

AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED WORKS OF VÍTĚZSLAVA
KAPRÁLOVÁ

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PREVIEW

AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED WORKS OF VÍTĚZSLAVA
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by

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Very few educated musicians would have trouble recognizing the names of Smetana, Dvořák, Janáček, and Martinů. These four men are considered to be some of the greatest composers of Czech music. There are others however who have contributed to the wealth of music from the Bohemian lands. People like Novák, Suk, Ostrčil, Fibich and many others are overlooked in the shadows of these great men. Specifically, Vítězlava Kaprálová fits into this second group, the relatively unknowns.

It is the purpose of this study to gain a better understanding of the music of Kaprálová through the analysis of several selected works. Much has been written about her life, as interesting and tragic as it was. The life of a musician cannot merit the full scope of research, however. To get to know a composer, you must get to know his or her music.

1.1 Parameters and Terminology

Selection of Works

The author intended to include a selection of varied works by Vítězlava Kaprálová. In order to accomplish this, the author chose three works, each from a different time period in Kaprálová's life.

The first work, *Skladby z Dětství*, was selected to demonstrate Kaprálová's initial attempts at composition. The second work, *Vojenská symfonieta* was chosen as a representation of Kaprálová's studies in Prague. The *Partita* was selected to demonstrate a work

composed under the tutelage of Martinů.

Octave Registers

During the course of this study, the necessity to discuss specific notes within a score arose. To facilitate understanding, the following system was used to describe the octave/register designation:

The octave number refers to the piano keyboard. Therefore middle C will be called C 4 the next C above that, C 5, and so on. All notes contained within the octave in discussion will include the same octave number. For instance, D 4 describes one whole step above C 4. B 3 describes the note one half-step below C 4. These numbers are used regardless of clef.

Music Examples

For the sake of clarity, all music examples include a clef, key signature, and time signature equivalent to what would be seen at the beginning of the piece, or whatever is appropriate to each particular example. A citation that includes edition and score information is found on the first music example of each work. All following examples are found in the same source. Measure numbers are included in the figure labels to ensure that they can be easily found in the actual score.

Form

During a discussion of form, capital-sized letters are used to describe major parts of the form. Lower-case letters are used to describe phrase elements, or the division within the major parts of the larger form.

Language and Czech History

The author used the original Czech titles for music and music instructions with the English translation only for the first occurrence. Any subsequent repetitions of the title are given

only in Czech. The term Czech refers to anyone who lives in, or any place that is located in, the modern-day Czech Republic. This is to lessen any confusion about place names and nationalities.

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Chapter 2

Biography

Vítězslava Kaprálová's existence was tragically short. This fact alone has led many scholars to focus on how remarkable her life was, even though it ended so early. Her story inspired two monographs and three novels as well as a radio broadcast series.¹ Many articles and reviews have mentioned her womanhood and her youth. Being a woman presented obstacles for a composer in the 1930s. When a scholar includes the fact that Vítězslava was only fifteen at the onset of her career only magnifies the difficulties she must have faced to gain success.

Vítězslava Kaprálová was born in Brno, Moravia on January 24, 1915, during the period of European unrest just before the First World War.² Little is known about her early years, other than that she lived with her mother and grandparents, while her father served as a conscript in the Austrian Territorial Army in Albania.³ At the close of the war, in 1918, her father returned to his young family and the new nation of Czechoslovakia. After hundreds of years of Habsburg rule, the Czech and Slovak people finally had an independent state.

Kaprálová was born into a musical family. Her mother, Viktorie Kaprálová, was a classically trained singer who was also certified to teach voice by the state. Viktorie gave Vítězslava her first piano lessons at age four. Vítězslava's cousin Věra was also musically gifted. Only

¹Graham Melville-Mason. "Michael Henderson (1947-1994)." In *Martinů's Mysterious Accident: Essays in Memory of Michael Henderson*, ed. Michael Beckerman, 14. Hillsdale, New York: Pendragon Press, 2007.

²Jiří Macek, and Anna Šerých. "Vítězslava Kaprálová." In *The Norton/Grove Dictionary of Women Composers*, ed. Julie Anne Sadie and Rhian Samuel, 245-246. New York: Macmillan Press Limited., 1995.

³Karla Hartl. "Vitezslava Kaprálová: Life Chronology." Kaprálová Society Newsletter [e-journal], spring 2004, 9. Accessed 10 December 2007; available from <http://kapralova.org/JOURNAL.htm>; Internet