

“Music kept us alive”

The dynamic of majority–minority recollections and musical remembrance of Terezín

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Abstract

A characteristic feature of post-authoritarian societies (such as the Czech Republic after 1989) is social consolidation, in which a re-construction of collective memory plays an important role. Usually, memories of minorities that have been temporarily silenced are reshaped. While in some cases minorities find their own autonomous voice (e.g. Roma in the CR), in other cases the minority “story” becomes part of the “story” of the majority. This is the case for the recollections of the concentration camp Terezín (Theresienstadt) 1942–45, where Czechoslovak Jews organized a rich cultural and musical life. In the words of one of the survivors – “Music kept us alive”. The article examines the transformation of the “Terezín phenomenon” (primarily its musical life and music production) from an important component of minority musical remembrance to a part of the majority narrative.

Keywords: Terezín, Theresienstadt, Czech Jewry, music, remembrance, collective memory

Ceremonial evening for the Bubny Memorial of Silence

On 12 July 2021, in the grand hall of Prague’s Trade Fair Place (*Veletržní palác*), which today serves as a venue for exhibitions of modern art produced by the Czech National Gallery, a ceremonial evening was held to commemorate the forced transports of Czechoslovak Jews to the concentration camps during the Second World War. The evening was organized by the Bubny Memorial of Silence (*Památník ticha Bubny*), an institution associated with the nearby Bubny train station, from which such transports departed. This institution was established by a descendant of those who were transported, Pavel Štingl (1960), a documentary film director who produced several films about the history of the 20th century, including the Holocaust (*O zlém snu*, 2000) [About a Bad Dream].

In the audience of roughly 150 people there were several Holocaust survivors, as well as some of the regular attendees of concert performances of the musical works authored by composers who were imprisoned at Terezín (*Theresienstadt*). However, this time the evening’s musical component was different: Iva Bittová, the actor, singer and violinist who is a leading figure of the Czech alternative scene, was performing her piece “The



Way” (*Cesta*) here; her compositions usually make it hard for the listener to be certain of what is already composed and what is improvisation. Just a couple of weeks earlier, Bittová had also performed on a similar occasion, the commemoration of the Holocaust and its Romani victims at the site of the former concentration camp at Hodonín u Kunštátu. Apparently, that performance was associated both with the figure of her father, the famous Romani musician Koloman Bitto (1931–84), as well as with her own early film output, in which she several times embodied the characters of young Romani women.

After this musical performance followed the essential part of the commemorative evening in Prague. Czech Culture Minister Lubomír Zaorálek announced that Memorial of Silence is becoming a state-subsidized organization (its status heretofore had been that of a nonprofit public benefit corporation). That this was no exception had been confirmed by the frequent commemorations of the transports in the public broadcast media. The newly-appointed Culture Minister Martin Baxa, who succeeded Zaorálek, mentioned in one of his first interviews the need to “set in motion the activities of the Memorial of Silence in the Bubny neighborhood of Prague, from where the Jewish transports set out during the war” (Vitvar 2022:58). As a scholar, I had anticipated such an event for a few years, and as a citizen I had hoped it would come to pass. From my own perspective, the drawing of an important arc of collective remembrance has now been completed, and a crucial role in that remembrance is played by music.

Figure 1. Gala evening in Veletržní palác Prague, 12 July 2021. Photo: Zuzana Jurková.

The hidden chapter of Czech music history

I first heard about the concentration camp at Terezín and its musical life in the mid-1990s, when my colleague at the Czech Academy of Sciences' Institute for Musicology, Milan Kuna, published two books on this subject: *Hudba na hranici života* (1990) [Music on the Border of Life] and *Hudba vzdoru a naděje: Terezín 1941–1945* (2000) [Music of Defiance and Hope: Theresienstadt 1941–1945]. As a junior researcher dedicated to other subjects who held a PhD in musicology, two things fascinated me. The first was the described facts of cultural life in the concentration camp at Terezín in and of itself, which were unbelievable. This is how Kuna describes musical life at Terezín during just one week in February 1944:

After all, just in the one week that closed with Verdi's "Requiem", the W. Lederer Piano Trio had organized a chamber music concert, together with a concert by the Taube Orchestra (Monday, 14 February), and Puccini's "Tosca" conducted by F.E. Klein sounded in parallel with the oratorio "Creation" by Joseph Haydn, under the direction of Karel Fischer (Tuesday, 15 February), and three remarkable concerts took place in the middle of the week: A solo recital of Bach's compositions by Edita Steinerová-Krausová (Wednesday, 16 February), a chamber concert by a piano quartet of Johannes Brahms and Antonín Dvořák (Thursday, February 17), and again a solo recital by Carl S. Taube of compositions by Fryderyk Chopin (Friday, February 18). The next day, Heda Grabová-Kernmayrová organized a song evening accompanied by Karel Reiner in parallel with a concert by V. Kohn and "his" orchestra (Saturday, February 19). On Sunday morning, February 20, the orchestra performed Taube's popular compositions in the hall on Main Street, and an hour earlier (at 4:30 PM), before Rafael Schächter led the performance of Verdi's "Requiem", Hans Hofer had performed Johann Strauss's operetta "The Bat". (Kuna 2000:77; translation from Czech by Gwendolyn Albert)

The second thing that was incomprehensible to me was that despite having graduated in musicology at Charles University during the 1980s and having earned a doctorate in the discipline during the 1990s, I had never before heard about this chapter of Czech musical life. How was that possible? What else should adepts of musicology learn but that music has "saved someone's life", as some Holocaust survivors put it – or more soberly, that during what were their last days of life, people passionately created and performed music? The absence of this chapter from our history in the customarily presented, historical, national narrative seemed even stranger because some of the survivors of Terezín belonged to the actual elite of the music world during the second half of the 20th century. Zuzana Růžičková (1927–2017), the Czech Philharmonic's harpsichordist and a soloist, was in my opinion a perfect interpreter of Bach's compositions in those days. Karel Berman (1919–1995), the bass singer with the National Theater, had been known to me as a charming interpreter of Leporello in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. His poignant interpretation of the oratorio by Schönberg, "A Survivor from Warsaw", would never have occurred to me to be associated with his

personal experiences. Despite having admired these performers onstage and having read about them in program notes, as well as in the interviews published with them in magazines and newspapers, I had never heard anything about what they had lived through at Terezín.

This paper is, in a certain sense, a search for an answer to that question: How was that possible? Or to formulate this in a more academic way: What circumstances prevented the commemoration of such an important chapter in Czech (music) history? What changed later so that it became a component of national remembrance? Lastly: Who were the main stakeholders that brought this chapter about Terezín into the public space? My search for answers to these questions takes place within a collective memory studies framework which is, in my understanding, centered around two basic ideas. The first comes from Jan Assmann. In his view, human societies (or in his terminology, "cultures"), are linked together with what he calls a connective structure. This involves two dimensions, the normative and the narrative. The former of these "binds the person to those close to him by, in the symbolic world of meaning ... creating shared space for experience ... thereby contributing to the development of trust and orientation" (Assmann 2001:20). The narrative or time dimension then "connects yesterday with today, as it creates the formative memories and maintains their presence" (ibid.). In other words, a human society is bound together, among other things, by what it considers to be important from the past and therefore recalls in the present.

The second crucial idea on which researchers in the field of memory studies more or less agree is that memory does not involve an objective picture of the past, but involves a highly selective (re)construction of the past, one that happens in the present and also testifies to the present. Astrid Erll's formulation is concise: "Individual and collective remembrances are never a mirror image of the past, but an expressive statement of the needs of the person or group who is doing the recalling in the present" (Erll 2011:8).

My search for an answer to the question of why this was, or at a minimum, why till the 1990s the chapter about Terezín was more or less absent from the Czech (music) history narrative, has taken the form of looking for those who did commemorate this chapter, and when, during the 75 years since the gates to the Ghetto at Terezín were opened. This accumulated material forms the basis for most of this paper and has provided me with an answer that resonates with the ideas of Andreas Langenohl (2010) about collective memory in post-authoritarian societies. I will discuss these ideas in my conclusion.

Terezín

In 1939 were about 120,000 of those who would later be labeled Jews according to the Nuremberg Laws living in the territory of what is today the Czech Republic (from March 1939 to May 1945 the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, *Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren*).¹ Most of them were culturally integrated into both urban and village settings and were secular. One of them was for example Bruno Nettel (1930–2020), one of the key

1. I am basing this on data from Jurková – Blodig 2022. Blodig gives the number 118310.

global figures in ethnomusicology. His father, Paul Nettl, was a professor of musicology in Prague, and his mother Gertrud Hutter-Nettl was a well-known pianist (Nettl 2013). The Nettls left the Czech Republic in September 1939 for the USA. According to Bruno, his father was a Czech patriot and did not want to return to Bohemia after the war because he (rightly) assumed he would no longer find the multicultural society there that he had enjoyed before the war (Nettl 1994). The vast majority of those who did not leave the country by 1940² later passed through the concentration camp at Terezín. From the Protectorate there were about 75,000 who ended up in Terezín.³ Later, Jewish people from Austria, Germany and other countries were brought there, numbering approximately 65,000. Around 6,000 prisoners from the Protectorate died at Terezín (mostly because of the appalling conditions for personal hygiene and malnutrition), but most of them were killed elsewhere. Almost 65,000 did not survive the war.⁴

Terezín is a city fortress built by Emperor Joseph II in the 1780s. Before the Second World War, 3,500 inhabitants lived there; at the time of its highest population density there were more than 58,000 prisoners living there.⁵ It began serving as a ghetto in late 1941, and in 1942, when the "Final Solution to the Jewish Question" had been decided, the administration of the ghetto was entrusted to the Jewish prisoners. This Jewish self-administration was in charge, among other matters, of raising the children and youth, and within the framework of their so-called "free time" (after the compulsory 10-hour work day), they organized concerts, lectures, theatrical performances, etc. In addition to the predominantly classical music repertoire, a cabaret or a dramatic theater repertoire were also in operation, but music dominated, undoubtedly. A partial explanation for this activity and its intensity certainly is connected with the high prestige that (predominantly classical) music enjoyed in the everyday culture of Czech Jewry during the interwar period, as can be read in many memoirs that have been published. The intensity with which "free time" was filled, as outlined above, is, in my view, difficult to believe even today. What is even more essential, of course, is the meaning of spending one's "free time" on culture. Later, the words of one survivor, which I heard during the *Defiant Requiem* at the Cathedral of St. Vitus in 2013 stuck with me: "Music kept us alive". This is also testified to by one of the youngest survivors, who was just six when she was imprisoned at Terezín, Micheala Lauscherová (later married surname Vidláková):

Culture in Terezín is a big chapter of its own that shows the will to preserve such humanity, human dignity, the appearance of normalcy, the escape from evil when the place to which one flees simply means running into culture. This is the huge significance of culture in Terezín. There is a lot of talk about culture in Terezín today, every-body says 'Well, if they had so much culture there, then it can't have been so bad' – but the culture that the people squeezed out of themselves was consumed by the others just so they could remain human beings. In order to escape ... the evil, there simply is one place into which to flee – to run into culture. This is the huge significance of culture in Terezín. (Michaela Vidláková roz. Lauscherová – Culture in Terezín, memoryofnations.eu)

2. According to Blodig, 25,274 people were officially rescued by emigration; another 4,000 emigrated illegally.
3. Blodig gives the number 73,468.
4. Of the 63,838 Jews from the Protectorate who were killed in the extermination camps, according to Blodig, the vast majority, namely 57,127, passed through Terezín.
5. According to Blodig, the highest number of prisoners in September 1942 was 58,491.

Brundibár

The most famous work associated with Terezín is doubtless the half-hour long children's opera *Brundibár* by librettist Adolf Hoffmeister (1902–1973) and composer Hans Krása (1899–1944). Krása came from the family of a wealthy lawyer, which enabled him to study music privately with Alexander Zemlinský and to study abroad in Berlin and France; his *Symphony for Small Orchestra* and *String Quartet* were also performed in Paris. His opera *Verlobung im Traum / Engagement in a Dream*, which was performed in 1933, received considerable attention (Červinková 2003). The content of *Brundibár* is simple and comprehensible for children: Two children are doing their best to make money by singing to buy milk for their sick mother. They are prevented from buying the milk by the organ-grinder Brundibár, who steals their money. With the aid of their small animal friends, the children catch to him and get their money back.

The composition was conceived in 1938 for a competition run by the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment, but given the political situation the competition was never judged (Červinková 2003:162). The opera was first performed in a Jewish orphanage in the Hagibor locality of Prague at the close of 1942 and start of 1943. By then, Krása and several of the children from the orphanage were already imprisoned at Terezín, while Hoffmeister had managed to escape in time, which – as it turns out – had a certain influence on the composition's dissemination in the future. An actor from the Hagibor production, Rudolf Freudenfeld, brought an arrangement of the score for piano along with him when he was forcibly transported to Terezín (Červinková 2003:177). Freudenfeld gave the arrangement to Krása, who then orchestrated it for the available line-up of musicians there.

The composition was performed at least 55 times at Terezín between September 1943 and September 1944 (Červinková 2003). The choral finale, "Brundibár defeated ...", is even captured in a film made for propaganda purposes by the Nazis in the summer of 1944 ("Brundibár clip from Terezín" Youtube.com). Child performers who survived the war repeatedly testified to



Figure 2. Brundibár in kibbutz Giv'at Chajim, 1955. Photo: Dita Kraus. With permission.



the conviction and enthusiasm with which they sang that finale and to the enthusiastic response they awoke in their listeners (Červinková 2003:200).

Two films were made about *Brundibár* in Czechoslovakia during a two-decade period after the war. In 1954, a film version by F. Lukáš was produced at the Children's Film Studios in Prague, and in 1965, the television film *The Penultimate Act*, a program composed of songs and music from *Brundibár* interspersed with the memories of survivors, especially Hoffmeister (Červinková 2003:208). In the same year, Walter Küttner prepared his loose adaptation of the latter film for German television under the title *Der vorletzte Akt*. Apparently, the birth of these films was associated with the fact that while the composer, Krása, had been murdered at Auschwitz in October 1944, Hoffmeister, the librettist, survived the war and became an important figure in the field of culture and diplomacy. He was also a protagonist in the film produced in 1965. The following year a public performance of *Brundibár* was staged in Prague. The musical preparations were by Hanuš Krupka, and performers from the Children's Choir of Prague sang the roles. After that, it was as if this piece had been swallowed up from the face of the earth in socialist Czechoslovakia.

Abroad, *Brundibár* was performed from time to time. It is explicitly first mentioned as being produced in kibbutz Giv'at Chajim, Israel, an event initiated by several survivors, above all the Kraus couple, for the 10th Anniversary of the Liberation in 1955 (Krausová 2022).

Figure 3. *Brundibár* in the National Theater Prague, 2014. Photo: Zuzana Jurková.

Other comments on its performance are associated with the year 1985. Červinková (2003:210) mentions that year in connection with the study of *Brundibár* in Freiburg, led by Maria Veronika Grüters for grammar school students. One survivor, Ela Stein-Weissberger, who performed the role of the Cat in *Brundibár* at Terezín, talks about that same year in connection with the revival of the opera in the French film *Terezín's Children and the Mustache Monster* of 2019. It did not return to the Czech stage until after the change of regime in 1991. At the instigation of the Terezín Initiative it was staged, and on 18 October on the 50th anniversary of the ghetto's founding, it was performed by Dismán's Children's Radio Ensemble for the first time. *Brundibár* has now been staged for a quarter of a century, and sometimes produced in concert form. Eight years on from that first staging, the Children's Opera of Prague rehearsed the composition and then performed it, primarily at the National Theater's New Stage venue.⁶

In 2015 the opera *Brundibár* became the centerpiece of a social intervention project in Brno, "Brundibár from the ghetto", in which this opera was studied and then performed by actors and musicians from Brno with children from socio-economically excluded localities (See 20 *Brundibár z Ghetta*, ymcabrno.cz).

A certain pattern can be seen in the dynamic of *Brundibár* emerging in public spaces. After the fading of its immediate postwar resonance, *Brundibár* first appears abroad as a memento of Terezín. In Bohemia it is taken up first by the "Jewish community" of the Terezín Initiative, the official activities of which were only possible after the political transformations of 1989. Only then was the stage of the most official institution, the National Theater, open to *Brundibár*. Both the context of this work and the work itself become an acknowledged component of cultural value, and it could also serve as an instrument of social intervention.

The Czech literature about music and musicology

The following section on "writing about music" has several interesting motifs. The first is a kind of concordance between the "writing about Terezín" and the situation in Czech society: The culture of music-making at Terezín was written about during politically more relaxed periods in the 1960s, and then hidden under the surface during the days of normalization in the 1970s and 1980s. After the November 1989 overthrow of the communist regime, not only did one postponed academic publication after another come out on this subject, but also several titles targeting readers among the informed public. The second motif is about communication with people abroad in the area of conferences and publications, and the third motif is the justifiably expected, but far from obvious, collaboration between musicologists and musicians.

The mid-1960s, a period of gradual loosening, politically known as the Prague Spring, was ruptured by the Soviets and their allies occupying the country

6. The Children's Opera also released *Brundibár* on DVD in 2003.

in August 1968; this period is also exceptional from the perspective of recalling Terezín. Even before the above-mentioned film *The Penultimate Act* was made, a short story by Josef Bor, *Requiem for Terezín*, was published in 1963. The author, who himself was a Holocaust survivor, drew attention for the first time to one of the important episodes in the life of music-making at Terezín, the production of Verdi's *Requiem*. 30 years later, music journalist Ludmila Vrkočová returned to this subject with her book *Requiem sami sobě* (1993) [Requiem for Ourselves]. Murry Sidlin's monumental 2013 memoir was then published in the United States, about which more below.

Just as important, albeit long concealed from the public, was another event: In 1965, on the basis of brokering done by a young musicologist, Ivan Vojtěch (1928–2020), the composer Alexander Waulin offered some scores by one of the composers imprisoned at Terezín who was a leading figure in musical life there, Viktor Ullman (1898–1944), to Charles University's Department of the History of Music at the Faculty of Arts. This collection of exceptional value is stored there to this day (Reittererová 2020:142). That's not all. As Vlasta Reittererová, who later became one of the important figures in the popularization and research of Terezín, has written:

In the mid-1960s, at the Department of the History of Music ... in Ivan Vojtěch's seminar two theses were produced about the "Terezín" composers. The thesis by Jiří Kocur was dedicated to Ullmann's opera *The Fall of the Antichrist*, and the thesis by Blanka Müllerová Červinková was dedicated to Hans Krása. After the defeat of the "Prague Spring" and the onset of what was called "normalization", the subject of German culture in Bohemia was pushed into the background for some time [Author's Note: the mother tongue of both Krása and Ullmann was German, which was dominant especially among Jewish people from bigger cities. For that reason, during this ignorant time, in Bohemia the history of Jewish people was considered a component of the culture of Germans –] ... Blanka Červinková returned to Krása years later and prepared a monograph on him, the publication of which she did not live to see ... (Reittererová 2020, footnote 150)

Červinková's other legacy also leads to the presentation of composers who were imprisoned at Terezín. She and her husband Stanislav published compositions by Krása and Haas (both imprisoned in Terezín) through the Tempo publishing house.

From the perspective of commemorating the cultural life at Terezín in Czech musicology, the 1970s "normalization" period was one of germination, especially in the form of academic literature and studies. In 1977, the composer and musicologist Milan Slavický published a study on the dazzling genius Gideon Klein (1919–1945), which became the basis for a brief monograph about him that was published subsequently. Jitka Ludvová, who had long paid attention to German music culture in the Czech lands, published a study on Viktor Ullmann in 1979. Milan Kuna, the author of the two monographs mentioned at the beginning of this paper, recalls that period as unfavorable to the publication of more extensive works: "... my

book *Czech Musical Life During the Nazi Occupation*, in which I also discussed the activities of musicians in Terezín, was not allowed to be distributed during the so-called normalization years, even though it was already in print" (Kuna 2000:5).

There was all but a boom in commemorating the culture of music-making at Terezín with the change of regime in 1989. In the 1990s and at the beginning of the new millennium, in addition to a number of academically published studies,⁷ several monographs were also released: The two already mentioned above by Milan Kuna (1990 and 2000 – the first of which contains just one chapter devoted to Terezín, the second of which is a monograph about the life of music-making in the ghetto); one by Ludmila Vrkočová on Verdi's *Requiem* (1993), and one on Klein by Slavický (1995). In 1999, the Brno-based musicologist Lubomír Peduzzi published his collected works, above all his criticism, entitled *O hudbě v terezínském ghettu* [About Music in the Terezín Ghetto]; and in 2003 Blanka Červinková's book *Hans Krása: Život a dílo skladatele* [Hans Krása: The Life and Work of the Composer] was published.

In the years 1994–2000, the biennial conference *Musica Iudaica* took place in Prague, focusing on Jewish influences primarily in Central Europe (including motifs from Terezín) and producing the conference proceedings *Kontexte. Musica Iudaica*.⁸ The event's main *spiritem agens* was Vlasta Benetková-Reittererová, who was working at Charles University's Faculty of Arts in the Department of Musicology in Prague. We will encounter her name again below.

At this point it is necessary to mention the characteristic feature of most Czech musicological productions, and not just those touching on the Terezín theme. Analysis of the music is usually combined with an historical perspective, to different degrees, in the work of Kuna, Červinková, Slavický, and Karbusický. Of course, this cannot be done without the use of academic terminology and excerpts from the scores, which makes their texts incomprehensible to readers who are not trained in reading music or in musicology itself. The Czech literature of musicology lacks, for all practical purposes, a genre aimed at an audience who is more deeply interested, albeit untrained. Therefore, when monographs focusing to a greater or lesser extent on the culture of music in Terezín and aimed at a broader audience finally appeared in Czech bookstores between 2008 and 2019, two-thirds of them (four out of six) were by authors who are not Czech. A year after Milan Kuna published his book about the composer Karel Reiner (1910–1979), who wrote the music for *Ester* [Esther], a famous production in Terezín, a biography of the then-oldest survivor, the pianist Alice Herz-Sommer (1903–2014), was released in translation from the German (Müllerová & Piechocki 2009). Another biography of this same remarkable figure was written by the American pianist Caroline Stoessinger (2012); considerable attention was paid to its Czech translation's presentation by Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg. In 2019, a biography of Zuzana Růžičková (1927–2017), the excellent harpsichordist mentioned here in my introduction, was also translated from English (Holden 2019), and a

7. In addition to Kuna, Červinková, Slavický and Peduzzi, who later transformed their articles into monographs, Karbusický (1993, 1997) and Benetková (Reittererová) (e.g., 2015, 2020) write on Terezín-related topics.

8. See the Conference Proceedings *Kontexte. Musica Iudaica*, published in 1995, 1997, 1999, and 2002.

comprehensive biography of Gideon Klein by British musicologist David Fligg was published in Czech translation that same year. Similar to Kuna's book on Reiner, Karel Berman. *Kronika života operního pěvce* (2014) [Karel Berman: A Chronicle of the Life of an Opera Singer] by Czech historian Martin Kučera is a detailed biography of an important figure of the Czech postwar cultural scene, with an extensive (70 page long) chapter on the war period and especially on Terezín, where Berman was one of the crucial figures.

Terezín onstage

Since the 1990s, both Prague and Terezín, with their specific genius loci, have seen music productions connected with this chapter in the history of Terezín. At first these frequently featured international performers, after which the number of Czech performers of such material increased. In 1993, the Austrian ensemble Arbos, led by Herbert Gantschacher, performed Ullmann's opera *Císař Atlantidy* [The Emperor of Atlantis], which had been written and rehearsed (but never performed) in Terezín during the Second World War. In 1995, the chamber stage of the National Theater in the Kolowrat Palace featured the first Czech production of this work. The following year, a CD recording of the opera was released by the Czech label Studio Matouš (Ullmann: *Der Kaiser von Atlantis*). However, the recording was of the Arbos production in Klagenfurt; the author of the liner notes was Vlasta Benetková, already mentioned above in connection with the *Musica Iudaica* conference. In 1994, under the baton of the Israeli conductor Israel Yinon, the Mannheim Opera and the Prague State Opera co-produced *Zásnuby ve snu* [Bethrothed in a Dream] by Hans Krása, the composer of *Brundibár*; its premiere in 1933 had already enjoyed significant renown.⁹ This generous Czech production garnered numerous responses not just in the domestic press, but also abroad.

The 1990s were also the period of the Hans Krása Foundation's greatest activity, founded and led by the German journalist Gaby Flatow, who lived in Prague at the time (Jurková – Flatow 2022). She was able to organize a big concert at Terezín in October 1994 commemorating the 50th anniversary of the final transports from there to Auschwitz, during which the main protagonists of cultural life in Terezín were forcibly sent out of the former Protectorate, mostly to their deaths. In addition, thanks to her husband's involvement with the German Embassy, Flatow not only got financial support from them, but also the symbolically significant participation of the German ambassador.¹⁰ Other events produced by the Foundation took place in coordination with the Office of Czech President Václav Havel, including its participation in the conference called *Fenomén holokaust* [The Holocaust Phenomenon] in 1999, organized by the Office of the President as an international event.

In 2009, the apocalyptically-themed *Pád Antikrista* [Fall of the Antichrist], Ullman's 1935 opera, had its Czech premiere at Terezín. It was next staged in 2014 by the Moravian Theater in Olomou. The Prague performance of that

9. For more detail, see Červinková 2003: 89–130.

10. This was the first trip by an ambassador of Germany to Terezín since the end of the war.

production, part of a review of various opera companies, took place in front of a fully packed National Theater, with program notes by Vlasta Benetková-Reittererová.

Another big concert event was the *Defiant Requiem* project, led by the American conductor Murry Sidlin, on 6 June 2013, featuring audiovisual recordings of several Holocaust survivors' testimonies. (This paper is named after one such testimony.) The concert was given in the Cathedral of St. Vitus at Prague Castle, i.e., a location of exceptional prestige with spiritual connotations. This was additionally confirmed by the VIP audience, including almost the entire diplomatic corps, who completely filled the cathedral's 900 seats, and by the fact that important soloists and institutions from both the musical and the diplomatic worlds took part in the project. Lastly, it should be mentioned that this magnificent production had been preceded by a more modest version at Terezín in 2006, where the choral parts were sung by students from American universities. Sidlin's second project connected with Terezín is *Hours of Freedom*, in which he presents 15 composers imprisoned at Terezín. It was performed at Terezín in May 2015 (Jurková – Sidlin 2017).

Another event that was generous and related to Terezín is worth mentioning: The concert and exhibition project *Viktor Ullmann, svědek a oběť apokalypsy 1914–1944* [Viktor Ullmann, Witness and Victim of the Apocalypse 1914–1944], organized by the Archive of the Capital City of Prague in 2015 at the Baroque showpiece of the Clam-Gallas Palace in the very center of the metropolis. The author of the concept and the texts was Herbert Gantschacher, mentioned earlier in connection with *Císař Atlantidy* [The Emperor of Atlantis]. The exhibition, which focused on Ullmann's experiences of the First World War and their connection with his musical work, was complemented by a three-day Ullmann Music Festival (*Viktor Ullmann, svědek a oběť ...* 2013).

While the big events connected with the commemoration of this chapter of history involving music at Terezín had been heretofore mostly initiated (or at least co-organized) from abroad, in 2018 a Czech organization called the Institut terezínských skladatelů [Institute of Terezín Composers] entered the scene. The initiator of its establishment was Jiří Polák (1953–2021), the son of a Holocaust survivor, who was equipped with managerial experience from abroad.¹¹ Thanks to this, he was able to secure the support of strong partners who, together with the Institute, could also fund the festival *Věčná naděje* [Everlasting Hope Festival], connecting the works of composers who had been imprisoned at Terezín with other domestic and international composers, especially Gustav Mahler. From the very beginning, the Institute and this festival, with important names on its board, had generous plans, including publications, educational activities, and concerts by top musicians (Jurková – Polák 2018). After this event's second year, the COVID-19 pandemic delayed its resumption, as did the death of its founder in the fall of 2021. However, their other activities show that the Institute's newly-formed team, led by the late Polák's wife, Martina Jankovská, does not intend to stop (*Věčná naděje* webpage).

11. Jiří Polák was also behind the publication of his father Erik's war memoirs, see Polák 2006.

The title page of the program for the Eternal Hope Festival's second year features the well-known soprano Irena Troupová who, after a period of interpreting Baroque music, has been focusing on 20th-century music in recent years. In addition to songs by Schulhoff and Winterberg, she mainly performed difficult songs by Viktor Ullmann in her showpiece concert at the Municipal House in Prague. She recorded the set for the double CD album *Schwer ist's, das Schöne zu lassen*. This set shows how the publishing practice of recordings by composers who were imprisoned at Terezín has progressed. In contrast to previous "collections", this is a dramaturgically precise title including a trilingual translation of all the songs and detailed liner notes by Vlasta Benetková-Reittererová. Troupová further emphasizes the credit due to this scholar: Benetková-Reittererová, at that time a librarian at Charles University, first drew attention of Troupová, a student of musicology there, to the Terezín topic. (Jurková – Troupová 2016)

For the 100th anniversary of his birth, the festival that year focused on Gideon Klein. It also represented a kind of continuation of the winter festival *Gido se vrací domů* ['Gido's Coming Home!'] (see Guidofest webpage). The main initiator of that festival was the above-mentioned British music-ologist David Fligg, author of Klein's biography published that same year. It was therefore nothing out of the ordinary for Irena Troupová to perform Klein's songs at the final concert, which took place in the newly-renovated Winternitz villa, which the young Klein may have visited during his own music studies in Prague – perhaps even to perform.¹² The evening did differ from regular concerts of classical (and Terezín-related) music in at least two respects. First, the audience – several dozen people – were dressed mostly in the style of the 1930s, as requested by the program. This was related to the participation of an American scholar of the theater, Lisa Peschel, who works in Britain and whose book on the Terezín Theater has also been published in Czech translation (Peschel 2008). Secondly, the choir of students from the *Přírodní škola* ['Natural School'], which systematically deals with Terezín themes, performed several songs from the repertoire of Klein's *Osvobozené divadlo* [The Liberated Theater], which was so significant in its day. The gala concert for this Klein festival, therefore, embodied a shift in the memory of Terezín. This was a complex event with several dozen sponsors, participants from the Czech Republic (as musicians) and abroad (Fligg, Peschel), and in addition to the very specialized musicians involved, it featured very amateur high school student singers. The audience was not just being instructed about this history, but were also themselves willing to engage in what was a kind of "happening".

Remembering Pavel Haas

The composer Pavel Haas (1898–1944) is counted among the four stars who were imprisoned at Terezín (alongside Ullmann, Krása and Klein). His place in remembrance is a specific one, though. Haas was from Brno, Moravia's capital, and he was one of the last students (and allegedly the most talented) of Leoš Janáček, who today is an almost mythological figure of Brno-based culture. (Pivoda 2014). Pavel Haas was also the brother of the famous actor

12. From the opening remarks by David Fligg at the concert on 8 December 2019.

Hugo Haas (1901–1968), who emigrated to the USA in 1939. He returned to Europe in the late 1950s and lived in Vienna until his death. Pavel's authorship of the opera *Šarlatán* [The Charlatan], which was performed in the interwar period at Brno's National Theater to success, as well as his connection to these two other Brno-based figures, secured him a certain popularity beyond the context of the cultural life at Terezín. For example, on the one hand, Brno-based musicologists have paid attention to Haas in his own right, including with an exhibition at the Moravian Museum in 2014.¹³ On the other hand, his musical language, which indisputably follows that of Janáček, is more audience-friendly than Ullmann's musical language. In 2002, the remarkable Pavel Haas String Quartet was formed in Brno, interpreting not just Janáček's and others' compositions, but also those by Haas, organically incorporating them into concert productions that are not framed by the memory of Terezín.

How was it possible?

In conclusion, I return to my initial question: How was it possible that I never heard about this chapter of musical life in the Czech lands in my youth? What circumstances proscribed such recollection of Terezín from entering the collective, public remembrance spaces prior to the year 1989? What circumstances and which stakeholders then brought it to light – beginning as community remembrance by survivors – so that it could later become a component of the national narrative of remembrance?

As indicated by authors from the field of *memory studies* (e.g., Erlil – Nünning 2010, Tota – Hagen 2019), totalitarian and authoritarian regimes seek to control not just their citizens' present-day existence, but also their past and its public remembrance (at least as officially commemorated). In socialist Czechoslovakia, there was just one official narrative about the war, beginning with the German occupation and ending with the liberation by the heroic Soviet Army. There was no room for alternative or partial remembrance. As a survivor of Terezín, Toman Brod, has commented:

It was said during socialism that 360,000 freedom fighters fell during the war. That was an empty phrase, though: They just killed us, and not because we fought for freedom, but because we were Jews.¹⁴

This monolithic remembrance of the war also corresponds to the absence of any reminder of the culture of music-making at Terezín, with a few exceptions that emerged inconspicuously during the liberalization of politics in the mid-1960s.

With the end of the totalitarian regime in 1989, what had once been a forcibly unified narrative also disappeared from then-Czechoslovakia; consolidation in the democracy was going on, in Langenohl's (2010) terminology. Associated with this is pluralization of group memories (Langenohl 2010:171), including that of Holocaust survivors' memories, and as has been mentioned, the vanishing of those memories is considered one of the basic impulses for the development of memory studies by many

13. Haas was still remembered by Lubomír Peduzzi, a member of the older generation who met him in person.

14. See the Czech TV film *Paměť 20. století: Nesdělitelné*. Corresponding to this is the fact that the first Terezín memorial, which was erected in 1947, was called the Monument of National Suffering (Munk 2007).

researchers in that field, e.g. Astrid Erll (2011:4). Aleida Assmann's "canon and archive" concept of history is well-suited to explain this dynamic of group memory. According to her, collective memory has two modalities: archival and working. The archival one lies halfway between forgetting and the working memory: "The archive is the basis of what can be said in the future about the present when it becomes the past". (Assmann 2010:102) Thus, after the end of a forced narrative, Ullmann's works emerged literally from an archive at Charles University in Prague. In Brno, different forms of memories about Pavel Haas emerged, as did commentaries about *Brundibár* from all sides.

The support for this transition from the archival to the working modality is the framework of Holocaust remembrance worldwide and is, according to Langenohl (2010:166), one of the most important collective remembrance frameworks ever. Here is the indispensable place for a Gaby Flatow, Murry Sidlin, Herbert Gantschacher or David Fligg. However, as this same author points out, even as the pluralistic "past" is emerging, the ubiquitous danger of losing social cohesion intensifies (2010:177). That is why, as a citizen, I hoped that the memory of the fascinating chapter of the cultural life of music-making at Terezín would not just be considered "theirs" today, i.e., belonging to a group of which I am not a member, but that it would also be considered "our" national memory. The gala evening at the National (!) Gallery, which I mentioned above in my introduction, when a "national" minister declared that what until then had been a private/minority organization was now a state one – among many other matters – is, for me, such a testament. This act recalled not just the dynamics of the borrowing that happens between a minority and a majority, but symbolically, in the person of Iva Bittová, also recalled the dynamics between more than one such minority group (Jurková 2020). Above all, though, this gala evening has proven there is the will – and efforts are being made – to bring the (national) community together through remembrance.

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