Leoš Janáček and His Works for Piano in Musical, Aesthetic, and Cultural Context

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ABSTRACT

In the first part of my document, I will briefly examine Leoš Janáček’s situation as a young artist in the cultural environments of Prague (Janáček studied and taught at the Organ School in the mid-1870s), Leipzig and Vienna (he studied in each city for several months in 1789-80) and Brno (where he spent his adolescence and then almost his entire adult life). This sketch will provide the background for a discussion of Janáček’s growing interest in folk music, as well as the ideas of pan-Slavism in fin-de-siècle Austria-Hungary, and their impact on his artistic growth before 1900. In the second part, I will discuss Herbartian aesthetics and psychology and their influence on Janáček’s theoretical treatise, The Complete Harmony Manual (first published in 1911), which contains analyses and practical applications of the fundamental features of Janáček’s compositional style. I will focus on his ideas formulated in the decade leading to his first compositions for piano such as atomism (reduction of the motivic material to its lowest terms), layering and stratification (smaller units serving as building block for longer ones), and splétna or twine (which is revealed in melting, overlapping melodic and rhythmic figures). In the third part of the document, I will discuss Janáček’s piano and composition studies and his dream of becoming a piano virtuoso, as well as the possible reasons why this dream remained unfulfilled. Most importantly, I will discuss the development of Janáček’s distinct piano style and show how Janáček’s modernist sensibilities transformed the post-Romantic piano stylization by stripping it of its pathos and empty stylizations. Using examples drawn from Tema con variazioni (1880), On an Overgrown Path (c.1900-1911), I.X.1905 (1905), In the Mists (1912) and from other piano works, I will continue the discussion from the previous chapter of Janáček’s particular treatment of melody, harmony, and texture. In the concluding chapter, I will revisit,
on a more general level, some of the main reasons for Janáček’s abandonment of neo-
Romanticism and his development of a unique Modernist aesthetics.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction: Marginalization and Folklorization of Leoš Janáček’s Music 8

II. Leoš Janáček until 1900 11

   1. Studies in Brno and Prague 11
   2. Leipzig and Vienna 14
   3. Professional Life. Folk Music and Speech Melodies 17
   4. Nationalism and Pan-Slavism 22

III. Herbartian Aesthetics and Janáček’s Theory of Harmony 26

   1. Janáček’s Exposure to Herbartian Aesthetics 26
   2. Herbartism and the Formation of Janáček’s Theory of Harmony 30
      a. pocit and pacit 32
      b. connecting forms: spletna and rozuzlení 34
      c. conciliation, excitement, intensification, and substitution 38
      e. thickening 43
      f. sčasování 49

IV. Janáček as a Pianist and Composer of Piano Works 56

   1. Janáček as a Pianist 56
   2. Genesis of Janáček’s Solo Piano Works and Development of an Original Piano Style 62
      a. Tema con variazioni 63
      b. Minor Works from the 1890s 65
      c. On an Overgrown Path 69
      d. 1.X. 1905 76
      e. In the Mists 85

V. Conclusion: Janáček Between Tradition and Modernity 94

VI. Bibliography 102

   1. Musical Scores of Janáček’s Works 102
   2. Janáček’s Own Writings 105
LIST OF EXAMPLES

All examples of Leoš Janáček’s works are from Leoš Janáček, Composizioni per pianoforte, ed. Ludvík Kundera and Jarmil Burghauser. Praha, Supraphon, 1979.

Ex. 1: Bohemian folksong “Prala šaty, prala”
Ex. 2: Moravian folksong “Dé mně Bože synka”
Ex. 3: example of speech melodies
Ex. 4: Janáček, They Chattered Like Swallows from On an Overgrown Path, mm. 31-42
Ex. 5: Janáček, They Chattered like Swallows from On an Overgrown Path, mm. 61-71
Ex. 6: Janáček, The Presentiment (Sonata I.X.1905), mm. 92-102
Ex. 7: Janáček, Čeladenský from Three Moravian Dances, m. 28
Ex. 8: Janáček, Pilky from Three Moravian Dances, mm. 12-13
Ex. 9: Janáček, The Barn-Owl Has Not Flown Away! from On an Overgrown Path, m. 93
Ex. 10: Janáček, Andantino from In the Mists, mm.10-11
Ex. 11: Janáček, The Madonna of Frýdek from On an Overgrown Path I, mm. 26-27
Ex. 12: Janáček, Andante from On an Overgrown Path II., mm. 1-3
Ex. 13: Janáček, Andante from On an Overgrown Path II., mm. 14-16
Ex. 14: Janáček, The Barn-Owl Has Not Flown Away! From On an Overgrown Path, mm. 69-72
Ex. 15: Janáček, The Barn-Owl Has Not Flown Away! From On an Overgrown Path, mm. 89-92
Ex. 16: Janáček, The Barn-Owl Has Not Flown Away! from On an Overgrown Path, mm. 34-36
Ex. 17: Janáček, Our Evenings from On an Overgrown Path, mm. 1-3
Ex. 18: Janáček, Presto from In the Mists, mm. 1-2
Ex. 19: Janáček, The Madonna of Frýdek from On an Overgrown Path I, mm. 25-28
Ex. 20: Janáček, Allegro from On an Overgrown Path II, mm. 25-28
Ex. 21: Janáček, Allegro from On an Overgrown Path II, mm. 31-36

Ex. 23: Janáček, *Ej danaj!* from *Three Moravian Dances*, mm. 1-9

Ex. 24: Janáček, *In Memoriam*, mm. 1-10

Ex. 25: Janáček, *The Madonna of Frýdek* from *On an Overgrown Path*, mm. 17-22

Ex. 26: Janáček, *The Madonna of Frýdek* from *On an Overgrown Path*, mm. 46-53

Ex. 27: Janáček, *Good Night!* from *On an Overgrown Path*, mm. 1-5

Ex. 28: Janáček, *Good Night!* from *On an Overgrown Path*, mm. 38-43

Ex. 29: Janáček, 1.X.1905 (*Presentiment*), mm. 1-4

Ex. 30: Janáček, 1.X.1905 (*Presentiment*), mm. 8-14

Ex. 31: Janáček, 1.X.1905 (*Presentiment*), mm. 21-28

Ex. 32: Janáček, 1.X.1905 (*Death*), mm. 1-4

Ex. 33: Janáček, 1.X.1905 (*Death*), m. 45

Ex. 34: Janáček, 1.X.1905 (*Death*), mm. 46-48

Ex. 35: Janáček, Andante from *In the Mists*, mm. 1-6

Ex. 36: Janáček, Andante from *In the Mists*, mm. 54-56

Ex. 37: Janáček, Molto adagio from *In the Mists*, mm. 1-4

Ex. 38: Janáček, Molto adagio from *In the Mists*, mm. 28-30

Ex. 39: Janáček, Presto from *In the Mists*, mm. 9-13

Ex. 40: Janáček, Andante from *In the Mists*, mm. 59-62

Ex. 41: Janáček, Presto from *In the Mists*, mm. 121-122

Ex. 42: Janáček, Andante from *In the Mists*, mm. 1-14

Ex. 43: Janáček, Presto from *In the Mists*, mm. 1-8

Ex. 44: Janáček, *Our Evenings* from *On an Overgrown Path*, mm. 95-1
I. INTRODUCTION: MARGINALIZATION AND FOLKORIZATION OF LEOŠ JANÁČEK’S MUSIC

It took a long time for Janáček to find himself as a composer. Most successful composers will have written a few distinctive works by the age of thirty but Janáček only begins to sound like himself in the second half of the 1890s, when he was well into his forties.¹

As in the case of Haydn, stuck out in the marshes of Esterháza and ‘forced to become original’, Janáček in another province of Habsburg Empire similarly became his own person, an anomaly difficult to pigeon-hole in the annals of twentieth-century music.²

For the greater part of the twentieth century, Czech musicologists and important literary figures have been overemphasizing the influence of the Bohemian musical tradition and Moravian folklore in Leoš Janáček’s (1854-1928) music and thus, as Milan Kundera argues in Testaments Betrayed, have consigned him to a restricted artistic space, predominantly defined by particular national values and interests. By habitually failing to discuss Janáček in the larger “cosmopolitan context of European music, the only one where he could be defended and understood, [academics and critics] cut him off from modern music and sealed his isolation.”³

While the current efforts of many musicians and Janáček scholars to recognize the composer as one of the crucial pillars of European modernism are laudable, much remains to be done to repair the lingering image of Janáček as a mere idiosyncratic artist, an interesting folklorist of limited influence consigned to the fringes of mainstream twentieth-century music. Although


² ibid. 8.

some valuable work in the field has already been done, an examination of Janáček’s aesthetic background and his relationship to other great nineteenth- and twentieth-century composers, his place in the European avant-garde movement, and the influence of his music on later generations of composers, must still be pursued in the coming years in order to place him within the “cosmopolitan context of European music.”

Carl Schorske notes that by refusing to accept the past as a genuine tradition with a continuous and nourishing impact on the contemporary mind, early twentieth-century European art defines itself “not out of the past, indeed scarcely against the past, but in independence of the past.” This radical break with the past “not only forces upon the individual a search for a new identity but also imposes upon whole social groups the task of revising or replacing defunct belief systems.” Despite their debts to the great composers of the past, the best and most daring works of both Stravinsky and Schoenberg brought about a sense of aesthetic rupture—an attack on contemporary society whose aesthetic sensibilities were firmly rooted in the previous century’s prevailing modes of musical perception. To what extent they indeed succeeded in influencing and redirecting those sensibilities in the long run is debatable. But the rupture illuminated the conflicts between the avant-garde and the mainstream, and highlighted the conflict between the composers and the public.

In this context, Janáček’s major solo piano compositions (On an Overgrown Path, L.X.1905, and In the Mists, all written between 1900 and 1913) are particularly interesting. These works of a mature composer, yet one barely known outside the rather provincial city of Brno, bear witness to the painful journey of an artist in the midst of a series of artistic and


5 ibid., XVIII.
personal crises, and they shed a light on the creative process of a composer torn between the past and the present. While some influence of composers including Chopin, Tchaikovsky, Schumann, Dvořák, Mussorgsky, and Debussy is still apparent, in these piano miniatures Janáček, without the fear of negative reception by the musical establishment, was free to experiment and to let his original approach to harmony and melody emerge.

In the following pages, Janáček’s piano works will be examined not only from the musical point of view but also from a broader aesthetic and cultural perspective. I will link his musical endeavors to the important European philosophical debates at the fin-de-siècle, and discuss how and why Janáček’s experimental treatment of harmony, melody, and form at the turn of the century created an aesthetic rupture that left him largely isolated and unappreciated for most of his life. I will argue that the importance of Janáček’s musical training and heritage notwithstanding, his stubborn refusal to accept tradition, both on the national (the Smetana-Dvořák-Fibich pedigree) and the supra-national (neo-Romantic aesthetics in general and Wagnerism in particular) levels was crucial to his artistic development and, in the late 1890s, brought about a radical aesthetic turn the consequences of which are clearly manifested in his solo piano music.
II. LEOŠ JANÁČEK UNTIL 1900

Modern art: a revolt against the imitation of reality, in the name of the autonomous laws of art.

One of the first practical requirements of this autonomy: that all the moments, all the particles of a work have equal aesthetic importance.\(^7\)

1. Studies in Brno and Prague

Janáček was born in 1854 in the small Moravian village of Hukvaldy into a family of cantors (\textit{kantor}\(^8\) in Czech). The social function of these village teachers was rather unique: a \textit{kantor} not only taught the prescribed syllabus to the children of the local community but also typically served as organist and choirmaster for the local church. To supplement his income, he also taught lessons in piano, organ, voice, and violin.\(^9\) Like most \textit{kantors} in 18\(^{th}\) and 19\(^{th}\) century Bohemia and Moravia, Janáček’s father and grandfather were both the leading cultural figures in the small communities they served.\(^10\) ‘Leo’, Leoš Janáček’s official name during his student years, was to follow in the family tradition. After basic schooling, he became a choral scholar at the Augustinian Monastery in Old Brno where he worked under the choirmaster and one of

\(^7\) Kundera, \textit{Testaments betrayed: an essay in nine parts}. 158.


\(^9\) The \textit{kantor} as a type has become so ingrained in popular imagination that in his opera \textit{Jakobín}, Antonín Dvořák introduces a charming character of such a village teacher.

\(^{10}\) Two other important fin-de-siècle Czech composers came from a \textit{kantor} family background—Josef Bohuslav Foerster and Josef Suk. See Tyrrell, \textit{Janáček: Years of a Life}. Vol. I., 26.
Moravia’s best composers and conductors, Pavel Křížovský.11 Křížovský’s highly evolved contrapuntal writing and unique harmonic language which did not shy away from modality, had a profound influence on Janáček’s own early choral works, and sparked Janáček’s early interest in Czech nationalism and in the ideas of pan-Slavism. Janáček did not study composition under Křížovský, who exerted more direct influence on the young boy as a conductor than as a composer.12

In 1869, Janáček enrolled in Brno’s Czech Teachers’ Institute (Slovanský ústav ku vzdělání učitelů), with the intent of becoming a professional teacher. In the early 1870s, however, Janáček’s ideas about his professional feature began to change. When Pavel Křížovský transferred from Brno to a more prestigious post in Olomouc, Janáček became the choirmaster at the Augustinian Monastery, where he rehearsed and performed a relatively wide variety of music at the services, ranging from Palestrina and Lassus to contemporary Czech vocal compositions. He had considerable success as a conductor, and in 1873 accepted an offer to become a conductor of Svatopluk, a choral society of working men in Brno. Not only did Janáček raise the level of musicianship of this group considerably; he steered the group away from its German Liedertafel pseudo-folklore tradition, and moved their activities from the local taverns to the more formal concert setting of the Beseda Hall. His collaboration with Svatopluk also provided an opportunity to work his early choral works into the group’s repertoire. Janáček’s choral works were in Křížovský tradition of what has been referred to as ohlasová (echo) works—compositions whose primary aesthetic was derived from folk art. Ohlasová

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11 A leading institution for the training of young musicians as well as a center of intellectual life in Brno, the Augustinian foundation had been in existence since the 17th century. The spirit of national revival must have been felt keenly by Janáček when he arrived there. For a thorough discussion of Janáček’s life in the Augustinian monastery, see Tyrrell, Janáček: Years of a Life, I. 44 ff.

12 “No-one could reach so boldly, so surely, as he could, into the depths of the soul, into the expression of another soul, of another composer.” Janáček cited in ibid. 74-75.
music, unabashedly Romantic and using syllabic four-part settings, uncomplicated rhythms and
traditional texts, played a crucial role in the Czech national revival of the second part of the 19th
century.\textsuperscript{13}

Janáček went to Prague for the first time in 1874, to study at the Prague Organ School
with František Skuherský whose interest in new harmonic systems and studies in contemporary
musical theories had a strong impact on the young man. Unlike the Prague Conservatory, which
enrolled composers and instrumentalists who expected to work mostly in the fields of secular
music, the Organ School, one of the most significant music schools in Bohemia, focused on the
training of church musicians.\textsuperscript{14} Over the course of the nineteenth century, Prague became an
important artistic center, attracting extraordinary performers and composers. The audiences
were familiar with the music of Wagner, Berlioz, and Liszt, each of whom personally conducted
their works in Prague. The German opera at the Estates Theatre mounted several Wagner
opera productions in the 1850s and 1860s, while the Czech Provisional Theatre programmed
operas by Smetana and Fibich. Excellent concert and choral societies were active in the city,
and the level of musical instruction at the Prague Conservatory and the Organ School rose
significantly. Extraordinarily motivated and hardworking, Janáček completed the first two years
of the three-year course at the Organ School in twelve months. However, he was too poor to
take part in the musical life of Prague; presumably, the cultural impact of the city on Janáček’s
artistic development was minimal.

Upon his return to Brno, Janacek took on the conductorship of the Beseda Choral
Society whose first choirmaster was Křižovský. Janáček’s leadership as music director
transformed the small male Beseda chorus into a large mixed choir of 250 singers, and

\textsuperscript{13} For a discussion of the history of the Czech national revival, see for example Ian Horsbrugh, \textit{Leoš

performances of large-scale works such as Mozart’s *Requiem* and Beethoven’s *Missa solemnis* took place shortly thereafter.\textsuperscript{15} He also promoted the work of Antonín Dvořák, thirteen years his senior. The enthusiastic championing of Dvořák’s works (rather than those of Smetana, whose Wagnerianism and somewhat overbearing Romanticism never fully resonated with Janáček\textsuperscript{16}) and the ensuing friendship between the two composers had a profound influence on several of Janáček’s works for string instruments. The still undigested influences of Dvořák’s music can be traced in the somewhat awkward instrumentation and rough harmonic progressions evident in Janáček’s *Suite* (1877) and *Idyll* (1878) for string orchestra.

2. Leipzig and Vienna

Deciding to take a paid leave from the Teachers’ Institute, Janáček returned to Prague for a month of special study, subsequently deciding to enroll at the Leipzig Conservatory. In fact, Janáček’s plan was to further his piano skills in addition to studying composition. His original intention to go to St Petersburg to study with the pianist and composer Anton Rubinstein could not be realized when the Regional School Board in Brno refused to finance his trip. Janáček’s piano teacher in Brno, Amalie Wickenhauser, suggested that he go to Leipzig instead.


\textsuperscript{16} Janáček once publicly described Dvořák as the “sole representative of Czech music,” a clear insult to Smetana who had been considered the father of Czech modern music. See Horsbrugh, 33. For more about his negative approach to the neo-Romantic compositions of Smetana, stemming from Janáček’s formalistic and anti-Wagnerian sensibilities, see Hans Hollander, *Leoš Janáček: His life and work* (London: J. Calder, 1963).47ff.
When Janáček arrived in 1879, the city of Bach, Mendelssohn, and Schumann was twice the size of Brno. Its rich musical scene boasted the Gewandhaus Orchestra, the Thomaskirche choir, the Royal Conservatory, and the Euterpe music society. The piano manufacturer Blüthner (one of the biggest European piano builders at that time) and the music-publishing house of Breitkopf & Härtel were also at home in the city. Again, because of financial concerns, Janáček social and cultural life in Leipzig was limited. He heard the Gewandhaus Orchestra a few dozen times but never went to the opera, thus foregoing the opportunity of hearing works by Liszt, Wagner, or Berlioz.¹⁷

Janáček’s studies at the Conservatory focused on composition (with Oskar Paul and Leo Grill), and piano (with Carl Reinecke and Ferdinand Wenzel).¹⁸ While occasionally resenting his teachers and the rather conservative environment of the Conservatory with its focus on the Classical and early Romantic compositional aesthetics, Janáček wrote some of his first serious compositions for piano there. Besides the lost Sonata in E-flat Major and probably 17 fugues,¹⁹ he composed the Schumannesque Tema con variazioni for piano (also known as Zdenka’s Variations, dedicated to his fiancée and future wife, Zdenka Schultzová), assigning them his first opus number. While these surviving compositions provide scant evidence of the originality of style that Janáček was to develop in the next two decades, they show a composer who, thoroughly assimilating the Dvořákian musical style of Classical/Romantic synthesis, is capable


¹⁹ While most of the fugues are lost, three of them were rediscovered in a Cistercian monastery in Rhein in 1998 and subsequently published by Editio Janáček.
of working with the utmost confidence with the musical material at his disposal. As Janáček observed a few months later in a letter to Zdenka Schultzová,

[...] I am working very easily now, since I know how to grasp every thought and round it off [...] My fellow students today wait for a perfect thought, but for that not only talent is necessary but a certain technical competence, which they totally lack.

But Janáček felt artistically and socially isolated in Leipzig and after a year, he decided to leave the city. Plans to continue his studies with Saint-Saëns in Paris were not realized, and Janáček decided to go to Vienna in 1880 to study piano and composition. A city larger than Prague, Brno, and Leipzig combined, Vienna felt more like home to Janáček, because of its close proximity to Brno, shared currency, and a sizable Czech population residing in the city. Vienna was also the capital of Austria-Hungary, and thus a part of the same socio-cultural space as Brno with its architecture, customs, and, most importantly, culture. Janáček stayed in Vienna only several months but composed prodigiously, as his letters to Zdenka show. Unfortunately, all of his compositions from the Vienna period are lost. His letters to Zdenka bear witness to the rather tumultuous relationship Janáček had with his teachers at the Vienna Conservatory. He stopped studying piano after a few lessons and focused solely on composition, studying with Franz Krenn, a teacher of Gustav Mahler. Janáček resented Krenn’s easygoing nature and the lack of rigor, as well as the modish Wagnerianism which many of his fellow students embraced and some of the professors encouraged, the “musical unstylishness, the chasing after effect and

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21 From a letter of Janáček to Zdenka Schultzová, 10-11 April 1880, quoted in Tyrrell, Janáček: Years of a Life, I. 168
the pompous throwing around of bombastic sequences of chords.”22 When his composition was not accepted for a Conservatory competition, Janáček left Vienna abruptly and in dismay, and returned to Moravia.

3. Professional Life. Folk Music and Speech Melodies

In 1880, the education ministry recognized Janáček as a ‘full teacher of music’ at the Teachers’ Institute. His studies officially finished, Janáček married Zdenka in 1881 and threw himself into teaching at the Institute and at the Old Brno Gymnasium. He continued conducting the Beseda, where he succeeded in creating a permanent orchestra in 1888. With the establishment of the Provisional Czech Theatre in Brno, Janáček acknowledged the need for a critical journal that would chronicle the musical life in Brno. The journal *Hudební listy* [Musical Letters] came into being in 1884, with Janáček as the main contributor. The Vienna debacle, a heavy teaching load, and other musical activities explain why Janáček composed relatively little in the 1880s.23 Several choruses composed in Křížovský’s spirit of Moravian folksongs stand out (e.g., *Four Male Choruses* of 1885, which impressed Antonín Dvořák, to whom they were dedicated) as well as the dramatic opera Šárka, which however, because of unresolved copyright issues regarding its libretto, remained unperformed until 1925 (with substantial revisions to the score made in 1918-9 and 1924-524).

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22 From a letter of Janáček to Zdenka Schultzová, 29 May 1880, quoted in ibid.179.


24 For a revealing comparison of the 1888 and 1918 versions, in which the latter shows increasing melodic independence achieved through remarkable rhythmic complexity of the vocal lines, see Horsbrugh, *Leoš Janáček: The field that prospered*. 42-44.
Janáček’s disappointment over his thus far unsuccessful career as a composer led to a shift of focus, and to the deepening of his passion for Moravian folk music. With the folklorist and philologist František Bartoš, Janáček collected and published two editions of several thousand songs and dances. A few original compositions of rather minor stature, like the *Lachian Dances*, ballet *Rákoš Rákoczy* and opera *Počátek románu* [Beginning of a Romance], directly influenced by his ethnographic studies in folk music, consisted primarily of series of folk dance tunes with traditional instrumentation. While enjoying popular success, Janáček considered both the ballet and the opera artistically inferior and would eventually reject both works.

In spite of the unrestrained quotations from folk material and rather naïve plot, *Počátek románu* marked an important turning point in Janáček’s artistic life. Here, Janáček began to discard the Romantic sensibilities (both in subject matter and compositional aesthetics) which had permeated his oeuvre until then and began to turn to realism. His immersion in the riches of Moravian folk music with its particular instrumentation played an important role in this turn.

Unlike the Czech folksongs, whose Western Slavic style is rooted in the sequential, regular metrical structure and uncomplicated diatonic major and minor of the early Classical period (these were the songs whose influences are found in the works of Smetana and Dvořák), the much older Moravian folk material can be traced to the traditions of Byzantium and ancient Greece. Rather than exhibiting the features of a Classical instrumental dance form to which words have been added later, the Moravian song is typically melismatic and improvisatory, rhythmically flexible, often modal, with sudden changes of mood and character. The following examples highlight the basic differences between a Czech (Ex.1) and a Moravian (Ex. 2) folksong:
It is the particular inflection of the individual syllables which determines the melodic contours and rhythmic structure of the Moravian folksong. As Janáček observed:

In every note of each song, there is, as I see it, a fragment of an idea. If you leave out a single note from the melody, you perceive that it has become incomplete and has ceased to make sense [...]  

Janáček maintained that every Moravian folksong had “grown from the cadence of speech” and that “it is an impossibility for a tune to have been composed first and words added to it afterwards;” this is the reason why the music “cannot always be fettered with regular time.”

And later:

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25 Quoted in ibid. 48.

For me, music emanating from instruments, whether in the works of Beethoven or of any other composer, contains little real truth. When anyone speaks to me, I listen more to the tonal modulations in his voice than to what he is actually saying. From this, I know at once what he is like, what he feels, whether he is lying, whether he is agitated or whether he is merely making conventional conversation. I can feel, or rather hear, any hidden sorrow […]

Janáček would call the “tonal modulations,” with their pitches and melodic curves changing depending on a particular context, nápěvky mluvy [speech melodies]. His notebooks and published essays contain thousands of snippets of speech melodies, which he wrote down while overhearing people uttering particular words or phrases, noting down what he believed was the precise pitch, rhythm, stress, and length (Ex. 3):

![Ex.3 Nápěvky mluvy [speech melodies]](image)

Using these notations, Janacek argued that the inflections of Moravian prose are closely linked to the Moravian folksong. While Janáček never consciously cited these speech melodies in his compositions (he forcefully rejected the notion that his work was naturalistic), their collection provided him with a window into the emotional world of the speakers. Miloš Štědroň also notes that Janáček strongly resisted the notion that he realistically incorporated these quotes into his works. But given the composer’s obsessive interest in the collection of speech melodies between 1879 and 1928, they had an impact on his vocal (and, by extension, his instrumental)

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oeuvre—as in Počátek románu, where the formulistic aria-arioso sections are juxtaposed with dramatic recitative-style passages exhibiting melodic freedom, rhythmic flexibility and dramatic flair.  

Because these influences will be discussed in more detail in the third and fourth part of this document, suffice it to say for now that Janáček’s exposure to the folk materials and his understanding of the melody of everyday speech radically changed his approach to composition. As Robin Holloway suggests:

The aim is for music to achieve its purpose, the intense utterance of feeling, via the startling physicality of its every sonorous constituent. Together, they reach the auditor direct, circumventing formalistic routines and play of conventions.

The exposure to the physical immediacy of the folk material brings into Janáček’s music an unmediated expressive content removed from Romantic sentimentality; the music, as Milan Kundera writes, is remarkable for its absence of “mere ‘technique’: transitions, developments, the mechanics of contrapuntal filler, routine orchestration.” By the time Janáček began to work on the opera Jenůfa in 1894, he was on his way to discarding the folk-based musical style of Křížovský and the Romantic language of Dvořák, Tchaikovsky, and Puccini (to name a few composers who had made an impact on Janáček in the last two decades of the 19th century), and to developing a language of his own. Janáček was forty years old.

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29 Robin Holloway, Janáček’s Musical Language in ibid.5.

30 Kundera, Testaments betrayed: an essay in nine parts.181.
4. Nationalism and Pan-Slavism

It is debatable whether Janáček “achieved full artistic self-realization by identifying his personality with Moravian peasant life and by studying the traditional songs, dances, and customs of his native province,” as Jaroslav Vogel writes. It is even more questionable whether by setting to music the poems of a great Czech left-wing poet Petr Bezruč, he identified himself with the Silesian miners and with their “social and national plight,” as Jaroslav Šeda asserts in his flowery prose. After all, Janáček had been removed from his early rural surroundings and sent to Brno when he was eleven years old. He spent his student years in the cultural environments of the great European cities of Prague, Leipzig, and Vienna, and eventually settled down to a busy, but decidedly middle-class life as the director of the Organ School in Brno. Thus on an existential level, Janáček never reconnected with his rural roots—although he had been influenced by the nationalism of the ohlasová music and poetry ever since his studies with Křížovský.

According to Bohumír Štědroň, Janáček “gravitated with his whole personality to Russia and Slavdom.” This is not surprising for several reasons. Firstly, Janáček was exposed to Greek Orthodoxy in the Old Brno Monastery, which embraced the cult of the Byzantine saints Cyril and Methodius. Secondly, educated Czechs had begun discussing the idea of Slav unification in response to Johann Gottfried von Herder’s Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte

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der Menschheit (1784-1791), a philosophical treatise in which Herder criticized what he saw as the deteriorating nature of the Germanic and Latin nations, proclaiming Slavs with their vitality (expounding on Rousseau’s idea of the *noble savage*) the next leaders in Europe. The revolutionary year of 1848 and the promise of a liberal constitution for all nations within the Habsburg Monarchy gave the Pan-Slavic movement a particular momentum, resulting in calls for a (rather damagingly foolish, as the Czech historian František Palacký, the first Czechoslovak president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, and others after him would point out\(^\text{34}\)) unification of Slavic nations, with Russia at the helm. Janáček was particularly aware of tensions between the Slavic and German cultures in Brno, which was linguistically (and inevitably politically) divided between the Germans and the Czechs.\(^\text{35}\) During his short visit to Russia in 1896, Janáček showed a keen interest in the language and the customs of the country (curiously avoiding political and social issues altogether) and after his return, he helped to found the Brno Russian Circle.

Within this context, Janáček’s choral work *Hospodine pomiluj ny* (*Lord Have Mercy Upon Us*) (1896), based on an old Czech hymn, occupies a particular place. Scored for four solo voices and two mixed choirs with a discreet accompaniment of organ, harp, three trumpets, three trombones, and two tubas (an odd instrumentation showing Janáček’s penchant for particular combinations of instrumental colors, undoubtedly inspired by his studies of Moravian folklore), the work curiously evokes the sounds of the Russian Orthodox church. With its haunting repetitions of the same melodic formulas with rather abrupt harmonic shifts, this piece is


\(^{35}\) This inevitably lead to tensions between Janáček’s Czech nationalist sentiments and Zdenka’s German cultural background.
coming out of nowhere, [...] arguably first piece of Janáček that sounds like the mature composer. Looking eastward had released something within him, enabling him at last to find his own voice [...]. Almost every piece he wrote thereafter [...] took him on to a new level as a composer in whom a distinct voice was becoming more and more audible.\footnote{Tyrrell, \textit{Janáček: Years of a Life}, I., 445-446.}

This voice would become even clearer in the next decade during the composition of \textit{Jenůfa} and the major piano works, a time of fruitful ethnographic and theoretical studies for Janáček.
III. HERBARTIAN AESTHETICS AND JANÁČEK’S THEORY OF HARMONY

For Herbart ideas were in themselves active, and could struggle with one another to cross the threshold into consciousness, rather as the most active molecules of water escape through the boundary of surface tension.\textsuperscript{37}

The impressionistic atoms, which at one time would have been meant, in their oscillation, to form a whole, here become means of creating a form whose power resides in the tiniest, invariant particle ... [There is] something of that magnificent randomness, of that monad-like power, which so fills every fragment that the fragment means the whole and scarcely needs the whole anymore [...].\textsuperscript{38}

It was like being out at sea, the Slav sea which I saw for the first time: a shiny, glimmering surface, empty as far as the eye could see. But suddenly some extraordinary features enliven the horizon. Unexpectedly, the ruler of the sea rises up.\textsuperscript{39}


\textsuperscript{38} Theodor W. Adorno review of The Makropulos Affair, translated by Susan H. Gillespie in Beckerman, Janáček as theorist.45.

1. Janáček’s Exposure to Herbartian Aesthetics

To understand Janáček’s artistic and intellectual development prior to and during the time his first important piano works appeared in print, one cannot ignore the role Herbartian aesthetics played in the formation of the young composer.

Johann Friedrich Herbart (1771-1841), who succeeded Kant in the chair of philosophy at Königsberg, was, unlike his predecessor, not an idealist. Rather than building a self-contained philosophical system, Herbart’s endeavor focused on creating methods that be used to explain concepts and phenomena, mainly in psychology. As had many thinkers before him, Herbart found logical incongruities in the way we describe complex objects, such a loaf of bread. While existing as a singular object whose properties we instantaneously recognize, we use many different attributes to describe a particular loaf of bread in order to fix it in our consciousness (e.g., soft, crunchy, white), thus creating a plurality of characteristics containing potentially contradictory attributes. Herbart attempts to resolve this incongruity by breaking down attributes and ideas into the smallest modules (called reals) and to posit them as stable and unchanging entities. Herbart understands reality in terms of perpetual relations and reactions between these indivisible entities, not unlike the behavior of atoms in Newtonian physics.

Herbartian aesthetics is likewise formalistic in essence. Rather than espousing a transcedent meaning of a particular value judgment and discussing our responses vis-à-vis complex works of art, Herbart “connects complex wholes to the underlying simple relations and the infallible judgments evoked by them.” He sees the human mind as a unified entity with its essence and function resting not on the transcendental existence of the mind’s substance but

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Beckerman, Janáček as theorist.17.
on the relationships between single indivisible entities or phenomena that represent the inner working of the mind.41

This empirical and profoundly anti-Hegelian approach to aesthetics was gaining traction in Prague academia in the second half of the 19th century. Thanks to important proponents of Herbartism such as Wilhelm Wundt, Robert Zimmerman, Josef Durdík, and Otakar Hostinský (the founder and most important proponent of Czech music aesthetics at the turn of the century), Prague’s young bourgeois class abandoned German idealism and enthusiastically embraced the new empiricism of Herbart and his followers en masse. For the Czech bourgeoisie, idealism and transcendental philosophy was associated with the ideology of the German aristocracy from which the Czechs tried to distance themselves. In so doing, they were drawn to the aesthetics of Herbart’s formalism, with its eminently practical approach to problem solving, and a conspicuous absence of speculative reasoning and complex philosophical terminology.42

As soon as he arrived in Prague in 1874 to study at the Prague Organ School (see chapter I), Janáček begun to read Josef Durdík’s Všeobecná aesthetika [General Aesthetics] and Zimmermann’s Allgemeine Aesthetik als Formwissenschaft [General Aesthetics as Science of Forms]. While he later dismissed some of the theories of Durdík and Zimmermann, the positivist work pertaining to the psychology of sound and acoustics of another Herbartian, the German physicist Hermann Ludwig Ferdinand von Helmholtz, would loom large in Janáček’s theoretical oeuvre43 and eventually become of importance in his future artistic endeavors.44

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41 Wilhelm Wundt, another Herbartian, speaks of the technique of introspection by which these phenomena (feelings, sensations, etc.) can be simplified, separated, and described.


43 On the genesis and genealogy of Janáček’s theoretical writings, see Tyrrell, Janáček: Years of a Life, I.215ff.
“Aesthetics as a science must be built on judgements, in which the subject and the predicate are absolutely unequivocal,” writes Durdík in *Všeobecná aesthetika.*\(^{45}\) What drew Janáček to Durdík's ideas, besides the linguistic clarity and philosophical common sense? For Durdík, Pečman writes, music belongs to the area of sensory beauty, it progresses in time, its rhythmical side intervenes in spacious beauty. [...] Music has a firm form, similarly to painting, to which it is connected with the same effort to create a feeling of performance. Music is plain art because it turns one's attention to only one sense – the sense of hearing. It belongs to the kind of arts of immediate appeal because it does not need an intermediary through the other senses. It is decidedly pure art because it cannot be mixed with another content. It is not able to render non-musical tendencies and ideas.\(^{46}\)

And according to Durdík himself,

The conditions for the sense of beauty can only be forms. The task of aesthetics is to deduce the conditions of pleasure, that is, form, the components of which stand in definite relation to each other; part to part, and part to whole.\(^{47}\)

In his essay *Moravská lidová poesie z pohledu hudebního* [*Moravian Folksong from the Musical Point of View*] (1901) Janáček affirms the same idea of wholeness:

In every note of each song, there is, as I see it, a fragment of an idea. If you leave out a single note from the melody, you perceive that it has become incomplete and has ceased to make sense.\(^{48}\)

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44 See ibid.96ff.


This essential relationship of “part to whole” propelled Janáček the composer to embrace the idea of economy of means, a radical realism of sorts, “doing away with every note that is not indispensable.”

Janáček’s espousal of musical formalism manifests itself in his deep interest in the music of Antonín Dvořák and a rather cautious response to the works of Bedřich Smetana. The rivalry between the supporters of Smetana and Dvořák mirrored the enmity between the admirers of Wagner and Liszt on one hand and those of Brahms on the other. It is no coincidence that in his early piano works, Janáček embraced the formalist tradition not only by focusing on classical forms (fugue, sonata, variation) but also by, perhaps subconsciously, emulating the styles of great “formalist” composers such as Beethoven, Schumann, and Brahms (see chapter IV).

Some immediate consequences of Janáček’s immersion in the works of Durdík can be observed in Janáček’s first theoretical essay Všelijaká objasnění melodická a harmonická [General Clarifications of Melodic and Harmonic Matters], published in 1877, three years after Janáček began reading Durdík:

We are concerned above all with truth; we guard against all mythologizing, poetizing in discourse, presentation and explanation where the scientific approach, that clear, lucid, and for that reason much colder rational enumeration, must be present.

48 Josiah Fisk and Jeff Nichols, Composers on music : eight centuries of writings, 2nd ed. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997).175.

49 Kundera, Testaments betrayed: an essay in nine parts.158.

50 Eduard Hanslick was its most important proponent. See Eduard Hanslick and Dietmar Strauss, Vom Musikalisch-Schönen : ein Beitrag zur Revision der Ästhetik in der Tonkunst, 2 vols., Schott Musikwissenschaft (Mainz ; New York: Schott, 1990). Skuherský, Janáček’s teacher at Prague Organ School, was in many ways Hanslick’s follower. See Vogel, Leoš Janáček: A biography.52.

Importantly, in the second half of the 19th century, this repudiation of Romantic aesthetics and espousal of an unapologetically raw and naturalistic view of art was becoming increasingly evident in the literary works of Balzac, Dickens, Zola, and, in music, in verismo works in Italian opera. In the Czech lands, Gabriela Preissová’s literary characters are put, as Geoffrey Chew notes, “under a laboratory-style microscope, on the assumption that if they are placed under stress, they will reveal their distinctive characteristics.”\(^{52}\) Preissová’s realist drama *Její pastorkyňa* (1890) became an inspiration and a model for Janáček’s opera *Jenůfa*.

2. Herbartism and the Formation of Janáček’s Theory of Harmony

As Jaroslav Jiránek asserts, “Janáček was better as an artist than as a theoretician, and the aesthetics inherent in his musical works are more legitimate than those expressed in his written academic […] works.\(^{53}\) While it is true that Janáček’s essayistic work is not of the same interest as his music (in part also because of the frequent introduction of new and ambiguous terminology coupled with a ‘feuilleton’ style of writing which obscures as much as it illuminates), Michael Beckerman is correct in claiming that the link between Janáček’s studies in aesthetics and his own compositional practice is of primary importance.\(^{54}\) Janáček developed idiosyncratic musical notions, which connected directly to Herbartian aesthetic ideas. These notions, realized in his mature compositions, are discussed below in the context of specific musical examples.

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\(^{54}\) Beckerman, “Janáček and the Herbartians.” 401.
Connection of chords—which Janáček discusses under the general rubric of *spojovací formy* [connecting forms]—as well as the issue of rhythm occupy the most significant part of Janáček’s theoretical writings, while problems of musical form and counterpoint are discussed only sparingly. In his article *Stati z teorie hudební* [*Studies in Music Theory*], Janáček speaks about connecting chords to one another, stating that “[h]armonic connections have the aesthetic significance of being forms of balance.” As Beckerman notes, the phrase “forms of balance” is directly taken from one of Durdík’s aesthetic categories in his *Všeobecná aesthetika*; given this demand for balance (i.e., for Herbartian reconciliation of diverse elements into a unified whole), a less consonant chord will always resolve to the nearest, more consonant chord. Janáček here draws on the teachings of his teacher Skuherský (see chapter II), who developed a theory in which any chord relationships could be explained in non-diatonic terms. Skuherský’s two maxims that a) “every interval and every chord is found on every degree of every scale” and b) “it is possible to move from one key to any other key” are embedded in Janáček’s theory and enable him to justify the existence of non-diatonic chord connections in contemporary music while coining and developing his own theoretical concepts.

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57 Quoted in ibid.6.
a. pocit [sensation] and pacit [false sensation]\textsuperscript{58}

In his harmony textbook *O skladbě souzvuků a jejich spojův* [On the Composition of Chords and their Connections] (1896), Janáček evocatively describes what he will call pocitové tóny [sensation tones] and pacitové tóny [false sensation tones].\textsuperscript{59} He instructs the reader to play on the piano with the right hand an incomplete dominant seventh chord (g–b–f’) in forte, and then with the left hand a triad (a flat-c’–e flat) in piano, without, however, taking the right hand off the keys. By listening to the resulting tonal chaos carefully, Janáček says, we will be able to separate two kinds of tones, namely pocitové (triad in the left hand) and pacitové (the lingering dominant seventh chord in the right hand). Further, Janáček asks the reader to begin releasing the fingers of the right hand one by one, beginning with the highest f’ and ending with the lowest g. Once the highest f’ ceases to sound, a process of clarification occurs, during which we begin to hear clearly the interval of the fifth in the left hand pocit chord. Even the remaining notes from the first, pacit chord, somehow turn into more pleasant and less chaotic sounds. This way, Janáček believes,

we could name those combinations with a disturbing effect, those with a calming effect, etc. Here is the source of our absolute musical feeling capable of the highest intensification in the most subtle nuances. This is the source of truth that everybody, layman or expert, will be subject to, providing only that they have healthy hearing.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{58} Here and elsewhere, I am using John Tyrrell’s and Michael Beckerman’s English translations of Janáček’s terms. I use Czech original terms only in those cases where the English translation, while conveying the general meaning of the word, seems somewhat imprecise (pocit, pacit, spletna, rozuzlení, sčasovka).


\textsuperscript{60} ibid. 114.
Following Helmholtz’s studies in electrophysiology in which he was able to show that the rate of conduction of signals in nerves is much slower than previously thought and thus creates a series of overlaps, Janáček claims that “a tone sounds from an instrument, but also floats in our mind when it has really faded out.”

Beckerman and other writers seem to be disturbed by Janáček’s insistence on describing his theories by employing a highly subjectivist, psychological and metaphorical vocabulary. While the notion of a phantom sound floating around for a fraction of a second after the actual stimulus has ceased is fascinating, Janáček, as far as I know, makes no significant effort to substantiate this theory. It is possible that, in his textbooks, Janáček’s endeavor was not only to provide students with objective practical descriptions of the rules of harmony but also to allow them to develop a fine sense of hearing and thus their own ideas about the connection between chords. John Tyrrell suggests that Janáček might have constructed his theory of pocit and pacit tones while experimenting on his Ehrbar piano. The instrument, with its powerful sound and rich harmonics (the piano has leather hammers) might have enabled Janáček to hear the tonal residue of the previously struck chords in the newly sounded chords in a particularly conspicuous way.

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61 Ibid., quoted in Beckerman, Janáček as theorist. However, as Beckermann argues, the connection of this notion to Herbartian theories remains highly problematic, and Janáček would have been better off to continue to support his findings by psychological observations (i.e., the role of memory in the creation of the aforementioned notion) rather then physiology (the inner workings of human ear). See ibid., 97ff.

62 Tyrrell, Janáček: Years of a Life, I.220.

63 The theory that the sound and touch of the composer’s 1876 Ehrbar piano substantially influenced Janáček’s piano compositions is a compelling one, and is further explored in Jan Jirský, Klavírní dílo Leoše Janáčka [Piano Works of Leoš Janáček], 149.
b. spojovací formy [connecting forms]: spletna [twine] and rozuzlení [disentanglement]

In his final theoretical work, Úplná nauka o harmonii [Complete Harmony Manual],
Janáček returns to the idea of “explaining the effects of chord connections as a clash between
the traces of one chord and the initial sound of the next chord, and the subsequent resolution
of this spletna [twine] in our consciousness as the basis of aesthetic form.”64 It is Janáček’s
belief that the relation between pocit and pacit tones is fixed in our memory and that “the
replacing of one harmonic idea by another has its importance in terms of aesthetics.”65 From
this starting point, Janáček develops his notion of spojovací formy [connecting forms]: spletna,
as the moment when the pacit sound of the no longer vibrating strings melts into the presently
sounding chord of the pocit sound (whose physical characteristics Beckerman aptly describes as
“sonic cement”66), and the resulting amalgam is burned into our consciousness;67 and the
subsequent rozuzlení of the pocit chord from the pacit sound which abolishes the chaos and
creates, according to Janáček, a “brilliance of beauty and specific character to the chord
connection.”68

There are many examples of spletna in Janáček’s works. An interesting one can be
found in They Chattered like Swallows, the fifth piece in Janáček’s piano cycle On an Overgrown
Path. There are two principal themes here. The first (starting at m. 31) is fast, brief, and rather

64 Leoš Janáček, Úplná nauka o harmonii, quoted in English in Kulka, Leoš Janáček’s Aesthetic Thinking.27.
65 Ibid. 28.
66 Beckerman, Janáček as theorist.61.
67 The pacit sound, according to Janáček’s own experiments with the chronoscope, remains in our
consciousness for up to 0.3 seconds. Again, it seems that this notion cannot be scientifically substantiated.
See footnote no. 23.
68 Quoted in Kulka, Leoš Janáček’s Aesthetic Thinking.29.
laconic. The second theme (starting at m. 39) incorporates motivic material from the first. It is slower than the first, cantabile, and introduces a soaring melody in the tenor voice:

Ex. 4

Janáček, *They Chattered Like Swallows* from *On an Overgrown Path*, mm. 31-42

Each of the two motives is later transformed, with the first motive undergoing a sort of contraction or diminution and the second one (appearing at Adagio in m. 68) an expansion or augmentation:
The key of B♭ established in m. 61, while relatively stable in the given harmonic context, is far removed from the home key of c-sharp (or C-sharp), and the fermata on the d♭ in m. 66 hints at the return of the home key, which is eventually restored in m. 76 (not included in the example above). What makes mm. 64-68 emotionally powerful is the ingenious use of spletne. At m. 65, a pacit latent dyad of g-b♭ comes to the forefront. While part of the melodic eighth-note flow, each note of the dyad is at the same time shown as dotted quarter note and a quarter note, respectively. At m. 66, a new, latent dyad makes an appearance—a-f#. It is not immediately heard as a pocit dyad, since the following note in the measure, a quarter note g, takes us back to the sound world of the previous measure. The following fermata on d♭, on the other hand, reinforces the pocit dyad a-f#. The listener is now torn between two sonic entities, and Janáček lets her linger in anticipation on the half note fermata d♭. It is not until the following measure (Adagio), that the primacy of the pocit dyad is ascertained. This is where rozuzlení occurs, clearing the sonic chaos created by the now vanished pacit dyad.
Another example of *spletna* occurs in the recapitulation of the first movement (*The Presentiment*) of Janáček’s piano sonata *I.X.1905*.

![Ex. 6](image)

*Ex. 6*

Janáček, *The Presentiment (I.X.1905)*, mm. 92-102

Here, the second theme (m. 92) is introduced in the key of A♭ major. In m. 96, a c♭ half-note octave appears, suggesting a change to a♭ minor. While the a♭/e♭ left-hand dyad in m. 97 strengthens this notion, the downward chord progression in the right hand does not firmly establish the a♭ minor as a tonic, suggesting instead a move towards the key of b♭ minor (a dominant in the home key of e♭ minor). In m. 98, the key of a♭ is discarded. On the downbeat, the right hand plays the first inversion of the (pacit) b♭ major chord. For a fraction
of a second, the left hand supports the newly found key with a b♭ and f in the bass but then the developing accompanying ostinato figure immediately moves to e♭, repeating it twice, thus shifting the focus to the later key and eventually striking a perfect balance between the pacit (b♭) and pocit (e♭) tonality (the ostinato figure has a b♭ on the downbeat but two e♭s in the middle and one at the end of the sextuplet, respectively). This tonic-dominant (or dominant-tonic, since at this point it is impossible to determine which is which) spletna is further enriched by the return of the key a♭ in the right hand in m. 99. The a♭ chord only heightens the harmonic tension already embedded in this passage, as it can be heard both as subdominant of the pocit e♭ (or, conversely, as a resurfacing tonic, thus fundamentally weakening the pocit e♭ which is suddenly heard as a dominant of a♭) and a 7th degree of the pacit b♭. M. 100 marks the beginning of rozuzlení. Above the ostinato figure in the left hand, the right hand plays an e♭ chord on the downbeat. In m. 101, the ostinato figure suddenly starts on a♭, which is now distinctly heard as the subdominant of e♭. The pocit e♭ chord is strongly reinforced by the second note of the left-hand sextuplet—a dyad b♭/e♭—which is immediately reiterated in the right hand. Despite the lingering b♭ in the bass, the e♭ as the reigning key has been established, the disentanglement completed, and the tension abolished (at least for now).

c. spojovací formy continued: smír [conciliation], vzruch [excitement], zesílení [intensification], and záměna [substitution]

Rather than understanding chords in terms of their harmonic function as tonic, subdominant, dominant, etc, Janáček favors an approach in which chord progression is
understood from the point of view of the intervallic movement of the individual notes which form the chords. Some theorists believed that in his approach to deindividualize chords, Janáček was ignoring the post-1850 scholarship and turning back to the baroque Affektentlehre with its symbolism of particular intervallic connections.\textsuperscript{69} But the examples above show that with spletña, Janáček offered a theory (albeit a highly idiosyncratic one) which could successfully explain the conflicting psychological states in which we experience two sounds not as a succession of individual chords but as a single pulsating entity existing in a space-time continuum.\textsuperscript{70}

For the first chord to ring by illusion even after its physical disappearance, it is necessary, Janáček maintains, that each voice form a strong sonic relationship with the basic tone— which for Janáček is the fundamental of the second chord. As Beckerman notes, “the satisfactory sense of resolution derives not from the block movement of whole chords, but from the individual resolution of each tone.”\textsuperscript{71} This linear, melodic approach allows Janáček to treat any chord as consonant and justify it on harmonic terms (following Skuherský’s maxim that “it is possible to move from one key to any other key”\textsuperscript{72}).

Janáček identifies four basic instances of spojovací formy between an interval of the first chord and the fundamental of the second chord: smír [conciliation], vzruch [excitement], zesílení [intensification], and záměna [substitution].

*Conciliation* suggests a movement from a dissonant to a more pleasing chord:

\textsuperscript{69}Tyrrell, *Janáček: Years of a Life*, I.221.

\textsuperscript{70} It would be intriguing, although beyond the scope of this study, to determine whether Janáček’s theory would have anything relevant to say about the compositional methods used in the works of such composers as Boulez, Ligeti, or the French spectralists. On another note, Kulka rightly observes that such a holistic approach to harmony suggests an interesting resemblance to the basic tenets of Gestalt psychology. See Kulka, *Leoš Janáček’s Aesthetic Thinking*.32.

\textsuperscript{71} Beckerman, *Janáček as theorist*.62.

\textsuperscript{72} See footnote 58.
Ex. 7

Janáček, Čeladenský from *Three Moravian Dances*, m. 28

*Excitement* describes a movement to a more dissonant chord:

Ex. 8

Janáček, *Pilky* from *Three Moravian Dances*, mm. 12-13

In *intensification*, the basic intervallic relationship between chords does not change, although one of the notes of the first chord is usually reiterated as the fundamental of the second chord:

Ex. 9

Janáček, *The Barn-Owl Has Not Flown Away! From On an Overgrown Path*, m. 93
Finally in *substitution*, the intensity of the consonance or dissonance remains relatively constant between the first and the second chord:

Ex.10

Janáček, Andantino from *In the Mists*, mm. 10-11

Furthermore, Janáček created a code to describe the movement between the notes of the first chord and the fundamental of the second chord. In the following example of *reconciliation* (Ex. 11), the fundamental of the second chord (e♭) being number 1, Janáček assigns numbers 2 and 4 to intervallic movement of the soprano line (f♭/a♭, showing a relationship of a second and fourth to the fundamental). Thus he is able to encode and describe each progression, starting from the soprano:
Ex. 11

_Madonna Janáček, The Madonna of Frýdek from On an Overgrown Path, mm. 26-27_

2-4 (conciliation, since the fourth is more consonant than the second)

7-8 (conciliation, since the seventh is more dissonant than the octave; the movement from a leading tone to tonic is for Janáček a connection of greatest opposition)

4-6 (excitement, since the fourth is for Janáček surprisingly more consonant than the sixth)

2-4 (conciliation, since the second is less consonant than the fourth)

2-1 (conciliation, since the second is less consonant than the unison)

It is beyond the scope of this document to discuss Janáček’s aesthetics of intervallic relationships further. The purpose of including these examples of connecting forms is to demonstrate that for Janáček, the emotional quality of each interval within the two chords is of crucial importance. By devising a particular numerical system, Janáček is able to attend to each melodic progression separately and precisely gauge the nature of the intervallic connections in question, from which he works out the emotional characteristic of the entire chord progression. This again points to Durdík’s notion of “part to part, and part to whole”royalfootnote as well as to Wundt’s studies of human psychology. In his discussion of the central functions of the brain, Wundt observes that

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73 See footnote 48.
every conscious contents, though it be [...] quite simple, conceived of in isolation from its connexions, and therefore, psychologically, insusceptible of further analysis, is always, psychologically considered, a complicated formation made up of various nerve processes spread over a large number of elementary parts.74

Similarly, the content of a chord progression consists of a series of basic entities called intervals; only once the character of these elemental structures is determined, Janáček notes, “it is possible to classify [emotional] affects and the complete structure of affects within a chord connection.”75

d. zhušťování [thickening] and prolínání [percolation]

We have seen that due to his early exposure to the theories of his teacher Skuherský, Janáček, also initially influenced by his studies of late nineteenth-century chromatic tonality, embraced the theory that “every interval and every chord is found on every degree of every scale.”76 He further believed that “any tone can be thickened by any other tone, i.e., any tone can be inserted after any tone.”77 A similar principle— that of percolation— applies to chords: any chord can interrupt any other chord.

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76 See page 30. Janáček reiterates this notion several times in his textbook, for example: “In order to to attain fullness of harmonic life, any chord must appear on any degree” [“Úplnost harmonického života žádá všechny souzvuky na všech stupních”] (Leoš Janáček, Complete Harmony Manual, ibid.249). Despite this flexible attitude to harmony, Janáček does not seem to accept Schoenberg’s notion of schwebende [fluid] and aufgehobene [suspended] tonality. For an extended discussion of Janáček’s analysis of Schoenberg’s Theory of Harmony, see Paul Wingfield, “Janáček, Musical Analysis, and ‘Jeux de vagues’” in Wingfield, Janáček Studies.247.
Here is an example of *thickening*, in which the c♭ in m. 2 darkens the color of the suspended E♭ major chord (as if hinting at the key of e♭ minor to which it belongs):

![Ex. 12](image)

Ex. 12

Janáček, *Andante from On an Overgrown Path II.*, mm. 1-3

From the same piece comes the following example of *percolation*. Here, an E major chord clashes with a c# minor chord on the second beat of m. 13.78

![Ex. 13](image)

Ex. 13

Janáček, *Andante from On an Overgrown Path II.*, mm. 14-16

(treble clef in the right hand, bass clef in the left hand)

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78 Of particular importance is also the appearance of the note a# within the context of the c# minor chord. I discuss this instance of *thickening* below.
An interesting example of both thickening and percolation can be found in the B section of The Barn-Owl Has Not Flown Away! from On An Overgrown Path:

The key of E major in m. 69 is interrupted on the downbeat of m. 70 by an interestingly colored chord. Initially, it can be heard as a chord built on the sixth degree of E major—a c# minor triad with an added a# (hence the thickening), suddenly lending a Lydian character to the E major. (Alternately, it would be theoretically possible to describe this chord as a vii ø65/V. However, this label would be somewhat misleading, since the leading tone a# does not resolve to B.) But the first chord on the second beat of m. 69, by reiterating the same notes in the left hand and excluding g# and doubling a# in the right hand (now heard in the soprano), has all of the appearances of a F# seventh chord in the second inversion (despite the fact that F# itself is omitted). While the last chord in m. 70 is the same as the first, it sounds, in the present context, like a minor dominant of F#, thus shedding the Lydian coloring completely. In m. 71 Janáček seems to have completed the modulation to F# major. It is not until the second chord of m. 72, with its sudden return to E major, that it becomes apparent that the modulation to F# was only temporary. Once the cadence is completed and the key of E major is at least
tentatively established, one begins to wonder whether the first chord in m. 72 was indeed part of the musical space delineated by the key of F#. In retrospect, perhaps it would have been more satisfactory to explain it as a second inversion of a seventh chord built on the second degree of E major—again, with the added Lydian a#?

Later in section B, in the second transposed iteration of the same melodic material, the traditional tonal relationships are weakened even further in the following example of *percolation*. In m. 92 Janáček inserts the F# major triad into the key of E major directly, without adding any transitional material:

![Ex. 15](image_url)

Janáček, *The Barn-Owl Has Not Flown Away! From On an Overgrown Path* (mm. 87-92)

Here the emergence of the key of F# is foreshadowed by the appearance of an F# chord on the downbeat of m. 87 (Ex. 17). In the absence of a conclusive resolution of this chord, however, the F# cannot be explained as a standard V/V of E (in fact, Janáček avoids the key of B major as a dominant of E major altogether in the piece). Not being able to connect these two chords by means of traditional harmony, we become increasingly aware of the antagonistic relationship between the two chords as individual sonic entities. Suddenly, the E/F# dissonance appears in a new light, and, reaffirming Janáček’s insistence on the importance of individual intervallic relationships within the *connecting forms* (and, of course, the pocit/pacit theory), these jarring,
irresolvable juxtapositions of intervals of minor and major seconds between the two chords come starkly to the foreground and keep ringing in our ears.

As an example of thickening, the previously discussed coloration of the c# minor chord by an added a# is particularly fascinating within the context of this piece (The Barn-Owl Has Not Flown Away!), as the dichotomy of c#/a# serves as a principal melodic building block in section A.79 Here again, the a# appears ‘inside’ the e/g# dyad, reiterated as a left-hand ostinato figure:

![Ex. 16](image)

Janáček, *The Barn-Owl Has Not Flown Away!* from *On an Overgrown Path I.*, mm. 34-36

Trying to explain the a# as the sixth degree of a c# minor ascending scale invariably fails, because nowhere in the A section does a# function in such a context—especially since the key of c# minor is never fully established by the left-hand ostinato. In fact, it is conceivable that the missing c# on the one hand and a recurring g# in the bass of the ostinato figure on the other point toward the key of g# minor, rather than c# (in which case the notes c# and a# would stand as the fourth and second degrees of that scale, respectively). One could argue that the appearance of the note a# here is modal (as Řehánek does, arguing that Janáček borrowed from

the inherent modality of Moravian folk music but even a possible reclassification of the a# as a Dorian sixth is problematic, given the paucity of melodic movement that would lend the right-hand motive a Dorian character.

As Morgan shows, a similar appearance of a# within a C# minor chord occurs at the beginning of *Our Evenings*, the first piece from *On an Overgrown Path* (m.2):

![Ex. 17](image)

*Janáček, Our Evenings from On an Overgrown Path I., mm. 1-3*

Here we encounter similar difficulty in explaining the note a# as part of the downward progression of the tenor line. Within the context of the decidedly Aeolian character of the progression, the a# is a curiously foreign element, hovering in space for a fraction of a second, and failing to resolve convincingly.

These examples show that using traditional nineteenth-century analysis when discussing Janáček’s music is rather unhelpful as this method fails to satisfactorily explain the full impact of the sonic events taking place. Janáček himself resorts to a metaphor when

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80 František Řehánek, "Diatonické mody u Leoše Janáčka [Diatonic Modes in Leoš Janáček],” *Hudební věda* 2003.31, 35.

81 Morgan, "Untangling Spletna: The Interaction of Janáček’s Theories and the Transformational Structure of On an Overgrown Path." The appearance of the same coloration at the beginning of the first and the end of the last pieces (*Our Evenings* and *The Barn-Owl Has Not Flown Away*) of the cycle *On an Overgrown Path* leads Morgan to a compelling hypothesis which highlights this particular chord’s structural significance throughout the whole cycle. This notion can be further corroborated given the further appearances of this type of thickening which Morgan does not discuss, most notably at the beginning of the first piece (*Andante*) of the second (unfinished) series of *On an Overgrown Path*. See Ex. 13 above.
discussing the phenomenon; he sees percolation of chords as one of the symbols of modernism in composition, and claims that

the clash [of chords] is unbearable when both of them are of the same strength, color, and length; in the undulation of orchestral colors, the percolating chord can immerse, predict, and stifle. Oftentimes, it seems as if the air was filled by the smell of the chord.  

And Thomas Adès, perhaps less poetically yet very succinctly concludes that the pieces in Janáček’s *On an Overgrown Path* exhibit

long-range events which rely on potent relationships between individual harmonic/coloristic objects almost to the exclusion of conventions of tonal ‘logic’. [...] The importance of ‘orchestration’ in establishing these objects cannot be exaggerated: the exact spacing of a chord, the weighting of its individual elements, the dynamic context, the precise register at which the pitch occurs. [...] Bald identification of ‘tonal areas’ or of decontextualized pitches in analyzing Janáček is absolute impotence.

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**e. sčasovka** [rhythmic unit, ‘entimelet’]

Janáček’s study of rhythmic phenomena in music is of particular importance, and dates back to at least 1901 when the idea of *sčasovka* was first formulated in his published article

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84 The term *sčasovka* and *sčasování* is notoriously difficult to translate. In Czech, the prefix ‘s-‘ means ‘together’, and ‘čas’ is ‘time’. “Ovka” is an ending suggesting here a diminution of the noun ‘čas’, while the ending ‘ování’ points toward a process of organizing ‘čas’. The translation offered by Kulka—‘rhythmic unit’ for *sčasovka* and ‘rhythmic organization’ for *sčasování*—is rather cumbersome to use. And since the translations of the terms offered by Beckerman and others (‘timelet’ or ‘entimelet’), while perhaps linguistically accurate, are rather awkward, I will resort to the original Czech term in this text.
As it is often the case in his theoretical writings, Janáček does not provide a clear definition of sčasovka. His article from 1907, *Můj názor o sčasování (rytmu)* [My ideas regarding sčasování (or rhythm)] begins rather cryptically:

When one speaks about sčasování of a tone, it is important to observe how the tone is situated in our own life.

Our own life creates time folds on a tone.

There are longest tones as well as those of shortest durations, which we can think of and conceive, those which our ear bears and vocal chords create. [...]

A conceived tone has far boundaries—those are imposed on our brain by fatigue.

Drawing on his ethnographic studies, Janáček claims that there is a fundamental difference between a professionally trained composer and a composer/creator of folk music. The trained musician, Janáček says, starts with the concept of time, with evenly divided empty rhythmic units, which he fills with melodic content. For the folk composer, on the other hand, creation begins with the words, whose length and melodic contour determine the rhythmic structuring of the musical phrase. Taking his cues from the folk musician, Janáček believes that rhythm is not an objective phenomenon. In order to create a progression of spiritually meaningful events in a composition, the composer must not treat rhythm abstractly as uniformly measured temporal space that he fills with notes. Rather, he should approach rhythm as an organic entity, as a vehicle for the melodic and harmonic content of music.

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85 For a detailed genealogy of the term, see Beckerman, *Janáček as theorist.* 81. As Wingfield notes, Janáček’s theory had evolved throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century (see Wingfield, *Janáček Studies.* 221-4.) For the sake of clarity, the following disussion of sčasování is based primarily on Janáček last theoretical study, *Complete Harmony Manual.*


87 *ibid.* 17 and elsewhere. In his essay *How Musical Talent Manifests Itself,* Janáček condenses this argument into one pithy statement: “A musically gifted man measures time by music.” (Janáček and Zemanová, *Janáček’s uncollected essays on music.* 78.)
The positivist thinking of the Herbartians also influenced Janáček’s concept of *sčasování*. In particular, the Herbartian idea of explaining complex entities based on the inner workings of the underlying simple relationships is directly connected to the notion of rhythmic stratification in *sčasování*. Thus any given measure comprised of interrelated rhythmic units has what Janáček calls *sčasovací dno*—a *sčasovací base* of the longest metric duration upon which a series of layers (called *sčasovací vrstvy*, or *levels*) of increasingly smaller durations is imposed. For example in a 4/4 measure, the *sčasovací dno* would be a whole note. The next level up would be two half notes, and so forth all the way up to the shortest rhythmic units.\(^8\) In the following example, the rhythmic material of five beats per measure can be broken down into several layers. The whole note b♭ is the *sčasovací dno* here. The next layer is the dotted half rest, followed by the quarter rest, followed by the eight notes, sixteenth notes, and finally by the thirty-seconds in the left hand, which is the shortest rhythmic motif:

\[\text{Ex. 18} \]

Janáček, *Presto* from *In the Mists* (mm. 1-2)

\(^8\) As Wingfield notes, from today’s perspective, Janáček’s theory of hierarchization is rather incomplete as it cannot always account for more complex rhythmic groupings. Despite this shortcoming, Janáček’s organic, cognitive views of rhythm are surprisingly close to those of modern theoreticians and composers who see rhythm as increasingly more integrated into and dependent upon the melodic and harmonic texture of music. See Wingfield, *Janáček Studies*. 225-9.
As Beckerman shows, the two most important elements in sčasování are accent and duration, and sčasovka has to account for the relationship between those two.\footnote{Beckerman, Janáček as theorist.82.} Indeed, what makes Janáček’s theory of sčasování most peculiar is the fact that he does not clearly distinguish between meter and rhythm, the former traditionally understood as an ordering of notes of various lengths and the latter described as alternation of variously accented beats. Janáček’s theory of sčasování strives to account for what Kulka calls “interior musical time”\footnote{Kulka, Leoš Janáček’s Aesthetic Thinking.23.}—time subjectively experienced by a perceiving subject—which stands in opposition to the objective, scientifically structured physical time. As in the rhythmically flexible and rhapsodic Moravian folk songs, in which the shape of the speech melody (see chapter I) lends its germinating power to the rise of harmony and rhythm, sčasování combines the beginning of a tone (the accent), its actual duration, as well as other properties such as dynamics, texture, color, and emotional expression, into an organic whole. This is why, as Beckerman comments, in speech and music, “the most serious emotions always fall to the primary rhythmic levels in a series of primary rhythmic durations, while more facile states of mind tend towards the higher layers.”\footnote{Beckerman, Janáček as theorist.84.}

For Janáček, any given sčasováci base lasts usually from 1 to 1½ seconds. This is because the base is defined not only by its temporal duration but also by its harmonic content—and Janáček believes that a listener needs at least one second to perceive and internalize any given sonority as a separate harmonic entity. Janáček discusses many different types of sčasovka.\footnote{See Wingfield, Janáček Studies.223ff.} The following three examples from the cycle On An Overgrown Path will illustrate the principle.

The first example is a simple sčasovka, with an appearance of only one chord per temporal unit (sčasováci base):

\footnote{Beckerman, Janáček as theorist.82.}
It is interesting to note that the tempo marking—un poco piú mosso—relates to the tempo of the A section with a faster harmonic rhythm, marked dotted quarter note=60 beats per second. For Janáček, a tempo of dotted half note=30 would fall outside the durational parameters set for sčasovací base, as it would be too slow—especially on the piano, where the rapid decay of the sound has to be taken into consideration. This is why the pianist should adopt a faster pace of dotted half note=45 (1½ seconds per chord).

In the second example of sčasovka below, the sčasovací base is found in the prolonged dotted quarter note c (played at the speed of 60 beats per second) in the left hand. On the next level, we find eighth notes in the left hand, whose melodic material essentially complements the c minor sonority established at the outset of the measure. Further up are dotted sixteenth-notes g and e♭, which likewise belong to the key of c minor. It is on the highest level of the thirty-second notes where we find the “facile” non-harmonic tones—f# and d in the right hand, and the pacit diminished 6th chord in the left hand:
Lastly, the sčasovka in this third example features not only several layers of different rhythmic material but also two overlapping (percolating) sonorities, one enriching the other:

In mm. 32-36, the sčasovaci base (dotted quarter note) oscillates between g♭ and e♭ in the left hand and between g♭, d♭, and b♭ in the right hand. The next three levels (d♭ and
b♭ eighth-notes, dotted sixteenth notes, and thirty-second notes, respectively) complement the particular chords established by the sčasovací base—namely g♭ and the minor seventh chord (vi7). The highest level of the fast sixty-fourth note g♭/b♭ pattern preserves the percolation of the pocit chord in mm.33 and 35. Because of the strong juxtaposition of the sčasovací base’s e♭ note and the relentless, intensely active rhythmic presence of the sixty-fourth note tremolo on the highest level, the listener hears in these measures a clash of a pacit and pocit chord. Burghauser comments on this phenomenon:

We find that various levels of composition have their own chords, separate from those of another layer; we recognize the harmonic impression shining through all of its layers; we perceive the variability of effect through every change of tempo.⁹³

In conclusion, for Janáček, connecting forms serve the primary purpose of shedding light on distinctive intervallic relationships within a particular chord progression. Sčasovka is instrumental in uncovering the layers embedded in a particular phrase, highlighting their unique rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic contents. As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, it is the thorough application of these two principles in his piano works, which radically distinguishes the music of Janáček from the works of his contemporaries.

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IV. JANÁČEK AS A PIANIST AND COMPOSER OF PIANO WORKS

The field of Czech music in the first decades of the 20th century is undoubtedly a rich one; in all sections of musical compositions the leading members of the post-Smetana generation composed works that indicated a fruitful continuance of the Czech tradition of musicianship. This traditional character had its disadvantages, however. At those moments when the leading phenomena of the international musical avant-garde were demonstrating reliable new ways of sound and expression of the development of European music, the mainstream of contemporary Czech music was arrested somewhere at the level of late Romanticism and Impressionism.94

Incidentally, pianists in particular get Janáček wrong, as to both spirit and structure: they nearly all of them succumb to a prettied-up romanticizing: by softening the brutal aspect of his music, by ignoring his forte markings and by throwing themselves into the delirium of a nearly systemic rubato. [...] Janáček’s expressionism is not an exaggerated extension of Romantic sentimentality. On the contrary, it is one historical option for moving out of Romanticism.95

1. Janáček as a Piano Student

Our information about Janáček’s early schooling is scant. However, he must have received a solid musical education; otherwise, it would not have been possible for him to become at an early age a choral scholar at the Augustinian monastery under the tutelage of

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95 Kundera, Testaments betrayed: an essay in nine parts.128.
Pavel Křížovský (see chapter II). To understand the importance of the piano in Janáček’s early musical development, it is most instructive to turn to the collection of his complete literary works, published by Editio Janáček. As a very young boy, under the supervision of his strict father, who would occasionally resort to physical punishment, Janáček remembers practicing Beethoven sonatas on the family’s piano:

Well known is the old Wolfenbüttel edition of sonatas by Beethoven, with metronome markings by Ignaz Moscheles. [...] As a boy of eight years, I battled with many sonatas on the old piano. Ah, the notes melted into my tears like the bloody spots on the back of my left hand. Surely I never got the bass right! Then, when my father stood over me with a brush in his hand, its brittles would suddenly bite in my left hand. I have known since then that notes must sweat blood when written, and sweat blood when badly played.

As Tyrell states, Janáček was an advanced piano student when he arrived at the Augustinian monastery in Brno in 1865. However, while grand pianos were available at the monastery, the institution did not have teachers to provide piano lessons. It is unclear whether Janáček took private lessons elsewhere upon his arrival in Brno but it seems that he continued playing the piano, since during his studies at the Teachers’ Institute (1869-77), he would regularly play Beethoven symphonies with his duo partner.

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96 For a detailed description of Janáček musical studies at the monastery, which resembled today’s conservatory system to a certain degree, see Vogel, Leoš Janáček: A biography, 40ff.


98 Ibid 590.

99 Tyrrell, Janáček: Years of a Life, 1.64.
Janáček continued practicing diligently during his years at the Prague Organ School (1874-1875). At the very beginning, his poverty prevented him from borrowing a piano. Janáček remembers

[...] piano keys drawn in chalk on the table. There, my fingers learned to run up and down, according to notes of Bach's preludes and fugues. It was embarrassing, how much I longed for a living note!\(^{100}\)

Upon his return to Brno, Janáček continued his piano studies with Amalie Neruda-Wickenhauser. The Nerudas were an illustrious musical family in Brno and Amalie, alongside her three siblings, toured Europe as a wunderkind and later in life continued playing chamber music. At a concert in the Brno Beseda (see chapter II), Neruda-Wickenhauser performed Rubinstein's Third Piano Concerto under Janáček's baton, an event that undoubtedly sparked Janáček's interest in the composer. The list of chamber works programmed and performed by Janáček in the Brno Beseda reveals a pianist of more than advanced skills. Between 1877-9, Janáček tackled, for example, Beethoven's Violin Sonata in F Major Op. 24; Rubinstein's Piano Trio in F, Op. 15 No. 5; Saint-Saëns' Piano Trio No. 1; Reinecke's arrangement of Schumann's Manfred for two pianos; Rubinstein’s Piano Quintet in G minor; and Mendelssohn's Piano Trio No. 1.\(^{101}\) It is more than likely that Neruda-Wickenhauser, a performer with an extensive 30-year musical career and a connoisseur of modern piano literature, guided Janáček through his first curatorial efforts at the Brno Beseda. Even more importantly, she was the first piano teacher in Janáček's life who offered the young musician systematic piano tuition of high quality. Thus Janáček, whose practical knowledge of secular concert piano music until his early twenties was only scant—Křížovský at the Brno Augustinian monastery and Skuherský at the Prague Organ School understandably emphasized sacred works over secular music in their

\(^{100}\) Janáček, Literární dílo [Literary Works], I.633.

\(^{101}\) ibid.631. Also see Tyrrell, Janáček: Years of a Life, I.120.
institutions’ curricula — was now able to play chamber music alongside established and well-respected players and even appear as a soloist in two demanding piano concerti, Mendelssohn’s First and Saint-Saëns’ Second.\footnote{Janáček: Years of a Life, I.114.} It seems that in 1878 Janáček’s professional goal was to become not only a professional composer but a concert pianist as well. He hoped to go abroad to study with Anton Rubinstein but when Janáček’s employer, the Regional School Board in Brno, refused to grant him a scholarship to undertake the study trip to St. Petersburg, Neruda-Wickenhauser recommended that Janáček go to the Leipzig Conservatory instead.

When Janáček arrived in Leipzig, he threw himself into his piano studies with vigor, practicing up to five hours a day in addition to his other student duties, which initially included an astonishingly wide array of subjects: composition, music theory (harmony, counterpoint, and musical form), violin, organ, conducting, and choral singing. His registration card from the Leipzig Conservatory shows that he studied “piano technique” with Ernst Wenzel and Karl Reinecke and “piano performing” with Dr. Oskar Paul.\footnote{Vogel, Leoš Janáček: A biography.67.} A custodian of the Classical tradition, a teacher who “firmly believed in the necessity of thorough grounding,”\footnote{Reinhold Sietz. "Reinecke, Carl." Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press, accessed April 18, 2013, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.turing.library.northwestern.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/23128.} Carl Reinecke was a particularly fine pianist, admired by Mendelssohn, the Schumanns, and Liszt. Wenzel, a contemporary of Mendelssohn and a frequent collaborator of Schumann (he studied with Friedrich Wieck, the father of Clara Schumann), was no longer in his prime as a teacher ("He often nods dozing over my left hand at my piano lessons," complained Janáček to Zdenka\footnote{Quoted in Vogel, Leoš Janáček: A biography.68.}).
Janáček’s letters to Zdenka from 1879 show that despite Wickenhauser’s large presence during his early Brno Beseda years, Janáček was in retrospect less than satisfied with her piano instruction. He repeatedly mentions Wickenhauser’s overbearing stage presence and particularly her flawed piano teaching. ¹⁰⁶ After the first piano lessons in Leipzig, Janáček learned from Wenzel that he had been playing pieces that were too difficult for him and that his technique was deficient and he was asked to practice Bach’s Inventions, Cramer’s Etudes, and Moscheles’ Studies. ¹⁰⁷ After having performed Saint-Saëns’ piano concerto in Brno just a year ago, this new assignment must have been humiliating. Despite Wenzel’s growing interest in his progress as a pianist, Janáček’s resolve to become a concert artist began to wane, not least because of his encounter with a plethora of talented students at the Conservatory. ¹⁰⁸ The versatile Oscar Paul, with his freethinking mentality, ¹⁰⁹ initially appealed to Janáček, especially after he assigned Janáček Beethoven’s Emperor Piano Concerto, which his pupil found “most beautiful.” ¹¹⁰ But for Paul, piano performance was no longer his primary interest, and he had given up on a solo career and practicing altogether (—“he doesn’t demonstrate because he


¹⁰⁷ ibid. 41-43.

¹⁰⁸ Wenzel wrote a most favorable assessment of Janáček: “Very capable, intelligent and hardworking student who makes very good progress; we can expect very soon the most gratifying results from him.” Vladimír Helfert, Leoš Janáček. V poutech tradice: Obraz životního a uměleckého boje. [Leoš Janáček. In the Bonds of Tradition...)] (Brno: Oldřich Pazdírek, 1939).122.

¹⁰⁹ Paul had a remarkable career. Formerly a theologian, he eventually became an well-known theorist and music historian. See Vogel, Leoš Janáček: A biography.68-69.

¹¹⁰ Janáček, Dopisy Zdence [Letters to Zdenka]. 133-134.
can’t do anything,” complained Janáček to Zdenka111) and his often erratic piano teaching left Janáček equally disillusioned.112

Due to mounting dissatisfaction with his studies in Leipzig, Janáček briefly considered spending the next part of his studies abroad in Paris as a student of Camille Saint-Saëns who like his other hero, Anton Rubinstein, was both a celebrated pianist and an established composer.113 Because the parents of his future wife did not approve of this idea, however, Janáček decided to enroll instead closer to home, at the Vienna Conservatory. There he continued his piano lessons with Josef Dachs, a student of Czerny (and, incidentally, the teacher of Gustav Mahler and Hugo Wolff114). However, Janáček’s studies did not go well. He was unaccustomed to the heavier touch of the Viennese pianos, and complained about his inability to “produce the right tone on Bösendorfer.”115 It transpires from Janáček’s letters that Dachs wanted to alter his piano technique once again, and Janáček was unwilling to subject himself to another radical change of direction. He would later sum up his experience thus:

I played for Professor Dachs Schumann’s Piano Concerto. I did not go to him again.

Hence useless studies. And I had many professors who wanted to begin the teaching from the beginnings! What I learned from one, another thought was

111 ibid. 182-183.


113 This idea took root after Janáček heard Rubinstein’s Leipzig piano recital in November 1879. At that time, Janáček must have still harbored the hope to follow his heroes Rubinstein and Saint-Saëns to become a successful composer/pianist. See Vogel, Leoš Janáček: A biography.69.

114 Zemanová, Janáček.38.

Amalie Nerudová [Wickenhauser] - Wenzel – Dachs. [...] No wonder I learned how to stand on my own feet. \textsuperscript{116}

While Janáček abandoned his ambition to become a concert pianist, he continued to practice on his own. But after his return to Brno, his interpretive focus turned mainly to conducting and occasionally to organ.

\textbf{2. Genesis of Janáček’s Solo Piano Works and Development of Original Piano Style}

The complete catalogue of Janáček’s music reveals the composer’s constant preoccupation with the piano.\textsuperscript{117} Janáček’s first known compositions for piano are his exercises in harmony, counterpoint, and form, and date from 1874 and 1877 respectively, when Janáček was a student at the Prague Organ School. While these exercises are thoroughly academic and provide very few glimpses of the new aesthetics that Janáček later developed in his mature piano works after 1900, these pieces attest to Janáček’s growing understanding of musical form as well as his particular interest in the art of modulation. Janáček composed piano works during his studies in Leipzig (1879-1880), of which several are lost, notably two movements of \textit{Piano Sonata in E-flat} and a \textit{Dumka}.\textsuperscript{118} Of the approximately 14 fugues written during the same time, copies of three (in G minor, A Minor, and A major) were discovered in 1998 in a Cistercian Cloister in the Austrian Rein.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{116} Janáček, \textit{Literární dílo [Literary Works]}, I.637.


\textsuperscript{118} See ibid. 245 and Tyrrell, \textit{Janáček: Years of a Life}, I.164.

\textsuperscript{119} See the catalogue of \textit{Editio Janáček} (http://www.editiojanacek.com/en_22_Fugy_pro_klavir_1879_1880/).
a. *Tema con variazioni*

Janáček’s first major piano piece bearing the composer’s opus number 1, *Tema con variazioni* (January-February 1880), is commonly known as *Zdenčiny variace* [*Zdenka’s Variations*], as it was Janáček intention to dedicate this final piece of his Leipzig studies to his future wife in Brno.\(^{120}\) Šeda argues that this work, written as an assignment for Janáček’s composition teacher Grill, displays the composer’s “limited pianistic and compositional experience,”\(^ {121}\) and Adès perceptively points out that the formally rigid structure and static harmonic scheme of the nineteenth-century variation genre did not suit Janáček with his propensity towards more fluid, “succinct and potent [harmonic] progression in its own right.”\(^ {122}\) But despite the occasional lack of inspiration and a certain compositional heavy-handedness, this work reveals a composer confidently and proudly displaying his craft in a musical style described by Czech musicologists as the Classical/Romantic synthesis.

The theme, whose harmonic progressions suggest influences of Janáček’s great model Antonín Dvořák, shows an impeccable grasp of part-writing (such a display of contrapuntal skills is rather unusual and is much more difficult to find in Janáček’s later piano pieces), and, as Tyrrell points out, a “confident handling of the key structure,”\(^ {123}\) as compared with much weaker harmonic structures in *Suite* (1877) and *Idyll* (1878), both scored for string orchestra:

\(^{120}\) Janáček, *”Intime Briefe” 1879-80 aus Leipzig und Wien.* 187.

\(^{121}\) Šeda, *Leoš Janáček.* 44


\(^{123}\) Tyrrell, *Janáček: Years of a Life,* I. 164.
The seven variations that follow are stylistically diverse, and the influence of several Romantic composers is quite apparent. While the theme and first variation inhabit the sound world of Mendelssohn’s *Variations sérieuses*, the second variation, with its rich figuration in the right hand and melodic line in the bass, is reminiscent of Schumann’s *Papillons*. In the third variation, the influence of Tchaikovsky’s and Rubinstein’s virtuoso writing is apparent, while the melodic flourishes above a steady left-hand accompaniment in the fourth variation point toward Chopin and Liszt. The melodic contrapuntal lines of the fifth variation, reminiscent of Brahms’ *Handel Variations*, proceed in a stately tempo, while the harmonic rhythm becomes richer and faster. The following sixth variation introduces the theme as a chorale, while the left hand enriches the initial harmonic blueprint of the theme by frequent additions of secondary dominants. The
piece concludes triumphantly with the seventh variation, in which the virtuosic thirty-second-note figurations, despite some Romantic flourishes, suggest a more restrained classical style.

b. Minor works from 1890s

After his return from studies abroad, Janáček composed relatively little, partly because of his disappointment with his compositional studies in Vienna.¹²⁵ As a newly married man, he worked several jobs in order to provide for his family—his daughter Olga was born in 1882 and son Vladimír in 1888 (he died of meningitis two years later)—and his teaching and conducting responsibilities allowed him very little extra time for composing. The marriage to Zdenka turned out to be quite difficult, since Janáček, a plebeian by birth and a Czech patriot by conviction, found it increasingly difficult to relate to Zdenka who came from a bourgeois German-speaking family.¹²⁶

Janáček’s intense ethnographic studies and fieldwork in the 1890s resulted in piano arrangements (two and/or four hands, occasionally accompanied by cimbalom) of Moravian dances which he collected with his collaborators Lucie Bakešová and Xavera Běhálková in three volumes as Národní tance na Moravě [Folk Dances in Moravia] (1888-9). Another folk-dance arrangement, Ej, danaj! (1892), published posthumously,¹²⁷ displays a remarkably original piano

¹²⁴ Vogel suggests that the “low octaves in the bass suggest the sombre mood of Beethoven and Brahms.” Vogel, Leoš Janáček: A biography.71.

¹²⁵ See chapter II. For a complete account of the story regarding the Vienna Conservatory composition contest to which Janáček’s piece was not admitted, see Tyrrell, Janáček: Years of a Life, I.177ff.

¹²⁶ For a detailed account of the tensions between the young newlyweds which resulted in a temporary separation in 1882, see for example ibid.231ff.

¹²⁷ See Simeone et al., Janáček’s works: A catalogue of the music and writings of Leoš Janáček.253.
In fact, this dance was rejected by the Prague publisher Mojmír Urbánek on the grounds that he preferred music that was more in keeping with the public’s taste. While the piano stylization in this dance is rather unconventional and contains some Romantic virtuoso flourishes, the first few measures of the work make it quite clear why Urbánek was alarmed. The striking juxtaposition of the A major chord and the dominant seventh A♭ (here V7/iii in A, enharmonically translated from G# to A♭) is almost painful to listen to. The home key of g minor, which appears tentatively after a most peculiar traversal of four different keys in mm. 7-8 (the resolution of the E-flat dominant seventh chord in the 3rd position into a g minor tonic is particularly odd), hardly asserts itself throughout the whole work, in which abrupt changes of keys, fast harmonic rhythm (despite the static ostinato character of the left-hand accompaniment) and added notes constantly clouding the emerging chords, foreshadow the language of harmonically rich pieces such as Unutterable Anguish from On an Overgrown Path.

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128 It was published together with two other dances, Čeladenský, and Pilky. Leoš Janáček, Composizioni per pianoforte [Compositions for piano], ed. Ludvík Kundera and Jarmil Burghauser (Praha: Supraphon, 1979).XVII. Interestingly, significant parts of Ej danaj! form the nucleus of the recruiting scene from Janáček’s opera Jenůfa, on which he began to work sometime before 1904.
Ex. 23

Janáček, *Ej danaj!* From Three Moravian Dances mm. 1-9

*Hudba ke kroužení kužely* [*Music for Club Swinging*] (1893) composed for the Moravia-Silesian District Sokol Gymnastic Association and, due to its popularity, subsequently arranged for wind band, is an occasional and rather conventional work, which reveals little about Janáček unique approach to piano writing. His piano miniature *Na památku* [*In memoriam*], whose date of composition is rather uncertain,\(^\text{129}\) is a unique work in its own right and, according to Adès, “sows the seeds of all the major piano works to come.”\(^\text{130}\)

\(^{129}\) For a possible genesis of this work, see Simeone et al., *Janáček’s works: A catalogue of the music and writings of Leoš Janáček.* 248.

Based on a motto borrowed from two poems by Eliška Krásnohorská, *In memoriam*, a mere 29 measures long, indeed foreshadows compositional principles which Janáček employs in his mature piano works: use of an a-b-a form, in which musical contrast is paramount; one of the first appearances of what Janáček would later describe as *sčasovka* (see chapter III) in the form of a thirty-second triplet, which permeates the whole piece, enlivening and illuminating every aspect of it; particular use of dynamics, which are applied both as an expressive and a structural device; layering of several distinct melodic and harmonic textures; consistent use of pedal points in the bass, most likely as a result of Janáček’s deep familiarity with harmonium and organ; distinctive fashioning, “instrumentation,” of particular chords, in which wide spacing is particularly prevalent; and, last but not least, unique use of harmony and modulation defying
conventional analysis, which enables Janáček to move from one key to another often without clearly resolving dissonances, thus maintaining the presence of the pocit and pacit chords (see chapter III) within a singular sound space.

c. On An Overgrown Path

In 1894, Janáček began to compose his opera Jenůfa, a seminal work which would define the next several decades of his life. However, after a promising start in which he completed the Prelude and Act I, Janáček suddenly abandoned this work. Janáček’s responsibilities at that time were extraordinary, as he was teaching at three different institutions at the same time—the Teachers’ Institute, the Old Brno Gymnasium, and the newly founded Organ School, of which he was the director. He was also immersed in ethnographic work, which demanded his full attention. But lack of time was perhaps only one of the reasons for his inability to focus on Jenůfa. It is likely that Janáček found that the raw, prosaic, and emotionally explosive realism of the libretto demanded a new compositional idiom stripped of the overbearing Romanticism, which was still prevalent in his first opera Šárka (1887) and, to a certain degree, in the second stage work, Počátek románu [The Beginning of a Romance] (1891). His theory of speech melodies (see chapter II) was undoubtedly born out of the need to realistically capture every aspect of human emotions. The plethora of Janáček’s theoretical writings and analyses from the late 1890s in which he begins to develop his new compositional vocabulary, including the pocit and pacit chord, attest to his desire to find a compositional technique adequate to the task.  

131 For a thorough discussion of the opera and its social and political context, see for example Vogel, Leoš Janáček: A biography.135ff.
The genesis of Po zarostlém chodničku [On an Overgrown Path], whose first pieces began to emerge shortly before Janáček decided to return to Jenůfa, is quite complicated.\textsuperscript{133} The origins of the cycle can be traced back to a request from a small town schoolmaster, Josef Vávra, who wrote to Janáček asking for a few short pieces for an intended series of music for harmonium. Janáček’s growing reputation as a composer and ethnographer prompted Vávra to ask Janáček for folksong arrangements: “I would like to put the most beautiful Slavonic melodies harmonized in an easy style in such a way that they would be accessible even to less experienced players.”\textsuperscript{134} Vávra’s series, Slovanské melodie [Slavonic Melodies] started coming out in 1897, initially without Janáček’s contribution. Janáček remembered Vávra’s request several years later, and offered him five harmonium pieces (nos. 1, 2, 4, 7, and 10 of the cycle as we know it today) which were subsequently published in the series in 1901 and 1902. Five more pieces were added after 1908. In 1911, all ten pieces of the cycle’s first series were in existence and in his letter to the publisher Kočí, Janáček mentioned the title On an Overgrown Path and his wish to publish these pieces as a whole. (This episode is of particular importance as we consider the connections between the individual pieces, which have already been briefly discussed in the previous chapter.\textsuperscript{135}) In 1911, Janáček began work on the second series of On an Overgrown Path, completing only two pieces and leaving a third one unfinished. A later

\textsuperscript{132} The important essay O skladbě souzvuků a jejich spojův [On the Composition of Chords and their Connections], discussed in chapter III, was published in 1896.

\textsuperscript{133} Wingfield, Janáček Studies. p.22-23,fn.3. See also the report in Simeone et al., Janáček’s works: A catalogue of the music and writings of Leoš Janáček.259-263.

\textsuperscript{134} Janáček’s works: A catalogue of the music and writings of Leoš Janáček.259.

\textsuperscript{135} Jiraský points out that already in 1901, the then existing pieces were published by Vávra under the title On an Overgrown Path; only the programmatic titles, by which we know the works today, were added later. See Jan Jiraský, Klavírní dílo Leoše Janáčka [Piano Works of Leoš Janáček] (Brno: Janáčkova akademie műzických umění / Výběrová řada doktorských prác JAMU, 2005).28ff. Tyrrell further speculates that since Janáček, in a letter to the critic Jan Branberger, referred to all the works consistently as piano pieces, it is likely that On an Overgrown Path as a whole was planned to be performed on the piano, rather than harmonium, from the start. See Tyrrell, Janáček: Years of a Life, I.490.
edition added two early, unpublished harmonium pieces to these three works, mistakenly calling the resulting hybrid the second series—hence the large stylistic discrepancies among the five works in the so-called second series, of which only the first two (nos. 11 and 12, respectively) convey the melancholic and rather dreamy quality of the first series. The dramatic and at times heroic and explosive features of the remaining pieces (not to mention the fact that they are partly unfinished and exist in performance editions that are only barely satisfactory) prompted the editors Kundera and Burghauser in their complete edition of Janáček's piano works to detach these pieces from the cycle and publish them separately as Paralipomena.\footnote{Janáček, \textit{Composizioni per pianoforte [Compositions for piano]}, p.74ff.}

Ludvík Kundera suggests that the origins of the emotional contents of the cycle can be often traced back to Janáček's childhood reminiscences.\footnote{Ludvík Kundera, "Janáčkova tvorba klavírní [Janáček's Piano Ouevre]," \textit{Musikologie} 3(1955).314-15.} In his essay \textit{Tvůrčí mysl [Creative Mind]} from 1923, Janáček himself asserts that "the inner environment during childhood has perhaps the most decisive influence also on the artistic creation."\footnote{Janáček, \textit{Literární dílo [Literary Works]}, I.535.} He goes on to describe a fire he witnessed as a four-year-old boy, remembering his own anguished cry as he was carried away from the burning house. His own cry and the image of the wall of burning fire created a unique, powerful and lasting emotional footprint on his mind. Janáček concludes: "and the key of C# minor is its echo in my \textit{On an Overgrown Path}."\footnote{ibid.} This statement throws a new light on the cycle, for, as I discussed in the previous chapter, the key of C-sharp (or its enharmonic equivalent of D-flat) plays a crucial role not only in the opening and closing piece of the first series, where it provides an emotional unity and a sense of closure to the cycle [\textit{Our Evenings} and \textit{The Barn-Owl Has Not Flown Away}!]. It is no coincidence that this key is introduced in

\begin{footnotes}
\item[136] Janáček, \textit{Composizioni per pianoforte [Compositions for piano]}, p.74ff.
\item[139] ibid.
\end{footnotes}
several other pieces, where it usually serves as a screen onto which Janáček projects his highly charged and unsettled sound objects. In The Madonna of Frýdek, Janáček explained to the critic Jan Branberger, a simple tune, a Marian hymn, alternates with initially quiet and eventually slowly rising chords of a church organ. The second, most anxious iteration of the Marian tune, is reserved for the key of D-flat:

\[\text{Ex. 25}
\]

Janáček, The Madonna of Frýdek from On an Overgrown Path, mm. 17-22

The middle section of the piece, the initially peaceful chordal progression—which, perhaps not by accident, begins in the key of E major, the same key which, as we saw in chapter III, plays a

\[^{140}\text{Ibid.253-254.}\]
crucial role as the polar opposite of the key of C-sharp in the last piece of the cycle, *The Barn-Owl Has Not Flown Away!*—comes to a shattering climax on the second inversion of a C# minor chord:

![Ex. 26](image)

Janáček, *The Madonna of Frýdek* from *On an Overgrown Path*, mm. 46-53

The main theme of the following piece, *They Chattered like Swallows*, fleeting and unstable, is likewise in C# minor, and the centrality of the note C# in the opening motif of *The Barn-Owl Has Not Flown Away* and its reappearance in the contrasting second motif has been discussed earlier.

It is clear from the Janáček-Branberger correspondence that several pieces in the cycle were composed during Janáček’s daughter Olga’s terminal illness. Janáček writes about the harmonically enigmatic and emotionally claustrophobic *Unutterable Anguish* and the following piece, *In Tears*, that here, one can perhaps sense a “premonition of certain death. During the hot summer nights that angelic person [Olga] lay in such a deathly anguish.”\(^{141}\) In the final piece, *The Barn-Owl Has Not Flown Away!*, Janáček writes that “the ominous motif of the screech owl is heard in the intimate song of life.”\(^{142}\) In *Good Night!* (“you will hear parting in it,”

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\(^{142}\) Tyrrell, *Janáček: Years of a Life*, I.494.
writes Janáček to Branberger, the use of sčasovka is particularly powerful. At the beginning, this short ostinato figure functions as unobtrusive accompaniment, creating a sense of longing, painting a dreamy backdrop to the melody that gently unfolds in the left hand:

Ex. 27

\textit{Janáček, Good Night! from On an Overgrown Path, mm. 1-5}

In the agitated middle section, the sčasovka begins to move to the foreground, eventually reaching such power and intensity that it threatens to drown the melody:

Ex. 28

\textit{Janáček, Good Night! from On an Overgrown Path, mm. 38-43}

This is only one of the many examples from the cycle in which the obsessive sčasovka interrupts a lyrical melody—a very powerful compositional device, most likely borrowed from Moravian folk ensemble music, which Janáček would increasingly use in his compositions from 1910 on. The repeated pattern of sčasovka coupled with the use of close motivic relationship in the

\footnote{Ibid.}
sharing of melodic lines functions as one of the main unifying features both within the
individual pieces and in the cycle as a whole.\textsuperscript{144}

The gloomy nature of the first series of the cycle is enlivened by rather cheerful
pieces (\textit{Come With Us!}, \textit{Words Fail!} and \textit{They Chattered like Swallows}) but as the cycle
progresses, the character of the music becomes increasingly darker. The last five pieces in the
set evoke anxiety, abandonment, emptiness, and disillusionment; here, the events of Janáček’s
personal life cast a shadow on the composition of these intimate works. A year after the death
of Olga (in 1903), \textit{Jenůfa} was premiered in Brno but the newly founded Brno National Theatre
could not do justice to this complex work. Karel Kovařovic, chief conductor at the Prague
National Theatre, refused to take up the opera,\textsuperscript{145} thus burying Janáček’s hopes of artistically
extricating himself from the provincial milieu of the small-town Brno cultural life.

In the piano miniatures of the cycle \textit{On an Overgrown Path}, Janáček’s mature
compositional style begins to crystallize. \v{s}časovka is employed consciously as a structural and
expressive device; key relationships emerge as paramount in identifying hidden tensions
between different thematic areas. Textural stratification, already apparent in \textit{In Memoriam}, is
employed even more consciously in such pieces as \textit{Unutterable Anguish}, in which three
different textures emerge: pedal point in the bass, ostinato \v{s}časovka in the middle, and a
melody in the soprano line. This “empty” orchestration, which dispenses with the Romantic
piano stylization still found in \textit{Tema con variazioni}, will play an even more important role in the
1.X. 1905 and \textit{In the Mists}. Janáček’s harmonic language, nourished by his studies of folk music,

\textsuperscript{144} Of particular importance is a four-note motive, initially developed from the opening phrase of \textit{Our
Evenings}, whose inversion appears in augmentation, diminution, and in different intervallic
configurations throughout the cycle. The interval of descending third, culled from this four-note motive,
is also used rather frequently, both as part of ostinato \v{s}časovkas and in melodic material. For other
examples of motivic relationships in the cycle, see Jiraský, \textit{Klavírní dílo Leoše Janáčka [Piano Works of
Leoš Janáček]}. 34 and elsewhere.

\textsuperscript{145} The were perhaps personal reasons behind Kovařovic’s refusal to present the opera in Prague. In
1887, Janáček wrote an article in which he ruthlessly criticized Kovařovic’s own opera \textit{The Bridegrooms}. 
becomes more advanced, and his frequent employment of modal melodic progressions and their diatonic harmonizations (or juxtapositions in the employment of pocit and pacit chords, as discussed in chapter III), complicates the harmonic structure of the works (as do the frequent enharmonic substitutions). Last but not least, Janáček finds a medium in the form of the piano miniature, whose emotional immediacy suits his emerging realism perfectly.

d. 1.X.1905

An emotionally highly charged work, 1.X.1905\textsuperscript{146} was composed in the aftermath of a violent political event in Brno. In the Viennese parliament, the Czech delegates heavily lobbied for the establishment of a Czech University in Moravia. The Prime Minister Paul Gautsch, who needed the delegates’ support for his new administration formed in 1905, promised that he would consider the request, provided that the Czech delegates could come to an agreement with the German delegates from Bohemia on where to build the new university. The Czech delegates favored Brno as the natural capital of Moravia. The German delegates, fearing the growing Czech and Moravian influence in the bilingual and multinational Brno, which they considered to be culturally and politically a German town, refused. In order to garner support, the Germans organized a protest demonstration (Volgstag) in Brno on October 1, 1905. A counter-rally was promptly called by the supporters of the Czech delegates in Brno Besední dům [Beseda House]. The supporters of both camps clashed violently in the streets, and the mass demonstrations continued into next day. The police and army were called in to maintain

\textsuperscript{146} Today, the piece is called sonata (which is not incorrect, given the fact that the first movement is in sonata form) but Janáček’s original title of the work is “Z ulice dne 1.října 1905 [From the Street on 1. October 1905]. Later, the composer simplified the title as 1.X.1905, which is how the work is labeled in Kundera and Burghauser’s edition. See Janáček, Composizioni per pianoforte [Compositions for piano]. 21-35.
order, and a young worker, a joiner’s apprentice from the nearby village of Ořechov, František Pavlík, was killed, apparently bayoneted by one of the soldiers.

For Janáček as a staunch Czech patriot, this event resonated deeply. Janáček was one of the many thousands who came to Pavlík’s funeral and he spoke briefly at his grave. 1.X.1905, written in a response to the tragic event and dedicated to Pavlík, bears the following inscription: *White marble of the steps of the Besední dům in Brno – Here, drenched in blood, sinks a simple worker František Pavlík—He came just to advocate for higher learning—and was slaughtered by brutal murderers.*

The work, originally in three movements, was written in the same year. It was supposed to have been premiered by the pianist Ludmila Tučková, a graduate of Janáček’s Brno Organ School, at the inaugural concert of the Club of the Friends of Art. The day before the scheduled premiere, Janáček was dissatisfied with the work after the rehearsal of the whole program, which featured pieces by his established contemporaries Suk, Foerster, and Novák, whose music, written in a polished neo-Romantic idiom, was well known and universally admired by the Czech public. The following day, Janáček took the third movement of the work away from Tučková (this movement was, according to some sources, a funeral march), and pronouncing it vulgar, he burned it. In the evening, Tučková could thus only perform the first two movements of the work. Later that year, Janáček became dissatisfied with the first two movements as well, and after a performance in Prague, he cast the score into the Vltava River. The two-movement torso, in the copyist’s version, was saved by Tučková. Almost two

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147 My translation. For the Czech original, see ibid.21.
149 Simeone et al., *Janáček's works: A catalogue of the music and writings of Leoš Janáček*.265.
decades later, when shown the score, Janáček decided not to discard the work, and *1.X.1905* was subsequently published by Hudební matice in Prague in 1924.

One can argue with Šeda’s reading of *1.X.1905*, which, according to him, is full of “emotional monumentality” that embodies the “fate of a remembered hero worker and the mission of his sacrifice, which emerges as part of a more general picture of a revolutionary era.”150 Šeda’s book was published in Czechoslovakia in 1961, at the height of the era of normalization, in which an artist’s work had value only when it celebrated, in some way, the working man’s victories against the bourgeois oppressor. But while this need to graft onto *1.X.1905* spurious revolutionary feelings and submerge the work in the galling light of the crude form of socialist realism might seem in bad taste from today’s perspective, the fact remains that from the point of view of musical architecture and pianistic texture, the monumental features of this two-movement torso are impossible to ignore.151

But this monumentality and emotional immediacy are not Romantic. As Milan Kundera notes, “whereas Romantic music sought to impose emotional unity on a given movement, Janáček’s musical structure is based on unusually frequent alterations of different, even contradictory, emotional fragments within a single piece, a single movement.”152 As we have seen, this emotional fragmentation is already apparent in the cycle *On an Overgrown*
Path, where Janáček abruptly juxtaposes several contradictory emotions within the space of a few measures by manipulating meter, dynamics, articulation, key relationships, and intervallic content of the melodic lines. Kundera correctly observes that this essentially non-Romantic “unexpected juxtaposition of emotions” occurs not only vertically (when the emotions follow one another) but also horizontally, when several emotional states are present at the same time. Kundera calls this phenomenon a “polyphony of emotions,” and one can observe it clearly for example in Good Night! discussed above (ex. 27) in which an unyielding ostinato sčasovka encroaches on a plaintive melody.

In Janáček’s music, perhaps nowhere is this simultaneous presentation of different emotional states more fundamental than in the opening of the first movement of 1.X.1905, to which Janáček later decided to give the title Předtucha (Presentiment):

![Musical notation image]

**Ex. 29**

Janáček, *1.X.1905* (Presentiment), mm. 1-4

In the fourth measure, the sixteenth-note sčasovka, marked *forte marc.*, brutally interrupts the melancholic melodic motif. The sčasovka is in fact a slight alteration and diminution of the

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153 Ibid.
closing phrase of the opening motif (mm. 3-4) and despite its sudden appearance, it can be treated at this point as an extention of this pp theme. Very soon, however, the sčasovka, thorough incessant, obsessive repetition, aquires a life on its own, becoming a motif which propels the music forward:

Ex. 30

Janáček, 1.X.1905 (Presentiment), mm. 8-14

In mm. 11-14, we come upon Kundera’s “polyphony of emotions,” with the combination of the opening motif in the treble and the sčasovka in the middle. In a clear departure from the Romantic piano stylization, the sčasovka ostinato motif does not support the melody in a
Rather than receding into the background as proper accompaniment, it retains its ferocious quality and textural independence, emphasized by Janáček through the careful use of dynamics and articulation (i.e., staccato markings for sčasovka vs. legato lines for the melody). With the addition of the pedal point E♭, this particular instumentation constitutes another textbook example of Janáček’s use of three-part texture which we encountered several times in On an Overgrown Path.

The inner cohesion of the work stems mainly from the fact that virtually every main theme and episodic motif in 1.X.1905 is derived from the opening motivic statement. The transitional bridge (mm. 22-24) with its strikingly colorful and rather non-pianistic wide spacing reminiscent of instrumentation techniques in Jenůfa and Janáček’s later operas, maintains the same intervallic content and the same melodic trajectory as the opening theme (raising and falling melodic line, with a repeated note in the middle). Also the second theme (mm. 23-25),

In her comparative study of Leoš Janáček’s 1.X.1905 and Vítězslav Novák’s Sonata Eroica (1900), Lenka Křupková argues that where Novák (in 1900 one of the most radical composers of the young generation) espouses the Romantic ideal of harmonically rich piano sound, Janáček embraces clarity and tonal plasticity. It is instructive to compare Janáček’s treatment of different textures in ex. 28 above (mm. 11-14) with the rather conventional approach to melody and accompaniment in Novák’s Sonata Eroica, (mm. 26-28) shown in the example below:


"Particularly effective are the expanses of tone colour and at times the melody is doubled two, even three octaves apart without any harmonic filling, a practice that anticipates the later operas, particularly From the House of Death." See Horsbrugh, Leoš Janáček: The field that prospered.96. Vogel considers the whole sonata “unpianistic in style,” one which “sounds like a piano score of a symphony, concluding that “the work has probably more importance as an idea rather than a composition” Vogel, Leoš Janáček: A biography.185. He was decidedly wrong in this assessment, given the rather frequent recent appearance of 1.X.1905 on concert stages in Europe and America.
introduced in G major, can be traced back to mm. 1-3 (ex. 29) which contains, in transposition, the exact same succession of notes as the second theme motif (G♭ A♭ G♭ F, E♭, E♭, D♭, B♭, D♭ in mm. 1-2 vs. G A G F# E E D C D in mm. 24-25). As in m. 4, in m. 28 the theme is again interrupted by sčasovka in the middle register:

Ex. 31

Janáček, 1.X.1905 (Presentiment), mm. 21-28

The main (and only) theme of the second movement of 1.X.1905, Smrt (Death) is likewise derived from the opening motif of the first, particularly of m. 3. (ex. 29):

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156 As Jiraský shows, both motifs bear a striking similarity to the opening theme of Thema con variazioni (see ex. 21). Jiraský, Klavírní dílo Leoše Janáčka [Piano Works of Leoš Janáček]. 117.
What Adès aptly describes as “obsessively monothematic sonata structure”\textsuperscript{157} in this movement is sustained by the compulsive dotted rhythm of the theme which eventually asserts its dominance also over the left hand accompaniment (which is constructed from the falling dotted gesture of the opening melodic motif in \textit{Death}) in the development section. The polyrhythmic section where the two individual rhythmic patterns of dotted notes meet is particularly difficult to perform (also given the pianistically awkward leaps in the left hand), but when played correctly, the juxtaposition between the dotted thirty-seconds and sixty-fourth is a source of extraordinary structural tension. Here again, Janáček employs his three-part texture:

\textsuperscript{157} Thomas Adès, “Janáček’s Solo Piano Music, Wingfield, \textit{Janáček Studies}.27.
Of similar importance is the consistent appearance of the silent downbeat throughout the whole movement. Janáček creates a conspicuous caesura, an emptiness in the flow of the melodic line which is both rhetorically and structurally significant. In an extraordinary way, the climax of the whole movement is found on the devastating silent downbeat on m. 46, preceded by the chromatic ascent of the melody in m. 45 (see ex. 33), after which the opening theme is reiterated, this time in forte. The dramatic effect of the reinstatement of the theme is reinforced by the crescendo dotted figure in the left hand. Melodically and structurally independent, this figure appears as a reverberation of the reigning left-hand motif of the development section which here brutally interrupts the aching, elegiac main motif while also, in an almost orchestral manner, prolongs and increases the sound of the B-flat in the right hand:
In 1.X.1905, Janáček further develops his unique approach to pianistic writing. The principle of motivic development is refined by the ingenious use of a single motif, and its melodic and rhythmic permutations throughout the piece lend the work a rare thematic unity. Written on a much larger scale and with a dramatic sweep that is absent from the mostly introverted pieces in On an Overgrown Path, 1.X.1905 is almost symphonic in its conception. The piano is used in all registers and all ranges of dynamics, and Janáček’s penchant for the polyphonic juxtaposition of several motifs within a single musical phrase creates formidable technical difficulties for the performer.

**e. In the Mists**

“The greatness of In the Mists lies in its very claustrophobia, an austerity of means affecting every aspect of music. The solo piano becomes a narrow space with four solid walls,” asserts Thomas Adès.\(^{158}\) Indeed, the year 1912, in which Janáček finished this new four-part piano cycle, was for him a time of personal and artistic crisis, if not outright despair. Jenůfa was

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\(^{158}\) Thomas Adès, “Janáček’s Solo Piano Music,” ibid. 34.
still waiting for its premiere at the National Theatre in Prague, where the director, Kovařovic, remained unwilling to introduce the opera into the repertory. Janáček’s earlier opera, *Fate*, was also awaiting its first performance, and there seemed to be no hope for a performance outside of Brno of his new stage work, *The Excursions of Mr. Brouček*. Janáček was fifty-eight years old, and despite a few works that had enjoyed limited popularity (orchestral *Lachian Dances* and several choruses), as a composer he was still largely unknown outside of the cultural confines of the Moravian capital. After the death of Olga, his marriage largely lost purpose. Janáček realized that he was getting old, and wrote dejectedly about “the boiling and galloping way in which transparent, empty, destructive time plies on.”

With no hope of receiving a satisfactory performance of a new large-scale orchestral work, and after some positive reviews of *On an Overgrown Path*, Janáček returned to the piano once more. In the fall of 1912, Janáček entered *In the Mists* in the competition of the Club of Friends of Art in Brno. The piece won and was published by the Club at the end of 1913. Karel Hoffmeister from the Prague Conservatory, a leading pianist and teacher and one of the jurors, spoke about the work’s “originality and sophistication which lies in its unusual rhythmic and harmonic layout.” While Tyrrell argues that the final impetus for composing *In the Mists* might have been Janáček’s first encounter with the piano music of Debussy—specifically the evocative reflections of nature in *Reflects dans l’eau*, programmed at the Brno Organ school.

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160 On the active role Janáček played in the Club, see Ludvík Kundera, *Janáček a klub přátel umění [Janáček and the Friends of the Arts Club]* (Olomouc: Velehrad, 1948).

161 Simeone et al., *Janáček’s works: A catalogue of the music and writings of Leoš Janáček*. 267. The editorial history and the resulting performance edition of *In the Mists* is problematic, as the work’s first editor, Václav Štěpán, introduced copious changes into the score without the composer’s explicit consent.

during the 1912/13 season—*In the Mists* is far removed from impressionistic aesthetics. As Šeda correctly observes, “there is no impressionistic coloring, dreamlike diffusion here [...] everything grows from apposition of melodic shortcuts in consistent motivic unity on a well-arranged formal ground-plan.”

The four movements of *In the Mists* have no programmatic titles. What binds these pieces together is their binary structure and a rather extraordinary monomotivism already encountered in *I. X. 1905*. The hesitant, wistful rising first motif in the first movement (ex. 35) is transformed into a folk-like emotionally charged second theme (ex. 36):

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![Ex. 35](image)

**Ex. 35**

Janáček, Andante from *In the Mists*, mm. 1-6

![Ex. 36](image)

**Ex. 36**

Janáček, Andante from *In the Mists*, mm. 54-56

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In a similar fashion, the adagio motif in the second movement (ex. 37) undergoes a transformation in the presto later on (ex. 38):

Ex. 37

Janáček, Molto adagio from *In the Mists*, mm. 1-4

Ex. 38

Janáček, Molto adagio from *In the Mists*, mm. 28-30

One finds in *In the Mist* countless examples of Janáček’s innovative approach to piano texture. One highly unusual case of pianistic stylization (already encountered in *Unutterable Anguish* from *On an Overgrown Path*) comes from the last movement, in which a syncopated melody in the right hand is juxtaposed with a left-hand jagged ostinato *sčasovka*:
Janáček, Presto from *In the Mists*, mm. 9-13

On the other hand, *In the Mists* contains several passages which are highly reminiscent of Romantic piano stylization, particularly that of Smetana. Undoubtedly, these were suggested by the pianist and editor of the score Václav Štěpán, whose eagerness to render the score more approachable led him to decisions which sometimes trivialize Janáček’s score.\(^{165}\) Two examples of curiously un-Janáčkean pianistic flourishes are found in the first (ex. 40) and the last movements (ex. 41).

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\(^{165}\) Adès mentions several examples in which the editor’s change of dynamics markings compromises the structural integrity of the music. See Thomas Adès, “Janáček’s Solo Piano Music,” Wingfield, *Janáček Studies* 30 and elsewhere.
In *In the Mists*, Janáček’s approach to harmony and key relationships is of particular significance. Enharmonic substitutions, diminished and ninth chords, juxtaposition of major and minor keys (as well as introduction of modality)—in short, the constant obfuscation of the main key (already employed in, for example *Our Evenings* and *Unutterable Anguish*) are the hallmarks of Janáček’s mature harmonic language. An example of such tonal ambiguity appears at the beginning of the first movement (ex. 35). The key signature as well as the pedal point in the left hand suggest a key of D-flat. But the C-flat in m. 2 points towards the key of G-flat as the tonic—which is, however, abandoned in m. 9 for a hint of A major (in the left hand, the D-flat pedal is enharmonically substituted for C#) after which the music lingers on a B-flat dominant seventh chord in the first inversion. Instead of resolving into an E-flat tonic, the following measure introduces a D-flat minor chord with an added 2nd and 6th (creating a bitonal clash between the keys of D-flat minor and E-flat). Despite the key signature and the pedal D-flat/C#, the key of D-flat never clearly asserts itself in the first sixty measures of the piece.
Janáček’s approach to meter deserves particular mention. “Everything wrong, the measure does not add up,”\textsuperscript{166} complained the Leipzig engraver of \textit{In the Mists}. The fact is that the highly improvisatory character of the last movement (reminiscent of cimbalom improvisations in Moravian folk music) with its irregular metric structure and frequent tempo fluctuations is virtually impossible to notate precisely.

\textsuperscript{166} Quoted in Jiraský, \textit{Klavírní dílo Leoše Janáčka [Piano Works of Leoš Janáček]}. 131.
**Ex. 43**

Janáček, Presto from *In the Mists*, mm. 1-8

*In the Mists* is Janáček’s last major solo piano piece,\(^{167}\) and the apex of his piano oeuvre. Particularly striking in this work is the economy of means applied vis-à-vis the choice and melodic permutations of the primary motivic material. The ingenious application of his theory of gradually subsiding pocit and pacit chords (see chapter III) fashions amalgams of sound with highly ambiguous harmonic contents. Chromaticism, frequent enharmonic substitution, and a mixture of diatonic and modal scalar material create a highly dense

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\(^{167}\) In his *Concertino* and *Capriccio* (both 1926) Janáček adds other instruments to the piano, which inevitably results in a certain decentralization of solo instrument, which is now treated as one of many. In fact, Janáček did return to the piano toward the very end of his life, albeit very briefly and aphoristically. His *Vzpomínka* [*Reminiscence*], written in 1928 for the Belgrade periodical *Muzika*, full of descending thirds and mediant relationships, quotes a theme from *Jenůfa* in the brief middle section. The *Pieces in Kamila Stösslová Album* (see Simeone et al., *Janáček’s works: A catalogue of the music and writings of Leoš Janáček*, 276-277), contains speech melodies, fragments, and some very short compositions dedicated to Janáček’s beloved Kamila.
harmonic space in which melodic notes hover as if in a vacuum, without a strong underpinning of clear key relationships. A few rhetorical figures introduced by an overzealous editor notwithstanding, every note, every marking of dynamics, tempo, or articulation is justified from a larger point of view of musical architecture and should be taken seriously. The bare pianistic texture, without any unnecessary harmonic fillings, by now the hallmark of Janáček’s pianistic style, implies that “every slightest instrumental or harmonic color fires its particular charge into the structure.”

In the bleak landscape of In the Mist, the choice of tight binary structures allows the composer to achieve striking results when juxtaposing themes with different emotional contents. Tensions are rarely resolved; the music never rests comfortably. In a radical departure from the Romantic conventions of many of his contemporaries, Janáček’s music brings no emotional closure, no catharsis. At this critical point in his life, Janáček finds no solace in empty rhetoric and has no interest in cheap emotional gestures. In his mature solo piano works, Janáček has made a major step towards the discovery of a highly personal musical language. Given the subsequent success of Jenůfa (which had its triumphant premiere in Prague in 1916, and was afterwards staged in Vienna and Berlin with equally resounding success) and his late stage and instrumental works, this language was uniquely attuned to the new sensibilities of the early twentieth century.

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168 Thomas Adès, “Janáček’s Solo Piano Music,” Wingfield, Janáček Studies.34.
V. CONCLUSION: JANÁČEK BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY

The field of Czech music in the first decades of the 20th century is undoubtedly a rich one; in all sections of musical compositions the leading members of the post-Smetana generation composed works that indicated a fruitful continuance of the Czech tradition of musicianship. This traditional character had its disadvantages, however. At those moments when the leading phenomena of the international musical avant-garde were demonstrating reliable new ways of sound and expression of the development of European music, the mainstream of contemporary Czech music was arrested somewhere at the level of late Romanticism and Impressionism.169

Thirty, thirty-five to forty hours of teaching per week, rehearsing a vocal group, organizing and participating in concerts, conducting the choir loft in the cloister in Králová, while composing Jenůfa, getting married, losing one’s children—it was necessary to forget oneself.170

Who was Leoš Janáček in 1914? In “Janáček at sixty,” Tyrrell describes a composer who, “harboring the feeling of embitteredness at the lack of recognition,” refused to publicly celebrate his birthday. Given the unwillingness of Prague’s National and Vinohrady Theatres to perform his operas, Jenůfa and Fate, which had been at the forefront of Janáček’s compositional endeavors during the past decade, Janáček must have considered himself a failed opera composer, and he stopped working on The Adventures of Mr. Brouček, his next projected opera. His lack of confidence is reflected in the myriad destroyed, constantly reworked, and abandoned compositions from that period:

169 Vysloužil, "Problems of Style in the 20th Century Czech Music." 195

From this viewpoint the decade after 1904 looks like a wasteland for Janáček in terms of progress and confidence. Here was a composer in his fifties who should have been at the height of his powers. Instead with Janáček one can observe a series of works that he revised or even destroyed, actions which suggest great uncertainty about where he should be going. His two piano suites of the period seem to say it all: from the ‘overgrown path’ he then blunders around ‘in the mists’. The list of destroyed works begins with 1.X. 1905 [...] and continues with the Piano Trio. Wherever Janáček turned it seemed to go wrong. Productivity narrowed down about one piece a year, a sad reflection on his state of mind.\footnote{Tyrrell, \textit{Janáček: Years of a Life}, I.819.}

However, this period of constant searching was crucial for Janáček as an artist, as it led to the gradual crystallization of his mature musical style. The development of a unique, anti-Romantic approach to composition which estranged him from the Prague musical establishment had its roots in his interest in Moravian folksong. Many Czech musicologists after 1945, especially those trying to come into terms with the ideologically stringent socialistic aesthetics espoused by the Communist Czechoslovak governments, argued that Janáček’s ethnomusicological interests stemmed from his inherent identification with the peasant workers and their plight under the rule of Austria-Hungary. But while Janáček himself came from humble origins, he worked his way up to a relatively comfortable bourgeois existence in Brno, and his livelihood and artistic sustenance was guaranteed and promoted by the state and by a plethora of bourgeois institutions for which Janáček had immense respect.

As Miloš Štědroň shows, Janáček’s immersion in the rich Moravian folksong material, starting in the late 1880s, had a direct impact on his compositional habits. His increasing ability to accurately sketch folksong materials (and eventually the speech melodies) quickly led to an increased sensitivity to musical inflections, to the “differentiation and refinement of the
Unlike his predecessors, Janáček had no need to “cultivate the folk song in the sense of its harmonic reforming and completing.” He was extremely receptive to modal fluctuations, inflections, microtonality, and rhythmic complexity, which are so abundant in Moravian folk music, and this receptivity allowed him to modify and eventually shed his older habitual compositional rhetoric that had been based on the Classical models he had learned to emulate during his studies in Prague, Leipzig, and Vienna. The fact that in the 1890s Janáček had been rather artistically isolated and completely enveloped by folk music had great benefits for the composer. Folk music created around his work a certain defensive shield, in which the tendencies towards neo-Romantism of the second part of the 1880s (detectable in his opera Šárka) completely dissolved. In this stylistic diaspora, in whose most radical period Janáček almost discarded his own author authenticity, Janáček remained completely protected from neo-Romantic influences.

Most importantly for his newly emerging compositional style, Janáček early on rejected the artificial idea of a conventionally harmonized folk song. His interest in Herbartian aesthetics and the scientific rigor with which the Herbartians approached the problem of perception and apperception of musical stimuli led his repudiation of Romantic idealization and harmonic embellishments of folksong material. Truthfully transcribing what he heard, Janáček became attuned to timbral differentiations and to the existence of what Štědroň calls the “abrasive surfaces” of the harmonic and melodic material. Consequently, in his own music, rather than

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173 ibid.291

174 ibid.231.

175 ibid.233.
underpinning each melodic note by a chord with a specific traditional harmonic function, Janáček developed his feeling for a melody accompanied by an active and ever-shifting sonic layer, as he encountered it in the improvisations of Moravian folk musicians. In their performances, the inherent color of the instruments, the independence of individual voices and rich sonic interaction gained particular importance for a composer who, as we have seen in the previous chapters, would eventually discard the traditional four-part texture in favor of a flexible musical space with several independent textural layers. Hence, from the 1890s onward, Janáček’s growing reservation vis-à-vis neo-Wagnerian chromatism, espoused by Fibich, Novák, Foerster, and many other Czech composers of the post-Smetana generation. Well before the turn of the century, he was poised to cultivate his own harmonic and melodic vocabulary, enriched by modal variations of the vocal line (called *flexe* by some Czech theorists) and whole-tone, octatonic, and other non-diatonic scales, found in the folk material.

As we have seen, contrast, most primarily in *spletta* and then more generally in what Kundera observed as a quick succession or montage of “contradictory, emotional fragments,” is of particular importance in Janáček’s musical vocabulary. Tyrrell argues that the fact that “Janáček can establish a mood and an atmosphere with just a few notes is one of his great attributes, and incidentally a fine Modernist reaction to the heavenly (or arrogant) lengths of much nineteenth-century music.” It was certainly an aesthetic to which the Czech musical establishment was unaccustomed, and Kovařovic’s stubborn refusal to accept *Jenůfa* for performance at the Prague National Theatre for many years was only one instance (although, for Janáček, one with a seriously damaging impact) of a Czech musician unable to grasp the striking originality and genius of Janáček’s music.

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176 See footnote 152.

On the other hand, Theodor Adorno, in his review of Jenůfa from April 1929, more than a decade after Janáček’s artistic breakthrough when his music was heard in Vienna, Berlin, and Venice and resonating with the main currents of European musical avant-garde, spoke perceptively about

the impressionistic atoms, which at one time would have been meant, in their oscillation, to form a whole, here become means of creating a form whose power resides in the tiniest, invariant particle ... [There is] something of that magnificent randomness, of that monad-like power, which so fills every fragment that the fragment means the whole and scarcely needs the whole anymore... 178

This power of the “tiniest, invariant particle,” as in the sčasovka, is derived in Janáček’s speech melodies from the expressive power of a syllable whose expressive quality can change the character or meaning of a whole sentence (or a musical phrase). 179 In another review of Janáček’s opera The Makropulos Affair from the same year, Adorno observed about Janáček’s music:

It is not that of explosive fantasy-construction as in Schoenberg; nor is it the scary evocation of the past, as in Stravinsky. It is the absurdity of the normal, possessed. Ghosts of the ordinary appear in it [...] It is as if the tiniest tonal flourishes, from whose unsystematic repetition the construction is joined together, are looked at so closely that they reveal their demonic origin [...] It is a completely enigmatic music, which demands [something] of the hearer without the latter being able to understand in advance what it is actually demanding. 180

178 “Appendix B: Theodor W. Adorno reviews, Jenůfa and The Makropulos Affair,” Beckerman, Janáček and his world. 45.

As examined earlier, these “tiniest particles,” or “tiniest tonal flourishes, from whose unsystematic repetition the construction is joined together” are already apparent in the various instances of three-part piano texture of On an Overgrown Path. In Our Evenings, the ostinato figuration is most unusual. This four-note group, in mm. 95-96 decidedly thematic, begins to lose its melodic importance in m. 98, in an abrupt ppp. The notes D#-C#-C#-A# are in fact a retrograde of part of the opening motif (the added A# appears in the middle voice). Rather than just impressionistically coloring the melody, these notes unify the musical space in which the melodic line is divided between the bass and the soprano. As in Janáček’s speech melodies, his piano figurations, never merely rhetorical, are of melodic importance; often displaying a different emotional charge than the melody, they are crucial for the overall architecture of the music:

Ex. 44

Janáček, Our Evenings from On an Overgrown Path, mm. 95-101

“In every note, [...] there is a] fragment of an idea. If you leave out a single note from the melody, you perceive that it has become incomplete and has ceased to make sense,” said

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180 “Appendix B: Theodor W. Adorno reviews, Jenůfa and The Makropulos Affair,” Beckerman, Janáček and his world.47.
Janáček. As in Adorno’s “absurdity of the normal,” every note, every syllable is of such an importance that changing or modifying anything would lead to incomprehensibility. As we have seen earlier, Janáček’s harbors a similar idiosyncratic approach to harmony. His writings abound in adjectives describing the character of a particular chord or a connection. To change a note in a “chord that bleeds,” a “chord that makes you wring your hands” would mean to irrevocably change its emotional intensity.

In most of the piano music discussed in this document, Janáček prefers a juxtaposition of various deft contours found in a small drawing to unobtrusively ordered wide brushstrokes of bright colors on a large canvas. Janáček shares this inclination toward an exact depiction of a precise emotional state and its real-time confrontation with other emotions—as opposed to a blind emotionality and single sweeping sensation, which overpowers and obliterates all other competing emotional states—with such modernists as Berg and Webern. Schoenberg, writing to Ferruccio Busoni in 1909, unknowingly encapsulates Janáček’s aesthetics when he postulates that for himself,

> harmony is expression and nothing else. ... My music must be brief. Concise! In two notes. Not built but expressed. And the results I wish for: No stylized and sterile protracted emotion. People are not like that: It is impossible for a person to have only one sensation at a time. One has thousands simultaneously. And this variegation, this multifariousness, this illogicality which our senses demonstrate, the illogicality presented by their interactions, set forth by some mounting rush of blood, by some reaction of senses or nerves, this I should like to have in my music.\(^1\)

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\(^1\) See footnote 26.


Janáček’s *In the Mists* appeared in print in 1913, the same year that Schoenberg’s *Six Little Piano Pieces* were published. At that time, both composers, each in his unique way, were among the first to stand against the excesses of Romanticism. Janáček was born a decade before Schoenberg and a generation before the Modernists who came of age in the 1920s. It is remarkable that Janáček, living in a provincial city on the periphery of Central Europe, was single-handedly able to extricate himself from the neo-Romantic sensibilities so powerfully permeating the musical landscape of the first decades of twentieth century. It is extraordinary that at the age of sixty, in his piano works, he was able to create a truly modern musical language and, in the remaining fourteen years, compose an astonishing array of works that, together with music of Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Berg, Webern, and Bartók, would become hallmarks of European Modernism.
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