Fukač, Jiří

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JIŘÍ FUKAČ

INVENTING EASTERN ROOTS

In the mid 1990s, some British and Czech musicologists (it should be underlined the fact that everybody of them dealt with Dvořák's and Janáček's music) were impressed by an interesting book which had just been published. It was Larry Wolff's monograph "Inventing Eastern Europe"[1] as a surprising analysis and interpretation of such explanations which were formulated in the period of Enlightenment on the basis of Voltaire's and Rousseau's observations of Russia and Poland. These more than 200 years old descriptions of the two countries offer us not only connotations like "barbarism and barbarity altogether", "darkness" and/or "belated civilization", but also those like "autarky", "originality" and "origin(ating)". In other words: the Eastern part of Europe was perceived as a synthesis of negative and positive values, as a specific balance between nightfall and daybreak, between falling and rising tendencies, and so forth. This picture grows out of the increasing pre-romantic view. Later, in the writings which fall under the category of "gothic novels", the Eastern European countries (sometimes including Moravia and Carinthia) are depicted as lands where evil and chaos can be born: in accordance with Bram Stoker, every succesful vampire should be domesticated there before he visits England. On the other hand, it appeared to many representatives of Romanticism that the Eastern regions could enrich the common European culture by means of well preserved ancient ethical and aesthetic values. The old Western parole "ex oriente lux" was transformed in the sense of typically pre-romantic expectations that the savage can be somehow "gallant" and – for instance to Herder's mind – the idealised rural folk which was, especially in the Eastern European countries, cut away from achievements of the modernised civilisation, represents a necessary source of authentic and natural virtues.

It is true that Russia was, in the 18th century, quite different from Western Europe, and that it was markedly behind in modernising, so that the abovementioned observations were, to a certain extent, realistic. But when it comes to

1 See Larry Wolff: *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, Standford, California 1994.

Poland, already the adequacy of such observations seems somewhat dubious. That is why we can suppose that the completed picture arose not only from the cognition of existing reality but also from the endeavour of the Western intellectuals to "invent" the opposite of their own world in an artificial way.

This endeavour might correspond with a more general archetypical tendency the character of which was explained by Claude Lévi-Strauss, the French father of structural anthropology. This author demonstrated[2] what sempiternally happens on the axis "North – South" and "East – West". While the first mentioned axis represents a comparatively constant polarity between qualities like "cold, dark, severity, sorrowfulness, midnight – warm, light, gay, midday" (it is interesting that in some Slavonic languages, among others in the archaic Czech, North and South are designated just as "půlnoc = midnight – poledne = midday"), in the direction "East – West" ("folllowing the sun", as it were) we can recognise everyday polarised connotations like "morning – evening" (see the German terms "Morgenland – Abendland"), "beginning – finishing (that is, finalising work)", "disorder/chaos – order", "formerly – later", "older/archaic – newer" etc. Such tendencies are conspicuosly dynamic to such an extent that we can find their specific modifications in various contexts. For example, Lévi-Strauss draws our attention to the fact that the acropolis as the dominant of a human settlement is mostly situated in the Western part of the cities. Living in a country which belongs to the Western culture we try to "invent" our own Eastern opposite pole and vice versa. Especially in the countries where the capital is situated noncentrically in their Eastern part one can have the feeling, that the East with all its typical connotations, is reached as soon as one goes beyond the border of the city (it is well-known, that chancellor Metternich had such an impression in Vienna). It can be admitted that it is only an inborn feeling, a vision of the people who appropriate their concrete geographical and sociocultural system in accordance with the mentioned polarisation. But a population which develops such self-interpretations can – so to speak step for step or under specific circumstances very suddenly – alter its environment just in accordance with these thought patterns.

This process occurred in the mind of the arising modern Czech nation, as well, in the course of which Bohemia and Moravia were understood in terms of their geographical and culturally historical morphology as the sought polarizing opposites. Roughly the following features have been ascribed to them:

West Bohemia	East Moravia
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closed (encompassed with montains)	open (transit way)
centripetal behaviour of population	centrifugal behaviour of population
rationality	spontaneity
more culture	more nature

2 See Claude Lévi-Strauss: *Tristes tropiques*, Paris 1955.

West	East
Bohemia	Moravia
newer	more ancient
advanced	belated or archaic
rather tending to the North-West (direction of the river Vltava and Labe) and therefore to the German world	rather tending to the South-East (direction of the rivers Morava and Danube) and therefore to Slavic world
rather cool	rather warm
.	.
.	.
(and last but not least) .	
beer	wine

Only some of the above-mentioned features which appear as connotations of the two geographical terms really exist, no doubt. The others represent even more projections of fictitious imaginations. Furthermore, the concrete acts of one's own identification could be sometimes relativized in a very surprising way. About 1942, for instance, the Czech composer Bohuslav Martinů described his culturally typological embedding as follows: "I was born in the town Polička, which is situated in Eastern Bohemia, but effectively it is Moravia"[3].

It is also clear, that the Czech searching for their own supposed Eastern pole was strenghtened by the slavophile or even Pan-Slav tendencies of what could be convincingly demonstrated in the field of music culture. Already in the 1840s Karel Zap was fascinated by the Polish and Ukrainian folk music and Max Konopásek, the well-known enemy of Smetana, wanted to develop a Czech musical style by utilising such "archetypes" of Slavonic music like kolomyjka and dumka[4]. This normative pseudotheory, however, was strictly rejected in the practice of composition by Bedřich Smetana and at the musicological level by Otakar Hostinský: to their mind the Czech national music ought to be oriented to the modern patterns of Liszt's and Wagner's neoromanticism. The effort of composers like Dvořák and Janáček to create a "Slavonic tone" and/or to react on typically Russian topics had almost nothing in common with Zap's and Konopásek's opinions, and Moravia as a source of the "Eastern" musical originality was discovered indepentently of such "Slavonic dreams", too. In the preface (written 1832) to the first edition of his collection of Moravian folksongs František Sušil emphasised the Moravian and/or Slavonic specifity of the so-called "mollezza dura" (a permanent oscillation between major and minor)[5] and it is very interesting that Antonín Dvořák considered the same phenomenon as a mu-

3 See Miloš Šafránek: *Bohuslav Martinů. Život a dílo*, Praha 1961, p. 24.

4 Konopásek published his explanations in the review Hudební listy 1874–75 (considerations *Z jaké půdy vyrodí se hudba slovanská, Rozbor otázky slovanské hudby and Hudební i nehudební stránky slovanské hudby*).

5 See František Sušil: *Moravské národní písně s nápěvy do textu vřaděnými*, Praha 41951, p. 8.

sical entity which is typical not only for the Central and Eastern European folklore but also for his own and Schubert's music.[6] Although the practical creative appropriation of such and similar Moravian features began only the Czech national music became matur enough: at this moment the aforementioned polarising tendency came to light as an indispensable condition of style differentiation.

The fact that the musically concretized "Moravian idiom" was not from the very outset directly determined by the activities of Moravian composers (for instance of Pavel Křížkovský) and that composers of Bohemian origin like Antonín Dvořák and his pupil Vítězslav Novák pertained to its main inventors is easily understandable, because the task to invent the supposed Eastern pole was a matter of the whole Czech national music. And what is more: the results of such a polarization were expected in foreign countries, too. Dvořáks world-acclaimed work "Moravské dvojzpěvy" (composed after 1875; the English title "Strains from Moravia" was created as a translation of the German title "Klänge aus Mähren") was promoted by authorities like Brahms and Simrock. Nevertheless not so much as Křížkovský's or Dvořák's dealing with the texts and sometimes with ditties of "Moravian folksongs in general" could contribute to the genesis of a typical "Eastern tone". In other words, it was necessary to find and to point out some specific structural entities which essentially differ from the usual stylistic patterns of the musical Classicism and Romanticism.

It is true that there is only one passage within the mentioned Dvořák's vocal work which corresponds with such entities, but it could just be understood as the real starting-point of the succesful polarizing process. I mean the very effective modal cadence by means of which the short instrumental postlude of the duet Nr. 11 "Zajatá" ("The Captured Bride" in the English translation) closes. It is well-known that, much later, Janáček arranged a textually similar ditty which belongs to the type of the so-called "hay-harvest songs" ("trávnice") and to the epic ballads at the same time and the very free metrorhytmical character of which is given by the specific vocal performance ("táhlá píseň"). Dvořák's setting has nothing in common with such free rhythm. Nevertheless Dvořák invented in the above-mentioned modal cadence a "minor" version of this harmonic mixolydian function (linking of the seventh and first degree of a heptatonic scale) which was explained by Janáček as the so-called "Moravian modulation". Dvořák discovered this modal function by transposing a conspicuosly descending passage which expressed in the sung stanzas the situations when the landlord tries to address and to "capture" the maid (texts in the English translation "harness, driver, the horse, we will go in the broad field", "give us, thou Maid, give us a pawn because thou mowed the grass in the dominion" and "Thou are already mine, Maid, I like thy little cheek"). We can suppose that this passage represents a rhetorical figure of the type "katabasis-descensus" so that it mediates the meaning "the submissiveness of the maid" in the given context. It

6 Dvořák formulated this opinion in his article dealing with Franz Schubert and published 1894 in *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazin.* See Klaus Döge: *Dvořák. Leben – Werke – Dokumente*, Mainz – München 1991, p. 343–358.

seems to me that Dvořák needed just such a original modal cadence for expressing this semantic intention in a psychologically and/or semantically adequate way.

At any rate, a surprising modal element was thus introduced in the major-minor diatonic context and the manner in which the tonality could be enriched and basically "alienated" was discovered for the sake of all Czech composers. Apart from the fact that, in the next decades, Dvořák intentionally exhausted some other modal materials (including the pentatonic scale), he used the mentioned mixolydian function more or less instinctively, i. e. without knowing that just such phenomena are typical for the musical folklore in Eastern Moravia.[7] The real existence of the East-West polarity in the field of Central European folk music was discovered and scientifically expounded about or rather after 1900, in other words: too late, in order to have affected some essential changes in the 19th-century art music. Until composers like Leoš Janáček and Béla Bartók, who undertook their own studies in ethnomusicology, were able to utilize this knowledge in their compositions. Thank to them the way was open also for many other personalities, e. g. for Szymanowski and Skrjabin, in the Czech music for Vítězslav Novák (of South Bohemian origin) and Alois Hába (born in Eastern Moravia) and finally for the Moravian composer's school which found its identity around Janáček and/or later.

Many Czech specialists, who dealt with Bohemian and Moravian folk music, explained the East-West polarization by identifying there two different musical styles or types. They characterized the Western type as an "instrumental style", while the structurally freer Eastern type got the name "vocal style".[8] Otakar Hostinský and Vladimír Helfert (using some impetus of Ilmari Krohn and keeping on Naumanns theory of the so-called "sunk values") believed that the instrumental style was influenced comparatively later by the penetration of baroque and classical music of Italian origin whereas the vocal style was identified with the surviving older and more original stratum of folk music, i. e. with a repertoir in which archaic modal and specific rhythmical elements of the universal validity could survive. In fact, the disclosed "Eastern" specificity of music folklore does not deserve to be called the "Moravian idiom", because it can be discovered only in some Eastern Moravian regions so to speak as the overlapping margin of the folk music culture which was developed in the Carpathian mountains and in the space of Pannonia.[9] Nevertheless the Eastern type as the crucial source of topical innovations in the practice of composition was comprehended

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7 See Jan Trojan: *Moravská lidová píseň Melodika/Harmonika*, Praha 1980.

8 See Otakar Hostinský: *Česká světská píseň lidová*, Praha 1906; Vladimír Úlehla: *Živá píseň*, Praha 1949. Vladimír Helfert considered such problems in his writings dealing with the baroque and classic music.

9 In his book *Slovenská ludová pieseň so stanoviska hudobného* (Bratislava 1951) the Slovak ethnomusicologist Jozef Kresánek formulated the opinion that the mountains – apart from their function as a political border – can serve as cultural transport ways so that the cultural frontier is usually situated at the roots of mountains, as in our case even in the most Eastern part of Moravia.

"pars pro toto" as the base of the "Moravian branch" of modern Czech music. What does it mean?

We tried to explain the two ways, namely the musically creative and the scientific, in which the fascinating "Eastern roots" of Czech music, actually fictional ideals derived from a geographically marginal idiom of the folk music in the Czech lands, were discovered and/or invented. At any rate, it was possible after this invention to compose in two different styles and to develop Czech art music in two different streams. The Eastern style and/or stream, which began to be sometimes designated as the "Moravian", tended again and again to the semantic field which has arisen around the term and/or notion "Moravia", in other words to its rich connotations. Let us be reminded of some of them: musical works of this type should be open to different style influences (including those of folk music), in their expression rather spontaneous or warm than rationally calculated or cool, discovering nature including natural sources of human soul and communicative behaviour, using archaic musical patterns which are evaluated as a living tradition and worth heritage, observing the Eastern cultures and beyond it everything which exists in foreign worlds in general and so on. For Leoš Janáček and Vítězslav Novák it was therefore possible to combine modality with "classical" harmony and to develop the so-called diatonic flexibility (instead of chromatic alteration), the system of which was consequently elaborated by Béla Bartók.[10] Alois Hába was convinced that the intrinsic elements of his microinterval system can be found not only in Eastern Moravia but also in the folk music of different European and Asian nations. The roots of Janáček's original theory of rhythm ("sčasování") and of Martinů's or Ištvan's complicated polymetrical solutions can be discovered in the European mensural tradition on the one hand and in extra-European (for instance African) musical cultures on the other. Janáček's speech motifs ("nápěvky mluvy") should discover the nature of human subconsciousness and some principles of extrahuman nature at the same time. After 1960, it was no problem for Moravian representatives of the neo-avant-garde (like Miloslav Ištvan and Alois Piňos) to create a synthesis of modal and serial techniques of composition. Without imitating Eastern Moravian folk tunes in their main works, Janáček and many other composers generalized some modal elements of this origin to such an extent that certain new musical symbols as the carrier of almost universal or enigmatic meaning were generated in this way. Let us mention two examples. The modal cadence (named "Moravian modulation"), which is based on the mixolydian function, was projected in the macrostructural dimension, too. Listening to the finale of Janáček's "Jenufa", we recognize it as a monumental combination of two different dramatic situations and/or musical "strata". While the tragical destiny culminates in C major chord (departure of the foster-mother in the prison and so on), the calming salvation and intrinsic catharsis of the two main heroes (Jenůfa and Laca) are presented in subtle B flat major: the "modulation" causes the change of perspectives. In the rhapsody "Taras Bulba", Janáček found an opposite type of this ca-

10 See Jaroslav Volek: *Modalita a její formy z hlediska hudebně teoretického*, Praha 1980.

dence in order to express catharsis and salvation altogether and it is well-known that Bohuslav Martinů, who declared his "effectively inborn" Moravianism, utilized a simplified form of this cadence (actually a mirror image of the "Moravian modulation"), by solving the old problem how to correctly link the chords situated on the first and second degree of a scale. The two authors used this procedure in the manner of a tonal sequence in order to "depict" the possibility of a nearly infinite progression or gradation of human emotions.

The play of the mentioned "Moravian" connotations offers furthermore broad semantic perspectives as for the search for extramusical themes of topics. Janáček expressed by means of the same individual style not only "Moravian" or Russian subjects but also those from the "fashionable" or urban environment. He could reflect nature and civilization, history and contemporary life, tragical and comical situations etc. Ištvan as a great master of metrorhytmical and modal innovations dealt in the 1970es and 1980es very consequently with African, Afroamerican and biblical topics. His colleague Arnošt Parsch tried to underline the relationship between Moravian or Bartóks modi and Indian ragas and dealt therefore with corresponding subjects and verbal texts. East and past, in other words: values which are – from the viewpoint of a composer who is embedded in the contemporary Western culture – far in the geographical and chronological dimension, can grow together in a very natural way. Finally, the roots of such values can be fictitiously discovered in their own region, as well, so that the narration which is realized by means of music can be repeated in a vicious circle. About 1900, some folklorists discovered a folk song (in Eastern Moravia), a musical structure the tune of which is conspicuously similar to that of the ancient Greek Seikilos Song. The two melodies are based on the "Moravian modulation". The imagination of many musicians and scientists was provoked by this discovery and the Czech writer of Moravian origin Milan Kundera described this fascination in his famous novel "Žert" ("The Jest"). Miloš Štědroň, a composer living and working in Brno, wrote in the 1970s a composition "Seikilos from Moravia" as a musical jest in the frame of which the two variants refer to the same ancient modal invariant.

We can conclude: the Czech musical culture of today is based on two different paradigms which correspond with the East-West polarity in the sense of the interpretation formulated by Lévi-Strauss; the Eastern pole was identified with some archaic elements, which survived in the folklore in Eastern Moravia; actually, the so-called Moravian stream of Czech music represents an artificial cultural invention, a project the function of which is to enrich composers' work and to grant to it a broader transcultural, multicultural, historical and mythological dimension.