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# **Pramenná báze pro výzkum Svazu československých skladatelů**

## **Sources for Research on the Union of Czechoslovak Composers**

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### **Abstract**

The article will focus on the state of the source base for the Union of Czechoslovak Composers, specifically the archival groups at the National Archives and the National Museum – Czech Museum of Music, which were examined as part of the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic's project no. 21-19041S – Composers' Unions and Cultural Policy in Socialist Countries in the 1950s and 1960s. On this occasion, a catalogue of the local archival group Sp 7/2008 was also created for the NM – CMH.

### **Key words**

Union of Czechoslovak Composers, cultural politics, Eastern Bloc, Socialist Realism, creative committee, creative secretary, ideological guidance, Stalinism, Khrushchev Thaw, Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia

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This study is the outcome of the project of the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic no. 21-19041S – Composers Unions and Cultural Policy in Socialist Countries in the 1950s and 1960s.

## Union of Czechoslovak Composers – General Information

Before discussing the main topic of this paper, a brief outline of the history of the Union of Czechoslovak Composers will be provided. Similarly to other countries of the Eastern Bloc, Communist Czechoslovakia established a “voluntarily selective” ideological organisation of music artists, critics and theoreticians<sup>1</sup> based on the Soviet model, called the Union of Czechoslovak Composers (hereinafter UCC) which had an absolutely critical role in shaping Czech music culture. The UCC essentially functioned as a monopoly, with its influence being guaranteed not only through direct political ties, but also through the considerable financial resources of the Czech Music Fund. This organisation, which was meant to support creative music activity in the country, was founded by the state through an amendment to the Copyright Act in 1954. However, state financial support on a larger scale began already in 1948 under the Union’s predecessor, the Syndicate of Czech Composers, after an agreement was reached with the Copyright Protection Association, which promised to support the work of composers by compensating the wages they lost when they took time off from their jobs to work on music.<sup>2</sup> From the turn of 1952 and 1953, another tool for controlling the music scene were creative commissions for each defined area (composition, musicology and concert artists).<sup>3</sup> The UCC also had its own publishing house in the form of Panton, publishing music and journals, especially *Hudební rozhledy* (*Musical Horizons*) and *Opus musicum*. In addition to providing direct support to music artists and researchers and publishing, the organisation was involved in many other activities, including, for example, organising national and international conferences and seminars, festivals, competitions and giving out awards. Last but not least was also international cooperation with partner organisations within the so-called Eastern Bloc. Through its leading members from the ranks of academia, the Union also had a profound influence on theoretical musicological discourse, music education and supported the politicization of culture in the spirit of the aesthetics of socialist realism and Marxism-Leninism. It thus became a lever of power of the ruling Communist Party.<sup>4</sup>

The preconditions for the establishment of the UCC came from earlier efforts to establish an organisation of music professionals, which culminated in the establishment of the Syndicate of Czech Composers in 1946. The development of the Union was affected

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1 ŠTĚDRŮŇ, Bohumír. Svaz československých skladatelů. In ČERNUŠÁK, Gracian – ŠTĚDRŮŇ, Bohumír – NOVÁČEK, Zdenko (edd.). *Československý hudební slovník osob a institucí*. Vol. 2, M–Ž. 1st ed. Praha: Státní hudební vydavatelství, 1965, p. 649.

2 HAVLÍK, Jaromír. Syndikát českých skladatelů. In *Český hudební slovník osob a institucí* [online]. Centre of Music Lexicography, Masaryk University Faculty of Arts, Department of Musicology. Page last edited 12 November 2003. [accessed 2022-12-08]. Czech version. Available at URL: <[https://www.ceskyhudebnislovník.cz/slovník/index.php?option=com\\_mdictionary&task=record.record\\_detail&id=4104](https://www.ceskyhudebnislovník.cz/slovník/index.php?option=com_mdictionary&task=record.record_detail&id=4104)>.

3 FUKAČ, Jiří. Svaz československých skladatelů. In FUKAČ, Jiří – MACEK, Petr – VYSLOUŽIL, Jiří (edd.). *Slovník české hudební kultury*. 1st ed. Praha: Editio Supraphon, 1997, pp. 889.

4 ZAPLETAL, Petar. Svaz československých skladatelů. In *Český hudební slovník osob a institucí* [online]. Centre of Music Lexicography, Masaryk University Faculty of Arts, Department of Musicology. Page last edited 7 March 2013 [accessed 2022-12-05]. Czech version. Available at URL: <[https://www.ceskyhudebnislovník.cz/slovník/index.php?option=com\\_mdictionary&task=record.record\\_detail&id=5881](https://www.ceskyhudebnislovník.cz/slovník/index.php?option=com_mdictionary&task=record.record_detail&id=5881)>.

by important socio-political milestones, especially the Communist coup between 17 and 25 February 1948 (the so-called Victorious February), the period of Stalinism and presidency of Klement Gottwald which lasted until 1953 and, subsequently, the “Khrushchev Thaw”. In its last phase, it was also affected by the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops on 21 August 1968, the beginnings of the so-called normalisation process and the federalisation of the Czechoslovak Republic on 1 January 1969. In its original form, the UCC was established at the 2nd Congress of Czechoslovak Composers and Musicologists, held in Prague by the Syndicate on 14 and 15 May 1949.<sup>5</sup> As part of its centralisation efforts, this newly created institution incorporated essentially all existing music associations, such as the Czech Music Society, Moravian Composers’ Club, the contemporary music association *Přítomnost* and especially the two composer Syndicates, the Czech and the Slovak, which served as a platform for the establishment of the UCC.<sup>6</sup> A good way to compare the mission statements of the original Syndicate and the new organization that emerged under the auspices of the Communist Party, is to simply look at their statutes, which say that:

the purpose of the Syndicate is

- “a) to pursue activities for the benefit of music production*
- b) to defend the interests of Czech composers as well as writers of texts set to music, musicologists and theorists*
- c) cooperate with other organisations of creative workers”*,<sup>7</sup>

whereas the task of the UCC is

- “1) to unite all conscious, progressive, Czech and Slovak creative music artists and researchers*
- 2) decide the direction of music production on the basis of a common goal*
- 3) familiarise composers and musicologists with the teachings of Marxism-Leninism*
- 4) bring creative musicians closer to the working people so that their work is focused on the needs of the broadest strata*
- 5) seek new talent within the ranks of workers and stimulate people’s music creativity*
- 6) cooperate with all progressive artists within our country as well as abroad”*.<sup>8</sup>

From these introductory points of the new organisation’s statutes, we can clearly see that UCC lays a claim to deciding which artists are or are not “conscious and progressive” and plans not only to provide general support for music, but to actually guide its direction. Alongside this, we also see a clear declaration of the principles of emphasis on people’s art and politicisation of art, following in the spirit of socialist realism.

5 HAVLÍK, Jaromír, op. cit.

6 ČERNUŠÁK, Gracian. Syndikát českých skladatelů. In ČERNUŠÁK, Gracian – ŠTĚDROŇ, Bohumír – NOVÁČEK, Zdenko (edd.). *Československý hudební slovník osob a institucí. Vol. 2, M–Ž*. 1st ed. Praha: Státní hudební vydavatelství, 1965, p. 670.

7 National Archive, UCC archival group (see the exact citation of the collection below), carton 1, document *Statutes of the Syndicate of Czech Composers*.

8 Ibid.; document *Statutes of the Union of Czechoslovak Composers*.

Over the course of its existence, the structure of the Union underwent significant changes, the discussion of which would, however, exceed the scope of this paper. To put it simply, the structure of the Union gradually stabilised into a division into two national segments, the Czech and the Slovak, and 3 sections – composers, musicologists and concert artists. In addition to its headquarters in Prague, chapters were established in larger cities, including Brno, discussed more extensively e. g. by musicologist Viktor Pantůček,<sup>9</sup> Ostrava, Košice, Plzeň, Bratislava and Banská Bystrica. In 1948, the organisation began publishing the union journal *Hudební rozhledy* (the first issue was printed on 15 October 1948, that is, before the establishment of the Union), which also served as a platform for publishing the official statements of the UCC. In 1953, a system of creative commissions and secretaries was established. In 1954, they established the aforementioned Czech Music Fund.<sup>10</sup> 1958 was the year that the Panton publishing house was established and, in 1969, the Brno branch started publishing the *Opus Musicum* journal.<sup>11</sup> In the wake of the invasion by the Warsaw Pact troops, the UCC condemned the Soviet occupation, which directly led to its transformation at the beginning of the “normalisation” period. The union was federalised, the number of its members reduced from roughly a thousand to 106, and, in December 1970, it was abolished at the national caucus of artistic and cultural workers by the establishment of the successor Union of Czech Composers and Concert Artists (UCCCA, which held its establishing convention in December 1972). The Slovak segment survived as the Union of Slovak Composers (hereinafter USC). From that point on, the Czech and Slovak unions operated more or less independently. However, 1973 marked the establishment of the federal Union of Czechoslovak Composers (hereinafter UCSC, as designated in the archives, in contrast to UCC) with the goal of coordinating the activities of both national organisations. In 1978, the two national organisations were formally incorporated into the UCSC.<sup>12</sup> This arrangement lasted until the events of 1989, when the UCSC’s leadership resigned on November 28. Following the so-called Velvet Revolution, both the UCCCA and the UCSC were dissolved at a special congress held on the 6th and 7th of May 1990 in Prague and a new successor organisation, the Association of Music Artists and Researchers (hereafter AMAR), which exists to this day.<sup>13</sup>

The central influential personalities were mainly the chairmen (composers Otakar Jeremiáš, Václav Dobiáš, vice-chairman Alexander Moyzes and other; in the Slovak segment, it was Dezider Kardoš), the general secretary, composer and music critic Miroslav Barvík (until 1953, when the position was abolished), later creative secretaries (for the

9 PANTŮČEK, Viktor. „*Když není pro, bude tedy, třeba i nevědomě, proti.*“ *Socialistický realismus v Československu? Budovatelská éra socialistického realismu v české hudební kultuře se zaměřením na Brno (1948–1953)* [online]. Brno, 2017 [accessed 2020-04-14]. Available at: <<https://theses.cz/id/iczv0n/>>. Dissertation. Masaryk University, Faculty of Arts.

10 HAVLÍK, op. cit.

11 ZAPLETAL, op. cit.

12 FUKAČ, op. cit.

13 CHMELÁŘOVÁ, Vlasta. Svaz českých skladatelů a koncertních umělců. In FUKAČ, Jiří – MACEK, Petr – VYSLOUŽIL, Jiří (edd.). *Slovník české hudební kultury*. 1st ed. Praha: Editio Supraphon, 1997, p. 890.

field of composition this was Vladimír Sommer, for musicology it was Antonín Hořejš) and the first secretaries (following the abolition of the position of chairman in 1963, e.g., Jiří Pauer, Věroslav Neumann, in Slovakia it was Andrej Očenáš) and various other members, such as the musicologist Antonín Sychra or the ideologically very active Jaroslav Jiránek. The very name of the Union of Czechoslovak Composers is, in fact, quite misleading, as its activities were influenced by representatives from all of its sections, and concert artists, such as cellists Karel Pravoslav Sádlo and Josef Chuchro, were also part of the leadership. As politics and priorities changed, some members, on the other hand, became undesirable (e.g., Miloslav Kabeláč, Jan Novák). For the sake of completeness, we may mention that, in addition to the UCC, other fields of art also had their own unions established during the 1950s and 60s, such as the Union of Architects of the Czechoslovak Republic, the Union of Czechoslovak Theatre Artists, the Union of Czechoslovak Writers, the Union of Czechoslovak Fine Artists and the Film and Television Union.<sup>14</sup>

## State of Research and Source Base

The history of the Union of Czechoslovak Composers has not yet received any comprehensive treatment in the form of a monograph. Some relevant information on its activities can be found in dictionary entries, with some of the older entries found, for example, in *Malá encyklopedie hudby (Little Encyclopaedia of Music)*<sup>15</sup> and *Československý hudební slovník osob a institucí (The Czechoslovak Music Dictionary of Figures and Institutions)*. A post-revolutionary interpretation of the history and activities of the Union of Czechoslovak Composers can be found in *Český slovník hudební kultury (The Czech Dictionary of Music Culture)* and the online version of *Československý hudební slovník osob a institucí*. Partially related topics (such as the aesthetics of socialist realism, activities of local branches in a specific period, content analysis of *Hudební rozhledy* or the lives and works of individual composers, etc.) have been analysed in various theses and articles. In recent years, there have also been numerous works dealing with socialist cultural policy and with the society of the time more broadly.

One of the key sources for the studying the UCC is the journal *Hudební rozhledy*,<sup>16</sup> which essentially become its printed platform. There are, however, two extensive and as of yet unprocessed archival collections stored at the National Archive (23.5 rm) and National Museum – Czech Museum of Music (43 rm) which were inaccessible until recently. My dissertation deals with the history of the Union of Czechoslovak Composers and its role in shaping the Czech musical culture with an emphasis on the field of classical music in the years 1949–1970. As part of the heuristics done for the dissertations and

14 KAPLAN, Karel. *Kronika komunistického Československa. Kořeny reformy 1956–1968: společnost a moc*. Brno: Společnost pro odbornou literaturu – Barrister & Principal, 2008, pp. 294, 435.

15 Umělecké svazy. In JAREŠ, Stanislav a SMOLKA, Jaroslav (edd.). *Malá encyklopedie hudby*. [2nd ed.], 1st edition under Supraphon. Praha: Supraphon, 1983, p. 672.

16 *Hudební rozhledy: časopis pro hudební kulturu*. Praha: Panorama, 1948-. ISSN 0018-6996.

also as part of a project under the Czech Science Foundation (GAČR),<sup>17</sup> both collections were fully examined, materials from the National Archive (hereinafter NA) were digitised and a comprehensive, albeit rough, cataloguing of the documents in the National Museum – Czech Museum of Music (hereinafter CMM) was carried out. The reflections of contemporary musical culture found in *Hudební rozhledy* are an important source of information, but it nevertheless represents only the official part of the facts, abbreviated versions of papers and, in a sense, censored information. Both archival groups, on the other hand, contain faithful stenographic records of discussions, unabridged texts in their original scope and many materials with relevant contexts, meaning their authenticity as sources is incomparably greater.

## National Archive

Although the archival groups within the National Archive are listed as unprocessed and there is no archival tool or database of its contents, a closer examination has shown that it is in fact already thematically and chronologically arranged into individual boxes. From the data that came from the digitisation and examination of the archival group performed by me, it may be possible to generate a retrospective description of the group's contents. Based on the obtained data, we may say that the Archive Group No. 361 entitled "*Union of Czechoslovak Composers, Prague*" consists of 121 boxes or, more precisely, 109 boxes of one numbered series and 12 the other one. Cartons 75 and 91 are missing for unknown reasons. The first set is related to the original UCC (1949–1970), the second to the UCSC (specifically the years 1978–1990, that is, the period when the organisation included both national unions). Although musicologist Jaromír Havlík states that the archive of the Syndicate of Czech Composers is missing,<sup>18</sup> the notebook "*Syndicate of Czech Composers; Minutes of meetings and attendance lists from 13 June 1945 to 31 December 1946*" has been found, including the records of the preparatory committee (as the date corresponds), but there is only a negligible amount of related material from this period in both archival fonds. An important part of the first series of cartons in the NA are the stenographic records of the meetings of the Central Committee of the UCC and its Board (hereinafter CC, BCC), which take up 24 of them. A large part also contains minutes from meetings of various sections and their parts (21 cartons), personnel files (including reviews of compositions, grant applications, etc.) (10 cartons), stenograms of conferences, symposia or seminars (9 cartons), correspondence and contacts with foreign countries, including travel reports (7 cartons) and many other materials, including cartons dedicated specifically to individual conventions, secretariat records, festivals, chronicles, etc. The second set is less extensive. It includes 12 cartons with similar themes, but pertaining instead to the UCSC – especially minutes of the meetings of the CC and BCC, but also cartons dedicated to individual congresses, foreign relations

17 See above for exact project designation.

18 HAVLÍK, op. cit.

and other documents, such as photographs or plans for a new building. The total extent of both series of cartons is 23.5 rm, over 70,000 pages or posters, etc. Its digitisation was done in a quality and form this is suitable for their study, which also means that the materials cannot be made publicly accessible at the current moment.

When it comes to the state of the materials, the brochures, posters and bound stenograms are in rather decent condition, are easily legible and do not fall apart when handled. In contrast, many carbon papers, which the group contains tens of thousands of, are often crumpled, illegible and their state is in some cases terrible. Most likely, these documents were not looked after very well even in their original location of the archive of the Union or the successor organisations. Attempts to find the origin of the materials of both archival groups and their creation has not yet yielded any definitive results. As noted by the archivist Roman Štér who is currently in charge of the archival group, the registry shows that the documents were handed over to the National Archive in 1990–1991 by AMAR and the Association of Authors and Performers (hereafter AAP, as of yet, we do not know how a portion of these materials made its way to this organisation). In any case, based on the content showing a clear continuity (stenogram bindings; the look and form of the records, hints to how they were sorted, etc.), we may assume that up to the establishment of AMAR in 1990, both archival groups were originally kept together and even had a systematic order. After that, it seems that AMAR and AAP then sorted out most of the materials of the original UCC and a part of the documents pertaining to the UCSC (which may be understood as a renewed organisation) and donated them to the National Archive. The rest of the documents, especially those related to the UCCCA were kept by AMAR, the successor organisation. This means that one of the core source bases for researching the original UCC is the archival group in the National Archive, even though for most of the other mentioned organisations, the more important resource is likely the Czech Museum of Music, which contains almost double the volume of materials.

## **National Museum – Czech Museum of Music**

Unlike the archival group in the National Archives, the documents found in the CMM's collection went through multiple moves which resulted in the loss of any sensible ordering. They were donated to the museum from the Ethnological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in 2008 and there has not been enough spare work capacity to process them given their extensive volume of 43 rm. The materials are also largely very recent, in many cases not even 30 years old, which also means that access to them remains restricted. However, they were made available to the Department of Musicology at the Palacký University Faculty of Arts for research purposes – naturally with only a limited possibility of subsequent use, as they are covered by the Personal Data Protection Act. Additionally, the institution only granted us access to the archival group under the condition that we will conduct at least a rough processing and cataloguing of it. These have now been completed. The archive was examined, divided into 1168



folders and separated into more than 400 cartons, and a description of it was made. This description currently has the form of an Excel spreadsheet of individual folders where each is given a number along with keywords, a closer description of its contents, additional notes and, if possible, a dating. The text of the catalogue comprises approximately 159 standard pages. The level of detail in the description varies depending on need. For example, for bound stenographic records of conferences or meetings of the central committee, the description contains a name and a date, while for simple records of meetings, there is only a date. An important aspect of processing the records is noting down all of the names on the personnel files – however, their contents are listed only through the example of a typical file of that type, rather than having an individual detailed list of each of its documents. Within the available time frame, it was not feasible to organise the archival group based on topic and chronology. The main purpose of this processing was to allow researchers to easily check if the archival group contains materials relevant to a given issue and provide a brief description of them. This style of tool fulfils its purpose and makes the archival group usable for further study.

Archival group *Svaz československých skladatelů (1949–1969) a Svaz českých skladatelů a koncertních umělců*, the increment number Sp 7/2008, stored in the NM – CMM's Music History Department, includes, to some extent, materials of almost all the mentioned organisations (with the exception of the Syndicate), i.e., UCC, UCCCA, USC, USCS and AMAR. However, the largest number of documents comes from the UCCCA with those from AMAR being the second largest group. Part of the archival group's content is similar to the documents found in the National Archive, such as complete stenographic records of meetings of the UCCCA's Board of the Central Committee and, later, of AMAR's Council, as well as records of conferences, seminars, etc. The personnel records are very extensive, comprising several filing cabinets of personnel files from different time periods which are, unfortunately, all mixed in together and the extent and content of individual files varies greatly. Some parts also include reviews of works, whether these were compositions or books, reviews of recorded artistic performances, staff materials, grant requests and their outcomes. There are also special folders dedicated, for example, to detailed records of many committees and subcommittees (including creative ones) and documents from various segments of the UCCCA (Circle of Lyricists and Librettists, Subcommittee for Mass Song, etc.). Of interest are, for example, photographs of many members of the Union taken at the studio of Miloň Novotný during the 1980s. Individual folders also contain material on various festivals, such as the Prague Spring, the Bratislava Lyre, the Sokolov Political Song Festival and the Golden Mace. There are also documents regarding the activities of the Circles of Friends of Music (organised by city), concert programmes and various other topics. In the future, various documents from 1989–1990, which reflect the situation at the time, may also prove valuable. Nevertheless, the archival group also contains many musicologically unattractive materials, such as accounting records, employee agendas or manuals for electronic devices. The files originally belonging to the UCCCA are very well organised and kept, despite being out of order. However, the state of how the AMAR documents are organised often reflects the tumultuous time period during which they were made.

As for the condition of the documents, it can generally be said that it is oftentimes worse compared to those found in the National Archive – the folders were often mouldy or dirty, although the documents themselves, which were often newer, were, somewhat paradoxically, less damaged. Their condition certainly is not the fault of the National Museum, but rather of the several moves they underwent along with storage in unsuitable conditions. Two witnesses, the former secretary of the UCCCA and AMAR Ivana Goldsteinová and the Prague musicologists Jarmila Gabrielová, noted that some documents were likely removed from the archival group following the regime change in 1989. There are, indeed, some empty personnel files and places where the name of an author was cut out from a review, but nevertheless a large number of genuinely important sources remains, including complete stenographic records of discussion at meetings of the Central Committee and others.

## Conclusion

Both archival groups are an important source for research into the organisations that had a major influence on music culture in Communist Czechoslovakia. Thanks to the digitisation of the National Archive, its content has been made clear and it is ready for the diligent work of further researchers. Similarly, cataloguing the archival group at the National Museum – Czech Museum of Music made it into a usable source and made its future detailed processing much easier.

## List of Abbreviations and Translations

AHUV	Asociace hudebních umělců a vědců
AMAR	Association of Music Artists and Researchers
ČMH	Národní muzeum – České muzeum hudby
CMM	National Museum – Czech Museum of Music
GAČR	Grantová agentura České republiky
GAČR	Czech Science Foundation
NA	Národní archiv
NA	National Archive
PÚV	Předsednictvo ústředního výboru
BCC	Board of the Central Committee
SAI	Svaz autorů a interpretů
AAP	Association of Authors and Performers

SČS	Svaz československých skladatelů (1949–1970)
UCC	Union of Czechoslovak Composers (1949–1970)
SČSS	Svaz československých skladatelů (1973–1989)
UCSC	Union of Czechoslovak Composers (1973–1989)
SČSKU	Svaz českých skladatelů a koncertních umělců
UCCCA	Union of Czech Composers and Concert Artists
ÚV	Ústřední výbor
CC	Central Committee
ZSS, SSS	Zváz/Sváz slovenských skladatelov
USC	Union of Slovak Composers

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*Archival group in the National Archives:*

Number of group/collection: 361

Name of group/collection: Svaz československých skladatelů, Praha

Sig of group/collection: SČSS

Date: 1949–1990

Originator: Union of Czechoslovak Composers 1949–1970 Union of Czech Composers and Concert Artists 1972–1990 Union of Czechoslovak Composers 1978–1990

Description: 18.15 organisation and management in the field of art, 18.41.79.03 music composers

Thematic groups: Social organizations 1948–1990 – cultural and educational unprocessed, 23.5 rm

*Archival group at the National Museum – Czech Museum of Music:*

Number of group/collection: NM-ČMH Sp 7/2008

Name of group/collection: Svaz československých skladatelů (1949–1969) a Svaz českých skladatelů a koncertních umělců

unprocessed, 43 rm

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