

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-57357-3 - Janacek Studies
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Janáček Studies

This volume of essays constitutes the first major study of the music of Janáček, now widely considered one of the most important composers of the early twentieth century. The essays deal with a broad range of topics relating to opera, symphonic poem, instrumental music, cultural context and reception. Some topics, such as the sources of Janáček's musical expressivity, questions of narrative, Janáček as musical analyst and Janáček as realist, have hitherto received little attention, whilst other more conventional topics, such as 'speech melody' and Janáček's ethnographic activities, are reappraised. A transcription of Janáček's analytical study of 'Jeux de vagues' from Debussy's *La mer* is published for the first time, and this document is considered in the light of Janáček's theory of music as a whole and of the reception of *La mer*.

Paul Wingfield is a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and is author of the Cambridge Music Handbook *Janáček: Glagolitic Mass*.

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521573573

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First published 1999
 This digitally printed first paperback version 2006

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Wingfield, Paul.
 Janáček studies / edited by Paul Wingfield.

p. cm.

Includes index.

Contents: Expressive sources and resources in Janáček's musical language / Robin Holloway – 'Nothing but pranks and puns': Janáček's solo piano music / Thomas Adès – Narrative in Janáček's symphonic poems / Hugh Macdonald – Evasive realism: narrative construction in Dostoyevsky's and Janáček's *From the House of the Dead* / Geoffrey Chew and Robert Vilain – Direct discourse and speech melody in Janáček's operas / Miloš Štědroň – Kundera's eternal present and Janáček's ancient gypsy / Michael Beckerman – Janáček's folk settings and the *Vixen* / Zdeněk Skoumal – Janáček's operas in Australia and New Zealand: a performance history / Adrienne Simpson – Janáček's Moravian publishers / Nigel Simeone – Janáček, musical analysis, and Debussy's 'Jeux de vagues' / Paul Wingfield.

ISBN 0 521 57357 2

1. Janáček, Leoš, 1854–1928 – Criticism and interpretation.
2. Janáček, Leoš, 1854–1928 – Contributions in music theory.
3. Debussy, Claude, 1862–1918. La Mer. I. Title.

ML410.J18W57 1999

780'.92–dc21 98–38096 CIP

ISBN-13 978-0-521-57357-3 hardback

ISBN-10 0-521-57357-2 hardback

ISBN-13 978-0-521-02772-4 paperback

ISBN-10 0-521-02772-1 paperback

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-57357-3 - Janacek Studies
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Preface

Robin Holloway writes on p. 11 below of this volume: '[Janáček's] reception is both ardent and on-target; he is not misunderstood, and no longer a cause. The next steps, alas, are academic appropriation and universal establishmentarianism.' Holloway is surely right to suggest that Janáček's works are now viewed widely and enthusiastically as core repertory – particularly the operas, which are performed more regularly than those of almost any other twentieth-century composer. And, of course, the devotion of a 'Studies' volume to a composer's music is the seal of 'academic appropriation' *par excellence*. Nevertheless, I hope this volume might be excused on the grounds that very little has yet been published about Janáček's music, even if, as Hanns Eisler once famously remarked, he is perhaps this century's most innovative composer in terms of musical 'expression'. In fact, the Janáček literature is still so overwhelmingly dominated by popular biography that a 'Studies' book could be regarded as long overdue, or at least as a valuable corrective.

The essays are not themed: the weighting towards opera, for example, reflects Janáček's apportioning of his energies rather than a scholarly agenda. Two authors essentially share Eisler's view of Janáček as the ultimate creator of musical expression. Holloway takes on both the entire oeuvre (centred on opera) and Janáček the man, seeking to discover how music 'can be reconciled with an aesthetic of unmitigated expression grounded in human utterance'. Tom Adès confines himself to a single 'underestimated' medium (solo piano), arguing that conventional analytical approaches are powerless when confronted by a composer who can transform a simple enharmonic shift into the most potent of signifiers.

A notable feature of Janáček research hitherto has been an avoidance of the concerns of modern musicology in the broader sense. This is certainly not true of the chapter by Geoffrey Chew and Robert Vilain, who, by exposing tensions between the music of *From the House of the Dead* and the work's literary model, raise important questions about the nature of

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operatic realism. Similarly, Hugh Macdonald's essay, which investigates the fractures between Janáček's symphonic poems and their programmes, has significant implications for the study of musical narrativity in general. Michael Beckerman's essay invites us to contemplate nothing less than the 'critical' differences between musical and dramatic time.

Not that familiar Janáček topics are excluded. Miloš Štědroň tackles the most frequently debated subject of all, 'speech melody', arguing that, contrary to received opinion, Janáček's deployment in his operas of vocal motives based on the rhythms and inflections of spoken Czech is a relatively rare, if powerful, compositional device. Zdeněk Skoumal offers a new approach to another mainstream topic: the interconnections between Janáček's activities as composer and ethnographer. Two further essays have a historical orientation. Nigel Simeone provides details about the provincial musical marketplace within which Janáček operated for most of his career. Adrienne Simpson reminds us that major developments in the reception of Janáček's music have not been limited to Europe and the United States.

One recurring motive in the book is the vital relationship for Janáček between music theory and composition. My own chapter thus grants the final word to Janáček the theorist and analyst, offering a transcription of his unpublished 1921 analytical study of 'Jeux de vagues' from Debussy's *La mer*, and considering this document in the light of Janáček's theory of music as a whole and of the reception of *La mer*.

I should like to take this opportunity to record some personal debts. First, to all my contributors, for their conscientious scholarship and their good-natured forbearance in the face of my editorial interference and constant requests for clarification. Also, I am grateful to Dimitra Stamogiannou for practical assistance. David Gascoigne provided invaluable advice concerning translation of the French texts quoted in my article. Inevitably, the period of a book's preparation is one of great trial to those close to the editor or author, and I would like to acknowledge my profound indebtedness to Anne, Jack, Alison, Pam, Christine and David, who have in different ways suffered and given their unqualified support over the last year or so. Finally, just as Debussy's *La mer* was written at a time of personal crisis for the composer, so the completion of this volume coincided with a turbulent phase in my own life. Penny Souster has borne the resulting delays and ditherings with considerable patience and understanding.