



Music Education in Ostrava in Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (1939–1945)

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Summary

The present study deals with history of music education in Ostrava in the period of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (1939–1945). The study reflects the studies theme in the area of general music education, specialised music education and music education in teacher preparation. The study also mentions music popularisation and music education of general public in the period of interest.



Introduction

On 16 March 1939 Adolf Hitler issued a decree on establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren). Development of the Czech system of education was negatively affected by the Nazi occupation for the related massive decrease of the number of Czech secondary schools and in November 1939 closure of Czech universities, negatively affecting staffing of secondary schools and teachers' institutes with new teachers.¹ Music education in Ostrava in the period 1939–1945 can be studied from several different angles, including general music education (at elementary, burgher and secondary schools); professional music education; music education in teacher preparation and music popularisation and music education of the general public.

cational relevance for practical life. Music education also followed particular objectives related to not only nationalistic but also ethical aspects of education and upbringing at school.

By Decree of the Ministry of Education of 26 August 1943 music education was introduced as a compulsory subject at secondary schools (in the first to the fourth year two lessons per week, and as an optional subject in the remaining years). There are documents of secondary professional school participation in concert life in the Protectorate period, as for example the documented existence of the Orchestra of Business Academy in Moravian Ostrava. The orchestra was conducted by teacher Karel Hofírek, in addition to teaching and artistic activities in the school also writing reviews for daily press, such as *České Slovo* daily. The Orchestra of Business Academy in Moravian Ostrava gave high-standard concerts, considering the environment in which it was established and developed its activity.²

Professional Music Education

In the Ostrava of the Protectorate period³ important activities are documented in the area



Elementary, Burgher and Secondary Schools

The background of music education at Ostrava elementary and burgher schools was quite favourable (one lesson per week in all boys' and girls' classes). Folksong was an important element of music education at the elementary level, especially with its edu-

of professional music education. Active concert activity was pursued for example by the Masaryk Music and Singing Institute (later renamed to Institute of Music and Singing), the Rund Music School of the Záboj Chorus Society (formerly the Music School of the Záboj Chorus Society in Silesian Ostrava), or the Vítkovice Municipal Music Institute of Dr. Leoš Janáček. The abovementioned institutions tried to develop both teaching and extensive performing activities (music parties, solo recitals, matinees etc.).

The following text will mainly focus on the Masaryk Music and Singing Institute (or later the Institute of Music and Singing) and the Rund Music School of the Záboj Chorus Society. In the school year 1938/1939 part of the teaching was suspended at the **Masaryk Music and Singing Institute** for some of the teachers were mobilised and had to serve the army (František Mířa Hradil, Josef Bartl). Despite that the Institute continues its activity including not only teaching but also various music evenings, solo recitals, or competitions; selected teachers involved in concert and music popularisation and general public education activities.

The Institute was reorganised, which for example resulted in establishment of the department of music education where children at the age of 6 to 8 received rudimentary music education, understood as elementary music education. The school activities further included chorus singing, ensemble and orchestra practise.⁴ The chronicle of the Institute also informs about Hradil's efforts at establishment of parent cooperation in music teaching activities at the Institute. "The most important element is the pupil who attends lessons, listens to the lectures by its professors and follows their instruction, practises the compositions at home and then performs the practised pieces in the classroom. Our work, to be really profound, must be supported by parent understanding. This means correct and serious view of music studies, checks of absolute accuracy and timeliness of the pupil's school attendance and home practise."⁵

Long-term success in teaching resulted in grant of public right (by decree of 8 August 1941) whereby F. M. Hradil was appointed member of the state examination jury for private teachers of music.⁶ Since then the Institute ranked among major educational institutions in the context of music education not only in Ostrava but nationwide.

The Institute can be said to have sufficient numbers of pupils despite the difficult times in early 1940s, even recording significant increase in the school year 1941/1942 in comparison to the previous years.⁷ Despite the culture and art restrictions in the Protectorate period the Institute of Music and Singing became kind of model for all music schools from other regions of the country. Period press reflects the need for building a proper music school on the level of music academy or music, dance and drama teachers' institute in Hradec Králové (as a model for other towns in North-Eastern Bohemia), with similar functions as the Institute of Music and Singing.⁸ On the occasion of 36th anniversary of the Institute existence (in the context of the visit of the ministerial secretary Basil Macalík in the Institute) F. M. Hradil summarised in his speech of 13 March 1943 the most important points of its history, formulating problems of contemporary Czech professional music education in this context.

According to Hradil Czech music education was impaired by organisational fragmentation and heterogeneity and needed unification. Hradil also pointed out the difficult financial situation of music school, their dependence on public funds which did not assure reliable existence. Hradil raised the requirement of permanent financial prosperity of the schools, which would also bring about increased social standards of the teachers. Hradil was fully aware that a good school needs good teachers – artists – who were lacked in the Czech schools. Only few performing artists were able to understand the specifics of the teacher profession to be able to sacrifice their performing ambitions to it.⁹ Hradil could see remedy mainly in deepening of conservatory studies on the



pedagogy-didactic level, in increased attention to teacher census including distribution of lists of available teachers to individual school via the Ministry of Education or Music Inspectorates.

The teachers of the Institute of Music and Singing also paid considerable attention to younger pupils (in the school year 1942/1943 the Institute provided music pre-education to children from 5 to 7 years of age),¹⁰ who were then expected to continue with further music education. In addition to the main aim of systematic education of music experts the Institute also aimed at education of perceptive concert audience. In their approach to younger pupils the teachers mainly utilised their natural vividness and inclination towards movement, further developed into a sense of rhythm and music in general. The Institute of Music and Singing was one of the first schools in the region providing professional training in rhythmical movement to children and promoting the same among their parents. Rhythmical movement was important not only in music education but also in general upbringing. Training in rhythmic movement was considered by the teachers as direct preparation for music education, with an important position in music lessons.

Institute developed music education on the grounds of a specialised department where mainly thanks to Miroslav Barvík special attention was paid to music analyses with a gramophone or a piano and where lectures of artists as well as listeners were organised. The purpose was to provide an opportunity for establishment of relationships between education, performing activities, literature and art in the wide sense. For example in September 1943 music lessons focused on the theme of the personality and compositional achievements of Leoš Janáček, with the conductor of the Ostrava Opera Jaroslav Vogel appeared in the second lesson to lecture on Janáček's *Jenufa*.¹¹

An interesting innovation leading in early 1944 to deepening and improvement of music education organisation at the Institute

was represented by establishment of the Music Education Board, with the members including the best students of all years. Each member has a special field allocated where he or she recorded performing availability of individual pupils.

At the beginning of school year 1944/1945 the Institute of Music and Singing faced insufficient spatial capacity (limited to mere two classrooms), after the school building was allocated to a German weapon factory, which paralysed the school activities. Efforts at finding classroom space outside the school building failed until the administration of the Holy Cross Convent provided one classroom in their building.

Air raids of Ostrava together with the false information about closure of all music schools at the beginning of the war year had catastrophic consequences for the numbers of enrolled students. Out of the one thousand thirty pupils registered less than a half actually turned up. Lessons were even held in the teachers' private homes. In November 1944 teachers and pupils of the specialised music department were sent to work in German weapon factories. But despite that the activities of the Institute were not suspended completely.¹²

Great courage was displayed by the headmaster F. M. Hradil, who made use of this contacts and knowledge of German to protect the teachers and the pupils of the institute for as long as it was possible. Full activity of the institute was then renewed after the end of World War II, when in 1953 a special department was allocated to education of professional musicians, after a time transferred under the Music and Teaching Higher Education Institute, the later conservatory.¹³ In the period of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia frequent changes in the position of headmaster of the **Rund Music School of the Zábój Chorus Society** (formerly the Music School of the Zábój Chorus Society in Silesian Ostrava) were made, with a negative impact on the school development and the teaching quality as such, although the apparent increase of the number

of pupils justified the hope for the best.¹⁴ Following Theodor Poledník Josef Schreiber was appointed the school headmaster (holding the post in the years 1938–1940), succeeded by Miroslav Junk (1940–1944) and Josef Przebinda (since 1944).

At the end of the thirties and in the former half of the forties further changes were made in the teaching staff. In 1938 Jan Pešat terminated his teaching activities.¹⁵ “The trustees of the Rund Music School of the Záboj Chorus Society in Silesian Ostrava accept with regret that you resign from the post of violin teacher at the school and express their acknowledgements for and appreciation of your (...) work done for 23 years for the benefit of the pupils, the school and the art of music in general.”¹⁶ “For nearly a quarter of a century you were one of the main pillars of our music school, and while you were here there was hardly any event held by the school in which you would not participate as excellent teacher, conductor and organiser.”¹⁷

The situation with the school building was not yet resolved in the Protectorate period. Josef Schreiber says that teaching was performed in restricted conditions. “(...) Classrooms of the Rund Music School scattered in many different places did not allow me to concentrate fully on the main task of teaching and artistic activities.”¹⁸ Schreiber tried to get a building for the school with the help of the school trustees, but he failed (the school only got its own building after the end of World War II).¹⁹ The restricted conditions were resolved by teaching in the teachers’ private homes.

Josef Schreiber was one of the most outstanding personalities of the Music School of the Silesian Ostrava. After his abdication for the headmaster post he received an offer of membership in the board of trustees of the Rund Music School of the Záboj Chorus Society. Schreiber’s relationship to the school can be documented, inter alia, by his selfless devotion. “Your headmaster activity (...) feel in the war period, full of political events. Then also the RMS (Rund Music School, author’s note) was in difficulties, both existential and financial. You were full of understanding for

the school, which was proved by donation of nearly all your headmaster salaries for one year for the need of the school.”²⁰

In addition to the surviving problems with the school background there is also evidence of restrictions in the area of concert presentation of the school educational results, for example in the school year 1941/1942 the music school prepared the final concert where the 35-member school student orchestra was to perform, but the general police ban prevented the concert from being held.²¹ Study of archive materials allows for the general conclusion that in the period of World War II the Music School of Silesian Ostrava mainly presented its results at in-house pupil concerts. Full teaching and performing activities were only renewed after the end of the war.

Music Education in Teacher Preparation

In the school year 1938/1939 the numbers of pupils at the **Teachers’ Institute in Silesian Ostrava** fluctuated considerably, mainly due to admission of large numbers of students from the discontinued schools. Due to the period context the activities of teachers Jan Šoupal and Antonín Kříž, including engagement of the school staff in school radio broadcasts, can be considered significant regional achievement. The broadcast programmes included selected choral compositions (for example on 9 June 1939).²²

School radio broadcasting can be interpreted as an effort at strengthening national identity in a difficult period, especially with support of parallel documentation of inclusion of Silesian folksongs in broadcasts of the Czechoslovak Radio thanks to the Lumír Chorus.

In late 1930s students of the Teachers’ Institute participated in occasional festivals of Czech writers (with regard to the difficult times also accenting values of the nation). For example on 14 March 1939 the Teachers’ Institute organised a programme in memory of Karel Čapek, including both literary and music performance (a selection from Dvořák’s *Biblical Songs*, mixed chorus compositions

Death, Life by Josef Bohuslav Foerster and the hymn *Saint Venceslas* by Adolf Cmíral).²³ The establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia increased the influence of Czech culture, culture institutions and festivals. The Teachers' Institute in Silesian Ostrava organised a concert performance in the context of the Czech Music May (with the proceeds donated to holiday care of the students of the Teachers' Institute). The event was held on 18 May 1940 in the big hall of the Catholic House in Moravian Ostrava (in addition to music and dance performances also including a model physical training lesson). The programme of the concert focused on Czech music, in addition to arrangements of Silesian and Moravian folksongs by Jan Šoupal and Rudolf Wünsch including the mixed chorus *Dowry* by Bedřich Smetana, and arias from the opera *Rusalka* by Antonín Dvořák.²⁴ In the period of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia Jan Šoupal terminated his teaching activities at the Teachers' Institute in Silesian Ostrava (in August 1942). In the same year the activities of the Teachers' Institute were suspended locally, only continued in Valašské Meziříčí.

Music Popularisation and Music Education for General Public

Although archive materials from the period of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (1939–1945) are only fragmentary in relation to music popularisation and music education of general public, even in that unfavourable period there was the **Popular Higher Education Institute** (the original **Masaryk Popular Higher Education Institute** was renamed in 1939) which existed till 1944, when letters of acknowledgement were sent to the teachers and the popular music education institution was finally closed.²⁵

The period of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia substantially affected not only the general public in Ostrava but also organizers of popular educational events. Despite the hard times in 1941 Mirko Očadlík was allowed to give a lecture in Ostrava on *The Purpose of Czech Music*, followed in the fo-

llowing year with *Foundation of Czech Opera*. The year 1941 was also the year of Antonín Dvořák's anniversary, in the context of which, in addition to numerous concerts, a lecture by Otakar Šourek, a leading expert in Dvořák studies, was held. In early 1940s Jaroslav Vogel initiated meetings before opera premieres where Ostrava audiences were provided factual information about the staging, with live performance examples (in 1942 – Dvořák's *Armida*, Wagner's *Walküre*).²⁶

Organisation of musical evenings was marked with a change comprising their transition to Cultural Wednesdays²⁷ with alternating music and literary programmes. In the period of interest commonly held concerts were also organised, confirming close cooperation of music educational and cultural institutions in Ostrava. In the case of cooperation between the Institute of Music and Singing (the former Masaryk Music and Singing Institute) and the Higher Popular Music School an important link was represented by the personality of F. M. Hradil, who was active in both institutions.

In 1940s, in addition to F. M. Hradil, another engaged musical life organizer was Josef Schreiber, whose concerts with opening lectures mainly featured contemporary Czech music (in 1942 compositions by Karel Boleslav Jirák, Václav Kaprál, Josef Bohuslav Foerster). In 1943 Ostrava public was introduced to compositions by Ostrava composers (Milan Balcar, Jaroslav Vogel and others). The Higher Popular Music School also organised an extraordinary lecture by Dr. Jan Racek on *Leoš Janáček and Contemporary Moravian Music*; and Prof. Karel Hofírek's lecture *Forgotten Masters of XVIII Century*.²⁸

Conclusions

The historic outline of music education in Ostrava in the period of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia 1939–1945 can be summarised in a couple of individual conclusions. In the Protectorate period of 1939–1945 the music education in Ostrava faced the hard existential conditions of Czech schools.

Despite the outlined difficulties activities were mainly developed by institutions providing professional music education (the Masaryk Music and Singing Institute/Institute of Music and Singing, the Rund Music School of the Zábaj Chorus Society and others).

The concerts and other events held in the period were focused on Czech music, emphasizing the attributes of Czech nationality and national values. Czech music was often featured against bans of German censorship. One of the positives of that period was establishment of compulsory subject of music education in secondary school, including secondary technical schools, with

after-school student activities in school orchestras, such as the Orchestra of the Business Academy in Moravian Ostrava.

Qualitative development of the subject was assured in the Protectorate period by a number of outstanding period personalities including Karel Hofírek, František Mířa Hradil, Jan Peřat, Jan Šoupal and others. The history of music education in Ostrava in the period of interest also included limited music popularisation and music education for general public activities organised by the Popular Higher Education Institute (formerly Masaryk Popular Higher Education Institute).

Notes

- 1 STEINMETZ, K., MAZUREK, J., KUSÁK, J., OLŠAROVÁ, P. *Ostrava hudební. Vývoj hudební kultury jednoho města v posledních 160 letech*. Ostrava: Ostrava University, Pedagogical Faculty, 2014, p. 77. ISBN 978-80-7464-664-5.
- 2 STEINMETZ, K., MAZUREK, J., KUSÁK, J., OLŠAROVÁ, P. *Ostrava hudební. Vývoj hudební kultury jednoho města v posledních 160 letech*. Ostrava: Ostrava University, Pedagogical Faculty, 2014, p. 78. ISBN 978-80-7464-664-5.
- 3 The hard times of the late 1930s also affected work by Ostrava composers, such as Rudolf Kubín. More information about the personality of Rudolf Kubín see the essay by KUSÁK, J., MAZUREK, J. Rudolf Kubín (1909–1973). K stému výročí narození ostravského hudebního umělce. In *Mezinárodní webový sborník hudební výchovy 2009*, No. 1. Ostrava: Pedagogical Faculty of Ostrava University, 2009, pp. 226–232. ISSN 1802-6540.
- 4 *Kronika Masarykova městského ústavu hudby a zpěvu s právem veřejnosti v Ostravě za školní rok 1941–1942*, available from the Archives of the City of Ostrava.
- 5 *Kronika Masarykova městského ústavu hudby a zpěvu s právem veřejnosti v Ostravě za školní rok 1943–1944*, available from the Archives of the City of Ostrava.
- 6 *40 let hudební výchovy v kraji Leoše Janáčka. 40. jubilejní výroční zpráva Masarykova městského ústavu hudby a zpěvu s právem veřejnosti v Ostravě*. Ostrava 1947, p. 18, available from the Archives of the City of Ostrava.
- 7 In 1940–1941: 481 pupils; in 1941–1942 732 pupils. *Kronika Masarykova městského ústavu hudby a zpěvu s právem veřejnosti v Ostravě za školní rok 1941–1942*, available from the Archives of the City of Ostrava.
- 8 SLAVICKÝ, J. O zřízení řádného hudebního učiliště v Hradci. In *České Slovo*, 2. 8. 1942
- 9 *Kronika Masarykova městského ústavu hudby a zpěvu s právem veřejnosti v Ostravě za školní rok 1942–1943*, available from the Archives of the City of Ostrava.
- 10 Ostravský Ústav hudby a zpěvu do nového školního roku. In *Lidové noviny*, 21. 8. 1942
- 11 *Kronika Masarykova městského ústavu hudby a zpěvu s právem veřejnosti v Ostravě za školní rok 1943–1944*, available from the Archives of the City of Ostrava.
- 12 *40 let hudební výchovy v kraji Leoše Janáčka. 40. jubilejní výroční zpráva Masarykova městského ústavu hudby a zpěvu s právem veřejnosti v Ostravě*, Ostrava 1947, p. 18, available from the Archives of the City of Ostrava.
- 13 HRADIL, F. M. *Hudebníci a pěvci v kraji Leoše Janáčka. Paměti a dokumentace*. Ostrava: Profil, 1981, p. 106.

- 14 *60 let lidové školy umění ve Slezské Ostravě*, p. 5, typed copy, available from the Archives of the City of Ostrava.
- 15 A letter of Jan Pešat to the Trustees of the Rund Music School of the Záboj Chorus Society in Silesian Ostrava of 10 January 1938, available from the Archives of the City of Ostrava.
- 16 A letter of the Trustees of the Rund Music School of the Záboj Chorus Society in Silesian Ostrava to Jan Pešat of 10 February 1938, available from the Archives of the City of Ostrava.
- 17 A letter of the Trustees of the Rund Music School of the Záboj Chorus Society in Silesian Ostrava to Jan Pešat of 12 February 1938, available from the Archives of the City of Ostrava.
- 18 *Čtyřicet let první hudební školy ve Slezské Ostravě 1907–1947*. Ostrava 1947.
- 19 In the post-war period the school progressed, even extending its activities to the close surroundings: Zárubek, Radvanice, Paskov etc.
- 20 A letter of the Rund Music School of the Záboj Chorus Society in Silesian Ostrava to Josef Schreiber of 5 September 1940, available from the Archives of the City of Ostrava.
- 21 *Zpráva celoroční činnosti Rundovy hudební školy pěveckého spolku Záboj ve slezské Ostravě*, Silesian Ostrava, 25 February 1943, available from the Archives of the City of Ostrava.
- 22 *Výroční zpráva (čtrnáctá) státního koedukačního ústavu učitelského v Slezské Ostravě za školní rok 1938-39*, Slezská Ostrava 1939, p. 9.
- 23 Programme of the Čapek Piety Festival of 14 March 1939, available from the Archives of the City of Ostrava.
- 24 Programme of the performance of 18 May 1940, available from the Archives of the City of Ostrava.
- 25 KUSÁK, J. Hudební lidovýchovné aktivity v Ostravě v období od 20. do 40. let 20. století. In *Janáčkiana 2014. Sborník z 32. ročníku muzikologické konference Janáčkiana 2014*. Ostrava: Ostrava University, 2015, pp. 215-221, ISBN 978-80-7464-709-3. ČERNÍKOVÁ, L. Masarykova vyšší škola lidová v Ostravě. In *Časopis Slezského zemského muzea*, series B, 45, 1996, pp. 281-288.
- 26 ČERNÍKOVÁ, L. Masarykova vyšší škola lidová v Ostravě. In *Časopis Slezského zemského muzea*, series B, 45, 1996, p. 285.
- 27 Večer ze skladeb V. Kaprála. In *Národní práce*, 27. 3. 1942.
- 28 ČERNÍKOVÁ, L. Masarykova vyšší škola lidová v Ostravě. In *Časopis Slezského zemského muzea*, series B, 45, 1996, p. 285.

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3. A letter of the Trustees of the Rund Music School of the Záboj Chorus Society in Silesian Ostrava to Jan Pešat of 12 February 1938, available from the Archives of the City of Ostrava.
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13. *Zpráva celoroční činnosti Rundovy hudební školy pěveckého spolku Záboj ve slezské Ostravě*, Silesian Ostrava, 25 February 1943, available from the Archives of the City of Ostrava.
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16. *České Slovo* (1942)
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Résumé

Studie se zabývá dějinami hudební výchovy v Ostravě v období Protektorátu Čechy a Morava (1939–1945). Studie reflektuje zkoumanou problematiku v oblasti všeobecné hudební výchovy, odborné hudební výchovy a hudební výchovy na učitelském ústavu. Studie věnuje pozornost také hudebním lidovýchovným a popularizačním aktivitám v daném období.

Keywords: Music education, teacher, Ostrava, Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, educational institutions.

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