

When, in art music especially, does a European expatriate become an American? Often on the instant: Given this nation's ethnic, racial, and religious diversity (*pace* the myopics who would have matters otherwise), America's high-culture posture has been, historically, arms-open. Where, for a parallel example, would New York's candidacy as the world's art capital be were it not for World War II's dislocations? The great California bohemian Lou Harrison's music looks, to a great extent, toward Asia. No irony whatever attaches to the Brooklyn-born son of Jewish immigrants Aaron Copland's part in creating a decidedly goyish rural-American idiom, another of its aspect forged by Virgil Thomson's WPA movie scores. Schoenberg, a Jew, and Stefan Wolpe, a Jew of far-left bent, moreover, fled westward for reasons we've no need to explain. Tripartite flight shaped Stravinsky's peregrinations, first to Switzerland, then to Paris from revolutionary Russia, thence to the U.S. from occupied France. If the measure be American (whatever in sum that is), the anti-fascists Paul Hindemith and Béla Bartók register as dissimilarly as two artists can. Hindemith's memorial to Roosevelt, *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd: A Requiem for Those We Love*, is surely as patriotic as anything in the literature, whereas the painfully deracinated Bartók imbued his *Concerto for Orchestra*, a Koussevitsky commission, with little that reflects the landscape in which it took shape. (Bartók's chamber piece, *Contrasts*, with Benny Goodman in mind, serves here as a mild disclaimer.) The genre's masterwork remains, in this writer's opinion, Stravinsky's silkily acerb *Ebony Concerto*. Another of remarkable quality, the Quartet for Tenor Saxophone, Trumpet, Piano and Percussion of 1950-54, is Wolpe's jazzy tribute to Mao Zedong's unjazzy victory over the Kuomintang.

If our theme be transposition from dictatorial scrutiny to democratic permissiveness (and, on occasion, neglect), the Prague-born Karel Husa (born in 1921) counts among this émigré select. The bogeyman is present, there in the wings: in 1948 the Communist Czech government commanded Husa's return on pain of secular excommunication--passport invalidation. Like his countryman Martinu, Husa had been living in Paris, where he remained despite the threat. Husa had also considered residence in the Soviet Union in order to study with Prokofiev; however, when in 1954 an opportunity to teach at Cornell presented itself, the composer-conductor arrived with his young family and stayed. The transaction's agent was Elliott Galkin, Husa's good friend from his Paris Conservatory days, who helped create the three-year invitation to teach, which became a permanent gig.

In Paris, Husa studied composition under Boulanger and Honegger and conducting under Eugène Bigot, Jean Fournet, and André Cluytens. In addition to teaching composition and conducting at Cornell, Husa has conducted internationally with most major orchestras. It is as a composer, however, that Husa concerns us here. Recognition began in France with the String Quartet No. 1, earning its composer the Gaudeamus Festival's first prize in 1948, bellwether, as it happens, for many more to follow: a 1969 Pulitzer for the String Quartet No. 3; a Lili Boulanger Foundation prize; another from the Bilthoven (Netherlands) Contemporary Music competition; awards from Kennedy Center-Friedheim, the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, and a Sudler International Winds Competition prize, as well as Guggenheim Foundation grants. Most recently, Husa's Concerto for Cello and Orchestra received the 1993 Grawemeyer Award. We end our long list on a note that Husa's colleagues in the School of Hard Knocks (elsewhere called the Ivory Tower) must surely marvel at, quite possibly with envy: With more than 8,000 performances to its credit, *Music for Prague 1968* stands among the most frequently played modern works. (One weighs the astonishing statistic against another composer's aside: *He* turned, he said, to music-making

computers mostly in order to hear his stuff. Attempting to line up performers and performances led him nowhere in the main, a drought worsened still by fast-dehydrating funding.)

With *Music for Prague 1968* betokening Husa's European lifeline, we have a significant number of works that celebrate, wordlessly or as settings of prose and poetry, the composer's adopted land: *An American Te Deum; Cantata*, to lines by Whitman, Dickinson, and Edward Arlington Robinson; a piece for chamber orchestra, *Cayuga Lake; Every Day* and *There Are From Time to Time Mornings*, for a cappella chorus, to words by Thoreau. With regard to the question of roots (in a nation where attachments are better characterized as rhizomatous), *Twelve Moravian Songs* from 1955 came to completion in Ithaca, New York, their initial motivation tracing to Europe some few years before: A German editor had requested easy pieces for school use. In the composer's words: "The result was a series of moderately difficult scores, including *Twelve Moravian Songs*. Moravia is a small province in central Czechoslovakia which nurtured many excellent folk poets and musicians, most of them unknown to us today. However, they were very adept in their craft; in terms of melody, form, and construction, they were impeccable. I have in no way altered the texts and only very sparingly changed melodic contours. The piano parts are entirely mine. At the time of composition I was not aware that Janáček had used some of the texts." The listener is grateful for the remark regarding the piano's relationship to that of the soprano; indeed, Husa appears to toss it out as a clue: While the vocalist meanders among sylvan vistas of a particularly direct and domesticated charm, the piano looks toward challenging terrain, but never so directly as to surrender its place to mere gestures of show.

Pianist André-Michel Schub commissioned Sonata No. 2 of 1975, which Husa composed, again in Ithaca, for the Washington Performing Arts Society's Bicentennial Piano series. Schub gave the work's première in Washington, D.C.'s John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in 1975. As Husa describes it, Sonata No. 2 "is in three movements, reminiscent of the classical sonata form. This similarity lies mostly in the contrasts of the movements, the first being fast, with a slow introduction. Otherwise, the composition is written in a virtuosic style, [and] uses twentieth-century language: new sonorities . . . in the highest and lowest registers and softest and loudest passages. There is extensive use of pedals, especially the sostenuto, as well as some playing inside the piano, all in often strongly contrasting sounds. Nevertheless, these are only tools with which I tried to convey some of my present ideas and feelings."

To engage purposefully with art music's legacy, which is what every living composer must do (each in and on his or her terms), is a task that approaches the Sisyphean, as effort and reward. In speaking of his Sonata for Violin and Piano, Husa describes the labor in rather more hopeful terms: "It is difficult to add something new, unusual and, hopefully, significant. . . . Yet, newer ways always arise. . . . I have tried . . . to preserve the sonata form by contrasting movements, expanding and contrasting ideas within the movements, along with the soloistic character of each instrument. I also wanted to include some of the virtuoso techniques of the old school, such as different 'jeté' bowings, left-hand pizzicato, double-stops, harmonics, and so on. When I studied the violin as a young boy these techniques fascinated me. At the same time, there are some new, equally fascinating, and characteristic present-day sounds for the violin: sliding tones producing space-like effects, quarter-tones, short and fast repeated figures reminiscent of bird calls; and for the piano, the implementation of clusters and extreme high and low registers and inside-the-piano plucking.

"The first movement is moderately fast and free, a dramatic recitative; the second movement resembles a slow aria; the Interlude explores constant repetition of a high note; the last movement,

following without interruption, is a fast and frantic toccata. Both parts, violin and piano, are of equal importance as in the classical sonata form, but differ from tradition in that they operate more independently, one from the other." Composed on the shores of New York's Lake Cayuga, the Sonata for Violin and Piano of 1972-73 was a Koussevitsky Foundation commission which received its premiere in April of '74. "Perhaps this music has been involuntarily influenced by events of the recent past: continuous warfare, the senseless destruction of nature and animals and, on the other hand, man's incredible accomplishments in space."

The composer adds these thoughts for the present release:

"Many years have passed since I wrote the Sonata for Violin and Piano and the Sonata No. 2 for Piano. At the time I was interested in exploring 'new' techniques, sounds, and forms. It seemed--and still does--that our performers' technique and musicianship grow more and more dazzling, although there have been incredible virtuosos in the past, too. Paganini, Wieniawski, Liszt, just to name a few, wrote music that is difficult to perform even today.

"Both my sonatas try to renew old forms with today's materials. Each period brings new ideas and possibilities characteristic to their time. Not that all of today's music need be virtuosic, but, as in the past, composers wish to challenge performers, and performers can then demonstrate their technique in addition to their artistry.

"While we may use the same subject matter over the centuries, each period will construct it differently. Take Orpheus: between the Greeks, Monteverdi, Gluck, Offenbach, Stravinsky and Cocteau, many technical differences exist, but the idea remains the same.

"On the other hand, my *Twelve Moravian Songs* are the pure preservation of the beautiful folklore I have known and admired all my life. To the simple, emotional, poetic vocal line (only rarely altered), I have added only a simple piano part."

—Mike Silverton

Mike Silverton *writes about contemporary art music for Fanfare and The Absolute Sound. Mr. Silverton's poetry has appeared in Harper's, The Nation, Prairie Schooner, Chelsea, and other general-interest and literary periodicals. He has produced poetry readings for the New School for Social Research, New York City's then municipal station WNYC, and the Pacifica Foundation's WBAI, KPFA, and KPFK.*

Producer's Reminiscences:

An embarrassment of riches was my principal problem. Most of the takes were amazing in that one was better than the next. To choose one was nit-picking on the highest level. The primary artists, Elmar Oliveira, Peter Basquin, and Barbara Martin, are all masters with impeccable standards and their supporting artists David Oei and Elizabeth Rodgers are, in their own right, first-rate.

The sessions were relatively easy; due to the gregariousness of the players we had a lot of fun, with warmth, love, respect, and a great deal of admiration for each other. The outtakes would be Hall of Fame material in spite of the deleted expletives.

Karel Husa remains to this date a dear and valued friend, and one of the most charming and delightful of men. His playful sense of humor continues to be a most enjoyed part of our friendship.

He did *not* attend any of the sessions, although he was always available for consultations and run-throughs with the artists. New World Records should be praised for this reissue, as it brings together some wonderful music by a modern master.—*Richard Gilbert*, September 30, 1995

Peter Basquin, piano, studied with William Nelson at Carleton College and with Dora Zaslavsky at the Manhattan School of Music, where he received the Master of Music degree. He has performed with the orchestras of Boston, Minnesota, and Montreal, among others, and presented premières of major contemporary works with the Long Island Chamber Ensemble of New York. Mr. Basquin has specialized in the solo repertory of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including Liszt's *Paganini Etudes*, Schumann's *Etudes Symphoniques*, and Stravinsky's *Petrouchka*. He has recorded for Grenadilla and New World Records.

Barbara Ann Martin, soprano, winner of the 1982 Concert Artist's Guild Award, has been soloist with the New York, Berlin, and Vienna Philharmonics and the Montreal Symphony. Her opera appearances include the Metropolitan Opera and the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Ms. Martin has performed and recorded works by Dominick Argento, Milton Babbitt, Alan Hovhaness, Louise Talma, Chinary Ung, and others. She has also performed the works of George Crumb, Sofia Gubaidulina, and Gyorgy Kurtag. Ms. Martin has recorded for CRI, Musical Heritage, Pantheon, and Grenadilla Records.

David Oei, piano, has appeared as soloist with the New York Philharmonic and the Pittsburgh and Baltimore symphonies, and as a guest artist with the St. Luke's and Orpheus Chamber Ensembles, Bargemusic, and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. An original member of the Aspen Soloists and "The Intimate P.D.Q. Bach," he has participated in the Caramoor, Seattle, and Chamber Music Northwest Festivals, and recorded for Vanguard and Grenadilla Records.

Elmar Oliveira, violin, was eleven years old when he went to the Hartt College of Music to study with Ariana Bronne and her father, Raphael Bronstein. Winning his first competition at age 14, Oliveira made his orchestral debut that same year (1964) with the Hartford Symphony. In 1966 he was chosen by Leonard Bernstein to appear as soloist with the New York Philharmonic for a nationally televised Young People's Concert. Mr. Oliveira has performed with the New York Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the symphony orchestras of Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Dallas, Milwaukee, Minnesota, Pittsburgh, and San Francisco, the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra, and the London Philharmonic Orchestra. He has toured the Far East, South America, Australia, and the former Soviet Union. In addition to playing the standard violin literature, Mr. Oliveira has premiered works by contemporary composers such as Joan Tower, Ezra Laderman, Morton Gould, Andrzej Panufnik, and Hugh Aitkin, and has recorded works by Barber and Bartók. He has recorded for Angel, CBS Masterworks, Vox, Delos, Grenadilla, Melodiya, Elan, First Edition, and Pickwick Classics.

Elizabeth Rodgers, piano, holds degrees from the Manhattan School of Music, where she studied piano with Dora Zaslavsky, and chamber music with Lillian Fuchs, David Wells, and Benar Heifetz. She earned critical acclaim performing as accompanist to the distinguished soprano Judith Raskin. She has appeared with, among other groups, the Philadelphia Composers' Forum, Infusion, Newband, and Contemporary Concerts at Columbia University. Ms. Rodgers has premiered works by such composers as Marc-Antonio Consoli and Miriam Gideon. She has recorded for Opus One and CRI.

TWELVE MORAVIAN SONGS

English translation of Moravian texts by Ruth Martin

Sunrise

There is the sun climbing the skies,
There is the sun climbing bright skies.
My dearest love open your eyes,
O, come, my dearest love,
Open your eyes.

Till you are here, sad is my heart,
Till you are here, sad is my heart.
Hurry to me, never to part,
O, come! Hurry to me, never to part.

Who Is That?

Who is that all alone walking along the dam?
It is a dark-eyed girl planting sweet marjoram.

Spring is the time to sow, now it's too late to start.
Why did you let her go? Why did you break her heart?

The Deserter

I deserted from the army,
But some soldiers caught me quickly,
Then they asked "From where do you come?
Soldier, tell us where's your home?"

I'm a loyal son of Moravia,
All I love is in Moravia.
There tomorrow I must be,
There my sweetheart waits for me.

Between Two Mountains

Down between two mountains in the lovely valley,
There I met my sweetheart looking very angry.
Then he began weeping
And his tears were flowing on the stones beneath him
While his rage was growing.
"Darling, don't be angry, come let's stroll together.
Saturday, I promise,
You shall have this feather."

When I Sing

High up in the mountains my song echoes clearly.
Down there in the stable my sweetheart can hear me.

He says to his father: "O please listen to my love!
How sweet is her singing on the mountain above."

What Is Wrong?

O Jan, what is wrong? You have plowing to do!
Are your oxen just too lazy, or can it be you?

Marie, don't you know that I want to plow,
But I need your love to cheer me and I need it now.

Song for Dancing

If the farmer did not have such a pretty daughter,
There'd not be so many boys around to court her,
There'd not be so many boys around to court her.

If the farmer had gates of steel, gates of steel from Steyer,
I would still jump over,
Were they ten times higher, I would still jump over,
Were they ten times higher.

Echo in the Mountains

Ah, mountains so green all bathed in gold morning light,
all bathed in gold morning light.

Say, when day is done who will I find waiting here?
Who will kiss my lips tonight?

The Snowball

Why, dear snowball, do you lie there in the river?
Does the thought of springtime make you shiver?

No, I'm not scared of springtime, nor of sunshine
nor of dry land.
I was born of water, this is *my* land.

Aspen Leaves

When the leaves fade on the aspen tree one fall day,
They just flutter to the ground and then the wind will
blow them away,
When the time comes, when the golden years are ending,
Shall I also like the aspen leaves grow faded and
unbending?

Dear beloved, dear beloved, hear me, come what may:
Never let our love grow faded,
Rather let it flutter away.

Lost Love

Love was once alive and glowing, then it fled in secret going,
leaving not a trace behind it.

Deep beneath a stone it's hidden, lying lonely
and unbidden
There where no one thinks to find it.

Homeland, Goodbye

When the Slovak set off to roam one fine day,
High on the hill we heard him cry, on his way:
"Father of mine, Mother so dear, Hear me call!
Sister I love and brother, too, Good-bye all!"

"Tell me truly, when I return, dear old hill,
shall I find you, steadfast and true,
Waiting still?
When I come home, where will my dear mother be?
When I return
Will my beloved still love me?"

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- Concerto for Orchestra. Saint Louis Symphony, Leonard Slatkin conducting. Limited Edition CD.
- Concerto for Percussion and Wind Ensemble. Moscow Philharmonic, Dmitri Kitayenko conducting. Sheffield Salon Series (CD) SLS 506.
- Divertimento for Brass Ensemble; Fantasies for Orchestra; scenes from *The Trojan Women*. New York Brass Ensemble, Lawrence Sobol conducting. Les Solistes de Paris, Brno Philharmonic, Karel Husa conducting. Phoenix PHCD 128.
- Elegie et Rondeau*. Lawrence Gwozdz, saxophone; David Evenson, piano. Crystal Records DCD 652.
- Music for Prague 1968*. Eastman Wind Ensemble, Donald Husberger conducting. CBS Masterworks (CD) MK 44916.
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- Serenade for Woodwind Quintet and Piano. Westwood Wind Quintet; Lisa Berman, piano. Crystal Records (CD) 751.
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KAREL HUSA (b. 1921) 80493-2

Sonata for Violin and Piano (1972-73)

- 1 Movement I (9:05)
 - 2 Movement II (12:34)
 - 3 Interlude (3:32)
 - 4 Movement III (9:32)
- Elmar Oliveira, violin; David Oei, piano

Sonata No. 2 for Piano (1975)

- 5 Movement I (5:39)
 - 6 Movement II (6:26)
 - 7 Movement III (7:18)
- Peter Basquin, piano

Twelve Moravian Songs (1955)

- 8 Sunrise (1:41)
 - 9 Who Is That? (0:55)
 - 10 The Deserter (0:54)
 - 11 Between Two Mountains (1:48)
 - 12 When I Sing (1:18)
 - 13 What Is Wrong? (0:49)
 - 14 Song for Dancing (0:37)
 - 15 Echo in the Mountains (1:10)
 - 16 The Snowball (1:20)
 - 17 Aspen Leaves (0:42)
 - 18 Lost Love (1:05)
 - 19 Homeland, Goodbye (2:04)
- Barbara Martin, soprano; Elizabeth Rodgers, piano

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