“WE SHALL REMAIN FAITHFUL”: THE VILLAGE MODE IN CZECH OPERA, 1866–1928

Christopher Campo-Bowen

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Approved by:

Annegret Fauser

Michael Beckerman

Andrea Bohlman

Mark Evan Bonds

Tim Carter

ABSTRACT

Christopher Campo-Bowen: "'We Shall Remain Faithful':
The Village Mode in Czech Opera, 1866–1928"
(Under the direction of Annegret Fauser)

This dissertation examines the powerful influence myths of rural origin wielded in Czech culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially as communicated through opera. By developing a theoretical model I term the village mode, I argue that idealized rural life, ideologically reinscribed by writers, composers, and intellectuals, epitomized normative ideas about gender, class, and society, which in turn influenced the ways in which Czech nationalism developed. Operas playing in the village setting used the concept flexibly, displaying a wide variety of social and communal possibilities. The changing reception of Bedřich Smetana's *Prodaná nevěsta* (*The Bartered Bride*, 1866), as the paradigmatic embodiment of the village mode, forms the main thread across the dissertation. I also examine such operas as Smetana's *Dvě vdovy* (*The Two Widows*, 1874), Antonín Dvořák's *Čert a Káča* (*The Devil and Kate*, 1899), and Leoš Janáček's *Její pastorkyňa* (*Jenůfa*, 1904). I investigate the roles of critical cultural agents, such as the director of the National Theater František Adolf Šubert and the music critic Zdeněk Nejedlý in propagating the village mode through events like the 1892 International Exhibition of Music and Theater in Vienna and the one-thousandth performance of *The Bartered Bride* in 1927. In addition to offering new insight into the repertoire and cultural backdrop for Czech opera, this dissertation provides fresh perspectives on current discussions about music and empire, cultural diplomacy, and Central European Studies.

In memory of my father.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF EXAMPLES

INTRODUCTION

The staging directions for Bedřich Smetana's *Prodaná nevěsta* (*The Bartered Bride*, 1866) are simple yet nonetheless specific. The libretto presents them, in their entirety, as "A village during *posvícení* [a feast day or village fair]; the action plays out during the afternoon, after church, until early evening."[1] The festive air of the plot becomes immediately evident with the opening chorus of happy peasants, who sing a text that would quickly turn into a metonym for the entire opera: "Proč bychom se netěšili, když nám pán Bůh zdraví dá?"—"Why should we not rejoice when God grants us health?" By the time *The Bartered Bride* had come to saturate Czech artistic culture to its fullest, in late 1920's Czechoslovakia, these words could simultaneously sell laundry detergent (Figure 5.1, below) and serve as the foundation for moral philosophy. Act I of Smetana's village comedy, however, provided more than these opening lines as emblems of Czech history and culture.

Shortly after the opening chorus, for instance, the young couple Jeník and Mařenka, the opera's protagonists, join each other in a lilting duet, declaring their love for one another to the words "zůstaneme věrni"—"we shall remain faithful." These words served as a pivot between their roots in a Hussite hymn from the fifteenth century (see below) and their pervasiveness in later Czech culture. Some seventy years later, Czechoslovak president Edvard Beneš evoked Smetana's phrase in his eulogy for his hugely influential predecessor, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, capturing the powerful hold *The Bartered Bride* and the country village it presented had on

[1] "Místo a čas děje: vesnice za posvícení, děj hraje odpoledne po službách božích podvečír." See Karel Sabina and Bedřich Smetana, *Prodaná nevěsta* (Prague: Vesmír, 1946).

Czech culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[2] In 1938, "věrni zůstaneme" would become the motto of Czech resistance against Nazi Germany. The connection between Masaryk and Smetana played out also on the field of identity politics. For his role in securing the country's independence after World War I, Masaryk was often referred to as "president-liberator." Smetana, for his part, was anointed "Smetana-liberator" on the occasion of *The Bartered Bride*'s thousandth performance at the Prague National Theatre in 1927, linking together the state, opera, and the village while cementing the cultural foundations of the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938).

Symbols of Czechness, both *The Bartered Bride* and its composer were, however, but one aspect of a larger discursive matrix, one which located the essence of Czech identity in the idealized village as the source of national and cultural authenticity. In this dissertation, I explore the ways in which the village and its musical emblems have both acquired and provided meaning for Czech audiences, encoding responses to a wide range of sociocultural and political issues, including gender, class, nationalism, imperialism, race, and ethnicity. Through the very nature of music theater, composers and librettists portrayed the world of the village in a format that was not only culturally prestigious but could also reach much of the population in theaters, through sheet music and other forms of distribution, and public discussion. Moreover—as a multimedia enterprise that involved not only music but also sets, librettos, costumes, and dances—opera could project a holistic view of the village that brought together a whole host of potent signifiers from different artistic genres into a single, culturally central discourse.

The village and rurality played a central part in the construction of contemporary Czech identity; they had been important to such patriotic activity since the late eighteenth and early

[2] See Derek Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 25–26.

nineteenth centuries, when the first *buditelé* (Awakeners) of the *národní obrození* (National Awakening) turned to the countryside in their attempts to rebuild the Czech language into a high literary form.[3] Their ethnographic and literary activities would leave behind crucial sources for writers and composers of the later nineteenth century, when the aspirations of this small group of intellectuals and scholars would be transformed into a mass movement.[4] Those who helped popularize the ideas of the National Awakening—the urban bourgeoisie, intellectuals, and other artists—also formed the main audience for Czech opera in Prague. Works like *The Bartered Bride*, perhaps the best-known Czech opera to deal with village life, served both as barometers of the changing conditions of Czech culture and as important factors in determining responses to change. Indeed, the cultural, political, and social upheavals that occurred from the late 1860s into the 1920s—the time frame of my dissertation— occasioned profound shifts not only in the Czech lands but across Europe as a whole, and dramatic music from this period reflected those changes. The village and its social relations were a key touchstone in Czech culture. In this habitus, operas dealing with the village served both as entertainment and—more importantly—stood as representations of what Czech society could or should be for this community.[5]

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[3] This will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 1. See Hugh LeCaine Agnew, *Origins of the Czech National Renascence* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993).

[4] The first leaders of this movement included figures like the linguists and translators Josef Jungmann (1773–1847) and Josef Dobrovský (1753–1829), the Slovak writer Jan Kollár (1793–1852), the poet František Ladislav Čelakovský (1799–1852), and the historian František Palacký (1798–1876), whose long life contributed to his extraordinary influence throughout the nineteenth century. Subsequent individuals who drew on this early tradition included the writers and ethnographic collectors Karel Jaromír Erben (1811–1870) and Božena Němcová (1820–1862), as well as the journalist and writer Jan Neruda (1834–1891). Important visual artists in this tradition (though of a slightly younger generation) included Mikolas Aleš (1852–1913) and Vojtěch Hynais (1854–1925).

[5] I should emphasize here that the village mode was not the only way of structuring Czech identity throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Mythologized understandings of ancient and medieval Czech history were also very important to how Czechs understood themselves and their place in Europe; operas like Smetana's *Dalibor* and *Libuše*, Zdeněk Fibich's *Šárka*, and Leoš Janáček's own version of *Šárka* provide examples of this narrative's influence on music theater. However, the impact of these operas and their source myths, instantiated in documents like the forged *Queen's Court* and *Green Mountain* manuscripts (*Rukopisy Královédvorský a Zelenohorský*) have been covered elsewhere. See, for example, Kelly St. Pierre, *Bedřich Smetana: Myth, Music, and Propaganda* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2017).

It is in this sense—operas centered on the village serving as mirrors of, and inspirations for, society—that my dissertation seeks to broaden the discursive range of Czech music studies. Since the very first attempts to formulate a historical sense of continuity for Czech music in music-critical circles, which the aesthetician and musicologist Otakar Hostinský initiated as early as the 1870s, Czech music's historiography has been almost inextricably intertwined with nationalist ideology.[6] That Czech music is unavoidably nationalist, nationally marked, or inescapably related to quests for the meaning of "Czechness" in relation to a larger European milieu has been, for most of the twentieth century and now into the twenty-first, a historiographic commonplace.[7] More recent work, like that of Brian Locke, Kelly St. Pierre, and Michael Beckerman, has begun to shift discursive emphasis into other areas, including the professional relationships between composers and the cultural context of their musical activity.[8] However, nationalism has proved perennially unavoidable in discussions of Czech music. This

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[6] See, for example, Hostinský's articles "Wagnerianismus a česká národní opera" (1870) and "Smetanova 'Prodaná nevěsta' a petrohradská kritika" (1871). Both were originally serial articles in the Czech music journal *Dalibor* and then published in Otakar Hostinský, *Bedřich Smetana a jeho boj o moderní českou hudbu* (Prague: Nákladem Jana Laichtera, 1901).

[7] Some notable examples of this include Brian Large, *Smetana* (New York: Praeger, 1970); John Clapham, *Dvořák* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979); Gerald Abraham, *Essays on Russian and East European Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); and Carl Dalhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989). One could also point to the multitude of music-history textbooks that invariably mention Czech composers under the subheading of "nationalism." Michael Beckerman produced over thirty years ago what is now a key text in music studies problematizing the idea of an essentialist national identity communicable through music: see Michael Beckerman, "In Search of Czechness in Music," *19th-Century Music* 10, no. 1 (Summer 1986): 61–73.

[8] Examples include David Beveridge, "Dvořák and Brahms: A Chronicle, An Interpretation," in *Dvořák and his World*, ed. Michael Beckerman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 56–91; Michael Beckerman, *New Worlds of Dvořák: Searching in America for the Composer's Inner Life* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003); Brian Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague: Polemics and Practice at the National Theater, 1900–1938* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2006); and St. Pierre, *Bedřich Smetana*. Czech language examples in a similar vein include Marta Ottlová and Milan Pospíšil, *Bedřich Smetana a jeho doba: vybrané studie* (Prague: Knižnice Dějin a Současnosti, 1997) and Helen Spurna, ed., *Hudební divadlo jako výzva: Interdisciplinární texty* (Prague: Národní divadlo, 2004). Richard Taruskin's *Oxford History of Western Music* brings welcome nuance to its discussions of Smetana and Dvořák, though it too still places the composers under a larger heading of "nationalism." See Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), especially volume 3.

may be due in part to a simple issue of language, in that to distinguish a body of works called "Czech music" is implicitly to give weight to a national mode of categorization. More importantly, Czech music critics, musicologists, and composers of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries constantly talked about the relationship between their music and national concerns. These figures include the three musicians on whose operas I focus primarily in this dissertation: Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884), Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904), and Leoš Janáček (1854–1928).

My concern here is not to attempt to dismiss discussions of nationalism, but rather to decenter them. In focusing on the idea of the village in Czech opera, I minimize implicit and explicit appeals to a totalizing mode of nationalist analysis; instead, I emphasize the social relationships inherent in village settings as regards gender, class, and race, and how these relate to larger cultural currents in both the Czech lands and European operatic contexts. Thus when nationalist musicologists like Hostinský or Zdeněk Nejedlý held up operas like *The Bartered Bride* as the *ne plus ultra* of what Czech music could and should be, they were, consciously or not, also advocating that the kinds of social relationship the opera showcases were exemplary for Czech society as a whole. To put it another way, explicating how the village is constructed in Czech opera allows us to investigate how the constituent social elements of idealized village life interacted with and influenced nationalist ideals, breaking down that ideology's monolithic character into more specific and analytically significant sociocultural components.[9]

[9] In the idea that it reflected its societal context, Czech opera was certainly not unique; the last thirty years of scholarship on nineteenth- and twentieth-century European opera have convincingly shown how different political, social, and cultural currents were mirrored and influenced by operas contemporary to those currents. Two issues, however, are unique in the case of Czech opera: first, its connection to the specific history and geography of the Czech lands, and second, the sheer number and centrality of village-centric operas within the region's operatic history.

In attempting to complicate and interrogate what lies beneath the ascription of "national" status to music, my dissertation accords with other recent musicological scholarship on the relationship between music and national identity. For example, I take a similar approach to Charles Hiroshi Garrett in his examination of music and American identity when he states that his work "explores the ongoing struggles over the definition of national identity that take place in cultural, historiographical, musical, and musicological arenas."[10] These multiple realms of contestation mirror the multiplicity of social norms and values that inhere within the larger concept of the "national." It is also helpful to underscore a distinction made by Matthew Riley and Anthony D. Smith, who posit that a continuum exists between "national" music—that is, music "more concerned with the myths, memories, symbols, and traditions of the community, its homeland and its culture"—and "nationalist" music, which "tends to proclaim the autonomy, unity and identity of the political nation, often in emotionally charged music."[11] My investigation tends more toward the "national music" side of the equation, precisely because such music relies on and expresses myths and traditions.[12] These provide the substance for my investigation of underlying sociocultural issues.

In addition to investigating the constituent aspects underpinning larger nationalist discourses, my dissertation addresses a significant lacuna in the literature. Recent historical scholarship has sought to overturn perceptions that the Habsburg Monarchy was little more than a backward morass of squabbling national groups. Pieter Judson and Hugh LeCaine Agnew, among others, have offered compelling accounts of the everyday impact of imperial institutions

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[10] See Charles Hiroshi Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation: American Music and the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 4.

[11] See Matthew Riley and Anthony D. Smith, *Nation and Classical Music: From Handel to Copland* (London: The Boydell Press, 2016), 10

[12] See Chapter 1 for further discussion of nationalism, music, and the village.

and how national movements were codependent with the ruling structures of empire.[13] Music scholarship, however, has largely focused on individual national groups within the Habsburg Empire. While recent studies on Czech music like those mentioned above have drawn welcome attention to the ideological value systems undergirding musical life in Prague and how they were propagated by institutions, very few have taken empire as an analytical frame in investigating Czech opera.

My research shows the multiplicity of intersections between local and imperialist agendas when such figures as František Adolf Šubert, the director of the National Theater in Prague, leveraged essentialist conceptions of Czech identity to advocate for greater power and rights within the multinational empire that was Habsburg Austria; the discourses and reception strategies developed under imperial rule were central, moreover, to understanding Czech opera in the newly independent First Czechoslovak Republic. In drawing on postcolonial thought to examine the diverse ways in which the Czechs dealt with the experience of empire and ethnocentric categorization, my work enters a larger conversation with music scholars about the ensounding of empire and its ramifications for the musical cultures of subjugated peoples.[14] I argue that in the context of Czech music history and the music history of Central Europe more broadly, empire must be regarded as more than a simple backdrop against which national acts

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[13] See Pieter M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016); and Hugh LeCaine Agnew, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2004).

[14] Examples of such scholarship include Annegret Fauser, *Musical Encounters at the 1889 Paris World's Fair* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005); Olivia Bloechl, Melanie Lowe, and Jeffrey Kallberg, eds., *Rethinking Difference in Music Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); and Ronald Radano and Tejumola Olaniyan, eds., *Audible Empire: Music, Global Politics, Critique* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016). For a discussion of the relationship between relative cultural power, the institutionalization of folk music versus art music, and who gets to define what traditions count, see Matthew Gelbart, *The Invention of "Folk Music" and "Art Music": Emerging Categories from Ossian to Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). An example specific to Central Europe, that of the place of Jews in the Habsburg Empire, especially as a part of the modern metropole of Vienna, is discussed in detail in Philip V. Bohlman, *Jewish Music and Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

stand out. It was a constitutive force, one without which Czech identity and music history as such would not exist. This dissertation thereby speaks to pressing questions facing both the United States and the European Union in the twenty-first century, especially in terms of how supranational institutions manage conflicting narratives of ethnic particularity—take, for example, the question of the EU's authority to resettle migrants in its member states, and how constructions of national identity shift when confronted with issues of racial and religious difference.

Underlying my dissertation as a whole is the understanding that, in its centrality to Czech culture, the village acted as a narrative and discursive mode, which, as I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 1, ideologically inscribed myths of rural origin as central referents for artistic works. This understanding of mode relates to its definition in literary criticism, whereby mode refers to an attitude or stance that may be reflected in a number of different genres. Paul Alpers refines this into the following:

> …we can say that mode is the literary manifestation, in a given work, not of attitudes in a loose sense, but of its assumptions about man's nature and situation… what notions of human strength, possibilities, pleasures, dilemmas, etc. are manifested in the represented realities and in the emphases, devices, organization, effects, etc. of this work?[15]

The underlying assumptions about human possibilities and motivations are ideologies by another name, and what differentiates the village mode from, say, the pastoral mode, is precisely the way in which different representation of realities—or, indeed, myths—produce specific behaviors. The village mode was a historical means of asserting Czech culture through opera on a wider European stage, but it is also a way of engaging with the archive of Czech opera by analyzing its ideological underpinnings. These two related concepts provide a deeper understanding of the village in Czech operatic culture during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,

[15] Paul Alpers, *What is Pastoral?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 50.

especially in terms of their relationship to questions of nationalism, gender, class, and other social markers.[16] In its homogenous and homogenizing character, the village mode also served as a kind of unremarked backdrop that incorporated norms and standards for a variety of social issues; it only became recognized as such when its unmarked character was challenged, as occured with the reception of Janáček's *Jenůfa* in the early twentieth century.[17] By addressing the influence of rurality on Czech opera through the village mode, my dissertation adds to the picture of musical life in Central Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

My dissertation encompasses the decades between 1866 and 1928: from the premiere of *The Bartered Bride* in Prague to its first performance in Paris as a gala celebration of the tenth anniversary of Czechoslovak statehood. These events bookend a complex, two-part process that first established and then institutionalized the norms of the village mode; the pivot between establishment and institutionalization was the unexpected, out-and-out success of *The Bartered Bride* at the 1892 International Exhibition of Music and Theater in Vienna. This is not to say that the shift was perfectly binary; attempts to institutionalize responses to Czech music production had begun most visibly with Hostinský's writings in the 1870s, and the norms of the village mode were still very much open to regional contestation in the early part of the twentieth century. However, the fulcrum of 1892 shifted the balance dramatically.[18]

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[16] The village mode also found expression in spoken theater. Examples of village-centric plays included Josef Kajetán Tyl's *Fidlovačka* (1834), František Adolf Šubert's *Jan Výrava* (1886), the brothers Alois and Vílem Mrštík's *Maryša* (1894), and Gabriela Preissová's *Gazdina roba* (*The Farm Mistress*, 1889) and *Její pastorkyňa* (*Her Stepdaughter*, 1890). For more on the latter two, see Chapter 4.

[17] I draw the concept of the unmarked from Peggy Phelan and Kate Whitaker in the context of gender studies. See further discussion in Chapter 4 and Kate Whitaker, "Performing Masculinity/Masculinity in Performance," in *Masculinity in Opera: Gender, History, and New Musicology*, ed. Phillip Purvis (New York: Routledge, 2013), 9–30.

[18] Echoing Riley and Smith, one might also say that *The Bartered Bride*'s character itself shifted from more "national" music to more "nationalist" music—capable of evoking politically centered sentiments—over the course of the nineteenth century and especially in the early twentieth. See Riley and Smith, *Nation and Classical Music*, 1–17.

The period from 1866 to 1928 also saw tectonic shifts in the political and cultural landscape of both the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Europe as a whole. The Austro-Prussian War proved a costly and decisive loss on the part of Austria, in part leading to the Ausgleich of 1867, which established the Dual Monarchy and parliamentary independence for the Kingdom of Hungary.[19] Czech resistance to this change and ire over not being accorded their own autonomous government system led to a Reichsrat boycott by Czech deputies from 1868 to 1879, eliminating their influence in imperial political life, though they maintained representation at the local level. The Old Czech party reentered the Reichsrat under minister president Count Eduard Taafe, and his coalition, termed the Iron Ring of the Right, would last until 1891. The Young Czech party, having split off from the Old Czechs in the 1870s, was kept out of negotations in the early 1890s over a series of administrative changes, the so-called *punktace* that would have effectively divided Bohemia into Czech and German zones. The party effectively campaigned against it on an explicitly nationalist platform, ensuring the electoral defeat of the Old Czechs and Taafe's government.[20] The 1890s and early 1900s were a tumultuous period in Austrian imperial politics, and flashpoints included the 1897 Badeni language ordinance crisis and the enactment, in 1907, of universal manhood suffrage. 1914 saw the outbreak of World War I, which would terminate in 1918 and help cause the breakup of Austria-Hungary; the First Czechoslovak Republic declared independence on 28 October of that year. Czechoslovakia's interwar years were politically fraught but largely stable, and though countries like France

[19] Further discussion of the effect of the Austro-Prussian War on life in Prague can be found in Chapter 1. My historical outline here draws on Agnew, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown*, 133–139 and 147–154.

[20] More detail on political and cultural shifts in the Czech lands from the 1890s up through World War I can be found in Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

aggressively touted the post-Versailles order, their committement to assisting their democratic ally failed in the face of Hitler's aggression.[21]

These political and cultural shifts were interwoven with changes in the musical and operatic life of Prague in the Czech lands, which forms the primary investigative context for my dissertation. Chapter 1 discusses the beginnings of the village mode, defining its origins through examination of Bedřich Smetana's operas, particularly *The Bartered Bride*, as well as theoretical considerations. It traces the operatic antecedents of Smetana's work and the establishment of the myth of the composer as the founder of Czech music, which was entangled with the larger issues of the village mode and Czech nationalism. As a corollary, this chapter introduces a recurring conflict in Czech operatic history: balancing the need for cosmopolitan, European recognition with the maintenance of nationalist, essential purity. I then go on to relate the rest of Smetana's creative output—especially his village-centric operas—to the way in which public perception of his image changed over the course of the 1870s and 1880s. With his death in 1884, his reputation as the bard of the Czech national cause, along with that of his operas, began to grow much more quickly.

Chapter 2 picks up this thread by focusing on the fortunes of *The Bartered Bride* and Smetana at the 1892 International Exhibition of Music and Theater in Vienna. It presents an account of the Exhibition itself and its importance for Czech critics and operatic life; I pay particular attention to the role of imperialism in structuring how Czech opera was newly defined through the success of *The Bartered Bride*. The category of ethnicity is central here, and both Czech and Viennese appreciations of the National Theater's operatic success would be refracted through this lens. The resultant transformation of stereotypes and reappraisals of Czech artistic

[21] Much more discussion on interwar Czechoslovakia and especially its relationship with France can be found in Chapter 5.

character had significant transnational resonances. Chapter 3 deals with the consequences of the exhibition in Prague, especially in how the great appreciation for village elements shown in Vienna led to a reappraisal of Smetana's importance, and even a complete reworking of his opera *Dvě vdovy* (*The Two Widows*, 1874, rev. 1878) by the critic and composer Václav Juda Novotný. Novotný reordered and significantly retexted many of the numbers in the opera, thereby creating an additional, second act where none had existed before. This second act was set in a village dancehall and gave tremendous emphasis to elements of the Czech village mode in an opera that had originally been based on a French conversation play. The reworked version of *The Two Widows* showcases the centrality of performing the village as a means of securing greater domestic and international prestige; this autoessentialist gambit, presaged by the success of *The Bartered Bride* in Vienna and elsewhere, would fundamentally alter the historiographic landscape of Czech opera.

Chapter 4 concerns the status of the village mode at the turn of the twentieth century in the Czech lands. It does so by comparing and contrasting Antonín Dvořák's opera *Čert a Káča* (*The Devil and Kate*, 1899) with Leoš Janáček's opera *Jenůfa* (1904). The libretto for Dvořák's opera, written by Adolf Wenig, draws heavily on the fairy tale of the same title by Božena Němcová, whose novel *The Grandmother* was heavily influential in the dissemination of the village myth. I investigate the workings of the village mode in Dvořák's opera and in its reception, and focus especially on elements of gender and class crystalized in the archetypal figures of the shepherd Jirka and his opposite, the ruling duchess. In contrast, the source text of Janáček's opera, Gabriela Preissová's play *Její pastorkyňa* (*Her Foster-daughter*, 1890), presented a tale of the village that eschewed the idealization of previous instantiations; among other developments, Jenůfa has a child out of wedlock, and her foster mother drowns the child in

an attempt to preserve Jenůfa's reputation. I explore the reasons for this departure and the implications of the opera's 1916 performance in Prague, twelve years after its premiere in Brno, after which it would go on to conquer a variety of German stages and help ensure Janáček's international popularity.

Finally, Chapter 5 takes stock of the village mode during the first decade of the First Czechoslovak Republic. It returns to Smetana and *The Bartered Bride* to showcase how the newly independent nation memorialized and used the composer and his opera in the service of larger political goals. Having finally achieved the culmination of their nationalist cause, Czech critics, musicologists, and politicians set about institutionalizing the operatic village mode and its vision for the new nation-state. Czech composers, on the other hand, were pulled in opposing directions by the paroxysms of modernism gripping Europe, even in the relatively musically conservative atmosphere of Prague. The chapter ends with an examination of the Paris premiere of *The Bartered Bride* in 1928 to celebrate the tenth anniversary of Czechoslovak independence. This politicized gala performance represented the pinnacle of significance for the village mode in Czech opera as an ideological and cultural force. A short Conclusion traces the denouement of this story and points toward its darker chapters, as the discourses of Czech opera, the village mode, and the ethnic purity of Czech identity found themselves responding to the Nazi occupation of the Czech lands, the expulsion of German-identified peoples during the short-lived Second Czechoslovak Republic, and the Communist government that gained power in 1948 and would maintain it—though not without changes and the intervention of the Warsaw Pact countries—until 1989. The myth of the village and its ideological importance as a source of Czech identity creation continues to hold sway, albeit in altered guises, into the twenty-first century.

CHAPTER 1: "THE RICH SOURCE OF OUR NATIONAL LIFE": THE ORIGINS OF THE VILLAGE MODE IN CZECH OPERA

> Without any fear that someone might contradict us, we do not hesitate to confirm that to this point none of our composers have so successfully drawn from the rich source of our national life for dramatic art as Smetana has succeeded in doing in *The Bartered Bride*. We consider it a successful idea that the theme was chosen from just such rural life, an environment in which our national particularities were still preserved in their integrity, and in which modern jadedness had not yet wiped away all immediacy and sanctity of feeling.[1]

So wrote Jan Neruda, a poet, critic, and founding member of the literary journal *Máj*, three days after the premiere of Bedřich Smetana's *Prodaná nevěsta* (*The Bartered Bride*) on 30 May 1866. He was intimately familiar with the work of the first generations of the scholars and writers who formed what would become known as the National Awakening, and in this passage Neruda expressed a view typical of the movement's thought. The National Awakening drew on Herderian constructions of peasants and their capacity for national representation in an attempt to construct a specifically Czech identity.[2] Rural life was invested with a sense of pre-modern timelessness, where feelings were truer than in the city and not yet corrupted by modern life. Following from this, the mythologized rural village was understood to be the preserver of the Czech nation—especially as metonymized through language—in the face of overwhelming

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[1] "Bez obavy, žeby nám někdo odmlouvati mohl, tvrditi neváháme, že dosud žádný z našich skladatelův tak šťastně z bohatého zdroje národního našeho života pro umění dramatické nečerpal jako se to Smetanoviv "Prodané nevěstě" podařilo. Pokládáme to za šťastnou myšlenku, že látka zvolena právě z života venkovského, kruhu to, v kterém se národní naše zvláštnosti ještě zachovaly ve své ryzosti a v němž ještě nesetřela modern blaseovanost všechen bezp[r]ostřednost a posvátnost citu." Jan Neruda, "Literatura a umění. Divadlo. Prodaná nevěsta," *Národní listy*, 2 June 1866, 2.

[2] A history of the Czech National Awakening, and especially its intellectual and philosophical roots, can be found in Zdeněk V. David, *Realism, Tolerance, and Liberalism in the Czech National Awakening: Legacies of the Bohemian Reformation* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2010).

oppression, typically figured as German and foreign. Such mythologizing was pervasive, intensifying throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, when it would be instrumentalized in ways undreamt of by Neruda or his contemporaries.

The beginnings of the village in Czech opera are complex; in this chapter, I tease out the interwoven strands of this story, discussing the village mode in conjunction with Smetana, his operas, and their historical antecedents. I argue that in their attempts to create a repertory of Czech opera and a historical framework in which to understand it, composers and critics built up a myth of the rural village as a key resource. The process by which this myth was ideologically inscribed into cultural practices was frequently unconconscious, occasionally conscious, and, in some cases, a deliberate act of forgetting. In order to understand how rurality became so important to Czech opera, I begin with the village as history, focusing on the importance of rural contexts to Czech history in terms of political and demographic shifts, which would have significant impacts on the cultural character of the Czech lands. Next, I turn to the village as myth, examining the roots of the mythologized and idealized Czech village in the works of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Awakeners, represented most centrally by Božena Němcová and her foundational novel *Babička* (*The Grandmother*, 1855). Also important here is the earlier history of opera in Prague, which saw operatic village models from German-speaking lands and elsewhere gain popularity, coinciding with the work of the National Awakening.

The ideological function of myth in Czech culture is the subject of the following section, which engages a close reading of Louis Althusser's work on ideology to come to a deeper understanding of the relationship between ideology and myth. Putting these strands of argument together is the focus of the subsequent section, which explicates more fully the idea of the village mode. This section also engages the village mode in discussing and refining the relationship

between nationalism and gender in the context of opera in the Czech lands; I join to this a discussion of Otakar Hostinský's early deployments of the village mode and his advocacy for Smetana. The final section turns to postcolonial theory to consider the ways in which imperial discourses and power structures in the Austro-Hungarian Empire influenced the functioning and constitution of the village mode.

The Rural in the History of the Czech Lands

Bohemia and its capital, Prague, form the heart of Europe, or so goes the narrative that Czechs are frequently eager to relate to tourists. Regardless of its marketing appeal, they have a point: geographically, Prague sits at the center of Europe when measured from the Atlantic coast of Portugal to the Ural Mountains.[3] A artful depiction of this fact can be seen here, in a painting from the sixteenth century depicting Europe as a queen, with Bohemia and Prague at its center (Figure 1.1). Its central location has given Bohemia a checkered history of its relevance to the larger concerns of Europe: while Prague served as the capital of the Holy Roman Empire under Charles IV, wars later raged across the province and various rulers took possession of the Czech lands at different times.

When the proto-Protestant teachings of John Wycliff and Jan Hus began to unsettle Catholic rulers across Europe in the early fifteenth century, Bohemia played a central part in the controversy. Hus was executed as a heretic at the Council of Constance in 1415, despite a writ of safe passage. The event helped spark the Hussite Wars (1419–1434). In response to the unrest from Hussite followers and nobles in Bohemia, the Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund declared a

[3] The concept of the center and centrality is, according to the Czech semiotician Vladimír Macura, an important symbol for Czech culture generally. See *The Mystifications of a Nation: "The Potato Bug" and Other Essays on Czech Culture*, trans. and ed. Hana Pichová and Craig Cravens (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), 27–34.

crusade in 1420 against the heretics with papal approval. He was soundly defeated by peasant armies led by Jan Žižka z Trocnova.

Figure 1.1: "Europa regina"[4]

[4] "Europa regina," engraving, in Sebastian Münster, *Cosmographia* (Basel, 1570).

Indeed, Žižka and the Hussites would go on to repel four more crusades by the end of 1424 alone. The Hussite wars, with their trappings of social revolution and peasant rebellion against monarchical authority, would serve as potent resources for nineteenth-century nationalists; composers would likewise find powerfully resonant materials in Hussite battle hymns, most famously "Ktož jsú boží bojovníci" ("Ye who are warriors of God," Figure 1.2).[5]

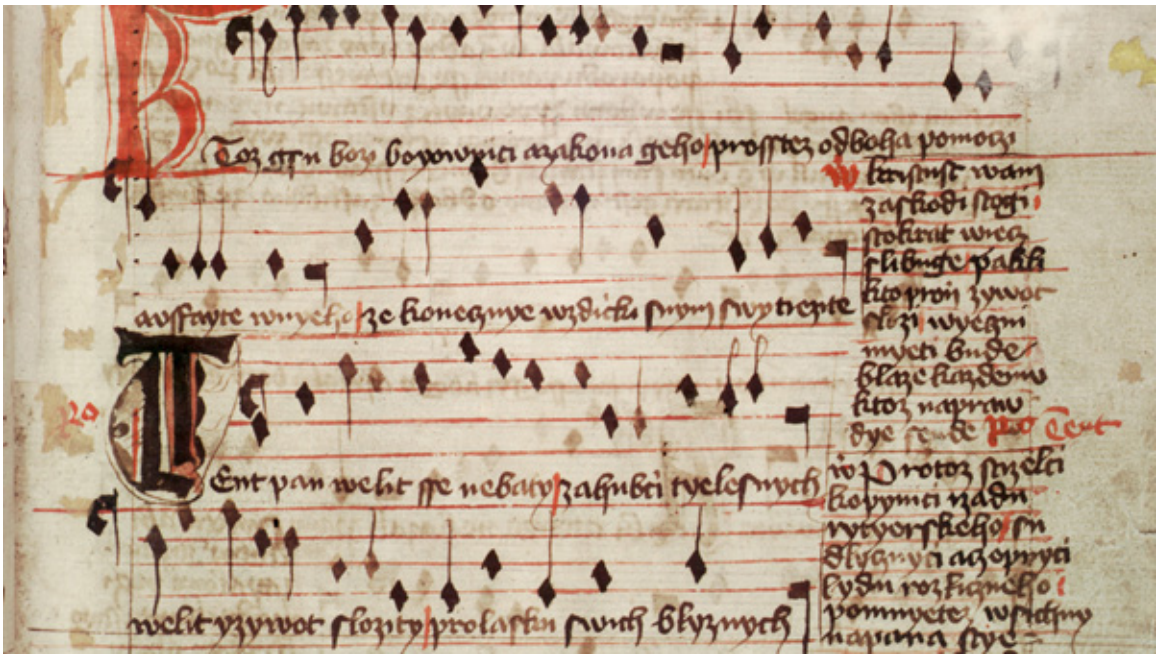

Figure 1.2: Music and text for the Hussite battle hymn "Ktož jsú boží bojovníci" from the fifteenth-century Jistebnický Kancionál.[6]

The centering of this Czech-singing, militant peasantry within the narrative of the Hussite Wars lent credence to the idea that Czech culture drew strength from the simple inhabitants of the countryside.

[5] Derek Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 37–39. For more on Hus and his importance to later nationalists, see Lonnie R. Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 62–65.

[6] Manuscript score, Prague, Knihovna Národního muzea, sig. II C 7.

The conflicts of the fifteenth century had other significant consequences for rural villages and their inhabitants. Having gained a measure of independence from the Holy Roman Empire in matters of language, politics, and religion, Czech culture flourished in what was later termed a golden age of cultural production. Many of the *buditelé* turned to the period from roughly 1420 to 1620 to find examples of a cultivated, literary Czech language from which they could draw.[7] While the Habsburgs would eventually gain control of the Czech lands in 1526 with the crowning of Ferdinand I King of Bohemia, the region maintained a measure of autonomy from the dynasty in matters of language and religion. By the early seventeenth century, however, rising tensions would eventually lead to open conflict between the Bohemian Estates, predominantly composed of Protestant, Czech- and German-speaking hereditary nobles, and the Catholic, German-speaking Habsburgs. When a delegation from the Bohemian nobility entered Prague castle in 1618 and threw two royal councilors out the window—the Second Defenestration of Prague—it set off a series of events that would lead to the beginnings of the Thirty Years' War in 1620. This local conflict was over almost as soon as it began, however, because the Bohemian Estates suffered a horrendous defeat at a location just outside Prague called Bilá hora, or White Mountain.[8]

The Battle of the White Mountain became an emblem of huge significance, especially as marking the end of the post-Hussite "golden age" of the Czech lands, for nineteenth-century nationalists and Czech culture as a whole. With the defeat of the Estates, the Habsburgs moved quickly to crush any remaining dissent. They executed twenty-seven leaders of the Estates

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[7] See Hugh LeCaine Agnew, *Origins of the Czech National Renascence* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993), 70–82.

[8] Hugh LeCaine Agnew, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2004), 66–67.

rebellion and confiscated lands from most of the Protestant nobles in Bohemia—more than half the land in the kingdom changed hands during this upheaval.[9] Jesuits took over all educational institutions in the region and instituted policies and programs of Catholicization. Despite this official stance, as recent scholarship has shown, the supposed hard imposition of Germanization post-White-Mountain was actually much more gradual and partial in rural areas.[10] Czech remained spoken by those living in the countryside, especially peasants and parish priests, and devotional practices in such regions were frequently performed bilingually. German, however, became the only acceptable language for the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie in the towns, and educated people generally.

It is necessary to make the distinction between Czech and German as spoken languages rather than ethnic designations; the latter form would be anachronistic here, as Lonnie R. Johnson summarizes in discussing the Battle of White Mountain:

> Distinguishing between the Bohemian nation and the Czech nation is important in this context. The Bohemian nation in the medieval sense of the word consisted of Czech and German nobles who fought the crown to maintain their own freedoms and privileges, not those of 'the people.' The Czech nation as a linguistic, cultural, and eventually political entity arose in the nineteenth century, and nineteenth-century Czech nationalists tended to reinterpret retrospectively the old Bohemian nation in modern Czech national terms. This led to distortions and turned the feudal or religious conflicts of German kings with Bohemian nobles or German Catholics with Bohemian Hussites into ethnic conflicts between Germans and Czech.[11]

Many of those nobles who would not convert to Catholicism emigrated to other European regions. Some old Czech families chose to convert (or had been Catholic all along) and could

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[9] Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends*, 85.

[10] See, for example, Erika Honisch, "Beyond the *Pietas Austriaca*: Marian Music and Local Religious Culture in Early Modern Bohemia," paper presented at the American Musicological Society national conference, Rochester, NY, November 2017. See also Howard Louthan, *Converting Bohemia: Force and Persuasion in the Catholic Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[11] Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends*, 85.

stay, while other noble families from elsewhere, allied to the Habsburgs, arrived to take possession of lands that had been vacated. This meant that the productive agricultural countryside of the Czech lands became concentrated into the hands a tiny minority of large landholders. Before 1620, over one thousand noble families were counted as members the Bohemian Estates, yet by the middle of the seventeenth century, just eighty-five families held authority over more than sixty percent of the region's peasantry: a vast group of predominantly Czech-speaking people ruled over by a German-speaking aristocracy.[12]

The economic and social structure that accompanied these changes has been termed the "second serfdom" by historians and political scientists. While feudal serfdom was waning in Western Europe thanks to the development of a cash economy, further east, peasants were increasingly bound to their land and expected to provide more and more obligatory labor for their lords.[13] In the Czech lands, this practice was called *robota*, and it weighed heavily on the daily life of rural people.[14] They had to labor on their lord's land for three days a week without compensation, and this duty could increase for up to six days a week during the harvest. Such living was quite difficult, and peasants frequently chafed against this system, as evidenced by a number of rebellions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[15] *Robota* was not officially

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[12] Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends*, 85. As elsewhere in Europe, the Jews in Bohemia and Moravia suffered at the hands of various rulers while at the same time being necessary in economic matters. They did, however, enjoy a period of stability and lessened persecution, especially in Prague, from the 1560s to the 1730s. For an overview of the history of the Jews in the Czech lands from the Middle Ages up through 1867 (when, with the adoption of the Habsburg December Constitution, they obtained full legal equality), see Jana Vobecká, *Demographic Avant-Garde: Jews in Bohemia between the Enlightenment and the Shoah* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013), 15–26.

[13] Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends*, 85–86.

[14] *Robota* serves as the basis for the English word robot; it was the root for the term introduced by Czech writer Karel Čapek's play *R.U.R.* (*Rossum's Universal Robots*, 1920).

[15] Agnew, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown*, 73–75. For more on the Habsburgs and their attempts to deal with peasant rebellions in the eighteenth century, see Pieter M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 45–47 and 70–71.

abolished until 1849, when the events of the 1848 revolutions forced the hand of the young emperor Franz Joseph I. As a consequence, feudal social structures, which had gone basically unchanged since the Middle Ages, were still part and parcel of life in the Czech lands up through the middle of the nineteenth century—in Hugh LeCaine Agnew's words, "the fundamental social axis of the Bohemian crownlands during the first half of the nineteenth century, however, remained that between landowners and subject peasants."[16] This social structure would color the way the *buditelé* framed their history and culture in the early nineteenth century as well as influence how later nationalists viewed the countryside and rural life.

The waves of industrialization marking other parts of Europe also began to affect the Czech lands during the nineteenth century. The latter half of the nineteenth century in particular saw large shifts in populations and economic realities. While agriculture and the large landholders remained an important part of Czech life, the middle classes became more wealthy and influential. They were at the heart of the industrial changes that swept the region, and from 1869 to 1890 the industrial share of the economy grew from 29.3% to 37%, while the agricultural segment saw its part fall from 54.9% to 43.1%.[17] Massive population movements, the result of the changing economic landscape, fundamentally changed the linguistic and ethnic character of urban areas, if not also the countryside. In 1843, only the imperial provincial capitals of Prague and Brno had a population of over 20,000 people, with 83.5% of the population in Bohemia living in rural settlements of no more than 2,000 people. By 1900, just 57% of the population remained in such rural settings.[18]

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[16] Agnew, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown*, 108–109.

[17] Agnew, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown*, 141.

[18] Sayer, *Coasts of Bohemia*, 85.

Whatever the experience of the nobility after 1620, many inhabitants of Bohemia and Moravia still spoke Czech, though its use was largely restricted to rural and lower class communities. When people from the countryside moved into the towns and cities, the proportion of Czech-speakers to German-speakers in urban environments increased. Prague, which in 1851 was a city of 150,000 individuals, 41% of whom spoke German, counted by 1900 a population of over 500,000 people, 93% of whom spoke Czech as their "language of everyday intercourse."[19] The Czech-speaking urbanites that gave rise to, and consumed, opera in Prague, therefore, often had strong personal connections to the countryside and its villages in which they themselves or their parents were raised. Even though Prague had become a predominantly Czech-speaking community, these villages and their people were rapidly mythologized within the growing culture of the National Awakening, which placed a high degree of emphasis on language as a central feature of national character.

Inasmuch as they were a source of inspiration, the day-to-day experiences of rural inhabitants ultimately mattered rather little to the second generation of Awakeners, individuals like Božena Němcová, Karolina Světlá, and Karel Sabina. The lives of villagers were aesthetically idealized and, where possible, linked to historical events and narratives, like White Mountain and its aftermath, that pointed to uniquely Czech histories and cultures. This served to create a specific sense of Czech identity that could be counterposed not only to the Germans of Bohemia and Austria, but to other groups in Europe as a whole. The Czech people, in the words of Derek Sayer, became "the repository of identity and seat of patriotism, and what is *lidové* [of

[19] Sayer, *Coasts of Bohemia*, 86–87. This does not take into account the fact that many individuals who primarily spoke Czech also spoke German, and that even those who learned German as their native language tended to know at least enough Czech to get around in Prague or converse with their servants. For a recent look at the real and imagined divisions between Czech-speakers and German-speakers in Prague, see Gary B. Cohen, "Cultural Crossings in Prague, 1900: Scenes from Late Imperial Austria," *Austrian History Yearbook* 45 (2014): 1–30.

the folk/people] is by that very fact also intrinsically *národní* [national].”[20] Throughout this chapter and the dissertation as a whole, I show how the slippage between the “people” and the “national” also frequently included or implied a third term—the rural.

The Myth of the Village and Early Reception of *The Bartered Bride*

While rural Czech villages were real, physical places, where certain folk traditions were practiced and nurtured (and still are to this day), for writers, artists, composers, and other intellectual nationalists in the nineteenth century, they proved to be a powerful source for mythic narratives about the Czech people and, eventually, their national identity. I use the word “myth” here following Andrea Orzoff’s discussion of the term in the context of the First Czechoslovak Republic. It indicates the extent to which narratives of identity, like those propagated by the Awakening authors writing about villages, relied on essentialist ideas and terms that functioned in the manner of fables, whereby simplified, symbolic figures and settings communicated what were perceived as “universal” truths. Despite, or indeed because of, their essentialist bases, the purportedly “universal” character of such myths could in practice be quite well-ordered.[21] This is in part why it is difficult to discuss the history of the Czech lands without invoking myth to a certain extent, even accidentally. The myth of the Czechs has become ingrained to the point of entering into the standard historiography. As Orzoff puts it, the myth “goes like this: under Habsburg rule, the innately democratic, peace-loving, tolerant Czechs were viciously repressed by bellicose, authoritarian, reactionary Austrians, under whose regime the Czech language and national consciousness almost died out. Czech identity was rescued by a heroic, devoted group of

[20] Sayer, *Coasts of Bohemia*, 119.

[21] See Andrea Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 11.

intellectuals, dubbed the Awakeners, who brought the dormant nation back to life by recrafting literary Czech, retelling Czech history, and making political claims on behalf of a 'Czech nation.'"[22]

Because of the ordered logic of such mythical narratives, however idealized their content, they easily represented and transmitted specific historical and political constellations of meaning. Additionally, because of their interweaving of historical events with ahistorical narrativization, they proved quite hard to contradict. Multiple symbolic meanings and narratives also came together to create a potent mythical experience of the village, much as they helped construct a sense of Czech history. In the case of the village myth, its layers encompassed such ideas as the peasantry forming the heart and soul of the nation; villagers as inherently musical people; the countryside as the location of purity, as a source of strength, and as an antidote to urban decadence; and outsiders as dangerous foreign elements. Through their generalizability, such signifiers could easily be mapped onto real-world experiences and events. Therein lay the power of the village as an explanatory myth.

The process of analyzing the village as myth, then, begins with recognizing and decoding the various symbolic elements of the narratives present in Czech cultural and artistic contexts. The village was understood, first and foremost, to be the preserver of the Czech nation, especially as metonymized in the Czech language, in the face of outside (defined in the later nineteenth century as German) oppression. As one Czech politician put it in 1885, the salvation of the nation and its language was only possible thanks to

> the Czech peasant, who, through his abundant talents, not only strove toward the salvific actions of our preservation, uplift, and awakening, but also cultivated faithful and steadfast sons who would continue in the footsteps of their grand and glorious fathers, having accepted from them this precious bequest: that they never cease in the sacred

[22] See Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 14. Orzoff's text discusses the myths and propaganda employed in First Republic Czechoslovakia in great detail, but engages very little with music.

> battle for the rights of the nation, for their maternal language! It was cottages and village houses from which our Awakeners emerged… Yes, these simple cottages became a Bethlehem for the Czech nation, wherein were brought forth those who, guided and strengthened by the bright star of vigorous patriotic love, the genius of their spirit, and the fervor of their golden hearts, would once again resurrect the Czech nation…[23]

Whether or not farmers understood the political, economic, and social circumstances of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, they were represented as being the cradle from which true patriotism, genius, and Czech ethnic essence emanated. Once such a myth was established, it would be quite easy to ascribe to country peasants and their villages whichever positive traits were apposite; from there, it was a simple slippage to regard the same characteristics as the essential qualities of Czechness.

This politician's speech betrays a number of other assumptions that contributed to the myth of the village: the place of non-Czechs goes unremarked, as does the fact that not only peasants lived in the countryside. Jews had enjoyed the protection of local nobility in Moravia in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, providing their patrons with capital and goods. Their descendants continued to live in these rural environments. When, in 1867, Jews were granted legal equality and restrictions on their movement were abolished, they integrated into many towns throughout the Czech lands. Even if they tended to speak German over Czech, their omission from narratives of Czech literature and opera was a consequential act that helped to create an essentialist sense of Czech purity.[24] Landowning nobility had also long been a feature

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[23] "…český rolník, který nejenom sám vydatnou hřivnou svou přičinil k spásnému činu našeho zachranění, povznešení a probuzení, nýbrž také vypěstoval syny věrné a vytrvalé, kteří pokračovali ve šlépějích otců velkých a slavných, přijavše od nich ten odkaz drahý: aby neustali ve svatém boji za národa právo, za jazyk mateřský! Chaloupky a chýše vesnické to byly, z nichž vyšli naši buditelé… Ano, ty prosté chaloupky staly se národu českému Betlémem, v němž zrodili se ti, kdo vedeni a síleni jasnou hvězdou činorodé lásky vlastenencké, ducha svého geniem a od srdce zlatého zápalem národ český opět vzkřísili…" Quoted in Jiří Rak, *Byvali Čechové* (Jinočany: Nakladatelství H&H, 1994), 85. Such an emphatic repurposing of Christian imagery was a standard gambit of secularized nationalism, which will be discussed below.

[24] For more on the status of rural Jews in the Czech lands, see Vobecká, *Demographic Avant-Garde*, 17–18, and 26–28.

of rural life, and their enterprises provided capital for local municipalities, where ethnolinguistic distinctions were much less important than being able to trade in both Czech and German. Indeed, actual rural inhabitants sometimes resisted the calls of nationalists for them to choose a side, so to speak, in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The nationalists in turn disparaged so-called "amphibians" who, in being able to switch back and forth between Czech and German milieux, refused to tie themselves a particular essential identity.[25]

The historian Jiří Rak locates the origins of the village myth at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Awakeners were beginning to widen their sphere of influence.[26] In part, the mythologization of the village reacted against one part of the larger Czech national master narrative: the idea that the period after Bílá hora was but an era of darkness (*období temna*), during which foreign Habsburg rulers had suppressed Czech culture and the region's inhabitants. The perceived absence of a native, powerful aristocracy or a financially, politically influential bourgeoisie was a problem for those who sought forebears for a cohesive national identity, and the fault was pinned squarely on the Habsburgs. The social classes purported to be missing in the Czech lands had proved important to nationalist movements in other areas, whether the ancestral nobility in Hungary or the economically powerful bourgeoisie in France.[27] Thus, the writers, philologists, and journalists of the early stages of the National Awakening—in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—held up the peasantry, its farmers, and what

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[25] For a discussion of this linguistic fluidity in the context of the town of České Budějovíce, see Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848–1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 1–4.

[26] See Rak, *Byvali Čechové*, 83–95. This was also when various writers began to lay out early conceptions of German nationalism; see discussion below.

[27] Miroslav Hroch discusses at length the variety of different processes that lead the creation and definitions of nations, which, though there were some shared elements among the various nations of Europe, showed a remarkable diversity of origin and method. See Miroslav Hroch, *European Nations: Explaining their Formation*, trans. Karolina Graham (New York: Verso, 2015), especially 37–116.

they considered the Czech people (*český lid*) to be the bedrock of their movement.[28] Because the nobility and wealthier bourgeoisie were perceived to be overwhelmingly German, and thus colonizers, the peasantry became almost by default where the "true core of national being" resided.[29]

This narrative—popularized by writers like Božena Němcová, Jan Nerdua, and Karolina Světlá—was derived partially from the philosophies developed by Johann Gottfried von Herder, who, as an influential figure in conceptions of romantic nationalism, held that nations contained within themselves the unique path to their own evolution. This path lay in rediscovering the folk practices and music of common people, who had not been tainted by upper-class customs. Herder was consciously writing against his own context of the eighteenth-century German lands, which to him was both a morass of small, disparate territories and overtaken by French cultural forms.[30] Herder's theories were widely read in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, precisely when the National Awakening was in its beginning stages, and he influenced Czech scholars like Josef Dobrovský, Josef Jungmann, Karel Havlíček-Borovský, and František Palacký. Herder's ideas spread despite their original ideological context of Herder's work,

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[28] "Na místo šlechtice (= cizácka) nastupuje český sedlák, rolník, prostě český lid, který sám je zárukou dalšího trvání národa a ke svému zdárnému vývoji šlechtu a 'pány' nepotřebuje." See Rak, *Byvali Čechové*, 85. To a certain extent, Rak perpetuates the myth that the aristocracy in the Czech lands was completely foreign and un-Czech. Recent historical work, such as that by Rita Krueger, has indicated that the situation was more complicated than that; indeed, some of the largest landholders in Bohemia were families that could trace their lineage in the region back to the early Middle Ages. See Rita Krueger, *Czech, German, and Noble* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[29] Rak, *Byvali Čechové*, 86.

[30] See William A. Wilson, "Herder, Folklore and Romantic Nationalism," *Journal of Popular Culture* 6, no. 4 (March 1973): 819–835. More on Herder, and especially on his relationship to discourses of "folk music" and "art music," can be found in Matthew Gelbart, *The Invention of "Folk Music" and "Art Music": Emerging Categories from Ossian to Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

which—given his goal of creating a united, resurgent Germany—was somewhat inimical to that of the Czech Awakeners.[31]

Although Herder was an important forbear not only for the Czechs but for proto-nationalists across Europe, the unique historical circumstances in each region led to dissimilar approaches to rurality as a source of national identity. For example, German nationalists also made use of Herder's theories regarding language as the determining factor of nationhood. Yet the histories of German and Czech as languages followed different trajectories. While German may have been considered by intellectuals like Herder and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe to have lagged developmentally behind French and English in terms of its literary efflorescences, writers like Goethe were rapidly changing that perception; moreover, the language itself had never been under threat.[32] Czech, by contrast, was perceived by nationalists to have survived near-eradication at the hands of the Habsburgs in the post-Bilá hora era. The villages and countryside of Bohemia were consequently viewed as safe havens from whence the Czech language would eventually flourish once more, grounded in a lost golden age during the post-Hussite era. This approach led to an increased emphasis on the rural as source of national identity in the Czech context, especially when considered from a Herderian perspective.[33]

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[31] See Brian Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague: Polemics and Practice at the National Theater 1900–1938* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 17. A consideration of the complicated heritage of Herder with regard to the National Awakening, in addition to the influence of other contemporary philosophers and thinkers, can be found in Zdeněk V. David, *Johann Gottfried Herder and the Czech National Awakening: A Reassessment* (Pittsburgh, PA: The Center for Russian and East European Studies, 2007).

[32] See Paul Bishop, "Nationalism and Europeanism in German Romantic Literature," in *Nationalism Versus Cosmopolitanism in German Thought and Culture, 1789–1914: Essays on the Emergence of Europe*, ed. Mary Anne Perkins and Martin Liebscher (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), 93–129.

[33] The co-constructedness of nation and rurality was by no means unique to Germany and the Czech lands; thinkers in most European regions had their own particular means of articulating this relationship. France presents an interesting case, as the nation-state was constituted in a very centralized way, with Paris and its culture as the defining center of gravity. It was only later in the nineteenth century that provincial reaction against Paris would lead to the appropriation of peasant cultures. However, because the impulse was one of reaction against centralization, rather than a constitutive act that took the peasantry as a central component (as in the Czech case), the movements

Idealized views of the peasantry and villages, fashioned by the urban Czech bourgeois Awakeners for their own purposes, were at odds with the situation of actual peasants residing in the countryside. The issues of language, literature, and national identity that so exercised the Awakeners and which were publicized in such venues as the *Journal of the Czech Museum Society* carried barely any weight among villagers in the countryside. According to Rak, rural inhabitants considered political affairs, including the revolutions of 1848, to be urban matters that had little bearing on life in the countryside.[34] This did not stop writers in the first half of the nineteenth century from creating their own versions of the idealized, nationally-inclined village. Vacláv Matěj Kramerius—publisher, writer, and one of the most important early Awakeners—issued a didactic publication in 1801 intended for rural audiences; Kramerius's publishing house, Česká expedice, was one of the few at that time that enjoyed circulation beyond the scholarly circles of Prague. The pamphlet, entitled *The Evening Gathering of Dobrovice Village* (*Večerní shromáždění Dobrovické obce*), advanced a vision of a peaceful, conflict-less village where the inhabitants gathered together to hear ideas and lectures from the village teacher and representatives of the estate owner so that they might better tend their land and lead more productive lives.[35]

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turned out very differently. For a discussion of this process and its relationship with opera, see Katharine Ellis, "*Mireille*'s Homecoming? Gounod, Mistral, and the Midi," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 65 no. 2 (Summer 2012): 463–623. For more on the interrelationships between the processes of French and German national development, see Mary Anne Perkins, "Introduction," in *Nationalism Versus Cosmopolitanism in German Thought and Culture, 1789–1914: Essays on the Emergence of Europe*, ed. Mary Anne Perkins and Martin Liebscher (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), 1–34, especially 23–25.

[34] Rak, *Byvali Čechové*, 87–88. This is not to say that rural inhabitants could not or did not have some idea of what was happening politically. Alamanacs and newspapers reached communities outside the main population centers, and literacy was exceedingly high in the Czech lands: by 1890, the literacy rate surpassed 95% for men and 93% for women over the age of six. See Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia*, 89.

[35] Rak, *Byvali Čechové*, 88–89.

The most famous example of the mythic village, however, was Božena Němcová's novel *Babička* (*The Grandmother*, 1855), whose prose "idealized rural relationships as a society of unchanging order and firm moral values."[36] Instrumentalized by later generations and commentators as the foundational work of modern Czech literature, it presents the "lyricized village [as] the picture of harmonious coexistence of people among themselves and with nature."[37] In a passage that outlined the archetypal characteristics of the mythic village, Němcová fashioned the setting as "a place of existential certainty and contentment, and although it may even include wickedness and passions, or see tragedies take place, as they do everywhere in human life, everything is nevertheless sweetened by beauty and harmony of a somewhat higher—divine or natural—order."[38]

Němcová was a central figure among the Awakeners; she moved in the same circles as, and worked on literary projects with Karel Sabina, who later wrote several librettos for village operas, including *The Bartered Bride*.[39] *The Grandmother* tells the stories of three women as they navigate life in the idealized Czech countryside of the author's youth, but Němcová's main focus was village life and its customs. According to the literary critic Miloš Sedmidubský, Němcová's tale is exemplary of the Awakening-era view of the villages as the locus of an intact society with "healthy" relationships among the members of their communities; the story also

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[36] Rak, *Byvali Čechové*, 89. For a biographical sketch of Němcová that attempts to dispel partially the myths surrounding her, see Peter Demetz, *Prague in Black and Gold: Scenes from the Life of a European City* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997), 308–313.

[37] Steffen Höhne, Eduard Kubů, and Jiří Šouša, "Úvodem: pojmosloví – stav bádání – historický kontext," in *Český a německý sedlák v zrcadle krásné literatury 1848–1948*, eds. Eduard Kubů, Jiří Šouša, Aleš Zářický (Prague: Dokořán, 2014), 13–47, 17.

[38] Höhne, Kubů, and Šouša, "Úvodem," 17.

[39] See Jan Bažant, Nina Bažantová, and Frances Starn, eds., *The Czech Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 153.

provided enough of a sense of realism to address what he terms the conflict between this view and the positivist, scientifically-minded tendencies of the larger Biedermeier European context.[40] Propagating the village myth relied on this sense of verisimilitude throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries; though created by urban intellectuals, it bore sufficient similarities to actual village life to be convincing in its work of cultural representation. Němcová's novel also reinforced the fable-like simplicity typical of the mythical village through its characters. By foregrounding children (especially Barunka, Němcová's fictionalized younger self) and the grandmother, the author performed a double idealization. The clarifying, reductionist nostalgia of childhood simplified and oversaturated the colors of the story, while the grandmother represented a kind of "second childhood" to reinforce the first. The grandmother, moreover, also represents the tradition of the "idyll of old age," a longing for a simpler, distant time, where the wisdom of elders could represent a refuge from contemporary cultural, social, and political conflicts.[41]

In addition to her novels and short stories, Němcová also authored and collected short stories and fairy tales, which quickly became beloved fixtures of Czech culture. One such fairy tale, *Čert a Káča* (*The Devil and Kate*, 1846), trades heavily on mythologized village elements. It would be transformed into an opera by Adolf Wenig and Antonín Dvořák in 1899, which I discuss in Chapter 4. Fairy tales published by Němcová and other authors like Karel Jaromír Erben were, I contend, another powerful source of the village myth.[42] Fairy tales helped build it

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[40] See Miloš Sedmidubský, "Das Idyllische im Spannungsfeld zwischen Kultur und Natur: Božen Němcovás *Babička*," in *Zur Poetik und Rezeption von Božena Němcovás "Babička,"* ed. Andreas Guski (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1991), 27–79, especially 36–38.

[41] Sedmidubský, "Das Idyllische im Spannungsfeld," 38–41.

[42] Erben was an influential mid-nineteenth-century writer, poet, and folklore collector. He is perhaps best-known in the present day for his *Kytice z pověstí národních* (*A Bouquet of National Legends*, 1853, rev. 1861). Antonín Dvořák utilized four of Erben's ballads from this collection as the basis for a set of tone poems, all composed from

up in large part through their settings: as the folklorist Dagmar Klimová points out, the "agricultural village environment [was] the most characteristic domain of experience for the overwhelming majority of practitioners of Czech prosaic folklore of the first half of the nineteenth century," whence came much of the material collected and published by the ethnographically-inclined Awakeners.[43] Influenced in part by such efforts, the village served also as "the most frequent setting or plot basis of Awakening-era fairy tales."[44] The tales collected and written by the pre-1848 generation of Awakeners not only influenced other contemporaries and artistic genres, but also became sources for composers and librettists of the later nineteenth century as they searched for ways to express a unified Czech identity through music theater. Much of the cultural resources to which figures like Smetana and his librettist Sabina had access, then, made use of the mythologized, idealized space of the village.

Such stories offered a useful and accessible way to communicate the values and standards of a culture, especially since fairy tales were often directed at children.[45] Despite their fictional and fantastical character, fairy tales reflected aspects of the realities from which they emerged.[46] The plots and settings of fairy tales were also influential beyond that genre itself. As a consequence, people of rural (and, axiomatically, lower-class) origins frequently served as the

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1896–1897: *Vodník* (*The Water Goblin*), *Polednice* (*The Noon Witch*), *Zlatý kolovrat* (*The Golden Spinning Wheel*), and *Holoubek* (*The Wild Dove*).

[43] Dagmar Klimová and Jaroslav Otčenášek, *Česká pohádka v 19. století* (Prague: Etnologický ústav Akademie věd České republiky, v.v.i., 2012), 42.

[44] Klimová and Otčenášek, *Česká pohádka v 19. století*, 42.

[45] For more on the social and cultural resonances of fairy tales, see Sheldon Cashdan, *The Witch Must Die: How Fairy Tales Shape Our Lives* (New York: Basic Books, 1999); Jack Zipes, *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: The Cultural and Social History of a Genre* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012); and Armando Maggi, *Preserving the Spell: Basile's* The Tale of Tales *and its Afterlife in the Fairy-Tale Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

[46] Klimová and Otčenášek, *Česká pohádka v 19. století*, 30–31.

heroes in Czech fairy tales and similar literature of the nineteenth century. To provide just one example, a central schema of many Czech fairy tales, as identified by Klimová, is the contrast between rich and poor brothers.[47] Such a conceit forms a key part of the plot of *The Bartered Bride*, albeit in a slightly altered form: the poor but sympathetic peasant Jeník, who wants to marry Mařenka but cannot, is the half-brother of the rich but laughably simple Vašek, whose arranged marriage to Mařenka is foiled by a trick of Jeník's relating to their shared but hidden parentage. The marrigage broker Kecal, as a wealthier outsider, acts as the main antagonist of the drama and provides comic relief along with Vašek.

While such figures did not constitute a uniform category of behaviors and characteristics, peasants, when portrayed in sympathetic roles, were often understood as "the adored and idealized representatives of the very core of the nation."[48] The reception of such stories, especially among urban intellectuals in Prague like Neruda, positioned these idealized pesants as ciphers for the nation. Whatever characteristics such figures displayed in their stories became national characteristics, though this formula was capable of being reversed and subject to slippage: while later artists could take up the characters and settings of Awakening-era fairy tales and stories in order to project a sense of Czech specificity, commentators could then turn back around and offer fictionalized visions of the village and its inhabitants as exemplary models for how Czech society should be ordered.

In the review of the *The Bartered Bride*'s premiere that opened this chapter, for example, Neruda made two rhetorical moves that continue, to this day, to be central to the opera's reception: one, he established the village and rurality as key sources for specifically Czech

[47] Klimová and Otčenášek, *Česká pohádka v 19. století*, 31.

[48] Klimová and Otčenášek, *Česká pohádka v 19. století*, 31.

narratives, and two, he positioned Smetana as primary proponent of creating a national music built on village ideology. According to Neruda, "Smetana is called, before all others, to take up an eminent position in our patriotic art, indeed, to become the founder of a purely national direction in our domestic opera."[49]

In mid-1866, however, Neruda's positive view of *The Bartered Bride* was something of an anomaly. The premiere had been lightly attended, largely due to tensions in Prague over the looming possibility of an Austro-Prussian war, which would indeed break out less than three weeks after the opera's first performance. While the audience did demand the opening chorus be repeated, the premiere was hardly an incontrovertible success; criticisms included the mechanical delivery of the prose passages between numbers, the convolutedness of the libretto, and the need for more nationally inflected dances.[50] Whatever the intial difficulties of Smetana's opera, Neruda's stance on both composer and work would be vindicated over the course of the next four years, as Smetana heavily revised *The Bartered Bride* and audiences warmed to the opera. In foregrounding Smetana as the most successful Czech opera composer to this date, Neruda inaugurated a third reception thread, perhaps the most important of all. His call for Smetana to become the founder of a purely Czech operatic school contributed a process of forgetting, both conscious and unconscious, of the earlier operatic history of Prague.

Works like František Škroup's *The Tinker* (*Dráteník*, 1826), the first original Czech-language opera, were largely forgotten by the 1860s or their importance was downplayed. This was all the more true for the German-language operatic scene in Prague, which had been active

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[49] "...Smetana před jinými k tomu povolán jest, zaujímati v našem umění vlasteneckém místo vynikající, ano státi se zakladatelem ryze národního směru v domácí naší opeře." Neruda, "Literatura a umění," 2.

[50] A narrative of the premiere and its reception is given in Přemysl Pražák, *Smetanova Prodaná nevěsta* (Prague: Lidová demokracie, 1962), 42–46.

since the opening of the Estates Theater in 1783. Composers like Carl Maria von Weber and Albert Lortzing, whose music would serve as inspiration for Smetana in creating works like *The Bartered Bride*, were downplayed in favor of discourses that positioned Smetana as the autochtonous creator of Czech music in its entirety.[51] *Der Freischütz* was one of most popular operas at the Provisional Theater in Prague, which Smetana conducted multiple times, including for his debut as a conductor at the theater on 28 September 1866.[52] While Smetana himself acknowledged the importance of Weber's *Freischütz* as a model, *The Bartered Bride* was, from its earliest reception, positioned as representing Czech essence mainly through its village underpinnings. Indeed, the advocacy of members of the Artistic Union on behalf of Smetana and his opera was so successful that, in the words of Kelly St. Pierre, they "proudly reduced both the arguments of his detractors and the individuals themselves to nothingness, essentially eliminating the work's poor initial reception."[53] The more that Smetana was regarded as the alpha and omega of Czech music, the more that the underlying myths of his oeuvre, like that of the village, would be referenced and reinscribed.[54]

Whatever these treatments of rural life—in operas or otherwise—might include or add to the village myth could be reincorporated by the very same logic that had given them their antecedents in the first place. Yet the largely fictional myth of the village was not only a narrative of Czech identity or a means of establishing a setting. It was also a way in which Czech

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[51] For more on the pre-Smetana operatic scene in Prague, see Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague*, 16–17, as well as Tyrrell, *Czech Opera*, 13–24.

[52] See Josef Bartoš, *Prozatímní divadlo a jeho opera* (Prague: Sbor pro zřízení druhého Národního divadla v Praze, 1938), 129.

[53] Kelly St. Pierre, *Bedřich Smetana: Myth, Music, and Propaganda* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2017), 54.

[54] A related discussion about the beginnings of Smetana advocacy on the part of the Artistic Society (Umělecká beseda) and its relationship to the National Awakening can be found in St. Pierre, *Bedřich Smetana*, 7–23.

artists and intellectuals understood themselves and their relationships to their history, culture, and society: that is to say, an ideology.

The Village as Ideology and the Revisions of *The Bartered Bride*

A common definition of ideology holds that it is a system of ideas and ideals that forms the basis for a larger theoretical construct, be it a political, economic, or cultural system.[55] The term may carry a positive or negative connotation and may refer to the ways in which ideas or belief systems interact with political power specifically. This seems to be the underlying conception in studies that reference the ideology of nationalism as it relates to music; one such example is Brian Locke's important text *Opera and Ideology in Prague*. Locke differentiates between three separate ideologies that he deems important to the discussion of opera and criticism in the context of early twentieth-century Prague: nationalism, modernism, and the social responsibility of art.[56] The systems of ideas and ideals encapsulated by these terms are so complex and contentious as almost to elude enumeration, but it is precisely through their indeterminate qualities that they allow for a certain amount of interpretive ease of use. Adherence to a Czech nationalist cause, Locke argues, influenced the way critics and composers engaged with music and the cultural materials of the era in addition to shaping their interactions with other national groups, in particular the Germans.[57] In this sense, my work engages with his, as this dissertation seeks to explore how the nationalistically inflected myth of the Czech rural village ideologically

[55] Terry Eagleton proposes that ideology is now more of a text than a term, in that it is comprised of multiple layers and threads of different conceptual origin, which must be read and interpreted in any given context. For an overview of the multitude of meanings and interpretations associated with the word ideology, see Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (New York: Verso, 1991), especially 1–31.

[56] Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague*, 4–6. Nationalism as a term has a long and fraught history, to say nothing of modernism; the former will be discussed in detail below.

[57] Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague*, 4–6.

forged conceptions of Czech identity. Moreover, I also refine my own working definition of ideology in order to understand better the constituent social attributes of Czech operas subsumed under the heading of "national" or "nationalist."

In a great deal of writing about Czech music, nationalist ideology is treated as a monolithic attribute.[58] Yet to allow for this ideology in its singular incarnation as the primary motivating force within Czech musical culture is to obscure other aspects of this environment, namely the way Czech opera engaged with, and influenced, other aspects of Czech society, especially through the categories of gender, race, and class. Such social categories structured the lived environments of artists and writers and were reflected in their works; the ways in which nationalist ideology was constituted, and the ways in which it interacted with cultural objects, were thus deeply enmeshed with these issues. In order to approach the ways in which this worked, however, we have to understand nationalism in a manner that accounts for its utter pervasiveness as well as its thoroughgoing complexity. Here I engage Louis Althusser's work on ideology in order to explore the power of the village as an explanatory and constitutive myth within Czech opera specifically and Czech culture more generally.

Althusser's theory of ideology rests on an important distinction between the concept's historical instantiations and its functioning.[59] In a structuralist move, Althusser states that

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[58] This is particularly true of Hostinský and his contemporaries' writing from the 1870s (see below). Scholarship from the twentieth century, however, is also guilty of this, particularly biographies of Czech composers. For example, see Brian Large, *Smetana* (New York: Praeger, 1970), and John Clapham, *Dvořák* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979). Czech-language scholarship is also not free of this tendency; for example, the collection *Bedřich Smetana a jeho doba*, while it does an excellent job contextualizing Smetana and Prague musical life of the later nineteenth century, pays little attention to categories of gender or class, much less their relationship to nationalism as refracted through opera. See Marta Ottlová and Milan Pospíšil, *Bedřich Smetana a jeho doba* (Prague: Knižnice dějin a současnosti, 1997).

[59] See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)," in *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewer (London: New Left Books, 1971), 127–186, as well as Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (New York: Verso, 2014).

ideology *in general* has no history, or put another way, is omni-historical. That is to say, the structure of ideology and the manner in which it functions is the same across all of history, or at least history in Althusser's Marxist understanding, whereby history emerges out of the history of class struggle. However, ideolog*ies* in the plural—represented by historically conditioned terms like nationalism or modernism—do have a history determined by the social formations from which they arise. This allows for the investigation of the historical workings of an ideology and its relationship to other social elements, like myths, while still permitting for a structural function of ideology as such.[60]

This underlying structure rests on two theses for Althusser. The first posits that ideology "represents individuals' imaginary relation to their real conditions of existence."[61] This form of ideology is an imagined set of norms or concepts that is part and parcel of the term's more informal definition, but the important issue is the non-correspondence between ideology and reality. Despite this non-correspondence, ideology nevertheless makes reference to reality through, in Althusser's terminology, allusion or distortion. The idea of allusion is key here, in that it allows for concepts and ideas that resemble reality yet are somehow distorted to govern the ways in which individuals relate to the world around them. Myth and mythic narratives make ideal substitutes for reality in order to help ideology to function. It is an ideological move to use the myth of the idealized village as a locus for desired social qualities or relations—cleverness, warm-heartedness, familial devotion, adherence to certain gender roles—in that it substitutes an

[60] Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, 174–176.

[61] Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, 181.

illusionary yet allusive conception for reality. It is this conception that then dictates how individuals relate to the larger world around them in their thoughts and practices.[62]

Althusser's second thesis regarding the functioning of ideology has to do with these practices, given that ideology also "has a material existence."[63] This is the mechanism through which Althusser connects his theorizing of ideology with his conception of the Ideological State Apparatus. Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) are systems of practices and institutions that serve to uphold the state and its larger governing ideology.[64] While they can take many forms—the Political ISA, the Familial ISA, the Religious ISA—the one that concerns me here is the Cultural Ideological State Apparatus. Czech comic opera as an aesthetic practice (and all its associated reception practices) serves as an anchor that instantiates a particular ideology or ideologies. As a component of the Cultural ISA, it relates to many other aspects of that system, such as the Prague National Theater.[65] Composers, librettists, critics, musicologists, and audiences were all engaged in these aesthetic practices, and in their practices they gave material existence to a number of different ideologies—in other words, their actions helped to normalize the substitution of an illusory/allusive concept, the village myth, for reality.

The two theses explaining how ideology functions give rise to a final, central thesis regarding the nature of ideology: the category of the subject is constitutive of ideology, or rather, that ideology can only exist in and through individual subjects. As Althusser states, "all ideology

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[62] While this formulation at first seems to suppose the existence of a pure, objective reality, it consequently plays directly into Althusser's point that there can be no knowledge or experience prior to ideology. Reality is always already allusively filtered through ideology, and the question of ideological engagement becomes one of degree.

[63] Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, 184.

[64] Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, 77.

[65] A question arises here that will be important for later chapters of this dissertation: can one have a Czech State Ideological Apparatus without a Czech state as such? I address the issue of how ideological practices of opera in the Czech lands functioned in a multinational, imperialist setting most saliently in Chapter 2.

hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects."[66] Subjects are interpellated, i.e. made legible as subjects, through their relationship with some larger, unique Other Subject, which Althusser posits as an abstract concept such as God, Justice, or the National Interest. This relationship, however, only exists insofar as it is materialized by the concrete practices of subjects existing in the world.

Althusser's structuralist conception of individual subjects and their reliance on ideology is relevant in that it is the practices of these subjects—composing operas or writing about music—that crystalized their relationship to larger Subjects like the nation. In analyzing operas or their critical reception as ideological practices, then, we can see the ways in which individual subjects relate to the larger illusionary/allusive Subject and to all that these Subjects subsume in their social specificity. It is with this in mind that I make one of the central claims of this dissertation: the mythologized village functions as a Subject in the Althusserian sense, which is to say ideologically, in Czech culture and especially in Czech opera. Individual subjects interpellated in and through this ideology of the village thus come to understand themselves and others through the logics of the village and its social relationships, which subsume a whole host of norms regarding gender, race, and class. These norms are in turn instantiated into cultural products through the material practices of ideology—criticism, composing, writing librettos, and other such activities.

Smetana's revisions to *The Bartered Bride*, which started to take shape in 1868, constitute a prime example of reinscribing the importance of the mythologized village into cultural products. Following in part on the advice of the reviews, Smetana introduced new dances and choruses into his first revised version—the polka and the choral paean to beer, which,

[66] Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, 188–190.

in the final version of the opera, end Act I and open Act II, respectively.[67] However, this move also had more outward-looking motivations. The possibility of performing *The Bartered Bride* in Paris was at that time being seriously discussed, and Smetana's new dance numbers were composed with an eye towards French tastes for ballet.[68] The question of cosmopolitan tastes, foreign audiences, and the potential draw of autoessentialism will be discussed more in Chapters 2 and 3. In early 1869 Prague, however, these revisions were praised because they added to the opera's idealized characterization of rural life.

Otakar Hostinský, one of Smetana's first and most influential advocates, was particularly fond of the addition of the pub scenes for precisely this reason: "The fiery drinking chorus and the entire transfer of the finale of this act to the tavern successfully supplements the universal, illustrative characteristics of jovial rural people through its lively contrast with the other parts of the opera."[69] Idealized depictions of rural life, with their self-evident connection to issues of Czech national particularity—for intellectuals like Hostinský—were what audiences appeared to respond to most favorably as well. Indeed, as Hostinský stated, the more the composer could "submerge himself in the most secret depths of the national spirit and national life," the more "favored and popular" his music would be become.[70] The critic's prose positioned the rural village and its nationally representative character as the pivot in *The Bartered Bride*'s reception, adding to the ideological centrality of the village and its inhabitants' character. Hostinský

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[67] A history of the various revisions to *The Bartered Bride*, which I draw from here, is given in Pražák, *Smetanova Prodaná nevěsta*, 49–54.

[68] Pražák, *Smetanova Prodaná nevěsta*, 50.

[69] "Ohnivý sbor pijácký a vůbec přeložení celé závěrečné scény tohoto aktu do krčmy šťastně doplňují všestrannou plastickou karakteristiku bodrého lidu venkovského živým svým kontra[s]tem k ostatním částem zpěvohry..." Otakar Hostinský, "Zprávy. České divadlo," *Dalibor* 8, no. 5 (10 February 1869): 32.

[70] "...ponořiti se v nejtajnější hloubi ducha a života národního, a stává se tudiž nejen den ode dne oblíbenější a popularnější..." Hostinský, "Zprávy," 32.

finished his report on the revised *The Bartered Bride* noting that the opera was already becoming quite popular: "The audience was very animated, and boisterous applause after almost every number demonstrated how greatly beloved Smetana's opera is."[71]

Hostinský considered *The Bartered Bride* not only nationally representative and musically worthy, but also morally didactic. He also positioned *The Bartered Bride* as an ideological reference point when writing about the performance of the opera in St. Petersburg in January 1871, the very first in another state. The performance, conceived in the late spring of 1870, was the brainchild of two Czechs engaged by the imperial court in St. Petersburg: the conductor Eduard Nápravník and the bass Josef Paleček. Paleček, writing to Smetana, unknowingly inaugurated a tradition that would accompany *The Bartered Bride* on its international travels, especially after 1892 (see Chapters 2 and 3). The singer strongly encouraged adherence to a particular imagining of Czech village life and its "faithful" reproduction onstage:

> I think you should ask the younger Mr. Kolár [probably František Kolár, a Provisional Theater set designer] to indicate everyone (besides Kecal) in color *completely faithfully*, and especially to design a Plzeň cap so that it can be well made; he should choose colors for every individual actor according to our national custom so that everything will be made faithfully here. So too it must be with the first act village square; indeed, it must look as it does during a festival, and so too the interior of the village pub. There is a frightfully large stage here, so let the decorations be indicated in all truthfulness. Once more I ask you to not think of our cramped conditions at home and design everything, costumes and decorations, with *the utmost splendor and faithfulness*.[72]

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[71] "Obecenstvo bylo velmi animované a hlučný potlesk skoro po všech číslech dokazoval, jak velice oblíbená jest Smetanova zpevohra." Hostinský, "Zprávy," 32.

[72] "Myslím tedy, by jste požádal p. Kolára mladšího, aby každou osobu (mimo Kecala) s barvami naznačil *docela věrně*, čepici plzeňskou zvláště vymaloval, aby se mohla dobře udělat, vůbec, aby podle našeho národního zvyku při každé jednotlivé osobě barvy vyvolil, zde se věrně udělá. Tak také dekorace první náves, jak vskutku o pouti vyhlíží, a pak vnitřek venkovské krčmy. Zde jest ukrutně veliké jeviště, tak ať se dekorace naznačují ve vší pravdivosti. Ještě jednou Vás prosím, abyste neměl naše domácí stísněné poměry na mysli a udal vše, kostymy a dekorace, se *vší nádherou a věrností*." Emphasis in original. Paleček likely excluded the role of Kecal from his suggestions because he had played Kecal on Czech stages and knew the role and its staging traditions. See Pražák, *Smetanova Prodaná nevěsta*, 193.

The insistence on national specificity and particularity, down to a certain type of hat from the area around the city of Plzeň, encouraged a distinct way of creating and mainting a sense of Czech identity through opera. Paleček was, in effect, the first person to export the village mode for other audiences.

Smetana was eager to adapt his opera to encourage performances elsewhere, paradoxically changing the shape of what was fast becoming the Czech national opera *par excellence* according to outside tastes. He completed the final version of *The Bartered Bride* in 1870, which now featured further dance numbers and through-composed recitative in place of spoken dialogue between numbers. Hostinský had suggested the latter as a fulfillment of the promise of the opera's music, thereby creating a more "grand" (*velká*) opera, and Paleček had likewise encouraged the move to conform to the customs of the imperial opera in St. Petersburg.[73] By eschewing the use of spoken dialogue, a feature associated with operettas and Singspiels, Smetana's opera was now more prestigious and suitable to nation-building. Hostinský relied on exactly this idea when he defended *The Bartered Bride* from the negative opinions of St. Petersburg critics. One had compared Smetana with Offenbach, and found the Czech composer lacking in both "piquantness" and originality. Hostinský found this comparison utterly inapt, as Offenbach's operettas were of a completely different order than *The Bartered Bride*:

> Smetana's opera is a picture of village life of a rather idyllic character, free of all sophisticated frivolities; the composer introduced the coloration almost entirely directly from naïve village people; a fresh and brisk liveliness, never lascivious, animates the whole composition. Its artistic direction tends toward the immediately comic, toward direct humor, rather than toward parodying burlesque.[74]

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[73] Pražák, *Smetanova Prodaná nevěsta*, 52–53.

[74] "Smetanova opera jest obrázek z venkovského života rázu spíše idyllického, prostého všech raffinovaných frivolností; kolorit vzal skladatel skorem vesměs přímo z naivního lidu vesnického; celou skladbu provívá tudíž jará a čilá sice, ale nikdy lascivní živost, směr její čelí spíše k bezprostřední komice, k přímému humoru, než k

Hostinský barely bothered to conceal his distaste for Offenbach's more overt displays of sexuality here, and his judgment was unequivocally couched in moral terms. The positive elements of *The Bartered Bride* followed directly from its reliance on village imagery, which would later take on an association with health and strength as opposed to illness and urban degeneracy. This assessment was but one example of many that positioned the village and its operatic depiction as ideologically central discursive referents within Czech culture. In Hostinský's telling, Smetana's villagers were something to be emulated in Czech political life and cultural production.

The centrality of the village and the popularity of *The Bartered Bride* went largely unquestioned even among those who disliked Smetana's aesthetic stances. František Pivoda, who led the anti-Smetana faction in Prague's musical establishment in the late 1860s and early 1870s, was of the camp that thought the best approach to Czech opera lay in utilizing folk song. This group was allied to the Old Czech political party through one of its leaders, František Ladislav Rieger.[75] The other camp, led by Hostinský and Smetana and associated with the Young Czech movement, advocated basing Czech opera on progressive operatic principles, especially as embodied Wagner's operas. The visibility of Wagner's output as a symbol of German culture led Pivoda and his camp to regard it as an existential threat to Czech culture, making ethnic politics a central issue within the discourses of Czech opera.[76] Polemical battles along these lines erupted after the premiere of Smetana's mythohistorical opera *Dalibor* (1868) and eventually culminated

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parodující burlesce." Otakar Hostinský, "Smetanova 'Prodaná nevěsta' a petrohradská kritika," in *Bedřich Smetana a jeho boj o moderní českou hudbu* (Prague: Jan Laichter, 1901), 212.

[75] Rieger would later become a personal friend of Antonín Dvořák, and his daughter, Marie Červinková-Riegrová, would be Dvořák's librettist for multiple operas, including *Dimitrij*.

[76] For more on the political background to this conflict, see the discussion in Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague*, 22–25.

in vitriolic personal attacks that, along with the onset of Smetana's deafness in 1874, ended his tenure as conductor of the Provisional Theater opera.[77]

Even Pivoda, however, had to acknowledge the importance of *The Bartered Bride* and its use of the village, though he would turn his praise to his own aesthetic ends. In a review published in the journal *Pokrok* after a performance of the opera's penultimate revised version, Pivoda addressed Smetana directly:

> We value your *Bartered Bride* as a work that, among all other domestic fruits, most convinces us how successfully one can use lovely material in an operettistic way; indeed, this is already less visible in the new revision of the work than in its original form. Here it was evident that the artist was not thinking about a domestic audience. But that *The Bartered Bride* now pants after Paris with its ballet and after the German heavens with its attached aria... it appears like a beautiful country girl when she comes back from the city, where she spent a year on *Bildung*...[78]

Pivoda's rather acerbic prose is dismissive of Smetana on multiple fronts, from characterizing *The Bartered Bride* as an operetta to suggesting that he was only thinking of foreign approbation in revising the opera. Nevertheless, Pivoda confirms the importance of village imagery in two ways. The first is his mention of Smetana's "lovely material," which, given the critic's stance that folksong was the way forward for Czech opera, doubtless referred to the village and folk elements in the opera. The second is his metaphor of *The Bartered Bride* as a country girl who has spent time in the city. The image has overtones of corruption and a forgetting of one's roots, especially in its use of a Czech version, *bilduňk*, of the German word *Bildung*. For all that it

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[77] An overview of these polemical battles can be found in Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague*, 22–29; for more on their connection to Wagnerian aesthetics and the musical milieu of Prague, see St. Pierre, *Bedřich Smetana*, 47–79.

[78] "Vaši Prodanou nevěstu ceníme co dílo, které mezi všemi domácími plody nejvíce dosvědčuje, jak šťastně se nechá pěkného materiálu v operistickém směru upotřebiti; arciť, že se to v novém upravení díla již méně jeví, nežli v původní jeho stavbě; zde bylo vidět, že při práci umělec nemyslel nežli na obecenstvo domácí. Že ale Prodaná nevěsta baletem teď vzdychá po Pařízi a přidělanou arií... po německém nebi, vyjímá se již jako krásná venkovanka, když se vrátí z města, kde byla rok na bilduňk..." Quoted in Pražák, *Smetanova Prodaná nevěsta*, 52.

criticizes Smetana, Pivoda's statement leaves unchallenged the centrality of the village and its images as central to a sense of Czech particularity.

The Village Mode

The village has been both a myth created within Czech culture and an ideological reference point. When composers and librettists created operas set in rural locales and presented their inhabitants as exemplary characters, they engaged the village as a myth to be repeatedly told, on the one hand, and as a means of subjectivization, on the other—as a mode, a set of assumptions and attitudes that crossed genres, influencing both operatic storytelling and subjects' relationship to their larger cultural context.[79] This is why I have chosen to call these creative practices and the method of their reception the village mode, whereby a given work—*The Bartered Bride*, *The Kiss*, *The Two Widows*, *The Devil and Kate*, *Eva*, *Jenůfa*, and others—both referenced the myth of the village and engaged in the ideological work of reinscribing that myth as a central cultural referent, regardless of the tenor of their reference. The village mode in its operatic expression subsumed not only music but also costumes, dances, the libretto, sets, and so forth. Once the village mode had become an institutionalized part of Czech music's history, the mere use of a melodic fragment or musical gesture could reference and represent the larger discourse. The village mode, however, functions in practice through the commingling of two different ideologies: the village and Czech nationalism. The mythologized village was understood to be representative of social ordering and/or a locus of desired qualities (village ideology), but it also functioned as a representative of Czech national specificity (nationalist ideology). Moreover,

[79] See Paul Alpers, *What is Pastoral?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 44–50.

through its emphasis on rural peasantry, it also helped obfuscate the inherent elitism of late-nineteenth-century nationalist ideology.

The symbolic character of the village mode aligns it with another concept, one that also helps to account for its atemporal character both in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and in contemporary analysis. That concept is Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire*, or memory sites. According to Nora, a *lieu de mémoire* might be cast as "any significant entity, whether material or nonmaterial in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element in the memorial heritage of any community."[80] Such a site of memory can be an object or place, but Nora takes pains to make a distinction between memory and history: for him, history is determinist, analytical, and diametrically opposed to memory, which is fundamentally an experience of the present, telescoping lived experience to make sense of the present without recourse to historicist time. While in the modern world history has all but replaced memory as the main practice of relating to the past (a claim betraying Nora's Eurocentricity), memory lives on in the *lieux*, which transmit it "in three senses: material, symbolic, and functional."[81] The Czech village functions in just such a way: it is based upon a material place, however idealized or mythologized; it is symbolic of larger social and personal relationships, up to and including the Czech nation itself; and it is functional, in that it provides a framework for understanding these social relationships through its ideological character.

The village as *lieu de mémoire*, most importantly, allows us to make the distinction between contemporary instantiations of the village mode in opera, which would not have been described as such, and modern-day analytical approaches to understanding the importance of the

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[80] See Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, vol. 1, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), xvii.

[81] Nora, *Realms of Memory*, 14.

village to Czech culture, musical and otherwise. Nora contends that the *lieux* are both within time and outside it, temporal and eternal:

> They are like Möbius strips, endless rounds of the collective and the individual, the prosaic and the sacred, the immutable and the fleeting. For although it is true that the fundamental purpose of a *lieu de mémoire* is to stop time, to inhibit forgetting, to fix a state of things, to immortalize death, and to materialize the immaterial (just as gold, they say, is the memory of money)—all in order to capture the maximum possible meaning with the fewest possible signs—it is also clear that *lieux de mémoire* thrive only because of their capacity for change, their ability to resurrect old meanings and generate new ones along with new and unforeseeable connections (that is what makes them exciting).[82]

It is thus key to distinguish the particular temporal moment in which one engages with a *lieu de mémoire* like the village, as its resonances and interpretations will have markedly different characters depending on who refers to such a site, and when. We also have to ascertain if it is indeed the village functioning as a *lieu de mémoire*, or if instead the object structuring memory is in fact *The Bartered Bride*, Smetana as a public figure, the edifice of the National Theater, or some other site which has accrued meaning and importance for Czech opera over time, even as all such memory sites draw on the village mode in one way or another. The village, to follow Nora, is thus like all other *lieux* an object *en abîme*, always containing representations of itself—its resulting ubiquity is what gives it such usefulness as an analytical frame.

Lieux de mémoire, as sources for individual identity formation through memory, are closely linked to discourses of European nationalism. Texts by Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm, and others contributed in the 1980s and 1990s to a new definition of what had until then primarily been regarded as a "primordial" concept: instead of being viewed as timeless, natural cultural entities preceding political consciousness, nations were, instead, reassessed as responses to modernization by the intelligentsia and state actors who invented

[82] Nora, *Realms of Memory*, 15.

traditions and imagined communities in the pursuit of political and social power.[83] Nationalist thought generally held, in these "modernist" configurations, that the state and the national unit, however defined, should be coterminous. Anthony D. Smith, whose work draws on that generation of scholars, defines nationalism in the following way, which undergirds my discussion of the term: it is "an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population some of whose members deem it to constitute an actual or potential 'nation.'"[84] To add to the complexity, references to sentiments stemming from this ideological discourse also intersect with the socio-political construction of the term nationalism.

Moreover, Smith's approach to nationalism is useful because it engages closely with religion and religious forms. Smith argues that religion was not so much displaced by secular nationalism but rather absorbed by nationalists who adapted the forms and practices of religious rhetoric to serve their own purposes. In the case of Czech opera, this is particularly visible in their treatment of composers (especially Smetana), who took on the role of "messiah-saviors." Defined as being of the people and thereby of the nation, "rooted in the soil of the homeland," such figures were "elevated by popular memory above everyday power politics and the struggles of history, because in some way they revealed the inner goodness of the nation, and epitomized its virtues and its hopes."[85]

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[83] See Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1997); Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, revised edition (New York: Verso, 2006); and Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). For a discussion of these modernist approaches versus earlier primordialist ones, see Geoff Eley, "Culture, Nation, and Gender," in *Gendered Nations*, eds. Ida Blom, Karen Hagemann, and Catherine Hall (Oxford: Berg, 2000), 27–40, 34.

[84] Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 24.

[85] Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, 40–41.

Defining the national unit was a highly contentious process that brought together individuals and ideas from different social realms. In Central Europe, according to Miroslav Hroch, the national unit was defined mostly along cultural and linguistic lines.[86] Although the collectives that conformed to these boundaries did, to an extent, invent and imagine aspects of their traditions and communities, they did so by drawing on the historical elements to which they had access.[87] The village was one such historical entity that was subsequently mythologized to serve nationalist purposes, in effect by being a *lieu de mémoire*. As Robert B. Pynsent put it, myth "usually has to do with creations, beginnings, matrices, models, and as it reveals permanent values in these beginnings or models, it binds a group morally and historically (mnemically)."[88] The community-forming, binding power of the village myth helped to generate (and was generated by) Czech nationalism in that it allowed for the imagining of a shared rural origin for people of Czech descent.

Hroch also contends that in Central Europe, and to an extent in Europe as a whole, nations went through different stages of formation, though the stages are not strictly bounded or chronologically discrete: an early stage of scholarly interest, a secondary one of patriotic agitation by a subset of the larger community, which eventually leads to a stage of mass acceptance, where nationalism becomes a widely accepted ideological framework, allowing political programs to be created and promoted, which finally engenders full statehood.[89] The

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[86] On the impact of Hroch's theories, and especially on the various interpretations of his schematic model, see Miloš Řezník, "Miroslav Hroch a evropské studium formování moderního národa," *Střed: Časopis pro mezioborová studia Střední Evropy 19. a 20. století* 2 (2011): 85–105.

[87] See Hroch, *European Nations: Explaining Their Formation*, 5; 39–50.

[88] Robert B. Pynsent, *Questions of Identity: Czech and Slovak Ideas of Nationality and Personality* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1994), 43.

[89] See Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations* (New York: Cambridge University Press,

chronological scope of my dissertation, from 1866 to 1928, covers the latter parts of this process in the Czech context, i.e. the spread of nationalism as a mass movement (though its components were created earlier, during the time of the Awakeners as described above), its instantiations in political programs such as that of the Young Czechs in the early 1890s, and the rise of the Czechoslovak nation-state.

This schematic framework—while useful for periodizing, and engaging with, larger trends in the spread of nationalism in different contexts—can also blur the specificities peculiar to particular nationalist movements. As Geoff Eley put it, the scholarly approaches to European nationalism by Gellner, Hobsbawm, Hroch, and others "have remained blunt in relation to two key dimensions—those of the colonial 'outsides,' and the gendered 'insides' of the nations concerned."[90] While building on classical approaches to nationalism in this dissertation, these two dimensions will form an important aspect of my engagement with Czech identity formation.

Here I draw on Judith Butler's conception of citationality as performativity. Subjects gain sexual and gendered legibility through the simultaneous citation and reinscription of pre-existing norms.[91] Normative strictures by definition carry with them their own outsides, the realm of the abject. By slight modifications in the constant reinscribing of cited norms, however, the borders of what is acceptable can change, pushing into or pulling out of the abject. What might once have been illegible as a properly gendered subject might now be acceptable to audiences or critics; this process, moreover, need not only draw on normative concepts of gender. Norms can be

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1985); and Hroch, *European Nations*, 109–116. See also discussion in Dagmar Francikova, "All Czechs, but Particularly Women: The Positionality of Women in the Construction of the Modern Czech Nation, 1820s–1850s" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2011), 16.

[90] Eley, "Culture, Nation, and Gender," 34.

[91] See Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 1–23. Butler's work draws on Althusser's, especially in her conception of subjectivization through ideological interpellation.

acquired from any number of sources, and the village myth was a potent source for how subjects should behave or appear in terms of diverse social categories, from gender to ethnicity to class. The process of citationality and reinscription also meant that these norms would change over time in the history of Czech opera, changing how the village mode was expressed and what subjects might appear on stage.

From here, we might also ask the following questions: how did the village mode in comic opera chart the subaltern positionality of Czech subjects within the larger, German-dominated Habsburg empire, on the one hand, and the gendered expectations of national belonging, on the other? The musicologist and writer Katynka Émingerová relied heavily on the village mode and its gendered aspects in a 1906 article discussing the role of women in Smetana's operas. She began by stating the following: "The roles of women in Smetana's dramatic work also confirm that his art sounds in a Czech folk tone always and everywhere. These are no vague specters, produced by sick thoughts, or banal creations of modern posturing, not at all; in the case of women in Smetana's compositions, we meet every time with the sympathetic profile of the purely Czech woman."[92] Because Smetana's operas were positioned as drawing from rural Czech folk practices, they were capable of counteracting the decadent tendencies of modern opera—given the timing of this article, it is possible that the author had in mind the titular character of Richard Strauss's *Salome* as the vague specter born of unhealthy ideas. To be rooted in the village was to be simultaneously healthy and Czech, and in 1906, in the *fin de siècle* tumult of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the opposite was to be urban, unhealthy, and German.

[92] "Nepopíratelný fakt, že Smetanovo umění vyznívá vždy a všude v český lidový ton, potvrzují I povahy žen v jeho díle dramatickém. Nejsou to žádné mlhavé mátohy, vyvolané chorobnou myslí, nebo banalní výtvory moderního pozérství, nikoliv, u žen hudební tvorby Smetanovy setkáváme se pokaždé se sympatickým profilem ryze české ženy." Katynka Émingerová, "Ženy v tvorbě Smetanově," *Smetana hudební revue* 1, no. 14 (1 July 1906): 177.

Along similar lines, the village mode allows for reflection on the question of how operas reflected or influenced the dichotomy of feminized, peaceful Slavs versus masculinized, militarist Germans, a conception that conflates both race and gender. Vladimír Macura notes this binary and others in his discussion of Jan Kollár's foundational collection of Czech poetry, *Slávy dcera*. Macura generalizes these binaries as being a part Czech culture generally as created by the Awakeners. The opposition between the militant Germans and the peaceful Slavs was also leveraged by those seeking to lessen Austrian imperial influence; such formulations not only drew on Czech historical understandings of the Battle of the White Mountain and its aftermath, but would also go on to structure the Czech national myth as propagated by Masaryk and his associates during the twentieth century.[93]

This formulation marks another aspect of the way in which the village mode functioned as a means of cultural understanding: the use of binaries to order thought and value systems. In the case of the village and ruralness, binary pairs included the countryside versus the city, nature versus culture, and old customs and orders versus socioeconomic progress.[94] These binaries functioned ideologically, in that they provided a means of relating to a larger Subject represented by the positively connoted term in each binary pair, and in this sense they are part and parcel of the village mode.[95] Myth, in turn, provided the idealized concepts, ideas, and things that served as the basis for binary pairs. Such pairs, moreover, help to produce a sense of identity through

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[93] See Vladimír Macura, *Znamení zrodu a České sny* (Prague: Academia Praha, 2015), 103–106, as well as discussion in Chapter 5. For more on Kollár's thought and poetry as they relate to Czech nationalist politics, see Pynsent, *Questions of Identity*, 43–99.

[94] See Höhne, Kubů, and Šouša, "Úvodem: pojmosloví – stav bádání – historický kontext," 15.

[95] Macura's semiotic binaries of Slavic vs Germanic culture, as transmitted through *Slávy dcera*, are as follows: femininity versus masculinity, softness versus hardness, peacefulness versus aggressiveness, sweetness versus bitterness, and diligence versus dilatoriness. He draws these from the Kollár's symbols for Slavdom, the linden, honey, and bee, versus those of Germandom, the oak, the acorn, and the boar. See Macura, *Znamení zrodu*, 105.

their power of ideological association. The binaries of ruralness function in much the same way as those of nationalism, as outlined by the historian Ruth Roach Pierson:

> Within the discursive fields of nation and nationalism, national identities are generated in relation to bipolar opposites and through the embracing of the positive and the rejection of the negative: pure versus impure, normal versus abnormal, healthy versus degenerate, beautiful versus ugly. Resting on such bipolarities, national identity is unstable, shot through with contradictions, as the excluded "other," the repressed, threatens reappearance. The result is a national subject beset with tensions and ambiguities, exclusions and inclusions.[96]

This is partially why it is so difficult to disentangle discourses about the village from discourses about nation: they function in exactly the same way, and though they draw on the same mythologies, the village myth is but one of many imbricated in the larger ideology and practices of nationalism. This intersection also provides the power of the village mode as an analytical frame: it provides a synchronic lens on these binaries, their ideological moves, and their mythic bases when investigating the history of Czech opera.

The reception of Smetana's opera *The Kiss* (*Hubička*, 1876) provides a salient example of both the entanglement of the village and national identity as well as the composer's growing unimpeachability in the artistic life of Prague. Debates over the Czech character of Smetana's output and his Wagnerian leanings had coalesced into all-out polemical war after the premiere of his opera *The Two Widows* (*Dvě vdovy*, 1874, rev. 1878).[97] At the same time, however, *The Bartered Bride* continued to enjoy success at the Provisional Theater, where, unlike all of Smetana's other operas, it never left the repertoire (and never has to this day).[98] Smetana and his

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[96] See Ruth Roach Pierson, "Nations: Gendered, Racialized, Crossed With Empire," in *Gendered Nations*, eds. Ida Blom, Karen Hagemann, and Catherine Hall (Oxford: Berg, 2000), 41–61, 43.

[97] I discuss this in greater detail in Chapter 3.

[98] Otakar Hostinský compiled performance statistics for all of Smetana's operas in an 1893 article connected with the first ever cycle of Smetana's operas that year. Even *The Kiss* did not appear on the program for two years, 1885 and 1892, while *The Bartered Bride* not only persisted, but was performed more and more. See Otakar Hostinský, "Něco o osudech zpěvoher Smetanových," *Lumír* 21, no. 27 (20 September 1893): 321.

supporters rallied in the aftermath of 1874: the composer teamed up with the writer Eliška Krásnohorská, who adapted Karolina Světlá's village novella for the libretto of *The Kiss*, and the intellectuals and writers of the Artistic Society continued their advocacy for the composer and his operas.[99] *The Kiss* was, from the beginning, conceptualized as another tale of village life, but with even more explicit emphasis on rural folk customs and setting. Smetana stated that he hoped it would be a "sister" to *The Bartered Bride*, subtitling it a *prostonárodní* opera. *Prostonárodní* is somewhat untranslatable, but is defined as belonging to the wide strata of the nation and its people, especially rural populations. Calling it a "folk opera" captures this partially, but misses the etymological resonances of the word, which derives from *prostý*, simple or rustic, and *národní*, national.

Ludevít Procházka, a former student of Smetana and member of the Artistic Union, published a celebratory preview of *The Kiss* in *Národní listy* on 7 November 1876, the day of the premiere. He set the tone of the article in the very first sentence, stating that "every time the master Smetana favors us with a new fruit of his creative genius, it is as a holy day for our national art."[100] The preview can be understood as another example of the hagiographic and narrative-building activities of the Artistic Union, but it also reinforced the centrality of *The Bartered Bride* and the village mode. Stating that the opera was proof of the "purity" (*ryzost*) of Smetana's national aims, Procházka went on to predict a bright future for *The Kiss*:

> If the Czech nation bears *The Bartered Bride* in its heart, *so too will it bear* The Kiss ***in its heart of hearts***. *Aside from* The Bartered Bride*, national sounds have not yet sounded more gracefully, more poetically, and more truthfully from our stage. The entire opera is like a diamond jewel, composed from the most beautiful folksongs with admirable artfulness; indeed, the whole work is like one grand folksong.* These sounds, with which

[99] See St. Pierre, *Bedřich Smetana*, 71–73.

[100] "Pokaždé, kdy mistr Smetana obdaří nás novým plodem tvůrčího svého genia, jest pro národní umění naše den svateční..." Ludevít Procházka, "Smetanova prostonárodní opera 'Hubička,'" *Národní listy*, 7 November 1876, 1.

> the composer adorned... scenes from the life of our rural people, seemed as though they were taken directly from the very bosom of our nation.[101]

This passage marks *The Bartered Bride* as the *non plus ultra* of Smetana's operatic output precisely through its ties to rural representation. It also centers *The Kiss* in this discourse as well, likening it to a single grand folksong—"jedna veliká národní píseň"—and thereby imputing to it the capacity for national representation. Procházka's statement turned out to prescient; the opera enjoyed significant popularity and ultimately cemented Smetana's centrality in the musical life of the Czech lands.[102] From this point forward veneration of Smetana and his operas accelerated, and when Smetana died in 1884, his commemoration kicked into overdrive.[103] The more that the composer's operas were performed and written about, the more their underlying myths and ideological stances—such as those encompassed by the village mode—would become ever more naturalized within Czech cultural discourse.[104] Other village operas from this time period, such as Vilém Blodek's *In the Well* (*V Studni*, 1867) and Antonín Dvořák's *The Cunning Peasant* (*Šelma sedlák*, 1877) tapped into these same narratives and helped reinforce them. None,

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[101] "Nosí-li národ český 'Prodanou nevěstu' na srdci svém, *tož nésti bude 'Hubičku'* ***v srdci svého srdce****. Půvabněji, poetičtěji a opravdivěji mimo 'Prodanou nevěstu' nezavzněly ještě zvuky národní z jeviště našeho; celá zpěvohra jest jakoby demantový šperk, s obdivuhodnou umělostí složený z nejkrásnějších národních písní, ba jest celá jako jedna veliká národní píseň*. Zvuky ty, jimiž skladatel přioděl... výjev z života našeho lidu venkovského, vyňaty jsou jakoby přímo z samých ňader národa našeho." Ludevít Procházka, "Smetanova prostonárodní opera," 1. Emphases in the original, but in the case of italics, the text was printed as spaced-out letters. In the interest of legibility, I have rendered it in italics here.

[102] See St. Pierre, *Bedřich Smetana*, 72, and Přemysl Pražák, *Smetanovy zpěvohry*, vol. 3 (Prague: Vydavatelství za svobodu, 1948), 152–162.

[103] This commemoration took the form of many publications, including collections of Smetana's letters, diaries, and books on the composer's life and work. Such publications would become so institutionalized they were eventually referred to with the word "Smetaniana." For more on the process of memorializing Smetana after his death, see St. Pierre, *Bedřich Smetana*, 82–85.

[104] The question of the impact of Smetana's mythohistorical operas, *Dalibor* and *Libuše*, is another issue entirely. They too relied on mythologized accounts of Czech history, but in their case it lay mainly in the ancient and medieval history of the Czech lands, which subsumed a wholly different set of historical reference points and narratives. They were in turn important in how Smetana as a composer was mythologized; for more on this process, see St. Pierre, *Bedřich Smetana*, 55–94.

however, gained the same level of cultural centrality that Smetana's operas would—Dvořák was the only composer of the time who would come close, but in the 1870s he was only beginning to make his reputation, and even then it was primarily on the strength of his instrumental music, not operas.

The Czech Village and the Austro-Hungarian Empire

While the context of Prague and the Czech lands was the most immediate one for the reception and development of Czech opera as well as the village mode, there were other arenas in which the ideas represented by the village mode were debated. The larger context of the Habsburg Empire provided the overarching space in which Czech composers, writers, and critics lived and worked; the tastes, dictates, and political decisions of imperial Vienna impacted the ways in which the ideologies of Czech nationalism and the village, as communicated through opera, developed. An imperial lens also deemphasizes the interethnic conflict of Czechs versus Germans, which has structured so many approaches to Czech music historiography, both then and now.

Nevertheless, the category of ethnicity opens up a larger issue regarding the constitution of empire and the relationships between ruling classes and subject peoples. Colonial projects like those of England and France produced vast overseas empires whose diversity was matched perhaps only by their brutality.[105] Axel Körner has pointed out that, in regard to the relationship between national identity and empire, "what defines their peoples' identity, their motivation, their social hierarchies and their economic strategies, is the fact that they live in states which, at the

[105] On the relationship between music and empire in the British context, see Jeffrey Richards, *Imperialism and Music: Britain 1876–1953* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), especially 1–18.

same time, constitute Empires."[106] Körner's statement may be overly prescriptive, but it does foreground the pervasive nature of empire in shaping social relations and institutional structures. In this sense, to write the history of Czech opera as a purely national enterprise misses a key aspect of its societal context; critiques of colonial thought and power structures in turn help to understand the ways in which the village mode functioned in Czech opera and its larger Habsburg and European transnational contexts. To be sure, there are distinct differences between the British project in India and Habsburg rule over the Czech lands—one is a colonial enterprise, the other an imperial one, and while these are not interchangeable terms, they do share a reliance on human difference as a means for articulating hierarchies of value, artistic and otherwise.[107]

Despite their subsumption within an imperial structure that taxed their inhabitants and prohibited certain kinds of political expression, the Czech lands were some of the most industrialized and well-educated provinces in the Dual Monarchy as a whole. The relative preeminence of the Czechs and the Czech lands within the hierarchies of the Habsburg Empire, not to mention the historical importance of Prague as former capital of the Holy Roman Empire, meant that the Czechs could ignore other "Othered" groups, such as the Roma and Jews. More than this, nationalist Czechs of the nineteenth century often actively excluded such groups from their social and political communities—a rhetorical violence, that, while never on the scale of the physical violence that characterized the British, French, or Belgian colonial projects, nevertheless had concrete impacts for those groups with less social capital than the Czechs within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Narratives of Czech identity, including those within the

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[106] See Axel Körner, "Transnational History: Identities, Structures, States," in *Internationale Geschichte in Theorie und Praxis/International History in Theory and Practice*, eds. Barbara Haider-Wilson, William D. Godsey, and Wolfgang Mueller (Vienna: Verlag der Österriechischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2017), 265–290, 277.

[107] For further discussion of this point, see below and Chapter 2.

village mode, thus typically concentrated on the Germans as antagonists—the leading Cisleithanian ethnic group—rarely mentioning the other geographical areas and ethnic communities of the wider Habsburg lands.[108]

The question of colonial versus European imperial relations, while different on a number of levels, nevertheless turns on the question of human difference. It is in this sense I draw on postcolonial theory to help bring new light to the discursive structures of empire in the Habsburg lands, particular in terms of those discourses' influence on the construction of Czech identity. In terms of colonial relations, difference lay at the center of power imbalances: "The construction of the colonial subject in discourse, and the exercise of colonial power through discourse, demands an articulation of forms of difference."[109] For Homi Bhabha, this difference turns primarily, though not exclusively, on categories of race and sex in order to produce an otherness capable of justifying "racial and cultural hierarchization."[110] Imperial logics of domination and subjugation functioned in similar ways, and were not limited solely to the Austrian rulers of the Habsburg lands.

With this in mind, one might productively ask how the imperialist logics of Habsburg rule helped construct Czech identity: how were intersections of gender, ethnicity, and class connected in a "dynamic map of power" that served (or did not serve) imperial interests, and how did these perceptions shift over time?[111] To put it another way, how might totalizing efforts

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[108] A parallel example can be found in the behavior of Polish elites in the Habsburg province of Galicia; see Nicholas Cook, *The Schenker Project: Culture, Race, and Music Theory in Fin-de-siècle Vienna* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 10–11.

[109] See Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge Classics, 2004), 96.

[110] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 96.

[111] Judith Butler brings attention to the question of the fluidity of identity categories, especially in how gender and race interact. See Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 116–117. Her discussion is highly reminiscent of Kimberlé Crenshaw's theorization of intersectionality, which seeks to account for the differences within the social and

on the part of the monarchy to create an overarching "Austrian" identity have affected efforts to construct a "Czech" identity (musical or otherwise) through its various points of gendered and ethnic identification? In such a reading of Czech opera, the genre was structured by the village mode and Czech nationalism, but these were constituted in and through the provincial, relatively subaltern status of the Czech lands in the larger Habsburg empire. While this is a useful interpretive framework, which functions throughout the nineteenth century and up through the end of World War I, it is not the only way in which Czech opera responded to imperial conditions.

In addition to its status as center of imperial authority, Vienna could also be a gateway to wider European recognition, as happened in 1892 with the premiere of *The Bartered Bride* at the International Exhibition of Music and Theater in Vienna. The Exhibition engaged a number of structures within the Cultural Ideological State Apparatuses of both Prague (insofar as one can have an Ideological State Apparatus without a homologous state, a subject I will return to in Chapter 2) and that of the imperial government in Vienna. The close collaboration between the National Theater's staff and that of the Exhibition, in addition to the subsequent staging of the opera in German as *Die Verkaufte Braut*, with appearances by Czech singers at the Theater an der Wien, provide an example of how a particular cultural object could be leveraged by different ideological structures. Despite the fact that the National Theater's production of *The Bartered Bride* fully instantiated the village mode in both its mythic content and its ideological

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political experiences of those who occupy multiple contested sites of identity within a given culture. See Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43 no. 6 (July 1991): 1241–1299. For a reflection on the uses and spread of intersectionality as a theoretical intervention, see Devon W. Carbado *et al.*, "Intersectionality: Mapping the Movements of a Theory," *Du Bois Review* 10 no. 2 (Fall 2013): 303–312.

functioning, the opera's victory in Vienna created positive outcomes for both the Czechs and the Austrians because of their respective ideological apparatuses.

Czech aspirations to pan-European recognition at that time needed the stage offered by imperial Vienna even as their assertions of national difference undermined the Austro-Hungarian project of a unified though multiethnic (if not multinational) empire.[112] Without permission and/or monetary support from imperial authorities, performance opportunities in European capitals were unattainable for Czech artistic groups, to which the multiple failed attempts to stage *The Bartered Bride* in Paris throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries attest. The success of that opera in the Habsburg imperial capital and among foreign critics was simultaneously an affirmation of the village mode as a structuring principle for Czech music and of its history; such a view would have important implications in the *fin de siécle* and beyond. As I will show, the rulers of Austria-Hungary relied on their subject populations and those populations' cultures to secure international approval and thus demonstrate the viability of the Habsburg imperial position. The critical and audience success of *The Bartered Bride* demonstrated the greatness of Austria-Hungary writ large, not just of the Czech lands. National music could ensure transnational dissemination through the ideological position of music as both nationally marked but supranationally intelligible, because the musical language of common-practice tonality was considered to be "universal."[113]

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[112] For more on the relationship between empire and nation, see Pierson, "Nations: Gendered, Racialized, Crossed with Empire," 41, as well as Alexander J. Motyl, "From Imperial Decay to Imperial Collapse: The Fall of the Soviet Union in Comparative Perspective," *Nationalism and Empire*, ed. Richard L. Rudolph and David F. Good (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 16–21.

[113] Ironically, this idea was definitively German in its provenance, especially in relation to instrumental music. Such discourses extended to opera as well, though the genre posed more issues in terms of its capacity for universal appeal. See Alexander Rehding, "Wagner, Liszt, Berlioz and the 'New German School,'" in *Nationalism Versus Cosmopolitanism in German Thought and Culture, 1789–1914: Essays on the Emergence of Europe*, ed. Mary Anne Perkins and Martin Liebscher (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), 159–187. See also Gundula Kreuzer,

Beyond this explicitly political context, however, I argue that the 1892 Exhibition allows for an examination of the deeper functioning of imperialist discourses and their relationship to the constitution of Czech opera. Another salient aspect of these discourses is the place of the stereotype in colonialist power structures.[114] In Homi Bhabha's conception of the term, the stereotype is an ambivalent, self-contradictory concept that is always already true yet needs to be constantly reiterated.[115] It is articulated primarily along lines of racial and sexual difference. By imputing inferiority to those labeled because of their difference, stereotypes structure the ways in which colonial authorities hold power over their subjects. Although scientific racism and its concomitant notion of radical ethnic difference would not enter mass culture in the context of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until the last decades of the nineteenth century, the structuring of the stereotype on the basis of fear of, and desire for, difference nevertheless had important consequences for the village mode and its operatic expressions. "Colonial discourse," Bhabha states, "produces the colonized as a social reality which is at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible."[116] Conceived of as an ethnic unit, Czechs were very much stereotyped within the imperial power structure of the Habsburg Empire, an Other that was both apart and familiar.[117] Conceptions of gender, race, and class emerging from the village mode and articulated through its operatic instantiations were deeply enmeshed within such discourse, and,

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Verdi and the Germans: From Unification to the Third Reich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), particularly 1–38.

[114] I am drawing here on Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 94–120.

[115] There is an interesting resonance here between the constant reiteration of Bhabha's stereotype and the repetitive citation/reinscription of gendered norms discussed by Butler, especially when the latter are figured as constraints. I will explore this resonance in more detail in Chapter 2. See Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 94–95, as well as Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 93–95.

[116] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 101.

[117] Regarding the thorny issues of ethnic identification and its relationship to demographic changes in the Czech lands, see King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*, 1–14 and 80–113.

as I will discuss in Chapters 2 and 3, figures such as the director of the National Theater, František Adolf Šubert, would use these stereotypes to their advantage.

The mythic aspects of the village mode, however, allowed the village itself to function as a stereotype with multiple levels of ambivalence. On the one hand, they could be a strategy of subversion for those who created, and wrote about, these operas. By holding up the simple, the rural, and what was conceived of as incontrovertibly Czech to be a kind of anti-monumental monument to Czech musical creativity, they could challenge German and Austrian assertions to musical and cultural dominance.[118] On the other hand, the stereotype promulgated by the village mode could be a force holding back the perceived need for the teleological development of Czech music into the modernist forms engrossing Europe in the early twentieth century. For imperial authorities, the village offered its own set of uses as a stereotype. It could be negatively figured as yet another indicator, always already true yet in need of anxious repetition, of the ethnic difference and racial inferiority of the Slavs, particularly once such discourses became a part of mass culture in the later nineteenth century. Yet it could also be positively regarded as an antidote to the problems of modernity, an object of desire that might offer a healthy contrast to the decadence perceived to be plaguing the imperial capital.

Thinking of the village within the larger context of Bohemia and the Habsburg Empire generates a final precept for the analytical frame developed over the course of this chapter. Ruralness figures in the imperial context as a location for backwardness or retarded development; imperialist relationships require a conception of time as historicist—stagist, developmental, and teleological—in order to support the narratives of development that

[118] For more on the relationship between music and monumentality, especially in terms of the question of smallness and ephemerality, see Alexander Rehding, *Music and Monumentality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3–17.

undergird the denigration of the rural. Such a historicist configuration of cultural progress, as Dipesh Chakrabarthy has argued, "posited historical time as a measure of the cultural distance (at least in institutional development) that was assumed to exist between the West and non-West."[119] Figured as Western Europe's internal Other, Eastern Europe writ large (and the Czech lands specifically) fits Chakrabarthy's schema in a similar way to other colonial areas, such as India's position relative to the British Empire. By maintaining that rural areas, peasantry, or the urban cultures who chose the village as their symbolic origin were at an earlier stage of historical or cultural development, imperial rulers could assert that these populations were not ready for the burdens of political participation or independence.

This stagist conception of history also supported the nineteenth-century view that Czech opera as a genre could not but lag behind Western operatic traditions, because its cultural context had not yet reached the same stage of historical evolution as that of Italy, France, or Germany/Austria. Thus to engage the village mode through a postcolonial frame also requires that we pay attention to the question of historicist time, both in contemporary accounts of Czech opera's development and in the very writing of its history in the present day. Critics and intellectuals would frame the act of representing the village on the operatic stage as a repudiation of its irrelevance or backwardness and, consequently, a corrective to imperialist logics of domination. By the same token, in writing this dissertation, I aim to challenge historicist assumptions about the "development" of European opera and the place of Czech operas within that larger context.

[119] See Dipesh Chakrabarthy, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 7, as well as 3–23 more generally.

CHAPTER 2: "THE TIME OF MIRACLES":
CZECH COSMOPOLITANISM AND THE HABSBURG EMPIRE AT THE 1892 INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION OF MUSIC AND THEATER IN VIENNA

On 27 May 1892, the Prague satirical magazine *Humoristické listy* published a special cover page in advance of a hotly anticipated event (Figure 2.1).

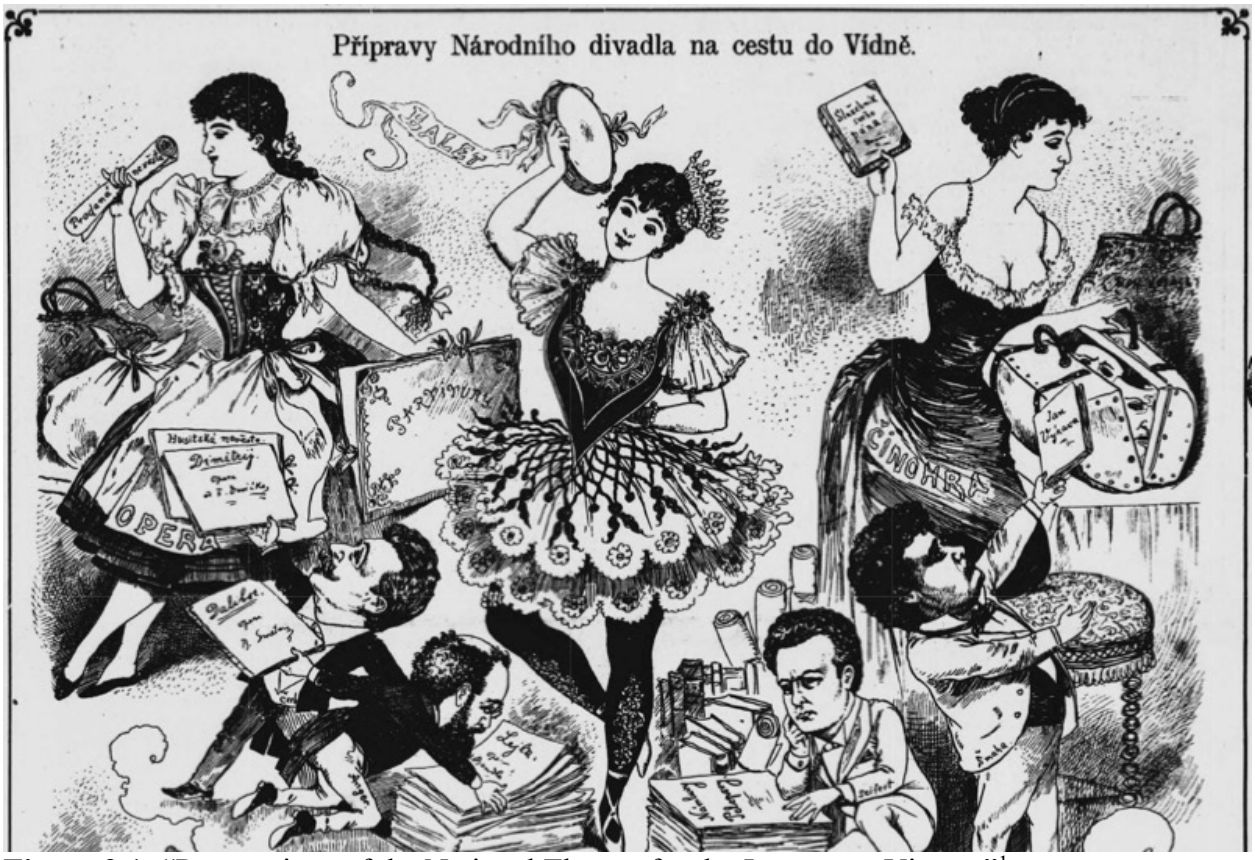

Figure 2.1: "Preparations of the National Theater for the Journey to Vienna."[1]

This image depicts, among other figures, three women: the elegantly attired figure of spoken drama stands to the right, the personification of ballet dances en pointe in the middle, and the embodiment of opera sits to the left, dressed in the Sunday best of a Czech peasant girl. Adolf

[1] "Prípravy Národního divadla na cestu do Vídně," *Humoristické listy* 34, no. 22 (27 May 1892): 1.

Čech and Mořic Anger, the kapellmeister and assistant kapellmeister of the Prague National Theater, respectively, frantically hand her music to add to the large folder, labeled "Scores," she holds in her left hand. However, her attention is focused on the score already in her right hand: Bedřich Smetana's *Prodaná nevěsta* (*The Bartered Bride*).

A few days after the cartoon was published, the National Theater ensemble left by special train for Vienna on 31 May to participate in the International Exhibition of Music and Theater, held in the imperial capital from 7 May until 9 October 1892. Originally conceived in 1890 as a way to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the death of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, the Vienna Exhibition was a part of the larger World's Fair tradition in Europe.[2] Princess Pauline von Metternich served as the Exhibition's honorary president, while Guido Adler headed the music-historical division and organized the showing of instruments, scores, and other musical artifacts.

The theater itself was built specially for the exhibition on the Prater; constructed out of wood, it could accommodate approximately 1,500 to 1,600 people (Figure 2.2). It had only one large floor, a single two-row gallery with seats for about 300, standing room for 420 people, and in a rather democratic move, only three boxes, two near the stage for members of the imperial family and one at the back of the theater for the management.[3] Its international character was confirmed, according to the author for the illustrated Czech journal *Světozor*, by the decorative portraits of artists and scenes from their works. These included not only Mozart and Wagner, but also Shakespeare, Molière, and Rossini. While the decorations may have suggested cosmopolitan

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[2] For more on the beginnings of the Vienna Exhibition, see Vlasta Reittererová and Hubert Reitterer, *Vier Dutzend rothe Strümpfe…: Zur Rezeptionsgeschichte der* Verkauften Braut *von Bedřich Smetana in Wien am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2004), 54–55. On the World's Fair phenomenon and the influential 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris, see Annegret Fauser, *Musical Encounters at the 1889 Paris World's Fair* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005).

[3] See P., "Na kolbišti mezinárodním," *Světozor* 26, no. 30 (10 June 1892): 358–359.

connections, the celebratory concert that opened the exhibition, on 8 May 1892, emphasized its Viennese setting. Hans Richter conducted the Vienna Philharmonic and the Singverein of the Society of the Friends of Music in a performance of Mozart's Overture to *The Magic Flute* and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.[4] The Czechs were slated to perform from 1 June to 7 June, and had brought with them six operas, two spoken plays, and one melodrama.[5] Luckily, the Vienna Hofoper gave no performances between 31 May and 1 August 1892, its summer break. Theatrical groups visiting Vienna for the exhibition at other times would otherwise have had to compete with the Hofoper for audiences.

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[4] Aside from a performance of Haydn's oratorio *The Seasons* on 15 May, conducted by Wilhelm Gericke, the Vienna Philharmonic played no other concerts for the remainder of the exhibition. See the Archive of the Vienna Philharmonic website, https://www.wienerphilharmoniker.at/concerts/concert-detail/event-id/6987/ and https://www.wienerphilharmoniker.at/concerts/concert-detail/event-id/1054.

[5] The full program on the eve of the visit was intended to include Smetana's operas *The Bartered Bride* and *Dalibor*, Antonín Dvořák's *Dimitrij*, Karel Bendl's *Lejla*, Karel Šebor's *Nevěsta husitská* (*The Hussite Bride*), and Pyotr Illyich Tchaikovsky's *Evgeny Onegin*. The melodrama was Zdeněk Fibich's *Námluvy Pelopovy* (*The Courtship of Pelops*), and the plays were Šubert's *Jan Výrava*, and František Věnceslav Jeřábek's *Služebník svého pána* (*The Servant of his Master*). See David Brodbeck, *Defining Deutschtum: Political Ideology, German Identity, and Music-Critical Discourse in Vienna* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 269, as well as Philipp Ther, *Center Stage: Operatic Culture and Nation Building in Nineteenth-Century Central Europe* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2014), 170–173.

The minutes of the executive committee (*správní výbor*) of the National Theater Association (*Družstvo Národního divadla*) provide behind-the-scenes detail here. Earlier drafts of the program had even floated the possibility of Smetana's most overtly nationalist opera *Libuše* and a triple bill of a spoken play, Vilém Blodek's one-act village-opera comedy *V studni* (*In the Well*), and what was likely a ballet version of Dvořák's *Slavonic Dances*. These performances were eventually rejected due to financial and logistical concerns, but speak to the original diversity of the program, which, as will be discussed below, was radically altered after the success of *The Bartered Bride*. See minutes from 18 and 25 February 1892, *Protokoly Správního výboru Družstva Národního divadla*, sig. D50, fond ND, National Archive, Prague.

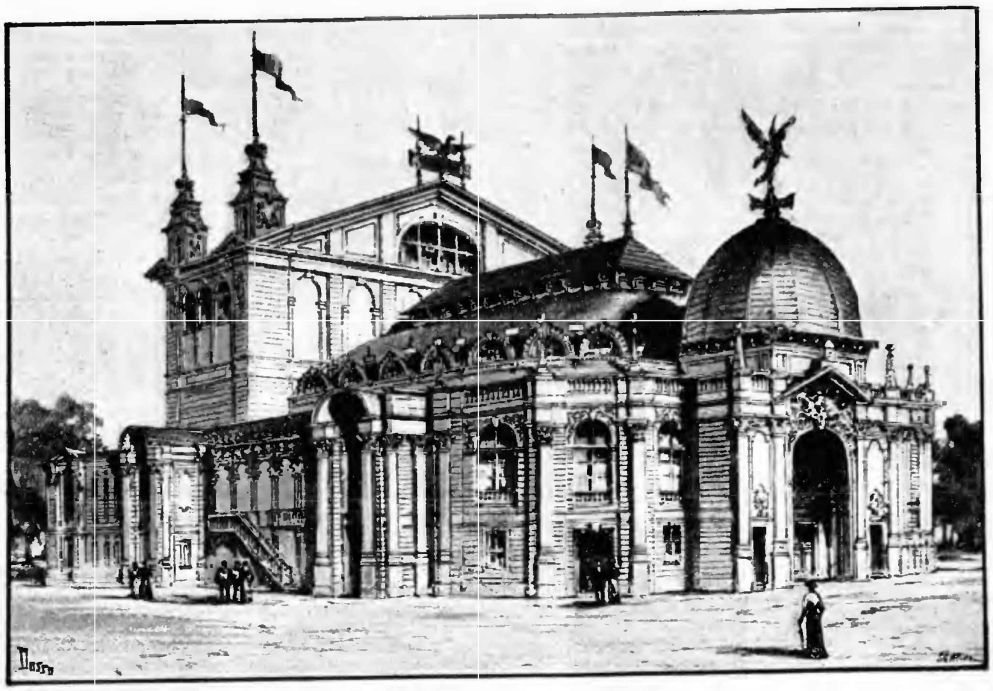


Figure 2.2: "The Exhibition Theater in Vienna."[6]

The results of the first night—when *The Bartered Bride* made its Viennese debut in the original Czech—exceeded even the wildest expectations of the National Theater ensemble and observers from Prague. Tremendously successful, *The Bartered Bride* gained accolades from almost every corner of the Viennese press as well as from the reporters of other countries visiting the capital for the exhibition. In response, National Theater administrators bumped performances of two other operas planned for the festival by lesser-known Czech composers, Karel Bendl's *Lejla* and Karel Šebor's *The Hussite Bride*, as well as a production of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's *Evgeny Onegin*. Instead, the company concentrated on Smetana by repeating *The Bartered Bride* twice more and also staging a second performance of his mytho-historical opera *Dalibor*. The National Theater even extended their visit by one more day to stage a fourth and final

[6] "Výstavní divadlo ve Vídni," *Světozor* 26, no. 30 (10 June 1892): 359.

performance of *The Bartered Bride*, displacing the Théâtre Français de l'Odéon, slated to appear immediately after them. Such imperial as well as international enthusiasm for Smetana's comic village opera inspired prodigious celebrations in the Czech press. The cover of *Humoristcké listy* of 10 June, for instance, mapped the work's triumphal success for its readers (Figure 2.3). The titular caption reads "Hussites of the 19th century go to take their belligerent campaign to all the four corners of the world. And astonishingly—women go with them to the battle! Thus the old blood of the Táborites rises up!" Czech opera is, once again, personified as a peasant girl, easily understood to be Mařenka, the heroine of *The Bartered Bride*. With shepherd's crook and poet's lyre in hand, she goes north to Berlin, where a Prussian imperial official offers her a contract for the entirety of July. The Czech personification of Thalia, the muse of comedy (lit. Česká Thalia), holds multiple laurel wreaths and a Greek-inspired mask, symbolizing the pan-European aspirations of Czech artistic output. She calmly regards a Viennese man begging her to extend the performances for two more weeks; in her left hand, she holds a broken stick labeled "bias against Czechs." The two male figures heading west for Nancy and east to Lwów, respectively, wear the costumes of the Czech nationalist gymnastics association, the Sokol. The man going to France holds a flag proclaiming "brotherhood!", while the figure entering Lwów—the capital of Polish Galicia, like Bohemia another province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire—bears a flag portentously labeled "for your and our freedom!" Layering national myth, imperial geography, and transnational ambitions, this illustration serves as a rich cipher for Czech responses to their Viennese moment.

Figure 2.3: “Hussites of the Nineteenth Century.”[7]

[7] “Husité XIX. století,” *Humoristické listy Humoristické listy* 34, no. 24 (10 June 1892): 1.

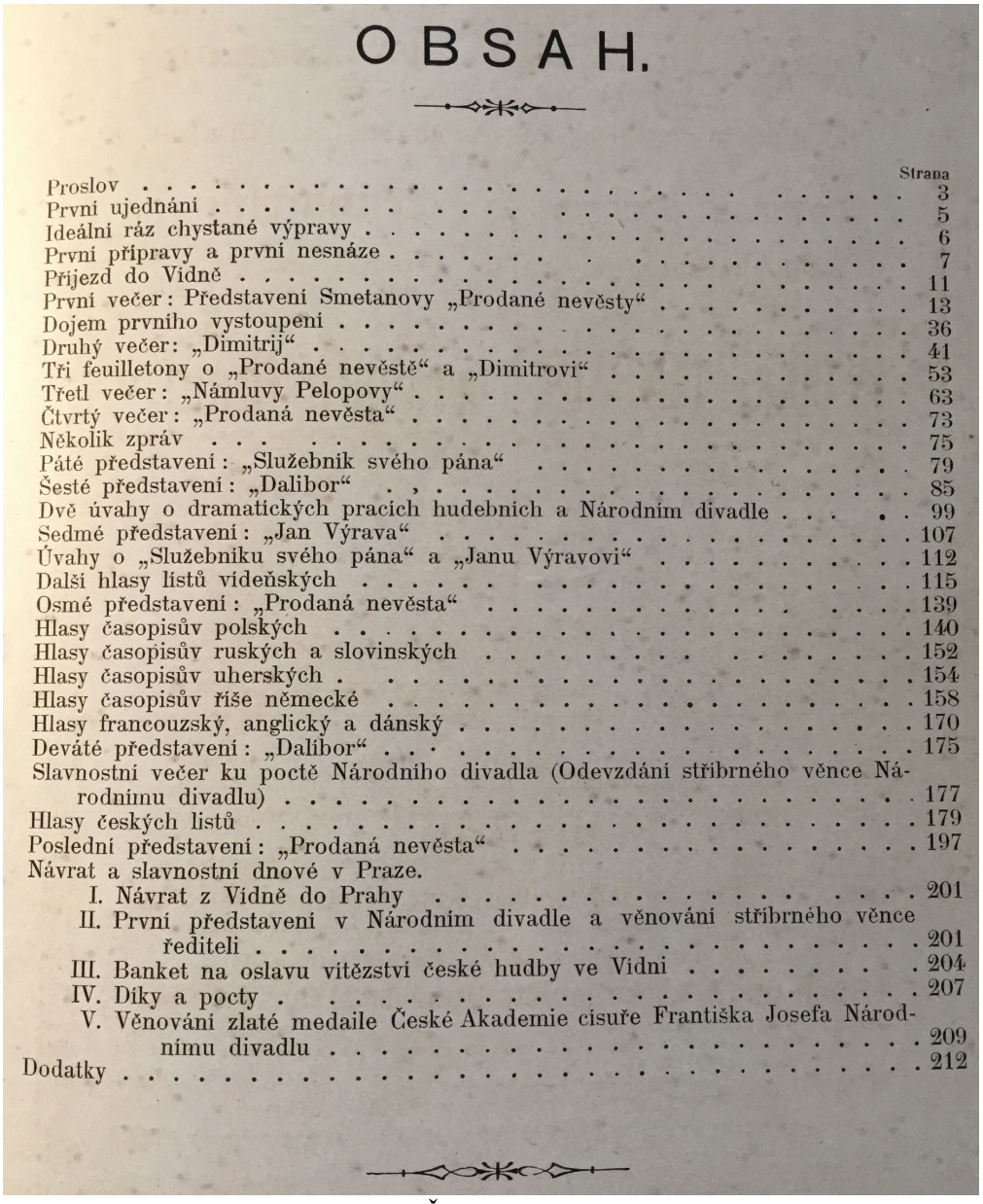
In this chapter, I explore the reception of the Czech residency at the 1892 Vienna exhibition through the three lenses suggested by *Humoristické listy*'s cartoon: the village mode, imperial relationships, and the transnational legibility of opera. Much as in the illustration above, these three frameworks are highly interconnected and reliant on one another. I focus not only on the ways in which Czech critics construed the success of *The Bartered Bride* as a victory for Smetana and Czech music generally, but also argue that there is a paradox at the heart of the 1892 Vienna exhibition: that the work glorified as the most nationally Czech of all operas needed both imperial and transnational approbation to be validated as such. Moreover, by branding themselves through Smetana, and especially through his village opera, the National Theater made a crucial if reductive move. It was a gesture of autoessentialism, a definition of Czech operatic output based on one composer and one vision of the source of Czech essence, and it succeeded spectacularly.

Empire, Transnationalism, and the State: Contextualizing the Prague National Theater

The book that the National Theater's director, František Adolf Šubert, compiled to celebrate and memorialize the Czech contribution to the exhibition neatly captures the extent to which imperial and transnational audiences were important for its success.[8] Moreover, it also constantly reinscribes the centrality of Smetana and *The Bartered Bride* for both the exhibition specifically and Czech opera generally. In the book, Šubert narrates the events of the festival mainly through quotations from published reviews and other commentary. The majority of these reviews are drawn from Viennese newspapers, translated from German into Czech. While on the one hand,

[8] See František Adolf Šubert, *České národní divadlo na první mezinárodní hudební a divadelní výstavě ve Vídni r. 1892* (Prague: Družstvo Národního divadla, 1892). For more background on Šubert and his role in the exhibition, see Jiří Kopecký, "1892: The International Success of Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*," in *Czech Music around 1900*, ed. Lenka Křupková and Jiří Kopecký, et al (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2017), 41–60.

this may be unsurprising, given that the exhibition took place in Vienna, on the other hand, the extent to which Viennese writings pervade Šubert's book is extreme. The table of contents helps to illustrate this (Figure 2.4).



OBSAH.

Figure 2.4: Table of contents for Šubert's *The Czech National Theater at the First International Exhibition of Music and Theater in Vienna, 1892*.

The progress of this official history follows the performances at the exhibition in mostly chronological order, but the first significant grouping of Czech newspaper reviews, titled "Hlasy

českých listů" ("Voices of Czech Newspapers"), does not occur until page 179 of the 222-page book, right before Viennese accounts of the final performance. These Czech voices are themselves preceded by several sections, from pages 140 to 174, that contain translated excerpts from Polish, Russian, Slovenian, Hungarian, Wilhemine German, Belgian, English, and Danish newspapers. 130 of the first 140 pages of the book are almost uniformly composed of Viennese reviews, comprising the sections titled "První večer: Představení Smetanovy Prodané nevěsty" ("First Evening: The Performance of Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*") all the way through "Osmé představení: Prodaná nevěsta" ("Eighth Performance: *The Bartered Bride*"). Thus, Czech appreciations of the Vienna exhibition are, at least for Šubert, of tertiary importance, relegated behind the Viennese and international press, in this book created to commemorate and institutionalize a major Czech cultural victory.

Šubert's organizational logic and the cover of *Humoristcké listy* reveal a paradox, one at the heart of empire as such. Both the center and periphery of an empire needed each other to sustain power relationships—relationships of dominance and control—and the places of regional elites, including cultural elites like Šubert himself.[9] The legitimacy of the National Theater as an institution could be granted only by imperial acquiescence, and so Šubert was bound to support Habsburg administrative and political structures, as they in turn enabled Czech cultural activities. By underwriting Czech cultural efforts, Vienna demonstrated a measure of control over their Bohemian territory, as they could dictate (to an extent) the shape of those cultural efforts. In the same manner, the aspirations of Šubert and the National Theater Association needed to be confirmed by imperial audiences and critics. Yet in legitimating the Czechs' claims to artistic

[9] Alexander J. Motyl, "From Imperial Decay to Imperial Collapse: The Fall of the Soviet Union in Comparative Perspective," *Nationalism and Empire*, ed. Richard L. Rudolph and David F. Good (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 16–21.

and cultural excellence, imperial figures wielded a double-edged sword. On the one hand, they improved their own position in the eyes of the rest of Europe by presenting the operatic and theatrical fruits of their imperialist project. On the other hand, they planted the seeds of their own destruction, allowing for the decay of empire that occurs "when the relationship of dominance, control, and hegemony is no longer stable."[10]

And an empire it was. While geographically limited to the European continent, the Austro-Hungarian Empire utilized the same discourses and practices of other overseas empires.[11] The rulers of the monarchy had long regarded themselves as holders of universal values who in turn bestowed them upon their subject populations. Their liberal, multinational project would ideally confer enough benefits on their subjects so that ethnic nationalism would not be an attractive political option. With the occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the late 1870s, Austria-Hungary became a colonial power in the nineteenth-century sense of the term and its mission shifted. Its previous role as universalizing guardian in Central Europe now began to veer East—in the words of the imperial administrator for Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1895, Austria was "a great Occidental Empire, charged with the mission of carrying civilization to Oriental peoples."[12] Even if Bosnia-Herzegovina technically lay due south of Vienna, in imperial minds it was quite far East.

The extent to which the Czechs were more aligned with the East or the West was an underlying part of their reception at the Exhibition in 1892, even if it was not expressed in those terms (and irrespective of the fact that Prague is geographically northwest of Vienna). They were

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[10] Motyl, "From Imperial Decay to Imperial Collapse," 19.

[11] For a discussion of the resonances and differences between the Habsburg Empire and those of the British and French, see Chapter 1.

[12] See Pieter M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 329–331.

ultimately subjects of the Austrian ruling class, and under the historicist logic of imperialism, subject populations are perpetually not quite yet ready for the burdens of self-rule.[13] Allowing the Czechs to demonstrate cultural excellence through operatic success paid short-term dividends on domestic and international levels, providing support for the legitimacy of Austria's multinational project. However, as Czech cultural life increasingly demonstrated its strength, independence, and international reach, the need for a centralized authority located in Vienna would be called more and more into question. As will become evident, Czech commentators foresaw this in the wake of the Czech visit to Vienna.

The popularity of *The Bartered Bride* among a wide swath of different countries' critics—facilitated by the European transnational legibility of opera—ensured that the outward, centrifugal force of Czech musical nationalism developed audiences beyond imperial borders.[14] Attempting to center and control the celebration of the empire's subject cultures in Vienna, a move of inward, centripetal force, made little difference thanks to the international character of the exhibition. In short, Vienna strengthened the Czechs' sense of their own artistic abilities and broadcast their presence to the rest of Europe, all mediated through *The Bartered Bride*. By insisting on the opera's fundamental embodiment of an essential Czech character, the National Theater's performances presented an easily packaged representation of Czech identity as a

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[13] See my discussion in Chapter 1. See also Dipesh Chakrabarthy, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 7.

[14] My theorization of transnationalism follows from Wendy Kozol when she states that transnational historical studies "examine how cultural practices and ideologies shape, constrain, or enable the economic, social, and political conditions in which people and goods circulate within local, regional, and global locales." In this context, people and goods would include opera as cultural commodity. See C. A. Bayly et al., "*AHR* Conversation: On Transnational History," *The American Historical Review* 111 no. 5 (December 2006): 1441–64. An overview of the transnational historical literature in the field of history is given in Simon Macdonald, "Transnational History: A Review of Past and Present Scholarship," the website of the UCL Centre for Transnational History, accessed 21 July 2015, http://www.ucl.ac.uk/cth/objectives/simon_macdonald_tns_review. See also Axel Körner, "Transnational History: Identities, Structures, States," in *Internationale Geschichte in Theorie und Praxis/International History in Theory and Practice*, eds. Barbara Haider-Wilson, William D. Godsey, and Wolfgang Mueller (Vienna: Verlag der Österriechischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2017), 265–290.

coherent whole, with musical, political, social and cultural components distinct from their overarching Austrian context.

This was typical for the village-mode rhetoric that by now suffused reception of the opera in Prague and the Czech lands (see Chapter 1). This epistemic tactic, and *The Bartered Bride* in particular, relied upon what Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett refers to as the "museum effect—rendering the quotidian spectacular."[15] The opera's setting during a village fair allowed pageantry of costumes and setting but also permitted access to the imagined everydayness of village life. Yet this quotidian setting also belied a sophisticated musical backdrop, one that indexed a developed tradition of compositional excellence. Through its connections to a larger sense of Czech identity, its use of a transnationally legible operatic language, and its presentability as a quasi-ethnographic museum object, regardless of its level of idealization, *The Bartered Bride* was crafted into the perfect symbol of Czech opera during the Vienna exhibition. At the same time, outside observers, both those local to the Habsburg lands and international ones, tended to see the triumph of Czech opera through the lens of their own national concerns, rather than as a paean to for Austria's multinational project.

Despite their support for Czech national particularity, critics and politicians were not yet arguing for the complete independence of the Czech lands. Political questions between Prague and Vienna in the early 1890s focused primarily on how many rights should be devolved to a Czech regional government in a federal, multinational Austria. One key issue within the larger context of Austrian politics at this time was to what extent ethnically-based conceptions of nationality should be a determining factor in the constitution and actions of political groups, not

[15] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 54.

whether such ethnic groups deserved their own corresponding state.[16] Czech political thought along those lines would have to wait until the outbreak of World War I for the idea to start gaining widespread currency. Nevertheless, the Czech contribution to the 1892 exhibition had profound consequences for the political situation in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This becomes clear if we examine how the material practices that constitute ideology fed into the system of ideological state apparatuses (ISAs).[17]

As the Czechs did not yet have their own independent state, it would perhaps be premature to label the National Theater, the National Theater Association, and the operas it performed as parts of a Czech cultural ISA. They were very definitely part of the system comprising the cultural ISA of the Cisleithanian half of the Dual Monarchy, in which the 1892 exhibition itself played a significant role.[18] However, this is where the village mode, as communicated through Czech opera, played a significant role in articulating the differences between imperial attitudes and the changing character of national consciousness within Bohemia. The material practices that instantiate ideological discourses—performing operas, music criticism, celebratory speeches—should in theory, through the system of the cultural ISA, serve the ruling state ideology.[19] To a large extent they did, as Austria-Hungary added to its international reputation through the artistic victory of a subject population, supporting the liberal,

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[16] For a summary of the political situation at this time, see Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848–1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 80–96 and 115–130.

[17] For more on the theorization of state ideological apparatuses, see Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, trans. G.M. Goshgarian (New York: Verso, 2014), 74–77, as well as my discussion in Chapter 1.

[18] Cisleithanian and Transleithanian are historical, Vienna-centric terms for the Austrian and Hungarian portions of the Dual Monarchy, respectively. The terms derive from the river Leitha, which formed an old border between the two regions.

[19] Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, 81.

monarchical, and multinational underpinnings of the Habsburg state. Yet by recasting the material practices of the 1892 exhibition in the light of both nationalist and village ideology (see the Introduction), Czech observers and participants strengthened their own sense of Czech particularity, especially in the realm of opera. They thus laid the foundations for the functioning of a Czech cultural ISA, in a way subverting the ruling ideology emanating from Vienna—even if no one was yet thinking explicitly of independence or revolution.

While the revolutions of 1848 had also spread to the Czech lands, the idea of Czech particularity as a basis for full independence had received support then only in the most radical quarters. The dominant view was that the Czech lands should seek for themselves a position as an equal nation (in the sense of an ethnolinguistic unit, not as an independent state) within a larger multinational Austria, alongside the Germans, Hungarians, and others. This view had led to František Palacký's famous dictum stating that "were Austria not to exist, we would have to create it." Palacký's desire for a multinational federation of nations with equal rights, under the imperial Austrian crown, was an influential view among Czech politicians all the way up until World War I. Indeed, no less a figure than Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, the future president of the First Czechoslovak Republic, had reaffirmed in 1891 that "everyone" was of the same mind as Palacký in desiring the continued existence of Austria, regardless of their disagreements as to the eventual status of the Czech people within Austria.[20]

Pro and Contra Vienna: Anticipating the Czech Visit to the Exhibition

The success of the delegation from the National Theater to Vienna was by no means a foregone conclusion. Czech commentators expressed concerns from all sides, derived mainly from what

[20] See Jiří Kořalka, *Češi v habsburské říši a v Evropě 1815–1914* (Argo: Prague, 1996), 217–221

they perceived to be the unfriendly, or even hostile, political atmosphere between Prague and Vienna. Audiences in Vienna were not unaware of this tension either; as David Brodbeck points out regarding the German reception of the Czech performances, Viennese German liberals described the upholding of the inclusive, multinational character of Austria as paramount, and Czech efforts to define themselves in exclusionary, nationalist terms could only damage this image.[21] Recent events in the Austrian parliament had also contributed to a chilling of political relations. In 1890, Count Eduard Taaffe's government succeeded in negotiating the Bohemian Compromise, which would have turned two of the curias of the Bohemian Diet, the urban and rural, into specifically German and Czech curias, defined by linguocentric ethnicity.[22] These curias would receive their elected officials from newly drawn Czech and German districts, organized along the same national/ethnic lines. However, the coalition that negotiated this new structure—a group which included the long-dominant Old Czech party along with various German parties and aristocrats—left out German nationalist parties and the newly ascendant Young Czech party.[23]

The Young Czechs immediately decried the Bohemian Compromise, claiming that it would lead to a loss of Czech power in determining affairs in Bohemia, while the Germans

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[21] See David Brodbeck, "'Ausgleichs-Abende': The First Viennese Performances of Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*," *Austrian Studies* 17, "Words and Music" (2009): 45–46; as well as Brodbeck, *Defining Deutschtum*, 265–274.

[22] The curial voting system of the Austrian crownlands was the means by which delegates were elected to the regional diets, and thence to the Imperial Reichsrat. The system divided up the population into three groups: large landholders, the urban population, and the rural population. These groups would elect curial delegates, who would then appoint representatives to the larger regional diet. From there, delegates would appoint individuals to the Reichsrat from among their own members. See John Deak, *Forging a Multinational State: State Making in Imperial Austria from the Enlightenment to the First World War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 158–59.

[23] For more on this moment in Austrian politics, see King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*, 81–83, as well as Hugh LeCaine Agnew, "The Flyspecks on Palivec's Portrait: Francis Joseph, the Symbols of Monarchy, and Czech Popular Loyalty," in *The Limits of Loyalty: Imperial Symbolism, Popular Allegiances, and State Patriotism in the Late Habsburg Monarchy*, ed. Laurence Cole and Daniel L. Unowsky (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 86–112, 98.

would gain too much power. So successful were their arguments that the Old Czechs, now irretrievably associated with Taaffe and the Austrian government, were defeated in a landslide during the 1891 elections for the Austrian Parliament, with only two mandates to the Young Czechs' thirty-seven.[24] By the middle of 1893 the Young Czechs had successfully destroyed any hope of the Compromise passing the Bohemian Diet. The Germans and Old Czechs were perceived to have sold out Czech interests in Bohemia, and thus the newly dominant Young Czech party was at odds with Taaffe's still tenuously reigning coalition, which included the majority of German Liberals dominant in Viennese cultural circles. *Humoristcké listy* printed a short satirical poem, also in the 27 May 1892 issue, that encapsulated Czech worries about the political climate and referred to the debacle of the Bohemian Compromise—evidently, the magazine's unnamed poet subscribed to the Young Czech position. Entitled "Glosses on the Performances of the National Theater in Vienna," its first stanza went as follows:

The Bartered Bride
Will not be a novelty there
Though it will be given like one:
Already the year before last was
Bohemia so bartered."[25]

Not only does the pun point to the idea that the Czech lands were sold out to imperial authorities in Vienna via the Bohemian Compromise, it also cleverly references, if possibly subconsciously,

[24] For an in-depth discussion of Young Czech political activity at this time, see Otto Urban, *Česká společnost 1848–1918* (Prague: Svoboda, 1982), 410–417.

[25] "'Prodaná nevěsta'/nebude tam novinkou,/ač jak taká bude dána:/bylať tam už předloním/Čechie tak prodávána." Confirming the connection to Taaffe, the second stanza puns on the title of Jeřábek's play *The Servant of his Master*. "'The Servant of his Master'/Will also not be new;/Here the jester suggests why:/Remember everyone, how Taaffe now/faithfully serves von Plener." "'Služebník svého pána'/také nebude novinkou;/proč, zde šášek napoví:/vzpomeň každý, jak teď Taaffe/věrně slouží Plen'rovi." "Glosy k představením Národního divadla ve Vídni," *Humoristické listy* 34, no. 22 (27 May 1892): 2. Ernst von Plener was a German Bohemian politician who served in the Reichsrat in 1892. He initially supported the Taaffe and the Bohemain Compromise, but turned against the minister-president once it became clear his government would not survive. Von Plener became the Cisleithanian minister of finance in the subsequent government.

the famous dictum of Matthias Corvinus regarding Habsburg imperial policy: "Bella gerant alii, tu felix Austria, nube!"

Fears over the reception the Czech delegation would encounter in Vienna were already widespread prior to the end of May 1892, however. The National Theater Association convened a special meeting of its members on 24 April of that year in order to discuss the upcoming visit; they then issued an official report from the session that was circulated in several leading Prague newspapers, including *Národní listy*, *Hlas národa*, and *Národní politika*, even appearing on the front page of the latter.[26] Questions as to who had the right to conclude an agreement with the exhibition authorities in Vienna set off an intense debate by the membership at the meeting as to the benefits and disadvantages of the exhibition visit, which in turn led to a vote to approve the report from the executive committee.[27] While largely symbolic, the vote nevertheless indicated that the possibility of success trumped anxieties over the possible reception of the Czech visit—only four of the twenty-three regular members present voted against sending the National Theater to Vienna, while the other nineteen were for it.

The arguments of various Association members not only illuminate the conflicting attitudes towards participation in the International Exhibition of Music and Theater. They also indicate the cosmopolitan nature of the members' thinking, as the Association was responding not only to the immediate context of Prague audiences, but also to Viennese imperial audiences and international observers. Gustav Hodek, a supporter of the visit, pointed to the large population of Czechs living in Vienna, for whom the exhibition would have major significance

[26] In what follows, I draw from the report published in *Národní politika*. See "Družstvo Národního divadla," *Národní politika* 25 April 1892, 1–2.

[27] The executive committee evidently viewed the special general meeting as something of a formality, and the leadership was incensed (judging by the level of passive aggression in the minutes) by general members questioning their authority to conclude the Vienna contract without the latter's input. See the minutes from 24 April to 6 May 1892, *Protokoly Správního výboru Družstva Národního divadla*, sig. D50, fond ND, National Archive, Prague.

in both national and social terms, as a reason to carry on with the delegation, yet he also worried that the National Theater might sustain tangible, if partial, damage to its reputation should the performances not go well.[28] Jindřich Odkolek, one of the four who ended up voting against the visit, was in favor of canceling the signed agreement; he referred to France, where, according to him, opposition to participation in the exhibition had appeared. Hodek was evidently ready to counter this, as the report indicates:

> Mr. Hodek, in opposition to Mr. Odkolek, pointed out that the French nation, which had already long ago gained recognition across the world in every area of its creative activities, would not need to participate in the exhibition at all, especially when the exhibition was being held in a foreign state. In contrast, we must search for every possible way to make ourselves known and gain recognition in the larger world. All that aside, the exhibition is happening in our own state, where we are not foreigners.[29]

Multiple members of the National Theater Association likewise viewed the exhibition as an opportunity to stand on a world stage, albeit one mediated and controlled by the empire. They were very much aware of their position as a relatively unknown quantity within the larger European context and of what the exhibition could do for Czech art. Yet their desire for international recognition was balanced by a fear of imperial rejection, and despite Czech insistence on national particularity, the Dual Monarchy was still "their state."

Dr. Josef Herold—former mayor of the suburb of Vršovice, delegate to the Imperial Reichsrat, and member of the National Theater Association—made sure to remind the meeting that it was necessary to preserve a Czech character for the Viennese performances "in every

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[28] For more on the character of the Czech population living in Vienna at this time, see Monika Glettler, "Minority Culture in a Capital City: The Czechs in Vienna at the Turn of the Century," in *Decadence and Innovation: Austro-Hungarian Life and Art at the Turn of the Century*, ed. Robert B. Pynsent (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989), 49–60.

[29] "Naproti p. Odkolkovi poukazuje na to, že národ francouzský, jenž si již dávno dobyl po celém světě uznání v každém oboru své duševní činnosti, nepotřeboval by vůbec výstavy se súčastniti, a zvláště když výstava jest ve státě proň cizím. Naproti tomu my musíme všemožně hledět, abychom se učinili známými a dobyli si uznání ve světě. Kromě toho výstava divadelní pořádá se ve státě našem, kde my cizinci nejsme." "Družstvo Národního divadla," *Národní politika*, 25 April 1892, 1.

respect." A member of the executive committee that had signed the agreement responded to this cautionary remark by indicating that it was expressly stipulated in the exhibition contract that posters, tickets, announcements, texts, and so forth would be published entirely in both Czech and German (see Figure 2.5). There was no reason, the report followed, "to fear that the Czech character of the performances in Vienna would in any way be pushed into the shade."[30] The insistence on national particularity reflects a subaltern strategy of differentiating oneself from the ruling population—in this case, in the hopes of attracting notice from the other nations of Europe.

Another major concern of the members of the National Theater Association was how Viennese critics would react to the Czech performances. One person present at the meeting worried that negative reviews in the imperial press might even have an adverse effect on artistic life at home, dampening sympathy towards the National Theater. A negative reception in Vienna, he argued, could even be used to attack the National Theater—and, implicitly, its leadership. Another member of the Association, in response, argued for a more nuanced view of the Viennese critics, stating that they were not all enemies of the Czechs. In support of his point, he offered up none other than Eduard Hanslick and his advocacy for the music of Antonín Dvořák. Director Šubert, who was also present at the meeting, likewise gave more credit to the Viennese journalists, stating that he expected from them the utmost objectivity, real sympathy, and hospitality. He also laid out the potential of the exhibition in stark terms: "Our general national success will go hand in hand with artistic success."[31] Hodek linked politics and artistic affairs

[30] "Není tedy přičiny obávati se, že by český ráz her ve Vídni jakýmkoli způsobem byl zatlačen do pozadí." "Družstvo Národního divadla," 2.

[31] "S prospěchem uměleckým půjde ruku v ruce náš všeobecný prospěch národní…" "Družstvo Národního divadla," 1–2.

even more explicitly, stating that “political results are achieved most safely when a nation obtains recognition in every field of work, be it artistic, industrial, commercial, or whatever other area.”[32]

Představení
král. českého zemského a
Národního divadla v Praze
v mezinárodní
hudební a divadelní výstavě
ve Vídni
ode dne 1. až do 7. června 1892.

Ředitelství
král. českého zemského a
Národního divadla.

Vorstellungen
königl. böhmischen Landes- und
Nationaltheaters in Prag
in der internationalen
Musik- und Theater-Ausstellung
in Wien
vom 1. bis 7. Juni 1892.

Direction
des königl. böhmischen Landes- und
Nationaltheaters.

Figure 2.5: A poster for Vienna announcing the National Theater performances in both Czech and German.[33]

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[32] “Výsledků politických dosahuje se nejbezpečněji, když národ si získá uznání v každém oboru práce, ať jest to práce umělecká, průmyslová, obchodní nebo jakákoli jiná.” “Družstvo Národního divadla,” 1.

[33] The female embodiment of the Czech lands, Czechia, presides over the poster. She holds a shield featuring the two-tailed lion of Bohemia and a branch from a linden tree, another Czech national symbol. At her feet are the personifications of Music (holding a harp) and Drama (holding a mask and dagger). The poster was published on 15 May 1892. Given in Šubert, *České národní divadlo*, 221. A description of the image and its symbolism can be found

Taken together, these opinions paint a decidedly complex picture of the relationship between Vienna and Prague, as well as of the various stakeholders in the success or failure of the Czech contribution. Czech audiences in Prague, in the view of the Association's members, would react differently than Czechs in Vienna, and both these views had to be taken into account. Similarly, German audiences and critics would likely respond according to whether they called Prague or Vienna their home. Viennese critics might reject or accept the Czech delegation and its performances, and their opinions would have wide-ranging ramifications. That they would influence opinion among the political and cultural leaders in the imperial capital was a given, but Viennese critics would also have the power, it was assumed, to affect domestic circles positively or negatively in addition to the international scene. Moreover, the Czechs would have to perform a balancing act by positing nationalist uniqueness while still claiming the mantle of loyal subjects of the empire. In light of this, it seems fair to say that the preponderant ethnic conflict of Czechs vs Germans in Bohemia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire at this time was far more multivalent and far less determinant, especially in artistic circles, than the ways in which it would be later characterized, both by nationalist commentators in the early part of the twentieth century and by more recent historians.[34]

In a move likely calculated to allay any last-minute jitters, Šubert sat down for an interview with a correspondent from the daily *Hlas národa* just three days before the Czechs would stage their first performance in Vienna. Commenting on the current tenor of opinion regarding the National Theater's trip to the capital, the journalist wrote:

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in Jan Panenka and Taťána Součkova, *Prodaná nevěsta: Prodaná nevěsta na jevištích Prozatímního a Národního divadla 1866–2004* (Prague: Národní divadlo a nakladatelství Gallery Praha, 2004), 53.

[34] The most recent historical scholarship has sought to analyze the Habsburg Empire in such a way as to downplay the extreme emphasis on nationalist conflict, choosing instead to focus on the functioning of empire and commonalities across the vast Habsburg lands. For examples of this, see Deak, *Forging a Multinational State*, as well as Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*.

> We constantly wondered: "Will they go — will they not go?!" and then we thought: "It's good that they are going — it's a mistake for them to go!" Today, however, all these considerations are in the past. They are going to Vienna, and none of us can now say anything other than "Let it thus be good that they are going!"[35]

If the journalist—Jaroslav Kvapil, who would go on to become the librettist of Dvořák's opera *Rusalka* and director of the National Theater himself—was uncertain of the wisdom of the National Theater expedition, Šubert displayed supreme confidence during the interview, just as he had done at the special meeting of the National Theater Association. Asked why he was really going to Vienna, the director responded, "Why? Because the opportunity presents itself. The entire world, not just the German one, but even the Slavic one, was up until now closed off to our art."[36] For Šubert, the Vienna exhibition was a chance once and for all to show the world the high artistic level to which Czech music had risen; the only reason the world had taken no notice of their operas as of yet was that there had been simply too few opportunities to perform outside of Bohemia. That fact alone justified taking whatever chance there was that the productions might meet with an unfavorable reception in the imperial capital.[37] While Šubert was aware of the political situation, he was nonetheless unconcerned. He explained that while "political relations are disadvantageous enough," journalists in Vienna had assured him of their utmost objectivity towards the Czech performances. "Political and national conflicts," he stated, "will be

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[35] "Pořád jsme uvažovali: 'Pojede se — nepojede se?!' a potom jsme přemítali: 'Dobře, že se pojede — chyba, že se pojede!': leč dnes už jsou všechny ty úvahy odbyty. Do Vídně se jede a nikdo z nás nesmí už teď říkati jinak než: 'Ať je to tedy dobře, že se jede!'" Jaroslav Kvapil, "Interview o divadelní výpravě do Vídně," *Hlas národa*, 29 May 1892, 1.

[36] "Proč? Protože se naskytla příležitost. Celý svět, nejen ten německý, ale is slovanský byl dosud našeum umění uzavžen." Kvapil, "Interview o divadelní výpravě do Vídně," 1.

[37] Despite Dvořák's reputation in the capital, success in the realm of instrumental music had not created many opportunities for Czech opera. To some, moreover, Dvořák's music simply inflamed ethnic and nationalist tensions in Vienna. See Brodbeck, *Defining Deutschtum*, 143–198.

left entirely aside."[38] By repeating many of the arguments he had presented to the National Theater Association, Šubert appears to have been engaging in a rather concerted publicity campaign—note too the fact that the official report from the special meeting was distributed to several major newspapers—to drum up enthusiasm for the visit to Vienna. The executive committee of the National Theater Association, meanwhile, not only decided that a representative of the Association would send a daily telegram to the major Prague newspapers during the residency, but also resolved to move forward with what would become Šubert's commemorative booklet before the performances had even begun.[39]

Celebration and Preview: The Two-Hundredth Performance of *The Bartered Bride*

Statements in the press were not the only way that the National Theater was attempting to lay the groundwork for its visit to Vienna. It also presented some of the works slated to be performed in Vienna at the Prague National Theater in their new productions, almost like the try-outs of twentieth-century American musicals. *The Bartered Bride* in particular benefitted from this treatment, because the premiere of the new production was to be simultaneously celebrated as a jubilee occasion: the two-hundredth performance of *The Bartered Bride* in the Prague National Theater, which occurred on 8 May 1892. In addition to generating enthusiasm for the National Theater and its upcoming Viennese excursion, the jubilee performance also reinscribed the importance of *The Bartered Bride* for Czech audiences and critics, activating the village mode in exhorting the idea that the opera was representative of the essential core of the Czech people.

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[38] "Ó ovšem, politické poměry jsou dost nepříznivý, to je pravda… politické a národní spory necháme úplně stranou." Kvapil, "Interview o divadelní výpravě do Vídně," 2.

[39] See minutes from 25 and 27 May 1892, *Protokoly Správního výboru Družstva Národního divadla*, sig. D50, fond ND, National Archive, Prague.

A journalist identified only by the letter "q"—probably Jaromír Borecký, director of the Prague university library—encapsulated this attitude in a review of the two-hundredth performance for the journal *Česká Thalia*.[40] For him, *The Bartered Bride* was "one of those fortunate artistic works that have become the property of the whole nation, and became so because they welled up from the blood of their nation's heart."[41] Its status as the aspirational ideal of Czech music, another aspect of the village mode, was confirmed shortly thereafter: "Appreciation for the opera is rooted more deeply, indeed in something so deep, that the characteristic stylistic signs of this opera could become the mark of a whole new Czech musical school."[42] The foundation of all of Smetana's work, Borecký declared, was

> unshakable, because it is healthy, and healthy, because it is constructed on the principles of the most mature development of music in its modern phase and because it sucks the sap from its own lifegiving soil… and one of the first stones for this bold and already beautiful edifice is *The Bartered Bride*, in which truly lies its significance. That which *Dalibor* accomplished in tragedy, *The Bartered Bride* already did earlier in comedy: the extraction of the national element simultaneously with the perfect utilization of all the benefits of modern formal progress.[43]

Borecký's appeal to blood and soil was part and parcel of nineteenth-century nationalist ideology, especially as derived from the importance of ethnolinguistic groups. As Anthony D.

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[40] Borecký's pseudonym is given in Karel Tauš, *Slovník cizích slov, zkratek, novinářských šifer, pseudonymů a časopisu* (Blansko: Nakladatel Karel Jelínek, 1947), 638. For a brief biographical sketch, see "Borecký, Jaromír, 1869-1951," in *Slovník českých knihovníků*, http://aleph.nkp.cz/F/?func=direct&doc_number=000000010&local_base=SCK.

[41] "Jest 'Prodaná nevěsta' jedním z oněch šťastných výtvorů uměleckých, které stávají se majetkem celého národa a stávají se jím proto, poněvadž vytryskly z krve jeho srdce." Jaromír Borecký, "Referáty o stálých českých divadlech. Zpěvohra," *Česká Thalia* 6, no. 14 (10 May 1892): 162.

[42] "Záliba koření tu hlouběj, ba v něčem tak hlubokém, že charakteristické známky stylu této zpěvohry mohly se státi charakteristickými známkami celé nové hudební školy české." Borecký, "Referáty o stálých českých divadlech," 162.

[43] "Neotřesitelné, poněvadž zdravé, a zdravé, poněvadž zbudované na zásadách nejvyspělejšího vývoje hudby v moderní její fási a ssající mízu z vlastní živodatné půdy… A že jedním z prvních kamenů ke smělé a již nyní nádherné této stavbě jest 'Prodané nevěsty,' v tom právě leží největší její význam. To, co později 'Dalibor' v pathetickém, vykonal již dříve 'Prodaná nevěsta' v komickém genru: vytěžení národního živlu při dokonalém zužitkování všech výhod moderního pokroku formálního." Borecký, "Referáty o stálých českých divadlech," 162–63.

Smith put it, an "overriding belief in shared kinship and common ethnicity" produces "vivid and tangible emotions… irrespective of the historical evidence."[44] Borecký's rhetoric in this passage tied *The Bartered Bride* into both an of close-knit ethnic kinship (blood) but also into an idea of shared homeland (soil).

The critic's encomium to *The Bartered Bride* is significant not only because it so directly connected a sense of *Blut und Boden* Czechness to the opera. It also celebrated *The Bartered Bride* as the foremost of all of Smetana's operas, adducing to it signifiers of musical modernity, best understood in this context as code for Wagnerian principles. If we take into account the standard nineteenth-century teleological view that originality and priority of conception were of the highest value—*The Bartered Bride* united modern progress with Czech national thought *first*—then Borecký's passage appears to place *The Bartered Bride* above even *Dalibor*, usually considered the composer's most progressive and Wagnerian opera. Indeed, *Dalibor* was the opera most frequently advanced by Otakar Hostinský, one of Smetana's earliest supporters and an important figure in Czech musical life (see Chapter 1), as indicative of Smetana's musical progressivism. Borecký's realignment, in addition to setting up *The Bartered Bride* as the most important of all Czech operas, also implicitly reoriented the importance of Czech cultural sources, making the village paramount.

While Borecký's argument may have stated the case more emphatically than most, *The Bartered Bride* and its village setting were quickly accruing prestige. The rhetoric of the village mode, in addition to some of the concerns over the exhibition visit, came through in a review published in *Národní listy* by Josef Bohuslav Foerster, a composer and critic whose operas—

[44] See Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 23. For more on the overlapping significance of vocabularies of kinship and homeland, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006), 143.

including *Eva* (1899), set in a rural village—would gain him considerable recognition at the turn of the century.[45] He noted the gathering clouds in the "theatrical heavens," which threatened storms, but conceded that there was no going back. He also stated that, while much had been written and publicized both for and against the exhibition visit, the majority were on the side of the optimists, who expected "the most wonderful moral outcome and a landslide victory for Czech art, with unforeseeable results."[46] Implying the National Theater was nonetheless acting cautiously, he stated that, prior to putting the new productions in front of "a foreign audience and foreign critics," the Theater Association would stage all the works, not just *The Bartered Bride*, before the "kindly eyes of Czech viewers and the similarly affable judgment of domestic critics."[47] Foerster's prose indicates that anxieties about the wisdom of participating in the exhibition, as well as the friendliness of Viennese critics, were quite widely held, and they would continue to be present up until the exhibition.

Yet Foerster displayed no anxiety whatsoever about the new production of *The Bartered Bride*. In the following passage celebrating the impact of the new staging, he linked Smetana and his opera explicitly to the hearts of the Czech people and, moreover, recruited Czech mythology in the vein of the opera *Dalibor* to serve the larger cause:

> [*The Bartered Bride*] appeared before us with new freshness in the true sense of the word, and the audience exulted in it as though it were a premiere being celebrated; all hearts were once again moved by it, specialists and laypeople alike told one another with courage, quivering with joy, that this fresh flower, grown from the great heart of Smetana and anchored in domestic soil, had not lost any of its aroma, any of its beauty, and thousands of reminiscences flew to the poor grave on celebrated Vyšehrad, where the

[45] For more on *Eva* and its relationship to the discourses of the village mode, see Chapter 4.

[46] "…výsledek morální co nejskvělejší, vítězství českého umění na celé čáře a následky nedohledné." Josef Bohuslav Foerster, "Zpěvohra," *Národní listy*, 10 May 1892, 4.

[47] "Nežli dojde ku představením před cizím obecenstvem a cizí kritikou, mají býti jednotlivá díla vystavena vlídným zrakům diváků českých a takovémutéž posouzení domácích zpravodajů divadelních." Foerster, "Zpěvohra," 4.

> knights of Blaník strive, battling with spiritual sword for the resurrection of the nation to new life…[48]

In Foerster's view, the hearts of the Czech people were tied to that of Smetana through *The Bartered Bride*, and the opera spoke directly to Czechs of all social and educational classes regardless of the work's age. This displays one of the primary aspects of the village mode's ideological functioning: the village and its operatic representations were something innately Czech, such that they were immediately comprehensible and always already correct.[49]

In this particular passage, moreover, Pierre Nora's concept of the *lieu de mémoire*, or memory site, is helpful in parsing the multiple mythological references that Foerster brings to bear. The central memory here has to do with an atemporal rural origin—the mythic village—for Czechness and the Czech people, which is encapsulated by *The Bartered Bride*. The purpose of this passage is, as Nora defines the role of a *lieu de mémoire*, "to capture the maximum possible meaning with the fewest possible signs."[50] Atop the basis of the ageless *Bartered Bride*—ever-fresh, it stirred the hearts of those present as though it were the first time—Foerster layers the memory of Bedřich Smetana, interred in a grave on Vyšehrad. This fortified hill was the site of the original fortress of the medieval Czech kings, and the legendary tale of Libuše the prophet-queen, immortalized by Smetana's opera of the same name, was purported to have taken place at

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[48] "Zpěvohra objevila se v pravém slova smyslu v nové svěžesti před námi a obecenstvo jásalo jí vstříc, jako by slavena byla premiera; všechna srdce byla znovu pohnuta, odborníci i laikové [lit. the laity] sdělovali si znovu s myslí radostí rozechvěnou, že ten svěží květ, vyrostlý z velkého srdce Smetanova a kotvící v půdě domácí, nepozbyl ničeho na své vůni, na své kráse, a tisíce vzpomínek letělo k chudému rovu na staroslavném Vyšehradě, kde spějí blaničtí rytíři, bojovavší mečem ducha za vzkříšení národa k novému žití…" Foerster, "Zpěvohra," 4.

[49] In this respect Foerster's passage echoes Borecký's appeal to kinship and homeland; such mainstays of nationalist ideology were, as explored in Chapter 1, central to the village mode.

[50] See Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, vol. 1, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 15. For a broader discussion of the *lieu de mémoire* as it relates to the village mode, see Chapter 1.

Vyšehrad. It was also the site of a cemetery where, beginning in the nineteenth century, famous Czechs were interred.

Foerster also performs a second collapse of geographical and temporal space by stating that the knights of Blaník resided at Vyšehrad. Blaník is a small hill, today about an hour's train ride southeast of Prague, and according to legend, a company of knights under the command of Saint Wenceslaus slumber under the mountain, awaiting a battle when the Czech lands will be surrounded; in the hour of direst need, the warriors will awaken and help vanquish the enemy (see Chapter 1). To add yet another layer to Foerster's *lieu de mémoire* here, a stone hewn from Blaník was incorporated into the foundations for the National Theater building, along with stones from other legendary mountains from around the Czech lands, during a grand ceremony in 1868.[51] In Foerster's telling, the knights of Blaník have been transplanted from one mythical hill to another, and are already battling to resurrect the nation, at least culturally. In linking them to Smetana's grave, the composer and his opera become instrumentalized toward this goal as well. By layering so many national and mythological signifiers into a single sentence, Foerster creates a powerful argument for the importance of *The Bartered Bride* and its composer to Czech cultural life.

Having made his case for the essential Czechness of *The Bartered Bride*, Foerster foresaw a potential challenge stemming from this. Because *The Bartered Bride* was so deeply Czech, it might pose problems for Viennese critics should it only be performed a single time:

> Of course, it is another question whether or not a single performance will suffice to make the work accessible and comprehensible to a foreign audience. He who takes into account that the premiere of this masterful opera did not meet with success at home, even though

[51] These mountains included Blaník and its sleeping warriors; Radhošť, a mountain in Moravia and sacred site of the old Slavic god Radegast; and Říp, where, according to legend, the forefather of all Czechs and leader of the first Slavs settled. For an account of the 1868 National Theater foundation ceremonies, see Servác Heller, *Jubileum velké doby: Obraz našeho národního rozmachu před padesaty lety založení národního divadla roku 1868* (Prague: Pražská akciová tiskárna, 1918).

> the esteemed story of Czech life and Smetana's melodies flow directly from the fountain of folk song, will understand our fear.[52]

Aside from engaging the village mode again by casting *The Bartered Bride* and its music as emblematic of ruralness through a Herderian appeal to folksong, Foerster's text also betrays an important slippage. Here, Vienna and its audiences are foreign, yet for other individuals, like those in the National Theater Association's report, Vienna was home territory. Definitions of, and distinctions between, the foreign and the domestic were constantly shifting, reflecting the volatile relationship between the imperial state and individual nationalities—in Palacký's sense—striving for recognition.

One Big Happy Habsburg Family: Viennese Reactions to the Czech Performances

Ultimately, Foerster and all those anxious about the Czech delegation to the International Exhibition of Music and Theater need not have worried. Viennese audiences and critics went wild over *The Bartered Bride*, rocketing the Czechs to international recognition literally overnight. The goodwill of the Viennese also extended to the other operas and plays on the program, though none of them inspired the same level of enthusiasm as *The Bartered Bride*. Despite the fact that the Viennese were just as aware of recent the political frictions as the Czechs, they nonetheless welcomed and celebrated the Czech performances, going so far as to declare the first performance an "Ausgleichs-Abend" or evening recreating balance.[53] Such an epithet echoed both the Ausgleich of 1867 that created the Dual Monarchy and the more recent,

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[52] "Jiná otázka je ovšem, zdali stačí jediné provedení, aby učinilo dílo přístupným a srozumitelným cizímu obecenstvu. Kdo uváží, že premiera této mistrné zpěvohry minula se doma se zdarem, ač vážen děj z českého života a melodie Smetanovy plynou přímo ze zřídla národní písně, pochopí naši obavu." Foerster, "Zpěvohra," 4.

[53] See Brodbeck, "'Ausgleichs-Abende,'" 47–50.

yet ill-fated Böhmischer Ausgleich (Bohemian Compromise), which the Young Czechs were at that very moment obstructing.

Viennese papers were quick to point out the welcoming attitude of the imperial capital, if in a somewhat self-congratulatory manner. A writer for the *Wiener Tagblatt* felt that the arrival of the Czechs confirmed the truly international character of the exhibition in a way that previous visiting groups had not. The afternoon of their arrival, the writer states, groups of Czechs were spread out across the exhibition grounds, and Czech speech could be heard everywhere:

> Let it be noted that, to the honor of the Viennese, it did not occur to any of them to consider the Czechs evil, that the Vltavian sounds in no way uncomfortably offended anyone, that on the contrary, our guests from Prague and also Czechs living in Vienna found everywhere the most friendly and most affable interest, even though, as is understandable, they rather ostentatiously put their nationality on parade."[54]

This friendly behavior on the part of the Viennese went hand in hand with rhetorical attempts to confirm Austrian imperial control of the Czechs. The sonic clash of unfamiliar languages was not, as for example during the 1889 World's Fair in Paris, an occasion for demonstrating the backwardness of a colonial population or concurrently confirming their status as a racialized Other (or not explicitly, at any rate).[55] By playing up friendly treatment of a subject nationality, the Viennese could broadcast the success of their imperial project and likewise claim the artistic success of the Czechs as their own.

While Czech otherness was still audible and legible, the Austrian imperial project, at least at this point in history, preferred to bring the Czechs into the family fold (even if they implicitly remained second to the Germans). The *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* reported that, between the

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[54] "Na všech místech slyšet bylo český hovor a ke cti konstantováno budiž Vídeňanům, že nikomu z nich nenapadlo pokládati to Čechům za zlé, že zvuky povltavské nikterak nedotkly se nikoho nepříjemně, že naopak naši hosté z Prahy a také ve Vídni žijící Čechové našli všade nejpřátelštější a nejpřívětivější účast, ačkoli, jakž i pochopitelno, národnost svoji dosti ostentativně stavěli na odiv." Quoted in František Šubert, *České národní divadlo na první mezinárodní hudební a divadelní výstavě ve Vídni r. 1892* (Prague: Družstvo Národního divadla, 1892), 16.

[55] See Fauser, *Musical Encounters*, 139–146.

opening performance of Smetana's *Festival March* and the overture to *The Bartered Bride*, the National Theater company sang the first verse of the Austrian national anthem in Czech. Storms of applause greeted the end of the strophe along with multilingual cries of "Hoch" and "Sláva." The applause compelled them to sing the second verse as well, "and in this way bridged the mood between stage and auditorium. Everything immediately felt as one in enthusiasm for the imperial house and for the emperor, beneath whose gentle scepter Germans and Czechs look forward to independent national development and feel themselves to be members of one family: the Austrian family of nations."[56]

Reports of Viennese friendliness towards the Czechs were no doubt conditioned by the overwhelming praise immediately showered on the National Theater's production of Smetana's village opera. A writer for the *Wiener Zeitung* declared that *The Bartered Bride* was "a work suffused with a national folk-like spirit while also artistically refined." He reported the opera had whipped the audience into "veritable hurricanes of rapturous applause," and that "the performance was perfect, of a precision that we, even in our celebrated musical city, rarely get to hear."[57] Characterizations of Smetana were of the same dual nature as that of the opera,

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[56] "Tím byl položen most nálady mezi jevištěm a hledištěm. Všechno se cítilo rázem za jedno v nadšení pro dům císařský a pro vládce, pod jehož jemným žezlem se těší Němci i Čechové samostatnému národnímu rozvoji a cítí se býti členy jedné rodiny: rakouské rodiny národův." Quoted in Šubert, *České národní divadlo*, 15.

While the emperor himself was not present, the imperial court and Austrian nobility were well represented. Audience members at the opening performance included Archduke Ludwig Viktor, the emperor's brother; Prince Philipp of Saxe-Coburg, who was the brother-in-law of Crown Prince Rudolf through his wife Princess Louise of Belgium (also in attendance); Princess Pauline von Metternich, who functioned as honorary chairman of the exhibition; Count Windischgrätz, who would replace Taaffe as minister-president of the Reichsrat; Count Kielmansegg, governor of Lower Austria and Windischgrätz's eventual replacement as minister-president; representatives of a whole host of Bohemian noble families, including Count Harrach, Count Czernin, Count Deym, and two Counts Kounic; an Esterhazy; and a de Rothschild. See Šubert, *České národní divadlo*, 14.

[57] "Es wurde Friedrich Smetana's reizende komische Oper 'Die verkaufte Braut' ('Prodaná nevěsta') aufgeführt. Das Werk, von volksthümlichem Geiste durchweht und dabei künstlerisch veredelt, entzückte das Publicum, dessen Enthusiasmus sich von Act zu Act steigerte und in wahren Orkanen von Applaus kundgab. Die Aufführung war vollendet, von einer Präcision, wie wir sie selbst in unserer berühmten Musikstadt nicht häufig zu hören bekommen." "Theater," *Wiener Zeitung*, 2 June 1892, 6.

emphasizing both fidelity to a true Czech folk spirit as well as artistic refinement. In a second article covering the first performance, Hanuš Paumgartner at the *Wiener Zeitung* characterized Smetana in the following way:

> He has artistically ennobled and uplifted all that is national, and in addition to the refreshment brought on by all true folk simplicity, listening to Smetana bring a spiritualized and refined delight in the artwork itself.[58]

Such rhetoric accorded with the kinds of canonizing, village-mode language already being used in Prague musical circles, but this time it was printed by a leading Viennese newspaper. The emphasis on folk spirit and national character was typical of many of the reviews—as a writer for the newspaper *Fremdenblatt* put it, *The Bartered Bride* "is anchored deeply in the people; this music is as fresh and original as the people themselves, and everywhere there sounded from it national color and folk melodies."[59] While the Viennese were plainly quite taken with Smetana, *The Bartered Bride*, and the Czechs, the emphasis on folkishness did not come out of nowhere.

This kind of ethnographic slant to the production had been clearly planned by the National Theater and created by the head scene painter, Robert Holzer. The action of this particular production was situated explicitly in a village in the region of Western Bohemia surrounding the city of Plzeň, home of the famous Pilsner Urquell brewery. According to the historian Přemysl Pražák, the desire for ethnographic veracity was so pronounced that members of the National Theater actually went out to a village near Plzeň and created the basic elements

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[58] "Er hat das Nationale künstlerisch veredelt und gehoben, und zur Erquickung, die alles echt Volksthümliche der Empfindung bereitet, tritt beim Anhören Smetana's der durchgeistigte und verfeinerte Genuß an dem Kunstwerke selbst." Hanuš Paumgartner, "Feuilleton. Musik. Internationale Musik- und Theater-Austellung in Wien," *Wiener Zeitung*, 2 June 1892, 1.

[59] "Ona kotví hluboko v lidu; svěží a původní jako lid sám jest i tato hudba, všude vyznívá z ní národní ráz, lidová melodie." Quoted in Šubert, *České národní divadlo*, 17.

of the production's set and costume design from what they found there (see Figures 2.6 and 2.7).[60]

Figure 2.6: Roles from *The Bartered Bride* in Plzeň-region costumes.[61]

The commitment to verisimilitude extended even to the stage action; while the action of Act II was happening in the room depicted in Figure 2.7 (actually the back room of a pub), supernumeraries bustled about, visible through the door into the front room of the pub, "modeling the life of a Czech village."[62]

[60] See Přemysl Pražák, *Smetanovy zpěvohry*, vol. 1 (Prague: Vydavatelství za svobodu, 1948), 215.

[61] This photograph depicts the sextet "Rozmysli si, Mařenko" from Act III. Mařenka sits to the far left with her parents, those of Vašek and Jeník, and the marriage broker Kecal, who stands at the far right. "*Prodaná nevěsta* (Opera)," National Theater Archive, http://archiv.narodni-divadlo.cz/default.aspx?jz=cs&dk=Inscenace.aspx&ic=3532&pn=456affcc-f401-4000-aaff-c11223344aaa&sz=0&zz=OPR&fo=000, accessed 28 October 2016.

[62] Pražák, *Smetanovy zpěvohry*, 216. Details about earlier productions and their various stagings can found in Panenka and Součková, *Prodaná nevěsta*, 26–48.

Figure 2.7: Village pub scene design for Act II of *The Bartered Bride*.[63]

The emphasis on ethnographic and geographic veracity placed the National Theater and its *Bartered Bride* production at the nexus of several European operatic trends, which in turn contributed to the opera's popularity with Viennese audiences. A trend of creating "authentic" stage sets started in Paris in the 1820s and was highly influential over the course of the nineteenth century.[64] The work of Eugène Lacoste, who worked as a costume and set designer for the Paris Opéra from 1876 to 1885, was particularly influential and well-received by the French press. He devoted considerable attention to historical research for the various productions he designed; his efforts included to multiple locations in England as part of the process of designing sets and costumes for the premiere of Saint-Saëns's *Henry VIII* in 1883.[65] Debates

[63] "*Prodaná nevěsta* (Opera)," National Theater Archive, http://archiv.narodni-divadlo.cz/default.aspx?jz=cs&dk=Inscenace.aspx&ic=3532&pn=456affcc-f401-4000-aaff-c11223344aaa&sz=0&zz=OPR&fo=000, accessed 28 October 2016.

[64] See Fauser, *Musical Encounters*, 142.

[65] See Nicole Wild, "Eugène Lacoste et la création de *Henry VIII* à l'Opéra de Paris en 1883," in *Échos de France et d'Italie: Liber amicorum Yves Gérard*, ed. Marie-Claire Mussat, Jean Mongrédien, and Jean-Michel Nectoux, 213–232 (Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 1997).

over the authenticity of musical performance and representation, especially in connection with ethnographic activity, were rife across Europe, especially as encapsulated by the World's Fair phenomenon.[66] The Vienna Exhibition of Music and Theater as a whole can be read as a part of that larger tradition; after all, the Paris Exposition Universelle had taken place only three years prior. Closer to home, ethnographic efforts to codify folksong and other such musical practices in the Czech lands were well underway. Leoš Janáček, for example, had begun collecting folksongs in earnest in the mid-1880s, and became so well known for this that he was asked to coordinate the presentation of Moravian folk music at the 1895 Ethnographic Exhibition in Prague.[67]

Even if *The Bartered Bride* was an idealized representation of peasant life, the European craze for *verismo* signaled a larger interest in "authentic" operatic representations of "everyday" people, and this desire probably also fed into the popularity of Smetana's village opera.[68] Finally, Viennese audiences probably also appreciated *The Bartered Bride* through the "internal exotic" character of Czech peasants. Western Bohemian villages would have been foreign to urbane elites in Vienna, yet were still within the territorial confines of the Habsburg Empire. The music of *The Bartered Bride* had been created in Prague by a self-consciously nationalist Czech composer, and thus gained domestic yet exotic credibility rather than being regarded as the product of an outside gaze.[69]

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[66] See Fauser, *Musical Encounters*, 12–14.

[67] For more on Janáček as ethnographer, see John Tyrrell, *Janáček: Years of a Life*, vol. 1 (London: Faber and Faber, 2006), 339–354.

[68] For a discussion of *verismo*'s impact in Prague, see Jan Smaczny, "Czech Composers and *verismo*," in *Janáček and Czech Music: Proceedings of the International Conference (Saint Louis, 1988)*, ed. Michael Beckerman and Glen Bauer (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1988), 33–44.

[69] In this it accords closely with the treatment of Gounod's opera *Mireille* in Parisian circles. See Katharine Ellis, "*Mireille*'s Homecoming? Gounod, Mistral, and the Midi," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 65, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 464. The treatment of Czechs as an "internal exotic" by the Viennese also bears more than a passing resemblance to treatment of Spaniards and Spanish music by Parisian audiences—yet another example of

Despite the specificity of self-consciously Czech elements of the production, German liberal attitudes in Vienna could modify interpretations of *The Bartered Bride* in significant ways. As Brodbeck points out, some critics saw heavy German influences in Smetana's opera, especially that of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. That Slavic seeds needed the soil of German culture to flourish fully was part and parcel of Viennese liberal thought, which assumed the universality and superiority of German culture in all things. One critic even went so far as to declare that Smetana had to have been suffused with a German spirit so that he could create *The Bartered Bride*.[70] In the more radical nationalist quarters of the German press, the opera's Czech specificity likewise found ready admirers, though it was precisely for its performed difference. As with the liberals, this was typically filtered through favorable comparisons with a German composer, but in this case, that composer was Richard Wagner. In distinction to Viennese liberals, who found in Smetana a way to glorify German culture, hardline German nationalists lauded Smetana for the Czech national purity of his conception—in a dark portent of things to come, this paragon of Czech opera, unlike the work of some German theatrical and operatic creators, was both full of Aryans and free from Jewish influences.[71]

This raises a difficult question about the concepts of race and ethnicity. Gary B. Cohen has argued that ethnicity is predicated on a shared sense of identity, markers of which may include "language, religion, traditional customs, shared history, or geographical origin."[72] In the context Prague's German minority and the Habsburg Empire, language tended to be the primary

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the mutual constitution of Self and Other internal to Europe. See Samuel Llano, *Whose Spain?: Negotiating "Spanish Music" in Paris, 1908–1929* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), xv–xxii.

[70] See Brodbeck, "'Ausgleichs-Abende,'" 50.

[71] See Brodbeck, *Defining Deutschtum*, 273.

[72] See Gary B. Cohen, *The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague, 1861–1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 12.

way of defining membership with a specific ethnic unit. Conflicts over language, however, tended to stand in for larger conflicts related to power and political status. Notwithstanding these very real struggles and their consequences within the Habsburg context, considering the degree to which Czech musicians and composers had to fight against historicist conceptions of their backwardness and for the inclusion of their music into the European canon, they suffered nowhere near as much, at this point in history, as did the subjects of British and French overseas colonial projects.[73] To put it bluntly, as Europeans, both Germans and Czechs, even if conceptualized along such racial lines as Teutons and Slavs, were still considered much closer on the racial hierarchy of whiteness than were South Asians or West Africans.[74] Bringing Czechs into the Habsburg imperial family fold, as several critics during the 1892 festival attempted to do, was significantly easier when difference was conceptualized along the relatively less contentious lines of linguistic ethnicity rather than "biological" race.

Regardless of the virulence of approach, and irrespective of the degree to which either conceptions of ethnic difference or more insidious ideas of biological race (or even a conflation of the two) informed Viennese reception of Smetana, such discourse deployed an important rhetorical strategy of imperial domination: mimicry. For Homi Bhabha, colonial mimicry "is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference this is almost the same, but not quite*… in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its

[73] See discussion of Chakrabarthy above, and in Chapter 1.

[74] See Cohen, *The Politics of Ethnic Survival*, 12–14. For a discussion of historicity, music, and race, see Olivia Bloechl and Melanie Lowe, "Introduction: Rethinking Difference," in *Rethinking Difference in Music Scholarship*, eds. Olivia Bloechl, Melanie Lowe, and Jeffrey Kallberg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 1–52, 10–12. For an outside perspective on the dynamics of the Austro-Hungarian Empire along lines of Western European racial thought, albeit from a slightly later period than the one under discussion here, see Glenda Sluga, *The Nation, Psychology, and International Politics* (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2006), 26–28. A discussion of ethnicity, nationalism, and their relationship to Austrian imperial politics can be found in Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, 269–275.

difference."[75] Mimicry is determined by the holder of power, and Viennese commentators saw in Smetana a composer who mimicked German standards very closely but would never quite measure up. Discourses of mimicry took into account not only Smetana's biographical credentials as a follower of Liszt and the New German School, but also his musical language. Many reviewers made comparisons between specific musical numbers and German composers; Paumgartner's review of the first night's performance, discussed earlier, stated that Mařenka's Act III aria "Ten lásky sen" almost reminded him of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*.[76] This was high praise, and helped to position Smetana's musical value.

Albert Kaunders, critic for the *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, took this one step further. He linked Smetana to the heart of the German tradition through counterpoint, pointing to the fugue that occupies a significant portion of the overture to the opera. In was through such musical gestures as fugues and arias that Smetana was infinitely closer to the spirit of German music than to "whatever other foreign artistic feeling."[77] Kaunders had a specific foreign context in mind: "Russian music is the child of a completely different spirit from [the mother of] Smetana's art. These heterogeneous productions cannot be brought under the same roof unless by force. German spirit and rancid Russian liquor!"[78] The hierarchy of musical value was clear here and mapped onto the sliding scale of Western culture versus Eastern otherness. German music was of course paramount; Smetana, and by extension Czech music, was a close second; and Russian music, as stand-in for all things Eastern and overly Slavic, fell to a distant third place.

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[75] See Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 122. Italics in the original. I discuss the concepts of Bhabha and how they relate to the imperial discourses of the Habsburgs in more detail in Chapter 1.

[76] See Šubert, *České národní divadlo*, 19.

[77] "A proto stojí jeho umění německému uměleckému citu daleko blíže nežli kterékoli cizozemské…" Quoted in Šubert, *České národní divadlo*, 24.

[78] Quoted and translated in Brodbeck, *Defining Deutschtum*, 272.

Two further points emerge here: one, this was a useful rhetorical strategy for celebrating Austro-Hungarian musical culture writ large, as Smetana, who was practically a German anyway in the eyes of critics, could be claimed as a product of the Habsburg state. This accorded with Habsburg self-fashioning as a civilizing influence in Central Europe and bearer of culture to the East. A second broader point is also significant: such discourse was in keeping with nineteenth-century European theories of music and race, where there was a "direct relationship of cause and effect between race and musical product."[79] Operas and fugues were indicators of Western art music, and therefore could be used to justify Smetana's inclusion near the top of the ladder of racial and cultural superiority, despite his ethnic difference from the Germans.

Finally, Theodor Helm, correspondent for the German nationalist paper *Deutsche Zeitung*, exemplified mimicry's hierarchizing potential in his review of *The Bartered Bride*:

> How characteristic and interesting is [Smetana's] handling of the orchestra, how blissful his choruses! Despite this, the composer, although he is a Slav through and through, perhaps does not refuse German music; to the contrary, one can quite clearly observe that he studied with its classic representatives, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Schumann, with charming Lortzing and the great Richard… [*The Bartered Bride*] is a number opera in the old style; [Smetana] connects its individual parts with recitative, nor does he exclude coloratura on principle. In opposition to this general view of opera he revealed himself to be a friend and disciple of Wagner's Muse all the more in the details.[80]

As David Brodbeck points out in his analysis of this same feuilleton, linking Smetana to the established canon of German music was by now a recurring gesture.[81] Ultimately, however,

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[79] See Fauser, *Musical Encounters*, 150.

[80] "Jak charakteristické a interesantní jest vedení orchestru, jak blahozvuký sbor hlasů! Při tom neodmítá snad skladatel, ačkoliv jest Slovanem skrz na skrz, hudbu německou, naopak lze zcela zřetelně pozorovati, že konal studie u klassických zástupců jejích Mozarta, Beethovena, Mendelssohna a Schumanna u roztomilého Lortzinga a velkého Richarda… on napsal spíše operu s čísly ve starším slohu, spojuje jednotlivé části její recitativy, nevylučuje zásadně ani koloraturu. Naproti tomuto všeobecnému vzhledu opery prozrazuje se však přítel a ctitel Wagnerovy Musy tím více v jednotlivostech." Quoted in Šubert, *České národní divadlo*, 54.

[81] For more on Helm, his political allegiances, and the Viennese critical establishment at this time, see Brodbeck, *Defining Deutschtum*, 143–289.

because Smetana did not fully embrace Wagnerian music drama in *The Bartered Bride*, Helm claimed that the Czech composer could not ever truly be on the same level as the Germans. Yet comparisons with "the great Richard" were nevertheless significant, even if Smetana failed to follow his example in every detail. In the context of late nineteenth-century expressions of Wagnerism, comparisons to Wagner indicated that Smetana was successfully expressing the Czech national soul. Wagner was widely lauded as having given Germans a means to express a particular view of national identity, especially through works like the *Ring* and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.[82] *The Bartered Bride*, in drawing on the myth of the Czech village, likewise provided a means of expressing and exporting Czech identity. Affinity with Wagner thus ultimately reaffirmed and strengthened the village mode as a way of interpreting Smetana and *The Bartered Bride*.

"Coming into Fashion": Czech Reactions to the National Theater Performances

Meanwhile in Prague, Czech discourse surrounding the Vienna visit took on a somewhat different character. It was still overwhelmingly positive—an article in *Národní politika* deftly summed up the mood at the close of the exhibition in a front-page editorial: "The successes of the National Theater in Vienna, wondrous beyond all expectation, shows that the time of miracles is indeed not yet past."[83] Few articles commented on the specifics of the production, perhaps in part because critics had already seen it during its pre-Vienna run at the National Theater. Periodicals also devoted large amounts of space to reprinting the rave reviews of

[82] See Stephen McClatchie, "Performing German in Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Wagner*, ed. Thomas S. Grey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 134–150.

[83] "Přeskvělé úspěchy Národního divadla ve Vídni dojakují, že doby zázraků tak dokonce přece ještě neminuly." "Triumfy českého umění ve Vídni," *Národní politika*, 8 June 1892, 1.

Viennese newspapers, indicating how positively Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* was viewed. The editors of *Česká Thalia*, for instance, devoted forty-six pages across five different issues of their bi-monthly magazine, extending from June to December, to the coverage of the Vienna exhibition. Their final installment revealed an important thread in the Czech reception of Vienna. The editors began by the notion of Smetana as the alpha and omega of all Czech music: "We all know that without Smetana Czech music would not exist, in the same way that really, from the whole of Czech dramatic music, there still exists only—Smetana alone."[84]

More importantly, however, this editorial put forward the notion that solely Smetana's national genius was responsible for artistic victory. This in turn had important consequences for the perception of the character of Smetana's music, and, because of the composer's stature, the character of Czech music generally. As the unsigned passage put it,

> Thus in the first place we will have to remember that it was Smetana and his works alone that achieved victory on the exhibition stage. One must not be permitted to generalize in any way. In the glorification of Smetana's genius the other composers disappeared almost completely in the semi-darkness of their cosmopolitan art. Along with Smetana, the national standpoint also gained a victory, which people here in Bohemia always want to cover up somehow. By downplaying the national angle, those who do not have artistic spirits sufficient to create independent, original works penetrated by national breath would not end up at home in the position where they belong—nicely in the corner.[85]

Nationalist specificity, as embodied by Smetana's operas—rhetoric emblematic of the village mode—is celebrated here in opposition to a cosmopolitan compositional style. The text is almost chauvinist in its foregrounding of the importance of nationalist music, and the author all but certainly had Dvořák in mind when he consigned non-nationalist cosmopolitans to a dusty

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[84] "To víme všichni, že bez Smetany by české hudby nebylo, jako vlastně z celé české dramatické hudby existuje pořád jenom—jediný Smetana." "Národní divadlo ve Vídni," *Česká Thalia* 6, no. 35 (10 December 1892): 393.

[85] "Předně tedy budou si musiti zapamatovati, že to byl jedině Smetana a jeho díla, která slavila vítězství na vídenské výstavě. Nesmí se nijak generalisovati. Neboť ostatní skladatelé ve slávě Smetanova genia zanikli skoro úplně v polotemnu svého kosmopolitického umění. Se Smetanou zvítězilo stanovisko národní a to neustále chce se u nás nějak zatušovati, aby ti, kteří nemají tolik umělecké duše, aby vytvořili samostatné, původní, národním dechem proniknuté dílo, nebyli také doma postavení tam, kam patří — hezky do koutka." "Národní divadlo ve Vídni," 392.

corner. Because the National Theater decided to repeat *The Bartered Bride* and *Dalibor* instead of performing Bendl and Šebor's works, Dvořák's *Dimitrij* was the only other opera the Czechs presented in Vienna.[86]

The stark terms of this review may have had something to do with its distance from the event itself—it was published in December 1892, likely long after positive feelings towards imperial acceptance had faded. Sentiments similar in content, if not tone, were also published in June. Multiple periodicals, including *Národní listy* and *Dalibor*, reported on a banquet in celebration of the victory in Vienna. Hosted by the music division of the Umělecká beseda (Artistic Union), it was attended by such important civic and cultural figures as Prague's mayor Jindřich Šolc, Smetana's son-in-law Josef Schwarz, and musicologist Otakar Hostinský. The latter delineated the post-Vienna terms of engagement with the composer quite clearly. For him, *The Bartered Bride* was nothing less than "the wellspring of our national art," a role that had been confirmed by the European audience encountered in Vienna. He meditated for some time on the necessity of artistic progress for a modern nation and the ways in which Smetana had helped achieve it. Finally, at the end of his speech, he thundered, "Whose work is the whole flowering of our music? Whose work is this fresh excitement and that self-confident strength within it, this modern progressive spirit that governs our art and won us such wonderful recognition in these last few days? It is Smetana's work! And so the victory of Czech music in Vienna is first and foremost by a wide margin Smetana's victory."[87] The reception thread

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[86] The National Theater had also performed Fibich's melodrama *Námluvy Pelopovy*, which, while not an opera, was still dramatic music. Fibich was at this point a rather lesser known quantity than Dvořák, however, who had enjoyed the vocal support of influential Viennese critics for some time. For more on Zdeněk Fibich, see Jaroslav Jiránek, *Zdeněk Fibich* (Prague: Státní hudební vydavatelství, 1963); Vladimír Hudec, *Zdeněk Fibich* (Prague: Státní pedagogické vydavatelství, 1971); and Jiří Kopecký, *Opery Zdeňka Fibicha z devadesátých let 19. století* (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2008).

[87] "Čí dílo je celý onen rozkvět naší hudby, čí dílo je ten svěží ruch a ta sebevědomá tvůrčí síla v něm, ten moderní pokrokový duch, který ovládá naše umění a jenž dobyl nám tak skvělého uznání v dnech právě minulých? Je to dílo

exemplified by the *Česká Thalia* editorial and Hostinský's speech, more than any other, shows the extent to which *The Bartered Bride* and Smetana were now, as a result of the events in Vienna, firmly bound up with an exclusionary, ethnolinguistic conception of Czech identity. This particular formulation of Czechness rejected cosmopolitanism in favor of nationalist particularity. At the same time, such rhetoric resisted Austrian appeals to a multiethnic though unified state, projected through the cosmopolitan musical profile of its capital city.

Despite the somewhat virulent tenor of these voices, cosmopolitan approbation of *The Bartered Bride* was evident in other quarters of the Czech press, much as it was in the German press. As with discourse prior to the Vienna performances, critical voices in the wake of *The Bartered Bride*'s triumph raised the issue of foreign nations and what they might think of Czech music. In the wake of *Dmitrij*'s colder reception, *Národní listy* thought *The Bartered Bride* admirably suited to be a representative for Czech music abroad, and even showed its support for repeating that opera at the expense of other offerings:

> It is certain that the first evening was the most celebratory evening. *The Bartered Bride* is in every respect the most perfect work that we can theatrically present to foreign nations at the moment, and the first evening will also definitely be the pinnacle of the exhibition's Czech production… If we stick with the program as it was conceived in Prague, we may meet with a sad end after joyful beginnings.[88]

The feelings expressed in this passage may well have been circulating in Vienna, and it is possible this editorial, published the morning of 4 June 1892, played a role in accelerating the decision to perform *The Bartered Bride* that evening instead of the scheduled offering, which

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Smetanovo! A tak vítězství české hudby ve Vídni jest v první řadě a na celé čáře vítězstvím Smetanovým." Otakar Hostinský, quoted in "Slavnostní banket na oslavu vítězství české hudby ve Vidni," *Dalibor* 11, no. 32 (2 July 1892): 251.

[88] "Jisto je, že první večer byl nejslavnější večer. 'Prodaná nevěsta' v každém ohledu je to nejdokonalejší, co divadelně prozatím můžeme cizině presentovat a první večer bude rozhodně zároveň vrcholem výstavní české produkce… Zůstane-li při programu v Praze určeném, dočkáme se asi po radostných začátcích smutného konce." "Dramatické umění," *Národní listy*, 4 June 1892, 4.

would have been Tchaikovsky's *Evgeny Onegin*.[89] The opera had celebrated a huge success with Prague audiences in its production at the National Theater in 1888, and was virtually unknown to Viennese audiences. However, what might have been a nod to pan-Slavic sympathies was dropped in favor of purely Czech particularity.[90] In his official history, Šubert stated that "the most emphatic wishes" to repeat *The Bartered Bride* came in "from all sides."[91] The triumph of Smetana's village tale was already determining the international profile of Czech opera, scarcely three days after its Vienna premiere.

Multiple commentators characterized the success at the exhibition as the means by which Czech art in general, and *The Bartered Bride* in particular, could reach an international audience. For example, an unsigned column in *Národní listy*, celebrating both *The Bartered Bride* and *Dalibor*'s successes, commented that "a path out to the world is opened for both of Smetana's operas, and we look forward to this for the glory of the nation and for the honor of our departed

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[89] Philip Ther summarizes the progress and impact of National Theater visit to the International Exhibition of Music and Theater in his book *Center Stage*, but incorrectly states that *Evgeny Onegin* was played on the fourth night of the Czech residency. Evidently he was working from a draft of the original program contained in the minutes of the National Theater Association executive committee, which was later abandoned after the runaway success of *The Bartered Bride*. See Ther, *Center Stage*, 170–173.

[90] An overview of pan-Slavic attitudes of the later nineteenth century, especially those of Russia and the Czech lands, is given in Mary Helena Kalil, "Reports from Offstage: Representations of Slavic History in Russian and Czech Opera," PhD diss., Princeton University, 2002, 1–20.

[91] "Se všech stran bylo pronášeno nejdůtklivější přání, aby byla opakována 'Prodaná nevěsta'…" Šubert notes that Karel Bendl's *Lejla* would have been performed the evening of the third *Bartered Bride* performance (6 June 1892). However, the National Theater's star tenor and buffo bass—Karel Veselý and Vilém Heš, respectively—were both indisposed, and replacements could only be brought in for *The Bartered Bride*. Of course, the work's overwhelming popularity in Vienna probably made this decision easier. Finally, Šubert also stated that the repeat performance of *Dalibor* bumped Šebor from the schedule.

What Šubert does not make public is that he had wanted, from at least the beginning of May 1892, to simplify the proposed repertoire for Vienna, as the logistical requirements for bringing nine separate productions to Vienna were immense. He was overruled by members of the National Theater Association executive committee, who at that particular meeting cited the higher cost of exhibition tickets as a way of offsetting the expense of presenting such a varied program. Their determination that no work would be repeated in Vienna was ultimately superseded by the enthusiasm for Smetana's operas, especially *The Bartered Bride*, as well as Šubert's desire to capitalize on it. See Šubert, *České národní divadlo*, 73, 139, and 175 and minutes from 6 May 1892, *Protokoly Správního výboru Družstva Národního divadla*, sig. D50, fond ND, National Archive, Prague.

master…"[92] At the celebratory banquet in Prague, the Czech critic and composer Emanuel Chvála toasted the Viennese critics, stating that the "Viennese critics announced the glory of Czech art to the entire world, they freed for it a route out to the world."[93] Indeed, this aspect of the reception would become deeply ingrained into the history of *The Bartered Bride* in particular, such that Vienna would still be celebrated over thirty years later as the point of departure for the opera's journey around the stages of the world.[94]

Vienna's role in disseminating knowledge of Czech music to the rest of the world also had important implications for imperial politics. Czech critics showed considerable finesse in differentiating among various constituencies of the larger imperial context—for example, the imperial political system did not determine, in their reading, the response of imperial audiences in Vienna. The following extended passage not only exemplifies this fine-tuned political awareness, but also illuminates the potential benefits of the Czech success in Vienna:

> We are standing in the fire, and it really is beginning to spread quickly. Is it not a betrayal to want, in this moment, to fraternize with enemies standing in the wings? The answer is easy; we are standing on the battlefield arrayed against a ruling system. We stood against Vienna insofar as she represented this system, never against Vienna and her population, which today was perhaps badly informed about us and tomorrow could admit us into its sympathy. Perhaps up until now the average Viennese citizen had added to the ranks of our enemies. But to get someone from the ranks of our opponents on our side, does that not signify an enemy's defeat? And it almost seems that our art and our music has succeeded in getting us the sympathies of the Viennese.
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> The average Viennese was never truly against us. He is a metropolitan citizen, carefree but good-natured. He himself is glad in the world, and he also wishes all the best for his

[92] "Ale oběma operám Smetanovým otevřena je cesta do světa a tomu těšíme se pro slávu národa, pro čest zesnulého mistra…" "Pohostinské hry Národního divadla na mezinárodní hudební a divadelní výstavě," *Národní listy*, 7 June 1892, 5.

[93] "Kritika videňská hlásala slávu českého umění do celého světa, otevřela mu dráhu do světa." "Slavnostní banket na oslavu vítězství české hudby ve Vidni," 251.

[94] For example, in an article reporting on a 1924 performance of *The Bartered Bride* in Barcelona, an anonymous author stated that the opera had "thirty years ago victoriously taken off toward the world after the Viennese theatrical exhibition." "'Prodaná nevěsta,' která už před třiceti lety vítězně se rozletěla po vídeňské divadelní výstavě do světa…" Nč., "Různé zprávy. Česká vesnice ve Španělsku," *Venkov*, 15 February 1924, 3.

> neighbor. That he cracked jokes and ranted about Czechs was only from habit. It was in fashion; it hung in the Viennese air. Poetic legends always forestall scientific truth, and the legend told about Czechs was that they are an uneducated, inward-looking nation, harmful and savage… A Prague German newspaper only spoke the truth when it mockingly quipped that now at last Czechs are coming into fashion in Vienna. And here we have arrived at the political significance of the expedition to Vienna.
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> It is perhaps not the case that Count Taaffe would bow down tomorrow because of excellent music, in which our fellow countrymen so proved themselves, or bend because our actors, decked in Greek attire, also led hands to applaud. We nevertheless gained an advocate in the public opinion of the audience, and in that we can find support. It is widely acknowledged that literature and art are found in Bohemia at a certain stage. Literature and art have their own close connection with the rest of national life. It is widely acknowledged that a nation, unobserved and unappreciated, works its way up to that stage where all patronizing stops and where, without opposition, the human right of self-determination belongs to it. Czech art put forth proof of this in the eyes of its Viennese audience. The Viennese audience applauded, and, given how close the connection is between all human affairs, that applause has for us a promising, political sound.[95]

Rarely has hope for the political potential of art been stated in such unequivocal terms. There are echoes here of Chakrabarthy's notion of historicist time and the "waiting room of history."[96] In this logic, imperial rulers could argue that they were right to rule over a subject population

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[95] "Stojíme v ohni a právě to začínalo chodit zostra. Není zradou, v takové chvíli chtít se na některém krídle bratřičkovat s odpůrci? Odpověď je snadna, stojíme v poli proti panujícímu systému. Stáli jsme proti Vídni, pokud ten systém představovala, nikdy proti Vídni a jejímu obyvatelstvu, které snad dnes bylo o nás špatně poučeno a zejtra nás mohlo pojmouti do svých sympatií. Snad dosud rozmnožoval Vídeňák řadu našich odpůrců. Ale dostati z řady odpůrců někoho na svou stranu, neznamená to, způsobit nepřiteli porážku? A skoro se zdá, že se našemu umění, naší hudbě podařilo získati nám sympatie Vídeňáků.

Vídeňák nikdy nebyl do opravdy proti nám. Je velkoměstský občan, bezstarostný, ale dobromyslný. Sám je rád na světě a přeje také sousedu všecko dobré. Že vtipkoval a hartusil na Čechy, bylo jen ze zvyku. Bylo to v módě, viselo to ve vídenském vzduchu. Vědeckou pravdu vždy předchází básnická legenda a o Češích pravila legenda, že jsou nevzdělaný, soběhrabý národ, škůdný a divošský…Vyslovil jen pravdu ten německý pražský list, který si posměšně zavtipkoval, že teď naposled Čechové přijdou ve Vídni do módy. A tu jsme u politického významu výpravy.

Ne snad, že by pan hrabě Taaffe zejtra v politice zahnul k vůli výborné hudbě, ve které se našinci tak osvědčili, anebo proto, že naši herci také už dovedou v řeckém plášti ruce zvedat. Ale přimluvčího jsem získali v širokém minění obecenstva a v tom je posila. Uznalo se, že literatura i umění nalezají se u nás na jistém stupni. Literatura i umění mají svou těsnou souvislost s ostatním životem národním. Uznalo se, že národ neuznán a neopozorován vyšvihl se už na onen stupeň, kde přestává všecko poručnikování a kde mu bez odporu náleží lidské právo sebeurčovací. Ten důkaz na očích videnského obecenstva provedlo české umění. Vídenské obecenstvo tleskalo a jaká je těsná souvislost všech lidských věci, ten potlesk má pro nás slibný, politický zvuk." Š—, "Feuilleton," *Národní listy*, 9 June 1892, 1.

[96] See Chakrabarthy, *Provincializing Europe*, 7.

because that group was not yet developed enough by the standards of European political history. By distinguishing between imperial power structures and Viennese public opinion, rather than lumping together all the Viennese as othered enemies, the anonymous feuilletonist could express the hope that the high level of Czech art's development—confirmed by a previously antagonistic third party, the Viennese audience—qualified the Czech nation for self-determination. However, this victory hardly subverted the logics of imperialism, in that historicism was functioning exactly as intended in the above passage. The Czechs, having made their argument in part through Smetana's operas, now would have to wait for the Viennese voluntarily to grant them further rights, which, of course, they did not do.

This rhetorical appeal to historicism, functioning within imperialist frameworks, matches the political and geographical situation at this moment: Czechs sought greater freedoms, while still remaining loyal to the larger Austrian state. Evidence of this can be found in Director Šubert's speech after the final performance of *The Bartered Bride* on the exhibition stage in Vienna. He concluded his address with the following words (in German, as pointed out by *Národní listy*): "In this case art once again proved that it rises above all antagonisms, that it brings together peoples and unites them. Would that God would grant, that this rapprochement and unification would over time also occur in other areas of our public life for the good of the peoples and the empire and to the joy of our beloved emperor and king!"[97] Šubert, evidently an

[97] "Umění v tomto připadě opět jednou dokázalo, že je povznešeno nade všechny protivy, že národy sbližuje a je sjednocuje. Kež by Bůh dál, aby sblížení a sjednocení časem dostavilo se také v jiných oborech našeho veřejného života ku blahu národův a říše a k radosti našeho mileného císaře a krále." "Dramatické umění," *Národní listy*, 9 June 1892, 4.

The *Wiener Zeitung* quoted Šubert's speech as well: "Die Kunst hat in diesem Falle wieder einmal bewiesen, daß sie hoch über allen Gegensätzen einherschreitet, daß sie die Völker einander nähert, daß sie einigt. Möge nur Gott geben, daß eine Annäherung und Einigung mit der Zeit auch auf anderen Gebieten unseres öffentlichen Lebens zu Stande komme — zum Wohle der Völker und des Reiches und zur Freude unseres geliebten Kaisers und Königs." "Theater und Musik-Ausstellung," *Wiener Zeitung*, 9 June 1892, 5.

effective diplomat as well as a successful theater administrator, chose his words carefully. His German speech uses the word "Völker," which translates fairly unambiguously to "peoples." However, Czech newspapers like *Národní listy* translated this word as "národy," which can mean "peoples," but also means "nations." This is consistent with the widely held nineteenth-century view of nation as arising from an ethnically and linguistically bounded "people."[98] Additionally, this linguistic slippage reflected the growing desire, encapsulated by the Young Czech electoral victories of 1891, to maintain a territorial integrity in the Czech lands that matched its imagined ethnic integrity.

Even if expliticly political matters remained somewhat tense, artistic divisions seemed to have been healed through opera, and Prague newspapers had very definite ideas about who was responsible for prior Viennese artistic antagonism. In this they again displayed a capacity for making distinctions that defied a one-dimensional view of Czech versus German ethnic conflict along the axis of Prague and Vienna. The writer for *Národní politika*, who had lauded the Czech residency and its successes as a "time of miracles," laid the fault squarely at the feet of Prague's German population. Singling out the German-language newspapers *Montagsrevue* and *Bohemia* for painting an unfair picture of Czech culture for their Viennese linguistic fellows, the critic stated that they had created "an opaque and impenetrable wall between, on the one hand, those Viennese classes that nobly demonstrated over the course of a week that they have sufficient receptivity for Czech art, and on the other hand, that art and all the cultural efforts of the Czech nation. The most major consequences of the glorious days of the National Theater in Vienna," he continued, "would be that that this wall fell and that no one will rebuild it."[99] Cosmopolitanism

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[98] See Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, 34–35.

[99] "Ti tvořili tu neprohlednou a neprodyšnou zeď mezi oněmi vídeňskými vrstvami, kteréž ušlechtile prokázaly v týdnu, který se zítřkem zabývá, že mají dosti vnímavosti pro české umění, a mezi tímto uměním a veškerým

and imperial cooperation are highly valued in this passage, but it nevertheless comes at the expense of an Other—here, Prague Germans. Such a binary view was very much in keeping with Czech nationalist thinking of the later nineteenth century, even if the binary was ensconced within a more multipolar context. Thought along these lines held that ever since the defeat of the Czech armies at the hands of the German Habsburgs at the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620, ethnic Germans were responsible for the suppression and impoverishment of the Czech people.[100] In the aftermath of Vienna, the blame for Czech ills once again fell on a group of Germans, but this time it was the Prague Germans rather than the Habsburgs or Germans as an undifferentiated ethnic whole.

Other periodicals echoed this sentiment; *Národní listy* agreed that the "main source of the mistakes into which Viennese politics has fallen—are our dear compatriots of German nationality and their journalism."[101] In the face of Viennese support for Czech art, especially Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* the overarching stereotype of all Germans as foreign oppressors momentarily broke down. This only worked, however, because of the distinctions made between different groups of Germans and their respective political contexts. The provincial/metropolitan axis was evidently much more complicated than later commentators would have it; at the same

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kulturním snažením národa českého. Že ta zeď padla a že ji nikdo nepostaví, to by byla tím nejhlavnějším důsledkem slavných dnů Národního divadla ve Vídni." "Triumfy českého umění ve Vídni," 1.

[100] Nineteenth-century Czech nationalists tended to reinterpret conflicts between Bohemian nobles and German kings or Bohemian Hussites and German Catholics as exclusively ethnic Czech versus German conflicts. This went against the older medieval understandings of Bohemian identity as deriving from territorial, not linguistic, attachment. For more on the history of Czechs and Germans and the changing definitions of group identity in the Czech lands, see Chapter 1, as well as Lonnie R. Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 85.

[101] "…hlavním pramenem chyb, do nichž politika vídeňská upadla — jsou naši milí krajané národnosti německé a jejich žurnalistika." "'Pressino' kázáníčko," *Národní listy*, 10 June 1892, 1.

time, casting a light on this act of Czech artistic self-representation makes clear how appeals for nationalist differentiation needed not necessarily involve explicitly political independence.

The contrasting if complementary reception of the Czech exhibition performances, arrayed along imperial lines, when placed alongside the village-mode insistence on *The Bartered Bride* as representative of Czech quintessence, serves to confirm the great importance of the event for the characterization of Czech music both domestically and internationally in the years to come. As I have argued in Chapter 1, Judith Butler's conception of citationality as performativity need not only be applied to questions of gendered and sexual legibility. Normative categories necessarily involve a realm of the abject, against which the acceptable is defined by the constant citation of behavioral and cultural norms. Prior to the National Theater performances, Czech music in Vienna was, at least according to the author for *Světozor*, most legibly and normatively represented by "those musicians who, according to the new staging [of *The Bartered Bride* in Vienna], stumbled out of the bowels of the pub onto the village common at the end of the first act to strike up the villagers to dance."[102] This caricature of "Falstaffian troops," the stereotype of the Bohemian *muzikant* occasionally derisively applied to Antonín Dvořák, had all the characteristics of Bhabha's stereotype of colonial discourse—an Other subject to both desire and derision, whose difference is a source of inferiority, but whose status as such must be constantly and anxiously reiterated.[103] This stereotype, moreover, was intimately

[102] "Dojista těmi muzikanty, kteří podle nového scenáře vyklopýtají se z útrob hospody na sklonku prvého aktu na náves, aby zahráli chase k tanci." P., "Na kolbišti mezinárodním," 358. Similar feelings were expressed in the 9 June 1892 feuilleton in *Národní listy*, cited above.

[103] "…pravé falstafské vojsko…" P., "Na kolbišti mezinárodním," 358. For more on Dvořák's entanglements with conceptions of nation, see Michael Beckerman, *New Worlds of Dvořák* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), 223–24, as well as Beckerman, "The Master's Little Joke: Antonín Dvořák and the Mask of Nation," in *Dvořák and his World*, ed. Michael Beckerman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 134–156. For a discussion of Bhabha's conception of the stereotype, see Chapter 1.

and inextricably linked to the image of the rural village. It provided the norm against which all Czech music would be measured, defining both the legible and the abject.

This is why it was *The Bartered Bride*, rather than *Dalibor* or *Dimitrij*, that brought such victory to the Czechs—it played on ideas of Czech music already circulating in Vienna, and at the same time as it reinscribed this stereotype as true, it simultaneously pushed the boundaries of what that stereotype could encompass. As the writer at *Světozor* noted, the attention of the Viennese was now directed at the orchestra, the conductor, and the singers who brought Smetana's operas to life. Czech music could now be more than simple village fiddlers; it contained operas that rivaled those regularly heard in Vienna. *Dalibor* and *Dimitrij* were too far outside Viennese understandings of the capabilities of Czech music going into the exhibition; they became more legible only once the norms of Czech music had been widened. While Dvořák's fame as a symphonist was already well-established in Vienna, his opera failed to make much of an impact during the exhibition, and he remained subject to these same stereotypes. Going forward, Czech opera would be filtered in large part through the success of Smetana, and especially *The Bartered Bride*, centering the Czech village and its inhabitants as the frame through which Czech opera would be legible beyond the stages of Prague. The village mode had triumphed in Vienna, and later works, whether *Rusalka* or *Jenůfa*, had to contend with this new epistemic horizon.

Moreover, the sudden recognition and elevation of Czech musical life, metonymized through the National Theater's opera performances, played right into the discourses of empire's audible regime. These discourses valorized the "naturalness" of tonality and the inherent superiority of complex metropolitan musical practices such as opera over the kinds of less "developed" musical practices like those of village musicians (to say nothing of the "noise" of

overseas colonial realms).[104] By succeeding within the constraints of imperial hierarchy, paradoxically, Czech opera reinforced their validity. In showing that this could be done, moreover, the National Theater company would provide inspiration to other musicians and musical observers within Europe, who would ultimately reinforce these same discourses while simultaneously attempting, in resistance to imperial pressures, to prove their own artistic and political individuality.

"This the Czechs Can Teach Us": National Lenses on Transnational Opera

The Viennese had welcomed their imperial compatriots while making a show of warmly accepting their Czech otherness. Other commentators, representing publications from both independent nation states and other provinces of the Habsburg lands, were no less enthusiastic about Smetana and *The Bartered Bride*. Director Šubert included a variety of responses from different places in his official history; responses there and elsewhere indicated a very suggestive split in terms of the reception of the Czech triumph in Vienna, one drawn along imperial lines.

In nation states with stable borders and powerful governments, the press treated the exhibition in Vienna as an event of mild interest. British papers made very little mention of the exhibition up until the arrival of their delegation towards the event's close. Aside from articles covering the opening ceremonies, only a few papers mentioned the Czech contribution, and only one short article, published in *The Times*, mentioned the excitement over the performances.[105]

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[104] See Ronald Radano and Tejumola Olaniyan, "Introduction," in *Audible Empire: Music, Global Politics, Critique*, eds. Ronald Radano and Tejumola Olaniyan (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 1–22, 7–8, as well as Fauser, *Musical Encounters*, 216–278.

[105] The London-based *Standard* published a short paragraph on 3 June noting that the Czech performances had begun, and the Scottish *Evening Telegraph* published a small note incorrectly alleging that Dvořák's *Dimitrij* had been performed for the first time in Vienna. See "Austria," *The Standard*, 3 June 1892, 5, and "New Opera by Dvorak," *The Evening Telegraph*, 4 June 1892, 4.

"According to universal opinion," the unnamed correspondent stated, "[the Bohemian National opera] is excellent in every respect… perhaps the best in Austria. They have had a well-earned success in Vienna, and certainly deserve to be heard abroad… [it] has little to envy its Vienna rival."[106] The correspondent alluded to the unstable relationship between Prague and Vienna, but his primary focus was artistic quality and not political conflicts.

Parisian newspapers were far more interested in accounts of French performances at the exhibition, and while the Czech sojourn to the imperial capital was mentioned only in passing, French writers were acutely aware the political resonances of the larger exhibition. Walter Vogt, Viennese correspondent for *Le Figaro*, observed that emperor Franz Joseph had not come to see either the company from Berlin that opened the exhibition or the French group that had immediately preceded the one from Prague. "And if he had," Vogt continued,

> would he not be obliged to go and see the Czech actors, the Hungarians, the Poles, the Dutch, the Japanese, who knows what else? To political augurs it was well understood that this would be absolutely impossible; that the emperor, poor crowned dilettante, could not swallow all these more or less exotic literatures; that he would surely awaken all national sensitivities if he entered the theater of the Tower of Babel and did not come back every day.[107]

Vogt's commentary summed up the political importance of the Vienna exhibition in a somewhat backhanded way. The exhibition theater was an international stage, and the emperor's presence at a particular performance might be seen as a gesture of approval, while his absence at another performance could be read as disapproval. Franz Joseph's presence at the Czech performances, for example, would have been read as implicitly supporting their cause, and thus completely

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[106] "Austria-Hungary," *The Times*, 9 June 1892, 5.

[107] "Et s'il le faisait, ne serait'il pas obligé d'aller voir les acteurs tchèques, les hongrois, les polonais, les hollandais, les japonais, que sais-je? Pour les augures de la politique, il était bien entendu que cela était absolument impossible, que, pauvre dilettante couronné, l'Empereur ne pouvait pas avaler toutes ces littératures plus ou moins exotiques, qu'il éveillerait sûrement toutes les susceptibilités nationales s'il entrait dans ce théâtre de la tour de Babel et n'y revenait pas tous les jours." Walter Vogt, "Courrier de Vienne," *Le Figaro*, 5 June 1892, 4.

upending Austrian domestic political calculus. International concerns were also in play here. Had the emperor gone to see either the Berlin theater or one of the French performances, it would no doubt be seen as supporting a particular side in the ongoing tensions between Paris and Berlin over Alsace-Lorraine, which had been annexed by Germany following French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War.

Yet for regions and states with much less firm political and territorial footing, the success of the Czechs in Vienna held great promise. The transnational legibility of European opera refracted along imperial lines; groups like the Galician Poles and the Belgians saw in the triumph of *The Bartered Bride* and Czech art the possibility of more clearly and definitively articulating their own national causes through opera. The National Theater performances paradoxically functioned, in their claims to Czech national specificity, as a blank slate onto which other nationalists could project their own dreams of artistic autonomy. By following the Czech example and demonstrating a clear, artistically outstanding vision of national identity, these other groups could hope that political security might then follow. Yet in aspiring to the grandeur and cachet of opera, critics and musicians reinforced a cultural hierarchy closely aligned with the functioning of empire, whereby the justification for domination rested upon the uncontested assertion of being at a more advanced stage of cultural, political, and/or human development. Such assertions could take myriad forms, whether embodied by tonality, opera, literature, or parliamentary democracy.[108]

In contrast to the scanty coverage from unified nation-states like Britain and France, multiple newspapers from the capitals of the three partitions of Poland—the Austrian, Prussian, and Russian—sent correspondents to Vienna. Šubert included articles from each of these capitals

[108] See Ronald Radano and Tejumola Olaniyan, "Introduction," 7–8.

in his commemorative booklet. While there is little doubt the director's selection of writings was intended to paint a positive picture of the Czechs' reception, the wide variety and differing scope of the various reviews testifies to the fact that Šubert was not single-mindedly including only reviews with overtly political content. As the director of the Royal Bohemian Provincial and National Theater, Šubert was both a supporter and direct beneficiary of the imperial cultural ideological apparatus at a time when complete independence from Austria was not a goal of Czech politics. Nevertheless, writers from Lemberg/Lwów/Lviv and Warsaw, the capitals of Austrian and Russian Poland, respectively, noted the potential for national self-definition through artistic excellence demonstrated by the Czechs.[109]

The writer at the Lwów *Dziennik Polski* brought up the political situation between Prague and Vienna almost immediately in his review, noting that "perhaps no other nation will gain such a triumph [as did the Czechs], and, considering the political antagonism, it was quite a difficult triumph."[110] In an unusual twist, the author partially dismissed speculation in the German press that the Czech victory would have an influence on political relations between Czechs and Germans. Instead, Czech artistic success was indicative of a deeper, inexorable, even teleological process:

> Those are obvious fairy tales. The battle between Czechs and Germans is not waged over such trifles; inalienable sociological law directs and guides this battle, and indeed the newly documented productivity of the Czechs confirms—a thing I reverently believe—that in the end their side will be victorious. Last year's Jubilee Exposition was a triumph of Czech industry and Czech skill; the current guest performances a triumph of Czech art. When will our politicians and press realize that to join with the Czechs in Austria is to join with the future, and on the contrary, in joining with the Germans we give our hand to

[109] For more on cultural and artistic life in Poland at this time, especially as it related to opera, see Irena Poniatowska, *The History of Music in Poland*, vol. 5 "Romanticism Part 2A 1850–1900" (Warsaw: Sutkowski Edition Warsaw, 2011), 57–146.

[110] "Takového triumfu nedobude si na výstavě již snad žádný národ, a uvažte, že vzhledem k politickému antagonismu byl to triumf docela nesnadný." Quoted in Šubert, *České národní divadlo*, 140.

> the past? It is for us to learn from the Czechs how to win national existence through hard work, even under the most difficult conditions.[111]

While on the surface, this passage seems to downplay the excitement in Vienna, it ultimately strengthens the argument that the Czechs had, through their operatic triumph, become a model for the process of national self-definition. Whatever this writer thought of the deeper implications of "sociological law," it was only by recognizing and understanding artistic success as an indicator of national maturity that his argument could be made.

Other Polish writers wanted to put this new Czech model for artistic self-determination into practice. Osvald Obogi, correspondent for the Lwów *Gazetta Narodowa* was so impressed by the National Theater performances that he became concerned when he thought of Polish efforts to present their own art to the Germans: "It is certain that after the Czechs it will be a difficult situation, especially after they established what national music really means, and how it is necessary to cultivate it so that it is brought to such perfection. It is not easy to believe the strange opinion of the committee that to present Polish art means — to perform French opera — in French."[112]

This otherwise strange comment can be explained by what eventually happened to the Polish delegation from Lwów that presented its theatrical efforts at the Exhibition that September. The program under consideration for presentation in Vienna featured the Polish

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[111] "To jsou zřejmé báchory; boj mezi Čechy a Němci nevede se o ořechy, boj ten řídí a vedou nezadatelná práva sociologická, a právě na novo dokumentovaná dělnost Čechů potvrzuje—věc svatě věřím—že na jejich straně konečně bude vítězství. Výstava lonská byla triumfem české práce a české dovednosti, nynější pohostinské hry triumfem českého umění; kdy konečně seznají naši politikové a sezná náš tisk, že spojujíce se v Rakousku s Čechy, spojujeme se s budoucností, naopak však spojujíce se s Němci podáváme ruku minulosti? Od Čechů jest nám se učiti, jak se prací nabývá národního bytu a to i za nejkrušnějších podmínek." Quoted in Šubert, *České národní divadlo*, 141.

[112] "To jest jisté, že po Češích bude postavení obtížné, zvláště když dokázali, co znamená hudba národní, a jak jí třeba pěstovati, aby byla privedena k takové dokonalosti. Neuvěří se tak snadno divnému mínění komitétu, že představovati polské umění znamená — hráti francouzské opery — po francouzsku." Quoted in Šubert, *České národní divadlo*, 146.

composer Stanisław Moniuszko's operas *Halka* and *Straszny Dwór* (*The Haunted Manor*) and one act of a Polish vaudeville entitled *Krakowiacy i Górale* (*Krakowians and Highlanders*) with music by Jan Stefani. It also included Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* as the final performance and even excerpts from Verdi's *La Traviata* and Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*. Galician theater authorities in Lwów delayed their decision to send a delegation to Vienna until July, giving them no time to prepare new productions, and their star soprano Marcella Sembrich cancelled at the last minute. Thus the Polish delegation to the Exhibition was reduced to staging *The Haunted Manor* and a potpourri of other operatic excerpts, many of them not even Polish, over the course of four days. It was an unmitigated disaster in the eyes of the Viennese press.[113]

If Obogi's concerns would be borne out to tragic effect, the correspondent for the Warsaw *Echo muzyczne, teatralne i artystyczne*, located in Russian Poland, had more hope for domestic efforts in the wake to the Czech triumph. For him, their victory had brought to mind the hope that Moniuszko might eventually find international success. He lamented that "up to today, we have never seen to it that the name of our composer sounds beyond the borders of our lands. Today, when the de Reszke brothers vowed that they will sing the quartet from *The Haunted Manor* the world can be convinced that even our musical literature has things that do not remain in the shadow of the sextet from *The Bartered Bride*."[114] The sudden success of Smetana among the Viennese was now a call to action for other ethnic groups who likewise felt their national composers had been unjustly neglected by the arbiters of international operatic taste. The de Reszke brothers, internationally renowned operatic stars from Warsaw then engaged at both the

[113] See Ther, *Center Stage*, 119–120, and Poniatowska, *The History of Music in Poland*, 91.

[114] "Až do dnešního dne jsme se o to nikdy nestarali, aby jméno našeho skladatele znělo za zemskými hranicemi. Dnes, kdy bratří Reszkové přislíbili, že zapějí kvartetto ze "Strašného dvora" může se svět předsvědčiti, že i naše hudební literatura má věci, které nezůstávají za sextettem z "Prodané nevěsty." Quoted in Šubert, *České národní divadlo*, 143.

Metropolitan Opera and Covent Garden, would have proved formidable allies in any attempt to perform Moniuszko for a wider audience. Or so the Warsaw critic thought—the Lwów theater did indeed recruit the de Reszke brothers, but even their star power could not overcome Viennese demands for more legibly and self-consciously Polish theatrical performances.[115]

Critics in other Habsburg lands besides Poland likewise saw an example to be aspired to in the National Theater's victory in Vienna, especially through Smetana's operas. Having reported on the success of *The Bartered Bride* and *Dalibor*, an author for *Pesti Hirlap* asked "When Prague can give these two operas to such great success, why could the Royal Hungarian Opera, with all its strength, not also attain the same victory via these operas?"[116] This critic seems to have considered Smetana's operas the larger property of Austria-Hungary generally, and rather than use them as a means to advance the cause of Hungarian opera, he advocated using them to heighten the profile of the Hungarian theater itself. If this indicated the extent to which Hungary considered itself to be on a level similar to that of Lower Austria in the imperial hierarchy, a report from the Austrian Littoral town of Gorizia showed that Slovenian nationalists were on a similar page as the rest of the Dual Monarchy's Slavs.

The newspaper *Nova Soča* published a celebratory passage stating that "the successes of the Czechs must fill the hearts of every Czech, every Slav with pride. We wholeheartedly congratulate our Czech brothers on the great acclaim [bestowed upon them] by our national opponents…"[117] Whatever the nationalist stances of the various ethnic groups in the Habsburg

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[115] Ther, *Center Stage*, 119.

[116] "Když může Praha tyto dvě opery s tak velikým úspěchem dávati, proč by jimi nemohla také král. uherská opera se svými silami téhož úspěchu dosíci?" Quoted in Šubert, *České národní divadlo*, 158.

[117] "Úspěchy Čechů musejí hrdostí naplniti srdce každého Čecha, každého Slovana. Gratulujeme z plna srdce bratřím Čechům k tolikerému uznání od našich národních odpůrců…" Quoted in Šubert, *České národní divadlo*, 154.

lands, it is worth pointing out that nationalist rhetoric or a pan-Slavic attitude did not signify a *de facto* anti-imperial stance, even if national groups were frequently defined by their exclusion of Others. In fact, in the case of the Habsburg monarchy, nationalism and empire were frequently mutually constitutive, with nationalist rhetoric utilized and even encouraged in order to unite local identifications with imperial loyalty.[118]

Outside the confines of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, there were some nation-states for whom the Prague National Theater's victory resonated with their own struggles for national identity and cultural independence. A writer for the Brussels newspaper *L'Indépendance Belge* introduced his review of the Czech visit to Vienna by tying the *raison d'être* of the National Theater to the mythologized history of Czechs suffering under German oppression (see the Introduction). This conflict resonated with a Belgian sense of having been oppressed by its powerful neighbors, France and Germany. Having established solidarity through a narrative of subjection, he went on to laud Šubert for proving "that nationalist agitations could powerfully assist in the intellectual development of nations that until recently languished in an ignorance in which they were held by a class or race that arrogated to itself a superiority of, or even monopoly on, intelligence." The victory that the National Theater won, the author concluded, would be politically more effective than "one hundred speeches and two hundred motions in the

[118] See Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, 331–332. Examples of the union between nationalist or pan-Slavic ideas and Austrian state patriotism could be found in school textbooks. An 1889 Czech textbook devoted significant space to descriptions of the Slovene and Slovak areas of the Habsburg monarchy; its approach to historical narrative emphasized the medieval history of the Czech lands but segued into more "Habsburg" history precisely when controversial figures like Rudolf II or Jan Hus arose. An 1895 Slovenian primer even more explicitly linked pan-Slavic feeling and Habsburg togetherness. In describing the inhabitants of the Dual Monarchy, the authors listed the Slavs of the empire first, followed by the Germans and other groups. Primacy is given to the familial links between all Slavs, but cooperation is emphasized over particularity: "each person [works] for everyone, all [work] for each." See Ernst Bruckmüller, "Patriotic and National Myths: National Consciousness and Elementary School Education in Imperial Austria," in *The Limits of Loyalty: Imperial Symbolism, Popular Allegiances, and State Patriotism in the Late Habsburg Monarchy*, ed. Laurence Cole and Daniel L. Unowsky (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 11–35, 19–21.

Reichsrat."[119] Brussels featured an elite French ruling class with a large Flemish working class; musicians and intellectuals in that city, typically Francophone, saw in music a means of uplift and integration for their lower class neighbors.[120] Nationalist musical agitation could achieve that uplift, at least in the opinion of this critic, which would in turn lead to national harmony between opposing ethnolinguistic factions, uniting the historically contentious factions of Francophone Walloons and Flemish to create a more unified Belgium. To some extent this echoed post-Vienna hopes for reconciliation between Czechs and Germans in the local context of the Habsburg monarchy. Overall, the anonymous author of the article adapted the National Theater's display of national maturity and specificity to the quite different local conditions of nation building in Belgium.

Along similar lines, a report in the Copenhagen *Dagbladet* saw the Czech performances not only as evidence of Bohemian readiness to stand on the world's stages as musical and dramatic equals, but also as examples of how to elevate their own national causes through music. In a series of by now familiar rhetorical moves, the Copenhagen correspondent marveled that the Czechs had triumphed in Vienna against all odds and prejudices from their very first performance of *The Bartered Bride*; he further highlighted the fact that Viennese newspapers suggested the opera deserved to spread around the world; and he felt that the performances confirmed that the personnel of the Prague National Theater measured up against those of any world-class stage.

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[119] "…et il a prouvé que les agitations nationales pouvaient aider puissamment au développement intellectuel des peuples qui naguère croupissaient dans l'ignorance où les tenait une classe ou une race qui s'arrogeait la supériorité ou même le monopole de l'intelligence… le fait que vient d'entreprendre au Prater la troupe du théâtre tchèque sera plus efficace que cent discours et deux cents motions au Reichsrath." F. K. -A., "La Vie à Vienne," *L'indépendance Belge*, 14 June 1892, 2.

[120] For more on the interaction of class, language, and nation in the context of late nineteenth-century Belgium, see Catherine Hughes, "Branding Brussels Musically: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism in the Interwar Years," PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2015, 10–17.

However, it is the concluding paragraph of the Copenhagen critic's article that most clearly demonstrates how highly politicized the Czech operatic triumph in Vienna could become. This was especially true in a European context where questions of foreign domination and national belonging were transnationally legible in much the same way as opera:

> And alongside the artistic impression that one feels, perhaps one will also take home another, much more valuable feeling; namely the impression of what a nation can do when, in the full consciousness of its rights, it arises to the struggle for them. If we Danes look at what the Czechs, under adverse conditions, have delivered for the uplift of their nationality, we would have to trust that the affairs of our southerly Jutlandic brothers, who really are and will remain ours, will grow in strength, and that any talk of surrender will fall silent. Once a nation, even one that numbers but a few million, feels itself to be a nation and becomes firmly established, centuries of oppression by a foreign nationality will give way. This nation will not tolerate foreigners to conquer them or rule over the opposition by force. This the Czechs can teach us. Nowhere does this lesson appear more eloquently and influentially than precisely in the Czech National Theater.[121]

This passage thus equates the struggle for Czech self-determination, as understood through the National Theater's artistic triumph in its imperial capital, to the struggle of Danish nationalists in the territory of Schleswig-Holstein, which had been fully annexed to the German Reich after the Austro-Prussian war of 1866. As in so many other provinces, regions, and nations throughout Europe, this Danish critic was captivated by the idea that Czech patriots could mobilize opera and artistic excellence as means to resist foreign influence, perhaps leading to political independence.

[121] "A vedle uměleckého dojmu, který pocítí, snad si také odnese domů jiný, ještě mnohem cennější, totiž dojem, co dovede národ, když v plném vědomí svého práva povstane k zápasu pro ně. Kdybychom my, Dánové, pohlédli na to, co Čechové za nepříznivých poměrů vyřídili ku povznesení své národnosti, musila by důvěra ku záležitostem našich jižně judských [*sic*] bratří, kteří vlastně jsou a zůstanou našimi, se rozmoci a jakýkoliv hovor o vzdání se, utichnouti. Že národ, jenž i málo miliónů čítá, jakmile se cítí jako takový a jest pevně ustanoven, že si nedá vnutiti cizí národnosť, vládne takovou silou odporu, proti níž staleté utlačování konečně musí prasknouti, tomu nás mohou učiti Čechové a nikde nevystupuje toto poučení výmluvněji a dojemněji nežli zrovna v českém Národním divadle." Quoted in Šubert, *České národní divadlo*, 174.

Hussites for a New Age

We can now return to the June cover of *Humoristcké listy* (Figure 2.3). The artist identified the Czech figures as Hussites for a new age, alluding to the medieval past of Bohemia, when the proto-Protestant group defended their lands against invasion and crusades. This was a standard nationalist rhetorical strategy; by terming the National Theater's operatic ambassadors nineteenth-century Hussites, the illustrator provided a "historical" example of a purely Czech ethnic group—from the perspective of the late nineteenth century, a nation—victoriously resisting foreign domination. In distinction from their medieval forebears, however, the new Hussites traveled beyond the borders of Bohemia, gaining notice across Europe. The case of the Czech visit to the 1892 International Exhibition of Music and Theater in Vienna shows the extent to which Czech musicians, theater directors, and critics were thinking along cosmopolitan lines as they prepared for and presented their artistic patrimony—a simplified, auto-essentialist version of it, to be sure—on the stage of the exhibition theater. There was some blowback on this point after the fact, however; following the National Theater's extraordinary success and reports that further guest residencies were potentially in the works, several critics opined that the National Theater had no business traveling around Europe and should rather concentrate on growing and preserving Czech opera at home.[122]

Such countervailing tendencies were representative of the larger conflict in the Czech press: a current of cosmopolitan desires for recognition from the rest of Europe versus a nationalist chauvinism that insisted on the primacy of recognizably and exclusively Czech content in art, expressed most centrally through Smetana, *The Bartered Bride*, and the village

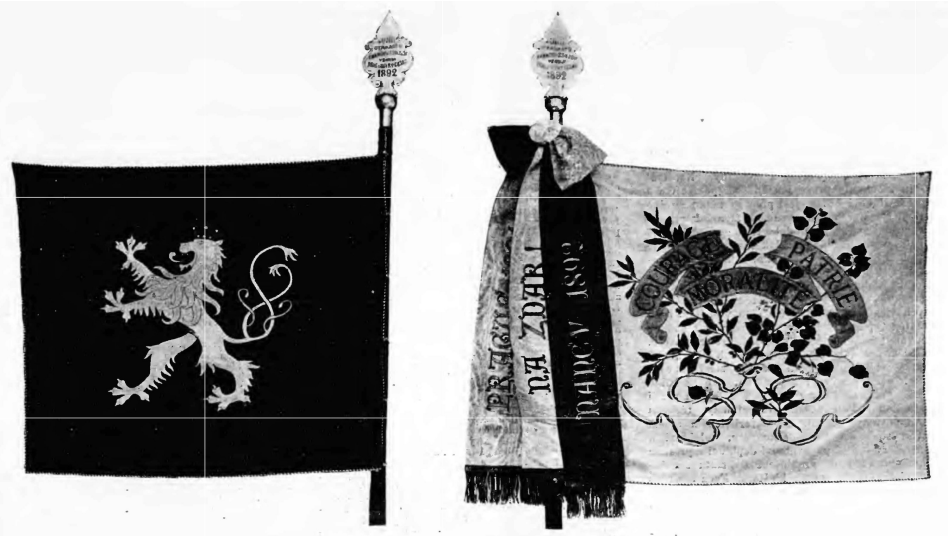
[122] See, for example, František K. Hejda, "Vítězství české opery ve Vídni," *Dalibor* 11, no. 31 (25 June 1892): 241–242.

mode. As the Vienna exhibition and its international reception demonstrated, however, these two threads were not necessarily mutually exclusive. Writers in faraway capitals like Copenhagen both appreciated the significant artistic accomplishments of Czech opera while they simultaneously used them to advocate for their own local nationalist causes.

Yet opera singers and musicians were not the only Hussites crusading in the summer heat of 1892. The two figures delivering the flags of brotherhood and freedom to Nancy and Lwów were members of the Sokol group, an association promoting Czech unity through physical fitness and national festivals. Members of the Czech Sokol participated in gymnastics festivals in both those cities that took place at exactly the same time as the Vienna exhibition. Czech periodicals were enthusiastic about the show of Austrian Slavic brotherhood on display in Lwów, but the Nancy visit caused nothing short of an international furor.[123] Newspapers in Berlin, Paris, Prague, and Vienna spilled gallons of ink discussing the celebrations in Nancy. Habsburg officials had forbidden the Czechs to appear as a unified delegation, limiting them to individual participation so as not to give the impression that an Austrian imperial representative supported the gathering. Moreover, progressive student groups, known for nationalist agitation, formed a large part of the Sokol contingent. Kaiser Wilhelm himself thanked the Viennese imperial government for thus restraining their subjects because multiple French gymnastics clubs from Alsace-Lorraine were participating; Berlin was concerned that their presence at a blatantly French nationalist event, watched over by French President Sadi Carnot, might lead to conflict within the contested province. To add further fuel to the fire, Grand Duke Konstantin Konstantinovich Romanov of Russia attended the Nancy festival in support of a nascent Franco-Russian alliance then under negotiation. The Sokols, who appeared as a group in defiance of

[123] For a discussion of these two visits, see Claire E. Nolte, *The Sokol in the Czech Lands to 1914: Training for the Nation* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 123–125. The following draws from her account.

Vienna, lost no time in proclaiming solidarity with the French and their feelings of Slavic brotherhood with the Russians (see Figure 2.8). In short, Czech aspirations to pan-European status and recognition were not only the province of musicians. Groups from across Czech society were anxious to claim a place within a larger European milieu, and they deployed all the resources at their disposal to make this possible.



Prapor věnovaný panimi a divkami českými Unii gymnastů francouzských.
Dle nákresu p. prof. Jana Koulý zhotoven v závodě p. Jindřicha Trenkwalda v Praze. Původní reprodukce dle fotografie ze závodu Jana Mulače v Praze.

Figure 2.8: "Banner dedicated to the Union of French Gymnasts by Czech men and women."[124]

Thus music and theater did the same work as the Sokol figures—promoting Czech interests in a way that the rest of Europe could understand, but with opera stages and singers instead of gymnastics and pageantry. Yet the fame these new crusades brought to Smetana and *The Bartered Bride* could not have been gained without the invitation by imperial authorities and through the approval of critics, both imperial and foreign. What is more, the primacy accorded Smetana in matters of nationalist efforts in the first half of the twentieth century would not have had nearly the same weight without Vienna in 1892. Indeed, this performance of *The Bartered*

[124] "Prapor věnovaný panimi a divkami českými Unii gymnastů francouzských," *Světozor* 26, no. 30 (10 June 1892): 357.

Bride and its reception reveal how deeply entangled the village mode in Czech opera was with wider imperial concerns and transnational, cosmopolitan contexts.

There is one final example that concisely summed up the intertwined importance of Smetana, *The Bartered Bride*, Czech identity, and the cosmopolitan dreams of the National Theater administrators who gambled on sending their delegation to Vienna: a commemorative coin (Figure 2.9).

Figure 2.9: Commemorative coin minted in honor of the National Theater's visit to the Vienna exhibition.[125]

On the left, Bedřich Smetana's profile is ringed with a laurel wreath. Below him, an intertwined lyre and parchment represents the operatic union of text and music, while the National Theater shields him from above. The words "Umění vítězí" ("Art prevails") crown the scene. Not only is this a declaration of the outcome of the National Theater's and Smetana's operas first appearance in Vienna, but it also recalls the words "Pravda vítězí," ("Truth prevails"), a phrase attributed to Jan Hus. That motto carried so much national significance that it was eventually adopted by the first president of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, for his banner.

[125] A photographic reproduction of this coin is given in Panenka and Součkova, *Prodaná nevěsta*, 54.

The obverse of the coin states the date of the Czech performances in Vienna, 1 to 8 June, 1892. Mařenka and Jeník, the principal couple of *The Bartered Bride*, stand at the center. They face away from the exhibition theater building on the left, instead looking and gesturing towards a sailing ship and a hill with a tower. The latter suggests the "Little Eiffel Tower" on Prague's Petřín hill, constructed in 1891 and based on the original version unveiled in Paris as part of the 1889 Exposition Universelle. The sun sets behind the tower, indicating the pair are looking West. The international ambitions of the scene are clear, with *The Bartered Bride* as the Czechs' vehicle out to the rest of the world. Taken as a whole, this coin is a powerful symbol of the Czechs' celebratory self-perception in the wake of Vienna, a *lieu de mémoire* that can be held in the palm of one's hand. It also reproduces the paradox that would have significant effects on the shape and reception of Czech opera after June 1892: that an opera celebrated as so essentially Czech that it had "welled up from the blood of nation" would ultimately find a resounding confirmation of this in the eyes of imperial and international audiences.

CHAPTER 3: REVISING SMETANA, RESTORING SMETANA: VÁCLAV JUDA NOVOTNÝ AND *THE TWO WIDOWS*

> Just an excellent doctor does not shrink back in horror when it is necessary to cut into a body's diseased bowels with his operating knife, or even to replace certain portions of an organism with other, healthier ones, so too did our intrepid arranger steel himself for the most extreme measures.[1]

Such graphic language is typically not found in opera reviews, yet that is precisely what František Hejda published in 1893 in the Prague music journal *Dalibor*. Hejda was reviewing a new production of Bedřich Smetana's opera *Dvě vdovy* (*The Two Widows*, 1874, rev. 1878); the "intrepid arranger" in question was the translator, composer, and writer Václav Juda Novotný. The measures Novotný took in rearranging Smetana's 1874 opera for this new production were indeed extreme. He eliminated many recitatives and replaced them with dialogue; he rewrote large portions of the libretto; and, most significantly, he changed the position of all but one of the opera's musical numbers, going so far as to create an entirely new, independent middle act. This turned what had been a two-act opera linked by recitative into a three-act work with a mixture of spoken dialogue and recitative.

Novotný's motivations for undertaking this extensive revision were decidedly complex. They reveal much not only about Novotný, but also about operatic life in Prague in the immediate aftermath of the immensely successful Czech National Theater opera performances at the 1892 Vienna International Exhibition of Music and Theater. The story of Notovný's *The Two*

[1] "Jako výborný lékař nehrozí se v případě nutnosti zarýti do chorých útrob těla svým operačním nozem, ba nahradit i jisté částky organismu jinými, zdravými, tak odhodlal se i náš neohrožený upravovatel ku prostředkům nejkrajnějším." František Hejda, "Národní divadlo v Praze. *Dvě vdovy*," *Dalibor* 15, nos. 25–26 (22 April 1893): 195.

Widows is a story of the village mode's newfound cachet for Czech audiences, theater administrators, and critics. Investigating these unusually intrusive revisions and their reception history also provides new insight into the wider European process of composer glorification and canonization.

Novotný's strikingly extensive revisions were not unusual in and of themselves—figures such as Henry Rowley Bishop in London and Alphonse Royer and Gustave Vaëz in Paris had translated and adapted operas to suit local conditions earlier in the nineteenth century.[2] What makes this case study unique is that, unlike the metropolitan capitals of London and Paris, Novotný was not attempting to update a foreign opera to make it more marketable in a different setting.[3] Instead, by taking a domestic work and updating it for local audiences, Novotný was trying to create a better (and more marketable) Czech opera and, concurrently, a better Czech composer in the figure of Smetana just short of a decade after his death. This adaptation—inextricably intertwined with the ideology of the village mode—was likewise tied to the position of Prague as a regional capital within the Habsburg Empire. Novotný's reliance on the self-essentializing tenets of the village mode went hand-in-hand with desires to raise the status of Czech culture within the Austrian imperial hierarchy and in Europe generally, something that could be accomplished, it was imagined, through more and better quality operatic performances.

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[2] For a discussion of Bishop's 1819 changes to *The Marriage of Figaro*, for example, see Tim Carter, *Understanding Italian Opera* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 123. More information on Bishop and his activities can be found in Christina Elizabeth Fuhrman, "'Adapted and Arranged for the English Stage': Continental Operas Transformed for the London Theater, 1814-33," PhD diss., Washington University, 2001. Royer and Vaëz were responsible for, among other activities, assisting Donizetti in adapting *Lucia de Lammermoor* for the Théâtre de la Renaissance in 1840; see Rebecca Harris-Warrick, "*Lucia* Goes to Paris: A Tale of Three Theaters," in *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer: Paris, 1830–1914*, eds. Annegret Fauser and Mark Everist (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 195–277.

[3] Novotný was no stranger, however, to translating foreign works into Czech for the National Theater: his translation credits included *Aida*, *Don Giovanni*, *Lohengrin*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Otello*, *Tannhäuser*, *The Queen of Spades*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, and many other operas. See "Václav Juda Novotný," Archive of the National Theater, http://archiv.narodni-divadlo.cz/default.aspx?jz=cs&dk=Umelec.aspx&ju=2272&sz=0&abc=N&pn=356affcc-f301-3000-85ff-c11223344aaa.

Novotný's reliance on the original French source text of the libretto for some of his revisions can also be read as a move toward securing further cultural capital, though he did not publicize this move in his various statements. His revisions ultimately created a paradox that eventually led to their repudiation: Smetana's less successful operas, in order to serve as ideal artistic symbols, had to be improved, and *The Two Widows* had never enjoyed the same audience or critical success as *The Bartered Bride* or *The Kiss* (*Hubička*). However, if Smetana's operas could be improved, then he as a composer was not infallible—a position that went against growing consensus on Smetana as a mythic artist-hero in the Beethovenian mold.[4]

In this chapter, I set the scene by outlining the history of *The Two Widows* up until 1892, when, in the afterglow of the Vienna exhibition, theater administrators decided to embark on staging the first full cycle of Smetana's operas at the National Theater. I then trace the events that led to Novotný being commissioned to "fix" *The Two Widows* so that it might rise to the same level of audience acclaim as Smetana's more famous operas, such as *The Bartered Bride* and *The Kiss*. I continue with an analysis of Novotný's textual and musical changes to the opera with an eye towards expressions of the village mode and new currents of thought in post-exhibition Prague. Finally, I examine the afterlife of the production through its final retirement, in 1923, in favor of Smetana's revised version from 1877–78.[5]

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[4] For a discussion of the origins and outlines of this trope, see see Scott Burnham, *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), especially xiii to xix.

[5] A vocal score of Smetana's second version was published in 1914, but an annotated copy held in the Music Archive of the National Theater in Prague indicates that a production using a copy of that score was still following some of Novotný's edits and prose. See Bedřich Smetana, *Dvě vdovy. Definitivní Smetanova úprava s recitativy z roku 1877* (Prague: Umělecká beseda v Praze, 1914). Printed piano-vocal score, inventory number 6/16, Music Archive of the National Theater, Prague.

The Origins of *The Two Widows* and Smetana's Own Revisions

Smetana's *The Two Widows* had its premiere on 27 March 1874. At the time, Smetana was embroiled in a heated war in the Prague press over the direction of Czech opera. Perceived Wagnerian features of Smetana's opera *Dalibor* had incited a number of voices to accuse him of insufficient devotion to the Czech national cause. Smetana and his friends fought against this charge in an increasingly nasty battle.[6] In this climate of nationalist fervor, his decision to turn to a French salon comedy as the source for a new Czech opera thus seemed somewhat strange. Figures on both sides of the quarrel wished for a second *Bartered Bride*, which had from its premiere been hailed as a touchstone of national art (see Chapter 1). After announcing in early March of 1873 that Smetana had recently begun composing *The Two Widows*, a writer from the journal *Hudební listy* expressed the hope that it would "turn out for him like his first work, *The Bartered Bride.*"[7]

In an 1882 letter to his friend and former student Ludevít Procházka, Smetana stated that *The Two Widows* had initially been "an attempt—when I had already proven myself in different operatic styles—as with *The Brandenburgers in Bohemia*, *The Bartered Bride*, *Dalibor*, and *Libuše*—also to write a noble salon opera, and I found no text more suitable than *Les deux veuves.*"[8] This was the title of an 1852 French conversation play by Jean Pierre Félicien

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[6] A key account of the battle over *The Two Widows* can be found in John Clapham, "The Smetana-Pivoda Controversy," *Music & Letters* 52, no. 4 (October 1971): 353–364; more recent discussions of the polemics and their importance to subsequent historiography are given in Brian Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague: Polemics and Practice at the National Theater, 1900–1938* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 22–29; and Kelly St. Pierre, *Bedřich Smetana: Myth, Music, and Propaganda* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2017), 72–73. These accounts, however, tend to focus on the fault lines the controversy exposed within Prague's musical community; while these are important, I am more interested in the subsequent revisions and their reliance on rural imagery.

[7] "Kéž by se mu tak podařila, jako prvá jeho práce 'Prodaná nevěsta.'" *Hudební listy* 6 March 1873, 78.

[8] "Byl to pokus—když jsem se už osvědčil v jiných genrech operního stylu—jako Braniboři, Prodaná nevěsta, Dalibor, Libuša—taky jednou v ušlechtilém salonním slohu napsat operu, a nenašel jsem žádný jiný textový podklad

Mallefille that had been translated into Czech by Smetana's eventual librettist, Emanuel Züngel and premiered at Prague's Provisional Theater on 25 August 1868.[9] The salon setting of *The Two Widows* was explicitly intended to contribute to enriching the range of the domestic repertoire of Prague's Provisional Theater, which in 1873 was still under his artistic and musical direction; as Smetana elaborates in his letter to Procházka, he "**purposely** wrote it with just such a textual basis and *musical style* for *our Czech theater*."[10]

The Two Widows had a complicated history of revisions and productions. The first version from 1874 featured four main characters: the titular widows, Karolina and Anežka, the gamekeeper Mumlal, and the ardent suitor in love with Anežka, Ladislav. Aside from opening and closing choruses, the entirety of the two-act opera was concerned with the interaction of the four main characters and proceeded through a combination of prose dialogue and discrete musical numbers. The plot is simple: Ladislav is in love with Anežka, who still mourns her husband, and Karolina, happy to be free of her husband and in charge of the estate, contrives to get the two of them together. Karolina eventually succeeds while Mumlal provides comic relief throughout the piece.

In its general outlines *The Two Widows* closely followed the example of French conversation operas of the nineteenth century. Later commentators have proposed Fromental Halévy's opera *L'Éclair* (1835) and Daniel François Esprit Auber's *Le Domino noir* (1837) as

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vhodnější, jako zrovna Dvě vdovy!" See Jan Löwenbach, *Bedřich Smetana a Dr Lud. Procházka Vzájemná korrespondence* (Prague: Umělecká Beseda, 1914), 81–82.

[9] For more on Mallefille and the history of his play, see Mirko Očadlík, introduction to *Dvě vdovy*, by Emanuel Züngel, ed. Mirko Očadlík (Prague: Státní hudební vydavatelství, 1962), 5–9. The first version of the opera was very close to a direct translation of Mallefille, though some passages were changed.

[10] "...kterou jsem pro *naše české divadlo* **schválně** v takové podložce textové a takovým *slohem hudebním* napsal..." Emphases in the original, but italicized passages printed as spaced-out letters. In the interest of legibility, I have rendered it thus. See Löwenbach, *Bedřich Smetana a Dr Lud. Procházka*, 81.

possible models, since both were very popular in the latter half of the nineteenth century and frequently performed in Prague.[11] Initial reactions to Smetana's opera were quite warm. The reviews tended to focus on two issues that would recur with other productions of *The Two Widows*. The first was general dissatisfaction with Züngel's libretto, which was considered weak and not equal to Smetana's music. The second was a tendency on the part of critics to ascribe a clearly Czech character to the music, though they were unspecific about how exactly Smetana had achieved this feat. It was precisely these two ideas—Smetana's decidedly Czech music and Züngel's weak libretto—that, taken to an extreme, provided the justification for Novotný's later surgery. At the time of the premiere, however, the elegance of the salon setting also received high praise, and through Smetana's music, the French salon was transformed into a Czech one, with explicitly Czech aristocrats engaging in the witty intrigues usually attributed to the nobility of other lands.[12] Despite the positive reviews, however, the opera was only performed seven times in 1874 before disappearing from the repertoire.

Perhaps with an eye towards securing further performances of *The Two Widows*, Smetana made significant revisions to the opera in 1877 with the help of Züngel. These revisions included the replacement of all spoken dialogue with recitatives, a new finale for Act I, and a new introductory song for Ladislav at the opening of Act II. The second act now also featured a pair of additional "lower-class" characters, the peasant sweethearts Toník and Lidunka. Smetana himself was more explicit about the deliberately Czech character of this newly composed music; in a letter to Züngel, he described Ladislav's song as written in a fully national style and went on

[11] See Vlasta Hrušková, "Bedřich Smetana: *Dvě vdovy* Dramaturgická analýze opery," master's thesis, Charles University, Prague, 1972, 34.

[12] The concept of a specifically Czech nobility was, moreover, rather complicated and somewhat invented; see discussion below.

to say that "I myself can confirm that it is a *new national song.*"[13] This song also recalled the important slippage between "národní" (national) and "lidový" (of the folk/people; see Chapter 1). Smetana referred to it as a pendant to the "Lullaby" ("Ukolébavka") from *The Kiss*. The "Lullaby" was indeed marked in that score as a "national song" and immediately became popular as a kind of newly composed folksong.

Smetana also described the new finale of Act I and an additional trio for Toník, Lidunka, and Mumlal as composed "in the national style."[14] The explicit connection of the national to the lower-class, rural characters in Smetana's new version was a clear instance of the village mode being applied to an opera otherwise focused on aristocratic intrigues. In an earlier letter to Procházka from 1880, Smetana discussed the updated character of the revised opera, but this time in a way that would foreshadow Novotný's rationale for revising *The Two Widows*. Smetana reported on a recent performance of his salon opera:

> *The Two Widows*, which was again repeated several days ago with decided success, gave me an idea: would this opera not be the most suitable for introduction to foreign lands, namely on German stages? …In its new version the opera projects both a national and cosmopolitan character, and as you know, does so in a kind of salon tone.[15]

Smetana's emphasis here on cosmopolitanism and attracting foreign attention to his operas may seem unusual, given subsequent insistence by critics and scholars on the purely Czech character of *The Two Widows* (and all his other operas, for that matter). This attitude, however, mirrored the one held by National Theater administrators and Novotný in the early 1890s. While Novotný

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[13] "...sám mohu tvrditi, že jest to nová národní píseň." See Lev Zelenka-Lerando, *B. Smetana a E. Züngl Listy B. Smetany E. Zünglovi* (Nymburk: Tisk J. Pospíšila, 1903), 8.

[14] "…v národním slohu…" See Zelenka-Lerando, *B. Smetana a E. Züngl*, 8, and Pražák, *Smetanovy zpěvohry*, 46–47.

[15] "'Dvě vdovy' které se před několika dny zase opakovaly, a sice rozhodným úspěchem, mě daly myšlenku, jest-li by tato opera nebyla nejvyhodnější k uvedení na cizinu a sice německém jevišti? …V novém přepracování má opera tato obojí ráz, národní a kosmopolitický, a tento docela jak Vám známo, v jakémsi salonním tonu." See Löwenbach, *Vzájemná korespondence*, 37.

may have disagreed with Smetana about the suitability of the opera for both domestic and foreign consumption, due to what he considered a difficult libretto, both composer and reviser shared a view that looked eagerly outward to the rest of Europe while also maintaining a sense of Czech particularity.

Smetana's village mode and self-consciously nationalist additions garnered praise from critics when the new version was produced on 15 March 1878, but they did little to further endear the work as a whole to Czech audiences. Despite reports that numerous numbers from the revised opera had to be repeated at its premiere, there were only seventeen total performances of *The Two Widows* between 1878 and 1885—by contrast, *The Bartered Bride* enjoyed seventy-five performances during that same period. A third version of *The Two Widows*, crafted by the German-language theater in Hamburg without Smetana's blessing, was premiered once more to critical, if not box-office, success on 28 December 1881. While the musical and dramatic changes made in Hamburg had no immediate effect on the content of the opera as it was performed in Prague, it was the first performance of any Smetana opera (albeit in a heavily revised version) in a German theater.[16]

The Spoils of Victory in Vienna: Revising *The Two Widows* for Prague Audiences

While *The Two Widows* technically became the first Smetana opera to have a premiere on a German stage, it was *The Bartered Bride*, staged on 1 June 1892 at the International Exhibition of Music and Theater in Vienna, that captured the attention of both the empire and the wider Western world (see Chapter 2). The triumph in Vienna also caused shifts in the cultural landscape of Prague. Overnight, Smetana's newly international cachet led to a revision of the

[16] For more on the Hamburg revisions to *The Two Widows*, see František Bartoš, introduction to *Dvě vdovy*, by Bedřich Smetana (Prague: Národní hudební vydavatelství Orbis, 1950), IX–XIII.

priorities and goals of key figures in Prague's musical life, including Novotný and the director of the National Theater, František Adolf Šubert.

Once the National Theater Association (*Družstvo Národního divadla*) returned from Vienna, an array of celebratory events and performances took place alongside the publication of multiple newspaper articles (for an outline of key events and publications, see Table 3.1). Figures like Notovný, Šubert, and Otakar Hostinský joyously proclaimed the newfound fame of Czech art, especially as represented by Smetana and his operas. In an article published on 15 June 1892 in *Hlas národa*, Novotný focused on the composer's vindication by foreign audiences: while Smetana and his music had suffered at the hands of an uncomprehending public during his lifetime (or so the narrative went), in the wake of Vienna "his firm belief in the future of the Czech musical type was borne out and the Czech nation is now the inheritor of his glory."[17]

Table 3.1: Key Events and Publications in Prague Musical Life in 1892 and 1893

Date	*Occurrence*
January to May 1892	Antonín Dvořák's farewell concert tour around Bohemia
1 June 1892	Bedřich Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* has its premiere in Vienna, eliciting widespread and enthusiastic praise
15 June 1892	Performance of *The Bartered Bride* in Prague celebrating the National Theater's visit to Vienna concludes with an "apotheosis" of Smetana
17 June 1892	Celebratory banquet honoring the National Theater, Smetana, and his operas
Late June or July 1892	Someone proposes revisions to *The Two Widows*; either a National Theater administrator like Šubert or Novotný himself
1 September 1892	Novotný completes his revisions to *The Two Widows* and produces an explanatory preface

[17] "…pevná jeho víra v budoucnost hudebního typu českého se osvědčila a dědicem jeho slávy je nyní český národ…" Vacláv Juda Novotný, "Umění a literatura. Zpěvohra," *Hlas národa*, 15 June 1892, 3.

15 September 1892	Dvořák leaves for America
30 October 1892	The National Theater Association meets and the possibility of a Smetana cycle for the coming season is floated
13 April 1893	Premiere of Novotný's new version of *The Two Widows*
4 to 23 September 1893	First Smetana cycle at the National Theater
Late 1893	Šubert's pamphlet on the tenth year of the National Theater, describing the impact of Vienna on activities in Prague, is published

The night Novotný's article appeared, the National Theater's victories in Vienna were celebrated by a command performance of *The Bartered Bride* back home in Prague, which was designed to maximize the connection between the opera, its composer, and their newfound fame. The evening featured speeches by the poet Jaroslav Vrchlický (later nominated eight times for the Nobel Prize in Literature) and the actress Otilie Sklenářová-Malá; a performance of Smetana's *Festival Overture* prior to the opera (as had been done in Vienna); no fewer than nine curtain calls after the end of the first act; multiple presentations of silver laurel wreaths; and a concluding "apotheosis of the immortal memory of Smetana."[18] At the end of the final chorus of *The Bartered Bride*, the choristers dispersed and a "picturesque group" of youths dressed in national costume surrounded a bust of Smetana, which was garlanded with all the celebratory wreaths accumulated by the National Theater after Vienna.[19] The appropriateness of the opening text for the final chorus—"Dobrá věc se podařila" ["A good thing has turned out well"]—was not lost on the reporter who described the evening for the readership of *Hlas národa*. This event helped solidify the newfound domestic enthusiasm for Smetana in the wake of his internationally

[18] "Včerejší představení bylo krásně zakončeno apotheosou nesmrtelné památky Smetanovy." "Po návratu z Vídně," *Hlas národa*, 16 June 1892, 2. For a brief overview of Vrchlický's output, see Jan Bažant, Nina Bažantová, and Frances Stern, eds., *The Czech Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 193.

[19] "Po návratu z Vídně," 2.

recognized artistic triumph. It was apparently the first time a so-called "apotheosis" of Smetana had been presented, and the National Theater would organize similar tableaux vivants in subsequent years; Figure 3.1 shows just such an apotheotic display, this time from the three-hundredth performance of *The Bartered Bride* on 25 September 1895.

A writer for the illustrated magazine *Zlatá Praha*, probably Jaroslav Vrchlický himself, summarized the results of the Vienna festival for the course of Czech art in an article, published on 24 June, covering the exhibition.[20] "The consequences," he wrote, "are twofold: first, the benefits to our art that result from its introduction to the wider currents of foreign cultural life, and second, the new opinions, lessons, and points of view that are brought to us at home."[21] The cosmopolitan stance here is both striking and characteristic of the immediate post-Vienna climate, when Czech patriots reveled in their nation's newfound fame and the possibilities of new, pan-European cultural transfer.

[20] The article is signed with the character "α," and Karel Tauš states that Vrchlický used the cipher "a" at this time in other literary journals such as *Lumír* and *Světozor*. See Karel Tauš, *Slovník cizích slov, zkratek, novinářských šifer, pseudonymů a časopisů pro čtenáře novin* (Blansko: Nakladatel Karel Jelínek, 1947), 11.

[21] "Následky jsou dvojí: Předně výhody, které umění našemu plynou z uvedení do širších proudův kulturního života zahraničného; za druhé nové náhledy, naučení, stanoviska, jež přineseny k nám, domů." α., "Pohostinské hry Národního divadla na výstavě Vídeňské," *Zlatá Praha* 9, no. 32 (24 June 1892): 382.

Figure 3.1: "Homage to Smetana. Tableau vivant for the 300th performance of *The Bartered Bride* at the National Theater in Prague."[22]

In the eyes of Vrchlický and his compatriots, foreign opinion could work in favor of a more progressive stance for Czech art, one which was nevertheless founded on Smetana's now almost thirty-year-old works and the village mode:

> We know that the measure of foreign critics can in many cases lead to the rectification of domestic opinions. Which works took away the palms of success from the exhibition performances? Primarily Smetana's operas and then Fibich and Vrchlický's melodrama.

[22] See "Hold Smetanovi," *Světozor* 29, no. 47 (11 October 1895): 560. A reproduction is also given in Jan Panenka and Taťána Součkova, *Prodaná nevěsta: Prodaná nevěsta na jevištích Prozatímního a Národního divadla 1866–2004* (Prague: Národní divadlo a nakladatelství Gallery Praha, 2004), 58. This particular tableau included actors portraying characters from all of Smetana's operas, a choice which was likely motivated by the other event this display was likely intended to help celebrate: the ongoing 1895 Ethnographic Exhibtition (see Chapter 4).

> Smetana's operas are nationally and artistically purely individual, the melodrama artistically purely original. All are modern works, standing at the forefront of their time.
>
> National, original, modern; only these characteristics opened the gates to recognition and success. Only works from our spirit, from our blood, original, individual works, gained a response and appreciation…
>
> What did the German audience honor in Smetana's operas alongside grand musical art? Our authentic Czech character, which bursts forth here through such a powerful source. It sounds strange, but it is the truth. The German critics themselves acknowledged that Smetana's national music, welling up from the arteries of Czech life, is much closer to them than the derivative music of *Dimitrij*, which clings to older foreign examples.
>
> The wonderful success of Smetana's operas is not only a victory of Czech art, but also a victory of the Czech spirit, of which the operas are the most beautiful of all expressions.[23]

Vrchlický's prose here reveals two significant issues: one, cosmopolitanism and the opinions of foreign critics could effect positive change on artistic directions, yet that what these critics found valuable, and what in turn was to be further propagated at home, was a conception of Czech art predicated on an essentialist, ethnolinguistic configuration of Czech identity. Second, Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* and *Dalibor*, by now revered classics and based on forty-year-old Wagnerian and New German aesthetics, could also be regarded as modern—a stance that Nejedlý would later take to an extreme. Vrchlický's disparaging remark towards Antonín Dvořák's opera *Dimitrij*, which had managed at least a *succès d'estime* in Vienna, also brings up another

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[23] "Seznáme, že měřitko cizí kritiky v mnohém může přiměti k opravení náhledů domácích. Která díla odnesla z představení výstavních palmu úspěchu? V první řadě opery Smetanovy a pak melodram Fibicha a Vrchlického. Opery Smetanovy—národně a umělecký ryze induvideulní [*sic*]; melodram—umělecký čistě původní, všechno díla moderní, stojící na výši doby.

Národní, původní, moderní, jenom ty vlastnosti otvíraly brány uznání a úspěchu. Jen díla z našeho ducha, z naší krve, díla původní, individuelní došla ohlasu a ocenění…

Co obecenstvo německé ctilo v Smetanových operách vedle velkého umění hudebního? Náš ryzí, český charakter, jenž tak mocným pramenem tu vytryskuje. Zní to podivně, ale jest to pravda. Sami kritikové němečtí uznávali, že národní, z tepny českého života prýštící hudba Smetanova jim jest mnohem bližší, než nesamostatná, starších vzorů cizích se přidržující hudba 'Dimitrije.'

Skvělý úspěch Smetanových oper jest nejen vítězství českého umění, ale i vítězství českého ducha, jehož jsou výrazem nejkrásnějším." α., "Pohostinské hry Národního divadla," 382.

important facet of the post-exhibition atmosphere. Dvořák, undoubtedly the Czech lands' most famous living composer, had left for America in September of 1892, only a few months after the Prague National Theater's delegation went to Vienna.[24] His absence would have made it easier for the Czech musical world to focus their attention on Smetana and his operas, since no other composer of Dvořák's stature was producing music in Prague at the time.[25] Vrchlický's damning assessment of Dvořák's opera also provided aesthetic grounds with which to justify pushing his music into the background in favor of Smetana.

The celebratory atmosphere of Prague that summer had further ramifications. The idea at the heart of Vrchlický's article—that foreign approbation and even wider success could be found in the projection of a rigidly defined Czech operatic profile—was no doubt influencing figures like Šubert and Novotný. After all, as I argued in the previous chapter, the village milieu performed in *The Bartered Bride* was the primary way in which Czech music was legible in Vienna, and the opera's success there served both to reinscribe this positioning of Czech music and to expand the boundaries of its legibility. Consequently, to gain wider acceptance of and visibility for Czech music, one had to perform the village, whether implicitly or explicitly. Such an understanding of Czech culture, moreover, fit in quite nicely with the *Vielvölkerstaat* ideal of imperial Austria, whose ruling ideology held that only the Habsburgs could successfully govern

[24] For a summary of Dvořák's career up to the time of his departure, see Michael Beckerman, *New Worlds of Dvořák: Searching in America for the Composer's Inner Life* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), 1–21.

[25] Zdeněk Fibich was a possible exception, especially after his melodrama *Námluvy Pelopovy* received a good deal of positive attention in Vienna. Fibich's music, however, did not endear itself to critics in Prague, as his operas lacked either village-mode elements or specifically Czech mytho-historical markers. His *Šárka* of 1897 was the exception that proved the rule, and while he was made dramaturge of the National Theater in 1899 and began an ambitious program of reform, he died the following year. See Jiří Kopecký, "Fibich's Path to Success in Prague's National Theater," in *Czech Music Around 1900*, eds. Lenka Křupková and Jiří Kopecký (New York: Pendragon Press, 2017), 145–166.

and bring unity to a realm composed of multiple, diverse national groups.[26] In this sense, the newfound enthusiasm for the village mode represented an internalization of imperial ideas: Czechs artists and critics were encouraged to stereotype or autoessentialize themselves as a means of producing an identity legible outside the borders of Bohemia.[27]

When, however, did the impact of Vienna come to bear specifically on *The Two Widows*? Smetana's newfound popularity both abroad and at home likely led Šubert and/or the National Theater Association to reconsider their approach to staging Smetana. None of the composer's operas were as popular as *The Bartered Bride*, however. With public interest in Smetana and his operas suddenly on the rise, someone in the National Theater's orbit probably thought that it would be worth revisiting their old productions as they sought to capitalize on the post-Vienna Smetana wave; plans were in the works by August for visits to Paris and the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago, though neither of these would come to pass.[28] During the heady days of summer 1892, either Šubert or someone of a similar position contacted Novotný with a request for changes, or Novotný himself decided such alterations were necessary. What we know with certainty in any case is that Novotný had completed his drastic revisions to *The Two Widows* by 1 September 1892, the date given at the end of his preface to the published libretto of the new version. In that preface, he states that the "management of the National Theater" had "entrusted"

[26] The "unity in diversity" strategy of Austria's imperial rulers had been in place since at least the 1850s, and was continually strengthened throughout the nineteenth century. See Pieter M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 316–321.

[27] For more on the stereotype and imperial discourse see discussion in Chapters 1 and 2.

[28] See the minutes of the National Theater executive committee from 18 August 1892, *Protokoly Správního výboru Družstva Národního divadla*, sig. D50, fond ND, National Archive, Prague.

to him the task of revising *The Two Widows*, though Novotný gave no explicit clues as to the management's motivation for the request.[29]

We can, however, glean something of those matters from later documents. At a general meeting of the National Theater Association's membership on 30 October 1892, according to a report published in *Národní politika*, the playwright František Ruth suggested that the upcoming National Theater season be delayed so as to allow for the addition of a cycle of "at least" five Smetana operas.[30] Šubert was present at this meeting, and while the record does not show what he thought of this proposal (or whether he had already had a similar idea), a later publication adds some clarity.

Every year during his tenure as director of the National Theater, Šubert published a pamphlet in which he summarized the activities of the theater for the recently concluded season.[31] His introduction to the pamphlet for the tenth year of the National Theater, published in 1893, paid homage to Smetana in no uncertain terms and described audiences' new attitude towards Smetana in the following way: "What was earlier still felt somewhat as a responsibility, indeed as a certain sacrifice—was transformed into entertainment: our entire world joyfully goes

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[29] "…když mi správa Národního divadla svěřila novou úpravu "Dvou vdov." See V. J. Novotný, *Dvě vdovy komická zpěvohra o třech jednáních* (Prague: Nakladatel Fr. A. Urbánek, 1893), 8. The minutes of the executive committee do not reveal who approached whom, but they do note that Novotný was paid an honorarium of 250 zlatých for his efforts. For comparison, leading soloists at the National Theater at this time generally made anywhere from 3,000 to 4,000 zlatých for a single season. See minutes from 15 September 1892, *Protokoly Správního výboru Družstva Národního divadla*, sig. D50, fond ND, National Archive, Prague.

[30] See "Řádná valná hromada družstva Národního divadla," *Národní politika*, 31 October 1892, 1. An obituary for Ruth provides some insight into his activities; see "František Ruth," *Divadlo: Rozhledy po světě divadelním* 1, no. 7 (1 September 1903): 142–143.

[31] The National Theater, located on the eastern bank of the Vltava river at the south end of Prague's Old Town, first opened in 1881. However, it was gutted by fire shortly after the first performance—Smetana's *Libuše*—and reopened in 1883.

on a pilgrimage to the banks of the Vltava whenever Smetana's operas are given…"[32] This change in audience opinion intimated a larger social transformation. The broadening acceptance of Smetana's operas meant that they could be instrumentalized more and more as markers of national essence, which in turn reinforced the concurrent, growing need to perform national belonging through public participation in cultural events such as opera. While Šubert was likely trying to paint a rosy picture for his readers, such an assessment of the changed attitude toward Smetana's operas would not appeared *ex nihilo*.

Šubert in turn cited the triumphs of Vienna as the reason for the success of the new cycle. He stated that the idea of a Smetana cycle had already been floated several years prior, but that it did not happen because of unspecified unfavorable circumstances. The idea for a cycle, moreover, "was not fomulated then as it was now, after Czech art and especially Smetana's operas attained victory in Vienna. That is why the idea was rightly dropped then—and why the cycle was rightly performed now. What theater and audience would once, to a certain extent, have had to force themselves to do, now became self-evidently necessary, and, as already stated, was universally successful."[33] Šubert deemed the Smetana cycle the high point of the year and "the greatest artistic deed of the National Theater to this day."[34] The cycle, moreover, was a marker of the National Theater's high cultural aspirations. By staging complete performances of all of Smetana's operas, Šubert and the National Theater Association were attempting to grant

---

[32] "Co dříve stále ještě poněkud se pociťovalo jako povinnost, ba jako jistá oběť—to změnilo se v zábavu: celý náš svět radostně putuje ku břehu Vltavy, kdykoliv se dávají opery Smetanovy…" See František Šubert, *Desátý rok Národního divadla* (Prague: Družstvo Národního divadla, 1893), 4.

[33] …nepodávala se sama tak, jak bylo nyní po docíleném vítězství českého umění a zvláště oper Smetanových ve Vídni. Proto bylo druhdy právem od ní upuštěno—a proto byla nyní právem provedena. K čemu by se bývalo druhdy divadlo i obecenstvo opět do jisté míry nutilo, to stalo se nyní samo nutným a, jak praveno, zdařilo se všestranně." Šubert, *Desátý rok*, 4.

[34] "Cyklus Smetanův byl dosud největší umělecký čin Národního divadla." Šubert, *Desátý rok*, 4.

Smetana the same status that, for example, Wagner and the complete cycles of his works at Bayreuth held in Germany.

The Intrepid Doctor's Extreme Measures: Novotný's Revisions

Not the least of the concrete markers Viennese success were Novotný's remarkably extensive revisions to *The Two Widows*. The vast majority of his changes to the opera concerned the structure of the libretto; only once did he interfere (lightly) with musical material aside from moving it to different locations. Indeed, in his introduction to the new version of the libretto, Novotný made it a point to refer continually to the beauty and sanctity of Smetana's music while simultaneously criticizing the libretto on multiple fronts. He pointed out a number of elements that, according to him, interrupted the flow of the action, including the added recitatives from 1878, the multiple entrances and exits of Mumlal and Ladislav in the first act, and the addition of the "rustic pair" of Toník and Lidunka, among others. All these "disruptive elements" in the libretto, he stated, were the reason for the opera's failure "despite all its extraordinary musical beauty; for the profusion of beautiful material cannot make an impression if it does not appear in beautiful, logically unfolding forms."[35]

Novotný certainly made plenty of changes, even though he left the music intact. The opera was nevertheless entirely different. Not only did Novotný extensively rework the libretto, but he also kept only a single number—Karolina's introductory aria, "Samostatně vládnu já,"—in the same location in the original libretto. All the other numbers were reordered to suit his new vision of the opera's dramatic unfolding (for a comparison of Smetana's 1878 version and Novotný's 1893 revision, see Table 3.2).

[35] "…rušivých živlů. Proto ten neúspěch při vší neobyčejné kráse hudební; neboť hojnosť krásné látky nedělá dojem, nejeví-li se v krásných, logicky se rozvíjejících formách." Novotný, *Dvě vdovy*, 7.

Table 3.2: Comparison of the Two Libretto Versions of *The Two Widows*

Züngel, 1878	***Novotný, 1893***
Act I	**Act I**
1. Chorus: "Jitro krásné, nebe jasné"	3. Trio: "Dobré jitro, milostivá paní," Karolina, Anežka, Mumlal
2. Recit, Aria: "Samostatně vládnu já," Karolina	2. Recit, Aria: "Samostatně vládnu já," Karolina
3. Trio: "Dobré jitro, milostivá paní," Karolina, Anežka, Mumlal	Prose
4. Duet: "Dlouho-li zde budu bloudit," Mumlal, Ladislav	Prose
5. Recit	6. Quartet: "O jakou tíseň… Malá ty šelmičko," Karolina, Anežka, Mumlal, Ladislav
6. Quartet: "O jakou tíseň… Malá ty šelmičko," Karolina, Anežka, Mumlal, Ladislav	9. Recit, Duet: "Rozhodnuto, uzavřeno," Karolina, Anežka
7. Chorus: "Mumlale, aj, tu vás máme"	Prose
	10. Recit, Duet: "Ach, jak krutě souží," Anežka, Ladislav
	11. Recit: "Stůjte, pane!," Karolina, Anežka, Ladislav
	12. Recit, Aria: "Aj, jaký to krásný den," Anežka
Act II	**Act II**
8. Aria: "Kdy zavítá maj," Ladislav	Prose
9. Recit, Duet: "Rozhodnuto, uzavřeno," Karolina, Anežka	14. Trio: "Co to, holka, co to"
10. Recit, Duet: "Ach, jak krutě souží," Anežka, Ladislav	1. Chorus: "Jitro krásné, nebe jasné"
11. Recit: "Stůjte, pane!," Karolina, Anežka, Ladislav	Prose
12. Recit, Aria: "Aj, jaký to krásný den," Anežka	7. Chorus: "Mumlale, aj, tu vás máme"

13. Recit, Aria: "Nechť cokoliv mne zlobí," Mumlal	Prose and zakolanská
14. Trio: "Co to, holka, co to," Toník, Lidunka, Mumlal	17. Chorus: "Musí nás mít Pan Bůh rád" **retexted**
15. Recit	
16. Recit, Quartet: "Jaké to, ach, překvapení," Karolina, Anežka, Mumlal, Ladislav	
17. Chorus: "Musí nás mít Pan Bůh rád"	
	Act III
	8. Aria: "Kdy zavítá maj," Ladislav
	13. Recit, Aria: "Nechť cokoliv mne zlobí," Mumlal
	Prose
	15. Recit
	16. Recit, Quartet: "Jaké to, ach, překvapení," Karolina, Anežka, Mumlal, Ladislav
	6. Quartet: "O jakou tíseň… Malá ty šelmičko," Karolina, Anežka, Mumlal, Ladislav **reprise**

Novotný's most drastic interventions in the libretto were intimately linked to the new power and cultural cachet of the village mode. He eliminated a sizable proportion of the recitatives and replace them with dialogue. The motivation here was twofold: one, the 1878 recitatives' "leaden heaviness fell onto the entire work and particularly hindered the whimsical scenes with Mumlal" and otherwise hampered more than they helped. The decision to revert to spoken dialogue was not unlike that of Henry Bishop in his 1819 English-language *Marriage of Figaro* adaptation for London, in that dialogue was in part employed to make the work more

audience-friendly.[36] As was the case with Bishop's revisions to Mozart in London, Novotný was, to an extent, working against perceptions of Smetana's music being too difficult or obscure for audiences. In distinction from the earlier example, however, it appears that Novotný wanted to draw contrasts between the class of the characters in a way typical of the village mode. For the aristocratic characters—Karolina, Anežka, and Ladislav—Novotný kept all the through-composed recitatives that characterize their interactions, creating a mix of spoken dialogue and recitative. Accompanied recitatives in particular were a feature of operatic depictions of nobility, a tradition going back centuries.[37] However, for interactions between the aristocrats and lower-class characters, and among the lower-class characters themselves—Mumlal, Toník, and Lidunka—Novotný reverted to spoken dialogue in a manner reminiscent of *opéra comique* or *Singspiel*.

This was particularly important for Mumlal, whom Novotný described as a "dobrák od kosti," which might be translated idiomatically as "a good ol' boy through and through."[38] Novotný also regarded his new Mumlal, now characterized overwhelmingly through prose dialogues and monologues, as a vehicle for an excellent actor. This emphasis on comedic acting also marked his difference from the noble. In the opening scene of Novotný's new version, Karolina makes a reference to Ugolino, a figure from Dante's *Inferno*, which was also present in Züngel's original libretto. In the original, Mumlal merely remarks that he does not know this

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[36] See Fuhrman, "'Adapted and Arranged for the English Stage,'" 138–142.

[37] For more on the dramaturgical role of recitative versus spoken dialogue, see Laurel E. Zeiss, "The Dramaturgy of Opera," in *The Cambridge Companion to Opera Studies*, ed. Nicholas Till (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 179–201, 185–188; a discussion of operatic poetics, subjects, and genre conventions across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can be found in Alessandra Campana, "Genre and Poetics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Opera Studies*, ed. Nicholas Till (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 202–224, 208–214.

[38] See Novotný, *Dvě vdovy*, 10. A literal translation would be "a good one from the bone."

Ugolino, while in Novotný's version, Mumlal's ignorance is emphasized and tied to specificities of place:

> **Züngel**
> Mumlal: Everything in my preserve looks beautiful – I cultivate game like wine –
> Karolina: Perhaps to eat them like Ugolino –
> Mumlal: I don't know him –
>
> **Novotný**
> Mumlal: Everything in my preserve looks beautiful. I cultivate game like wines…
> Karolina: Perhaps to eat them, in the way of Ugolino… [*pravzor Ugolina*]
> Mumlal: I don't eat in Kolín!… [*u Kolína*]

Kolín is a town about 75 kilometers east of Prague, and the pun would likely have been comprehensible to audiences even if they, too, could not place the reference to Dante. In Novotný's version, not only does Mumlal not get the reference, but he also does not even recognize it as a person's name, instead thinking it a countryside town. Such a passage not only emphasizes Mumlal's simplemindedness, but also demonstrates his specific Czechness, as only someone from Bohemia would likely know the town of Kolín. It is precisely through gestures like these that the village mode could encode multiple meanings about social categories—in this case, class—within a larger framework of nationalist self-imagining. High-minded references to Dante were not what made one truly Czech, even if Karolina, Anežka, and Ladislav belonged to an invented Czech aristocracy.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Germanization practices implemented by the Habsburgs after the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620 meant that by the mid-nineteenth century, nobility in the Czech lands were almost exclusively German-speaking. This led Czech nationalists to regard them, and nobility in general, as foreigners, even if the nobility themselves exhibited a nuanced,

though different, notion of Bohemian patriotism.[39] Thus, the idea of a Czech-speaking aristocracy was something of a fiction. It was nevertheless a fiction that some writers and artists of Smetana's era desired, as Nejedlý would later point out.[40] From Novotný's careful treatment of the noble characters, it is clear that he too was invested in this fiction. By including Ladislav and Karolina in his village-centric second act, he inverted the usual value hierarchy of social class—the doings of the lower-class characters constitute the main content of the second act, while the aristocrats hang back—but nevertheless permitted his aristocrats to be a part of an incontrovertibly Czech milieu. This move, "Czechifying" the aristocratic characters through the village mode, can also be read as a gambit to create legibility and prestige in the context of empire. By portraying gracious, naturalized, unproblematically Czech nobles, Novotný implicitly acceded to the standards of imperial hierarchical relations, where nobility served in the highest positions of the Habsburg government, and, crucially, retained good relationships with their subjects. *The Two Widows*' representation of legibly Czech nobility, however fictional, in turn suggested the possibility for greater political and social relevance.

Of the four main characters, Mumlal is the one most closely associated with the village and rural life. He therefore provides a number of opportunities for exploring social structures as circumscribed by the village mode in late-nineteenth-century Prague. Among other moments, his conversation with Anežka in Novotný's Act III is particularly revealing regarding ideas of gender. Smetana and Züngel's original 1874 version featured a translation of Mallefille's original monologue for Mumlal's French counterpart, Labaraque. Scandalized by Caroline's

[39] For an overview of the Bohemian nobility and their changing character across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Rita Krueger, *Czech, German, and Noble: Status and National Identity in Habsburg Bohemia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3–22.

[40] See Zdeněk Nejedlý, *Zpěvohry Smetanovy* (Prague: Nakladatelství J. Otty v Praze, 1908), 190.

apparent decision to take up with Edmond (Ladislav), he laments the improper behavior of widows, considers it a result of female emancipation, and worries that women now would venture to the inn instead of serving their husbands at home. The recitatives of 1878 replaced this with a shorter, less explicit passage wherein Mumlal declared that he was merely "not modern" (*nejsem dnešním*).[41] Novotný, however, eliminated this stretch of recitative, restored prose dialogue, and inserted an entirely new version of the longer diatribe against women's emancipation, almost a direct translation of Mallefille's original:

> Well indeed, nowadays women swagger too much above their station… Emancipation, like the village teacher says… Poor man… He will try!… Once women would stand humbly behind our chair, they served and only did what was in front of them. They stayed nicely at home and eagerly focused on housekeeping, they cooked, busied themselves, raised the children and mended stockings. In the meantime, the husband went to work and here and there nipped out for a pint with friends… […] Now it's a whole other story. Now the wife sits at the table with us, and—even worse—at the head of that table, she goes with us to the pub, and has to be at every dance!… I, gracious lady, am still of those old, good times, and I refuse to put up with such things, that is known![42]

Mumlal's rant can be read in a number of ways. It may have been meant to be comic, the grumblings of an old man against modern society. Yet if Mumlal was purely intended to be ridiculous for the purposes of comedy, Novotný would not have put so much weight on fleshing out his character and showing him to be a "dobrák od kosti."

Thus, while Mumlal's little tirade is intentionally extreme in its positions—it followed a French text from the early 1850s after all, further archaicizing the gamekeeper's opinions—it has two important consequences. One, it shows that anxieties about gender roles were very much

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[41] See Očadlík, *Dvě vdovy*, 68–69, 94, and 148–151.

[42] "Ba věru, za nynějších časů ženy se příliš vypínají nad svůj stav… Samá emacipace, jak říká náš pan učitel… chudáček… ten zkusí!… Jindy stávaly ženy pokorně za naší židlí, obsluhovaly a dělaly co nám jen na očích viděly. Hezky se vždy držely doma a horlivě si všímaly hospodářství, vařily, předly, chovaly děti a spravovaly punčochy, mezitím, co muž chodil po svém zaměstnání a sem tam zaskočil na ňákou tu skleničku mezi kamarády… […] Nyní je to jiná historie. Nyní žena sedí za stolem s námi, a ještě k tomu na prvním místě, chodí s námi do hospody, a musí býti na každé merendě!… Já, milostpaní, jsem ještě z těch starých, dobrých časů, a takové věci netrpím, to se ví!" Novotný, *Dvě vdovy*, 65.

relevant to Novotný and his audiences; women's organizations in the Czech lands were very active in lobbying for female emancipation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[43] Two, Mumlal's otherwise positive characterization lends a certain amount of credence to his assertions. The rhetoric of the village mode axiomatically held that positive traditions and older, truer ways of living were preserved in the countryside, and Mumlal's monologue draws on this strand of thought, even if his age and comic role prevented him from being held up as an idealized example of Czech male subjectivity.

Besides the removal of most of *The Two Widows*'s recitatives, the other of Novotný's drastic changes in revising the libretto, and surely the more extreme, was the creation of an entirely new second act featuring all the village-mode elements of the opera. This new act included the opening and closing choruses of the first act, the trio featuring Toník, Lidunka, and Mumlal, and the final chorus and ballet that close the original second act. Novotný explained his reasons for this radical change in the following way:

> The rural dancehall with its harvest festival merriment is, in the newly inserted second act, the true soil of these happy scenes of national life. Earlier they sadly languished as inserts in different locations [throughout the opera]. Here in a folk environment, however, they have their natural place and operate, in all their beauty and strength, in this unified current of national music.[44]

Simply having village-mode elements in the opera was not enough for Novotný—they all had to be concentrated in one place so that their effect would be intensified. This new act allowed for a literal staging of a village with all its visual appeal. On top of that, Novotný further embellished his new rural act with other gestures to emphasize the rural and folk trappings of the action. As

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[43] For more on Czech women's organizing at this time, see Jana Malínská, *"My byly, jsme, a budeme!": České ženské hnutí 1860–1914 a idea českého národa* (Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2013).

[44] "Venkovská tančirna s obžinkovým veselím jest v nově vsutém druhém jednání pravou půdou veselých těch scen z národního života, které dříve jako vložky na různých místech smutně živořily, kdežto zde v ovzduší lidovém mají své přirozené místo a působí v celé své kráse i síle v jednotném tom proudu hudby národní." Novotný, *Dvě vdovy*, 9–10.

with the staging of the National Theater's Vienna production of *The Bartered Bride*, Novotný specified supernumerary roles that pantomimed village life for the second act, further contributing to the air of verisimilitude. These figures included the mayor, blacksmith, teacher, and "other members of the countryside delegation."[45] In rearranging and updating the opera to serve newly relevant Czech and imperial tastes for village pageantry, Novotný was adapting a long-established tradition of operatic practice for his local context; in Paris, Royer and Vaëz had significantly altered the plot, setting, and conclusion of *Lucia di Lammermoor* to conform to what they termed specifically French dramatic conventions.[46]

Toník and Lidunka also received updates so as to flesh out their characters and provide them with deeper connections to village life. In Züngel's version they are referred to simply as a "peasant lad" and his bride.[47] Mumlal's monologue, freshly written for the opening of Act II, outlines their new relationship: Lidunka is now the daughter of the village innkeeper and Toník's fiancée, while Toník is now apprentice gamekeeper to Mumlal.[48] Novotný creates a small subplot with these details, whereby Karolina blesses Toník and Lidunka's marriage, elevates Toník to gamekeeper, but in turn also elevates Mumlal to administrator of her estate. Among other small details, Novotný changes the text of Toník, Lidunka, and Mumlal's trio so that the two young peasants refer to the gamekeeper as "pantáta" rather than by his name, a somewhat archaic term that refers specifically to an older, staid, rural man, but which also has connotations

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[45] "…jiní členové venkovské honorace." See Novotný, *Dvě vdovy*, 57.

[46] See Harris-Warrick, "*Lucia* Goes to Paris," 205–206.

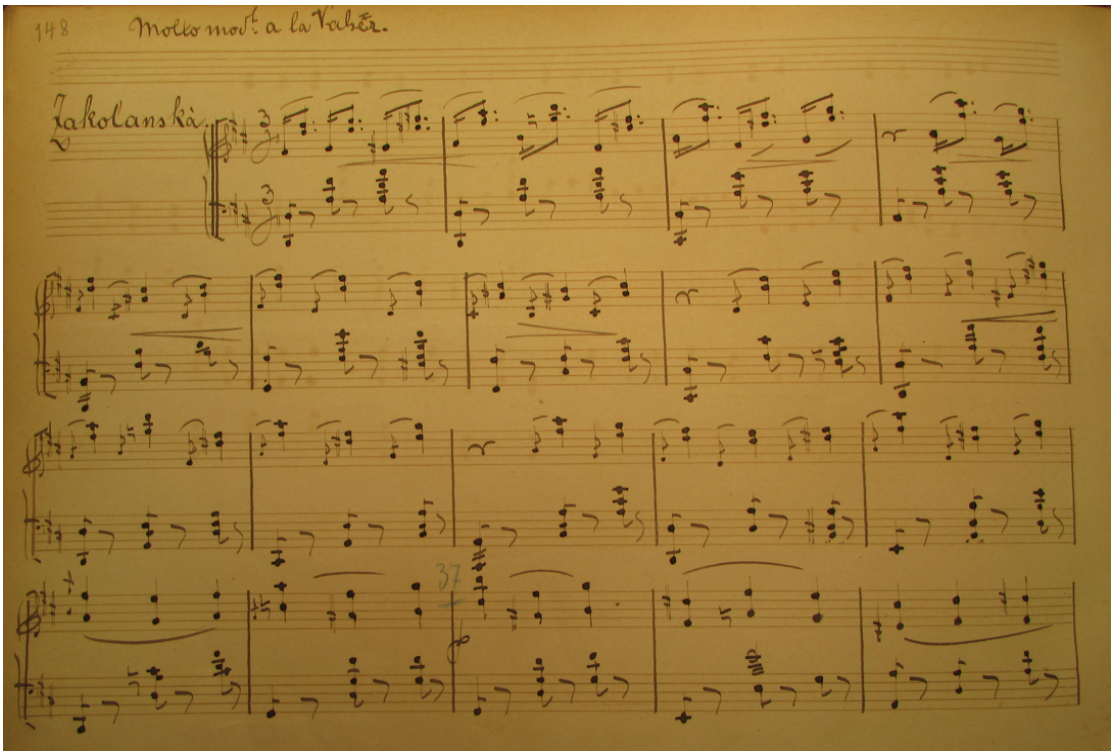
[47] "Selský hoch" and "jeho nevěsta." Mirko Očadlík, the editor of the critical edition of Züngel's libretto, notes that the theater placards termed Lidunka a "peasant lass," and when paired together the pair was referred to as betrothed, not married. See Očadlík, *Dvě vdvoy*, 35 and 83.

[48] See Novotný, *Dvě vdovy*, 52–53. Novotný also abbreviates Lidunka's name as Lidka throughout his libretto; by utilizing the broader Czech tradition of nicknaming here, he facilitates an air of familial coziness.

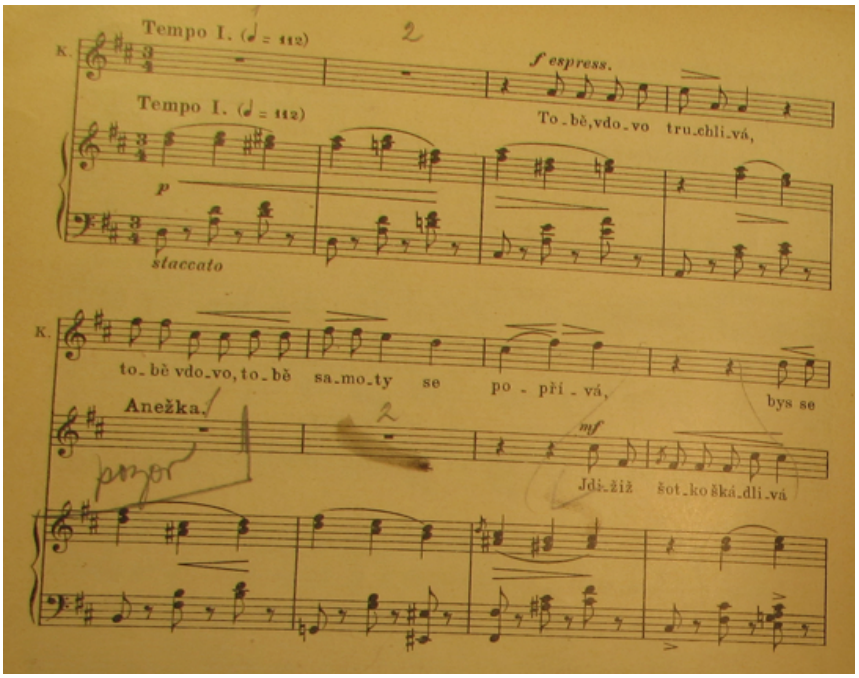
of lower-class status and portliness. Similar minor gestures, when considered as a whole, show Novotný's thoroughness in adding village-mode embellishments to Züngel and Smetana's 1878 version.

Finally, this same impulse led to Novotný's single interference with Smetana's musical material: his addition of a new dance number, the *zakolanská*, to the plot of the opera. According to Züngel's original libretto, the *zakolanská* was a dance in which the partners gave each other a kiss in the course of dancing; Karolina and Ladislav danced it offstage during Act II, which Mumlal duly reported to Anežka, making her jealous.[49] Novotný staged the *zakolanská* for two reasons: one, it clarified some of the motivations in the larger plot by showing the audience the action instead of telling them about it, and two, it provided further opportunities for dancing, which was an important part of projecting village-mode character in Novotný's new second act. The music for the *zakolanská* originally underpinned the recitative "Stůjte, pane!" (no. 11), which featured Karolina, Anežka, and Ladislav. Novotný considered the latter half of this stretch of recitative to be superfluous and cut it. From the excised material he extracted forty seven bars of music in D major, marked in the 1893 manuscript prompter's score as "Molto moderato a la Valser" (See Example 3.1 for an extract from the 1893 score and Example 3.2 for the source passage in the published vocal score from 1914.)

[49] Toník also refers to the dance in his trio with Lidunka and Mumlal (no. 14) as a way to get a kiss from his fiancée. In Novotný's new ordering of the libretto, this happens before Mumlal reports to Anežka that Karolina and Ladislav danced the zakolanská (no. 13), further clarifying the characters' motivations. See Table 3.2.



Example 3.1: Bedřich Smetana, *The Two Widows*, Opening of the 1893 Zakolanská.[50]



Example 3.2: Bedřich Smetana, *The Two Widows*, Novotný's source for the Zakolanská music.[51]

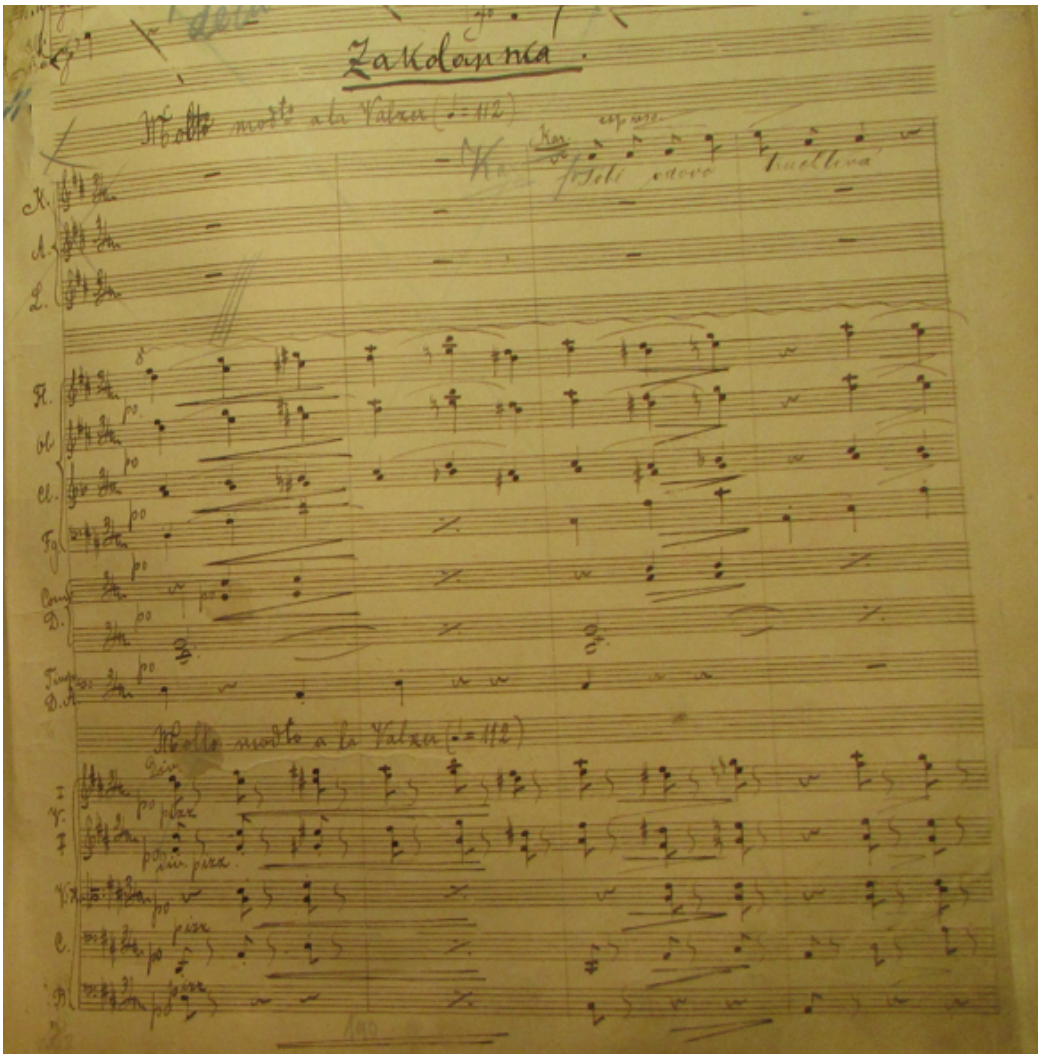
[50] Bedřich Smetana, *Dvě vdovy. Komická opera o třech jednáních*, 1893. Manuscript piano-vocal prompter's score, inventory number 6/22, Music Archive of the National Theater, Prague.

[51] Bedřich Smetana, *Dvě vdovy. Definitivní Smetanova úprava s recitativy z roku 1877* (Prague: Umělecká beseda v Praze, 1914). Printed piano-vocal score, inventory number 6/16, Music Archive of the National Theater, Prague.

The changes Novotný (or possibly his copyist) made to Smetana's music are quite minor; they included adding embellishments to the right-hand melody and expanding some octave doublings in the left hand, probably to help the music stand alone as a dance piece rather than as underpinning for recitative. A manuscript full score copied in 1884, moreover, bears markings indicating that it was used in the performance of Novotný's version with full orchestra, and no emendations have been made to the orchestral texture of the zakolanská in that exemplar (Example 3.3). This suggests that there may have been no actual changes to the music of the zakolanská in the course of performances of Novotný's *Two Widows*, and if there were, they were minor enough not to require modification of the conductor's score.

In a way, this lack of any significant changes to Smetana's musical material testified both to Novotný's desire to intensify the village mode in his new revision and to the former's status as a national composer. Indeed, when discussing the source of the *zakolanská* music, Novotný praised Smetana in the preface to his new libretto: "Where did I colled the music for the 'Zakolanská?' In this opera, Smetana wrote so much music that I found everything I needed in this inexhaustible score."[52] Novotný needed music for a new dance to fill out his new second act, which presented a rural dancehall in a "unified current of national music," so he expediently shifted musical material around to achieve this with little regard for the actual character of the music. The passage Novotný made use of, however, had no specifically Czech associations or markings in its original incarnation: he did not, for example, borrow music from a different Smetana opera or orchestrate a piano version of a nationally marked dance like a *skočná* or polka.

[52] "Kde jsem sebral hudbu k 'Zakolanské?' Smetana v této opeře napsal tolik hudby, že jsem v nevyčerpatelné té partituře našel vše, co jsem potřeboval." Novotný, *Dvě vdovy*, 13.



Example 3.3: Bedřich Smetana, *The Two Widows*, Manuscript full score with added "Zakolanská" title.[53]

Borrowing music from other operas by the same composer was a common practice for operatic adaptions. For example, in adapting Mozart's *Don Giovanni* for the Parisian Académie Royale in 1834, Louis Véron interpolated numbers from *Cosí fan tutte*, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, *Idomeneo*, and even the Requiem to help conform to the ubiquitous five-act structure of contemporary French grand opera.[54] Novotný's use of a relatively unremarkable passage from

[53] Bedřich Smetana, *Dvě vdovy*, 1884. Manuscript full score, inventory number 6/P1-II, Music Archive of the National Theater, Prague.

[54] See Katharine Ellis, "Rewriting *Don Giovanni*, or 'The Thieving Magpies,'" *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 119, no. 2 (1994): 212–250.

within *The Two Widows* indicated that, in his eyes at least, Smetana's music was sufficiently "national" to reasonably support villagers during a folk dance, even when taken from a recitative featuring aristocratic characters. Moreover, because there was "so much" in the score, he did not need to go beyond its confines in search of other music to fill out his new conception of the opera. This suggests a strangely dissonant view of the score as work-concept: while the borders of the score itself were inviolable, the interior juxtaposition of the numbers and the connective tissue between them were open to drastic modification. Such a disconnect would give reviewers, if not audiences, pause.

The changes detailed above would represent a serious intervention into the character of an operatic work in almost any context, but these are only a few of the many extensive changes Novotný made. Others included retexting the chorus "Musí nás mít Pan Bůh rád" (no. 17) so that it would make sense as the finale of Act II rather than the whole opera—commentators could and would take issue with this, as it fundamentally changed the relationship between text and music that Smetana had created. Since Anežka was offstage for the entirety of his Act II, Novotný replaced her with an unspecified "lady's maid" (*komorná*) so her solo line would be covered in the chorus "Mumlale, aj, tu vás máme" (no. 7), which reflects on the nature of love. This move also switched the dramatic focus of the chorus from Anežka's hidden ardor for Ladislav to a more generalized paean to love and to the Toník and Lidunka subplot. The list of seemingly small changes to the text goes on, underpinning the more radical revisions to the overall character of the opera.

Theatrical Practicalities and True Believers: The Reception of Novotný's *Two Widows*

While all the reviews of Novotný's new version of *The Two Widows* at least touched on the drastic nature of his revisions, many critics regarded the changes as positive or even necessary. Emanuel Chvála, a composer, critic, and friend of Novotný, applauded his solution and credited him with appropriate piety to "the master's immeasurably valuable score, the artistic requirements of which he considered wholly inviolable."[55] For Chvála, the necessity of the revisions was due to the incompatibility of the French source text with the explicitly Czech village elements. According to him, the "folk village scenes were forced into" the plot of the original, which led to irregularities and problems in Smetana's two versions.[56] Instead, Novotný's revision achieved two important improvements. First, the "musically excellent village scenes" were now integrated into the larger plot, and second, their consolidation in the new second act justified their role within the opera.[57] Behind these words we can distinguish an important motivation: Chvála considered it to be of the utmost importance that these scenes were preserved and made to work with the larger plot rather than removing them entirely, for their music and the village character were highly valuable in his eyes. Moreover, such village scenes would undoubtedly contribute to the opera's success and therefore secure its place in the repertoire of the National Theater. Chvála's argument suggests the relevance and popularity of operatic depictions of village life in the wake of *The Bartered Bride*'s triumph in Vienna.

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[55] "…s náležitou pietou ku nezměrně cenné partituře mistrově, jejíž umělecké požadavky předem považoval za nedotknutelné." Emanuel Chvála, "Zpěvohra," *Národní politika* 15 April 1893, 4.

[56] "ději… vnuceny byly vesnické sceny lidové." Chvála, "Zpěvohra," 4.

[57] "Potřeba upravení textu opery v tom směru, aby hudebně znamenité sceny vesnické děj kusu netlačily a nějakým způsobem v něm byly odůvodněny, stala se tím nalehavější, že "Dvě vdovy" ani v přepracování Smetanově nenalezly tolik přízně, aby se byly mohly trvale udržeti na repertoiru." Chvála, "Zpěvohra," 4.

František Hejda, the critic whose comparison of Novotný to an intrepid doctor were cited at the opening of this chapter, likewise considered the revision a great achievement. He judged the opera as "forever saved" by the revision and predicted its gaining a permanent place in the repertory, even if he was unsettled by Novotný's decision to take the duet between Mumlal and Ladislav, remove the words, and use it as the prelude to the new Act II.[58] Overall, however, he praised the second act and the way in which its subsidiary plot fleshed out some of the more schematic aspects of the old libretto. Hejda singled out the staging of the "national custom of dancing the Zakolanská" as a particular benefit of the new production, as this would have a much greater effect on the audience than simply hearing about it in recitative.[59] Both Novotný's clarification of the opera's plot and his concentration of the depictions of rural life into the second act moved Hejda to declare the production's success "indisputable" (*nepopiratelný*).

Karel Knittl, a music critic, pedagogue, and later an administrator of the Prague Conservatory under Dvořák, wrote two different approving reviews of the new production for the journals *Osvěta* and *Světozor*. They shed light not only on what the critic considered positive about it, but also on the production's connections to broader concerns. Knittl's longer article in *Osvěta* covered several months' worth of musical developments in the Czech lands, but began by recalling the triumph of the Czech National Theater in Vienna. The passage described Smetana's dramatic works, chief among them *The Bartered Bride*, as "the core of our musical army," echoing earlier comments about the victorious National Theater as Hussites for a new age, not to mention reinforcing the axis of Czech-German relations in the Habsburg lands and abroad as

[58] František Hejda, "Národní divadlo v Praze *Dvě vdovy*," *Dalibor* 15, nos. 25–26 (22 April 1893): 195.

[59] "národní obyčej tančení 'Zákolanské…'" Hejda, "Národní divadlo v Praze," 196.

fundamentally oppositional (see Chapter 2).[60] A few pages later, Knittl followed Hejda's example and praised Novotný for fixing the "unnaturalness and incoherence of the plot" of Smetana and Züngel's 1878 version, "which overflowed with impossibilities."[61] Such strong terms were evidently necessary, as voices had already begun to speak out against Novotný's version; Knittl both began and ended his discussion of the new *Two Widows* with a defense of Novotný.

Knittl's article for *Světozor*, written earlier than his broad overview in *Osvěta*, was also positive, likening Novotný to an "experienced surgeon" (*zkušený chirurg*) in his handling of the revisions. More interestingly, however, Knittl made an important distinction about what he considered the intended audience for the new version: although Novotný's work "was not about saving the life of Smetana's opera, which through its merit, sweetness, and individuality was kept alive in the hearts of every progress-loving Czech musician, the opera was dead to the greater world, to the wide strata of the audience."[62] Novotný's changes, Knittl asserted, ensured that now both musicians and non-musicians could appreciate *The Two Widows*. The new version of the opera, moreover, would "soon be the envy of foreign lands, like the ever-fresh *Bartered Bride*."[63]

Knittl's *Světozor* review adumbrates many of the central issues at play in the story of Novotný's revisions to *The Two Widows*. He explicitly tied it to the recent success of *The*

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[60] "jádro to hudebního voje našeho…" Karel Knittl, "Hudební rozhledy*," Osvěta* 23, no. 9 (1893): 824.

[61] "nepřirozenost a nesouvislost děje, který oplýval nemožnostmi." Knittl, "Hudební rozhledy," 832.

[62] "Nešlo zde sice o zachránění života zpěvohře Smetanově, ta svou hodnotou, svou lahodou a svérázností žila v srdcích všeho pokrokumilovného hudebnictva českého: ale ona nežila pro veliký svět, pro široké vrstvy obecenstva." Karel Knittl, "Opera. Nová úprava zpěvohry Dvě vdovy od B. Smetany," *Světozor* 27, no. 23 (21 April 1893): 275.

[63] "…květ, který nám v brzku cizina tak záviděti bude, jako věčně svěží Prodanou nevěstu." Knittl, "Opera," 275.

Bartered Bride and that opera's new international profile; for Knittl, Novotný's revision would undoubtedly lead to the same fame for *The Two Widows* outside the Czech lands in addition to granting the opera a permanent place in the National Theater's repertory. Novotný's appeals to the village mode formed a central part in this recasting, as was evident in his own writings and those of other critics. Knittl's review, moreover, set the stage for the backlash against Novotný's revision and the terms along which the production would be criticized: the "dumbing down" of the new version so that it would appeal to a wider audience instead of just trained musicians, on the one hand, and the axiomatic veneration of Smetana, which had as its corollary a view of his works as sacrosanct and inviolable, on the other. The negative reviews and eventual downfall of Novotný's revisions illuminate the process of canonization of Smetana and his operas in the Czech lands, which was in turn intimately bound up with his post-Vienna rise in popularity.

Such concerns were already latent in many of the 1893 reviews of Novotný's version of *The Two Widows*, especially when they referred to the purity of Smetana's music. Josef Bohuslav Foerster, the composer whom we met in Chapter 2 in his day job as music critic for *Národní listy*, was more ambivalent than most about the need for the new revisions. On the whole, Foerster approved of Novotný's attempts to fix what the former saw as dramatic insufficiencies in the opera's libretto, especially through the staging of the subsidiary plot in the second act and the concentration of the village-mode elements there. However, Foerster termed three elements of the new production "alarming" (*povážlivý*). First, Novotný's sweeping reordering of the numbers throughout the opera disrupted the flow of the music as created by Smetana, and especially its key relationships and motivic interplay. Second, Foerster objected to the cutting of the Mumlal/Ladislav duet and the use of its music for the prelude to the second act.

Finally, Foerster took issue with the change of text in the final chorus of Novotný's second act because it eliminated the original connection between text and music, which "with a composer of Smetana's character… was all the more daring."[64] In the original 1878 version, part of the passage in question reads "Musí nás mit, musí nás mit/pán Bůh rád/že nás živí, že nás živí/dosavád!"[65] Novotný changed this so it referred to the action of his second act instead of broadcasting general rejoicing: "Hubičky jsou sladké, svěží/jako med!/Tanec se nám, jak náleží,/dobře zved!"[66] While the music is completely unchanged, Foerster did have a point here, if a relatively minor one. Smetana's text setting accurately followed the pattern of accents in the Czech, but Novotný makes a mistake—he sets the word "náleží" so that the metrical accent falls on the syllable "-le-" instead of the correct "ná-" (Example 3.4). Foester's criticisms proved prescient, even though he would later largely retract them. Though Novotný had made no changes to Smetana's actual notes, commentators would find ways to show that he had gone too far interfering with the music, whether through upsetting larger key relationships or text-music interactions.

Whatever critics thought of Novotný's revisions, audiences seemed to like the new production, and while not as popular as *The Bartered Bride* or *Cavalleria rusticana*, it was performed 24 times between 1893 and 1899. Thereafter, however, major changes began to be made to the production, unraveling Novotný's work. The ever-increasing veneration of Smetana was ultimately to spell the doom of Novotný's revisions, whatever the popularity of the village elements he had added or the apparent success of his dramaturgical revisions. It was the

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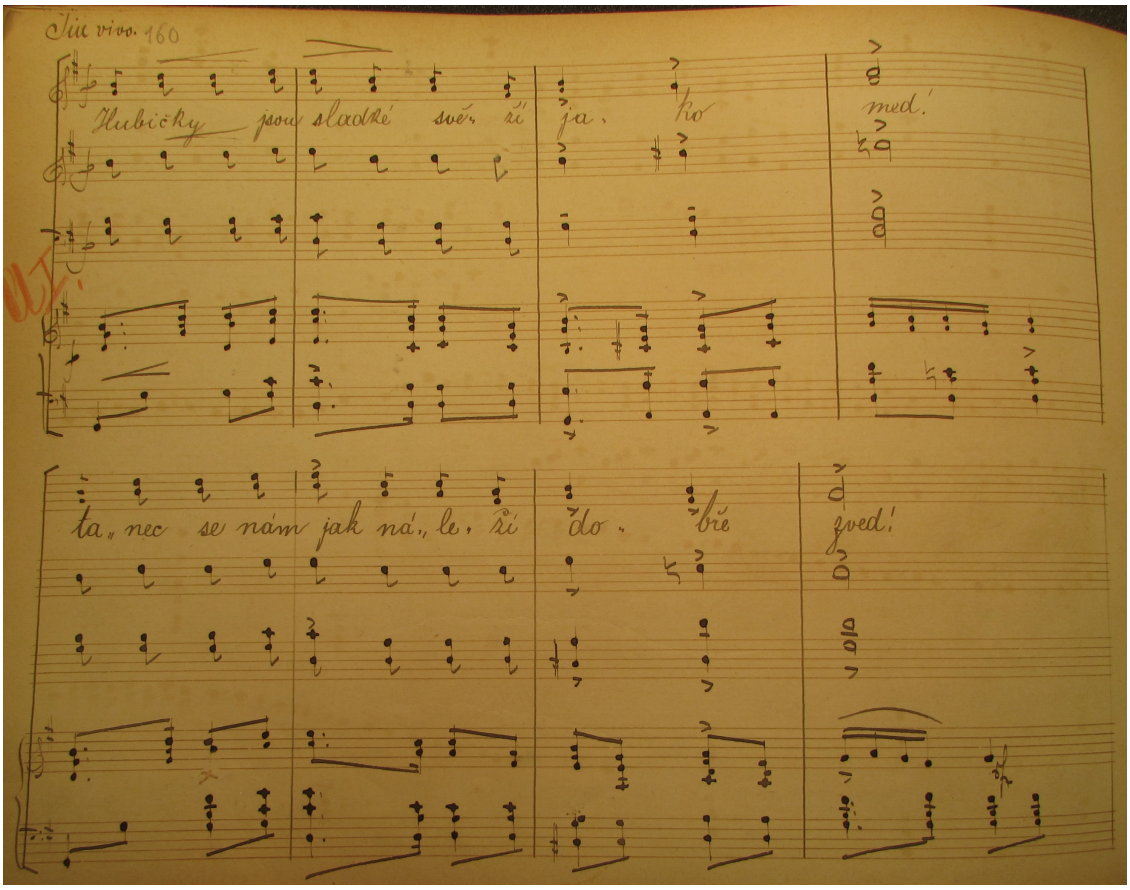
[64] "u skladatele rázu Smetanova… jest tím odvážnější." Josef Bohuslav Foerster, "Hudba. Dvě vdovy," *Národní listy*, 15 April 1893, 4.

[65] "Lord God must love us/as he has supported us up to now!" Očadlík, *Dvě vdovy*, 80.

[66] "Kisses are sweet and fresh like honey/Dancing's turned out well for us, as it should!" Novotný, *Dvě vdovy*, 61.

musicologist and critic Otakar Hostinský who launched the first explicit salvo against Novotný in the journal *Lumír* in September 1893. In a long footnote to an article primarily about the performance history of Smetana's operas, written in connection with the then-ongoing Smetana cycle, Hostinský stated that, despite all the good intentions of the National Theater in attempting to rehabilitate *The Two Widows*, he could "in no way be friendly" (*nikterak spřáteliti se*) toward the new production.



Example 3.4: Bedřich Smetana, *The Two Widows*, Novotný's rewritten text for the finale of his Act II.[67]

For Hostinský, the integrity of Smetana's music was paramount; the musicologist would not have objected, he said, to the more thorough adjustments and corrections to the libretto,

[67] Bedřich Smetana, *Dvě vdovy. Komická opera o třech jednáních*, 1893. Manuscript piano-vocal prompter's score, inventory number 6/22, Music Archive of the National Theater, Prague.

especially the use of spoken dialogue, but the actual score would have had to remain untouched. He thus objected strongly to the reordering of the entire opera, calling it a "far too daring experiment."[68] He again pointed to the inviolability of the overall musical structure, calling Smetana an "excellent artist with a clear sense for musical architecture."[69] The best solution, Hostinský concluded, was to let the composer's original version stand on its own: "Smetana's music, even in the original order of numbers (be it in its first form or in its later revision) would have asserted itself through its own merit in as complete a musical and scenic performance as possible."[70] Such a position indicted Novotný on the counts of interfering with Smetana's music and of disregarding the composer's genius in creating overarching tonal relationships.

Rather than regard *The Two Widows* as a living theatrical piece, as Novotný had done in his attempt to make it more palatable to contemporary audiences, Hostinský was advocating a view of composers and musical works as sacred or museum-piece objects. Such a view aided Hostinský's larger project of establishing Smetana as the founding father of modern Czech music in the broader narrative of Czech music history.[71] Ironically, both Novotný and Hostinský held up Smetana as an exemplary artist and implicitly agreed that his operas could be used to project a vision of Czech character domestically and abroad. Novotný turned to the village mode in an attempt to make *The Two Widows* even more effective in this role, while for Hostinský (and

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[68] "zdá se mi býti… příliš odvážným pokusem…" Otakar Hostinský, "Něco o osudech zpěvoher Smetanových," *Lumír* 21, no. 27 (20 September 1893): 323.

[69] "…vůči umělci jemným smyslem pro hudební architektoniku vynikajícímu…" Hostinský, "Něco o osudech zpěvoher Smetanových," 323.

[70] "Hudba Smetanova i v původním pořádku čísel (nechť již v prvotní formě své nebo v pozdějším spracování) byla by při dokonalém dle možnosti provedení hudebním a scenickém vlastní hodnotou pronikla…" Hostinský, "Něco o osudech zpěvoher Smetanových," 323.

[71] In this Hostinský's ideas accord quite closely with similar trends in the rest of Europe towards canonization and the preservation of repertoire pieces. See, for example, William Gibbons, *Building the Operatic Museum: Eighteenth-Century Opera in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2013), 1–7.

slightly later, Nejedlý), Smetana's music was always already perfectly suited to the job. This accords with what Anthony D. Smith has explored when discussing the sacred underpinnings of nationalist thought (see Chapter 1). The exaltation of Smetana followed the model of what Smith termed the "fallen patriot-hero" that itself replicates classical examples and the story of Christ.[72] For his apologists, Smetana's character was unimpeachable, and his works were testament to a genius conquering illness and death. His heroic self-sacrifice, the plot went, led him to create the foundations of Czech music in his operas while beset by a critical press and his own deafness; that he died impoverished in a mental asylum only added to the pathos of this image.[73] In this line of argument, it would be committing a sin against the nation itself were one to interfere with Smetana's patrimonial gift.

While Hostinský did not go so far as to accuse Novotný in these terms, his negative opinion of Novotný's revisions was in the ascendant. On 29 May 1899, Adolf Čech, the music director of the National Theater, sent Novotný a letter with a list of revisions to be made to his version. This updated version was first performed on 18 September of that year. It was to be a compromise between Smetana's original and Novotný's revision. The three-act structure was preserved, but all numbers were returned to their original order. Some recitatives were restored but the majority of Novotný's prose dialogue kept.[74] Evidently this pleased no one, as multiple criticisms of the revised *Two Widows* emerged in various sources. Nejeldý would later suggest that his teacher Fibich had already pushed to have Smetana's original version restored in 1892,

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[72] See Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 230–238.

[73] For some of the prehistory of Hostinský's Smetana crusades, and of the foundations of the Smetana myth, see Kelly St. Pierre, *Bedřich Smetana*, 48–79.

[74] See fond Václav Juda Novotný, boxes 1 and 3, Literary archive, Memorial of National Literature, Prague.

during a rehearsal of the Novotný adaptation.[75] When Fibich was made dramaturg of the National Theater in early 1899 this conflict may have flared up again, but it seems that he was overruled by Čech, resulting in the compromise.[76]

Nejedlý, who had once been Hostinský's student and counted him among his most influential teachers, inveighed against the Novotný version in his lectures on Smetana at Charles University in Prague, which were published as a collection in 1908. From the very beginning of his section on *The Two Widows*, it is clear that Nejedlý abhorred Novotný's revisions: "*The Two Widows* is one of Smetana's most delightful works. Unfortunately, this precious work is little known in its genuine beauty, because the thing that the National Theater performs under that title is not at all Smetana's work, if by a dramatic work we understand something more than a series of songs."[77] For Nejedlý, Smetana was incontrovertibly a genius of the didactic, fallen patriot-hero type. In his 1903 *History of Czech Music*, he characterized Smetana as "the 'father of Czech music,' a reformer, gifted 'with endless moral strength and purity.'"[78] Thus, in interfering with the work of the genius-hero, Novotný's revisions could not but ruin Smetana's original opera.

Nejedlý's criticisms held to the same models as some earlier commentators. Novotný's decision to reorder the numbers, eliminate recitative, and change texts meant that, even though he had not written a single new note, he had nevertheless interfered with Smetana's music. "If

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[75] See Zdeněk Nejedlý, *Zpěvohry Smetanovy* (Prague: Nakladatelství J. Otty v Praze, 1908), 207–208.

[76] The repudiation of Novotný in favor of the Fibich/Hostinský position may also have been part of a larger power struggle between Old Czech and Young Czech political forces over the leadership of the National Theater; the latter would eventually win out, resulting in the ousting of Šubert and the National Theater Association in 1900. See my discussion in Chapter 4.

[77] "'Dvě vdovy' jsou z nejrozkošnějších Smetanových děl. Bohužel toto vzácné dílo jest právě ve své ryzí kráse málo známo, neboť to, co pod tímto titulem provozuje Národní divadlo, není vůbec dílo Smetanovo, rozumíme-li dramatickým dílem něco více než řadu zpěvů." Nejedlý, *Zpěvohry Smetanovy*, 188.

[78] See Jiří Křes'tan, *Zdeněk Nejedlý: Politik a vědec v osamění* (Prague: Nakladatelství Paseka, 2012), 44.

Smetana's original has a weak text but Smetana's masterful musical style," Nejedlý wrote, "then the revision still has a weak text and no musical style. Smetana rescues even the weakest libretto precisely through his style…"[79] Nejedlý's long analysis of the opera seems designed to refute each of Novotný's various premises for particular revisions. In almost every instance, the crux of the former's argument was that Smetana was such a genius that any change—whether getting rid of recitatives, changing the position of Anežka's big aria, or more deeply characterizing Toník and Lidunka—would inevitably interrupt the dramatic, musical, and poetic foundations of the opera.

It is thus no surprise that Nejedlý expressed particular disdain for Novotný's decision to move all the choruses and "folk" scenes into a new second act. Yet despite his reservations, Nejedlý was just as enthusiastic as other commentators when it came to the effectiveness of these scenes vis-à-vis the village mode: in the case of the chorus "Jitro krásné," he stated, "this whole scene smells directly of the countryside and its hues, drenched in sunshine."[80] While he held that the choruses were not a "narrative factor" (*dějový činitel*) in *The Two Widows* as they had been in *The Bartered Bride*, he maintained that "the scenes of the underlying plot play out in a countryside chateau, the whole mood of the countryside is here only a background for the plot as such; Smetana, however, knew superbly how to take full advantage of this background."[81] The village mode was an important part of *The Two Widows* for Nejeldý as well as Novotný, but they differed in how it should be expressed in this particular opera.

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[79] "Má-li Smetanův originál slabý text, ale mistrovský hudební sloh Smetanův, má úprava text sice také slabý, ale při tom žádný hudební sloh. Smetana právě svým slohem zachraňuje i najslabší libretto…" Nejedlý, *Zpěvohry Smetanovy*, 188.

[80] "…celá ta scéna přímo voní venkovem a jeho barvami, sluncem prozářenými." Nejedlý, *Zpěvohry Smetanovy*, 203.

[81] "Scény vlastního děje odehrávají se na venkovském zámku, celá nálada venkova jest tu jen pozadí pro celý děj; Smetana však dovedl nálady tohoto prozadí znamenitě využitkovati." Nejedlý, *Zpěvohry Smetanovy*, 202.

Novotný and the National Theater Association felt the need to revise Smetana both in order to ensure the success of all his operas domestically as well as to gain further international recognition. In other words, they were trying to make him competitive with the operatic repertoire both abroad and at home. Novotný's strategy to accomplish this lay in streamlining the action of *The Two Widows* by drawing on the village mode so successful in *The Bartered Bride*. For Hostinský and Nejedlý there was no need of this because, in their eyes, Smetana was already enough of an apotheosized composer-genius to obviate updating. In this respect, Novotný, Šubert, and others like them represented an older view of Czech music and its place in Europe, while Nejedlý and Hostinský brought the conversation more into line with discourses of composer glorification and music-historical narrativization happening in the rest of Europe. This is evident in Nejedlý's key pronouncement regarding the value of Smetana's salon opera: "In *The Two Widows* Smetana is *the creator of the modern salon comedy*, and not just Czech ones. No musical literature yet has such a comedy from the present day as we have in this opera of Smetana."[82] If this was indeed the case, the logic of musical heroism and operatic canonization would dictate a return to Smetana's final version to allow the opera to take its place at the vanguard of European music.

Novotný, for his part, held to more practical concerns: namely, filling seats in the National Theater. He published a set of retrospective articles in the journal *Hudební revue* in early 1908—after Nejedlý publicly gave his *Two Widows* lecture condemning Novotný, but likely before it was published. In the final installment of these recollections, Novotný engaged in a full-throated defense of his actions:

[82] "Smetana jest ve 'Dvou vdovách' *tvůrce moderní salonní veselohry*, a to nejenom české. Žádná hudební literature nemá dosud takové veselohry ze současné doby jako máme my v této Smetanově zpěvohře." Zdeněk Nejedlý, *Zpěvohry Smetanovy*, 191. Italics in the original.

> It is well known that my revisions had a sensational success, that the opera still holds on in the repertoire, and that the revisions fulfilled their duty: they attracted the audience, they added to the ranks of enthusiasts for our great master, they filled the theater's box office, and they benefitted Smetana's heirs. Director Šubert insisted that the performance of revisions to Smetana's operas should win the widest circles of the audience for those operas; next to Šubert, I too can thus take some credit for this popularization of Smetana's art, and even my enemies must concede this to me.[83]

Novotný mentions Hostinský and Foerster by name as opponents of his revisions, though he acknowledges that Foerster later changed his mind about Novotný after seeing the unauthorized German Hamburg version. Given the timing and the self-righteous tone of this passage, is it not hard to imagine that Novotný was also responding to Nejedlý. However, even while defending his revisions from the point of view of a theatrical professional, Novotný still held that the importance Smetana's version was paramount. In his opinion, the fault for having to resort to such revisions lay with the audience, not with some misguided impulse on the part of himself, Šubert, or the National Theater. Novotný concluded his recollections with the following: "And the time will come when our people would enjoy getting to know the original version of the revised operas, as our fathers heard them… perhaps we will even hear *The Two Widows* in its most original form from 1874. Interest for this will exist in the audience of a new age."[84] Novotný's audience for a new age would eventually get to enjoy the restored 1878 version of

[83] "Známo, že tato má úprava měla úspěch sensační, že na repertoiru stále se drží a svou povinnost že vykonala: přilákala obecenstvo, rozmnožila řady nadšenců pro velkého našeho mistra, naplnila pokladnu divadelní a také dědicům Smetanovým prospěla. Ředitel Šubert na provedení úprav Smetanových oper naléhal, aby jim získal nejšírší kruhy obecenstva; mám tedy vedle Šuberta o toto popularisování Smetanova umění také já kousek zásluhy a tu mi musí přiznati i nepřítel." V. J. Novotný, "Z mých vzpomínek na Bedřicha Smetanu," *Hudební revue* 1, no. 3 (March 1908): 133.

[84] "A přijde doba, kdy naši lidé rádi by poznali původní znění upravených oper, jak je slyšeli naši otcové… a "Dvě vdovy" že uslyšíme třeba i v nejpůvodnější podobě z r. 1874. Zájem pro to bude v obecenstvu nové doby." Novotný, "Z mých vzpomínek," 134.

The Two Widows in 1923, under the baton of Otakar Ostrčil, who as head conductor of the National Theater enjoyed Nejedlý's support and shared some of his aesthetic views.[85]

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The history of *The Two Widows* reflects the changing appreciations of Czech opera in Prague. The ascendancy of the rural as one of the defining aspects of Czech comic opera brought *The Two Widows* success both during Smetana's lifetime, with his deliberately national additions of 1878, and in the aftermath of Vienna in 1892, when the popularity of the Czech village was confirmed by its success with international audiences. Novotný relied on his theatrical experience and familiarity with Prague's musical culture to fashion a version of Smetana's opera that, through the village mode, would be more Czech, more dramatically coherent, and, as a result, more appealing to audiences. His use of tried and true revision strategies, already employed by artists in other European capitals, reveal the resonances of both local and imperial discourses—at the same time, however, they were strategies that were popular much earlier in the nineteenth century, which may have been in part what doomed Novotný's efforts.

This reception history also allows us to trace the progress of the consecration of Smetana and his works, from the composer's embattled nadir in 1874 to his ascension to the status of unimpeachable artistic hero-genius in the early twentieth century. Novotný's *Two Widows* stands as a testament to the public veneration of the composer, especially in the wake of Vienna, as all commentators agreed that Smetana's operas should be performed for the public. Novotný initially felt that it was necessary to update *The Two Widows* almost as a pious act toward the composer, a way of ensuring his legacy for future generations. That others would then denigrate

[85] For more on the relationship between Ostrčil and Nejedlý around this time, see Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague*, 146–150 and 187–190.

Novotný's efforts testifies both to changing appreciations of the integrity of operatic works and the increasingly sacrosanct status of Smetana.

Finally, the case of *The Two Widows* also reveals some of the ways in which Czech opera was not an isolated cultural phenomenon, but a repertoire that was influenced by trends in a larger European context. The question of cosmopolitan participation versus nationalist isolationism in Czech opera would become a highly fraught one for the remainder of the Habsburg Empire and well into the lifespan of the First Czechoslovak Republic. The ongoing debate would likewise have ramifications for operatic life in Prague, especially as enacted through the language of the village mode.

CHAPTER 4: THE PEASANT PRIME MINISTER AND THE SACRISTAN'S STEPDAUGHTER: VISIONS OF THE VILLAGE MODE AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY AND BEYOND

As with other major cities in Europe, the cultural life in the *fin-de-siècle* Czech lands contained a dizzying array of new artistic, musical, and aesthetic currents. The influential modernist writer and critic Karel Teige later described the 1890s as "the nervous, chaotic, and simultaneously exhausted and convulsive end of the century, in which so many unresolvable political, social, national, cultural, and artistic problems clashed."[1] The beginning of the decade saw the electoral victory of the Young Czechs in 1891 with their attendant emphasis on nationalist issues, though they still wished to remain within the larger Austrian state. In 1892, the triumph of *The Bartered Bride* in Vienna validated the inward-looking, essentialist tenets of the village mode while simultaneously encouraging cosmopolitan, outward-looking attitudes.[2]

In the autumn of 1895, a remarkable document was published in the pages of the journal *Rozhledy*, entitled "Manifesto of the Czech Modern." Authored by important figures in Czech literary and artistic life, including František Xaver Šalda and Josef Svatopluk Machar, it called polemically for a new individuality and truth in art, rejecting that of the past.[3] It also explicitly

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[1] "Devadesátá léta, doba nervozního, chaotického a zároveň mdlobného i křečovitého konce století, doby, v níž se střetlo tolik nevyřešených politických, sociálních, národnostních, kulturních i uměleckých problémů." Karel Teige, "F. X. Šalda a devadesátá léta," *F. X. Šalda 1867 1937 1967*, ed. Felix Vodička (Prague: Academia, 1968), 165–189, 172.

[2] See Chapters 2 and 3.

[3] For a discussion of the document's history and its authors, see Milan Vojáček, "Manifest České moderny. Jeho vznik, ohlas a spory o pojetí České moderny, které vedly k jejímu rozpadu," *Časopis Národního muzea* 169, nos. 1–2 (2000): 69–96. An examination of the Manifesto's relationship to contemporary cultural currents in the Czech lands and Europe can be found in Martin Kučera, *Kultura v českých dějinách 19. století. Ke zrodu, genezi a smyslu avantgard* (Prague: Academia, 2011), 188–191.

disallowed the self-consciously nationalist bent of earlier artistic practice, and in one particular passage, spoke to the paradox of representing Czech identity to the rest of the world that the Vienna exhibition had brought so sharply into focus three years earlier: "We do not in any way accentuate *Czechness*: be yourself and you will be Czech. Mánes, Smetana, Neruda, these now purely Czech artists par excellence, spent an entire half of their lives 'Czechly' expressing themselves for foreigners. We do not know national maps."[4] The auto-essentialism that had, up to this point, passed more or less without comment as an effective means of artistic and political expression for the intelligentsia of Prague and their newfound foreign audiences was now called into question. Smetana and other Czech artists' dedication to expressing Czechness was to be cast aside in favor of focusing on the essentialist concept of "individuality," one that enveloped national identity by virtue of birth. Yet by claiming not to know national maps, the authors of the Manifesto aimed to align themselves with a supranational conception of Europe, repudiating the political affairs of the Old Czechs and of the Young Czechs alike. Although they mentioned Smetana among their pantheon of "purely Czech" artists, none of the original signatories was a musician. While similar pan-European longings were latent in the cosmopolitan dreams of the National Theater Association, never before had as stark a break with Czech artistic traditions been advocated by Czech intellectuals.

Only a few months earlier, however, the 1895 Czechoslovak Ethnographic Exhibition had revealed the mass appeal and mainstream resonance of a particular conception of Czech identity, one very much in line with, and drawing on, the village mode. First conceived in 1891 by none other than František Adolf Šubert, the 1895 exhibition aimed to give Czechs a comprehensive

[4] "Neakcentujeme nikterak *českost*: buď svým a budeš českým. Mánes, Smetana, Neruda, tito nyní čistě čeští umělci par excellence, platili celou polovici svého života za cizáky česky se vyjadřující. Neznáme národnostních map." F. V. Krejčí *et al.*, "Manifest České moderny," *Rozhledy* 5, no. 1 (25 October 1895): 1.

view of themselves through an actively and self-consciously ethnographic lens.[5] This ethnographic approach focused, along the now-familiar lines of the village mode, on the countryside and its inhabitants. National folk costumes were collected and displayed, both in exhibition advertising and in person. An entire wooden village was constructed on the exhibition grounds, complete with multiple pubs. Even if it was a mishmash of different styles freely adapted from around the Czech lands, as knowledgable commentators pointed out, the model village nevertheless proved highly popular with visitors, most of whom were natives of Prague.[6] The exhibition thus emerged as another strong confirmation of the explicit connection between an ethnically centered national identity and the experience of the Czech countryside, however imagined, invented, or idealized.

Music was an important aspect of the exhibition. Many other important figures in Czech musical life besides Šubert were involved in the preparations for and execution of the exhibition, including Emanuel Chvála, Otakar Hostinský, Karel Kovařovic, and Leoš Janáček (who coordinated the Moravian folk-music portion of the exhibition). These figures gained first-hand experience of the planning and creation of this festival of explicitly Czechoslovak identity creation, steeping themselves in the village mode. At the same time, they also actively worked to create music that took on a central place within the national imaginary, inevitably linking it to an idea of rurality as Czech origin. The festival orchestra played almost every day for the duration of the entire exhibition, and its repertoire—with the exception of five compositions by Tchaikovsky—was entirely Czech. Smetana, Dvořák, and Fibich were featured prominently in

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[5] For an account of the exhibition and its preparations, see Stanislav Brouček *et al.*, *Mýtus českého národa aneb Národopisná výstava československá 1895* (Prague: Littera Bohemica, 1996).

[6] See Irena Štěpánová, "Kalendárium Národopisné výstavy," in *Mýtus českého národa aneb Národopisná výstava československá 1895* (Prague: Littera Bohemica, 1996), 31–81, 60–61.

the lineup of composers, indicating the extent to which they were already canonized figures, but lesser-known composers also had their music performed, including Josef Richard Rozkošný, Jan Málat, Vilém Blodek, Jindřich Kàan z Albestů, and others.[7] In a move that should surprise no reader of this dissertation by now, *The Bartered Bride*, too, was featured in connection with the Czechoslovak Ethnographic Exhibition—the exhibition program featured the three-hundredth anniversary performance of the opera at the National Theater, which took place on 25 September 1895.[8] (Antonín Dvořák had been in America for the vast majority of the exhibition's planning period; he returned shortly after the exhibition began, but spent much of the summer at his family cottage in Vysoká).[9]

The contrast between the character of the "Manifesto of the Czech Modern" and that of the Czechoslovak Ethnographic Exhibition, both of which occurred in 1895, revealed the discontinuities and clashes between different elements of Czech culture in the *fin de siècle*. Art, literature, and architecture would develop in varied and different directions, but the avant-garde ultimately had little influence in music until after World War I. As Brian Locke has argued, a Czech musical modernist movement did develop in the early years of the twentieth century, but it

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[7] For background on the musical elements of the Ethnographic Exhibition, see Vladimír Lébl, "Změny v charakteru hudebního života," in *Dějiny české hudební kultury 1890/1945*, vol. 1 (Prague: Academia, 1972), 56.

[8] For more on the celebrations for the 300th performance of *The Bartered Bride*, see Přemysl Pražák, *Smetanova Prodaná nevěsta: Vznik a osudy díla* (Prague: Lidová demokracie, 1962), 86–88; a photograph of the tableau-vivant apotheosis of Smetana that formed a part of the festivities is shown in Chapter 3. Documents from the National Archive in Prague reveal the extent of the National Theater's deep involvement in the exhibition. It began its portion of the festivities with a performance of *Libuše* on 15 May 1895, followed by a performance of *The Bartered Bride* the day after. The theater ran three concurrent cycles of performances: one entitled the "Cycle of Czech Operas," one the "Cycle of Dramas from the Life of the Czech People," and a "Cycle of Historical Dramas," the latter two of which featured spoken plays. All of these cycles featured dramatic works with explicitly Czech content or that were of Czech provenance. All told, the National Theater gave forty-eight performances from May to October as a part of these cycles. See inventory number Book 24, fond ND, National Archive, Prague.

[9] The exhibition opened on 14 April 1895; Dvořák arrived back in Prague on 27 April. According to one biographer, he initially let very few people know he had even returned to the Czech lands. See Hans-Hubert Schönzeler, *Dvořák* (New York: Marion Boyars, 1984), 174.

was one that aligned neither with post-Romantic maximalist excess nor avant-garde experimentation.[10] In his terms, the early "modernist" composers cut their teeth on European cosmopolitan fare in the salons of the Czech bourgeoisie, while those of the Hostinský camp, who considered themselves "progressive" and "modern," grew ever more conservative in their insistence on Smetana as the defining model for musical progress.[11] This would ultimately lead to a strangely stagnant and dated musical discourse in the twentieth century, but in the late 1890s, the terms of engagement were still being formed.

It is within this context that Antonín Dvořák and his librettist Adolf Wenig created the fairy-tale opera *Čert a Káča* (*The Devil and Kate*), composed 1898–99 and premiered in 1899.[12] In the first part of this chapter, I present an investigation of *The Devil and Kate* as a case study for the importance of the village and its rural setting in conceptions of Czech national identity at the end of the nineteenth century. The centrality of the village mode in Dvořák's opera, as well as the opera's critical and audience success, speak to the inherent conservatism of Prague's musical culture at the *fin de siècle*: while Zdeněk Nejedlý and his followers may have derided Dvořák's opera, their own Smetanian models drew from the same ideological underpinnings of the village mode.[13] The second half of the chapter examines what happened when the village mode was largely freed from the strictures of Prague's musical milieu: Leoš Janáček's opera *Její pastorkyňa*—better known in English as *Jenůfa* (composed 1896–1903, premiered 1904 in Brno)—still draws on the larger cultural preoccupation with rurality as the source of Czech

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[10] See Brian Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague: Polemics and Practice at the National Theater, 1900-1938* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 65–69.

[11] See Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague*, 31–33.

[12] See Milan Kuna, ed., *Antonín Dvořák Korespondence a dokumenty*, vol. 4 (Prague: Bärenreiter Edition Supraphon, 1995), 133.

[13] For more on Zdeněk Nejedlý and his aesthetic views, see below.

identity. Yet Janáček's choice of Gabriela Preissová's realist play as the basis for his opera, in addition to his deep involvement with Moravian ethnographic work, showed how new currents at the turn of the twentieth century led to a very different village world than the one that had dominated Czech stages for the final three decades of the nineteenth century.

To frame this discussion, I return to Teige's assessment of Czech *fin-de-siècle* cultural life as divided into two separate camps, one national and one cosmopolitan. These two camps could in fact be seen as two variants of academic, sanctioned art, and "both the national and cosmopolitan output were expressions of official ideology; these two were trends of the same bourgeois art, in which the traditionally more staid patriotic school formed the right and the cosmopolitans who… signified the progressive element thus stood on the left of artistic events."[14] In the sphere of music, the Hostinský/Nejedlý circle had arrogated to itself the mantle of a progressivism based on Smetana's aging example, leaving Prague's salon cosmopolitans—the so-called "Club of the Young" (*Klub mladých*), led by Vítězslav Novák, Josef Suk, and Oskar Nedbal—with the rightward half of the binary. Yet Teige's larger point about the dual yet unitary nature of bourgeois art still fits quite closely here. Where his narrative of literary development in the 1890s fails to provide a sufficient model for musical culture is precisely in the arrival of the avant-garde, announced in part through the Manifesto of the Czech Modern—there was no such analogous moment for Prague's musical milieu until after World War I.[15]

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[14] "…jak nacionální, tak kosmopolitická produkce byla výrazem oficiální ideologie; byly to dva směry téhož měšťanského umění, v němž patriotická škola tradičně setrvalejší, tvořila pravici a kosmopolité, kteří… znamenali progresivní prvek, stáli spíš na levici uměleckého dění…" Teige, "F. X. Šalda a devadesátá léta," 174.

[15] An attempt was made in 1896 by the composer Ludvík Lošťák to create another union of young Czech composers when he published an emphatic manifesto in the music journal *Dalibor*. However, aside from a few concerts, little came of this declaration, and Locke termed Lošťák's aesthetic position "somewhat commonplace and conservatively nationalistic." See Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague*, 35, as well as see Vladimír Lébl, "Koncertní život," in *Dějiny české hudební kultury 1890/1945*, vol. 1 (Prague: Academia, 1972), 82–84.

In Teige's Marxist-inflected dichotomy, artistic and literary culture "were severed into two counterposed camps: the avant-garde took up against official Parnassism and academicism. Adjacent to and against one another now stood here dual arts, growing out of different roots and professing to conflicting aesthetic opinions: avant-garde versus conservatism, independent artists versus academics, modernity versus tabloid or salonnish popularity."[16] Teige's dialectical assessment of the situation leads to a somewhat uncomfortable conclusion: Czech music was left behind in the *fin-de-siècle* foment of Prague. Even if all of this narrativization is discarded, Dvořák's *The Devil and Kate*, regardless of its musical beauties or endearingly comic moments, is emblematic of the conservative (if internally bifurcated) nature of Prague's musical environs in the late 1890s, both in its extensive use of the Smetanian village mode and in its critical reception. Janáček, who, despite his best efforts, largely remained an outsider to Prague audiences until the smash Prague premiere of *Jenůfa* in 1916, provides a striking counterexample of how the village mode could encompass a decidedly realist approach to operatic composition when freed from the strictures of Prague's musical milieu, an approach much more difficult for the state to co-opt in the service of identity formation—whether under under the Habsburgs or in the First Czechoslovak Republic.

The conservative posture of both Dvořák's opera and the village mode precepts it so carefully embodies are revealing in another way. I contend that the gender and class relationships presented within *The Devil and Kate*'s fairy-tale village are representative of the ways in which the village mode would influence ideologically larger conceptions of Czech nationalism, particularly through its portrayal of an idealized Czech masculinity in the character of the

[16] "…v podstatě se svět umění rozdvojil na dva protisměrné tábory: avantgarda nastoupila proti oficiálnímu parnasismu a akademismu. Vedle sebe a proti sobě stojí tu nyní dvojí umění, vyrůstající z různých kořenů a vyznávající protichůdné estetické názory: avantgarda a konzervatismus, nezávislí umělci a akademikové, moderna a bulvární nebo salónní popularita." "F. X. Šalda a devadesátá léta," 174.

shepherd Jirka. By contrast—as I argue—part of the reason that Janáček failed to get performances of *Jenůfa* outside Brno in 1904 is that it presented a realist, "failed" version of a specifically Moravian femininity that critics (especially the ever-more-influential Zdeněk Nejedlý) found distasteful, largely by virtue of its explicit defiance of the gendered and genre norms of opera. By engaging with the text and music of these operas alongside contemporary criticism, I show how *The Devil and Kate* represents a confirmation of the importance of the village and its social components to Czech nationalist self-imaginings. The opera can be read as a summation of the village mode in the nineteenth century, especially when counterposed with Janáček's very different specimen.

A Fairy-Tale Village: Setting, Text, and Music in *The Devil and Kate*

Dvořák's operatic output up to *The Devil and Kate* had varied widely. On the one hand, he had composed operas drawing on the village mode as articulated most centrally through Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*, including *The Cunning Peasant* (*Šelma sedlák*, 1877) and *The Jacobin* (*Jakobín*, 1888, rev. 1897); on the other, he wrote works in the tradition of grand opera, such as *Vanda* (1875) and *Dimitrij* (1882, rev. 1885 and 1894).[17] It was thus not a stretch for him to create *The Devil and Kate*, which draws elements both from the tradition of the village mode in Czech opera and from the wider European trend of post-Wagnerian fairy-tale opera, especially as encapsulated by Engelbert Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel* (1892).[18] Several reviews of *The Devil and Kate* both praised the "national" elements of the opera and compared it favorably with

[17] While it had been over ten years since his last opera by the time he started composing *The Devil and Kate*, Dvořák had kept up his engagement with the genre through revisions to *Dimitrij* and *The Jacobin*, both of which occupied him during the 1890s.

[18] For more on this opera and other post-Wagnerian trends, see Carl Dalhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 339–344.

Humperdinck's composition. Czech stages had seen a number of fairy-tale works in the 1890s besides *Hänsel und Gretel*; Karel Hoffmeister, in his review of *The Devil and Kate*, singled out Ludwig Fulda's 1892 play *Der Talismann*, Elsa Bernstein's 1895 play *Königskinder* (published under the pseudonym Ernst Rosmer), itself turned into an opera by Humperdinck in 1897, Gerhard Hauptmann's 1896 play *Die versunkene Glocke*, and Czech native Jaroslav Kvapil's 1897 play *Princess Dandelion* (*Princezna Pampeliška*).[19] Kvapil would go on to author the libretto for another Dvořák fairy-tale opera, the composer's most famous stage work: *Rusalka* (1901).

In choosing folklore and fairy tales as the basis for this opera, however, Dvořák was bucking a trend that had invaded certain Prague operatic circles, that of *verismo*-inflected operas.[20] Emanuel Chvála said as much in his feuilleton for *Národní politika*, published two days after the premiere of *The Devil and Kate*: "By turning away from romantic and historical topics—which are disappearing given the modern desire for meaningful subject matter—and searching for a buttress against the surge of realism, the present work gravitates towards folktale materials. The sweeping success of Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel* was proof that the audiences can be interested in a dramatized fairy tale and that it wishes for folktale opera."[21] Chvála sets up Dvořák as an innovator, someone up-to-date with international trends by relying,

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[19] Karel Hoffmeister, "Národní divadlo. Čert a Káča," *Dalibor* 21, nos. 42 and 43 (2 December 1899): 332.

[20] See Jan Smaczny, "Dvořák: The Operas," in *Dvořák and his World*, ed. Michael Beckerman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 104–133, 106, as well as Smaczny, "Czech Composers and *verismo*," in *Janáček and Czech Music: Proceedings of the International Conference (Saint Louis 1988)*, ed. Michael Beckerman and Glen Bauer (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1993), 33–43.

[21] "Operní tvorba nyněší, odvracejíc se od látek romantických a historických v moderních tužbách významu pozbývajících a hledajíc oporu proti přívalu realismu, tíhne k látkám báchorkovým. Pronikavý úspěch Humperdinckovy "Pernikové chaloupky" byl důkazem, že obecenstvo dovede se interesovati pro dramatisovanou pohádku a že přeje opeře báchokové." Emanuel Chvála, "Feuilleton. Čert a Káča," *Národní politika* 25 November 1899, 1.

both paradoxically and fittingly, on old fairy tales from the second generation of Czech national Awakeners—the very creators of the village mode.

As discussed in Chapter 1, fairy tales held an important place in nineteenth-century Czech culture. As the music critic and Prague University librarian Jaromír Borecký wrote in his 1899 review of *The Devil and Kate*, "the people deposit within their fairy tales their moral convictions; justice and the reckoning of good and evil play the leading roles here."[22] Fairy tales were a useful way to communicate the values and standards of a culture in a way that was accessible to all. Despite their use of supernatural elements and fictional plots, fairy tales reflected, and were often didactic in regard to, the socio-political environment from which they emerged, and *The Devil and Kate* was no different. The rural village was the single most frequent setting for fairy tales in the Czech tradition, and poor villagers were typically the main characters and heroes.[23] The libretto to *The Devil and Kate*, by Adolf Wenig, is drawn mainly from an 1845 fairy tale of the same title by the celebrated Czech poet and novelist Božena Němcová. The libretto also incorporates elements of the play *The Devil on Earth* (*Čert na zemi*, 1850) by Josef Kajetán Tyl, itself partially based on Němcová, and Ladislav Quis's poem "The Ballad of the Poor Devil" ("Balada o nebohém ďáblu," 1883).[24] Němcová's works were key in perpetuating the myth of the village as idealized repository of Czech essence and character, and the final title for Dvořák's opera may have been chosen to help bank on Němcová's fame—a brief note in *Hlas národa*

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[22] "Lid ukládá do svých pohádek své mravní přesvědčení; spravedlnost, odplata zlého a dobrého hrají tu přední úlohu." –q., "Hudba. Čert a Káča," *Národní listy*, 25 November 1899, 3. For a biographical sketch of Borecký, see "Borecký, Jaromír," in *Slovník českých knihovníků*, http://aleph.nkp.cz/F/?func=direct&doc_number=000000010&local_base=SCK.

[23] Dagmar Klimová and Jaroslav Otčenášek, *Česká pohádka v 19. století* (Prague: Etnologický ústav Akademie věd České republiky, v.v.i., 2012), 30–42.

[24] See Otakar Šourek, *Život a dílo Antonína Dvořáka Část čtvrtá 1897–1904* (Prague: Hudební matice Umělecké besedy, 1933), 47–49.

prior to the opera's premiere referred to the libretto's source as "one of the most popular of all Czech folktales."[25]

The libretto—originally titled *Ovčák*, or *The Shepherd*—was submitted to and won first prize in a competition put on in 1898 by the National Theater Association (*Družstvo Národního divadla*). The jury featured Borecký as well as the composer and Prague Conservatory teacher Jindřich Kàan, the chief conductor of the National Theater Adolf Čech, and Václav Juda Novotný (see Chapters 2 and 3).[26] All four men were key figures in Prague's musical life and had, moreover, either been directly involved in or enthusiastic observers of both the 1892 Vienna exhibition and the 1895 Prague Ethnographic Exhibition. Their investment in the village mode and its capacity for bringing both domestic and international success to Czech opera was well established, not to mention the simple fact that, aside from Borecký, all of these figures had been involved in Czech musical life for well over twenty years (both Novotný and Čech had known Smetana personally). Many of them were linked to the Old Czech political cause through the party's connections at the National Theater Association. Wenig, the competition winner, was Šubert's nephew, and it was the theater director who had the highly influential Old Czech politician František Ladislav Rieger recommend the prizewinning libretto to Dvořák (Rieger, moreover, was the father of Marie Červinková-Riegrová, who had been Dvořák's librettist for

[25] "…patří k nejpopularnejším z českých bachorek vůbec." See "Různé zprávy. Z kanceláře Národního divadla," *Hlas národa*, 15 November 1899, 5.

[26] Šourek, *Život a dílo Antonína Dvořáka*, 44–45. The original libretto jury was assembled by Šubert and the executive committee (*správní výbor*) of the National Theater Association and only featured Borecký, Čech, and Novotný. The minutes of the executive committee deposited in the Prague National Archive indicate that Kàan was added at the request of the music division of the Artist's Union (*Umělecká beseda*), who wished that a composer be included on the jury. See minutes from 29 October and 26 November 1898, *Protokoly Správního výboru Družstva Národního divadla*, sig. D51, fond ND, National Archive, Prague.

both *Dimitrij* and *The Jacobin*).[27] The opera's staging was likewise a product of Prague's musical old guard: Adolf Čech conducted, F. A. Šubert directed, and Augustin Berger choreographed the dances.[28] All three had been directly involved with *The Bartered Bride* in Vienna, and both Čech and Berger had traveled around Europe in subsequent years consulting on various productions of Smetana's opera on foreign stages.[29] Thus, at all stages of its creation, *The Devil and Kate* was deeply, almost incestuously intertwined with leading figures in the political and musical community of Prague and, consequently, shaped by the importance they ascribed to the village mode as a means of creating Czech national and artistic identity.

Wenig's libretto featured many of the characters from the original fairy tale, but the plot itself was a mashup of Němcová, Tyl, and Quis. The opera opens with Jirka the shepherd and a chorus of peasants in the pub celebrating a day of *posvícení*, a feast day or village fair, and lamenting that they have to go back to the hated *robota*, or forced labor, in the morning. Jirka has to return to work that evening and pays the musicians to accompany him and make his trek less doleful. Kate enters and, as most feared girl in the village for her extreme mouthiness, can find no one to dance with her. When Kate states that everyone in the pub can go to the devil, Marbuel the devil promptly appears and dances with her. Jirka returns, having been fired by the cruel estate steward for bringing the musicians with him. Marbuel tricks Kate into leaving the pub with him and drags her down to hell; Jirka closes the act by declaring that he has nothing left to live for and jumps into the hole left behind by Marbuel in order to rescue Kate.

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[27] Šourek, *Život a dílo Antonína Dvořáka*, 45. It should be noted that Dvořák was already composing the music of the opera by the time the libretto officially won the competition, suggesting something of a *fait accompli*. See the minutes from 7 January 1899, *Protokoly Správního výboru Družstva Národního divadla*, sig. D51, fond ND, National Archive, Prague.

[28] See František Hejda, "Divadlo a hudba. Zpěvohra. *Čert a Káča*," *Světozor* 33, no. 51 (1 December 1899): 612.

[29] See the *Protokoly Správního výboru Družstva Národního divadla*, sig. D50 and D51, fond ND, National Archive, Prague.

Act II, set in hell, begins with another chorus, this time of devils singing the praises of gold. Lucifer appears and questions why Marbuel has not returned yet; when he does, he is suffering under the weight of Kate on his back. The devils cannot touch her, as she is wearing a cross, and all are stumped as to what to do when Jirka appears at the gates. He manages to get Kate off of Marbuel and overhears Lucifer question Marbuel about his real mission on Earth—he was to ascertain whether the steward and the even crueler duchess were ready to be taken to hell. After hearing Marbuel's report, Lucifer decides that the steward may repent, but the duchess is irrevocably damned. Marbuel then asks for Jirka's help with his Kate problem, and to repay the shepherd for getting rid of Kate, Marbuel concocts a plan where Jirka will scare him away when the devil threatens the steward. Marbuel entertains the humans by summoning a devilish dance, and the act ends with Jirka dancing Kate out of hell, to the amusement of the devils.

Act III is set in the duchess's castle, and it begins with a long introductory aria for her. In the gap between Acts II and III Jirka has saved the steward, but the impending damnation of the duchess has scared off almost all her courtiers and caused her to repent her evil ways. She has summoned Jirka, who duly appears and agrees to help on one condition: the duchess must abolish *robota* in exchange for her salvation. She does so to the horror of the remaining nobles and the joy of the peasants, who have gathered outside to watch her get dragged down to hell. Jirka sets his plan in motion, and when Marbuel appears to abduct the duchess, the shepherd runs in and warns him that Kate is coming to exact revenge. Marbuel flees, preferring the horrors of hell to Kate, and the duchess is saved. In gratitude she makes Jirka her prime minister and grants Kate the biggest home in the village; all rejoice at the duchess's decisions as the opera ends.

The first act of *The Devil and Kate* is rife with village markers, and contemporary critics were quick to comment on the folk elements. The stage directions explicitly state that the act

should be set in a *venkovské hospody* or country pub on a day of *posvícení*. Set designs from a 1918 production at the Prague National Theater clearly illustrate the conventions of the setting (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: Act I set for *The Devil and Kate*.[30]

Setting operas on a day of *posvícení* also meant that villagers would have been wearing their Sunday-best folk costumes, and productions at the National Theater emphasized seemingly authentic dress as a means of projecting national particularity, if not ethnographic realism, as in the 1892 production of *The Bartered Bride* (the set designs for the pub scenes are practically interchangable; see Chapter 2). Costuming in *The Devil and Kate* was no exception, as can be

[30] This set was initially designed in 1899 by Josef Wenig, the brother of the librettist. See "Adolf Wenig st.," Archive of the National Theater, http://archiv.narodni-divadlo.cz/default.aspx?jz=cs&dk=Umelec.aspx&ju=4160&pn=456affcc-f401-4000-aaff-c11223344aaa, as well as "Čert a Káča," Archive of the National Theater, http://archiv.narodni-divadlo.cz/default.aspx?jz=cs&dk=Titul.aspx&ti=12&sz=0&abc=C&pn=456affcc-f401-4000-aaff-c11223344aaa.

see in photographs from the original 1899 production and the second production of 1918 (Figures 4.2 and 4.3).

Figure 4.2: Anna Kettnerová as Kate, 1899.[31]

Dvořák's and Wenig's decision to set the first act of the opera on a day of *posvícení* in the village pub was in all likelihood a direct reference to *The Bartered Bride*—both these elements were typical of Czech stories and fairy tales, but in opera their combination was only explicit in one other instance—Act II of *The Bartered Bride*. Regardless of the intention behind the choice of the Act I setting, multiple critics mentioned Smetana in their reviews, frequently placing Dvořák's opera in dialogue with Smetana's earlier village-centric works. Such comparisons were inevitably refracted through the personal biases and preferences of the reviewers. For the reviewer at *Hlas národa*—possibly the composer Ludvík Lošťák—who took an overall positive

[31] "Čert a Káča," Archive of the National Theater, http://archiv.narodni-divadlo.cz/default.aspx?jz=cs&dk=Titul.aspx&ti=12&sz=0&abc=C&pn=456affcc-f401-4000-aaff-c11223344aaa.

view of Dvořák's opera, the composer's music "follows in Smetana's footsteps and distinguishes itself by its true Czech national character."[32]

Figure 4.3: Antonín Lebeda as the shepherd Jirka, 1918.[33]

Václav Krofta, the critic at *Právo lidu*, and an anonymous reviewer for *Zlatá Praha* both espoused a more negative view of the opera. Its music and libretto were judged dramatically insufficient, but more importantly, the work could not compete with Smetana's legacy in the realm of music theater. Krofta acknowledged that after Smetana's death, Dvořák was the most famous figure in the world of Czech music, and that the latter's music had gained favor beyond the borders of the Czech lands long before Smetana's; Dvořák's music for this particular opera, however, "lacked dramatic fire and verve," and its comic style likewise wanted for "freshness

[32] "Jinak hudba Dvořákova kráčí ve šlépejích Smetanových a vyznačuje se pravým českým národním rázem…" See –ák., "Čert a Káča," *Hlas národa*, 25 November 1899, 2.

[33] "Čert a Káča," Archive of the National Theater, http://archiv.narodni-divadlo.cz/default.aspx?jz=cs&dk=Titul.aspx&ti=12&sz=0&abc=C&pn=456affcc-f401-4000-aaff-c11223344aaa.

and humor like that of Smetana's comic style."[34] If the reviewer at *Zlatá Praha* was more equivocal in his overall assessment of *The Devil and Kate*—for him, the Act I waltz and the shepherd's song were "pieces of healthy village realism"—his comparison between Smetana and Dvořák was all the more damning.[35] Dvořák's dramatic works lacked the sense of organic development considered key to nineteenth-century appreciations of both genius and musical style: "No clear developmental line extends from his older operas to *The Devil and Kate*, which would have finally arrived at an independent style, as did from *The Bartered Bride* to *The Secret*, from *The Brandenburgers in Bohemia* to *Libuše*."[36]

Regardless of this critic's assessment of Dvořák's connection to Smetana, others conceded that *The Devil and Kate* projected self-evidently Czech characteristics. Textual markers in the libretto and musical gestures in the score added to its saturation with village elements. The indications for onstage musicians and dancers would have provided opportunities for village pageantry, and for the critic at *Zlatá Praha* mentioned above, the Act I waltz filled precisely this role. Dvořák's autograph score calls multiple times for an onstage bagpiper, a feature of many Czech fairy tales and stories, to mime along an evocative clarinet melody (Example 4.1).[37]

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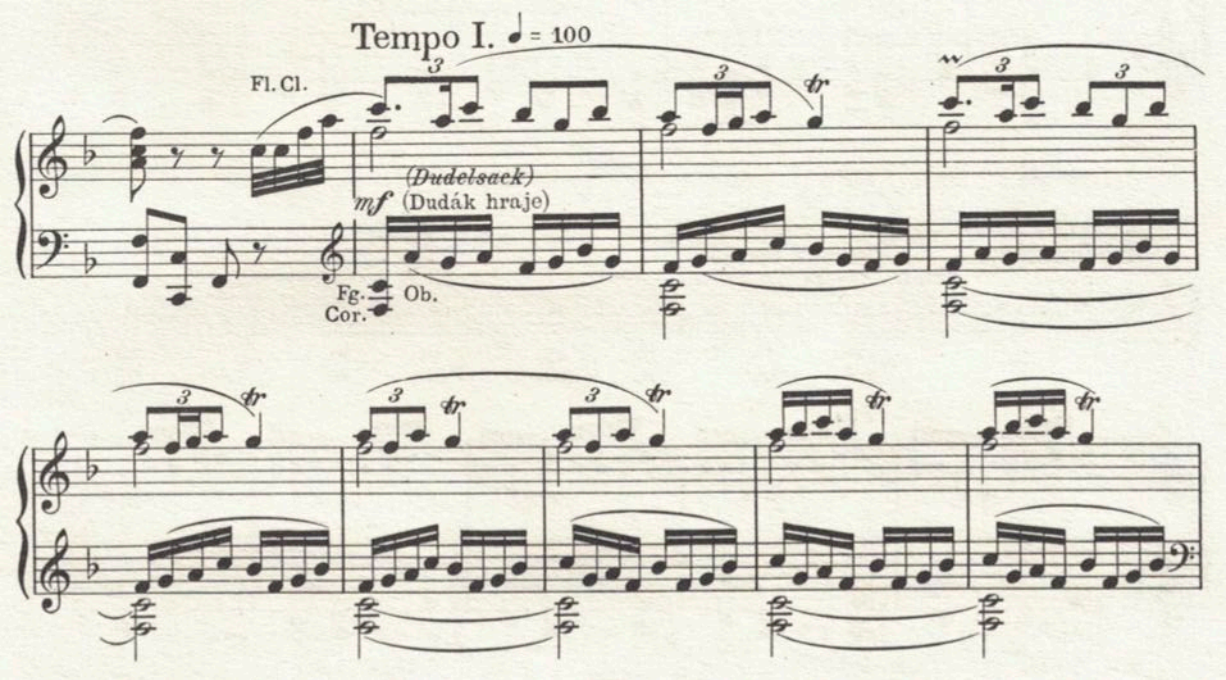
[34] "Hudbě její chybí dramatický oheň a švih… svěžesti a humoru, jako má komický styl Smetanův." See vk., "Beseda. Čert a Káča," *Právo lidu*, 25 November 1899, 1–2. Karel Tauš states that the cipher "vk." belonged to Václav Krofta, who, in addition to being the director of the state teachers' academy, wrote articles for a multitude of Czech periodicals in addition to poetry and dramatic works. See Karel Tauš, *Slovník cizích slov, zkratek, novinářských šifer, pseudonymů a časopisu* (Blansko: Nakladatel Karel Jelínek, 1947), 72.

[35] "Valčík v tančíně a píseň ovčákova jsou kusy zdravého realismu vesnického…" See "Hudba," *Zlatá Praha* 17, no. 5 (8 December 1899): 59.

[36] "Od starších jeho zpěvoher k "Čertu a Káči" nevede určitě vyměřená linie, která by byla dospěla konečně k usamostatněnému slohu, jako od "Prodané nevěsty" k "Tajemství," od "Branibořů" k "Libuši." "Hudba," 59.

[37] Examples of this tradition include Josef Kajetán Tyl's play *Strakonický dudák*, itself based on a fairy tale, and Karel Bendl's opera-ballet adaptation of Tyl, *Švanda dudák*. For more on the composer, see Vlasta Reittererová, "Bendl, Karel," *Český hudební slovník osob a institucí*, http://www.ceskyhudebnislovnik.cz/slovnik/index.php?option=com_mdictionary&task=record.record_detail&id=7406,

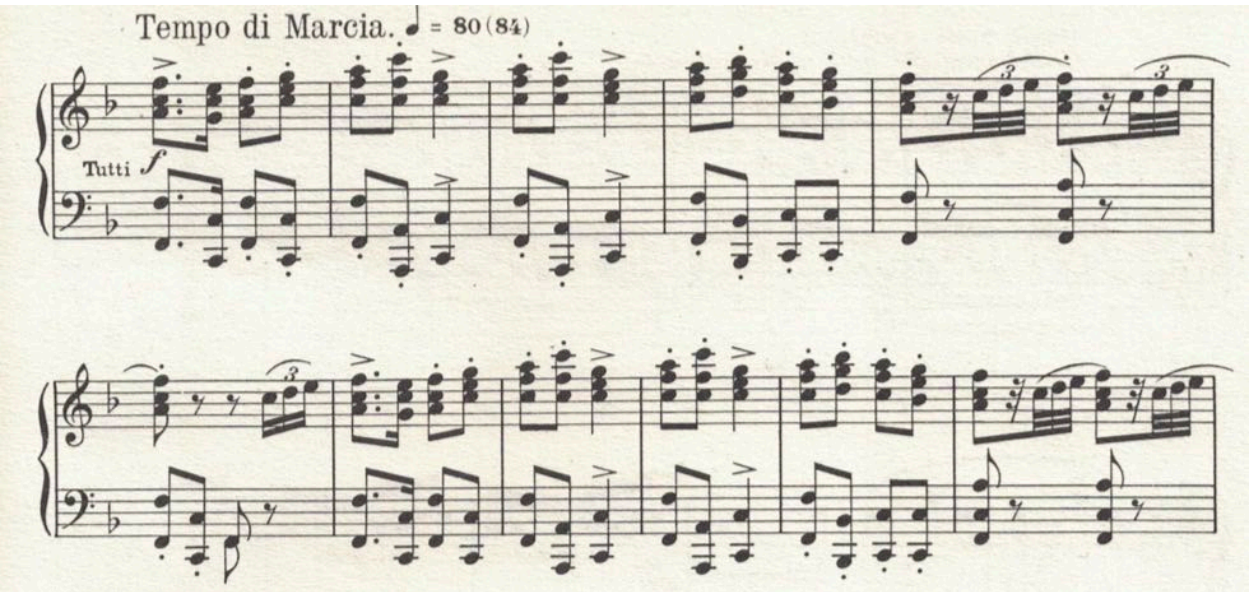


Example 4.1: Antonín Dvořák, *The Devil and Kate*, Imitation bagpipe melody.[38]

The male chorus that opens the act in dialogue with Jirka is specified in the libretto as composed of *chasníci*, an antiquated term that might be loosely translated as "country bumpkins." The pastoral character of the shepherd was a strong marker in many fairy tales for a rural mode of life, one that only grew more romanticized and idealized as it disappeared from the actual countryside. The simple origins of such a character were intended to elicit sympathy, especially when the shepherd was also the hero triumphing at the end of the opera, as Jirka does in *The Devil and Kate*.[39] Jirka's musical theme likewise prepares the audience for a sympathetic reaction (Example 4.2).

[38] See Antonín Dvořák, *Čert a Káča*, piano-vocal score (Prague: Národní hudební vydavatelství Orbis, 1944), 25.

[39] Klimová, *Česká pohádka v 19. století*, 35.



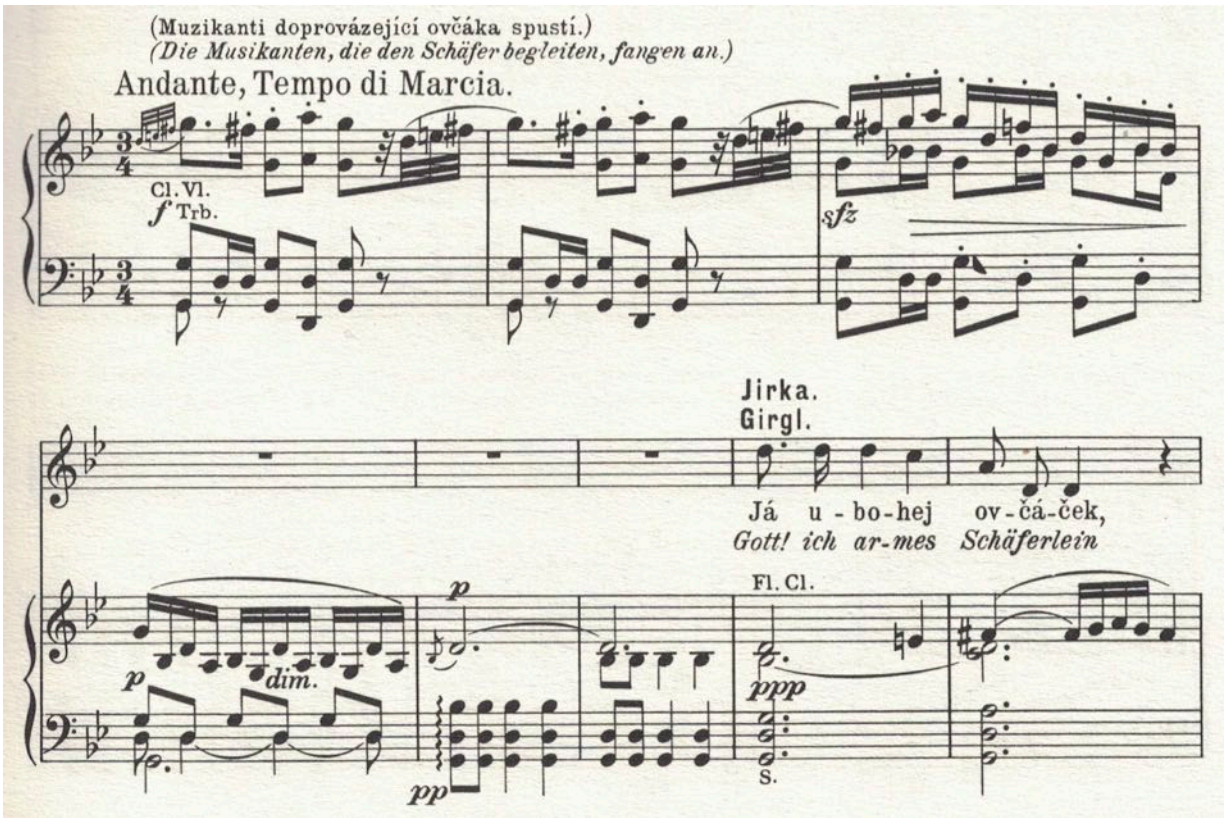
Example 4.2: Antonín Dvořák, *The Devil and Kate*, Jirka's theme.[40]

Marked "Tempo di marcia" and set in F major, itself a marker of pastoral feeling in the Western musical tradition, Jirka's four-square theme projects solidity and simplicity.[41]

Wenig also granted Jirka two stanzas of a quasi-folksong that begins "Já ubohej ovčáček," "I am a poor little shepherd," an obvious and self-conscious appeal to folk practices. The song is presented conspicuously as a diagetic piece—Jirka calls the musicians to accompany him in a song, and the opening of the song features an expanded percussion battery and an introductory flourish in the clarinet and violin, echoing both the contour of Jirka's introductory theme and the bagpipe idea from earlier in the act (Example 4.3).

[40] Dvořák, *Čert a Káča*, 25.

[41] The tradition extends back at least to Beethoven and the "Pastoral" Symphony; Beethoven was reputed to have said that F major was the most appropriate key for depicting country life. Whatever its veracity (which is questionable, given that the quote is attributable to Schindler), it has nevertheless become a part of the reception, as indicated by its inclusion in Grove's analysis of Beethoven's symphonies. See George Grove, *Beethoven and his Nine Symphonies* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1962), 200.



Example 4.3: Antonín Dvořák, *The Devil and Kate*, Introduction to Jirka's song.[42]

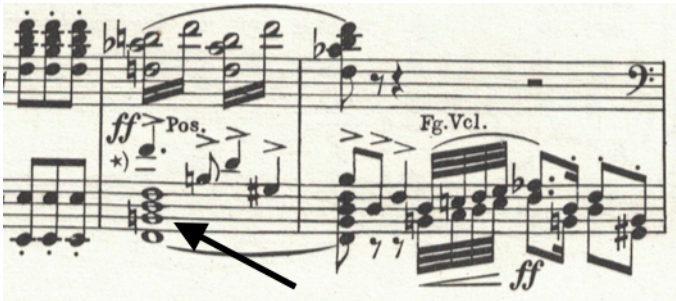
Dvořák's setting of the text is simple, with a relatively constrained tessitura for the tenor and an uncomplicated harmonic pallet in G minor, in keeping with the folk character of the text.

Wenig also included an important detail that adds to the folk and popular character of the opera by inserting popular colloquialisms that are not found in written Czech. An example is the use of the words *ubohej* (poor) and *zelenej* (green) in lieu of their more correct forms, *ubohý* and *zelený*. Kate, too, uses colloquial Czech, such as the phrase *s těma* (with them) instead of the more formal *s těmi*. Both of these instances of spoken colloquialisms persist to this day, particularly in Prague and its Bohemian surroundings. While Wenig does not carry this to the extent that, for example, Preissová and Janáček would for Moravian dialect in *Jenůfa*, it nonetheless emphasizes the lower-class nature of the peasant characters, especially in contrast to

[42] Dvořák, *Čert a Káča*, 43.

the nobility present in the final act. For Jaromír Borecký, "the Czech element flourishes best in the first act," a sentiment echoed by other commentators, and he went on to pronounce the opening chorus as well as Jirka's song "completely folklike."[43]

This quintessentially Czech setting, however, incorporated social parameters that were an important, albeit more tacit, aspect of the village mode. However much the village was a space of warm-hearted common folk like Jirka, it was also a closed space. When Marbuel enters, he is dressed as a hunter and thus marked as from a higher social class than the farmers in the tavern. His introductory theme outlines a fully diminished seventh chord on B, which resides a tritone away from the F-major world of Jirka and his peasant compatriots, and is moreover harmonically highly unstable (Example 4.4). Moreover, the fact that Marbuel's identifying chord itself is composed of two stacked tritones—the "diabolus in musica"—suggests that Dvořák may have been engaging in a little compositional in-joke.



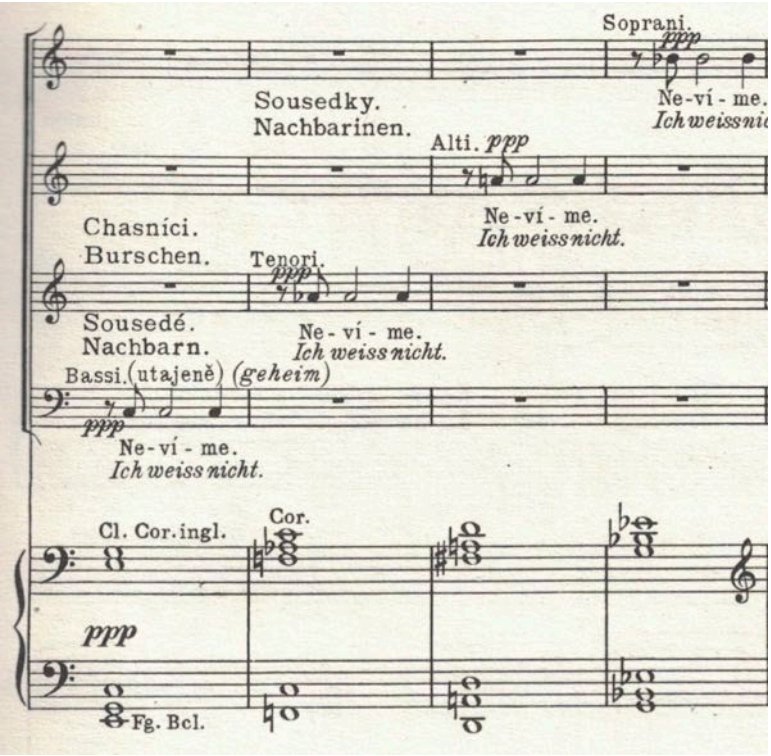
Example 4.4: Antonín Dvořák, *The Devil and Kate*, Marbuel's chord.[44]

If Marbuel's musical alterity has more to do with his fantastical, diabolical nature than his foreignness to the village setting, his supernatural identity is initially lost on the villagers. After Marbuel questions them about their relationship to the local estate manager and the ruling

[43] "Českému živlu vede se nejlépe v prvním dějství… z prvního jednání vstupní sbor do F-dur, tak zcela lidová (též instrumentálním průdvodem) píseň ovčákova z G moll…" –q., "Hudba. Čert a Káča," *Národní listy*, 25 November 1899, 3.

[44] Dvořák, *Čert a Káča*, 52.

duchess, the villagers "make threatening gestures" and accuse him of spying on them in order to report their hatred of both manager and duchess back to the castle.[45] Although Marbuel assures them that he is not spying, the villagers nevertheless maintain their suspicions, questioning the pub musicians as to the stranger's identity. Jirka returns to the scene, having been fired by the cruel estate manager for bringing musicians back to the castle with him, and he too asks the villagers about Marbuel. Their response only adds to the air of suspicion, as Dvořák gives the line "we do not know" (*nevíme*) to the basses, tenors, altos, and sopranos in succession, all marked *ppp*, over an evocative, non-functional progression of whole-note chords, C major to F minor to D major to E-flat major (Example 4.5).



Example 4.5: Antonín Dvořák, *The Devil and Kate*, Suspicious villagers.[46]

[45] The piano-vocal score gives the stage directions for the chorus as "dělají hrozivé posuňky." See Dvořák, *Čert a Káča*, 62.

[46] Dvořák, *Čert a Káča*, 91.

Through gestures such as these, the first act sets up the world of the village musically, textually, and visually: drinking, joking, and dancing go hand in hand with the suspicion of outsiders and a sharp division of social classes.

While Borecký offered praise for the village elements of Act I, he and other commentators were even more enthusiastic about Act II, which they considered to be one of the most characteristically Czech parts of the opera. Many critics considered this depiction of hell and its devils quintessentially Czech; for the critic of *Hlas národa*, it was "a very Czech department of hell," indeed.[47] The national character of Wenig's devils lay in the fact that their representation was born of folk and fairy tales: "This hell was created by the exuberant fantasy of our people, a fantasy the librettist very successfully captured. In this hell, there are no Mephistos, nor red fiends, nor Satans; these are black, fuzzy devils with long tails, clumsy and foolish, as our people imagine them."[48]

These clumsy, foolish devils gained a great deal of their endearing appeal through Dvořák's music. The opening of Act II features a chorus of devils who sing a lusty, G-major gambling song about the power of gold to seduce mankind. As if to drive the point home, the Prince of Darkness and Father of Sin himself, Lucifer, then enters to the accompaniment of a cheery melody in B major, scored with prominent piccolo clarinet and tambourine: hardly threatening, ominous music (Example 4.6).

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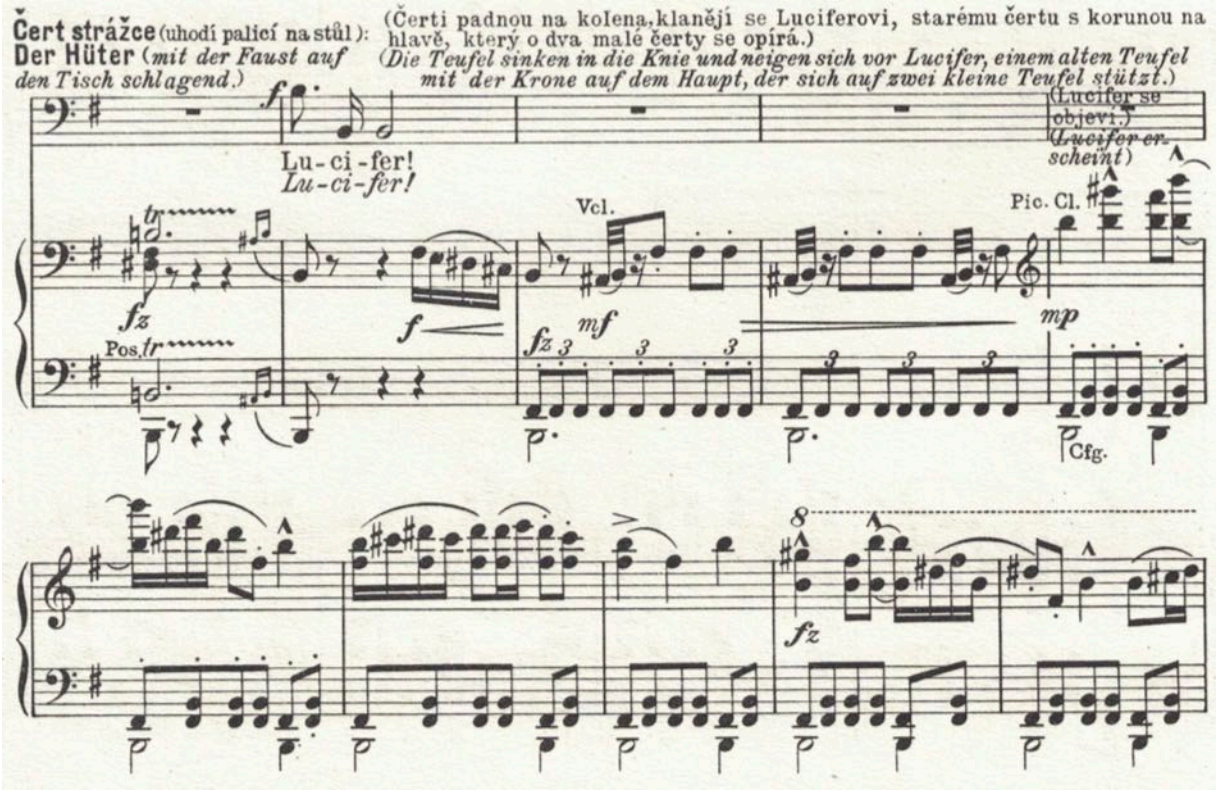
[47] "Je to pravé české oddělení pekla." –ák., "Čert a Káča," *Hlas národa*, 25 November 1899, supplement 1.

[48] "Je to peklo, které vytvořila si bujná fantasie našeho lidu a kterou libretista velmi šťastně zachytil. Nejsou v tom pekle mefistové, ani červení ďáblové, ani satanové, jsou to černí chlupatí čerti s dlouhým ohonem, neohrabaní a hloupí, jak si je lid náš představuje." –ák., "Čert a Káča," supplement 1.



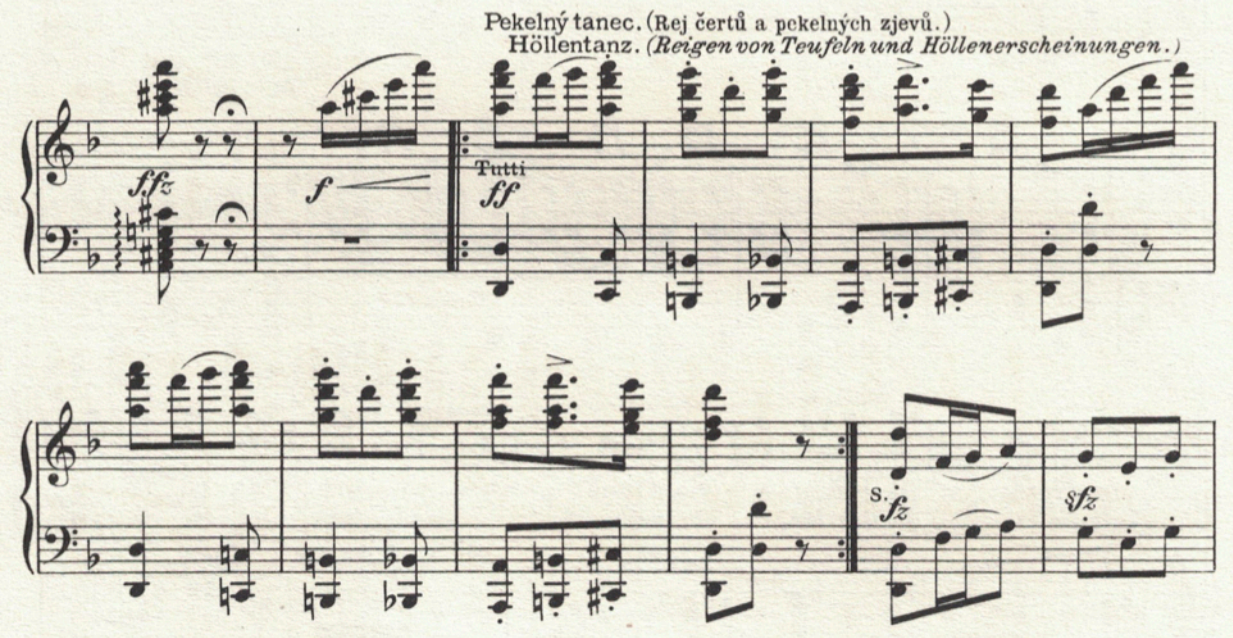
Example 4.6: Antonín Dvořák, *The Devil and Kate*, Lucifer's entrance.[49]

By playing directly into the idea of the devils as bumbling nincompoops—or, to put it another way, by emphasizing Czech folk characters who happen to dance in hell—Dvořák solidified the idea that the whole opera was born of folk and popular sentiment.

The syllogist logics of the village mode led many critics to state that the second act was in fact completely suffused with a Czech character because of its hellish setting. Karel Knittl, a professor at the Prague Conservatory and friend of Dvořák, said as much in his review for the journal *Osvěta*. Wonderful examples of Dvořák's fluency with cheerful and joyous music, Knittl states, can be found "in the numbers of rural dance and in the musical illustration of Beelzebub in the hellish dance, which, it goes without saying, is entirely permeated by a Czech character, a character which, for that matter, expresses itself in Dvořák's opera at every appropriate

[49] Dvořák, *Čert a Káča*, 114.

opportunity."[50] One might lay out Knittl's underlying logic thus: the Hellish Dance is a lively one, composed by the Czech lands' foremost living composer (Example 4.7).



Example 4.7: Antonín Dvořák, *The Devil and Kate*, Opening of the Hellish Dance.[51]

It takes place in a Czech fairy-tale opera and is therefore a Czech dance.[52] Who are the foremost exponents of Czech dance? The people. Where do the people live? In rural villages. The first act of the opera laid this out explicitly, with waltzes and polkas, and therefore even a dance of devils and damned spirits can be considered to be quintessentially Czech because of its connection to the imagined practices of the rural folk.

[50] "Skvostné toho ukázky nalézáme v číslech venkovské muziky v líčení Belzebuba, v tanci pekelném, který, jak se samo sebou rozumí, prosycen je veskrze českým rázem, jenž se ostatně v opeře Dvořákově projevuje při každé vhodné příležitosti." Karel Knittl, "Opera," *Osvěta* 30, no. 1 (1900): 78.

[51] Dvořák, *Čert a Káča*, 164.

[52] The Hellish Dance also bears a marked similarity to Dvořák's other orchestral dance music. It is set in D minor, marked Allegro giusto, and features a quick 3/8 time signature that is cleverly obscured by a strong sense of duple hypermeter. Shorn of its operatic associations, it could conceivably pass as one of the *Slavonic Dances* to an unknowing listener—though the hellish dance is not a furiant, it bears more than a passing resemblance to the *Slavonic Dance* op. 46, no. 8 in G minor, which is a clear example of that historically Czech genre.

The Duchess and the Shepherd: Masculinity and the Village

The logics of the village mode are likewise on full display in the final act of *The Devil and Kate*, especially in regard to class and gender. Dvořák draws a carefully delineated portrait of of the duchess with his music: the overture to Act III, which in part develops musical material associated with the duchess, is marked *Alla Polacca* in the score. With such music, we are not only transported to the higher-class context of nobility, but also to a foreign environment. The idea of the nobility as foreign and therefore un-Czech was a popular one in nineteenth-century nationalist discourse, and the introduction of the duchess with the Polish national dance is highly suggestive.[53] The duchess, moreover, is the only character with a formal aria. It opens Act III and stands out in the otherwise through-composed, Wagnerian score, alluding to the tradition of a prima donna's entrance aria.

The duchess has summoned Jirka to help her in her crisis. The symbolism of this interaction is fully in keeping with the village mode, especially as expressed in the fairy tale: the humble shepherd, an emblem of the Czech people, must use his natural, cunning resourcefulness to assist the foreign and out-of-touch ruler. The duchess tells Jirka that she wants to change and "be a mother to her people." The shepherd is not convinced, however, that she will abandon her cruel ways.[54] As a marker of her commitment to her change of heart, Jirka extracts a promise that would have had contemporary political relevance: in return for saving the duchess from

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[53] On the question of foreign nobility, see Rita Krueger, *Czech, German, and Noble: Status and National Identity in Habsburg Bohemia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3–22, as well as my discussion in Chapter 1.

[54] The duchess's character is nevertheless a bit hard to pin down, as she spends a large portion of her introductory aria lamenting the fact that her halls no longer ring with laughter and joy, which she would have no doubt bought at the expense of her subjects. Several critics lamented the fact that the audience was only introduced to the duchess in the third act, which gave them little time to appraise her character. She does recognize her role, stating that "My guilt was greater, much greater, the estate manager was but an instrument in my hands" ("Větší moje vina, mnohem větší, správce byl jen nástrojem v mých rukou"), and declares to Jirka that she "want[s] to govern justly from now on, to be a mother to my people" ("Spravedlivě dál chci vládnout, matkou býti lidu svému"). Dvořák, *Čert a Káča*, 195, 204–205.

damnation, she must abolish the practice of *robota*, a form of serfdom that bound Czech peasants to the local lord and required them to work unpaid for the landowner's benefit. The practice of *robota* went back to feudal times and was partially responsible for the agricultural wealth that the Czech lands brought to their Habsburg rulers.[55] In the opera, the duchess duly abolishes *robota*, the people rejoice, and Jirka saves the duchess from Marbuel with the help of Kate. In return for his help, Jirka is elevated to prime minister, so that he may help the duchess govern judiciously.

The image of a Czech commoner as prime minister, ruling over the people with justice and fairness, represented a fairly pointed commentary in 1899. Emperor Franz Joseph, who had presided over the definitive abolition of *robota* back in 1849, was still in power, and the Czech lands had just helped precipitate a constitutional crisis in 1897 over ordinances requiring the equal use of both Czech and German in government bureaucracy.[56] Street riots and violence ultimately led to the quashing of the controversial language ordinances. Wenig introduced the *robota* subplot of his own volition when he created the libretto in 1898; none of the original sources mention the practice. The freeing of the Czech people and the elevation of one of theirs to an important post under a foreign ruler, therefore, had strong resonances with the contemporary political situation.

We can also detect the logic of the village mode here: true wisdom and fairness come from the embodiment of the Czech countryside, a shepherd, whose village origins grant him legitimacy and the ability to speak for all his people. As the duchess thanks the grateful peasantry after Jirka saves her, she presents him to the assembled crowd, stating "Here is my

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[55] The burden faced by peasants under *robota* in the Habsburg lands was already recognized as a problem under Maria Theresa in the 1770s, but efforts to reform the practice of compulsory labor were, unsurprisingly, stymied by the nobility who benefitted from it. See Pieter Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 34–38.

[56] See David Brodbeck, *Defining Deutschtum: Political Ideology, German Identity, and Music-Critical Discourse in Liberal Vienna* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 318–319.

prime minister, I will now rule the land with him, it will go well for all of you."[57] Both the assembled peasantry and Jirka himself emphasize their identities through speech acts. The peasants hail Jirka as *milý kmochu*, (dear godfather/sponsor). *Kmoch* is a hypocoristic variant of the more proper *kmotr*, also sometimes considered specifically Moravian in provenance.[58] Jirka addresses his fellow peasants with shouts of *Jářku braši*, where *braši* is the plural of *brach*, a hypocoristic variant for *bratr* (brother), similar to *kmoch*. *Jářku* is a contraction meaning "I say," a means of emphatic address already archaic and formal in 1898.[59] By joining these two words, Jirka utilized both ministerial and rural speech patterns, and to drive the point home he then declares, punctuated by fragments of his motive, that "I am a minister, but I am and will remain one of you!"[60]

The village mode, as a means of ideological subjectification, positions individuals relative to its larger allusive referent—in other words, norms on display in the fictionalized villages of Czech artistic life are the examples through which behavior in society is judged and understood.[61] In this sense, Jirka functions as an avatar for Czech masculinity in *The Devil and Kate*. He is the central figure of the opera—not for nothing was the libretto originally titled *The Shepherd*—and the opera largely reproduces the "phallocentric, patriarchal, and sexist" character

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[57] "Tady minister můj první, s tím teď budu v zemi vládnout, všem vám dobře povede se." Dvořák, *Čert a Káča*, 247.

[58] See Vladimír Šmilauer, "Výklady slov," *Naše řeč* 22, no. 4 (1938): 115, and Pavel Jančák, "K jazykovězeměpisné charakteristice česko-moravských a česko-slezských protikladů v slovní zásobě," *Naše řeč* 84, no. 4 (2001): 175.

[59] Alois Jirásek used it in his historical novel *Psohlavci* (*The Dogheads*) in 1883; such usages were meant to evoke an atmosphere of ancient or medieval times. See Kateřina Kolářová, "Porozumění knižním a archaickým výrazům z české literatury 19. století žáky 2. stupně ZŠ," PhD diss., Masarykova univerzita, Brno, 2014.

[60] "Minister jsem, ale jsem a budu z vás!" Dvořák, *Čert a Káča*, 248.

[61] For further discussion of ideology and the village, see Chapter 1.

of the genre.[62] Yet the way in which it does this reveals the centrality of the village mode for *The Devil and Kate*'s conceptual world.

The opera reinforces the pattern of victorious masculinity, partially at the expense of the work's main female figures. While neither dies or is overtly punished for their transgressions, they are denied the standard comedic ending device of marriage (in the case of Kate) or are subsumed within a patriarchal power structure, as is the duchess. From the beginning, Kate is portrayed as the laughingstock of the village when no one dances with her, as Jirka describes her as *hubatá až hrůza* (sharp-tongued to the point of horror). It is mentioned in passing that she may carry a torch for the shepherd, but this potential plot line is not developed in the opera. As a failed object of male sexual interest, Kate bucked a deeply entrenched trend in village comedies, as almost all of them featured a romance at the heart of the plot.[63] Indeed, so prevalent was this tradition that Wenig stated that the working title for the libretto was at one point *Bez lasky*, or *Without Love*.[64] Nevertheless, when the duchess rewards Kate with a new house and money at the end of the opera, Kate declares that her newfound wealth will have men lining up to be her bridegroom, "as if I were the most beautiful girl in the whole village."[65] Even if her blunt appraisal of the vagaries of human attraction is cast as comic, she still subscribes to the necessity

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[62] See Philip Purvis, "Introduction," in *Masculinity in Opera: Gender, History, and New Musicology*, ed. Philip Purvis, (New York: Routledge, 2013), 1–8, 1.

[63] It goes without saying that such romances were invariably heterosexual, and they figure in Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*, *The Kiss*, and *The Secret* (though not explicitly a village comedy, one might also include *The Two Widows*, especially in the Novotný version being used contemporaneously to *The Devil and Kate*), Vilém Blodek's *In the Well*, and Dvořák's *The Stubborn Lovers*, *The Cunning Peasant*, and *The Jacobin*, to name a few. Perhaps bowing to the weight of tradition, a recent production at the Prague National Theater (premiered in 2003) made the Jirka/Kate romance explicit in the staging, as he takes her by the hand at the close of the opera in a resigned if clearly romantic gesture.

[64] Adolf Wenig, "Feuilleton," *Divadelní listy* 1, no. 2 (20 December 1899): 35.

[65] "Však když mám teďka dům a peníze, to bude ženichů se o mne hlásit, jak bych byla nejkrásnější holka v celé vesnici!" Dvořák, *Čert a Káča*, 242–243.

of getting married. Additionally, while she is key to saving the duchess, this is true only because she is portrayed as so unbearable that Marbuel would rather flee the vengeful Kate than deal with her in his attempt to abduct the duchess, declaring the full force of hell's wrath preferable to the girl. She thus remains an object of mockery, fading into the background in the face of Jirka's heroism.

The more obvious village-mode resonances of the interactions between the duchess and Jirka have already been discussed above, but the gendered aspects of their relationship also bear emphasizing. In showing how Jirka cunningly fools Marbuel with Kate's help, saves the duchess, and becomes the key to a successful rapprochement between nobility and peasantry, the opera posits that a foreign, female ruler might only govern properly with the help of a native, male authority figure; left to her own devices, she had reigned thoughtlessly and cruelly. The steward, as her underling, had only enabled her cruelties; Jirka's authority came both from his new position as prime minister and from his role as a symbol of the Czech folk. In this light, the feminine ideal of the village mode was neither too mouthy nor too powerful, while the masculine ideal was courageous, clever, and of humble origins. Moreover, if one follows the assertion that all masculinities are at least theoretically available for hegemonic status, then *The Devil and Kate* presents a specifically Czech masculinity as desirable, victorious, and a viable alternative to the ostensibly controlling, German, imperial order adumbrated by the noble duchess.[66] It thereby fulfilled a village-mode precept of differentiating itself from the rule of empire through recourse to the rural at the same time as it reified the figure of the male Czech peasant as hero.

[66] For more on the question of hegemonic masculinities, see Kate Whitaker, "Performing Masculinity/Masculinity in Performance," in *Masculinity in Opera: Gender, History, and New Musicology*, ed. Philip Purvis (New York: Routledge, 2013), 9–30, 12–13.

Leoš Janáček, *Jenůfa*, and Village Modes

Dvořák's opera was highly successful, garnering mostly positive critical attention and the appreciation of Prague audiences; the opera has been a fixture of the repertoire of the National Theater from its premiere to the present day, with only a handful of years in which it was not performed.[67] The network of musical and political powerbrokers that facilitated its creation and success, however, would soon fade—the National Theater Association, with its Old Czech political allegiances and Šubert at its head, would lose the management of the theater in 1900 to a Young-Czech-affiliated group. Gustav Schmoranz replaced Šubert as the theater's administrative director, while Karel Kovařovic replaced Adolf Čech as head of the opera. Kovařovic quickly consolidated his position, which thereafter was much less dependent on the director and the executive committee of the new National Theater Company (*Společnost Národního divadla*) than it had been under Šubert.[68] Kovařovic, a member of the younger generation in Prague's musical life, enjoyed the support of both the Umělecká beseda and the Nejedlý circle, even if it was a qualified support in the latter case. He studied composition with Zdeněk Fibich, who had been an outsider to National Theater circles until his appointment as dramaturge in 1899, though he died the next year. Kovařovic's distinguished conducting of the orchestra for the 1895 Ethnographic Exhibition had propelled him to recognition in Prague, and his historical opera *Psohlavci* (*The Dogheads*, 1897) had won a National Theater competition.[69]

While the balance of power in Prague's theatrical sphere may have shifted, it remained a closed world of insiders. It was thus quite difficult for someone like Leoš Janáček, who lived and

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[67] For a list of productions of the opera, see "Čert a Káča," Archive of the National Theater, http://archiv.narodni-divadlo.cz/default.aspx?jz=cs&dk=Titul.aspx&ti=12&sz=0&abc=C&pn=456affcc-f401-4000-aaff-c11223344aaa.

[68] See Jan Němeček, *Opera Národního divadla v období Karla Kovařovice 1900–1920*, vol. 1 (Prague: Divadelní ústav – Český hudební fond, 1962), 9.

[69] For more on Kovařovic and his relationship with Nejedlý, see Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague*, 48–49.

worked in the Moravian capital of Brno, to gain notice and performances in Prague, where resources and the potential for wider recognition were much greater. This is not to say, however, that he had no success in Prague before *Jenůfa* in 1916: indeed, when circumstances suited the powerful in Prague, Janáček obtained performance opportunities.

After an unsuccessful attempt to get his ballet *Valachian Dances* performed in Prague in 1889, Janáček tried again after he had reworked them into a different ballet entitled *Rákoš Rákoczy*.[70] Augustin Berger, the dance master at the National Theater, who would go on to be an important agent spreading the village mode after 1892 by assisting other opera companies in staging *The Bartered Bride*, had seen parts of the *Valachian Dances* performed in Brno and reported back to Šubert, after he had rejected them. In 1891, however, with preparations for the Prague Jubilee Exhibition underway and in need of recognizably Czech musical content, Šubert decided to schedule *Rákoš* as part of the event.[71] The ballet was composed of twenty-seven dances with a text by the theater critic Jan Herben, who adapted part of the well-known poet Vítězslav Hálek's *Děvče z Tater* (*The Girl from the Tatras*). The performance was a success, so much so that it achieved a total of eight performances, a fairly substantial number, and both Moravian and Prague newspapers reviewed it positively, if somewhat less enthusiastically in the latter case.[72] The work's explicit use of Moravian folk dances lent it quasi-ethnographic status and an indisputable claim to Czech specificity. Šubert could thus weave it into his plans for the

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[70] The dates for these works are hard to determine, as Janáček was constantly reordering and reusing various dances in different works. For more on this, see John Tyrrell, *Janáček: Years of a Life*, vol. 1 (London: Faber and Faber, 2006), 386.

[71] Much more on this process and the relationship between Berger, Šubert, and Janáček at this time can be found in Tyrrell, *Janáček*, vol. 1, 327–363. For brief overviews of the 1891 exhibition, see Otto Urban, *Česká společnost 1848–1891* (Prague: Svoboda, 1982), 413, as well as Hugh LeCaine Agnew, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2004), 159.

[72] For more on the reception of *Rákoš Rákoczy*, see Tyrrell, *Janáček*, vol. 1, 363–366; information about the recycling of Janáček's folk dances in various works can be found in Tyrrell, *Janáček*, vol. 1, 386–389.

1891 exhibition, an event specifically cast as a Czech national demonstration in the village mode. Šubert helped shape the 1891 exhibition as an example of what the Czechs might do if given the chance to organize their own World's-Fair-style exhibition. Only a few years later, buoyed by the victory in Vienna in 1892, the 1895 Czechoslovak Ethnographic Exhibition in Prague fulfilled this ambition to some extent.[73]

In the 1890s, Janáček largely focused on promoting Moravian folk practices, especially song and dance. His compositions included various folk dance arrangements like *Rákoš Rákoczy* (1891) and his folk-song-based, one-act opera *Počátek románu* (*The Beginning of a Romance*, premiered 1894). Moreover, he served as chairman of the Moravian Days portions of the 1895 Ethnographic Exhibition in Prague, and edited, with František Bartoš, the massive *Národní písně moravské v nově nasbírané* (*Moravian Folksongs Newly Collected*, 1901). Such activity promoted Moravian specificity, one collected in, and exported from, rural areas. Janáček's collection of and advocacy for such folklore materials was founded on the implicit idea that these cultural practices were both valuable in themselves and worthy of emulation. Janáček's activities in this vein can thus be said to be within the village mode to the extent that they promoted rural life as an important part of Czech culture. However, Janáček's conception of the village was almost completely disconnected, with the exception of *Rákoš*, from the discourses of the village mode that dominated Prague. There, the village was seen as embodied in Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*—which relied on a kind of unmarked, normative, Bohemian conception of rurality—and propagated by the network of musicians and intellectuals helping to make *The Devil and Kate* a reality.

[73] Jaroslav Kvapil asserts in his memoirs that Šubert's experiences in 1891 made him long to stage something grander and "more national." See Jaroslav Kvapil, *O čem vím*, vol. 1 (Prague: Průmyslová tiskárna, 1946), 134–135.

The two years following the Ethnographic Exhibition were the period in which Janáček composed most of Act I of *Jenůfa* (1895–1897). Janáček adapted Gabriela Preissová's prose play, *Její pastorkyňa* (*Her Stepdaughter*, 1890), for his libretto. The story was explicitly set in the region known as Slovácko, which translates roughly to Moravian Slovakia.[74] It revolves around the lives of two women: the village sacristan, the Kostelnička, and Jenůfa, her stepdaughter. Act I sets up the love triangle between Jenůfa, her boyfriend Števa, and Števa's half-brother Laca. Števa is away in the next town, and Jenůfa worries that he may be recruited into the army. He returns undrafted, though drunk, and dances with everyone. Jenůfa is put out by his behavior, and the Kostelnička appears and scolds everyone; she decrees that as a consequence of Števa's intemperance, he must stay sober for a year before he can marry Jenůfa. Jenůfa reveals in an aside that she is already pregnant with Števa's child and worries about her future. Laca, jealous over Števa, fights with Jenůfa, and in the heated argument he slashes her cheek with a knife.

Act II begins several months later in the middle of winter; Števa rejected the disfigured Jenůfa and the Kostelnička has hidden her stepdaughter away in her cottage, where she gave birth. The Kostelnička attempts to reason with Števa to marry Jenůfa, to no avail; after he leaves, Laca appears, still in love with Jenůfa and remorseful over his actions. The Kostelnička tells him about Jenůfa's fate. When Laca balks at the idea of marrying Jenůfa if he also has to take care of another man's child, she lies and says the baby died. Laca departs to confer with Števa, and the

[74] Gabriela Preissová was born and grew up in Bohemia, but she had lived in Slovácko for a number of years, giving her ample opportunity to hear the local dialect and to experience village life. She enjoyed a huge success with her second play, *Gazdina roba* (1889), roughly translatable into English as *The Farm Mistress*, and, like *Její pastorkyňa* (her third play) set in Slovácko. In both she liberally employed dialect from the region, and while she was not a native speaker of that particular kind of Czech, audiences in Prague found *Gazdina roba* engaging. *Její pastorkyňa*, in contrast, was a marked failure, getting only five performances and biting critical reviews. This may in part have been due to the very different gendered politics of the two plays (and their subsequent operatic versions); see below. For background on Preissová and her plays, see Timothy Cheek, *Jenůfa: Translations and Pronunciation* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 13–14.

Kostelnička is left alone to ponder her course of action. She decides to down the baby in the millrace, saving Jenůfa's honor and allowing her to marry Laca. Jenůfa forgives Laca and the Kostelnička blesses their union as the act ends, but guilt already begins to haunt her. Act III begins on Laca and Jenůfa's wedding day in the spring. The festivities are interrupted with the discovery of an infant's corpse in the melting ice. Jenůfa recognizes her child and screams with grief, but before she can be arrested for the murder, the Kostelnička confesses to everything. Jenůfa forgives her as the mayor leads her away, and Jenůfa and Laca are left alone at the end of the opera to forge their own new path.

Janáček had previously collected folksongs and dances in Moravian Slovakia and considered it a particularly distinct part of Moravia in this regard.[75] Act I bears the traces of the composer's engagement with the Moravian village in its use of three folksong lyrics for the recruits' scene, and its opportunities for folk dancing. Janáček, however, composed his own music for the opera instead of quoting actual folksongs, as he had done in *The Beginning of a Romance*; it goes almost without saying that *Jenůfa* also featured many opportunities for ethnographic costume pageantry.[76] After a pause of approximately five years, during which Janáček started to develop his famous theory of speech melody, he once again resumed composition of *Jenůfa*, which he completed in 1903.[77]

Janáček's opera, however, was not accepted for performance in Prague. Kovařovic effectively banned *Jenůfa* from the National Theater for thirteen years; John Tyrrell suggests that this was due to Janáček having savaged the conductor's first opera, *Ženichové* (*The*

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[75] See Tyrrell, *Janáček*, vol. 1, 366–367.

[76] For more discussion of the folk influences in *Jenůfa*'s music and costumes, see Cheek, *Jenůfa: Translations and Pronunciation*, 23–30. *The Beginning of a Romance* was also a collaboration with Preissová.

[77] Much more on the compositional timeline for *Jenůfa* and on speech melody can be found in Tyrrell, *Janáček*, vol. 1, especially 477–489 and 524–547.

Bridegrooms, 1884), in an 1887 review.[78] The theater in Brno ended up premiering *Jenůfa* in 1904, and Janáček revised it substantially thereafter for a series of performances in 1908. Kovařovic, for his part, suggested unremittingly that there were serious musical and dramaturgical problems with the work, and once the opera was finally accepted for performance in 1916, it was only on the condition that the conductor would undertake a series of cuts and revisions that substantially altered several sections of the opera, especially the finale.

It is this discursive disconnect that concerns me in the remainder of this chapter. I argue that the difference between the village modes of Bohemia versus Moravia, at least as encapsulated by operas like *The Bartered Bride* and *Jenůfa*, can be understood through a relationality I alluded to in the Introduction: the idea of the Bohemian village mode, propagated through the ideological practices of Prague musical culture in the final three decades of the nineteenth century, as an unmarked category. The notion of the unmarked is linked to the idea of hegemonic masculinity. As the dominant concept in understanding gender relations, the masculine is both marked with value and the unthought background to cultural projections of gender—in the words of Peggy Phelan, "he is the norm and therefore unremarkable; as the Other, it is she whom he marks."[79]

This concept is valuable here for three reasons: one, figuring the Bohemian village mode as an unmarked category reveals its constantly shifting and negotiable character, one communicated by operas like *The Bartered Bride* and *The Devil and Kate*. It was against this repertoire that the Moravian otherness of *Jenůfa* would be judged. Two, Phelan's formulation incorporates the idea of agency. Critics in Prague, in occupying a dominant cultural position and passing judgment on

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[78] An in-depth discussion of Janáček and Kovařovic's relationship can be found in Tyrrell, *Janáček*, vol. 1, 613–618.

[79] Peggy Phelan, *Unremarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), 5. For further discussion and contextualization of Phelan, see Whitaker, "Performing Masculinity/Masculinity in Performance," 11–12.

both Janáček and *Jenůfa*, reveal their unmarked terms of engagement in "marking up" all the reasons why *Jenůfa* was, at least initially, deficient. Critics in Brno, in occupying a relatively subordinate position, reveal different valuations of the village mode in their writing. Three, the roots of this marked/unmarked concept in gender and performance studies resonate with one of the central reasons for *Jenůfa*'s "markedness" relative to discourses in Prague: its portrayal of femininities that subverted the standard gender expectations of the village mode and nineteenth-century opera in general.

By examining the reception of *Jenůfa* from 1904 through its triumphal Prague debut in 1916, we can "re-mark" the unmarked nature of the village mode, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of *Jenůfa* and of its context. Janáček remained bound by the village mode, even as a putative outsider. Paradoxically, by being incorporated into these discourses, *Jenůfa* was rendered abject to Prague operatic circles; it was only incorporated (and even then in a contested fashion) in 1916, redefining the boundaries of what counted as village opera. Similarly, *Jenůfa*'s claim to "village modernism," to borrow John Tyrrell's felicitous phrase, is only legible against the backdrop of the village mode as defined in Prague.

Smetana versus Janáček: Reading *Jenůfa*'s Village in 1904

Appraisals of *Jenůfa*'s otherness tended to refract along predictable lines in articles covering the 1904 premiere of the opera. On the one hand, critics frequently referred to the opera's Moravian specificity, which in the regional capital of Brno was a highly laudable quality; on the other, reviewers engaged with Janáček's new declamatory, more fragmentary style, one often connected with his recently developed theory of speech melody. Moreover, given Smetana's centrality to the village mode, especially as promulgated in Prague circles, it was perhaps

inevitable that the older composer and his operas would likewise serve as the touchstone against which Janáček was judged. This became ever more the case, especially after the triumphal 1916 Prague premiere of *Jenůfa*, in part because of the overwhelming influence of the domineering doyen of Czech music criticism in the twentieth century: Zdeněk Nejedlý.

Even before Nejedlý pronounced his disdain for Janáček's work, comparisons with Smetana were common. The very first reviews of the opera's premiere in Brno contained such references, and the flavor of the comparison between Smetana and Janáček tended to reflect, unsurprisingly, regional differences. These comparisons are valuable, however, precisely in how they reveal regional contrasts in the value placed upon opera, the village mode, and Czech singularity. The Brno newspaper *Lidové noviny*, for example, positioned Janáček as the direct heir of Smetana:

> Czech songs, dances, and even declamation have already resounded for a long time from Smetana's masterworks; Janáček was the first to speak out to us in Moravian—and that was something we had never before heard onstage… If, however, the meager means of folk accompaniment were insufficient to the task of drawing from them music for the entire drama, then Janáček found elsewhere a means for the realization of purely Moravian music: in the spoken word. *What Smetana sought: the musical, dramatic expression of the Czech word, Janáček found in the speech and songs of the people.*[80]

The review was more than likely written by one of Janáček's many students, which explains to an extent the article's familiarity with speech melody and the composer's investment in musical ethnography.[81] In his teleological view, Janáček had even improved upon Smetana's heritage, fulfilling the elder composer's long-held goal in his Moravian masterwork. This review abides

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[80] "Písně a tance české i deklamace zaznívají již dlouho z veledíl Smetanových, Janáček promluvil k nám první po moravsku—a toho jsme z jeviště dosud neslyšeli… Nestačí-li však skrovné prostředky lidových doprovodů, aby z nich mohlo čerpati se hudby pro celé drama, našel Janáček jinde prostředek k uskutečnění ryze moravské hudby: ve slově mluveném. *Co hledal Smetana: hudební dramatické projadření českého slova, našel v řeči a písní lidu Janáček*." Emphasis in the original, but printed as spaced-out letters. In the interest of legibility, I have rendered it in italics here and below. See —v., "Divadlo a hudba. 'Její pastorkyňa,'" *Lidové noviny*, 23 January 1904, 4.

[81] Most, if not all, of the reviews of the Brno premiere were written by students of Janáček. See Tyrrell, *Janáček*, vol. 1, 590–594.

by the conceptual framework of the village mode in that it locates value in the customs and language of rural Czech people, and, moreover, it links Janáček with Smetana. The Moravian particularity of Janáček's materials and method is what allows him, in this view, to go beyond his model and to create something truly new.

The "village modernism" of *Jenůfa* was grounded textually in Janáček's concept of speech melody and his adaptation of Preissová's prose play without versification. Another Brno writer, Antonín Průsa, again tied Janáček to Smetana through the idea of declamation and speech melody in a preview for *Jenůfa*. Writing for the magazine *Neděle*, he drew a line from Wagner to Smetana by way of Otakar Hostinský's theories, which advocated for the progressive idiom of Wagner in its emphasis on through-composition and the dramatic union of music and text. Smetana, Hostinský said, was able to create a progressive style of specifically Czech opera by focusing on the proper declamation of the Czech language, since the national character of the music would necessarily follow from the proper musical expression of the language.[82] According to Průsa, Smetana suspected that truly dramatic declamation derived from the connection of the speaker's mental state to their way of speaking and singing Czech. "Smetana suspected," Průsa wrote, "but he did not reach a full awareness of it. *The Moravian composer Leoš Janáček consciously exalted the Czech word to dramatically faithful declamation, and thereby opened new paths to music drama!*"[83]

Průsa appraisal of Janáček's technique draws on concepts familiar from the composer's well-known theorizations of speech melody, which posited that the musical elements of everyday

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[82] See Antonín Průsa, "Hudební drama na nových základech," *Neděle* 1, no. 3 (9 January 1904): 70.

[83] "Smetana tušil—ale nedospělo v něm uvědomění. *Vědomě vyvýšil české slovo ku dramaticky věrné deklamaci moravský hudební skladatel Leoš Janáček, a tím nové dráhy otevřel hudebnímu dramatu!*" Průsa, "Hudební drama," 71.

speech could provide insight into the psychological character of any given person when speaking. Janáček even went so far as to term speech melodies "window[s] into the human soul."[84] In tying Janáček's vision to Hostinský's theories of Czech national opera as practiced by Smetana, Průsa used his regionalist perspective to argue for Janáček as the next great national composer of the Czech lands—a figure who explicitly and enthusiastically celebrated his Moravian heritage.[85] In this frame, *Jenůfa* had a solid claim to being the most faithful operatic representation of the Czech village thus far composed, given its composer's publicly acknowledged familiarity with Moravian folk customs and the psychologically revealing character of his speech melodies. In claiming authority from the periphery, Průsa was engaging regionalist specificity to contest the very grounds of Czech identity.[86]

While the Prague response to *Jenůfa*'s 1904 Brno premiere was more muted, the work did attract some comment. Emanuel Chvála, a well-respected music critic, writer, and composer deeply involved in Prague's music scene, wrote a favorable review of the Brno *Jenůfa* that was published in both the German-language daily *Politik* and its Czech-language version, *Národní politika*.[87] At the outset of his review, Chvála noted Janáček's leading position in the musical

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[84] Tyrrell, *Janáček*, vol. 1, 478.

[85] Průsa's regionalist orientation may also help explain why he skipped over Dvořák and Fibich, both Bohemians, in his lineage-building. Regardless, his prose bears witness to the pervasive reliance on artistic lineage as a legitimizing strategy, a recurrent rhetorical gesture in nineteenth-century hagiography, and one that has remained influential into the present: in the Czech context, this tends to be instantiated in what Michael Beckerman has termed the "Czech school 'begats': Smetana begat Dvořák who begat Janáček, etc." See Jan Smaczny, "Czech Composers and *verismo*," in *Janáček and Czech Music: Proceedings of the International Conference (Saint Louis 1988)*, ed. Michael Beckerman and Glen Bauer (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1993), 33–43, 33.

[86] For a related discussion of claims to artistic value through regional emphasis, see Katharine Ellis, "Mireille's Homecoming? Gounod, Mistral, and the Midi," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 65, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 463–509.

[87] Chvála had celebrated the victories of 1892 at the Prague banquet, written on all manner of premieres and performances in leading newspapers, helped plan the 1895 Ethnographic Exhibition, and been one of two finalists, along with Fibich, for the National Theater dramaturge position in 1899. See Chapters 2 and 3, as well as the minutes of the executive committee of the National Theater Association from 7 through 28 January 1899, *Protokoly Správního výboru Družstva Národního divadla*, sig. D51, fond ND, National Archive, Prague.

milieu of Moravia and emphasized his ethnographic connections by citing the composer's collaboration with Bartoš on the collection *Moravian Folksongs Newly Collected*. While he did not make such bold claims about Janáček's connection to Smetana as those from Brno, Chvála nevertheless rated Janáček's attempts at speech melody and dramatic depiction of village life quite highly:

> In that which the composer endeavored the most, namely in the grasping of folk individuality through the capturing of the people's speech in tones, in the enlivening of words in melody and rhythm, in the sensing of that spirit that the people put into their songs, Janáček's work does not fail; rather, it rang out with a tone that awakened a resonance in the hearts of receptive listeners, clear proof of which is his work's success at its premiere and the strong impression that it evoked in the audience.[88]

This success was all the more impressive to Chvála given what he termed the work's "extremely progressive" elements, such as its prose libretto and polyphonic orchestral development. Janáček's difference here is predicated on this musical progressivism and his attention to speech melody; Chvála's position as a Prague insider obviated the necessity of appeals to Moravian regionalism and the need for establishing a link to Smetana. Precisely because Chvála neither related Janáček's opera to Smetana nor emphasized any ethnic otherness, *Jenůfa* was bestowed partial access to the unmarked character of the Bohemian village mode, but only through its Prague interlocutor.

Other Prague commenters were not as kind as Chvála. Jan Branberger, writing for the periodical *Čas*, took a much more sharply delineated stance. The critic began by contrasting Janáček with the younger Vítězslav Novák, a student of Dvořák who utilized Slovak and south Moravian musical elements in his early compositions. Novák, whose Bohemian origins

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[88] "Že v tom, oč skladatel nejvíce se snažil, totiž ve vystižení svérázu lidového v zachycení mluvy lidu v tonech, v uživotnění slova v melodii a rhytmu, ve vycítění té duše, již lid do svého zpěvu vkládá, Janáčkovo dílo neselhává, nýbrž rozezvučelo se tonem, který v srdcích posluchačů vnímavých budí ozvěnu, toho jasným důkazem jest úspěch jeho díla při premiéře a dojem silný, jež v obecenstvu vyvolalo." Emanuel Chvála, "Feuilleton. Národní divadlo v Brně," *Národní politika*, 26 January 1904, 1.

Branberger emphasized, was characterized as achieving a deep understanding of Slovak song by using it in his instrumental music, which the critic considered excellent. What Novák had come to notice in this folk music through outside study had been "innate from the cradle" for Janáček. Branberger, however, continued:

> Janáček, although older than Novák, has, up to now, not gained an excellent name in musical composition like Novák's. At least that is how it would seem to us Bohemians, who from Prague assess the musical world from the viewpoint of the three stars of Czech music: Smetana, Dvořák, Fibich. Yet Janáček has long had a great significance for Moravia. He is not only the leading and perhaps only Moravian music theorist, he is not only a longtime expert in Moravian song, but he is the greatest *composer-Moravian*."[89]

Branberger's prose positions Janáček outside what he considered the great troika of Czech music.[90] His place was a result of his fundamental Moravian difference, which the critic seems at pains to emphasize—he is "perhaps [the] only" Moravian music theorist. While the review is not overtly negative, the term "composer-Moravian" suggests an inextricability of "Moravianness" from Janáček's abilities as a composer, unlike the more universal appeal of the Smetana-Dvořák-Fibich trio.

Branberger's emphasis on the Moravian character of both *Jenůfa* and Janáček went even further when the critic stated that Janáček's most important criterion for anyone using Slovak music is that they be Moravian.[91] If by this point Janáček were not already firmly excluded from

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[89] "Janáček, ač starší nad Nováka, nezískal si doposud jak tento v hudební komposici jména vynikajícího. Aspoň tak by se zdálo nám Čechům, kteří z Prahy odhadujeme hudební svět s hlediska trojhvězdí české hudby Smetana, Dvořák, Fibich. Za to pro Moravu Janáček už dávno měl význam velký. Není pouze předním a snad jediným moravským hudebním theoretikem, není pouze dlouholetým znalcem moravské písně, ale jest největším *skladatel-Moravanem*." Jan Branberger, "Nové dráhy pro budoucí operu?," *Čas*, 24 January 1904, 4.

[90] It is ironic that, slightly over a hundred years later, the troika is incontrovertibly comprised of Smetana, Dvořák, and Janáček.

[91] "Slovak" music here can also be understood as the music from Slovácko, which translates roughly to Moravian Slovakia. Although today this region lies on the southern border of Czechia with Slovakia, it is worth keeping in mind that the whole region was, at the time, within the larger borders of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Thus, the designations for regional differences would have been less definite and geographically specific than they seem in the twenty-first century. See also John Tyrrell, "Janáček, Nejedlý, and the Future of Czech National Opera," in *Art and*

the normative musical world of Prague and Bohemia, Branberger then went on to draw an extended comparison with Smetana, the two composers' respective operatic representations of the people, and the sources of their operas:

> Smetana, when he began to write Czech folk opera, could not rely on a theory of Czech song; he did not know its hallmarks. Smetana was, however, a great genius; he was a musician in whose soul slumbered entirely unconscious sources of the Czechly charming and Czechly faithful melodies. Smetana did not need to develop his own Czechness: with his first operatic note he created, all at once, a Czech dramatic style. We would be led far astray in analyzing his dissimilarities with operatic styles then emerging elsewhere.
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> Despite that, however, it is worth comparing Janáček with Smetana. Both had the same goal, but different points of departure. Smetana emerged out of his Czech interior and thus immediately had all stylistic questions solved: he simply went where his tremendous instinct led him. In contrast to this, Janáček, with ant-like industriousness, first of all collected Moravian-Slovak folksongs; he dissected their most secret parts with a scalpel… Smetana could not indicate well the Czechness of his music in a finished work; indeed, neither could critics say where his Czechness resided. In this lays the great difference between the pure wonder of the music itself in Smetana's works and Janáček's theoretical combinations and constructions.[92]

Smetana the primordial, autochthonous genius; Janáček the collector, theoretician, and laborer. In spite of its tone, it is hard not to read this passage as a slight against Janáček. Smetana's village would always be greater and more relevant because it emerged from the soul of an artist-hero. No matter how much Janáček labored, his careful dissection of folk music could, in the Romantic framework of genius that structures this passage, never reach the same musical and

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Ideology in European Opera: Essays in Honor of Julian Rushton, ed. Rachel Cowgill, David Cooper, and Clive Brown (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2010), 103–121, 106 n. 8.

[92] "Smetana když počal psáti lidové opery české, nemohl se opírati o theorii české písně, neznal jejích znaků. Smetana byl však velký genius, byl hudebník, v jehož duši dřímaly zcela neuvědomělé zdroje melodií tak česky miloučkých a česky věrných. Smetana nepotřeboval se v českosti své vyvíjeti: on vytvořil první operní notou svou zároveň český dramatický styl. Vedlo by nás daleko rozebírati jeho odlišné stránky stylu operního, jinde tehdy vznikajícího. Stojí však za to Janáčka porovnati se Smetanou. Oba mají stejný cíl, ale různé východisko. Smetana vyšel ze svého českého nitra; proto měl hned rozřešeny všechny otázky stylové: psal prostě tak, jak jej obrovský instinkt vedl. Naproti tomu Janáček nejprve s mravenčí pílí sbíral lidové písně moravsko-slovenské, anatomickým nožíkem pitval jejich nejtajnější součástky… Smetana nemohl českost své hudby ani dobře označiti po dokonaném díle; ba ani kritikové neřekli, v čem ta jeho českost spočívá. V tom jest velký rozdil mezi ryzím divem hudby samé u Smetany a mezi Janáčkovými theoretickými kombinacemi a konstrukcemi." Branberger, "Nové dráhy pro budoucí operu?," 4.

dramatic heights to which Smetana had ascended. In Branberger's eyes, Janáček remained apart from the discursive pantheon of the great Czech composers in two ways: his alterity as a self-conscious Moravian composer, and his labor-intensive, folksong-focused approach to operatic composition. In this sense, the village world of *Jenůfa* was of a completely different order than that of works like *The Bartered Bride* or even *The Devil and Kate*. The differences between critical appraisals of Janáček's work, in addition to showing the unmarked background of the village mode in Prague, were part of a more fundamental conflict: this was a dispute over who got to say what was or was not Czech in opera.

Nejedlý versus Janáček: The Path to the Prague *Jenůfa* and its Triumph

It is difficult to overstate the influence Zdeněk Nejedlý commanded in the musical life of Prague and the Czech lands. From the beginning of the twentieth century, his polemics and aesthetic ideas set the tone for discussion of Czech music history and its significance until, more or less, the end of communist rule.[93] While his activities as a music critic were so controversial he wrote himself out of mainstream discourse by the early 1930s, he remained influential as a university professor of musicology. After World War II and the ascension of the communist government in 1948, he became Minister of Culture and Education, a position he held until 1953, where he was able to exert more influence than ever before. By the time he died in 1962, he had profoundly shaped the course of Czech music history and historiography.

Nejedlý had spent a large part of 1907 and 1908 codifying his appraisal of Smetana's operas (see Chapter 3), which eventually resulted in the publication of his lectures on the subject under the title *Smetanovy Zpěvohry* (*Smetana's Operas*, 1908). His next project was another

[93] Nejedlý's echoes are still felt in Czech musicology to this day. For an overview of his activities, see John Tyrrell, "Janáček, Nejedlý, and the Future of Czech National Opera," 103 and 103–104 n. 1.

public lecture series, which would be published under the title *Česká moderní opera po Smetanovi* (*Czech Modern Opera after Smetana*, 1911). It was, unsurprisingly, highly polemical, dismissing Dvořák entirely and favoring Nejedlý's chosen operatic succession of Zdeněk Fibich, Josef Bohuslav Foerster, and Otakar Ostrčil. While Nejedlý was staking out his claims for Smetana and his operatic heirs, Janáček was continuing to work on *Jenůfa*. He undertook a series of cuts and revisions starting in 1906, resulting in the publication of a piano-vocal score for *Jenůfa*, featuring substantial revisions, in 1908.[94]

Prague opinions regarding *Jenůfa* remained fairly static; in the wake of the opera's revival in Olomouc and Brno for the 1906–1907 season, an anonymous reviewer published a short article in *Dalibor*. It was in some ways even more direct than the 1904 reviews, stating that the opera was "the first Moravian opera in the same sense as we accord, for example, to *The Bartered Bride* as a Bohemian opera."[95] This reviewer, like Branberger, considered the two operas to be based on different principles: whereas Smetana was concerned with proper Czech declamation, Janáček focused on the melodic cadence of speech. Unlike Branberger, however, this anonymous reviewer did not relegate Janáček to the provinces for his opera's "through-and-through" Moravian character. Indeed, the *Dalibor* review went so far as to call for the Prague National Theater to perform the opera, stating that it was the theater's "responsibility" to do so, "so that the opera can be judged once and for all."[96]

The publication of *Jenůfa*'s piano-vocal score in 1908 fueled new appraisals of the opera, though at the National Theater Kovařovic remained intractable. His position was no doubt

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[94] See Tyrrell, *Janáček*, vol. 1, 688–697. For an overview of the work's revision history in general, see Cheek, *Jenůfa: Translations and Pronunciation*, 19–20.

[95] "…první opera moravská v tom smyslu, jak zoveme na př. "Prodanou nevěstu" operou českou." -vs-, "Divadla. České divadlo v Brně," *Dalibor* 29, no. 2 (19 October 1906): 17.

[96] "…aby vůbec posuzováno býti mohlo?" -vs-, "Divadla," 18.

bolstered by Nejedlý's dismissal of the opera in a public lecture that took place on 27 May 1910.[97] Nejedlý had been discussing Foerster's opera *Eva* (1899), which like *Jenůfa* drew its text from a play by Gabriela Preissová—in this case, her *Gazdina roba*. To Nejedlý, Foerster's *Eva* was a true village opera because it followed Smetana's example, in more ways than one:

> Foerster, a true modern master, who in this respect follows from Smetana and Fibich, found it impossible to fabricate a Slovak character through whatever artificialities in the manner of the old grand opera, which prided itself on the geographical rarities in a given production. In *Eva*, Foerster wrote a drama of a female soul, and this drama, so inward-looking, could of course not be anything other than—Foersterian… in the same way, following from the subjective work of Smetana, so too in *Eva* we have the feeling that we are in a Slovak village, perfect and deep, since here the artist directly relates to us his idea of Slovak life.[98]

This is a fairly remarkable statement, in that it does not matter that Foerster was Bohemian, worked in Prague and Hamburg, versified Preissová's prose play, and smoothed out its Moravian dialect. Rather, because he drew from the depths of his own soul, as did Smetana, his opera could not help but be the perfect embodiment of Moravian-Slovak village life.[99] Nejedlý's statement was tied to the village mode in a second way, in that he focused on the psychological element of Foerster's opera and how it explored the inner life of a single woman—Eva—rather

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[97] The history of this event and Nejedlý's disagreements with Janáček's style have been amply documented in Tyrrell, "Janáček, Nejedlý, and the Future of Czech National Opera," 103–121. I draw partially from Tyrrell here, though I also resituate Nejedlý's polemic in the larger context of the village mode.

[98] "Pro Foerstera jako pravého moderního mistra, jenž v té otázce kráčí za Smetanou a Fibichem, bylo nemožno jakýmikoliv umělůstkami padělati slovenský ráz po způsobu staré velké opery, jež si zakládala na geografických raritách ve svém výrazu. Foerster psal v 'Evě' drama ženské duše, a toto drama, tak niterné, nemohlo ovšem býti jiné než—Foersterovské… opřený jen o stejně subjektivní výtvor Smetanův, tak i v 'Evě' máme dojem, že jsme na slovenské vsi, dokonalý a hluboký, poněvadž umělec nám zde přímo sděluje svou představu slovenského života." Zdeněk Nejedlý, *Česká moderní opera po Smetanovi* (Prague: J. Otto, 1911), 181–182.

[99] It is worth pointing out here that for all of his polemical fire, Nejedlý held many of the same ideas and opinions about Czech music history as did other Prague figures. He and Jan Branberger (and many others) shared a very similar conception of Smetana's character and role; both relied on the same concept of Smetana as Beethovenian genius-hero, drawing artistic truth from his own soul. While they contributed to similar periodicals in the first decade of the twentieth century, they ultimately ended up on opposing sides of the quickly forming ideological divide in Prague music criticism—Branberger threw in with the Artistic Union side, while Nejedlý ended up leading his own faction through the journal *Smetana hudební list*.

than, as he would complain about *Jenůfa*, focusing on externalities of behavior. For Nejedlý, Eva and her eponymous opera were a moral example, a symbol to be used for understanding human behavior grounded directly in village life. It is no mistake that *Eva* served in this fashion for Nejedlý. Eva leaves her crippled husband Samko to live with the handsome Mánek, openly flouting social norms. In the third act, Mánek is compelled to leave Eva behind, and while she has been presented as a sympathetic character throughout, the opera fulfills the standard gender dictates of the genre: Eva commits suicide by leaping into the Danube at the end.[100] By contrast, Jenůfa's fate did not conform to the standard pattern, thus presenting a departure from village-mode strictures on gender propriety. Following on these two points, we can discern two key elements of the "unmarked" Bohemian village mode, at least as propagated by Nejedlý. First, composers who created village operas could only do so as a result of interiority and the Romantic conception of translating the artist's own soul into music, and second, these operatic villages had to conform to (or at most bend) social norms.

Among several other criticisms, Nejedlý further indicted Janáček on two counts: Moravian separatism and "naturalism," the latter being a result of Preissová's play.[101] There was no need to create a Moravian artistic style separate from an "all-national" ("*celonárodní*") style that encompassed both Bohemian and Moravian artistic life, Nejedlý argued, and to do so would only move Czech art backwards. Nejedlý's response here can also be understood within its imperial context, in that a united Czech artistic front would be more likely to succeed in differentiating itself from the homogenizing impulses of Vienna. This stance made sense in the political context

[100] A discussion of this trope and its history in scholarship can be found in Heather Hadlock, "Opera and Gender Studies," in *The Cambridge Companion to Opera Studies*, ed. Nicholas Till (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 257–275.

[101] Nejedlý discounted Janáček's opera in almost every manner available to him, including dismissing the composer's theory of speech melody. For more on the links between this rhetorical move and the Smetana battles of the 1870s, see Tyrrell, "Janáček, Nejedlý, and the Future of Czech National Opera," 110–113.

of the period. In 1905, politicians in the Reichsrat negotiated an agreement termed the Moravian Compromise, whereby the Czechs, Germans, and large landowners in the region would now vote separately from one another. School boards and local administrative entities were also divided along Czech and German lines. The idea behind this divide-and-conquer strategy on the part of the Habsburgs was that by compromising and giving regional actors a certain amount of atomized power, they could diffuse issues with the potential for concerted nationalist action that might threaten overall Habsburg rule.[102] Thus, the notion of "Moravian separatism" had contemporary political resonances: by focusing solely on Moravian artistic and political concerns, public figures like Janáček could be seen as hurting the greater Czech nationalist cause.

Nejedlý simultaneously linked the charge of Moravian separatism against Janáček to a potential regionalism built on Smetana's model.

> A united idea of national (thus here: generally Czech or quite precisely: Czechoslovak) art perhaps does not require, however, some uniformity of national character when it comes to the *color of the work*. If Smetana is exclusively Czech [Bohemian], this would not be the smallest obstacle to the appearance of a master of, for example, Moravian-Slovak opera. Just such a Smetanian opera, but Moravian-Slovak, is Foerster's *Eva*. However, this color of a certain region is always only a variant of a single true Czech art.[103]

Janáček's *Jenůfa*, according to Nejedlý, was no such thing. The critic rejected the kind of regionalist specificity that was a positive trait in the opera's early reception in Brno. For Nejedlý, opera created in the Czech lands had to serve an imagined, unitary Czech nationalism that superseded regional specificity even as it made use of it.

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[102] See discussion in Agnew, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown*, 152, and Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, 315–316.

[103] "Jednotná myšlenka národního (tedy u nás: všeobecně českého neb zcela přesně: československého) umění nežádá však snad nějakou uniformitu národního rázu, pokud jde o *kolorit díla*. Je-li Smetana výlučně český, není ovšem nejmenší překážky, proč by nemohl se vyskytnouti mistr na př. slovácké opery. Právě smetanovskou operou, ale slováckou, jest Foersterova 'Eva.' Vždy však tento kolorit určitého kraje jest jen obměnou pravého, jednoho českého umění." Emphasis in original. Nejedlý, *Česká moderní opera po Smetanovi*, 184.

Nejedlý described *Jenůfa*'s separatist character as a result of not following the Smetanian example of internalized, psychological drama.[104] He found fault with the libretto and the unfeminine aspects of its main characters, as he explained here: "In *The Farm Mistress* Preissová was able to create a beautiful type of woman and to make this woman suffer in a completely feminine way, which Foerster himself then heightened with his work into a psychologically finely nuanced composition. In *Her Stepdaughter* there is no trace of this art by the same playwright."[105] Tyrrell argues persuasively that Nejedlý probably had not even scanned the piano-vocal score of *Jenůfa* past the end of the first act, so his criticisms of the opera are also largely criticisms of the play, since he seems to have known that slightly better. (He also apparently missed the fact that the opera is more about the Kostelnička than Jenůfa herself.) However, the social implications here are exceedingly clear: an opera framed properly within the village mode controlled gender in a socially acceptable way.

Eva's transgression, for all its tragic beauty and psychological depth beloved by Nejedlý, had to be punished, and she was duly offed at the end of opera. By all accounts, both Jenůfa and her stepmother, the Kostelnička, contravened the gender norms of contemporary Czech society. Jenůfa had a child out of wedlock and the Kostelnička, in an attempt to shield Jenůfa from social opprobrium, drowned the child in the millrace. When this all comes to light in Act III, the Kostelnička is arrested and taken away to be tried, but Jenůfa forgives her stepmother and is ultimately free to leave with her new husband Laca and start a new life. While one should be careful in assigning *Jenůfa* too much feminist credit—the opera is still very much bound by

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[104] It goes without saying that Janáček's opera deeply characterizes the main roles; see Tyrrell's refutation of Nejedlý along these lines in Tyrrell, "Janáček, Nejedlý, and the Future of Czech National Opera," 108–109.

[105] "V 'Gazdině robě' dovedla Preissová vytvořiti krásný typ ženy a dáti této ženě trpěti tak zcela ženský, což právě Foerster pak svým dílem vystupňoval v dílo psychologicky nesmírně jemné. V 'Její pastorkyňi' není po tomto umění téže autorky ani stopy." Nejedlý, *Česká moderní opera po Smetanovi*, 186. Translation slightly adapted from Tyrrell, "Janáček, Nejedlý, and the Future of Czech National Opera," 107–108.

conventional gendered expectations even as it partially transgresses them, and Jenůfa displays properly feminine behavior in her forgiveness of Laca, Števa, and the Kostelnička—the fact remains that Preissová's *Její pastorkyňa* and Janáček's *Jenůfa* present a very different village world than those of *Eva* and *The Devil and Kate*, in their Moravian source material, their lack of idealization, and their willingness to defy social and generic conventions.[106] Nejedlý's emphasis on these aspects helps explain, in part, why both the play and the opera were rejected by Prague audiences and artistic figures for so long.

Yet the opera, at least, was not rejected forever. Kovařovic, after a concerted lobbying attempt by Janáček's friends and supporters, finally relented and agreed to stage *Jenůfa* in 1916.[107] The opera's premiere at the Prague National Theater was a huge success, creating a sensation that led to a flood of publicity and reviews. Nejedlý's response to the success of *Jenůfa*, published in his personal mouthpiece journal *Smetana hudební list*, was characteristically negative and polemical; it was still couched in moral terms, now even more explicitly arguing from the perspective the village mode. While others have discussed Nejedlý's 1916 response in detail, I want to draw attention to a particular moment: his comparison, once again, of *Eva* with *Jenůfa*.[108] The critic stated that "Foerster chose Preissová's play in which he could himself place

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[106] Comparisons between the gendered worlds of Preissová's two plays and their operatic transformations are also given in Alfred Thomas, *The Bohemian Body: Gender and Sexuality in Modern Czech Culture* (Madinson, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 77–87; and Zuzana Konopáčová, "Analýza mocenských vztahů a genderových stereotypů v dílech Gabriely Preissové - *Gazdina roba* a *Její pastorkyňa*," PhD diss., Univerzita Karlova, Prague, 2012.

[107] For the history of the lobbying effort, the progress of rehearsals leading up the Prague premiere, and the nature of the cuts and modifications that Kovařovic introduced into the score, see John Tyrrell, *Janáček: Years of a Life*, vol. 2 (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 20–63.

[108] See both Tyrrell, "Janáček, Nejedlý, and the Future of Czech National Opera," 116–121, and Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague*, 62–63. Nejedlý was thorough in his dismissal of *Jenůfa*, leveraging arguments that included the inappropriateness of speech melody; the connection of Janáček to Pivoda, Smetana's antagonist from the 1870s; Janáček supposed personal antagonism to Smetana; inauthentic Moravian ethnographic character; Moravian character as popular and sensationalist; and the outdatedness of its musical style, which Nejedlý argued was too reliant on *verismo* of the 1890s.

his concept of *love*, not just any sort, but a pure Czech, Moravian or in fact Slavonic love… that is the love of a purely Czech mother in a Moravian atmosphere. It is these *moral values* that make *Eva*, just like the folk operas of Smetana, so national because we can find in them the soul and heart of our feeling."[109] Once again, Nejedlý portrayed *Eva*, like the folk operas of Smetana, as steeped in moral values. More importantly, however, these principles were closely intertwined with the national, universalized subjecthood of the Czech people, which makes Nejedlý's discourse a clear engagement of the village mode.

Anyone who followed Nejedlý's journal would have had ample exposure to the connections he drew between Smetana's operatic villages, bourgeois morality, and the ideal structure of Czech society. Indeed, the issue immediately prior to the one containing Nejedlý's *Jenůfa* review led off with a long article by Josef Bartoš, a key Nejeldý acolyte, entitled "The Roots of the Immortality of Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*."[110] Bartoš argued that the secret of *The Bartered Bride* was its "humor, which is none other than its *morality*."[111] He then launched into a comparison with Molière's *Tartuffe*, and concluded that Smetana had ultimately done better than the French playwright: "Molière does not have that pure, childlike, naive faith in the goodness of the people's heart, whereas Smetana truly lives and breathes only through such faith."[112] This faith in the people—who were understood to be rural villagers like those portrayed

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[109] "Foerster vybral si z Preissové drama, v něž mohl sám potom vložiti svou představu l á s k y, ne jakékoliv, ale ryze české, moravské neb vlastně slovanské lasky… toť láska ryze české matičky v moravském ovzduší. To jsou právě ty morální hodnoty, jež 'Evu' stejně jako lidové opery Smetanovy činí tak národními, poněvadž my v nich nalézáme duši i srdce našeho citu." Zdeněk Nejedlý, "Leoše Janáčka 'Její pastorkyňa,'" *Smetana hudební list* 6, nos. 9–10 (4 August 1916): 120. Translation slightly adapted from Tyrrell, "Janáček, Nejedlý, and the Future of Czech National Opera," 118.

[110] See Josef Bartoš, "Kořen nesmrtelnosti Smetanovy 'Prodané nevěsty,'" *Smetana hudební list* 6, no. 8 (4 May 1916): 101–104.

[111] "…humor, který není než její *moralitou*." Bartoš, "Kořen nesmrtelnosti Smetanovy 'Prodané nevěsty,'" 101.

[112] "Molière nemá té čisté, dětské, naivní víry v dobrotu lidského srdce, kdežto Smetana jí, a jen jí, vlastně žije a dýchá." Bartoš, "Kořen nesmrtelnosti Smetanovy 'Prodané nevěsty,'" 102.

in *The Bartered Bride*—was cast as the source of Smetana's idealism, which in turn informed the moral examples proffered by his operas. Bartoš characterized *The Bartered Bride*, for example, as portraying a conflict between two worlds: a materialist one versus an idealist one, adumbrated by the conflict of Kecal versus Mařenka and Jeník. That "faithful love [and] the world of idealism" triumphed was only natural, and offered a vision for how Czech individuals should think and act.[113] When Nejedlý rejected *Jenůfa* as immoral, he was simultaneously denying it a place in this Smetanian, Bohemian lineage of the village mode.

There were others, however, who argued against this viewpoint, instead installing Janáček once again as the heir of Smetana. Even without the Nejedlý circle's emphasis on the older composer, comparisons were made likely by the circumstances of performance: the premiere of *Jenůfa* in Prague occurred on 26 May 1916, and the fiftieth anniversary performance of *The Bartered Bride*, covered in several articles before and after the performance, took place on 30 May 1916. Having two different village operas in this close a proximity no doubt intensified the likelihood of comparisons between the two works and their composers. The composer and writer Václav Štěpán, who would become an important artistic collaborator of Janáček's in subsequent years, mounted a defense of the latter in the pages of both *Lidové noviny*, Brno's main daily newspaper, and *Hudební revue*, the Prague music journal serving as mouthpiece of the Artistic Union and as the main opponent to the Nejedlý contingent. Štěpán was generally in favor of Janáček's opera in his two-part *Lidové noviny* feuilleton, and he repeated the claim, basically unchallenged by any contemporary commentators, that Janáček's music and reliance on Moravian ethnographic materials was fundamentally different than Smetana's more "universal"

[113] "Věrná láska, svět idealismu." Bartoš, "Kořen nesmrtelnosti Smetanovy 'Prodané nevěsty,'" 102.

approach.[114] His article in *Hudební revue* (subtitled "A Response to Prof. Nejedlý's Article"), on the other hand, was as polemical and wide-ranging as Nejedlý's, countering point-by-point all of the latter's claims; Štěpán even went so far as to take Nejedlý to task for setting up a false dichotomy between Smetana and Dvořák, accusing him of a doing a disservice to musicology.[115]

Another writer at *Hudení revue*, one Jindřich Pihert, made perhaps the strongest argument in opposition to Nejedlý's rejection of Janáček and his claims to village mode relevance. The following extended passage outlined the importance of Janáček and established *Jenůfa* as a direct, if atmospherically dissimilar, heir:

> As opposed to Smetana's idealizing style emerges this style, which attempts to reflect life more realistically and implacably, and which can be sensed during Janáček's *Jenůfa*, which continues to maintain its place in the repertory. There is no doubt that this very contrast is one of the causes of the success of this opera. These are quite different peasants that our audience meets in *Jenůfa* than those who are well known to them from *The Bartered Bride* or *The Kiss*. Although their characters are not enveloped in this music of high beauty and classic, formal perfection, they are however closer to daily life. Although surprising depths of feeling are not concealed beneath the distinctiveness of these peasants' appearance and character, the spontaneous vitality of their savage instinct attracts and stirs through its elemental strength.
>
> Therein lies their appeal to a large audience. They are thus the children of a creative Dionysian fire opposite Smetana's formal Apollonian creations. And yet again it is evident for both groups, even if the degree of their artistic realization was not equally perfect, that they grew from the same soil, and that they come together in a effort of artistic expression of the distinctive life of our nation, that despite being opposed in their manifestations they are analogous efforts. And in such vivid analogies of opposites happens the evolution of operatic creative and representative art.[116]

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[114] See Václav Štěpán, "Její pastorkyňa na Národním divadle v Praze," *Lidové noviny*, 30 May and 1 June 1916. Significantly, the anonymous feuilleton that ran on 31 May was entitled "Fifty Years of *The Bartered Bride,*" priming comparisons between the two.

[115] See Václav Štěpán, "'Její pastorkyňa.' (Odpověď na článek prof. Nejedlého.)," *Hudební revue* 10, no. 1 (October 1916): 39.

[116] "Jak oproti idealisujícímu slohu Smetanovu vyjímá se sloh, jenž snaží se v hudbu promítnouti život realističtěji a bezohledněji, to lze si uvědomiti při Janáčkově "Její pastorkyňa," jež až dodnes zachovává si význačné místo v repertoiru. Není pochyby, že právě tento kontrast je také jednou z příčin úspěchu této opery. Jsou to docela jiní venkované, s nimiž setkává se naše obecenstvo v "Její pastorkyni," než ti, kteří jsou mu známi z "Prodané" neb "Hubičky." Jejich postavy nejsou sice obestřeny hudbou té vysoké krásy a klassické formální dokonalosti, jsou však bližší dennímu životu, pod rázovitostí jejich zjevu i projevu netají se sice překvapující hloubky citové, avšak jejich spontanní vitalita živelnou silou své prudké pudovosti vábí a strhuje.

While there seems to have been a consensus among critics, however mistaken, that the protagonists in *Jenůfa* showed little depth of character in comparison to Smetana's, there are obvious differences with Nejedlý in this passage. In framing *Jenůfa* in this way, Pihert sanitized the opera's Moravian otherness by placing it into a dialectical relationship with *The Bartered Bride*, collapsing the temporal distance between the two and allowing for *Jenfůa*'s subsumption into the unmarked village mode. For this critic, Moravian alterity was not a reason for the work's dismissal; rather, this marked difference was the reason for its success.

The opera's dramatic power and musical effectiveness had been improved as a result of Janáček's 1908 revisions and (for Prague audiences, used to the likes of Richard Strauss) Kovařovic's 1916 changes, but this in itself was no guarantee of the audience and critical success *Jenůfa* enjoyed. Acceptance of the opera was no doubt aided by the upsurge in unifying and uncritical nationalist feeling occasioned by World War I, which was raging at the time of *Jenůfa*'s premiere.[117] Indeed, not long after the sensational success of the opera, an exhibition devoted exclusively to the life and works of Smetana opened in Prague in 1917. It was wildly popular with the public and with both sides of the Nejedlý/Artistic Union divide in Prague's musicocritical circles.[118] *Jenůfa*, from the time of its Brno premiere up through 1916, became the very thing that Nejedlý wished for: a Moravian-centered opera that nevertheless served the larger

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V ní tkví i jejich působivost na velké obecenstvo. Jsou tedy dítkami tvůrcího vznícení dionyského oproti oněm smetanovským tvořeným appolinsky. A přece zas je na obou těch skupinách patrno, že byť i stupeň jich umělecké realisace nebyl stejně dokonalý, vzrostly z téže půdy a že stýkají se ve snaze uměleckého vyjádření osobitého života našeho národa, že byť protivné si projevem jsou analogické snahou. A v takových názorných analogiích protiv děje se vývoj umění operního tvůrčího i reproduktivního." Jindřich Pihert, "Z hudebního života. Praha. Národní divadlo," *Hudební revue* 10, no. 1 (October 1916): 47.

[117] A few scholars have touched on the effect of World War I on Prague's musical life, such as Brian Locke, but it still awaits a comprehensive treatment in the literature.

[118] For a brief discussion of this event, see Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague*, 63–64.

dictates of Czech nationalism through its incorporation into the village mode. Yet to some extent it still escaped full absorption, in that its reception never carried the didactic or exemplary character encapsulated by responses to *The Bartered Bride* and its morality.

Jenůfa's approach to gender, to say nothing of its musical language and speech-melody-inflected text setting, remained outside the examples proffered by Smetana's village heroines or Dvořák's masculine shepherd. When the First Czechoslovak Republic emerged from the ruins of Austria-Hungary and World War I, it would turn to the village mode, especially as communicated through Smetana, as a way to demonstrate a cohesive identity and model of statehood. While *Jenůfa* continued to be popular and promoted by cultural authorities, the new state would use *The Bartered Bride* as the paradigmatic symbol of the republic. Its idealized village would exemplify social standards and the essential character of the Czechs—yet the question of who was invited into that village would be a fraught one.

CHAPTER 5: "EXEMPLAR AND GOSPEL": BEDŘICH SMETANA, *THE BARTERED BRIDE*, AND THE VILLAGE MODE IN THE FIRST CZECHOSLOVAK REPUBLIC

The one-thousandth performance of an opera at a particular theater perhaps no longer garners much attention from listeners in the twenty-first century. The explosion of recorded music and the solidification of an operatic canon throughout the twentieth century have largely inured opera goers to the unique nature of such milestones. Yet this was not always so. From the late nineteenth into the early twentieth centuries, the most famous of these jubilees was possibly that of Ambroise Thomas's *Mignon* (1866) at the Opéra-Comique in Paris on 13 May 1894; it was followed by a celebration of its 1,500th performance in 1919. On 30 May 1927 a different opera was granted a gala celebration on the occasion of its one-thousandth performance: Bedřich Smetana's *Prodaná nevěsta* (*The Bartered Bride*, 1866), at the National Theater in Prague. Zdeněk Nejedlý, an indefatigable promoter of Smetana and combative musicologist who would go on to become minister of culture under the communist regime of postwar Czechoslovakia, drew a clear distinction between the two jubilees in a commemorative volume for the event:

> What, then, did [*Mignon*'s] jubilee mean? Nothing but the confirmation of a large theatrical success, or, to put it better, a box-office success. For actual French culture, the development of art, national society, and finally the artistic level of the theater, *Mignon* had a very negligible, if not a directly negative significance. But *The Bartered Bride*? What wealth is contained for us in this work, what artistic, theatrical, cultural, and national endeavors![1]

[1] "Co však znamenalo toto jubileum? Nic než ověření velkého divadelního či lépe kassovního úspěchu. Pro vlastní kulturu francouzskou, pro rozvoj umění, národní společnost i konečně umělecké úrovně divadla měla 'Mignon' velmi nepatrný, ne-li přímo negativní význam. Ale 'Prodaná nevěsta?' Co všecko je pro nás obsaženo v tomto díle, co úsilí uměleckého, divadelního, kulturního, národního!" Zdeněk Nejedlý, *Almanach na památku tisícího provedení Prodané nevěsty* (Prague: Soubor Národního Divadla, 1927), 7.

Even taking into account Nejedlý's rather dim view of French culture overall, his encomium to the importance of *Bartered Bride* for Czech culture is important for two reasons. First, it encapsulated the general attitude towards Smetana's most famous opera, one shared not only across the ideological spectrum of music critics in Prague, but also within the state apparatus of the recently formed First Czechoslovak Republic. Second, Nejedlý's statement betrays an important facet of the high regard in which *The Bartered Bride* was held: by contrasting it with the supposedly prosaic, financially oriented, and ultimately insignificant jubilee of *Mignon*, Nejedlý was elevating Smetana's work—and by extension Czech opera as a whole—to a higher plane: a plane of national sacralization.

Nejedlý also pressed musicians into service in support of this symbol of Czech identity on the occasion of the jubilee, especially in the National Theater's commemorative almanac-program for the celebration. Performers' experience of embodying sound made their testimony and their approbation of Smetana all the more powerful. By presenting their recollections in a commemorative program, Nejedlý created a unique historical narrative for *The Bartered Bride* that further legitimized its status as the foremost symbol of Czech music. Such was the success of the popularizing efforts of Nejedlý and others that the first line of the opera—"Proč bychom se netěšili" ("Why would we not be merry")—could even serve to sell household goods: in one instance, Radion laundry detergent (Figure 5.1).

In this chapter, I explore the sacralization of *The Bartered Bride* and Smetana in the contemporary press of the First Czechoslovak Republic, focusing on the discursive strategies through which this was accomplished. While critics had been celebrating this opera and its composer since its première in 1866 (see Chapter 1), I concentrate here on three notable cases that provide unique perspectives on the discourses at play after World War I: the 1924 centennial

celebrations of the birth of Smetana, culminating on the day of his birth, on 2 March; the one-thousandth jubilee performance of *The Bartered Bride*, on 30 May 1927; and the Paris premiere of the opera, on 26 October 1928, in a gala celebration on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the founding of the First Czechoslovak Republic, which was attended by European diplomats, French dignitaries, and the elite of Parisian society. I argue that these five years (1924–1928) represented the apogee of Smetana's importance and prestige both to the music-critical establishment in Prague, eager to cement an incontrovertible, teleological historiography of Czech music, and to the Czechoslovak government writ large, which understood that Smetana and *The Bartered Bride* could serve important roles as emblems of the nation and its underlying ideologies. The French reception of *The Bartered Bride*'s gala premiere in Paris underscores the latter point in particular.

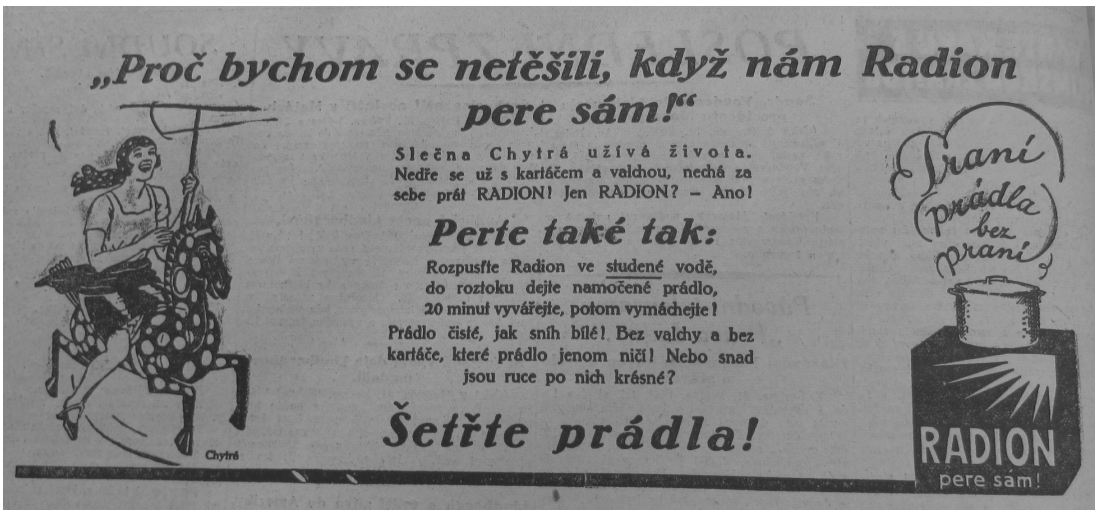

Figure 5.1: "Why would we not be merry when Radion washes our laundry by itself?"[2]

[2] Aside from the title, the rest of the ad reads "*Ms. Clever enjoys her life*. She doesn't bother with a brush and washboard; she leaves RADION to wash in her place! Just RADION? – Yes! You can wash this way too: disolve Radion in cold water, put in the soaked clothing, boil for 20 minutes, then rinse! Clean laundry, white as snow! Without a washboard and brush, which only destroy clothes! Or perhaps your hands are beautiful after that? Save your clothes!" "*Slečna Chytrá užívá života*. Nedře se už s kartáčem a valchou, nechá za sebe prát RADION! Jen RADION? – Ano! Perte také tak: Rozpusťte Radion ve studené vodě, do roztoku dejte namočené prádlo, 20 minut vyvářejte, potom vymáchejte! Prádlo čisté, jak sníh bílé! Bez valchy a bez kartáče, které prádlo jenom ničí! Nebo snad jsou ruce po nich krásné? Šetřte prádla!" The text in the cloud on the right reads "Wash clothes without washing," "Praní prádla bez praní." *Právo lidu*, 1 June 1927, 8.

As I discussed in Chapter 1, the history of Smetana and *The Bartered Bride* is deeply connected to the discursive regime of the village mode. I revisit this theoretical framework here briefly in order to highlight the ways in which governmental and cultural actors of the independent First Czechoslovak Republic were thoroughly enmeshed in this ideological construct, foregrounding an atemporal, rural origin myth as a central component of the Czech state and its music. From there, I move on to my three case studies. In exploring these moments of glorification of Smetana and his opera, I advance a new understanding of the place of Smetana and his music in the history of the Czech lands, especially during the interwar period, which has scarcely been mentioned in the Anglophone literature. Furthermore, I reveal the significance of Smetana and his most famous opera to the self-representation of the Czechoslovak government, a relationship which, despite its importance to the character of Czechoslovak politics of the time, has gone almost entirely uninvestigated.

Myth and Ideology: The Village Mode in the First Czechoslovak Republic

Neither the apotheosis of Smetana as originator of Czech music writ large nor the positing of *The Bartered Bride* as the perfect emblem of the nation were a given. These assertions had to be repeated, reinscribed, and re-performed. It was through the concrete, habitual practices I explore here that the cultural and political relevance of Smetana and *The Bartered Bride* became assured. These practices took varied forms, including frequent and positive press coverage; special publications like the commemorative programs both for *The Bartered Bride*'s thousandth jubilee and for the Paris premiere; and the performances of the operas themselves. I contend that these practices are the material indications of the incorporation of these two subjects—the composer

and his opera—into the larger state ideological apparatuses of the First Czechoslovak Republic.[3] As I have indicated in previous chapters, this cultural ideological apparatus had existed somewhat independently of the repressive state apparatus and other ideological apparatuses of the Austrian imperial government; in effect, it was a state ideological apparatus without a state, though it was made legible through the use of nationalist ideology. After World War I and the foundation of Czechoslovakia, however, what had once been used to fight cultural and ideological battles internal to the Austro-Hungarian Empire now became a means of asserting a state culture predicated on a hegemony of homogeneity. Such claims of national unity were aimed both within, at the heterogeneous population of the newly constituted state, and without, to the rest of a Europe whose fragile, post-Versailles ordering had been imperative for the creation of the Czechoslovak state and which, it was argued, had to be maintained to safeguard the future of the country.

The need for a unified Czechoslovakia had been advanced most saliently and successfully by Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and Edvard Beneš, respectively the new president and foreign minister of the country. These two figures employed propagandist myths of Czech culture and essence both during World War I and once the new state had been founded in order to assure their own power domestically and the importance of Czechoslovakia internationally.[4] As discussed in Chapter 1, the word "myth" as deployed within the larger framework of the village mode reflects the essentialist character of the narratives that claimed to represent Czech rural life, on the one hand, and their morally binding, exemplary, and didactic character, on the other.[5]

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[3] See Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (New York: Verso, 2014), 184–187.

[4] See Andrea Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 14.

[5] See Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 14–15, as well as Robert B. Pynsent, *Questions of Identity: Czech and Slovak Ideas of Nationality and Personality* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1994), 43.

In the case of Smetana and *The Bartered Bride*, Nejedlý and his contemporaries were capitalizing on just such a narrative with their promotional efforts, one that had been long established. It had begun as early as 1869 with laudatory articles by Otakar Hostinský, who cast Smetana as the only composer capable of moving Czech music into a more progressive stage of its inevitable evolution.[6] In addition, members of the Artistic Society (*Umělecká beseda*) like Václav Juda Novotný contributed to the developing Smetana myth throughout the 1870s and 1880s.[7] In the vein of Beethoven, Smetana was cast as a solitary heroic creator-figure, with *The Bartered Bride* described, concurrently, as the first "true" Czech opera.

Such mythologizing narratives aided expressions of nationalist thought. The theory of nationalism as an imagined community is relevant here, in that the imagined community was broadly generalizable. Its constituent members were conceived to be similar to whoever was doing the imagining—sometimes elites like Masaryk and Beneš; sometimes critics like Hostinský or Nejedlý. This meant that broad archetypes or narratives could come to stand for the entire nation or for elements of its people's purported character, and because this imagined community was "always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship," all members of the nation could be said to conform to these archetypal models.[8] Such generalizable narratives and

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[6] For an overview of Hostinský's efforts to popularize and aesthetically legitimate Smetana, see Marta Ottlova, "Jiný svět hudby přelomu století," *Hudební věda* 37, no. 1–2 (2000): 77. A recent overview of evolutionary theory's connection to conceptions of style and music history throughout the twentieth century can be found in Rachel Mundy, "Evolutionary Categories and Musical Style from Adler to America," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 67, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 735–768.

[7] See Kelly St. Pierre, "Smetana's 'Vyšehrad' and Mythologies of Czechness in Scholarship," *19th-Century Music* 37, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 91–112. Her book covers in further detail twentieth-century conflicts over who truly understood Smetana's legacy and myth; see Kelly St. Pierre, *Bedřich Smetana: Myth, Music, and Propaganda* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2017).

[8] The comradeship discussed by Benedict Anderson was facilitated by the spread of a common vernacular in print culture, and as he points out, "nor should we forget that the same epoch [the mid-nineteenth century] saw the vernacularization of another form of printed page: the score. After Dobrovský came Smetana, Dvořák, and Janáček." See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 2006), 6–7 and 75.

myths were recruited to support a broad array of different postulations of identity. Entities conceived of as foundational—in this case, Smetana and *The Bartered Bride*—supplied mythic narratives that papered over, or replaced, the complexities of musical practices in Prague during the mid- to late-nineteenth century (see Chapter 1). With the societal changes of the *fin-de-siècle* and World War I, these homogenizing narratives were easily recruited to constructing new formations of musical identity.[9]

The twin myths of Smetana and *The Bartered Bride* connect deeply to the larger theoretical frame at the heart of this dissertation: the village mode. As I have discussed in Chapter 1, the village mode offers a two-pronged approach to engaging with, and creating, Czech culture. In the first sense of the concept, works and texts that draw on the village mode created historical and cultural narratives via the use of a deeply entrenched myth of the rural village as origin for the Czech people. Farmers, pesants, and those who dwelt in the countryside were figured as embodying the ideal characteristics to which the Czech citizen should aspire; the village was also understood as the place in which the Czech language and culture had withstood outside domination and oppression by the ethnically German Habsburgs. The second aspect of the village mode is its power as a means of constituting subjects. The mythologized village and all that it encompassed became a reference point by which individuals understood themselves and their relationship to larger social roles.[10] For example, in questioning the social structure of the newly independent Czechoslovak state, writers could posit the rural village, as communicated through opera, to be an example of harmonious coexistence worthy of emulation in quotidian

[9] See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 204–205, as well as discussion of music, nation, and identity in Chapter 1. Comparable discussions of musical identity and nationalism in the Russian context can be found in Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), and Marina Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism From Glinka to Stalin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

[10] See discussion in Chapter 1 and Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, 196–198.

life. In addition to this ideology of the village, the village mode likewise engaged nationalist ideology—the village was exemplary not only for the positive attributes of its inhabitants, but also for the fact that it was a specifically *Czech* village, and thus whatever laudable qualities arose in a work engaging the village mode were taken to be essentially Czech.

In being framed through the village mode by Nejedlý and others, Smetana and *The Bartered Bride* were made culturally intelligible to a wider public precisely through the citational nature of ideological material practices, be they performance or publication.[11] Even more broadly, the nation as a whole was often configured in terms of the idealized village—a simile often hinted at and occasionally explicitly stated, as we shall see, in interwar writings about *The Bartered Bride*. While the village mode, in the end, was but one of a number of ideologies at play in the larger state ideological apparatuses of Czechoslovakia, it was a key element in how the state and its subjects were constituted through their myths. This ideological configuration was concretized not only in representations of, and writing about, *The Bartered Bride*, but also in the ways in which Smetana himself was mythologized and ideologized. Most saliently, Smetana's legend as told by Hostinský and Nejedlý erased the complexity and pluralism of musical life in Prague in favor of an autochthonous wellspring of the nation's music. This reduction mirrored the claim for the village as the cradle of the Czech people and their culture; sometimes mediated through *The Bartered Bride*, sometimes explicitly stated *ad personam*, Smetana came to be seen as one of the chief creators of Czech identity as understood through his musical work.

[11] See Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 2–16. While Butler discusses Althusser and the idea of subjectivization in the context of the legibility of sexual difference, her broader point about the citational nature of ideological practices is relevant here. For more on Butler's reading of Althusser, see Chapter 1.

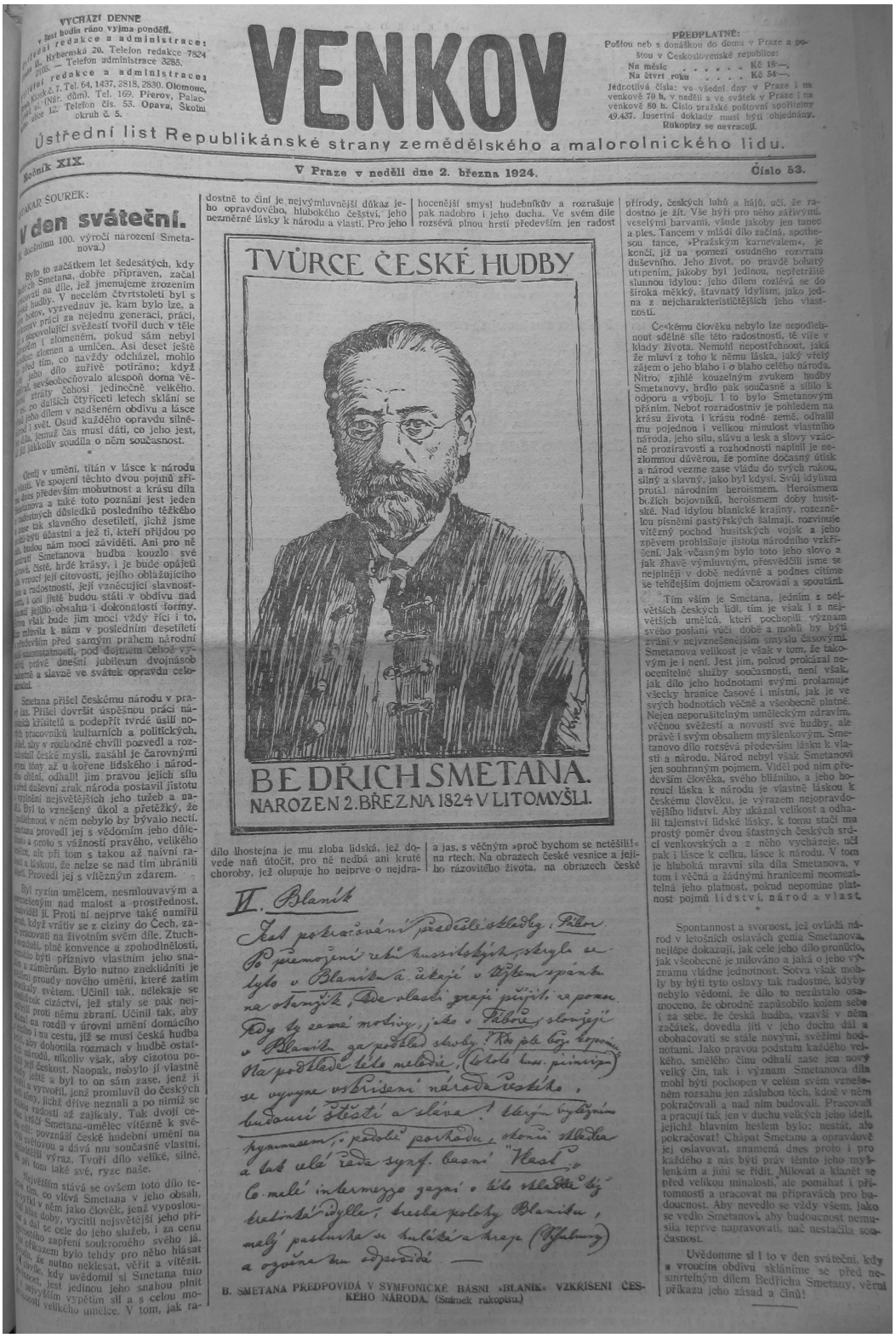
The insistence on Czech particularity, a central aspect of the village mode, initially emerged in the context of Habsburg Austria. Its corollary proposition, that a unified, ethnically distinct population required its own state (or at least largely autonomous system within a larger state), had as its logical endpoint an independent Czech nation-state. Thus, when Czechoslovak independence was declared, the village mode was ready and waiting, an ideal ideological system for understanding Czech identity and art. The homogeneity of Smetana's origin story alongside the closed, uniform character of the village thus mirrored the nationalist ideology of the nascent First Czechoslovak Republic. Despite its large minority population and despite the presence of three distinct ethno-linguistic groups—Czech, Slovak, and German—the republic's government was nevertheless very much beholden to the idea that a nation-state ought to have a unitary language, ethnic basis, and culture. Focusing on the village mode in the new context of interwar Czechoslovakia allows us to connect the efforts of musicians and critics with larger discourses at play in the ongoing construction and reconstruction of nationalist tropes from various constituent elements, including gendered representation, class divisions, and—as will shortly become particularly important—religious rhetoric.[12] The dual nature of the village as ideology and myth, when applied analytically to the history of Czech opera, reveals aspects of this history heretofore unexplored in the literature. It is with this duality in mind that I now turn to the centennial celebrations for the birth of Smetana, when the ongoing re-creation and use of his myth reached a fever pitch.

[12] Anderson intimated the debt of nationalist imagining to religious rhetoric when he characterized sacred languages as the forerunners of vernacular print culture in terms of their usefulness in imagining global communities centered around worship; see Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 12–19. Anthony D. Smith, on the other hand, argued that the actual foundations of nationalist thought and national identity lie precisely in sacred systems, forms, and practices. See Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 5. See also Chapter 1.

"On This Holy Day": Smetana's Centennial Celebrations

The process of promulgating the Smetana myth had been at work for a certain time, especially since the composer's death in 1884. However, it went into overdrive in 1924, the year of the centenary of Smetana's birth on 2 March 1824. Daily newspapers across the political spectrum, to say nothing of specialist music journals, devoted numerous articles to the composer during January, February, and particularly March. *Venkov* (*The Countryside*), a newspaper tied to the right-wing Agrarian party, published a serial article entitled "Through the Life of Bedřich Smetana" that ran for over two months in fourteen separate installments.[13] By tracing the composer's life story from purportedly humble beginnings to his first premieres on Prague operatic stages, *Venkov* helped to publicize standardizing narratives about Smetana. One installment emphasized his compositional and personal connections to Franz Liszt, whom Smetana had met in 1856; Liszt was characterized as a source of artistic authority, providing links to a wider European musical milieu, at least as seen from 1924. On the day of the centennial, *Venkov* devoted the entire front page to Smetana, with a portrait captioned "The Creator of Czech Music;" a facsimile of the manuscript program from his explicitly nationalist tone poem *Blaník*; and a long celebratory article entitled "On This Holy Day" (Figure 5.2).

[13] Right-wing Czech thought at this time crystallized around Czech cultural chauvinism, especially in its anti-German form, and the Agrarian party was its most visible representative. This chauvinism found ready expression in the village mode. See Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 99.



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Bylo to začátkem let šedesátých, kdy Bedřich Smetana, dobře připraven, začal pracovat na díle, jež jmenujeme zrozením české hudby. V necelém čtvrtstoletí byl s Prodaným nevěstou, vyzvedňuv je, kam bylo lze, a Dalibora, vyzvedňuv je nejedním generací, práci, jíž jsou vlastny a nepovolující svěžestí tvořil duch v těle zmítaném zlomeném, pokud sám nebyl zlomen a umlčen. Asi deset ještě let před tím, co navždy odcházel, mohlo jeho dílo zuřivě potíráno; když se sevšeobecňovalo alespoň doma ve-
[illegible] ztráty čehosi jedinečně velkého. [illegible] po dalších čtyřiceti letech sklání se [illegible] jeho dílem v nadšeném obdivu a lásce [illegible] svět. Osud každého opravdu silné-[illegible] jemuž čas musí dáti, co jeho jest, [illegible] jakkoliv soudila o něm současnost.

Genij v umění, titán v lásce k národu [illegible] dnes především mohutnost a krásu díla Smetanova a také toto poznání jest jeden z nejcennějších důsledků posledního těžkého a nesmírně tak slavného desetiletí, jichž jsme byli účastni a jež ti, kteří přijdou po nás, budou nám moci záviděti. Ani pro ně [illegible] Smetanova hudba kouzlo své [illegible] čisté, hrdé krásy, i je bude opájeti [illegible] vroucí její citovostí, jejího oblažujícího [illegible] a radostností, její vznečující slavnost-[illegible] i oni jistě budou státi v obdivu nad [illegible] jejího obsahu i dokonalostí formy. [illegible] však bude jim moci říci i to, co mluvila k nám v posledním desetiletí [illegible] především před samým prahem národní [illegible] samostatnosti, pod dojmem čehož vy-[illegible] právě dnešní jubileum dvojnásob [illegible] a slavně ve svátek opravdu celo-[illegible].

Smetana přišel českému národu v pravý čas. Přišel dovršit úspěšnou práci ná-[illegible] křisitelů a podepřít tvrdé úsilí no-[illegible] pracovníků kulturních a politických, [illegible] aby v rozhodné chvíli pozvedl a roz-[illegible] české mysli, zasáhl je čarovnými [illegible] tóny až u kořene lidského i národ-[illegible] cítění, odhalil jim pravou jejich sílu [illegible] duševní zrak národa postavil jistotu [illegible] vyplnění nejsvětlejších jeho tužeb a na-[illegible]. Byl to vznešený úkol a přetěžký, že [illegible] v něm nebylo by bývalo nectí. [illegible] provedl jej s vědomím jeho důle-[illegible] a proto s vážností pravého, velikého [illegible], ale při tom s takou až naivní ra-[illegible] a láskou, že nelze se nad tím ubrániti [illegible]. Provedl jej s vítězným zdarem.

Byl rytím umělcem, nesmlouvavým a [illegible] nad malost a prostřednost, [illegible] ji. Proti ní nejprve také namířil [illegible], když vrátiv se z ciziny do Čech, za-[illegible] pracovati na životním svém díle. Zhuch-[illegible], plné konvence a zpohodlnělosti, [illegible] být příznivo vlastním jeho sna-[illegible] a záměrům. Bylo nutno zneklidniti je [illegible] proudy nového umění, které zatím [illegible] světem. Učinil tak, nelekaje se [illegible] cizáctví, jež staly se pak nej-[illegible] proti němu zbraní. Učinil tak, aby [illegible] na rozdíl v úrovni umění domácího [illegible] i na cestu, jíž se musí česká hudba [illegible], aby dohonila rozmach v hudbě ostat-[illegible] národů, nikoliv však, aby cizotou po-[illegible] svůj českost. Naopak, nebylo jí vlastně [illegible] ještě a byl to on sám zase, jenž ji [illegible] a vyvolil, jenž promluvil do českých [illegible], jichž dříve neznali a po nimiž se [illegible] radostí až zajíkaly. Tak dvojí ce-[illegible] krásu Smetana-umělec vítězně k své-[illegible] povznáší české hudební umění na [illegible] světovou a dává mu současně vlastní, [illegible] výraz. Tvoří dílo veliké, silné, [illegible] tom také své, ryze naše.

Největším stává se ovšem toto dílo te-[illegible] tím, co vlévá Smetana v jeho obsah, [illegible] v něm jako člověk, jenž vyposlou-[illegible] doby, vycítil nejsvětlejší jeho při-[illegible] a dal se cele do jeho služeb, i za cenu [illegible] zapření soukromého svého já. [illegible] bylo tehdy pro něho hlásat [illegible] že nutno neklesat, věřit a vítězit. [illegible] kdy uvědomil si Smetana tuto [illegible], jest jedinou jeho snahou plnit [illegible] nejvyšším vypětím sil a s celou mo-[illegible] velikého umělce. V tom, jak ra-dostně to činí je nejvýmluvnější důkaz jeho opravdového, hlubokého češství, jeho nezměrné lásky k národu a vlasti. Pro jeho dílo lhostejna je mu zloba lidská, jež dovede naň útočit, pro ně nedbá ani kruté choroby, jež olupuje ho nejprve o nejdra-hocenější smysl hudebníkův a rozrušuje pak nadobro i jeho ducha. Ve svém díle rozsévá plnou hrstí především jen radost přírody, českých luhů a hájů, učí, že radostno je žít. Vše hýří pro něho zářivými, veselými barvami, všude jakoby jen tanec a ples. Tancem v mládí dílo začíná, apotheosou tance, »Pražským karnevalem«, je končí, již na pomezí osudného rozvratu duševního. Jeho život, po pravdě bohatý utrpením, jakoby byl jedinou, nepřetržitě slunnou idylou: jeho dílem rozlévá se do široká měkký, šťavnatý idylism, jako jedna z nejcharakterističtějších jeho vlastností.

Českému člověku nebylo lze nepodlehnout sdělné síle této radostnosti, té víře v klady života. Nemohl nepostřehnout, jaká že mluví z toho k němu láska, jaký vřelý zájem o jeho blaho i o blaho celého národa. Nitro, zjihlé kouzelným zvukem hudby Smetanovy, hrdlo pak současně a sililo k odporu a výbojí. I to bylo Smetanovým přáním. Neboť rozradostniv je pohledem na krásu života i krásu rodné země, odhalil mu pojednou i velikou minulost vlastního národa, jeho sílu, slávu a lesk a slovy vzácné proziravosti a rozhodnosti napnul je neslomnou důvěrou, že pomine dočasný útisk a národ vezme zase vládu do svých rukou, silný a slavný, jako byl kdysi. Svůj idylism protkal národním heroismem. Heroismem božích bojovníků, heroismem doby husitské. Nad idylou blanické krajiny, rozezněnou písněmi pastýřských šalmajů, rozvíjuje vítězný pochod husitských vojsk a jeho zpěvem prohlašuje jistotu národního vzkříšení. Jak vlasným bylo toto jeho slovo a jak žhavě výmluvným, přesvědčili jsme se nejplněji v době nedávné a podnes cítíme se tehdejším dojmem očarování a spoutání.

Tím vším je Smetana, jedním z největších českých lidí, tím je však i z největších umělců, kteří pochopili význam svého poslání vůči době a mohli by býti zváni v nejvznešenějším smyslu časovými. Smetanova velikost je však v tom, že takovým je i není. Jest jím, pokud prokázal neocenitelné služby současnosti, není však, jak dílo jeho hodnotami svými prolamuje všecky hranice časové i místní, jak je ve svých hodnotách věčně a všeobecně platné. Nejen neporušitelným uměleckým zdravím, věčnou svěžestí a novostí své hudby, ale právě i svým obsahem myšlenkovým. Smetanovo dílo rozsévá především lásku k vlasti a národu. Národ nebyl však Smetanovi jen souhrnným pojmem. Viděl pod ním především člověka, svého bližního, a jeho horoucí láska k národu je vlastně láskou k českému člověku, je výrazem nejopravdovějšího lidství. Aby ukázal velikost a odhalil tajemství lidské lásky, k tomu stačí ma prostý poměr dvou šťastných českých srdcí venkovských a z něho vycházeje, učí pak i lásce k celku, lásce k národu. V tom je hluboká mravní síla díla Smetanova, v tom i věčná a žádnými hranicemi neomezitelná jeho platnost, pokud nepomine platnost pojmů l i d s t v í, n á r o d a v l a s t.

Spontannost a svornost, jež ovládá národ v letošních oslavách genia Smetanova, nejlépe dokazují, jak cele jeho dílo proniklo, jak všeobecně je milováno a jaká o jeho významu vládne jednotnost. Sotva však mohly by býti tyto oslavy tak radostné, kdyby nebylo vědomí, že dílo to nezůstalo osamoceno, že obrodně zapůsobilo kolem sebe i za sebe, že česká hudba, vzavši v něm začátek, dovedla jíti v jeho duchu dál a obohacovati se stále novými, svěžími hodnotami. Jako pravou podstatu každého velkého, smělého činu odhalí zase jen nový velký čin, tak i význam Smetanova díla mohl býti pochopen v celém svém vznešeném rozsahu jen zásluhou těch, kdož v něm pokračovali a nad ním budovali. Pracovali a pracují tak jen v duchu velkých jeho ideií, jejichž hlavním heslem bylo: nestát, ale pokračovati! Chápat Smetanu a opravdově jej oslavovat, znamená dnes proto i pro každého z nás býti práv těmto jeho myšlenkám a jimi se řídit. Milovat a klanět se před velikou minulostí, ale pomáhat i přítomnosti a pracovat na přípravách pro budoucnost. Aby nevedlo se vždy všem, jako se vedlo Smetanovi, aby budoucnost nemusila teprve napravovati, nač nestačila současnost.

Uvědomme si i to v den sváteční, kdy v vroucím obdivu sklánime se před nesmrtelným dílem Bedřicha Smetany, věrni příkazu jeho zásad a činů!

TVŮRCE ČESKÉ HUDBY

BEDŘICH SMETANA.
NAROZEN 2. BŘEZ. NA 1824 V LITOMYŠLI.

V. Blaník

Text pokračování předešlé ukázky: Pilen. Po přemožení velké husitských skryla se bylo v Blaníku a čekají v těžkém spánku na okamžik, kdy vlasti přijdou se pomoci. Tedy by zase mohly, jako o Táboře, slovujíc o Blaníku za podlaz skroby "Kdo pak boží bojovníci" Na podkladě tělo melodie (Kotlo hus. principu) se vynyne vzkříšení národa českého, budoucí štěstí a sláva! Ukrýjí bytožním symbolem, i podobě pochodu, okouzlí vlastka a tak celá řada symf. básní "Vlast". Co malé intermezzo zazní o tělo vlastek by tvořinská idylla, kreslí polohy Blaníku, malý pastýřka se hulíká a hraje (Klatovy) a ozvěna mu odpovídá. —

B. SMETANA PŘEDPOVÍDÁ V SYMFONICKÉ BÁSNI »BLANÍK« VZKŘÍSENÍ ČESKÉHO NÁRODA. (Snímek rukopisu.)

Figure 5.2: Front-page spread in honor of Smetana's centennial.[14]

[14] *Venkov*, 2 March 1924, 1.

The author of this article was Otakar Šourek, better known as Antonín Dvořák's first major biographer, whose magisterial four-volume work was written from 1922 to 1933.[15] Given the battles that raged between the opposing camps of supporters of Smetana and Dvořák in early-twentieth-century Prague, this might seem somewhat surprising. Šourek's authorship of the article, however, confirms the extent to which Smetana could be instrumentalized across the spectrum of political and musical allegiances. Šourek celebrated Smetana in hyperbolic terms, calling him "a genius in art, a titan in love for the nation and homeland. In the joining of these two concepts we behold today above all else the power and the beauty of Smetana's work."[16] Smetana and his music were depicted as embodiments of essentialized national characteristics that were, at the same time, indisputable in their high artistic quality.

Aside from engaging familiar tropes of essence, Šourek went one step further in presenting Smetana as the one true founder of all Czech music who had appeared, in messianic fashion, when most needed by his nation:

> Smetana arrived at just the right moment for the Czech nation. He arrived to bring to completion the successful work of the national revivers and to shore up the vigorous efforts of the new cultural and political laborers; he arrived at the decisive moment in order to raise up Czech minds and fill them with joy, reaching them at the very root of folk and national sentiment with his enchanting tones. He revealed to these minds their true strength and in the spiritual sight of the nation he established the certainty of the fulfillment of its most sacred desires and hopes.[17]

By this account, Smetana had the ability to get at the most fundamental elements of the Czech spirit, a common theme across a variety of different accounts of the composer's life. It also

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[15] See Otakar Šourek, *Život a dílo Antonina Dvořáka* (Prague: Hudební Matice Umělecké besedy, 1922–1933).

[16] "Genij v umění, titán v lásce k národu a vlasti. Ve spojení těchto dvou pojmů zříme dnes především mohutnost a krásu díla Smetanova…" Otakar Šourek, "V den svateční," *Venkov*, 2 March 1924, 1.

[17] "Smetana přišel českému národu v pravý čas. Přišel dovršit úspěšnou práci národních křísitelů a podepřít tvrdé úsilí nových pracovníků kulturních a politických, přišel, aby v rozhodné chvíli pozvedl a rozradostnil české mysli, zasáhl je čarovnými svými tóny až u kořene lidského i národního cítění, odhalil jim pravou jejich sílu a před duševní zrak národa postavil jistotu o vyplnění nejsvětějších jeho tužeb a nadějí." Šourek, "V den svateční," 1.

utterly dehistoricized Smetana's impact on the development of Czech musical culture, another frequent trope, by implying that Smetana's work had always been viewed and accepted as musically and nationally significant. This implication was somewhat skewed, however, as Smetana had been the target of sustained polemical battles in the Prague press during the 1870s (see Chapter 1).

Šourek's rhetoric here added another element to the process of mythologization, one that would be echoed by others during the centennial year: literal sacralization. The language of this passage, which resembles other parts of Šourek's article, intimated a sense of eschatalogical inevitability. This sense of world-historical import (however inflated) distinguished the centennial celebrations from the Smetana hagiography of 1892 and 1893—at that time, Smetana and his operas were the key to imperial and international recognition and, it was hoped, advancement. Now, the chronological weight of the centennial itself—a full hundred years since the birth of Smetana—resonated with the establishment of the independent Czechoslovak nation-state, which was expeditiously recast as the goal of so much nationalist striving over the course of the nineteenth century, rather than a sudden revision of the long-held desire for more autonomy within a federated Austria.

The article's title, "On This Holy Day," and the fact that, in 1924, Smetana's birthday happened to fall on a Sunday, only added another layer to this rhetoric of sacralization. Šourek and most of Smetana's mythologizers promulgated sacrificial, heroic narratives like those found in Classical Greek and Roman sources, alongside similar narratives in the Christian tradition concerning Jesus and the saints. As Anthony D. Smith argues, such narratives were easily incorporated by nineteenth-century nationalist ideological practices of glorifying heroes and

geniuses.[18] Religiously inflected language and even references to religious content became in this context a placeholder or intensifying agent for arguments promoting the importance of a particular figure or work to the nation's history and identity.

Šourek did precisely this when he linked the nineteenth-century composer to the fifteenth-century Hussite movement and legendary Czech warriors of old: "[Smetana] interwove his idealism with national heroism, the heroism of the warriors of God, the heroism of the time of the Hussites. Over the idyll of the Blaník countryside, resounding with the songs of shepherds' reed pipes, spreads the victorious march of the Hussite soldiers; through its song it announces the certainty of national resurrection… Smetana is all of this."[19] The Hussites, militant followers of the martyred proto-Reformation theologian Jan Hus, had defended the Czech lands from Catholic crusades in the fifteenth century and were regarded in the nineteenth century as the first Czech nationalists; peasant troops had formed the core of many of the Hussite armies, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Hussites began to be equated with the struggle for peasant liberation.[20] They provided a historical link to argue for a larger narrative of Czech self-determination, which was central to the ideological apparatus of the new First Czechoslovak Republic.[21]

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[18] Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, 218–250. In music, moreover, the precedent of Beethoven offered an easy model of heroic genius to follow and adapt. For discussion of this model and its connections to Beethoven's music, see Scott Burnham, *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), especially xiii to xix.

[19] "Svůj idylism protkl národním heroismem. Heroismem božích bojovníků, heroismem doby husitské. Nad idylou blanické krajiny, rozeznělou písněmi pastýřských šalmají, rozvinuje vítězný pochod husitských vojsk a jeho zpěvem prohlašuje jistotu národního vzkříšení… Tím vším je Smetana…" Šourek, "V den svateční," 1.

[20] See Jiří Rak, *Byvali Čechové* (Jinočany: Nakladatelství H&H, 1994), 89–90.

[21] Rak discusses at length the ways in which the myth of the Hussites was redefined in the nineteenth century to emphasize their desire for freedom from foreign domination; Masaryk utilized this to argue that the "conception of Czech history was to be found in the fulfillment of the humanitarian ideals of the Czech reformation" and that his fight for the right to national independence during the First World War was conducted "in the spirit of [our] Hussite forbears." See Rak, *Byvali Čechové*, 62–63, as well as Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 11–14.

Šourek was on well-trodden ground in tying Smetana to the Hussites and Blaník; Josef Bohuslav Foerster had conjured up the legendary mountain in his *Bartered Bride* encomium of May 1892, and the editors of *Humoristické listy* had likened the National Theater and its operatic ensemble to Hussites in their victorious conquering of the Viennese exhibition. As noted above, the centennial issue of *Venkov* (Figure 5.2) included a manuscript facsimile of the first page of Smetana's tone poem *Blaník*, which narrated the legend, quoted the Hussite battle hymn "Ye who are warriors of God," and concluded the entire cycle of *Má vlast* (*My Fatherland*). By tying Smetana to Hussite ancestors, Šourek was participating in mythologizing both the composer and the history of the Czechoslovak state, reusing rhetoric developed in imperial Austria that would have been very familiar to his readers. His deft interweaving of national myth, rurality, music, and the figure of the composer expertly reinscribed the centrality of village mode and its connection to the mythologized Smetana. In this complex layering Smetana and his operas became inextricably tied to the fate of the Czechoslovak nation-state, and both were seen as the teleological endpoints of nationalist striving, musically and politically.

Smetana as Icon: Visual Rhetoric and the Composer

Other writers engaged in similar mythologizing and canonizing strategies in the 1924 press. While there were many articles that helped cement the myths surrounding Smetana and his operas, some of these myths' most powerful expressions were visual rather than written. The centrist newspaper *Lidové noviny* ran several political cartoons in the days leading up to the centennial that appeared both to join in with the outpouring of enthusiasm for the composer and his music as well as to poke mild fun at it. These cartoons sometimes went so far as to canonize him, portraying him in heaven alongside saints and other famous composers (Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3: "The First Celebration."[22]

Here Smetana, on the far left, is being serenaded by four historical figures. From left to right, they are Saint Prokop, an eleventh-century Czech Benedictine abbot who celebrated Slavonic masses; Saint Wenceslaus, the patron saint of the Czech lands; and the saints Cyril and Methodius, who were credited with introducing Christianity to the Slavic peoples and creating the Eastern Orthodox rite. These saints are depicted as singing a quartet to honor Smetana and giving him a wreath with the inscription "To Our Glorious Countryman." While probably intended to be slightly hyperbolic, this illustration nevertheless appears to be portraying the

[22] The caption reads, "The celebrations naturally began in the current workplace of Bedřich Smetana, that is in the kingdom of heaven. Czech saints arrived first. The abbot Prokop, Saint Wenceslaus, and Cyril and Methodius sang a quartet and gave Smetana a wreath with the inscription: 'To Our Glorious Countryman—Czech Saints.'" "Oslavy se začaly přirozeně v nynějším působišti Bedřicha Smetany, to jest v království nebeském. První se dostavil čeští světci. Opat Prokop, Václav Svatý, Cyril a Methoděj zapěli kvarteto a podali Smetanovi věnec s nápisem: Slavnému krajanu—Čeští Světci." *Lidové noviny*, 1 March 1924, 1.

composer sincerely as an equal to these holy figures and as worthy of their admiration. By extension, then, Smetana is presented to the public as a holy figure in the history of the Czech lands, activating the nationalist overtones latent in (self-consciously Slavic) religious imagery. This is yet another example of the citational nature of ideological practices: by referring in this image to a number of Czech and Slavic religious figures, the author reinforced the ideological link of Smetana to broadly recognizable national symbols and thereby made him more culturally legible.

Cartoons and illustrations help to provide a sense of how Smetana may have been perceived by the public. Another image, also from *Lidové noviny*, shows Smetana reading newspaper coverage of his centennial celebrations in the company of Ludwig van Beethoven, Dvořák, and Jan Hus himself (Figure 5.4). Titled "The Times Don't Change," the cartoon portrays Smetana as saying "So they're celebrating me after one hundred years, praise God! …but I would like to know whom they are beating up these days, whom they are pushing away again!"[23] Smetana sits among the symbols of musical greatness, both Czech and European (insofar as Beethoven and Dvořák had been stripped of their connection to specifically German and Czech contexts in favor of "universal" appeal), with the two composers presented as equals. The artist of the cartoon also draws on religious imagery. Beethoven's violin bow, indicating the star, recalls scenes of the nativity, and Jan Hus's presence imparts both religious and national legitimacy as the assembled figures ponder Smetana's fate. The caption also refers to Smetana's personal travails at the hands of Prague music critics during his lifetime, when he was heavily criticized in the 1870s under charges of Wagnerism.

[23] "Tak mne oslavují za sto let, chvála Bohu!… ale rád bych věděl, do koho zase dnes tlukou, koho zas dnes ostrukují!" *Lidové noviny*, 2 March 1924, 7.

Figure 5.4: "The Times Don't Change."[24]

The satirical magazine *Humoristické listy*, instead of portraying the composer directly, published cartoons that indicated just how deeply Smetana had become a part of both elite and popular culture. The periodical ran the cartoon below in a celebratory issue devoted entirely to the composer (Figure 5.5). A rather exasperated-looking man is having a conversation with his wife in a beer garden. She asks "What are you doing here?" to which the husband replies "I'm celebrating Smetana, since after all—as you should know—he was born in a brewery…!"[25] The cartoon's humor relies in part on the insistence that typical, working-class Czechs would be celebrating what might otherwise be thought of as operatic high culture. It is thereby subtly

[24] "Časy se nemění," *Lidové noviny*, 2 March 1924, 7.

[25] "—Co tady děláš? —Oslavuju Smetanu, neboť ten se přece—jak bys měla vědět—narodil v pivovaře…!" *Humoristické listy* 67, no. 10 (29 February 1924): 119.

connected to the village mode: the importance of the village was to be found partially in the Czech societal foundation of the folk and working peasantry. Even if the figures portrayed here are from the early twentieth century rather than the late eighteenth, they still index a sense of an "everyday" Czech people through the thoroughly Czech tradition of drinking beer. Indeed, it is unclear exactly where this particular pub is located. It could just as easily be in a country village as in Prague—following Anderson, the situations is, in its generalizability, profoundly national.

Figure 5.5: Discussing Smetana in the beer garden.[26]

[26] "—Co tady děláš?," 119. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Ústav pro českou literaturu AV ČR (Institute of Czech Literature of the Czech Academy of Sciences).

If knowledge of Smetana's biography could be assumed among a wide readership, the same was true of at least some of Smetana's operas, specifically in the case of music from *The Bartered Bride. Humoristické listy* printed other cartoons in the centennial issue that played on that opera's text in ways that expected prior knowledge on the part of their readers. One particular page, entitled "Our Illustrations to *The Bartered Bride*," featured eight cartoons, each accompanied by a caption drawn from the libretto of the opera. The first one features the opening line of the opera, "Proč bychom se netěšili," which we saw at the beginning of this chapter being used to sell laundry detergent (Figure 5.6). The two gentlemen depicted in this drawing are smiling about the headline in their newspapers, which reads "Adjustments to pensions will be carried out in the near future." This answers the question posed by the caption from *The Bartered Bride*, "why would we not be merry," but plays on the second, unprinted line of the text, "when God gives us health," by depicting two old retirees excited about their pension funds. In this case, it is the state that is giving them health, not God.

Figure 5.6: "Why would we not be merry?"[27]

[27] "Naše ilustrace k 'Prodané nevěstě," *Humoristické listy* 67, no. 10 (29 February 1924): 120. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Institute of Czech Literature of the Czech Academy of Sciences.

The traditional imagery that all of these cartoons and illustrations employ maps onto a larger issue at play in the musical world of Prague in 1924. Brian Locke has argued that Prague musical circles retrenched to a much more conservative aesthetic stance after an initial burst of enthusiasm for cosmopolitan European modernism after Czechoslovakia's independence in 1918.[28] Locke focuses mainly on the response to the 1924 International Festival for Contemporary Music, held in May of that year in Prague, and though he notes that the Smetana centennial was happening practically concurrently with the festival, there is little comment on the centenary aside from a passage on the furor that erupted around a new, modernist production of *The Bartered Bride* in 1923.[29] The centennial celebration of Smetana, however, with its appeals to conservative Czech imagery and nationalist myths, was a deeply influential means of asserting the primacy of Czech music practice and tradition at this time. Adoring references to unspoiled origins like the village setting of *The Bartered Bride*, alongside the sacralization of Smetana as a national hero and spiritual descendant of the Hussites, took on an unavoidably conservative quality, especially in the face of modern developments represented by abstract stagings of Smetana's operas and the ISCM. This was all the more true because such narratives had been central aspects of public discourse around the composer and his operas since the 1870s.[30] These rhetorical strategies nevertheless suited the needs of the new Czechoslovak Republic for creating national myths about its origins as a homogenous country founded on a shared—albeit imagined—history and culture.

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[28] Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague*, 110–154.

[29] This and new productions of Smetana's other operas were clearly still controversial the next year, as several cartoons in *Humoristické listy*'s centennial celebration issue disparaged the new stagings.

[30] For more on the origins of these narratives, see my discussion in Chapter 1.

The Bartered Bride's Thousandth Jubilee: Performance as Practice

Many of the tropes and narratives at play in the reception of Smetana's centennial were echoed and reinforced when *The Bartered Bride* reached its one-thousandth performance in 1927. Otakar Šourek, whose article on the day of Smetana's centennial sacralized and mythologized the composer, also wrote an encomium to *The Bartered Bride* entitled "The Thousandth Time!" Published the day before the performance, again in *Venkov*, his article clearly and systematically established a link between the number of the opera's performances and the emergence of a Czech musical identity. According to Šourek, *The Bartered Bride*

> is a work born under the most fortunate sign, at the very beginning of the Czech musical awakening… it brought to the Czech stage a picture of Czech life, in which was and is the best national genuineness, the best distinctiveness, sincerity, and healthy naïveté, the best freshness, colorfulness, and fragrance: a picture of life in a Czech village, among peasant people.[31]

This enthusiastic praise of *The Bartered Bride* testified to several underlying axioms regarding the opera and its cultural context. First, it characterized the opera as fated to serve as the seed from which all Czech music grows. Second, it attributed to the opera, and thus by extension to the Czech people, a series of positive national characteristics. Third, it reinforced the myth of the rural village as unspoiled origin for Czech culture, one perpetuated not only in music but also in literature, painting, and the other arts. By characterizing Smetana and *The Bartered Bride* through the mythic rhetoric of the village mode, Šourek's statement casts the composer as the Promethean founder of Czech music and *The Bartered Bride* as his guiding torch. Through the ideological nature of the village mode, individuals who engaged with *The Bartered Bride* as the

[31] "'Prodaná nevěsta' je dílem zrozeným v nejšťastnějším znamení na samém počátku českého hudebního probuzení. Byla šťastná již tím, že přenášela na divadelní scénu obraz českého života, v němž bylo a je nejvíce národní ryzosti, nejvíce rázovitosti, upřímnosti a zdravé naivity, nejvíce svěžesti, barevnosti a vůně: obraz života na české vesnici, mezi selským lidem." Otakar Šourek, "Po tisícaté!," *Venkov*, 29 May 1927.

operatic representation of the ideal Czech village could view the opera as a model for national engagement, familial structure, and moral values.

Other critics in Prague echoed Šourek's elaborate praise of Smetana and *The Bartered Bride*. Boleslav Vomačka, the editor of the music journal *Listy hudební matice*, described *The Bartered Bride* as the ultimate representation of all that was Czech. According to Vomačka, the opera was "a part of the Czech national soul. Embodied here are the ideal characteristics of our people: faithfulness, intelligence, objectivity, and healthy joyfulness."[32] Therein lay the opera's political significance, for it projected a unitary image of Czech nationhood and character in line with the state's ideological underpinnings. He wrote that "in the whole of the operatic literature there are few works as fortunate as *The Bartered Bride*... it seems as though some unknown genius were directing her fortunes along the paths of the greatest fame and success."[33]

This hinted at the shape of things to come. Vomáčka asserted that, as a result of its unimpeachable quality, "in the foreseeable future [*The Bartered Bride*] will ring out even in inaccessible Paris and surely in other further foreign settings afterwards."[34] Vomáčka's emphasis on the uniqueness and elite status of Paris was significant because the City of Light was seen as offering the final stamp of approval the opera needed to be an incontrovertible international success, a path on which it had been set after the 1892 triumph in Vienna. Moreover, he placed the city above even the "greatest domains of worldliness" represented by Germany and America,

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[32] "Pro nás pak znamená 'Prodaná nevěsta' kus naší národní duše. Ztělesněny jsou tu ideální vlastnosti našeho lidu, věrnost, chytrost, věcnost i zdravá radostnost." Boleslav Vomačka, "Jubileum Prodané nevěsty," *Listy hudební matice* 6, nos. 9–10 (8 July 1927): 293.

[33] "V celé operní literatuře je málo děl tak šťastných, jako je 'Prodaná nevěsta'... Zdá se, jako by neznámý genius řídil její osudy cestami největší slávy a největšího úspěchu." Vomáčka, "Jubileum," 293.

[34] "...v dohledné době zazní i v nepřístupné Paříži a dojista pak i na dalších scénách cizích." Vomáčka, "Jubileum," 293.

where the work had already been performed.[35] His view of the work as the perfect embodiment of Czech essence would eventually find resonance not only with some Czech critics during the Paris premiere, who felt similarly about *The Bartered Bride*'s representational capability and its "purely musical beauties," but also with French critics getting to experience the opera for the first time, though Czech music was not unknown in France.

Vomáčka's article also performed a balancing act by asserting both the "universal" appeal of Smetana's "pure" music as well as the nationalist appeal of its purported folk-music sources. Smetana, for his part, was insistent that his music never relied on quotations or even imitations of folksong, yet commentators like Vomáčka repeatedly tied the composer to that genre as a means of boosting his nationally representative capabilities.[36] In so doing, they deployed rhetoric that was definitively representative of the village mode. The village mode functioned by the intermingling of village ideology—that the village was a locus of desired qualities and its inhabitants social role models—with nationalist ideology.[37] While nationalism's symbols are frequently drawn from the traditions of the peasant *Volk* and treated as coterminous with these cultures, the "basic deception" of nationalism is that it proceeds structurally through the "imposition of a high culture on society."[38] This imposition functions by borrowing, adapting, and appropriating elements of folk cultures, encapsulated in the Czech context by the village, as it simultaneously claims to be defending these cultures in their pure, unadulterated forms. Vomáčka, fully engaging rhetoric of the village mode, claims precisely this cultural role

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[35] "v největších doménách světovosti" Vomáčka, "Jubileum," 293.

[36] For more on Smetana's rejection of folksong and the concurrent critical insistence that he was inevitably and immediately nationally marked, see Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 448–452.

[37] For further discussion of this interplay, see Chapter 1.

[38] See Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 57.

for *The Bartered Bride* in his celebratory passage, which would play right into later discussions about the use of the opera as a diplomatic tool. His tacit appeal to the allure of folksiness, moreover, underlay the opera's spread among international opera houses and its exceptional success in Paris. Yet the insistence on universality would mirror that of other critics—most of whom were Czech.[39]

Finally, Vomačka also touched on the historical resonances of the opera, considering it to be ineluctably tied up in the establishment of a singular Czech national consciousness:

> In the time of the awakening of Czech national culture, *The Bartered Bride* signified a grand cultural contribution and a great stimulus towards national self-consciousness… [The opera] shepherded the Czech nation in good times and in bad, spreading around itself faith in the life of the nation and faith in the nation's indestructible strength.[40]

Vomačka's reference to good and bad times in part alluded to World War I, which would have been fresh in the memory of his readers. He stated explicitly that *The Bartered Bride* provided strength to the people during the conflict because the opera's origin in the Czech lands indicated that "a nation of such a culture of spirit and heart would never perish."[41] By alluding to the familiar "ad astra per aspera" narrative Vomačka implied that the Czech people survived the war in part through the music of *The Bartered Bride.*[42] He rounded out his editorial by declaring that

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[39] In this regard Smetana was treated similarly to Mikhail Glinka. Both were considered to be the founders of their respective national schools, which they had largely accomplished by getting their music recognized as on the same level as Western Europe. Both, moreover, were viewed internationally as the first authentically nationalist composers of their country and domestically as the first universal geniuses of their nation. See Richard Taruskin, "Some Thoughts on the History and Historiography of Russian Music," in *On Russian Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 28–30.

[40] "V době, kdy se probouzela česká národní kultura, znamenala veliký kulturní přinos a velkou vzpruhu národního sebevědomi… Provázela český národ v dobách dobrých i zlých, šíříc kolem sebe víru v život národa a v jeho nezničitelnou sílu." Vomačka, "Jubileum Prodané nevěsty," 294.

[41] "…národ takovéto kultury ducha a srdce nezahyne." Vomačka, "Jubileum Prodané nevěsty," 294.

[42] Zdeněk Nejedlý, characteristically, went so far as to state in 1924 that Smetana had been the most important domestic leader of the Czech people during the difficult years of World War I; see Zdeněk Nejeldý, *O Bedřichu Smetanovi* (Prague: Academia, 1980), 289.

the independent First Czechoslovak Republic was where the opera could ring out most beautifully, as though teleologically destined to be its ultimate home.

The Bartered Bride was, in the minds of most Prague critics, intimately associated with the new Czech state and its leaders. This was made explicit by the anonymous writer for the left-leaning newspaper *České slovo*, who ended the celebratory review of the jubilee performance with the following statement: "Smetana is valued as a national genius and artist. But we must complete this image with a final valuation: Smetana as co-creator of our revolution and even of our glorious liberation. Smetana-Liberator!"[43] This new honorific was clearly a reference to Masaryk, president of the republic, who was often referred to as the *prezident-osvoboditel*—president-liberator—for his role in securing the independence of Czechoslovakia after World War I. Having won re-election to the presidency just three days before the jubilee performance, Masaryk attended the event alongside the prime minister and a whole host of important figures from the Czech government.

In an incontrovertibly direct gesture confirming the extent of Smetana's and *The Bartered Bride*'s enmeshment in the state cultural ideological apparatus, Masaryk contributed a letter to *Venkov* about the opera and its composer, published the day after the premiere. The president painted Smetana and his works as fundamentally democratic, tied to the people, yet individual: "Smetana believed in the people, trusted in them, and had hope in their happy future. This hopeful love led him to musical creation with the people and in the people; he did not lose himself in the people, he created artistically and independently, as the people understood."[44]

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[43] "Smetana je hodnotou jako národní genius a umělec. Ale obraz si musíme doplnit závěrečnou hodnotou: Smetana jako spolutvůrce našeho odboje i našeho slavného osvobození. Smetana-Osvoboditel!" "Jubileum Prodané nevěsty," *České slovo*, 31 May 1927, 1.

[44] "V ten lid [Smetana] věřil, důvěřoval mu a měl naději v jeho šťastnou budoucnost. Tato nadějná láska vedla ho k hudební tvorbě s lidem a v lidu; neztrácel se v lidu, tvořil umělecky a samostatně, jak lid pochopil." T. G. Masaryk, "President T. G. Masaryk o Smetanovi," *Venkov*, 31 May 1927, 4.

Masaryk's statement presented the composer not only as an intrinsic part of the Czech people, in tune with their desires and needs, but also as a creator in the Beethovenian heroic model, who did not lose himself to the banality of the masses yet spoke to all equally. Such a hero could serve the nation as an artistic symbol comprehensible to the whole range of Western art-music traditions. Masaryk's letter to *Venkov* and his presence at the thousandth performance also contributed to the president's own personality cult, even as they simultaneously played a part in Smetana's ongoing mythologization. Indeed, the parallels between the mythologizing of the two figures are hard to miss. Leader cults were perpetuated in many different ways, all of which presented the central figure in highly public fashion; strategies included their participation in state rituals, use of their image on items like currency or banners, and the celebration of important dates like birthdays or independence.[45] These strategies could be used equally well for Smetana as for Masaryk, and the latter's cult included plenty of religious and historical references, just as we have seen with Smetana in the case of his 1924 jubilee. Such public rituals also helped maintain and reinscribe the ideologies, nationalist and otherwise, that kept myths like Smetana's and Masaryk's relevant to the musical and political affairs of their day.

Nejedlý's commemorative program-almanac for the thousandth performance distilled all these ideas, calling *The Bartered Bride* the most characteristic embodiment of all Czech music because of three qualities: its simplicity, its vitality, and its joyfulness. These were linked explicitly to the idea of the village and the simple Czech peasant. Simplicity was foregrounded by the evocation of Božena Němcová's foundational novel *Babička* (*The Grandmother*), providing an unassailable lineage to perhaps the most famous literary expression of the Czech village mode. Nejedlý, however, fully engages the ideological aspect of the village mode, stating

[45] See Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 120.

that "the moral values that were here obtained from a Czech village were then also transferred to all the other spheres in which Czech art was attempting to make its mark."[46] This was typical Nejedlian rhetoric, very similar to that which he had used in his public lectures on Smetana's operas and those composed thereafter. The emphasis on moral rectitude was also emblematic, especially as a means of dismissing that which was perceived to be amoral, as Janáček's *Jenůfa* had been.[47]

Not only was the Czech village of *The Bartered Bride* specifically a source of simple, positive moral values for Nejedlý, but it was also a primary source for other artists of any kind, granting Smetana a primacy in the artistic life of his nation unusual for composers in most European countries. While it was not necessarily unusual for a musician to be of central importance for smaller states in the post-Versailles world—Ignacy Jan Paderewski in Poland, George Enescu in Romania—what was remarkable in this context was Smetana's having been dead for some forty years. Nejedlý did try to promote living composers, provided they swore allegiance to the Smetanian cause, but none were placed in so central a role as the deceased composer, who through his temporal distance could serve as a symbol readily attached to whatever political or cultural concerns were in play.[48] Dead men tell no tales, ideological or otherwise.

Nejedlý fully and enthusiastically engaged rhetoric typical of the village mode, even if he did not explicitly have such a construct in mind: *The Bartered Bride*'s operatic village was a microcosm of the nation, where healthy, productive, and honest villagers would serve as an

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[46] "Mravní hodnota, jež zde byla vytěžena z české vesnice, byla potom přenesena i do všech jiných sfér, o něž se pokoušelo české umění." Nejedlý, *Almanach*, 9.

[47] For more on Nejedlý's earlier rhetoric and his anti-Janáček stance, see Chapter 4.

[48] Leoš Janáček might have served in this capacity were he not so utterly reviled by Nejedlý and his ilk; see Chapter 4.

example to the work's Czechoslovak audiences. It was, moreover, the fount of all Czech opera. As an example of the mythologizing to which Smetana and *The Bartered Bride* were subjected, the following extended passage is practically unparalleled:

> *The Bartered Bride* is not just one of our artistic works. It is the Czech artistic work *par excellence* [*kať exochen*], exemplar and gospel for all of our other arts. That is why we all honor it, irrespective of our political or musical allegiance. That is also why, however, not just we Czech musicians, but even the *widest strata* of the nation honor *The Bartered Bride*, because the values that *The Bartered Bride* represents are not only musical or artistic, but rather have a deep meaning for all national life.
>
> *The Bartered Bride* arrived at a time when there still really was no Czech opera at all. Attempts at creating it only confirm this fact. And here Smetana arrived and all at once, practically from nothing, built up Czech opera to such a height theretofore undreamt of by anyone among us. How would the nation not have exalted, how would it not have been proud that our music, our opera could suddenly show artistry, which was even the envy of other, more powerful nations? After all, nothing then could strengthen national energy more than the consciousness that we were something, we knew something, we had something. And Smetana's art was the true proof of this, above which the age had nothing more wonderful.[49]

This passage drew on all the myths and narratives discussed previously, from religious rhetoric to the idea of *The Bartered Bride* as the ultimate representation of Czech national values. While Nejedlý may have been the most vocal and hyperbolic in his rhetoric, the myths he promulgated were certainly shared by a wide cross-section of Czech musical, critical, and political society, if not the wider public.

[49] "To není jen jedno z našich uměleckých děl. To je české umělecké dílo kať exochen, vzor a evangelium pro všechno i další naše umění. Proto také je ctíme všichni, bez rozdílu směrů, k nimž se dnes hlásíme. Proto však také 'Prodanou nevěstu' ctíme nejen my, čeští hudebníci, nýbrž i *nejširší vrstvy* národa, protože hodnoty, jež 'Prodaná nevěsta' representuje, nejsou jen hudební a jen umělecké, nýbrž mají hluboký význam pro celý národní život. 'Prodaná nevěsta' přišla v době, kdy vlastně ještě vůbec nebylo české opery. Pokusy o ni jen potvrzovaly tento fakt. A tu přišel Smetana a najednou, takřka z ničeho, postavil českou operu tak vysoko, jak se dotud u nás nikomu ani nesnilo. Jak by byl národ nejásal, jak by byl nebyl i pyšný na to, že naše hudba, naše opera najednou se může vykázati uměním, jež nám mohli závidět i jiní, mocnější národové? Vždyť nic tehdy nemohlo posilovat národní energii více než vědomí, že něco jsme, něco dovedeme, něco máme. A toho bylo Smetanovo umění důkazem, nad nějž skvělejší neměla ona doba." Nejedlý, *Almanach*, 10.

Legitimizing Sounds: Performers' Recollections of *The Bartered Bride*

Nejedlý's hagiographic essay was not the sole content of the almanac, however. After a middle section comprised of various kinds of performance statistics came one final section that included over forty recollections by a variety of singers, conductors, composers, and even set painters. These accounts lent authority to the narrative of dominance accorded to Smetana and *The Bartered Bride*; this authority, however, was not born of academic discussion or critical fiat, but rather out of the production and embodiment of sound. Singers like Anna Veselá and Jiří Huml, while they emphasized the same narratives as Nejedlý, Šourek, and others, did so from a different subject position, thus strengthening even further the status of *The Bartered Bride* and Smetana as hegemonic cultural entities.

Anna Veselá, a celebrated interpreter of the role of Mařenka and who sang in the breakthrough Viennese exhibition performances, testified to the glory of Smetana's music and its "universalizing" power by relating an anecdote about a guest appearance at the Theater an der Wien in Vienna in 1893, less than a year after she first appeared on the exhibition stage. Called in at the last minute to replace an indisposed Mařenka in the first German-language production of the opera in the imperial capital, which opened on 2 April, she knew the role only in Czech. Despite the threat of a demonstration by German students against the presence of a Czech singer, she was firmly decided to sing the role in Czech whatever the consequences. Veselá reported that notwithstanding a certain amount of murmuring in the audience after her first entrance, once her initial, unexpectedly bilingual duet with Jeník was complete, the audience surprised her with energetic applause. Such was their approval that she and Jeník had to repeat their Act III duet three times. Veselá sang Mařenka in Vienna five more times: "The theater was always sold out. Smetana's enchanting music smoothed out all disagreements between Czechs and Germans in

those moments and commanded frenetic applause!"[50] Veselá's story granted her authority by establishing her devotion as a performer in the face of political disagreements; her support of the universalizing power of Smetana and his music was presented as therefore all the more meaningful.

Whereas Veselá provided a story about the power of Smetana's music to resolve national conflicts, Jiří Huml, a bass who sang the role of Kecal the marriage broker over five hundred times, reinforced the connection of *The Bartered Bride* to the Czechoslovak nation-state. He was present in the National Theater on 28 October, 1918, the day of Czech independence from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. According to his tale, the head of the National Theater Company interrupted rehearsal to tell the conductor Karel Kovařovic that independence had been declared. Since *Carmen* was already slated to be performed that night, the easiest adjustment to the schedule was possible only the day after. Kovařovic was said to have exclaimed, "Well, *on the first day of freedom*, it has to be *The Bartered Bride*." The evening of the performance, Huml reported, the stage "shined with exceptional magic and brilliance. From all corners radiated

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[50] "Vždy bylo divadlo vyprodáno. Čarovná hudba Smetanova vyrovnávala v těch chvílích všechny neshody mezi Čechy a Němci a vynucovala frenetické potlesky!" Nejedlý, *Almanach*, 68. Veselá's utopian recollection concealed a rather more fraught situation, revealed in the minutes of the executive committee (*správní výbor*) of the National Theater Association (*Družstvo Národního divadla*). In March 1893, partially as a result of extended guest appearances by newly-in-demand ballet master Augustin Berger, for which the Prague National Theater was not being compensated, the executive committee placed restrictions on how National Theater company members could use their vacation time. In particular, if singers used their holiday time for guest appearances outside the Czech lands, they were explicitly required to sing and act only in Czech.

Veselá was thus bound by this directive when she agreed to her last-minute substitution at the Theater an der Wien. Viennese audiences, having seen her in the smash exhibition performances, would have been predisposed to favor her interpretation, and she was likely receiving significant compensation in addition to being a box-office draw. This latter point is underscored by another report in the executive committee minutes, dictated by National Theater Director Šubert: "In regard to the holiday that Ms. Veselá obtained during my absence, in understanding with Chairman Růžička, I sent her a telegram indicating that she was permitted to remain in Vienna at maximum until Sunday evening. It is hereby resolved, should Ms. Veselá stay in Vienna longer than this, that 100 zlatých should be requested from Director Jauner [of the Theater an der Wien] for each of her guest appearances." "K dovolené, kterou sl. Veselá obdržela za mé nepřítomnosti ve srozumění s předsedou p. Drem. Růžičkou telegrafoval jsem sl. Veselé, že smí zůstati ve Vídni nejdéle do neděle večer. Usneseno, kdyby sl. Veselá měla ve Vídni déle zůstati, aby žádano bylo od ředitele Jaunera z každého pohost. Vystoupení sl. Veselé 100 zl." See minutes from 9 March and 6 April 1893, *Protokoly Správního výboru Družstva Národního divadla*, sig. D50, fond ND, National Archive, Prague.

something warm and so unusually happy. It was our Czech picture, our Czech life on the first day of freedom!"[51] Huml further described the occasion as a *primice*, the first mass celebrated by a priest after his ordination, driving home the sacredness of the occasion. Czech politicians who came up to him at intermission evidently wholeheartedly agreed, speaking of inexpressible feelings brought about by *The Bartered Bride* that brimmed over in the souls of Czech individuals. Huml's story thus connected his experience singing Kecal at this historic moment with the political implications of statehood and national identity, enshrining the ideological power of the village and its foremost operatic representation at the moment of the creation of the new state.

Musicians' retellings gained weight both through their auras as performative co-creators as well as through their association with the very space in which the jubilee took place. The building of the National Theater itself was responsible for a great deal of the ongoing business of building the cultural memory of the nation.[52] Its multifaceted symbolic functions—to quote the historian Kamil Činátl, "church, parliament, school of the nation, castle, pantheon, funeral hall, tomb, monument of national rebirth and even fortress"—all contributed alongside the encomiums of singers, critics, conductors, composers, and audiences to the sacralization of *The Bartered Bride* and Smetana. The National Theater, moreover, was precisely that—national, the public face of Czech culture. As such, it was intimately linked to the apparatus of the state. Moreover, as a *lieu de mémoire*, it embodied Czech music and culture as its occupants had

[51] "Nu, *v první den svobody*, to musí být 'Prodaná'… Vyhrnula se opona a scéna zářila v Kalvodovské výpravě mimořádným kouzlem a jasem. Ze všech koutů sálalo cosi tak hřejivého a tak neobvykle šťastného. Byl to náš český obrázek, náš český život v prvý den svobody!" Nejedlý, *Almanach*, 78.

[52] Kamil Činátl, *Naše české minulosti* (Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2014), 49.

forged an ethnolinguistic, if not national identity in the context of imperial Austria.[53] *The Bartered Bride*'s one-thousandth jubilee constituted a profoundly political event, especially with the participation of members of the government from the president on down, and its political resonance was reinforced by the attendant ideological discourse of the village mode.[54]

The 1927 performance was, if not the ultimate consecration of *The Bartered Bride* and Smetana, then certainly the zenith of their importance as symbols of the Czech nation and its musical culture in the domestic sphere. The addition of singers to the critical apparatus promoting the opera, however, added a new and heretofore unexploited resource. By combining the imagined sounds of *The Bartered Bride*'s history, filtered through memory, with the real sounds of the event itself, singers and critics alike contributed to an atemporal, multilayered symbolic moment. The historical events the opera had borne witness to—the anxieties of the Austro-Prussian War in the late 1860s, Smetana's death in 1884, the work's 1892 victory in Vienna, the declaration of Czechoslovak independence in 1918—all were collapsed into this one performance, elevating it beyond the mere fact of a numerical milestone to an event of epochal power. It was as though all the Mařenkas and Jeníks ever to perform "we shall remain faithful" from their Act I duet were singing at once, almost like a command to the audience to remain faithful to Smetana, his opera, and the Czech nation above all else. In that imagining lay the triumph of *The Bartered Bride*: these multitudinous voices were configured so as to connect the

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[53] See my discussion in Chapters 1 and 2 as well as Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, vol. 1, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

[54] For discussions of similar interconnections between the French state and its theatrical institutions, see Jane Fulcher, *The Nation's Image: French Grand Opera as Politics and Politicized Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1–10, and Mark Everist, "The Music of Power: Parisian Opera and the Politics of Genre, 1806–1864," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 67, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 685–734. Everist's foregrounding of the "network of regulations, practices, and negotiations" undergirding the power structures of Parisian opera parallels the material and ideological practices of critics and performers discussed in this Prague context.

opera and Smetana once and for all to a sense of Czech identity, his operatic village as nation. Such a notion, moreover, was not only useful for projecting a sense of national and cultural unity in the domestic sphere. In its guise as a symbolic representation of Czechoslovakia, *The Bartered Bride* could also serve as an emissary abroad.

An Operatic Locarno

"Even after the world war France has, from a cultural point of view, preserved its dominant status. To draw attention to oneself in Paris in a particular cultural area is, to a large extent, to draw to oneself the attention of the whole of cultural Europe."[55] That Paris was the center of the Western cultural universe has been a longstanding idea. The sentiment expressed in this 1929 memorandum is therefore important not so much because of its content, but rather because of who wrote it: the Czechoslovak ambassador to Paris, Štefan Osuský, who served in that capacity from 1921 until 1939, when Czechoslovakia was occupied by Nazi Germany and transformed into the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. During his tenure as ambassador, Osuský oversaw, or took part in, practically all important affairs related to Czechoslovakia and France, even attending meetings of the League of Nations in Geneva with Czechoslovak foreign minister Edvard Beneš. Osuský was very much aware of the importance of France to Czechoslovak politics. Elsewhere in that same memo he detailed the significance of maintaining good relations with France with regard to the League of Nations, the progress of the reparations process, and especially the promotion of Czechoslovak interests in European politics. To this last issue, Osuský pointed out that "the leading role that France occupies in world politics induced

[55] "Také s kulturního hlediska si Francie i po světové válce zachovala své dominující postavení. Upozorniti na sebe Paříž v některém kulturním oboru znamená do jisté míry upozorniti na sebe celou kulturní Evropu." Štefan Osuský, memorandum, 15 April 1929, I. Section 1918–39 box 85, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Prague.

many European countries to devote an exceptional amount of attention to Paris from the point of view of propaganda." Therefore, Osuský concluded, the undertakings of the embassy in promoting Czechoslovak interests were "extraordinarily critical."[56]

A good relationship with France would then be of great benefit in attempting to influence political dealings in one's favor. Osuský, and through him the Czechoslovak government, aggressively cultivated this relationship through events, organized in part or wholly through the embassy, aimed at promoting Czechoslovak-French cultural exchange and friendship. Czech choruses and orchestras engaged in regular tours of a myriad of European countries, including France; one such visit in 1919 featured Czech musicians playing instrumental compositions by Smetana, Dvořák, Vítězslav Novák, Josef Suk, Otakar Ostrčil, and others for a room full of delegates from the Versailles peace conference—a significant gesture, given that the Czechs, as part of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, had technically been enemy combatants only a year prior.[57] In the second half of 1928 alone the Czech embassy in Paris reported on three lectures in Paris and Biarritz devoted to Czech topics, three Czech films given in a variety of French cities (one film accompanied by its own lecture series), four concerts of music by Czech composers, participation in two different visual art exhibitions, and the publication of a French-language "Artistic Guide to Prague."[58]

Perhaps the most important of these events during the interwar period, however, was the Paris premiere of *The Bartered Bride*, on 26 October 1928 at the Opéra Comique. Attempts had

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[56] "Vůdčí postavení, které Francie zaujímá ve světové politice, přimělo mnohé evropské státy, aby věnovaly Paříži obzvláštní pozornost s hlediska propagačního… Úkoly, které na vyslanectví doléhají také s hlediska propagačního, jsou tudíž rovněž zcela mimořádně veliké." Osuský, memorandum, 15 April 1929.

[57] See Josef Bek, "Mezinárodní styky české hudby 1918–1924," *Hudební věda* 4 (1967): 397–419, especially 412–414.

[58] See "Přehled úřední činnosti v II. pololetí 1928," 1–3, I. Section 1918–39, box 82, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Prague.

been made to get the opera to Paris as early as 1869, just three years after its premiere in Prague; indeed, Smetana himself revised the opera specifically for this purpose, adding new choruses and ballet music with an eye towards French tastes. That performance did not come to pass, however. Despite the occasional efforts of important political figures like *Reichsrat* member František Ladislav Rieger and Princess Pauline von Metternich throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, no performances of the opera were successfully produced in Paris before 1928.[59]

Discussions for this successful production began as early as 1925, and the very first stages were already of interest to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Prague and the Czechoslovak embassy in Paris.[60] The premiere ultimately took the form of a gala event to mark the tenth-anniversary celebrations for the foundation of Czechoslovakia, on 28 October 1918. In addition to this celebratory event, the premiere itself was broadcast over the radio to cities across Europe, including Marseille, Lyon, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Warsaw, and Zagreb.[61] Attendees included Ambassador Osuský; his wife and major supporter of the premiere, Pavla Osuská; the president

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[59] For an account of this process, see Přemysl Pražák, *Smetanova Prodaná nevěsta: Vznik a osudy díla* (Prague: Lidová demokracie, 1962), 49–54. The preface to the 1953 critical edition of the opera also details the various revisions to the opera in tabular form. See Bedřich Smetana, *Prodaná nevěsta* (Prague: Muzeum Bedřicha Smetany Státní nakladatelství krásné literatury, hudby a umění, 1953). An illustrated history of all productions of *The Bartered Bride* at the National Theater in Prague is given in Jan Panenka and Taťána Součkova, *Prodaná nevěsta: Prodaná nevěsta na jevištích Prozatímního a Národního divadla 1866–2004* (Prague: Národní divadlo a nakladatelství Gallery, 2004).

[60] The prospect of a Paris premiere for *The Bartered Bride* is discussed in a letter from the Ministry to the Paris embassy from 9 February 1925. It reads in part "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, responding to the above-mentioned letter advises that, as is known to the local office, it is considering the possibility of a French performance of *The Bartered Bride* on the stage of the Opéra Comique in Paris. The participation of Czechoslovakia would consist only of the sending of appropriate artistic representatives to Paris for the preparation of the work." "Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí, odpovídajíc k shora uvedenému dopisu, upozorňuje, že, jak tamnímu úřadu známo, uvažuje se o tom, aby 'Prodaná nevěsta' byla uvedena ve francouzském provedení na scénu Komické opery v Paříži. Účast Československa by spočívala jen v tom, že by vyslalo příslušné umělecké činitele do Paříže k nastudování a scénování díla." Underlining in the original. See "Zájezd pražské opery do Ženevy," 9 February 1925, III. Section 1918–39, box 389, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Prague.

[61] See "Přenos Prodané nevěsty v Paříže," *Lidové noviny*, 27 October 1928, evening edition, 2. I discuss the radio broadcast in greater detail below.

of France, Gaston Doumergue; the French ministers of Education, War, the Interior, and Labor; members of the World War I Reparations Commission; and a wide range of literary, musical, and social luminaries. In a statement that neatly encapsulates the cultural and diplomatic import of the evening, the French newspaper *Le Radical* quipped, "after such a happy event of allied art, a question comes to mind: when will the directors of the Opéra Comique reside at the palace of the League of Nations?"[62]

The Paris premiere of *The Bartered Bride* allows for a detailed examination of two interconnected issues. One is the status of Smetana's opera as a political, ideological, and national symbol for the nascent Czechoslovak republic, which also shaped the events of 1924 and 1927. The other is the cultural and political relationship between Czechoslovakia and France. As we saw above, Prague critics described Paris as the final jewel in the crown of *The Bartered Bride*. For their part, French critics saw Czechoslovakia as a friendly neighbor; they supported the production in part because they considered it a long-delayed presentation of a classic work. Yet Smetana's opera was also yet another exotic work to be incorporated into the ambit of French nationalist self-imaginings as the cosmopolitan, universal, and cultural capital of the Western world, especially coming after World War I.[63]

The gala premiere event thus presented the final consecration of *The Bartered Bride* as a symbol for the nation abroad in the confluence of two distinct nationalist discourses: Czech

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[62] "Après cette heureuse manifestation de l'art interallié, une question se présente à notre esprit: quand donc MM. les directeurs de l'Opéra-Comique siégeront-ils au palais de la Société des Nations?" André Bloch, "L'art et la diplomatie fraternisent à l'Opéra Comique," *Le Radical*, 28 October 1928, given in *"Prodaná nevěsta" v Paříži*, inv. number F118, vol. 1, Muzeum Bedřicha Smetany, Prague.

[63] See here Katharine Ellis, "*Mireille*'s Homecoming? Gounod, Mistral, and the Midi," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 65, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 463–509. Ellis discusses differing French reactions to Gounod's opera *Mireille*, which showcased the tensions inherent in coming to terms with a kind of "internal exotic" represented by Provençal culture. Many of the same universalizing/othering discourses and centralizing ambitions of Paris at play in the French reception of *The Bartered Bride* are present in discussions of Gounod's opera versus its original source poem.

insistence on Smetana as the font of all Czech music (freshly reiterated by the 1927 jubilee) and French determination to be the final arbiter of all that was important in operatic culture. Earlier performances of the opera in foreign cities—St. Petersburg (1871), Zagreb (1873), Vienna (1892), Berlin (1893), Bern (1894), London (1895), Milan (1905), New York (1909), Barcelona (1924), among others—had varying effects on the reputation of the opera in international circles but cumulatively added to the reputation of the opera and its composer. Vienna, as I have discussed in Chapter 2, was especially important in accelerating dissemination of the opera on Western stages. While the 1892 International Exhibition of Music and Theater in that city was a tremendous success for Czech opera, especially Smetana, it was nevertheless the capital of the empire to which Prague and Bohemia belonged. Additionally, it took place at a time when the structures of empire appeared fixed and immutable. Paris, on the other hand, had a far less complex historical relationship with Prague, and the premiere there took place ten years after the end of World War I. Because of its relative disconnectedness from Prague—however much the diplomats exhorted their successes, Czechoslovakia and France had been allies for only ten years, whereas the history of Bohemia within the Habsburg Empire reached back centuries—Paris was that much more important to the international reputation of Czech music, especially when it came to opera.

Nonetheless, while chauvinist nationalist discourses, both contemporary and later, would occasionally discount the weight placed on the Paris premiere, it was precisely individuals like Osuský—who agreed with the idea of Paris as the last word in operatic relevance—that dominated Czech appreciations of their Parisian moment. Smetana, as *The Bartered Bride*'s creator, was thus confirmed as Czechoslovakia's foremost composer. As we saw earlier, he had already been apostrophized as the musical equivalent to Masaryk, the "president-liberator" of his

country. The combination of *The Bartered Bride*'s premiere with the celebration of the tenth anniversary of Czechoslovak statehood, moreover, cemented the importance of the event for the legacy of the opera and its composer.

At this time, Czechoslovakia was politically concerned with Hungarian animosity to Czechoslovak gains from Versailles; her alliance with Romania and Yugoslavia, the so-called Little Entente, geared towards containing Hungary; and the progress of the reparations process. France could guarantee or provide support in many of these areas, and the Locarno treaties, signed in late 1925, were ostensibly a concrete step in this direction. The main body of the agreements, signed by France, Great Britain, German, Belgium, and Italy, guaranteed Germany's western borders and provided a path for that country's eventual accession to the League of Nations. However, in a move that caused some concern in Czechoslovakia, Germany's eastern borders were not guaranteed, though Germany and Czechoslovakia did conclude a treaty of arbitration in case of disputes. Czechoslovakia nevertheless needed France to support its regional security concerns, and France wanted Czechoslovakia to act as a buffer, in concert with the Little Entente, towards Soviet Russia and the potential for German resurgence. As a result, France and Czechoslovakia concluded a separate treaty, not technically part of the main Locarno accords but included as a separate appendix, that reaffirmed their mutual guarantees of security.[64] Both countries touted the success of Locarno, whatever its actual practical outcomes, and reiterated the importance of their alliance to their respective domestic publics.

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[64] For a discussion of the Locarno treaties and their results in general, see Zara Steiner, *The Lights that Failed: European International History, 1919–1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 387–430. Piotr Wandycz extensively covers the question of France's attempts to create a *barrière de l'est* comprised of Czechoslovakia and Poland as well as with the impacts of the Locarno treaties on these efforts. While the treaties allayed to an extent France's territorial and security concerns regarding Germany and thereby obviated the pressing need for eastern containment, France continued to cultivate its many alliances as a part of the greater diplomatic game through the rest of the 1920s and into the 1930s. See Piotr S. Wandycz, *France and Her Eastern Allies 1919–1925* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962), especially 341–389, as well as Wandycz, *The Twilight of French Eastern Alliances 1926–1936* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 3–46.

The political situation thus mirrors the cultural one: despite their relatively incommensurate levels of political and cultural power in Europe, both nations needed each other, and the gala premiere represented an opportunity for France and Czechoslovakia to offer each other something that would lead to closer ties. The celebration of the tenth anniversary of the foundation of Czechoslovakia, as a result, took on an outsize importance, symbolizing not just an expression of Czechoslovak-French amity, but the promise of national self-determination and the integrity of the post-Versailles European order. In this way the premiere resonated with greater European feelings of a "spirit of Locarno," a utopian faith in international diplomacy and good will between nations that lasted roughly from the signing of the Locarno treaties to the early 1930s.[65] While Czechoslovakia, wary of Hungarian demands on its territory and the looming specter of an *Anschluss*, may have not exulted quite so much in the "spirit of Locarno" as did Western European countries like France, it nevertheless supported the larger cause of international democracy and peaceful diplomacy.

In the remainder of this chapter, I place the gala premiere of *The Bartered Bride* in Paris in its social, cultural, and political context. In so doing I hope not only to expand understandings of Czechoslovak-French relations in relation to music during the interwar period, but also to contribute to larger discussions about cultural diplomacy in Europe. Specifically, I offer here an example of what I term cultural reciprocity: an instance of sharing musical and cultural capital with the goal of strengthening political and social ties. In contrast to such events as the orchestral tours of the Cold War, which could be understood as promoting mutual understanding through appeals to the "universal" nature of symphonic music, the Paris premiere engaged a dual form of musical diplomacy. On the one hand, appeals to the universality of Smetana's music were

[65] An accounting of the reasons for, and failures of, the "spirit of Locarno" is given in Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, "Reconsiderations: The Spirit of Locarno: Illusions of Pactomania," *Foreign Affairs* 50, no. 4 (July 1972): 752–764.

present throughout reception of the event, but on the other hand, the gala was also celebrated as a profoundly national affair.[66] This is in large part thanks to the representational capacities of opera and the status of *The Bartered Bride* in particular; the reception of the 1927 jubilee in Prague, encapsulated by Nejedlý's florid praise, is evidence of this. Another writer from Prague, reacting to the radio broadcast from Paris in 1928, was more direct, simply calling it "our most national (*nejnárodnější*) work."[67] Such appeals drew on a by-now familiar discourse with long roots, going back to the earliest reception of the opera (see Chapter 1) and strengthened greatly by autoessentialist representations of the opera institutionalized by the 1892 Vienna exhibition.

As an exchange between two rather different nation states, the Paris *Bartered Bride* gala benefits from adopting an analytical framework influenced by ideas of transnational history. As I have already touched upon in Chapter 2, albeit in the framework of nineteenth-century imperialism, opera has long been studied as a transnational emissary: common practice tonality, a shared musico-dramatic language, and the gradual codification of an operatic canon within Europe facilitated the use of the medium as an effective means of communication across national and linguistic boundaries, and ever more so in the later nineteenth century and into the twentieth.[68] In this sense, then, the emphasis on *The Bartered Bride*'s national particularity and its symbolic status are not diminished by a transnational reading but rather confirmed, in that it served as an effective means for propaganda and communication that was legible across Europe

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[66] See David Mahiet, Mark Ferraguto, and Rebekah Ahrendt, "Introduction," in *Music and Diplomacy from the Early Modern Era to the Present* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 7, as well as Emily Abrams Ansari, "Aaron Copland and the Politics of Cultural Diplomacy," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 5, no. 3 (August 2011): 344–346.

[67] See J. B., "Pařížská *Prodaná nevěsta* v rozhlasu," *Národní politika*, 28 October 1928, 12.

[68] See my discussion in Chapter 2 as well as Axel Körner, "Transnational History: Identities, Structures, States," in *Internationale Geschichte in Theorie und Praxis/International History in Theory and Practice*, eds. Barbara Haider-Wilson, William D. Godsey, and Wolfgang Mueller (Vienna: Verlag der Österriechischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2017), 265–290.

and its various nations. As other scholars including Gundula Kreuzer and Tamsin Alexander have shown, operatic exchange could serve both to explore the limits and overlaps of national identity as well as to declare affinities between national groups for political reasons.[69] I too follow this thread, but my discussion of Czech and French reactions to this work also shows the ways in which a transnational approach nevertheless relies upon relatively stable (if still imagined and contingent) concepts of nations and their cultures. There was no question in the minds of French or Czech critics that *The Bartered Bride* was a national opera, presented to a different nation in a cosmopolitan framework of reception. Indeed, its transfer from the Prague National Theater stage to that of the Opéra Comique showcased the ways in which specific national discursive contexts could mold reception into different shapes, while maintaining mutual legibility across a Western international context. The village mode is a key indicator of this: while very much grounded in Czech history and culture, the discursive products of its functioning—insistence on the rural village as emblem of Czech essence, for example—would be repeated and interpreted in new ways by the French press.

France and the Music of "The Republic on the Shores of the Vltava"

Czechoslovak newspapers devoted significant space to international developments, a necessity in the quickly changing environment of interwar Europe. Music journals like *Listy hudební matice*, which we encountered during the jubilee celebrations for *The Bartered Bride*'s thousandth performance in 1927, followed suit. Originally founded in 1921, it printed regular columns on music in Paris, in keeping with standard practice in music journals of the time. Readers of this

[69] See Gundula Kreuzer, *Verdi and the Germans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); and Tamsin Alexander, "Decentralising via Russia: Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar* in Nice, 1890," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 27, no. 1 (2015): 35–62. See also Benjamin Walton, "Italian Operatic Fantasies in Latin America," *Journal of Modern Italian History* 17, no. 4 (July 2012): 460–471.

journal would have been introduced to many important names in modern French music, including Les Six, Albert Roussel, Charles Koechlin, and Maurice Ravel. Bohuslav Martinů, who lived in Paris throughout the 1920s and 1930s, contributed several articles not only about Parisian musical life but also relating his thoughts on the contemporary situation in Czechoslovakia, colored by his experiences as an expatriate.[70] In 1924, the journal began covering the appearance of Czech music on concerts abroad, and Paris regularly featured in this section as well. The influential singer Jane Bathori is mentioned as an interpreter of the art songs, operatic arias, and folksongs of Czech composers, suggesting that Czech music was gaining notice in some of the artistically most progressive circles of interwar Paris.[71] French audiences had, moreover, ample opportunities to read about Czech music and Smetana: volumes included Albert Soubies's *Histoire de la musique: Bohême*, William Ritter's biography *Smetana*, and Henri Hantich's *La musique tchèque*.[72] Hantich himself was involved in the unsuccessful efforts to stage *The Bartered Bride* in Paris in 1907.[73]

Czech enthusiasm for the acceptance of their music into French cultural life extended to *The Bartered Bride* as well. A new round of speculation about a Paris premiere appeared in *Listy hudební matice* as early as October of 1926. In April 1927, the journal reported that the eventual conductor of the French production, Louis Masson, had visited Prague, that a new French

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[70] His disagreements with Nejedlý and the critic's circle were loud and frequent; see Thomas D. Svatos, "Martinů on Music and Culture: A View From his Parisian Criticism and 1940s Notes," PhD diss., University of California Santa Barbara, 2001, especially 4–14 and 59–83.

[71] "Česká hudba v Paříži," *Listy hudební matice* 4, no. 4 (20 December 1924): 124. On Jane Bathori's importance to the avant-garde musical scene in interwar Paris, see Barbara Kelly, *Music and Ultra-Modernism in France: A Fragile Consensus, 1913–1939* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013), 50–54.

[72] See Albert Soubies, *Histoire de la musique: Bohême* (Paris: Librairie des bibliophiles, 1898); William Ritter, *Smetana* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1907); and Henri Hantich, *La musique tchèque* (Paris: Librairie Nilsson, 1908).

[73] See "*La Musique Tchèque*, par Henri Hantich," *La Revue mondiale (Ancienne "Revue des Revues")*, 74, no. 10 (15 May 1908): 97–98.

translation of the libretto had recently been completed, and that a premiere was likely imminent. Despite an overall pessimistic tone, the unsigned passage displayed a somewhat guarded enthusiasm about the latest prospect of a Parisian premiere:

> There is also the best intention to stage *The Bartered Bride* [at the Opéra Comique] not as some kind of one-time celebration with a charitable purpose, but rather as a classic work that must enter the repertory of French opera. And here the theater must decide for itself on the most convenient date for the performance and when it will have sufficient time for the proper preparation and staging, as well as access to the best and most favorable artists.[74]

While this statement could be read as gently chiding the French for not staging the work earlier—the work was, according to the author, already a "classic"—ultimately the passage is quite deferential toward the authority of the Opéra Comique's administration. This kind of tone was adopted in many quarters in the Czech press. Other figures, however, expressed their annoyance with the French delay in staging *The Bartered Bride* much more pointedly.

Czech excitement would finally find its outlet over a year later, when the opera premiered in late October 1928. The level of anticipation was high, as we can see from an article published in the cultural supplement released with the 28 October national anniversary edition of *Národní listy*. Though published two days after the gala premiere, it would likely have been written a few days prior to the performance because of the need to print a huge multi-supplement edition of the newspaper for the national anniversary day. Antonín Šilhan, a powerful critic in Prague music circles, noted how "foreign lands are turning their attention with increased intensity to Czech music," thereby preparing *The Bartered Bride* to stand for all Czech music. He continues, "in the tenth year of the Czech [Bohemian] republic, we will finally perhaps see fulfilled that which

[74] "…nejlepší vůle vypravit je nikoliv jako nějakou příležitostnou slavnost s dobročinným účelem, nýbrž jako klasické dílo, jež má vstoupit v repertoár francouzské opery. A tu musí rozhodovat jen divadlo samo, kterou dobu uzná k tomu za nejpříhodnější a kdy bude disponovat k náležitému nastudování a vypravení jak dostatečným časem, tak nejlepšími a nejvýhodnějšími umělci." K., "'*Prodaná nevěsta*' v Paříži," *Listy hudební matice* 6, nos. 6–7 (15 April 1927): 236.

several generations pursued strenuously for over a full half-century: *The Bartered Bride* in Paris."[75] The celebratory and elevated tone accorded Smetana's work is emphasized by the fact that this is the only opera Šilhan explicitly mentions in the article. He also never actually names Smetana as its composer, indicating that knowledge of the opera's history and importance among his readers was assumed.

French anticipation of the premiere, meanwhile, seemed to have also reached something of a fever pitch. Documents from the Czech embassy in Paris note that from 1 to 26 October 1928 alone, 130 small notices and 95 longer articles about *The Bartered Bride* were printed in French newspapers.[76] The following passage by Lucien Bourguès from the 20 October 1928 issue of *L'Europe Nouvelle* was typical for the majority of these anticipatory articles:

> *The Bartered Bride*, which the Opéra Comique has chosen to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the definitive liberty of Bohemia and French-Czech friendship, is without a doubt Smetana's most typical work. He has there embodied the joyful good humor which is the cardinal virtue of his people; he has there glorified peasant life, which at that happy time had not yet lost any of its moving poetry; he has there managed, perhaps better than on any other occasion, the difficult fusion of the "national" and the "universal," which alone ensures staying power and great renown.[77]

A number of key points emerge here. The emphasis on French-Czech friendship is pervasive throughout both the advance notices and the reviews. Many French and Czech critics saw the

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[75] "…cizina se zvýšenou intensivností obrací pozornost svoji k české hudbě. V desátém roce české republiky konečně snad splněno to, oč několik generací o plné půlstoletí usilovně pracovalo: 'Prodanou nevěstu' v Paříži." Antonín Šilhan, "Česká hudba ve svobodné vlasti," *X let naší kultury* (*Příloha "Národních listů" k číslu 299*), 28 October 1928, 1.

[76] See "Přehled úřední činnosti v II. pololetí 1928," I. Section 1918–39, box 82, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Prague. At least two of these articles were written by Bohuslav Martinů.

[77] "*La Fiancée Vendue*, que l'Opéra-Comique a choisie pour célébrer les dix années de liberté définitive de la Bohême et l'amitié franco-tchèque, est certainement l'œuvre la plus typique de Smetana. Il y a incarné la bonhomie joyeuse qui est la vertu cardinale de son peuple; il y a glorifié la vie paysanne qui, à cette bienheureuse époque, n'avait encore rien perdu de sa mouvante poésie; il y a réussi, mieux qu'en aucune autre occasion peut-être, cette fusion difficile entre le 'national' et l' 'universel' qui, seule, assure la durée et une large renommée." Lucien Bourguès, "Smetana, musicien national du peuple tchèque," *L'Europe Nouvelle*, 20 October 1928, in *"Prodaná nevěsta" v Paříži*, inv. number F118, vol. 1, Muzeum Bedřicha Smetany, Prague.

performance of the opera as a symbol of their respective countries' alliance, especially since the opera was being sung by French singers in their own language. Louis Schneider at *Le Gaulois*, evoking the rhetoric of the village mode, remarked that the interpretation of the quintessential picture of Czech peasant life by the best artists of the government-supported theater "symbolically shows the close links which unify France and the republic on the shores of the Vltana [*sic*]."[78] An anonymous Czech critic for *Nová doba* echoed this in almost exactly the same words, stating that the performance of a Czech opera on a Parisian stage constituted "a symbol of close ties existing between the Czechoslovak Republic and France, ties that through this cultural action will be still more reinforced."[79] This particular review goes even a little further by arguing for the importance of the gala performance for the advancement of Czechoslovak-French relations.

Bourguès's article also reiterates the trope that the work embodied Czechness, essentializing the opera, a strategy of which both Czech and French critics were quite fond. His statement recalls Vomáčka's formulation and sets up Smetana and his opera as the ideal national symbols of Czechoslovakia. The glorification of an atemporal, golden age of peasantry was, for the Czechs, very much in keeping with the village mode. Since the French had a different historical, geographical, and cultural relationship to the peasantry and rural environments than the Czechs, and since they were engaging with a foreign work, *The Bartered Bride*'s idealized

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[78] "…et ces tableaux typiques de la vie paysanne tchèque, interprétés par les meilleurs artistes de notre grand théâtre subventionné, montreront symboliquement les liens étroits qui unissent la France à la République sœur des bords de la Vltana [*sic*]." Louis Schneider, "Avant *La Fiancée vendue*," *Le Gaulois*, 17 October 1928, in *'Prodaná nevěsta' v Paříži*, inv. number F118, vol. 1, Muzeum Bedřicha Smetany, Prague. Schneider's equating of Prague with the whole of Czechoslovakia perhaps betrays another level of exoticist incomprehension, not to mention that he misspells the name of the Vltava river.

[79] "V předvedení 'Prodané nevěsty' na pařížské scéně spatřuje symbol úzkých svazků, existujících mezi republikou československou a Francií, svazků, které tímto kulturním činem budou ještě více zesíleny." "Paříž nadšena dílem Bedřicha Smetany," *Nová doba*, 26 October 1928, 1.

village space instead appeared exotic. While Bourguès was more complimentary with his assertion that Smetana had managed to fuse the national and the universal in his opera, exoticism pervaded other articles from the French press, both those anticipating the premiere and those written after. It is important to point out that while the village mode and exoticist discourse were both predicated on ideas of national essence, there is a critical distinction to be made between them. The village mode was a way of creating historical narrative and constituting subjects in a decidedly domestic sphere. Exoticism necessarily implied a power difference, where a fully constituted Self regards a stereotyped Other, who is always already less than the Self.[80] This is not to say that Czech self-imaginings were without Others; as discussed in Chapter 1, this role was mostly played by the German Habsburgs. Czech autoessentialist appreciations of *The Bartered Bride*, forwarded especially in cosmopolitan contexts, were a legacy of 1892 and assisted the French in their own interpretations. Additionally, Bohemia's place as a province within a European continental empire resulted in very different applications of essentialist imagining than did France's status as an overseas colonial power.

An anonymous critic for *Le Monde illustré*, writing on 20 October 1928, was more direct in his exoticism, stating that "notably in the patriotic and national music of Smetana, *The Bartered Bride* is eminently symbolic of everything of this spirit and of its poetic sentiment, of vibrant enthusiasm, of rough vigour, of spiritual mischievousness."[81] This statement betrays the usually tacit negative connotations associated with outside othering of Czech music, which characterized both music and composer as naive, impulsive, and rustic. At the same time,

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[80] See Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge Classics, 2004), 94–120, as well as Ralph P. Locke, *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 72–84.

[81] "…et notamment dans la musique patriotique et nationale de Smetana, *La Fiancée vendue* est éminémment représentative de tout ce que cette âme a de sentiment poétique, de vibrant enthousiasme, de rude vigueur, de malice spirituelle." "Un festival tchèchoslovaque a L'Opéra Comique," *Le Monde illustré*, 20 October 1928, in *"Prodaná nevěsta" v Paříži*, inv. number F118, vol. 1, Muzeum Bedřicha Smetany, Prague.

multiple commentators from both Paris and Prague, including the anonymous writer from *Le Monde illustré*, compared Smetana to Mozart and Rossini, placing him among a canonic pantheon of composers. Occasional comparisons to Glinka and the Mighty Five, while at first glance seeming to contradict the Western canonical bent of comparisons to the likes of Mozart, were in fact the opposite side of the same coin.[82] The intertwining of the canonical and exotic would appear again in reception after the gala, and is perhaps best summarized by Michael Beckerman's quip that "Dvořák [here, Smetana] was invited to the Great Composers party on the condition that he arrive in national dress."[83] Nevertheless, the characterization of *The Bartered Bride* and Smetana as quintessentially Czech aided their roles as diplomatic emissaries. The reduction of the opera to, and its commodification as, the perfect Czech national symbol made it easier for French audiences to form an idea as to the character of a nation that, despite the fame of its statesmen like Masaryk, was still *terra incognita* to many in Western Europe; while Prague may have been a fairly popular tourist destination, knowledge of the country as a whole was decidedly more limited.

The essentializing of *The Bartered Bride* as perfect Czech symbol was further confirmed by Pavla Osuská, the wife of the Czech ambassador to Paris, though she displayed a somewhat more nuanced approach. Three separate interviews with her were published by three different French newspapers—*Comoedia*, *La Liberté*, and *Paris Soir*—on the same day, October 22, 1928,

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[82] For example, Jean Pouleigh, writing in *Le Carnet de la semaine*, made the following comparison: "It is just that Czechoslovakia piously maintains the cult of Smetana, who did for little yet big-hearted Bohemia what Glinka, serving as forerunner, did for the immense Russia of the 'Five.'" "Il est juste que la Tchècoslovaquie entretienne pieusement le culte de Smetana qui a fait pour la petite Bohême au grand cœur ce que Glinka l'ancêtre fit pour l'immense Russie des 'Cinq.'" Jean Pouleigh, "Un grand musicien tchèque," *Le Carnet de la semaine* 13, no. 698 (21 October 1924), in *"Prodaná nevěsta" v Paříži*, inv. number F118, vol. 1, Muzeum Bedřicha Smetany, Prague.

[83] See Michael Beckerman, *New Worlds of Dvořák* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), 223–224.

suggesting a coordinated publicity campaign on the part of the embassy.[84] In these interviews, Osuská commented not only on the ways in which the opera exhibited Czech characteristics, but also on the performance of the opera in other countries, the importance of a Paris production for the Czechs, and the ways in which Smetana and *The Bartered Bride* had served the cause of Czech independence from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This last point unites the threads under investigation within this chapter as a whole: the presence of the village mode in reception of *The Bartered Bride*; the canonization and institutionalization of Smetana and his opera; and their use in the cultural diplomacy between France and Czechoslovakia.

Osuská stressed Smetana's role as creator of a national musical style in her interview with *Paris Soir,* though her explanation of his role was of a far less bellicose hue than other statements that would appear in reviews after the premiere. She claimed that the creation of national music was a result of living under domination by a foreign power, with the arts being the only outlet for the expression of national consciousness. Smetana could in this way be seen as helping the cause of Czech independence. "But," she says, "when we say that [Smetana] created our national music, we must understand that he created our modern musical art by putting it [folk music] in harmony with universal musical art." "In sum, madam, if I understand you correctly," the interviewer continues, "Smetana is your Chopin." "Exactly. What Chopin, for example, did for the mazurka, the national Polish dance, Smetana did for the polka, the Czechoslovak national dance."[85] This interview thereby not only reiterates the familiar trope of

[84] Some of the words attributed to Osuská in the interview in *La Liberté*, however, directly match what was published in *La Monde illustré* two days earlier as an entirely separate article, quoted above, suggesting there were some liberties being taken among the French newspapers of the time.

[85] "Vous savez que nous avons toujours gardé jalousement le trésor de notre musique populaire. Durant de nombreux lustres, sous la domination étrangère, notre peuple n'a guère eu d'autre moyen d'exprimer sa conscience nationale. Le temps de Smetana a été celui du complet réveil de cette conscience, dans tous les domaines. Mais quand nous disons qu'il a crée notre musique nationale, il faut comprendre qu'il a fondé notre art musical moderne, en le mettant en harmonie avec l'art musical universel. –En somme, madame, si je comprends bien, Smetana, c'est

Smetana as the careful and skilled creator of Czech national music, but also links him explicitly to Chopin, whose influence and fame in France had reached mythical proportions. Osuská and the interviewer's dialogue claims a musical universalism for both French music, mediated by Chopin, and Czech music, mediated by Smetana, implicitly placing them on the same level of artistic excellence. In much the same way, Smetana could be "understood" in Paris in terms of musical "universality," as Chopin was. Not only would this be advantageous for Smetana's reputation in the French context, but it also provides a connection between French and Czech musical cultures as a basis for mutual understanding.

The links between France and Czechoslovakia were also being celebrated in quarters besides the press. The embassy sent out official invitations for the tenth-anniversary gala to a number of important figures on the French political and social scene as well as Czech expatriates living in France. A large number of the responses to these invitations were preserved, many of them addressed directly to the ambassador and his wife. Most of the letters express support for Czechoslovakia and the anniversary, and a few wax rhapsodically about the gala's benefits for Czechoslovak-French relations. One typical note, after thanking the ambassador and his wife in glowing terms, expressed enthusiasm to be a part of "a quite symbolic event, which officially consecrates the friendship that unifies the great nations of Czechoslovakia and France."[86] Another letter confirmed the prevailing view of *The Bartered Bride* as intimately tied to the struggle for Czech independence from Austria-Hungary, though it evidently came from personal

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votre Chopin. –Exactement. Ce que Chopin, par exemple, a fait pour la mazurka, danse nationale polonaise, Smetana l'a fait pour la polka, danse nationale tchècoslovaque." Francis Baumal, "*La fiancée vendue*: Interview de Mme Stephen Osuska [*sic*]," *Paris Soir*, 22 October 1928, in *"Prodaná nevěsta" v Paříži*, inv. number F118, vol. 1, Muzeum Bedřicha Smetany, Prague.

[86] "…fête toute symbolique d'ailleurs, et qui consacrera officiellement l'amitié qui unit les deux grandes nations de Čecoslovaquie et de France." Gibert Chérest, visiting card, 12 October 1928, inv. number 34/88, Muzeum Bedřicha Smetany, Prague.

experience: "*The Bartered Bride* awakens for me the times when I would conspire with my Czech brothers and friends for the independence and liberty of their beloved homeland."[87]

The composer Vincent d'Indy received an invitation and responded in similar fashion, but also explicitly linked the anniversary of the republic to the figure of Masaryk, indicating the extent to which knowledge of the Czech lands was most often filtered through its elder statesmen. He went on to describe himself and his wife as "old friends" of the nation.[88] The embassy also sent a number of formal invitations to various French newspapers and journals, including *Le Journal*, *Le Journal des débats*, *The Paris Times*, *Le Petit Parisien*, and *Le Quotidien*, indicating that Prague and its representatives hoped to improve upon the already considerable press coverage being afforded the premiere. Even accounting for the celebratory and occasionally hyperbolic character of these letters, the correspondence reveals not only the scope of the Czech embassy's publicity campaign but also the extent to which ideas about Smetana, *The Bartered Bride*, and their central role in serving the cause of Czechoslovak-French relations were already ingrained in public opinion.

Prague and Paris Respond

To use the expression of an American newspaper report, "Tout-Paris" celebrated the long-awaited premiere of *The Bartered Bride* at the anniversary gala. The French translation gave the opera a new sound and an elevated linguistic cachet; in the words of one Czech critic regarding this translation, "the vocal culture and softness of French speech gave Smetana's melodies a

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[87] "*La Fiancée vendue* eveillera pour moi les temps où je conspirai avec mes frères et amis tchèques pour l'indépendance et la liberté de leur chère Patrie." C. Mége, letter, 24 October 1928, inv. number 34/88, Muzeum Bedřicha Smetany, Prague.

[88] "Nous serons heureux de fêter avec vous l'anniversaire de votre République et aussi votre cher Président… que nous y avons été reçus en vieux amis." Vincent d'Indy, letter, 7 October 1928, inv. number 34/88, Muzeum Bedřicha Smetany, Prague.

natural, sonorous beauty."[89] The French soprano Germaine Féraldy was also particularly praised for her interpretation of Mařenka. The press in both countries published detailed lists of the diplomats and cultural celebrities in attendance; bankers and admirals rubbed shoulders with the president of France and ambassadors from most of Europe. The Parisian musical establishment was represented by, among others, d'Indy and his fellow composers Gustave Charpentier and Arthur Honegger.[90]

In a move that would turn out to be of matter of historical record, the gala performance was also broadcast across Europe, from France to Croatia. According to the Prague newspaper *Národní politika*, it was the first ever simultaneous broadcast from Western to Central Europe. The performance was transmitted across the entire French radio network, to Berlin, Vienna, the rest of the Austrian radio network, all four Czechoslovak radio stations, Warsaw, and Zagreb—more than twenty stations in total, which *Národní listy* reported to be almost half of all the European stations at that time.[91] Most Czech reports estimated the listening audience at anywhere between two and four million listeners.[92] *České slovo* reported that loudspeakers were placed on the streets of Prague, and "entire crowds stood before [them], scarcely breathing due to suspense and attention."[93] Similar public scenes were reported in Brno, and evidently Czechs

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[89] "Kultura hlasová i měkkost řeči francouzské… daly melodiím Smetanovým živelní krásu zvukovou." L. K., "K triumfu 'Prodané nevěsty' v Paříži," *České slovo*, 27 October 1928, evening edition, 5.

[90] "Francouzský presindent [*sic*] a členové vlády přítomní představení," *Národní listy*, 27 October 1928, 2.

[91] "…neboť s přidruženými stanicemi vysilalo premiéru přes dvacet stanic, tedy téměř polovina evropského počtu…" bk., "Evropa poslouchala včera 'Prodanou nevěstu,'" *Národní listy*, 27 October 1928, 2.

[92] See "Rozhlas. *Prodaná nevěsta* v Paříži," *Národní politika*, 26 October 1928, 11, and "Přenos Prodané nevěsty v Paříži," 2. The latter gives the number of listeners as around two million. In a second article *Národní politika* estimated there were "at least" (*nejméně*) three or four million listeners. See J. B., "Pařížská *Prodaná nevěsta* v rozhlasu," 12.

[93] "V pražských ulicích stály před megafony celé zástupy, sotva dýchajíce napětím a pozorností." Mj., "Včerejší večer v pražských ulicích," *České slovo*, 27 October 1928, 4. A 1937 report for the Czechoslovak radio service *Radiojournal* put the number of licensed Czechoslovak listeners at 238,341 in 1928. Statistics from the same report

with their own radio sets invited relatives and neighbors to come and hear the broadcast.[94] Many periodicals commented on the technical challenges presented by such an ambitious broadcast and were duly amazed by the success of the transmission, which was reported to have been quite clear, with only minor disturbances.

The program book that accompanied the gala performance also helped to consecrate the occasion by offering essays by three experts: a collaborator on the libretto's translation, Daniel Muller; the distinguished French musicologist Julien Tiersot, who had published a book on Smetana and Czech music two years prior to the premiere; and the French minister of education, Édouard Herriot. Together, the three essays cover practically every trope discussed here and no doubt served as models for some of the subsequent reviews. Among other topics, the essays touched on Smetana's unimpeachable Czechness, the lofty and quasi-revolutionary goal of his music, his similarities to Rossini, Mozart, and other canonized Western composers, and the performance's benefits for Czechoslovak-French amity.[95] Tiersot's contextualizing essay in particular drew on village-mode views of the composer; he termed Smetana the master of the harmonic interpretation of national genius, destined to arise from the Czech soil—a statement redolent of the *Blut und Boden* rhetoric of the late nineteenth century, especially surrounding the

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for the year 1936 suggest that, eight years after the gala, there were approximately five to six million registered listeners in the wider European area where *The Bartered Bride* would have been broadcast. It is therefore conceivable that the more conservative estimates of two to three million potential listeners in 1928 might not have been far from the truth, especially if public loudspeakers were in use in other cities besides Prague and Brno. See Lenka Čábelová, *Radiojournal: Rozhlasové vysílání v Čechách a na Moravě v letech 1923–1939* (Prague: Nakladatelství Karolinum, 2003), 71–74.

[94] Pražák, *Prodaná nevěsta*, 303.

[95] See *La Fiancée vendue, opéra-comique en trois actes de Bedřich Smetana: Gala du 26 Octobre 1928 au Théatre National de L'Opéra-Comique* (Paris: E. Aulard, 1928) as well as Julien Tiersot, *Smetana* (Paris: Laurens, 1926). Unsurprisingly, French composers also figured heavily as positive comparisons for Smetana; Tiersot mentions César Franck, Édouard Lalo, Ernest Reyer, and Daniel François Esprit Auber in the course of his text for the program book.

jubilee two-hundredth *Bartered Bride* performance—and then went on to proclaim the eternal freshness of Smetana's music.

Someone like Nejedlý, on the one hand, would have posited the immortality of Smetana's music as necessary to the future of Czech composition, a decidedly domestic goal strongly reiterated in 1924; as we shall see, he had nothing good to say about French appreciation of Smetana. Tiersot, on the other hand, saw it as motivation for the presentation of the opera to French audiences, who had not yet had the opportunity to experience the music of *The Bartered Bride*, aside from the occasional appearance of the overture on concert programs. Thus despite almost identical hagiographic formulations of the composer, they were rooted in very different ideologies: an insistence on Czech national specificity grounded in the village mode, on the one hand, and on an appeal to French cosmopolitan tastes, on the other. In a way, then, this speaks to the transnational appreciation for a commodified version of Smetana and *The Bartered Bride.* While it clearly moved freely across national boundaries, the composer and his opera were interpreted differently based on the observer and the context in which they found themselves, just as they had in the case of the Belgians and the Danes in 1892. The central difference here, however, lay precisely in the bodies (and language) of the performers: in Vienna, the Czechs performed as subjects in an imperial framework, while in Paris, the French performed the Czech work in a post-Locarno setting.

A myriad of different Czech newspapers from across the political spectrum reported not only on the gala performance itself but also on the open dress rehearsal and the radio broadcast. They followed up with longer reviews in subsequent days. Czech reviewers were mostly enthusiastic about the Opéra Comique's production, though they occasionally had certain reservations. An anonymous critic for *České slovo* was fully convinced by the orchestra and

singers heard over the radio, stating that their performance "indicated that the spirit of Smetana's opera had been perfectly understood. We genuinely had the impression that the opera was being broadcast from our National Theater."[96] The reviewer for the Czech music journal *Tempo*, Silvestr Hippman, was somewhat more equivocal in his praise. He reported that the Paris performance "constituted overall a faithful image of Smetana's opera and reached an artistic level above the average," but, at the same time, kept emphasizing that the Opéra Comique could never completely master the music and drama because the performers were not Czech.[97] This strategy offered him control over which people he considered to have true access to Smetana's legacy:

> It is possible to say that *The Bartered Bride* at the Opéra Comique truly lives in its staging. This is of the utmost importance if we consider that the opera has to gain the interest of a foreign nation. It is necessary for this nation to give priority to the score as clearly as possible, because it does not have historical relationships with the work as we do, to whom the words [of the Act III sextet] "Rozmysli si, Mařenko" suffice to recall an image of Homeric concision.[98]

Domestic relationships with *The Bartered Bride* were placed above French ones and given a positive cast in part through the reference to Homer, equating Smetana with the Greek poet and positing thorough knowledge of the opera in Czech minds. Reading between the lines, then, it would appear that despite French commitment and faithfulness to the work, French musicians could never reach the same level as a Czech production. Hippman's reference to the words from

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[96] "Výkon orchestru i herců svědčí o tom, že byl duch Smetanovy opery dokonale pochopen. Měli jsme skutečně dojem, jakoby hra byla přenášena z našeho Národního divadla." "'Prodaná nevěsta' stává se evropskou sensací," *České slovo*, 27 October 1928, 4.

[97] "…constituait, dans son ensemble, un fidèle image de l'opéra de Smetana, et atteignait un niveau artistique au dessus de la moyenne." Silvestr Hippman, "*La Fiancée Vendue* à L'Opéra-Comique de Paris," *Tempo* 8, no. 2 (November 1928): 41. Article abstracts for *Tempo*, from which this quotation was drawn, were published in French—another means of expressing affinity with French culture. The full articles were in Czech.

[98] "Možno říci, že 'Prodaná' v Komické opeře na scéně skutečně žije a to jest nejdůležitější, uvážíme-li, že má získat zájem cizího národa, kterému nutno přednosti partitury podat co nejzřetelněji, neboť on nemá k dílu historických vztahů, jako my, kterým stačí slova 'Rozmysli si, Mařenko,' abychom si vybavili obraz homérské lapidárnosti." Hippman, "'Prodaná nevěsta' v Paříži," *Tempo* 8, no. 2 (November 1928): 52.

the Act III sextet is all the more intriguing as the premiere in Paris was sung in French, not Czech. This linguistic sleight-of-hand is yet another way in which Hippman reserves Smetana's full legacy for Czech performers and audiences alone. This is not to say that Hippman was opposed to the spread of the opera through the various opera houses of Europe. Rather, his romanticized emphasis on the music's physiological resonance with his countrymen seems to be more a nationalist caution against overvaluing the French performance—and one squarely in the village mode, since the village's status as repository of Czech essence meant that only Czechs could truly appreciate and correctly perform something like *The Bartered Bride*.

Hippman's measured praise, published about three weeks after the Paris premiere, contrasts sharply with the effusiveness of *Národní listy*'s main review of the opera by Miloslava Sísová, a Czech writer and artist living in Paris. For Sísová, writing the day after the gala, "no foreign composer has had such a festive and wonderful premiere as Paris prepared—although somewhat delayed—for our *Bride*!"[99] She noted a kind of Gallic clarity in the Paris production, stating that the directors had given *The Bartered Bride* as a "classic comic opera." She approved of this, comparing the opera to dramatic works whose "classic" credibility is beyond question:

> The directors did not concern themselves with realism or so-called "historical truth," just as any director cannot maintain Molièrian or Shakespearian realism if he wants to serve and understand Molière or Shakespeare. And in that, the Parisian *Bartered Bride* exhibits the essence of French design: it is more balanced, clearer, more logical, and more level-headed than our performances and especially German ones.[100]

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[99] "…dosud žádný cizí skladatel neměl tak slavnostní, tak skvělé premiéry, jakou připravila Paříž—třebaže tak opožděně—naší Prodané!" Miloslava Sísová, "Francouzská premiera 'Prodané nevěsty,'" *Národní listy*, 27 October 1928, 2.

[100] "Nestarali se o realismus a o to, čemu se říká 'historická pravda,' jako se žádný režisér nemůže starat o realismus moliérovského nebo shakespearovského ovzduší, chce-li podat a pochopit Moliéra či Shakespeara. A v tom se jeví podstata francouzského provedení: je vyváženější, jasnější, logičtější a vyrovnanější než jsou představení naše a zvláště pak německá." Sísová, "Francouzská premiera," 2.

Sísová's discursive strategy is both classicizing and canonizing, as it calls on narratives of the universal genius and the inherent aesthetic qualities of their works. Yet it is precisely this genius that allowed different nations and artists to create successful new productions, even if they possessed a different character, through the proper adaptation. Along these lines, she approved of the characteristically French values she saw as having been brought to bear on the Paris production, even as she acknowledged that visitors coming from Prague expecting a "photograph of a Czech performance" would be disappointed—in her eyes, this was a positive aspect of the production. Sísová's swipe at German versions not only reflects the post-World-War-I abhorrence of German influence but also the marked preference on the part of the Czechs at the time for all things French.[101] The translation of the opera's text into French likely made the classicizing comparison with Molière all the more possible.

In a way, the aspects of the Paris production perceived to be cosmopolitan or particularly French decentered the Czechness of the village even as Czech critics reiterated the centrality and importance of *The Bartered Bride*. The village mode did not cease to function, however. Though the idealized Czech village setting was deemphasized in Paris, the importance of the opera itself as representative of Czechoslovakia was greatly magnified. Critics like Sísová argued for both sides of the equation, contending that the opera was universal enough to support a French version, but asserting the importance of Smetana and *The Bartered Bride* as representatives of Czech music at the same time. This echoed the rhetoric of individuals like František Šubert and Jaroslav Vrchlický, who emphasized the essential Czechness of *The Bartered Bride* and Smetana

[101] For an overview of international musical relations between Czechoslovakia and other countries at this time, see Bek, "Mezinárodní styky," 628–648. For Francophilia in the realms of visual art, literature and architecture, see Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia*, 195–220.

as they simultaneously encouraged its suitability for performance across the stages of Europe.[102] Their hopes, as a result of their autoessentialist, village-mode discursive framing, had come to pass, and the post-war generation of critics celebrated—for the most part.

Bohuslav Martinů tried, like Hippman, to reserve a certain amount of jurisdiction over the ownership of the opera through his knowledge of Czech operatic life. He was careful to distinguish between Czech and French traditions, though he approved of the latter, as we can see in the following extract:

> I can assure you that the Paris *Bartered Bride* is absolutely full of life and sincere. It is not in our tradition, but it lives its own life. I like this new Parisian tradition because it is simple, natural, logical, springing from that which is written in the notes and text.[103]

The same terms of "Frenchness" that Sísová advances are reflected in Martinů's review, with one telling addition. For him, all the simplicity and naturalness of the French *Bartered Bride* resulted from the musicians' fidelity to the score, a strikingly contemporary—even modernist—way of interpreting music. Such a statement placed Martinů's conception of the Paris *Bartered Bride* right in line with avant-garde musical aesthetics current in the French capital, bringing Smetana's work into the same conversation as that of Les Six and Stravinsky. While Martinů admires this French aesthetic, however, he also notes its contextual specificity when he continues:

> I cannot demand that a French orchestra plays "Czechly" because it can never attain that warmth of the strings like our orchestra [at the National Theater in Prague]. But the true

[102] See Chapters 2 and 3.

[103] "Mohu vás ujistit, že je naprosto životné a upřímné. Není v naší tradici, ale žije svým životem. Tato nová pařížská tradice se mi líbí, protože je prostá, nestrojená, logická, vyvěrající z toho, co je napsáno v notách a textu." Bohuslav Martinů, "Poučení z 'Prodané nevěsty'" *Přítomnost* 5, no. 44 (8 November 1928), reprinted in Miloš Šafránek, *Bohuslav Martinů: Domov, Hudba a Svět* (Prague: Statní hudební vydavatelství, 1966), 105.

> life on the stage convinces me. Mařenka in Paris is different than with us, but she is beautiful in her simplicity.[104]

Here we see the composer attempting to assert discursive control over the artistic execution of Smetana's opera. While the French orchestra brings *The Bartered Bride* to life through simplicity and logic, it can never match the warmth of Prague's interpretation. However, French performance practice brings out the work's unique quality, independent of Czech traditions, but inscribed in the music. In this way, Martinů advances the idea of *The Bartered Bride* as a work capable of standing on its own, unbound to a specifically Czech context, given that the French could create their own successful interpretation of the opera: a Czech work without a Czech performance, universal but deeply tied to its origins.

A number of other Czech critics echoed the theme shared by Hippman, Sísová, and Martinů's articles: that *The Bartered Bride*'s worth was located in the music itself. An anonymous writer for the weekly journal *Přítomnost* wondered the day before the premiere why it took so long for *The Bartered Bride* to finally make it onto the Parisian stage:

> Perhaps the political moment subconsciously played a role here; before the war the whole of Bohemia was a political unknown [*politické X*] in France… But to praise Paris to the skies for playing *The Bartered Bride*? For something that happened in a wide array of German cities, not to mention other countries? We would have too little awareness of the worth of Smetana's music if we were to see in the staging of *The Bartered Bride* an excessively great favor from France, where we can speak of—delayed obviousness.[105]

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[104] "Nemohu žádat, aby mi francouzský orchestr zahrál 'počesku,' neboť nikdy nedosáhne té vřelosti smyčců jako orchestr náš. Ale přesvědčí mne opravdový život na scéně. Mařenka v Paříži je jiná než u nás, ale je krásná ve své prostotě." Martinů, "Poučení," 105.

[105] "…snad tu hrály—podvědomě—roli i momenty politické; před válkou Čechy byly v celku ve Francii politické X… Ale vynášet do nebes Paříž za to, že hraje 'Prodanou nevěstu?' Za něco, co se stalo v celé řadě německých měst, nemluvíme-li o jiných? Byli bychom si příliš málo vědomi ceny Smetanovy hudby, kdybychom viděli v provozování 'Prodané nevěsty' přílis velkou úslužku Francie tam, kde můžeme mluvit o—opožděné samozřejmosti." V. G., "'Prodaná nevěsta' v Paříži," *Přítomnost* 5, no. 42 (25 October 1928): 661.

The writer argued forcefully for the value of *The Bartered Bride* on its own, dismissing the idea that Smetana's opera needed the Parisian premiere as a marker of its worth. The mention of the political situation between the two countries is also rather more explicit than in other reviews, which were on the whole much more focused on celebrating the success of the premiere and its the political benefits, rather than criticizing France for its delay in staging the opera.

The critic at *Přítomnost* was not alone in this, however. Another anonymous critic, this time for the journal *Česká hudba*, was even more explicit in his or her disdain for the political trappings of the gala premiere in an article sarcastically entitled "Proč bychom se těšili," or "Why should we rejoice." This was a pun on the opening chorus of *The Bartered Bride*, which begins "Why should we not rejoice?," a reference we saw the Radion company making at the beginning of this chapter in an effort to sell washing machines—clearly, the phrase had entered the general lexicon as an immediately recognizable idiom.

The critic at *Česká hudba*, disparaging the celebrations over the Paris premiere in other quarters of the press, stated that he or she "was not glad to see that it was precisely Czech diplomats who brought about this performance. Everywhere else *The Bartered Bride* was mounted out of respect for the work, only here did it have to wait for the intervention of diplomats." The performance thus was, the reviewer says, the result of naive propaganda rather than a "pious act toward Smetana's genius."[106] These political motivations for the production distracted from a "true" appreciation of the work's musical values. The critic goes on to disparage Paris and politicians quite directly: "Happily, however, the world did not wait for Paris

[106] "…ale neradi jsme viděli, že to musili býti právě čeští diplomati, kteří vymohli toto provedení. Všude jinde byla 'Prodaná' provozována z úcty k dílu, jen zde se čekalo na intervence diplomatů a diplomatek… museli teprve dokazovati naivní propagátoři, kteři toho docílili zase spíše jako dar k 28. říjnu, nežli jako pietní akt geniu Smetanovu." "Proč bychom se těšili," *Česká hudba* 32, no. 4 (2 November 1928): 24. While the article was unsigned, given the tone of the article and its insistence on piety to Smetana, it is not unlikely that Zdeněk Nejedlý may have written it.

and long ago accepted the opera as work in the international repertoire, and so the political claqueurs and fans of Paris and Prague arrived late… we only maintain that for us this victory is not a musical event. That would have been the case twenty or thirty years ago; today it is only a political event—a diplomatic success, and that is precisely what is unattractive and undignified."[107] Overall, the critic argues strongly for the quality of the music alone, which puts them in the same category as other Czech reviewers like Hippman and Martinů. Nevertheless, this article confirms the highly politicized character of the premiere and gala, though in a negative rather than a positive way.

A positive spin on the political import of the gala was instead offered by a writer for *Venkov*. In a passage that displays a much more *Realpolitik* approach to cultural diplomacy, he stated, "beneath the national coat of arms a quite different world now opens itself to our art than as before, and Czech art is beginning to expand where it could not reach earlier. The recent performance of *The Bartered Bride* in Paris is proof of exactly this: do you think that its melodies would sound along the Seine without the support of a state alliance?"[108] State support was only possible because of Czechoslovakia's independence, and the fact that the state was a primary supporter of the premiere in turn served to glorify the new Czechoslovak nation. Alliance seems to signify here both the connection of *The Bartered Bride* and Czechoslovakia as well French-Czechoslovak political relationships; the slippage betrays the extent to which these two bonds were conceived of as intertwined. The explicit reference to state power, moreover,

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[107] "Na štěstí však svět nečekal na Paříž a přijal již dávno operu za dílo světového repertoáru a tak pařížští a pražští klakéři a obdivovatelé přišli pozdě. …ale tvrdíme pouze, že pro nas toto vítězství není hudební událostí. Bylo by jí bývala před 20 nebo 30 lety; dnes je pouze událostí politickou – úspěchem diplomatickým, a to je právě to nehezké a nedůstojné." "Proč bychom se těšili," 24–25.

[108] "Pod státním znakem otvírá se nyní našemu umění svět docela jinak, než bylo jindy a české umění počíná expandovati, kam se dříve nedostalo. Právě tyto dny v Paříži prováděná 'Prodaná nevěsta' jest toho dokladem: myslíte, že bez podpory státního spojenectví zněly by nad Seinou její melodie?" Jaroslav Hilbert, "České umění a stat," *Venkov*, 27 October 1928, 4.

confirms the extent to which *The Bartered Bride* was perceived to be an important part of the cultural state ideological apparatus of Czechoslovakia. Much as the 1927 jubilee had displayed the connection between the state, as embodied by Masaryk, and one of its most beloved cultural artifacts, so too did the 1928 Paris gala serve to foreground Czechoslovakia's reliance on *The Bartered Bride* as an emblem of all that was Czech.

French reviewers, however, tended to situate *The Bartered Bride* in a different context. In general, the political aspects of the gala premiere were celebrated joyously and explicitly, especially in regard to the figure of Smetana. In many reviews, he appears to take on the role of composer-liberator to go alongside Masaryk as president-liberator. French affection towards the young Czechoslovak Republic was nonetheless laced with a certain amount of exoticism, as was already evident in the previews leading up the gala. For Jean Chantavoine of *Le Ménestrel*, writing after the gala, *The Bartered Bride* reveals a very specific picture of the Czech lands:

> By contrast, those listeners, who know little of Bohemia save the savage sumptuousness of Prague, risk finding the quaint images of *The Bartered Bride* unequal to their memory and to their expectations: this is not the superb Hradčin, it is a comely peasant hut.[109]

In this way Chantavoine deliberately located the opera in a backward peasantry, though one nevertheless connected to Prague's imposing castle. This statement betrayed a kind of double exoticism. While the romanticization of rustic peasants may be unsurprising—and reminiscent of earlier imperial discourses, where the Czechs lagged behind their Viennese rulers in terms of cultural development—the characterization of the capital city as sumptuously savage placed the

[109] "Au contraire, les auditeurs qui, de la Bohême, ne connaissent guère que la somptuosité farouche de Prague, risqueront de trouver assez inégales à leur souvenir et à leur attente les gentilles images de *la Fiancée vendue*: ce n'est pas le superbe Hradschin, c'est une avenante cabane de paysans…" Jean Chantavoine, "La Semaine Musicale – Opéra-Comique," *Le Ménestrel* 90, no. 44 (2 November 1928): 456.

entire country at a distance, downplaying the Baroque splendor of Prague by imputing to it a tacitly Slavic savagery.[110]

Chantavoine adroitly combines both nationalist and exoticist tropes when he discusses the choruses of *The Bartered Bride* and their dance-music inflections. He relies mainly on characterizations of Czech folk music as naive and impulsive, unable to attain true development:

> The dance is an almost instinctive entertainment for the rustics of Bohemia; the dance-like character of the choruses gives them a cachet of local truth for the compatriots of Smetana... [It is a] living music, moreover, alert, fresh, of an impulsive melodic invention, though rather short, and which quickly, over the course of development, descends into formulas and repetition.[111]

This passage and the review as a whole thus performed an essentialist, exoticist casting of *The Bartered Bride* as embodying Czech national character. As we have seen, the essentialist view was espoused both by Czech writers like Vomáčka and by French writers such as Bourguès, though with different objectives. On the one hand, this meant that the opera, and by extension the Czechs themselves, were constructed as an ineluctably nationalist unit peripheral to a larger mainstream that valued intellectual "development" over the evolutionarily inferior repetition of dance—a move typical of exoticism. On the other hand, this kind of essentialist condensation of "Czechness" into the musical representation of one particular opera—here the influence of the village mode is evident—made *The Bartered Bride* an ideal means of communicating Czech character quickly and easily to a wider audience, whether it be diplomats or the French public: unthreatening and friendly, worthy of being an ally, if perhaps a little backwards. This attitude

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[110] For a somewhat earlier, but nonetheless still representative example of such rhetoric, see Annegret Fauser, *Musical Encounters at the 1889 World's Fair* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005), 43–47. See also discussion of historicist time and Chakrabarthy in Chapters 1 and 2.

[111] "La danse étant pour les campagnards de Bohême, un divertissement quasi instinctif, ce caractère dansant des choeurs leur donne, pour les compatriotes de Smetana, un cachet de vérité locale: les étrangers, en revanche, sont plutôt gênés d'entendre des choeurs si passifs chanter une musique si active et trémoussant. Musique vive, au surplus, alerte, fraîche, d'une invention mélodique primesautière, mais assez courte et qui, en fait de développement, tombe vite dans les formules et les redites." Chantavoine, "La Semaine Musicale," 457.

was evident in illustrations that accompanied coverage of the premiere. Take, for example, a drawing of the cast of the opera, published in *L'Illustration* (Figure 5.7).

Figure 5.7: "The principal characters of *The Bartered Bride* by Smetana, at the Opéra Comique. Set and costumes by [Josef] Wenig."[112]

Josef Wenig, the designer whose sets and costumes were used in the Paris gala production, was none other than the brother of Adolf Wenig, librettist for Dvořák's *The Devil and Kate* (see Chapter 4). In much the same way as earlier figures like Augustin Berger and Anna Veselá helped transmit the village mode around Europe by assisting in the staging of various performances of *The Bartered Bride*, so too did Josef Wenig carry on the tradition, transmitting an older generation's set of narratives and customs into the interwar period.

[112] "Un opéra-comique Tchèque a Paris," *L'Illustration* 86, no. 4468 (20 October 1928): 456.

However much the village mode might have exercised its influence, not all of the French reviewers were necessarily in agreement about the opera's nationalist character. Henry Malherbe, in his review for *Le Temps*, was pleasantly surprised by one aria and the "secret quality of Czech genius in its tender melancholy and adventurous grace." The question of nationally marked musical material and its operatic expression was another matter, however:

> Folksong in Bohemia does not have a clearly circumscribed national character. The styles of Western and Eastern folklore have in turn weighed on its development. It is impossible for Smetana to acquire a trenchant originality even when he uses national rhythms.[113]

Since folksong—which, Malherbe (erroneously) contended, underlay most of Smetana's opera—was too adulterated by Western influences to be sufficiently original, the opera itself would inevitably fall short. Such rhetoric again betrayed French conceptions of difference, resonating with descriptions of Russian music, jazz, and further musical Others. In the case of *The Bartered Bride*, however, an insufficiently different, undeveloped, or primitive national folk character disqualified the work as nationalist in the traditional cultural sense. Malherbe, however, used another route to establish the opera's Czechness by characterizing Smetana himself as nationalist in an explicitly political way. According to Malherbe, Smetana was the

> campaigner for independence, the composer of a conspiracy, the prophetic musician of Czech deliverance, [and] the precursor to the sacred political spark. …the notes of his melodies aligned themselves on the staves as though they were rows of insurgents. He brandished his scores as though they were flags.[114]

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[113] "Là nous surprenons la qualité secrète du génie tchèque dans sa mélancolie tendre et sa grâce aventureuse. Le reste est d'une inspiration facile, d'un ornement suranné. D'ailleurs, M. Julien Tiersot, dans sa fine étude sur Smetana, a ingénieusement remarqué que la chanson populaire de Bohême n'a pas une figure natale nettement circonscrite. Les styles du folklore occidental et oriental ont tour à tour pesé sur son développement. Il est impossible à Smetana d'acquérir une originalité tranchante, même quand il s'en tient aux rythmes nationaux." Henry Malherbe, "Chronique Musicale," *Le Temps*, 31 October 1928, 3.

[114] "Il a été le militant de l'indépendance, le compositeur d'une conspiration, le musicien prophétique de la délivrance tchèque, le précurseur à l'étincelle politique sacrée. …les notes de ses mélodies s'alignaient sur les portées comme des rangées d'insurgés. Il brandissait ses partitions comme des drapeaux." Malherbe, "Chronique," 3.

The use of such blatantly militarist language brought Smetana and *The Bartered Bride* into the nationalist fold, but in a very different way than Chantavoine's celebration of the opera's folk character. It aligned Smetana, accurately or not, with the successful struggle for Czech freedom in 1918 that occasioned the gala celebrations of independence ten years later. Moreover, it resonated with Czech strategies of tying Smetana to the Hussite past and their victories against foreign challengers; even if the French were unaware of this historical narrative, their own take on Smetana as revolutionary nevertheless reached a similar conclusion as that of Czech hagiography.

This discursive strategy was carried to an extreme by Camille Mauclair in his homage to Smetana, published the day of the premiere:

> Bohemia's tearing from the claws of the two-headed eagle [Austria] has become the prosperity of Czechoslovakia. The political wisdom and energy of a Masaryk and of a Benès [*sic*], the sword of a Milan Stefanik [*sic*], the Hoche of his country, the sacrifice of thousands of legionnaires on the fronts of Champagne and Galicia, have all freed this chivalrous nation which has always loved us so faithfully and which has always celebrated our artists in its capital of a hundred spires. It is [Bohemia] that today invites us to know and honor [Smetana], the great unfortunate laborer of Bohemia's musical Renaissance.[115]

This rather grandiose passage implicitly placed Smetana on the same level as the liberators of Czechoslovakia: president Masaryk, foreign minister and chief diplomat Edvard Beneš, general and minister of war Milan Štefánik, and the literal foot soldiers of the Czech lands who gave their lives in World War I. Mauclair also references the trope of Smetana as a tragic hero, unappreciated in his own time, which was the narrative favored and propagated by Nejedlý and

[115] "La Bohême s'arrachant aux serres de l'aigle bicéphale est devenue la prospère Tchécoslovaquie. Le sagesse politique et l'énergie d'un Masaryk et d'un Benès l'épopée d'un Milan Stefanik, le Hoche de sa patrie, le sacrifice de milliers de légionnaires aux fronts de Champagne et de Galicie, ont fait libre cette nation chevaleresque qui nous a toujours si fidèlement aimés, et nos artistes ont toujours été fêtés dans sa capitale aux cent tours. C'est elle qui nous invite aujourd'hui à mieux connaître, à honorer le grand ouvrier infortuné de sa renaissance musicale." Camille Mauclair, "L'hommage à Frédéric Smetana," *Le Figaro*, 26 October 1928, 1.

his circle. The dramatic undertones of this view of Smetana add further import to the occasion of the anniversary gala. While Smetana would not live to see the independence of his homeland, the passage intimates, he was, through his music, nonetheless still very much a part of the struggle commemorated by the premiere. This assertion was not without some merit—as we saw above, in Nejedlý's commemorative almanac for 1927 jubilee, performers asserted the significance of the impromptu performance of *The Bartered Bride* on 29 October 1918, the day after the declaration of Czechoslovak independence.

Despite the presence of such nationalist and exoticist discourses, however, French critics simultaneously described the opera in classicizing terms, akin in some ways to Czech responses. The reviewer from *Le Courrier musical* was ambivalent about the nationalism of the opera, and while positing that it had nothing in common with the skyscraper modernity of the 1920s, he cast its musical characteristics as "derived from the traditional form of the old comic opera of Mozart, Dalayrac and Boieldieu."[116] This classicizing language was typical of several French reviewers and resonated in harmony with the opinions of both Sísová and Martinů. Daniel Muller, one of the translators of the libretto, wrote an article for *La Revue musicale*, published in advance of the premiere, that described the overture's music as evoking a "lightheartedness [that is] a little rustic, a little savage, a little wild even for our Latin taste, but sincere and communicative."[117] For Muller, the overture contained the seeds of the whole opera, and while at first he seemed to espouse a fairly typical essentialist/nationalist reading, he concluded his text by calling Smetana

[116] "…dérivent de la forme traditionnelle du vieil opéra-comique de Mozart, de Dalayrac, de Boieldieu. La vivacité de la déclamation procède du tour rossinien." Ch. Tenroc, "Les Théâtres," *Le Courrier musical*, 15 November 1928, 641.

[117] "…une allégresse un peu rustique, un peu rude, un peu sauvage même pour notre goût latin, mais sincère et communicative." Daniel Muller, "*La Fiancée vendue* et l'art de Smetana," *La Revue musicale* 9, no. 11 (1 October 1928): 495.

"a musician of the soul, in the same manner as a Mozart, a Beethoven, or a Wagner."[118] Muller thereby followed the thread among writers who wrote that Smetana had managed to combine both the national—"rustic" and "savage" lightheartedness—and the universal, though of course the definition of "universal" in this context was entirely German. This was probably in part due to his reliance on the untexted, "absolute" overture, but at the same time it adds another layer to the cosmopolitan compositional milieu to which Smetana, in the reception of the gala event, had ascended.

The *Bride* and the State

As is evident from the myriad of articles and responses above, French and Czech treatment of Smetana and *The Bartered Bride* at this premiere took on a rather complicated character. From one angle, the composer and his music were othered in a fairly typical manner by the French, if more rarely by the Czechs, allowing them to be used as nationalist stand-ins for Czech culture as a whole, which itself both confirmed canonic characterizations of Smetana and aided diplomatic comprehensibility. From another angle, the opera was treated as a revered classic by both Czech and French writers, which granted legitimacy and artistic authority to the gala performance; the veneration accorded the opera, however, only exacerbated Czech resentments over the delay of the premiere. The latter approach also had its own diplomatic benefit. The credibility conferred by the constant comparisons to composers like Mozart, Rossini, and Beethoven further solidified the canonic importance of Smetana—now possessing unimpeachable credentials both in terms of nationalist fervor and of compositional genius. With such bona fides, Smetana and *The Bartered Bride* could serve as effective emissaries for the Czech lands when called upon.

[118] "…un musicien d'âme, au même titre qu'un Mozart, qu'un Beethoven ou qu'un Wagner." Muller, "*La Fiancée vendue*," 494.

Yet writers from France and Czechoslovakia differed in significant ways in how they characterized the opera's importance. French reviewers seemed to be split as to whether they considered *The Bartered Bride* folkloric enough to do the work of cultural nationalism by standing in for Czech music as a whole. Failure to accept Smetana's high operatic art as accurate folk culture meant that conferring canonic privilege via markers of musical nationalism would not work. Explicitly political nationalism, however, wherein Smetana was treated as a quasi-insurrectionist hero, still allowed for the opera to be elevated to the pantheon of operatic masterpieces on those terms—revolutionary fatigues instead of national costume, as it were. Even when French reviewers "classicized" *The Bartered Bride* in other reviews, placing it on the same level as works by Mozart and Dalayrac, they nevertheless engaged exoticizing language. These critics thus ensured a canonical place for the opera in the minds of the French public, on the condition that it be viewed through a nationalist lens. In tying Smetana to revolution, the creation of Czechoslovakia, and the dissolution of Austria-Hungary, French appreciations of the composer and *The Bartered Bride* were in one sense diametrically opposed to earlier the Viennese reception, which elevated Smetana in order to co-opt his cultural cachet for the glory and maintenance of empire. Nevertheless, for all their praise, critics from both countries positioned Smetana as tacitly inferior to their own national examples, a signal of historicist thinking—for Austria, inferiority had been a justification for imperial control, and in France, the same "underdeveloped" quality justified the somewhat patronizing attitude toward its ally in post-Locarno Europe.

For their part, Czech reviewers such as Hippman, Sísová, and Martinů reiterated the familiar claim to a specifically Czech provenance for *The Bartered Bride,* but they were much more occupied with casting it as a universal work through appeals to the inherent quality of the

score. It was first and foremost the score that allowed the French to create such a discriminating performance of the work, which would thereby validate the opera's universal and canonical status. The "classicizing" that the Czechs engaged in deemphasized nationalist tropes to place the opera in an international canon of master works. While the nationalist imaginings of the village mode certainly held sway in the Czech context, local critics did not necessarily see this as the overriding interpretive lens for *The Bartered Bride*—while it could easily be instrumentalized for the purposes of nationalist agitation, this was not their only way of engaging with the work. *The Bartered Bride* emerged, as did so many musical works, as a convenient means of reinforcing multiple national (self-)identifications. The same piece and the same performance of a "classic" work could be turned to the confirmation of vastly different but not necessarily oppositional ideologies, much in the same way that elevation of Smetana himself could both serve Czech nationalist aims and help satisfy the requirements for French cosmopolitan acceptance.

Despite occasional underlying differences, however, both the French and the Czechs were united in their overall veneration of Smetana. *The Bartered Bride* seems to have enjoyed a kind of diplomatic immunity: not a single article, letter, or note suggested that some other opera would have been better suited to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the founding of the First Czechoslovak Republic in Paris. In this regard in particular the gala event, broadcast throughout Europe, was perhaps the zenith of the opera's importance to the cause of Czechoslovak cultural diplomacy, as well as nigh-indisputable confirmation of Smetana's legacy as the epitome of Czech music.

At the same time, the Paris premiere of *The Bartered Bride* was an important moment for showing Europe that Czechoslovakia, despite its youth and small size, was enjoying an especially warm relationship with France, one of the great powers of Europe. Moreover, through

the gala, France was affirming Czechoslovakia's claims to having a deep and sophisticated musical culture, especially for a nation-state only ten years old. To return to Ambassador Osuský's words, Paris was immensely important for propaganda and the advancement of national interests. The embassy was decidedly pleased with the results of the premiere. It had engaged in a concerted, multi-pronged effort to promote Smetana and *The Bartered Bride* as the authorized and "authentic" representatives of Czechoslovakia and to sell its importance to French audiences, and by its own account succeeded spectacularly.

In its summary of official activities during the second half of 1928, the embassy sent to Prague not only twenty-one pages detailing the press coverage of the gala performance, but also stated that the opera's "introduction to Paris was unequivocally the most appropriate celebration possible of the tenth anniversary of the republic."[119] In addition to the success of the celebrations themselves, the report highlighted the renewal of old relationships and the many new ones established between embassy figures and individuals (mostly journalists) in Paris as a result of the premiere. A cable by the Czech chargé d'affaires Vincent Ibl, sent to Prague in January of 1929, made an even stronger claim, above all emphasising the great benefit that the performance and its radio broadcast had particularly on *mutual* relations between France and Czechoslovakia:

> The introduction of *The Bartered Bride* onto the Parisian stage of the Opéra Comique in October 1928 signified a sizeable event in Czech-French cultural relations. It was a great achievement of publicity from a Czechoslovak point of view, which to a large extent likewise benefitted French affairs in Czechoslovakia. The simultaneous radio transmissions of *The Bartered Bride* from Paris to Czechoslovakia, all of Central Europe, and throughout the entirety of France on 26 October and 16 December 1928 very effectively strengthened mutual relations between France and Czechoslovakia, not to mention that the performance of Smetana's opera in Paris had, by itself, already

[119] "…uvedení do Paříže bylo nejvhodnější oslavou desátého výročí republiky." See "Přehled úřední činnosti v II. pololetí 1928," 1, I. Section 1918–39, box 82, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Prague.

> strengthened the sympathies of the widest strata of Czechoslovak society toward France.[120]

Not only was *The Bartered Bride* a powerful tool of cultural diplomacy, but it was also cast as a counterweight to balance the otherwise asymmetrical relationship between the two nations. From the Czech embassy's point of view, the Opéra Comique production was responsible for a significant strengthening of French-Czech ties. Moreover, because of the opera's broadcast across Europe, the Parisian *Bartered Bride* would have been disseminated to the widest possible audience as a symbol of alliance. As a tool of cultural diplomacy, the opera seems to have scored a great success in the arena of public opinion.

But did the symbolic power of this message of artistic alliance lead to any concrete results beyond a plethora of newspaper articles? For Ibl, the voluminous press coverage was itself an unexpected and very welcome benefit of the gala; commenting on the unusually large response, he stated later in his report that "it turns out that Czechoslovakia has an array of the most devoted friends in the French press."[121] Aside from the advantages for Czechoslovak representation in France, the Paris premiere of *The Bartered Bride* paid cultural dividends as well. In a concrete example of cultural reciprocity, the Paris cast was invited to perform in Prague. They presented the opera in French at the National Theater in May and June of 1929, less than a year after the Paris gala.

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[120] "Uvedení 'Prodané nevěsty' na scénu pařížské Komické Opery v říjnu 1928 znamenalo velkou událost v kulturních stycích česko-francouzských. Byl to veliký čin propagační s hlediska československého, který ve vysoké míře prospěl zároveň francouzské věci u nás. Simultánní vysílaní 'Prodané nevěsty' radiem z Paříže do Československa, celé Střední Evropy a po celé Francii 26. října a 16. prosince 1928 posílilo velmi účinně vzájemné vztahy mezi Francií a Československem nehledě k tomu, že již samo provedení Smetanovy opery v Paříži posílilo sympatie nejširších československých vrstev k Francii." Čeněk Vincent Ibl, "Kulturní přehled," "Periodická politka zpráva za říjen, listopad, prosinec 1928," 51, Politické zprávy: Francie – Paříž, 1928, vol. 2, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Prague.

[121] "Ukázalo se, že Československo má ve francouzském tisku řadu nejoddanějších přátel." Ibl, "Kulturní přehled," 51.

The reviews for that event again centered around the strengthening of Czechoslovak-French relations. Nejedlý, however, complained in characteristically polemical fashion that the French were the most musically limited of all nations, that Paris had not added and could not add anything to *The Bartered Bride*, and went so far as to term the French performance in Prague "a black day at the National Theater."[122] If disagreements about who truly had access to Smetana's legacy were alive and well, his canonic status was, at least for the Czechs, only strengthened by this French-Czechoslovak artistic alliance. While *The Bartered Bride* enjoyed some success at the Opéra Comique after its sensational premiere—it was played seventeen times before the end of 1928—it disappeared from the repertoire after 1932.[123]

Nationalist cultural practices and discourses, encapsulated by the Czech and French press's accounts of Smetana and *The Bartered Bride* before and after the gala and exploited by the embassy, had a decisive effect on the transnational diplomatic circulation of the composer and his opera. Ultimately, they could not help but be reduced to an essentialized symbol of an ill-defined yet broadly legible Czech identity. This leads to a broader question: what was the status of the music of Czech composers in the transnational context of musical Europe? If the commodified, essentialist Paris version of *The Bartered Bride* was a prime way European listeners came to know of Czech music, other works and composers would be hard-pressed to escape similar characterizations because of Smetana's centrality and fame. Czechoslovakia's most famous opera, certainly, was confined by the nationalist ideologies that had given rise to the Czechoslovak state. This made it an integral part of the exercise of state diplomatic power in the interwar community of European nations.

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[122] See Zdeněk Nejedlý, *Pařížská Prodaná nevěsta čili černý den v Národním divadle* (Prague: Tiskem Jar. Hoffmana v Praze, 1929).

[123] Pražák, *Prodaná nevěsta*, 306–307.

There is a rather portentous coincidence at the heart of the Paris premiere of *The Bartered Bride*: this operatic Locarno fell almost exactly between two events of historic importance. One was the signing of the Versailles treaty in 1918, which gave rise to the First Czechoslovak Republic and, eventually, the League of Nations. The other was the Munich Agreement of 1938, whereby the Czechoslovak Sudetenland was, in an ironic twist, ceded to Hitler by the signatories of the Locarno treaties, excepting Belgium—Germany, Italy, France, and Great Britain. Czechoslovakia, abandoned by its allies, was powerless to stop this seizure of territory and the country's eventual absorption into the Third Reich as the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. The Paris *Bartered Bride*, coming at the center of these opposing poles, was a bright symbol of the post-World War I faith in international cooperation and diplomacy that resulted in the Paris Peace Conference, the League of Nations and the "spirit of Locarno." But much like the Locarno treaties themselves, this premiere and the French-Czechoslovak alliance it supposedly strengthened ultimately did little to aid Czechoslovakia as it attempted to survive in the growing darkness of Europe.

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For the historical moment of 1924–1928, however, the stars of Czechoslovakia, Smetana, and *The Bartered Bride* shone brightly. The events of these years showed just how deeply this opera and its composer were enmeshed in the cultural ideological apparatus of the Czechoslovak state; this went hand in hand with the functioning of the village mode. Critics, audiences, and musicians alike reinscribed the idea that a mythic village in the countryside, immortalized in *The Bartered Bride*, was not only representative of positive character traits and Czech essence, but that the qualities its inhabitants purportedly displayed were worthy of emulation. Through the village mode, Jeník's cunning was the cunning of all Czechoslovak men; Mařenka's

steadfastness was the steadfastness of all Czechoslovak women; and the peaceful resolution of conflict and strong internal bonds characteristic of the village were likewise inherent to the Czechoslovak state. Smetana's sacralization was the necessary corollary of this; only a true genius and hero born of the people could capture their innermost qualities through his music. His reimagining as a revolutionary hero, conducted both in Prague and Paris, further legitimated his prestige, that of his opera, and that of the state which celebrated it. Just as the model of the village was projected within, towards a domestic population that was hardly as homogenous and conflict-free as the festive villagers of *The Bartered Bride*, so too was it projected outward to the rest of Europe, as a symbol of cultural maturity, musical excellence, and national character.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that rurality and myths of village life were central to Czech opera in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and that these myths—staged, sung, and popularized—functioned ideologically to structure Czech culture. The village was figured as a repository of Czech essence; it was understood to have saved the nation itself; and its moral values were the ideal to which Czechs should aspire, both under Habsburg rule and in their independent state. Cultural interlocutors like František Adolf Šubert and Zdeněk Nejedlý autoessentialized the Czech people and their artistic culture for various ends. Šubert looked outward, toward a Europe that seemed eager to partake of Czech opera so long as it validated previously held stereotypes in an artistically elevated way. Nejedlý looked inward, toward a compositional lineage that he saw as under threat from outsiders and fellow travelers, both before and after independence. For him, the surest path toward cultural independence and integrity lay in Smetana, the Czech village, and its moral values. That they both relied on the myth of the rural village, especially as embodied by *The Bartered Bride*, speaks to its centrality within Czech culture and its malleability as a symbol of Czech essence.

In Chapter 1, I argued that the historical circumstances of the Czech lands, combined with the activities of the intellectuals of the National Awakening, presented the village as a key source in the creation of a nascent Czech identity. Set to music and staged in operas like *The Bartered Bride* and *The Kiss*, rural life became a cultural touchstone that generations of critics referred to as a key marker of national particularity. The social relationships inherent to the idealized village life of Smetana's operas and related works like Vilém Blodek's *In the Well* and

Antonín Dvořák's *The Cunning Peasant* were, through their constant reinscription as central to the Czech nationalist project, subsumed into these discourses. For example, I have shown, particularly in Chapter 4, how one might excavate intertwined ideas about gender from larger arguments about the national suitability of village tales.

Chapter 2 explicated the nexus of issues at the intersection of the village mode and the Habsburg Empire. The historiography of Czech music has largely erased or heavily downplayed the role of imperial forces in the creation and reception of Czech opera, but by focusing on Šubert and his recognition of the need to work within the structures of the Habsburg Empire, I hope to have opened up a rich field for further exploration. Most centrally, I argue that empire was a constitutive frame, without which the centrality of *The Bartered Bride* in discussions of Czech opera and identity up through the end of the First Republic would not have been possible. In moving toward reassessing the mutually constitutive relationship between imperial authorities and provincial groups, rather than treating individual national groups as isolated entities, my work in this chapter draws from new approaches to understanding the history of Austria-Hungary. It was only through its triumph at the 1892 International Exhibition of Music and Theater in imperial Vienna that *The Bartered Bride* reached new audiences in appreciable numbers; indeed, before Vienna, it had only been performed in two cities outside the Czech lands: St. Petersburg (1871) and Zagreb (1873), both cities with large Slavic populations. After Vienna, the opera quickly spread, accumulating performances in Berlin (1893), Bern (1894), London (1895), Milan (1905), New York (1909), Barcelona (1924), and—finally—Paris (1928), not to mention a multitude of smaller theaters throughout Europe.

I also demonstrate how transnational appreciations of opera were facilitated by relying on reductive strategies that typified a people through a single composer or a single opera. This is

true of both Chapter 2 and Chapter 5, when actors within the Czech ideological apparatus (before and after there was an actual state to accompany the ideology) relied on *The Bartered Bride* to build a sympathetic image of the Czechs in the minds of foreigners. This was intimately tied to constructions of the essential ethnic character of the Czech people, another arena in which historiographical constructions of nationalism as the singlar interpretive frame for Czech music obscures the complexities afforded by investigation of the village mode and its social components. The Czechs' relatively high status in the hierarchy of both Habsburg ethnic groups and European racial identity afforded them a unique position: they could and did argue that they were oppressed by the Habsburgs, relying on the village mode as a subaltern strategy of differentiation. The success of their autoessentialist strategies can be felt to the present day, when the dominant mode of interpreting the instrumental music of Antonín Dvořák, for example, lies in connecting him to folk music. At the same time, through the very same operas, Czech intellectuals claimed parity with other European groups in the realm of cultural advancement. Such operatic assertions to cultural and political maturity were often paired with rhetorical moves towards whiteness, away from racial otherness positioned to the South and East.[1]

Chapter 3 presented a focused case study in how the autoessentializing impulse awakened by Vienna led to changes in the Prague National Theater's repertoire. This is most clearly visible in V. J. Novotný's revisions to Smetana's *The Two Widows*, which were geared so as to emphasize the village and rural life in an opera that featured very little of such material in its original incarnation. The decision to stage a cycle of all of Smetana's operas was also largely motivated by the National Theater's and Smetana's success in Vienna. The reception history of

[1] I plan to explore this in further work expanding on the autoessentialist strategies of figures like František Adolf Šubert, especially in how these resonated with contemporaneous "ethnographic" efforts such as the 1892 Prague exhibition of African artifacts by Emil Holub.

The Two Widows also shows some of the rhetorical strategies that facilitated Smetana's canonization as the patriarch of Czech music. The shift in how theater administrators and critics regarded Czech opera resonated with the administrative and artistic shifts at the National Theater; both were a symptom of the changing political and cultural climate in Prague and Europe as a whole at the end of the nineteenth century.

This *fin-de-siècle* foment provides the backdrop to Chapter 4, which presented two very different case studies: Dvořák's *The Devil and Kate*, almost a summation of the impacts and rhetorical devices of the village mode in the nineteenth century, and Leoš Janáček's *Jenůfa*, a very different tale that, while still centering rural life as a key marker of Czech particularity, revealed what had become an unremarkable, naturalized discourse of operatic value in the context of Prague. Dvořák's operas prior to *The Devil and Kate* had never enjoyed the same kind of immediate and enduring success that his village fairy tale did. I contend that this was in large part due to the network of intellectuals and politicians who participated in the creation of the opera. Like Emanuel Chvála and Novotný, they were all figures steeped in the musical life of Prague, many of whom had been active participants in it since before Smetana's position as an important cultural figure was even secure. Their emphasis on the village mode, which by the late 1890s was enjoying widespread popular appeal, was part of what made *The Devil and Kate* such a success.

Had the old guard led by F. A. Šubert stayed in power, the fate of *Jenůfa* in Prague might have been different. Perhaps not—and perhaps this is to give Karel Kovařovic's personal animosity too much credit. More importantly, the centrality of the village, its idealized character, and its social norms in operatic circles had been reinscribed constantly and pervasively over the forty years between the premiere of *The Bartered Bride* and that of *Jenůfa*. Like a square peg in

a round hole, the Moravian difference actively promoted by critics as inherent to the opera, even if later downplayed by Janáček, created problems for those steeped in the village-mode discourses of Prague—and who were already prepared to understand Moravia as a kind of internal exotic in the wake of the 1895 Ethnographic Exhibition. It was precisely this discursive disconnect that reveals the contours of the village mode in Prague, especially in terms of gender and as crystallized in the criticism of Zdeněk Nejedlý.

Nejedlý's ideas were also central in the critical environment of the First Republic, even if his personal involvement in music criticism lessened. Chapter 5 continues to trace the influence of Nejedlý as well as the appropriation of the village mode and *The Bartered Bride*, focusing on the newly constituted Czechoslovak state. Governmental entities latched onto the importance and popularity of the village mode adumbrated by *The Bartered Bride*, inscribing that complex of myth and ideology into the cultural and political life of the new country. By memorializing both Smetana and *The Bartered Bride* in publications, performances, and events, interlocutors like Nejedlý, Otakar Šourek, and Boleslav Vomáčka carried on the work of earlier generations in further propagating the village mode. The autoessentialism key to *The Bartered Bride*'s success in Vienna was once again called into play when the opera served as a diplomatic tool, building Czechoslovak-French amity through its gala French premiere in honor of the ten-year anniversary of the First Republic. It was a performance that had been in the making since at least 1868, when Smetana himself began revising the opera to include more ballets—something that the French were still excited to see sixty years later. This trajectory is representative in many ways of one of the issues at the heart of this dissertation: Czech identity was encapsulated by a reliance on rurality, ethnically essentialized, and operatically staged, but this reductive, inward-

looking strategy was made to serve a desire for outward recognition, cosmopolitan acceptance, and European integration.[2]

In arguing for the centrality of Smetana's operas and the idealized rural lives they depicted, intellectuals and critics could not help but be a part of broader European cultural discourse. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, one aspect of this discourse concerned the question of essential national character and the need for a nation's boundaries to be coextensive with the geographic distribution of its dominant ethnic or racial group. Militant nationalism would spell the doom of the First Czechoslovak Republic, as Nazi Germany demanded the ceding of the Sudentendland and its German population to the greater German Reich; Hitler would go on to occupy the entirety of the Czech lands and transform them into the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, while Slovakia became a fascist client state. The village mode and its emphasis on rurality as a key part of identity construction, however, continued to be important despite the change in ruling governments.

The fate of *The Devil and Kate* in Nazi-occupied Prague provides a case in point. Nazi censors reviewed the librettos of all operas performed at the National Theater beginning in 1939. A copy of the opera's libretto held in the music archive of the National Theater indicates that censors went over it as well, and that they approved it for performances to school-age children in 1943.[3] In the process of censoring the work, however, Nazi officials made a significant change to the ending of the opera: all references to Jirka becoming prime minister were eliminated. No longer would Jirka represent the Czech everyman, emblem of the hopes of the village, justly

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[2] As I mentioned in the Introduction, the village mode was not the only means of structuring understandings of Czech identity; narratives of ancient and medieval Czech history were also important throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

[3] An official page from the office of the Regional Governor is pasted into the printed libretto; it ends with the words "Dieses Theaterstück ist der schulpflichtigen Jugend zugänglich." See Antonín Dvořák, *Čert a Káča*, printed libretto, sig. 15 L3, Music Archive of the National Theater, Prague.

elevated to help fairly rule the land. Instead, the duchess promoted him merely to manager (*správce*) of her estate, much as the Czechs were nominally managing their lands in the name of the Third Reich, and the chorus of peasants sang praises only to the duchess in closing the opera.[4]

The village mode could, in effect, be manipulated in local constructions of national identity, when creators and their audiences instrumentalized it to represent Czechness in the face of the Hapsburg Empire. Yet, like all myths and ideologies, it could also serve in oppressive reconfigurations to suit different governments. Indeed, in the aftermath of World War II, the focus on the purity of Czech essence, celebrated and aestheticized in the operatic village mode, resonated once again with the pervasive European desire for one ethnic group to occupy one land—the Czechoslovak government expelled some three million Germans from its territory by the end of 1947, leading to widespread abuses and hundreds of thousands of deaths.[5] With the communist takeover of Czechoslovakia in February 1948, the village mode entered a new phase of its influence, one that resonated stongly with the collectivist tenets of state socialism. Zdeněk Nejedlý, the "last Awakener," would be there to shepherd it on as he served as the Minister of Culture and Education from 1948 to 1953.

The village, as a nexus of different discourses and myths, occupies a space between the pastoral and the urban. It is not fully invested with the status of a pre-lapsarian paradise, though it shares a sense a timelessness with the pastoral. Moreover, it is precisely through this

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[4] For more on the dynamics of the Nazi occupation of Prague, see Chad Bryant, *Prague in Black: Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2007); for a discussion of the occupation and its effect on musical life, especially as encapsulated by the 1941 celebrations for the 100-year jubilee celebrating the birth of Dvořák, see Kateřina Nová, "The Dvořák Jubilee of 1941," *Musicalia* 6, nos. 1–2 (2014): 39–52.

[5] For an accounting of this event, see Eagle Glassheim, "The Mechanics of Ethnic Cleansing: The Expulsion of the Germans from Czechoslovakia, 1945–1947," in *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944-1948*, eds. Philipp Ther and Ana Siljak (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 197–220.

timelessness, and related ideas of purity and preservation, that its community structure evades a collapse into the urban. Its character as a liminal community with careful regulated social norms is also what affords it its exemplary, didactic status, which over time becomes ideologically inscribed through the practices of writers, composers, and intellectuals. This image of the village—a rural community, figured as innately positive, that preserves traditional norms—is one that I believe can be expanded to contexts besides that of opera in the Czech lands in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Consider the myth of the Wild West in the late-nineteenth-century United States, which foregrounds an individualist spirit, strictly defined gender roles and racial characteristics, and an emphasis of man's mastery over nature. This myth, though it lacks the emphasis on community characteristic of the Czech village mode, nevertheless places the rural and its inhabitants at the center of a narrative of American identity—one reinscribed in countless works of literature and musical works like Aaron Copland's *Billy the Kid* (1938) or Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* (1943). In the twenty-first century, rural communities, particularly those in the industrial and agricultural heartlands of the United States, have become mythologized as repositories of traditional values, again revolving around issues of gender expression and, most contentiously, race. Such a move also relies, if tacitly, on the concept of historicist time and developmental disparities: the American South's relative dependence on agricultural ways of life and the American West's veneer of pioneer newness were defined in opposition to a more developed, urban environment on the Eastern seaboard that boasted the majority of the country's political and intellectual elite. This disparity, however mythologized, is evident up to the present day, and it allows for a claim of more direct access to earlier, more pure ways of American life that can be found in the regional cultures of the South and West.

The myth of the rural village and an unspoiled countryside is also still very much an aspect of current political discourse in Czechia, though relatively tacit and far less intertwined with artistic discourse than in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Witness the reelection of Miloš Zeman in early 2018; Zeman's campaign platform was reliant upon stoking fears of immigrants and featured an emphasis on anti-Muslim religious xenophobia. These issues animated voters who feared changes to the religious and racial/ethnic makeup of their communities, and the strategy played particularly well in rural communities. This was intertwined with appeals to populist rhetoric, which similarly relied on myths of the rural village as the home of simple yet clever and self-sufficient people. One anonymous supporter of Zeman addressed those voting for his opponent, Jiří Drahoš, in the following way: "You young people, Prague, are always undervaluing the countryside, where people work with their hands. What will these clever ones make?"[6] From fears of Islam to concerns about European integration, the countryside continues to be an important reference point, and it is one that resonates not just in Bohemia, but in various contexts—all with their own particularities and histories—in Europe and the United States.

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From the outset, I wanted this dissertation to be about the myriad ways in which composers, critics, and intellectuals deployed ideas about Czech rural life and their relationship to identity. I should also be careful to note that these figures, and composers in particular, were not necessarily writing with the express intention of consciously advancing a particular ideology or

[6] "Vy mladí, Praha, pořád podceňujete ten venkov, kde lidé pracují rukama. Co ty chytrý budou dělat?" Mp., "Tady Zeman dostal 94 procent. Lidé vzkazují: Pořád podceňujete ten venkov, kde lidé pracují rukama. Co ty chytrý budou dělat? Co budou za těma počítačema přehazovat za peníze?," ParlamentníListy.cz, https://www.parlamentnilisty.cz/arena/monitor/Tady-Zeman-dostal-94-procent-Lide-vzkazuji-Porad-podcenujete-ten-venkov-kde-lide-pracuji-rukama-Co-ty-chytry-budou-delat-Co-budou-za-tema-pocitacema-prehazovat-za-penize-522354, accessed 6 April 2018.

worldview. Sometimes they did so, as in the case of Zdeněk Nejedlý, but I highly doubt Leoš Janáček, when he composed *Jenůfa*, deliberately set out to challenge the received notions of Prague music critics concerning how the operatic village should be portrayed. Following from this, my dissertation is about the cultural field from which village operas emerged, and I have tried to tease out how this field was consciously and unconsciously shaped by various actors, all with different goals and positions.

In another sense, however, this dissertation ended up becoming a series of case studies in how opera's public importance was "written" through the power of the village as an explanatory and ideologically functional myth. The many moments in which critics positioned opera relative to contemporary cultural concerns, or in which opera was mobilized in the service of state goals—1892, 1893, 1916, 1927, 1928, to name a few—show just how important the genre was in the larger cultural discourse of the Czech lands, and by extension, in Europe as a whole. In some ways, this dissertation is about Bedřich Smetana's opera *The Bartered Bride*, and how its reception changed, influenced, and was changed by Czech operatic culture over the course of some sixty years.

All of these issues were influenced by their broader historical context, which is something else this dissertation is "about": empire. The role of the Austro-Hungarian empire in the Czech deployment of the village mode is particularly apparent in Chapters 2 and 3, and it is something that I did not anticipate when I first set out to write the dissertation. However, I think my focus on how discourses of empire shaped Czech music's history and historiography has the potential to be an important contribution to the literature. The emphasis on empire as a framework within which to understand Czech opera also ties into my use of transnational thinking to help understand the history of the village mode and *The Bartered Bride*, which, by

demonstrating how different national contexts produced different receptions of the opera, demonstrates a key way in which music theater reproduced the intertwined hierarchies of musical value, ethnicity, and race that governed European thought.

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