

# STARTING POINTS OF ‘POPULAR MUSIC STUDIES’ IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA<sup>1</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

The story of the emergence and institutionalization of Popular Music Studies is often set in the 1980s. It is associated mainly with the activities of researchers of the so-called Western Bloc, especially its Anglophone part, led by Great Britain. These included the Britons, Philip Tagg (1944) and Simon Frith (1946), and an American, Charles Hamm (1925–2011) who, together with other colleagues, initiated the establishment of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM) in 1981. By 1987, the Association had six hundred members from over thirty countries „from Bulgaria to the Philippines”<sup>2</sup>, and its organizational activities included among its operations four international conferences held in the Netherlands (1981), Italy (1983), Canada (1985), and Ghana (1987)<sup>3</sup>.

In the second half of the 1980s, the state of Popular Music Studies from the perspective of the Anglophone countries was summarized by the British and later Canadian musicologist John Shepherd, who said that the field still

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<sup>2</sup> J. Pareles, *Examining Pop Music in the Greater Sociological Context*, „The New York Times” 2.10.1988.

<sup>3</sup> See: <https://www.iaspm.net/welcome/> [accessed 21.01.2020].

had „a huge distance to go in terms of becoming legitimized”<sup>4</sup>, whereas its subject of interest at that time was „monumentally under-researched”<sup>5</sup>. The actual differences within the field of popular music research across the Anglophone Western countries after 1980 were remembered by American musicologists Vincent Duckles and Gary Tomlinson: „[...] this area remains somewhat underdeveloped in the USA in comparison with the UK and Canada, where it was nurtured by sophisticated traditions of Marxism and grew along with the cultural-studies orientation they spawned”<sup>6</sup>.

It was true that the specific tradition of Marxist scholarship contributed to the early establishment and institutionalization of the field of ‘Popular Music Studies’<sup>7</sup> in the Eastern Bloc countries, too. However, the systematic exploration of popular music in communist Europe remains largely unknown to this day and is almost absent within the global picture of the history of theoretical reflection on music<sup>8</sup>. The aim of this article is to present at least the basic circumstances of the formation of Popular Music Studies in Czechoslovakia, which in a way preceded the aforementioned activities of Western researchers by approximately twenty years<sup>9</sup>. In this sense, the ar-

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<sup>4</sup> J. Pareles, op. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>6</sup> V. Duckles [et al.], *Musicology*, „Grove Music Online”, 2014, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> [accessed 21.01.2020].

<sup>7</sup> Although the English term as such is associated mainly with Western scholarship, it will be used in this study for the purpose of easier understanding. Czech musicologists called the research into popular music ‘Theory and History of Non-Artificial Music’, as will be discussed later.

<sup>8</sup> From the recent works on the topic see J. Blüml, Y. Kajanová, and R. Ritter, *Popular Music in Communist and Post-Communist Europe*, Berlin 2019 (especially the chapters by A. Ignacz, *Historical Backgrounds of Marxist Music Sociology in Socialist Hungary. The Study of Generative Musical Abilities*, pp. 23–30; Y. Kajanová, *Rock, Pop and Jazz Research Development in the Former Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and Present-Day Slovakia*, pp. 31–49; R. Ritter, *Researching Jazz in Socialist Countries*, pp. 49–76). Further, A. Ignacz, *Milliók zenéje. Populáris zene és zenetudomány a Rákosi- és Kádár-korszakban* („Music for Millions. Popular Music and Musicology during the Rákosi- and Kádár-Era”), Budapest 2020.

<sup>9</sup> The same was true also in case of Hungary, for instance, due to musicologist János Maróthy.

ticle outlines the periodization of the theoretical reflection on popular music, from its spontaneous starting points in folkloristics and music journalism in the interwar period to the official establishment of popular music research at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in the early 1960s. Simultaneously, key figures, literature, and projects shall be recalled, taking into account the contemporary context of Marxist scholarship and communist cultural policy with its aesthetics of socialist realism.

## PERIODIZATION AND THE CONCEPT OF 'ARTIFICIAL' AND 'NON-ARTIFICIAL' MUSIC

The history of theoretical reflection on popular music in the Czech environment was first summarized by musicologists Josef Kotek (1928–2009) and Ivan Poledňák (1931–2009) in the entry on 'non-artificial music' in the factual section of *Encyklopedie jazzu a moderní populární hudby* („The Encyclopaedia of Jazz and Modern Popular Music”), first published in 1980 (second edition 1983). As the name of the entry suggests, regarding the terminology, the authors followed their own original concept of the division ('typological polarization') of the music universe into two parts, namely 'artificial' and 'non-artificial' music<sup>10</sup>. While the first term covered the sphere of music in everyday speech usually referred to as serious, artistic, or classical, the second term was a definition through negation (*per negationem*) of the second, 'other' music, i.e. popular music.

By the term 'non-artificial music' the authors understood a relatively distinctive evolutionary line of European music culture, which as such began to take shape in the 19th century, and whose specificity and internal differentiation, as well as social and artistic significance, increased during the 20th century<sup>11</sup>. This music was characterized by features such as a) the type-standardized basis of creation, b) the diminished importance of the compositional uniqueness of the work and the enhancement of its performative

<sup>10</sup> The authors were inspired by German musicologist H.H. Eggebrecht and his concepts of 'Artifizielle Musik' and 'Funktionale Musik'; see: H.H. Eggebrecht, *Funktionale Musik*, „Archiv für Musikwissenschaft” 1973, No. 1, pp. 1–25.

<sup>11</sup> J. Kotek, I. Poledňák, *Nonartificiální hudba 1. vymezení*, [in:] *Encyklopedie jazzu a moderní populární hudby*, eds. A. Matzner, I. Poledňák, and I. Wasserberger, Prague 1980, p. 293.

part, c) the spontaneity of perception and consumption, d) the commodity character of the majority of the production of non-artificial music and thus its subordination to normal economic mechanisms such as the law of supply and demand<sup>12</sup>. Furthermore, according to Kotek and Poledňák, non-artificial music generally covered three sub-spheres, namely a) folk music (*hudební folklor*), b) traditional popular music derived from European music before the advent of African-American folk music, and c) modern popular music characterized by African-American folk music elements after 1900. If we refer to theoretical reflection on 'popular music' in the following text, we mean the field more or less defined by the term 'non-artificial music', perhaps with the predominance of the latter two sub-spheres.

Kotek and Poledňák divided the development of theoretical reflection on popular music in Czechoslovakia into several phases. According to the authors, the real foundations of research were laid in the period of the so-called First Czechoslovak Republic, bounded by the years 1918–1938, i.e. at the time characterized by a pro-Western political orientation and a rapidly developing market economy; at the same time, a period in which the original euphoria at the emergence of a new independent state was gradually replaced by social polarization under the impact of a global economic and political crisis. However, exploring popular music during the First Republic was merely a sequence of partial, uncoordinated actions, only some of which could be considered sufficiently mature, conceptually and methodologically – this concerned particularly the systematic research into the domestic social singing tradition of the 19th century. As Kotek and Poledňák claimed, the formation of an independent musicological discipline focused on popular music had not yet created its prerequisites, „neither from the internal need to expand the existing boundaries of musicology, nor in terms of any external social order”<sup>13</sup>.

Both motivating factors did not significantly arise until after the Communist Party came to power in 1948, when advancement was directed „to a new understanding of the relationship between artificial and non-artificial music and a new, qualitatively higher assessment

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<sup>12</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem, p. 302

of non-artificial music within the overall national culture"<sup>14</sup>. This trend was soon institutionalized – as mentioned in the introduction – by establishing a workplace focused exclusively on popular music within the new Institute of Musicology at the main domestic scientific institution, the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, in February 1962<sup>15</sup>. This moment accelerated efforts to conduct research into popular music systematically and conceptually (with a special emphasis on national music culture), which over the next three decades resulted in the realization of several large-scale projects and synthetic books, and eventually in the theoretical substantiation of the very existence of the new musicological discipline called 'Theory and History of Non-Artificial Music'. Some of the main outputs will be treated below.

Regarding the issue of the periodization of Czech popular music research, for the sake of completeness let us add that the major and defining divisions from today's perspective are represented by the years 1969 and 1989. The first was framed by the process of normalization initiated by the occupation by Warsaw Pact troops in August 1968, which was accompanied by extensive staff exchanges in the academic sphere; the second brought deep institutional transformations in the academic and non-academic spheres after the fall of communism, and eventually also a shift of social demand, from systematic research into popular music to the exploration of other phenomena – this time entirely under Western influences<sup>16</sup>. However, let us return to the very beginnings.

## DISCUSSION OF 'POPULAR MUSIC' IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD

If we analyze the discussion about popular music in the interwar period closely, we find at least three lines along which the new discipline could have been based in the 1950s and 1960s, each of which naturally had a specific cultural-political background, and hence a specific social response conditioned by the dominant political system of the time. The first line was represented

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, p. 303.

<sup>16</sup> See: J. Blüml, *Popular Music Studies in the Context of Post-Communist Historiography in the Czech Republic*, [in:] *Popular Music Studies Today*, ed. J. Merrill, Kassel 2017, pp. 35–42.

by Marxist-oriented authors interested in national folk music and the culture of the widest social strata. One of them was Bedřich Václavek (1897–1943), a literary historian, at the same time a member of the Communist Party since 1927 and the leading exponent of the domestic left-wing ‘cultural front’<sup>17</sup>, who together with Olomouc musicologist Robert Smetana (1904–1988)<sup>18</sup> crossed the boundaries of a relatively narrowly defined folkloristics towards a consideration of the previously neglected socio-cultural connections of genres such as half folk songs and *cantastoria* songs (*kramářské písně*) and the social singing of the 19th century.

An important moment, which opened the possibilities for later research into popular music, arrived with Václavek’s book *Písemnictví a lidová tradice: Obraz jejich vztahů v české písni lidové a zlidovělé* („Literature and the Folk Tradition: A Picture of Their Relationships in the Czech Folk and Folklorised Song”), published in Olomouc in 1938<sup>19</sup>. In this work, Václavek, as a Marxist aesthetician and sociologist of art with a strong interest in the world of the poor, and at the same time a propagator of proletarian art with an active relationship to life<sup>20</sup>, subjected to in-depth criticism the theory of the so-called fallen values by German literary historian and folklorist Hans Naumann, along with the schematic division of ‘lower’ and ‘higher’ structures of the nation with the related cultural connotations. In contrast, Václavek himself saw the songs of the modern nation as the authentic product of human creativity with particular social functions and a dialectical link to art music<sup>21</sup>.

Speaking of the dialectical connection to art music, we must also recall the study by Josef Stanislav (1897–1971), *O té lidové a vážné hudbě a lidových hudebnících* („On Folk and Classical Music and Folk Musicians”), published

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<sup>17</sup> M. Petrušek, *Bedřich Václavek*, [https://encyklopedie.soc.cas.cz/w/V%C3%A1clavek\\_Bed%C5%99ich](https://encyklopedie.soc.cas.cz/w/V%C3%A1clavek_Bed%C5%99ich) [accessed 21.01.2020].

<sup>18</sup> E. Vičarová, *Robert Smetana*, 2010, [http://www.ceskyhudebnislovník.cz/slovník/index.php?option=com\\_mdictionary&task=record.record\\_detail&id=783](http://www.ceskyhudebnislovník.cz/slovník/index.php?option=com_mdictionary&task=record.record_detail&id=783) [accessed 21.01.2020].

<sup>19</sup> The second edition in 1947.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, *Bedřich Václavek*, <https://www.phil.muni.cz/fil/scf/komplet/vaclvk.html> [accessed 21.02.2020].

<sup>21</sup> B. Václavek, *Písemnictví a lidová tradice*, pp. 32–62.

in „Hudební věstník” in 1939<sup>22</sup>. The text, which Kotek and Poledňák considered „the first attempt at a global, not only historical, view of non-artificial music”<sup>23</sup>, in fact responded to the polls which were published in the mainstream magazines „Tempo” and „Přítomnost” in 1936 and 1937, and which reflected the growing social impact of popular music under the influence of radio as well as recording industry; all this in the face of the crisis of European politics and the militarization of Hitler’s Germany. The first poll was entitled „Light and Serious Music” („Tempo”, 1936), the second „So What Should We Sing?” („Přítomnost”, 1936), and the third focused on „National Song and Schlager” („Tempo”, 1937). Stanislav, a concert pianist, graduate of the master compositional school of the renowned Czech composer Vítězslav Novák, and from 1931 a member of the Communist Party and a leading figure in proletarian music culture, in his study opposed the frequent opinions of ‘aristocratic’ elitists such as V.E. Babka, who believed that:

The problem of the so-called light music is neither a problem of music, nor of composers, because light music is not really music, and those composers are called such title only by mistake. If there is any connection, it is only superficial and lies in the fact that the composers of light music use accidentally also notes, therefore at the first glance, one might recklessly assume that we are still in the field of music<sup>24</sup>.

In contrast to Babka, Stanislav understood ‘light music’ as a whole complex of mental and physical manifestations, tied up and organized by music that accompanies the daily life of the masses – music that allows people to „dance and sing their personal and collective emotional affairs, and empower their hearts to beat in the same rhythm of work and combat”<sup>25</sup>. Legitimization of light music in contrast to the so-called high culture came with Stanislav’s thesis that the music of the people unites thought with emotion and reason with heart, „as it is in the power of every art”<sup>26</sup>. Stanislav

<sup>22</sup> Later published in the following proceedings: *Josef Stanislav – stati a kritiky*, ed. J. Macek, Prague 1957, pp. 33–52.

<sup>23</sup> J. Kotek, I. Poledňák, op. cit., p. 302.

<sup>24</sup> *Josef Stanislav – stati a kritiky*, op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem, p. 38.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, p. 39.

framed the whole discussion with a Marxist interpretation of ‘musical thinking’, with a comparison of realistic and abstract creative methods as well as with the confrontation between the autonomous and heteronomous concept of music history.

If we were looking for a common inspirational source for both Václavek and Stanislav, we would find it in the personality of university teacher Zdeněk Nejedlý (1878–1962), an influential music historian and radical advocate of representatives of the Czech National Revival, led by the national composer Bedřich Smetana; furthermore, an ideologist of music who saw its content and program primarily in dialectical ties with the contemporary socio-political context. It was also for these reasons that Kotek and Poledňák found the very first prerequisites for Czech research into popular music in Nejedlý’s widely conceived cultural-historical writings on Smetana after the First World War<sup>27</sup>. Let us add, however, that from the point of view of modern popular music, Nejedlý, like most of his fellow academics, was a genuine elitist. Although he did not speak directly against jazz while he was communist Minister of Education after 1948, Nejedlý asked ironically whether ‘squealing’ was also supposed to be music<sup>28</sup>.

In addition to the first line of Marxist intellectuals advocating the creativity of the broadest social strata of the nation, the controversial discussion about the new phenomenon of jazz – whether it was the authentic form of this American music or its mediated version imported through lively cultural relations with Paris, especially in the 1920s – also played an important role. In this respect, it is necessary to mention the internationally pioneering book by composer Emil František Burian (1904–1959), titled *Jazz* and published in 1928<sup>29</sup>. The author divided the text into four sections, in which, in the manner of an essayist and with undisguised enthusiasm for the new exotic form coming from the ‘modern New World’, he discussed topics such as syncopation, instrumentation, and the ‘fabrication’ of popular music in the legendary New York district of Tin Pan Alley.

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<sup>27</sup> J. Kotek, I. Poledňák, op. cit., p. 301.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted from the letter by Emanuel Uggé to Ladislav Pospíšil from 1950. Archive of the author.

<sup>29</sup> The book was published in Prague by Aventinum.

Burian's interest in jazz in a wider context in 1967 became a subject for Lubomír Dorůžka (1924–2013) and Ivan Poledňák in their synthetic monograph *Československý jazz: minulost a přítomnost* („Czechoslovak Jazz: Past and Present”). According to the authors, the reason why the composer clung to jazz, besides the actual fascination with its sound, lay in the specific situation of the contemporary left-wing avant-garde, which sought to

discover and at the same time to realize the new social function of art, thus to cope with new social, political, and civilization moments. A new, unconventional model of culture was constructed, in the context of which jazz had a firm place together with sport, film, and other new civilization phenomena<sup>30</sup>.

While Burian's essayist text was yet far from modern scientific standards (for example, it lacked the very precise distinction between authentic jazz and contemporary pop music, etc.), among the growing community of jazz supporters in the 1930s, informed journalists already anticipating academic jazz studies gradually appeared. In this respect, the key person was a discophile and propagator of traditional jazz Emanuel Uggé (1900–1970), who had regularly published in (Western) foreign magazines such as „Esquire”, „Gramophone”, „Melody Maker”, „Ebony”, and „Music-Magazine international du jazz” since 1929, and who was in personal contact with renowned foreign colleagues such as Charles Delaunay, Hugues Panassié, Rudi Blesh, John Hammond and others<sup>31</sup>.

The third line of the inter-war theoretical reflection on popular music in Czechoslovakia is connected primarily with the discussion of new media, especially the discussion of the impact and importance of radio. Here, the issues of the national music of broader social groups, as well as the theme of jazz, were closely intertwined. Radio broadcasting in Czechoslovakia was launched by Radiojournal in the spring of 1923, less than a year after the establishment of the British BBC and several months before the first German

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<sup>30</sup> L. Dorůžka and I. Poledňák, *Československý jazz: minulost a přítomnost*, Prague 1967, p. 25.

<sup>31</sup> Z. Mácha, I. Poledňák, *Emanuel Uggé*, 2009, [http://www.ceskyhudebnislovník.cz/slovník/index.php?option=com\\_mdictionary&task=record.record\\_detail&id=3088](http://www.ceskyhudebnislovník.cz/slovník/index.php?option=com_mdictionary&task=record.record_detail&id=3088) [accessed 21.01.2020].

station, Funk-Stunde AG, Berlin, was established<sup>32</sup>. During the 1920s and 1930s, the importance of the new medium grew rapidly, as evidenced by the statistics of radio concession owners. For example, on March 1, 1934, there were already 604 725 concessions in Czechoslovakia, meaning small social groups or families who had access to radio broadcasts<sup>33</sup>. Regarding the proportion of individual genres within the broadcasts, the statistics showed, for instance, that in 1937, 25 percent of musical broadcasting was devoted to art music, 35 percent to popular music (the term used to refer to the so-called higher popular music, specifically excerpts from well-known operas, ballets, chamber works, or stylized dances by national composers of art music, etc.), and 40 percent to light music (which covered a wider spectrum of genres, from operettas and revue to popular brass and dance music – with gradually growing influences from jazz and jazz-derived pop music). In the same year, the editors of „Tempo” magazine conducted research among one thousand randomly chosen listeners which showed that 84 percent of respondents liked to listen to light music, while only 10 percent listened to art music<sup>34</sup>.

The new medium through which the true nature and structure of the ‘Czech nation’ became perfectly visible for the first time with all its social characteristics, including the differentiated musical tastes and cultural needs of the various social groups, naturally attracted the attention of theorists. As early as 1935, the musicologist Anna Patzaková prepared an extensive monograph analyzing the first phase of Czechoslovak radio broadcasting in detail: *Prvních deset let Československého rozhlasu* („The First Ten Years of Czechoslovak Radio”). Afterwards came the study by musicologist and folklorist Karel Vetterl, *K sociologii hudebního rozhlasu* („To the Sociology of Music Radio”) in 1938, in which the author tried to define „a new auditorium, comprising hundreds of thousands and millions of members of various social classes and cultural groups, whose socialization

<sup>32</sup> A. Patzaková, *Prvních deset let československého rozhlasu*, Prague 1935, p. 660.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, p. 667.

<sup>34</sup> J. Machek, *Když hrají dury a molly, vypínáme aparát. Diskuze o hudebním programu Radiojournalu v druhé polovině třicátých let*, „Politics in Central Europe” 2017, No. 1S, pp. 143–158.

is realized in the imaginary space, in the air"<sup>35</sup>, which many understand to be the ground-breaking work of its kind.

Vetterl's sociological investigation, comparing the statistical data of foreign surveys of music preferences with the first domestic polls, emphasized in particular the plurality of social functions of music, because, as the author concluded at the end of his paper:

The ultimate purpose of music radio is the human being, the human being and society. As this is not always noble and serious, so the radio cannot serve only to 'heavy' culture and sublime experiences. There are times when 'one craves for cheerfulness, when he wants music to be entertained so that he can dance, listen to nice songs'<sup>36</sup>.

The issue of the plurality of functions became a central problem of popular music research in the coming decades. The key example is the very theory of the typological polarization of artificial and non-artificial music<sup>37</sup> mentioned at the beginning of this article.

## INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF POPULAR MUSIC RESEARCH IN THE POST-WAR YEARS

All three aforementioned lines also formed the framework of the discussion of popular music in Czechoslovakia in the era after the Second World War – naturally, in modified, sometimes seemingly paradoxical forms, under the influence of political and cultural changes. Of these, one must recall especially the abolishment of free economic competition due to the nationalization of the recording industry in January 1946<sup>38</sup>; and then, in particular, the takeover of power by the Communist Party in February 1948, with a marked inclination towards the Soviet policy as well as the totalitarian practice of cultural isolationism towards the West.

<sup>35</sup> K. Vetterl, *K sociologii hudebního rozhlasu*, „Musikologie” 1938, No. 1, p. 27.

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem, p. 43.

<sup>37</sup> See: J. Fukač, I. Poledňák, *K typologickým polarizacím hudby, zejména polarizaci hudby umělejší a nonumělejší*, „Hudební věda” 1977, No. 4, pp. 316–335.

<sup>38</sup> See: <https://www.supraphon.cz/historie-spolecnosti/30-znarodneni> [accessed 21.01.2020].

As previously mentioned, according to Kotek and Poledňák, the new phase of theoretical reflection on popular music in Czechoslovakia began right after ‘February 1948’. As real steps leading to the institutionalization of the field – this time the ‘actual cultural-political issue’, the authors mention the establishment of the Institute for Ethnography and Folkloristics in 1954, which followed the former activities of the Institute for Folk Song and which extended its scope towards the working-class as well as half folk songs for a certain period of time. In this respect, the authors recall the work of Robert Smetana at the restored Palacký University in Olomouc, which developed the legacy of Bedřich Václavek, who was murdered in a concentration camp during the war. However, the musicological section of the Union of Czechoslovak Composers, founded in May 1949<sup>39</sup>, played a crucial role. Today, its magazine „Hudební rozhledy” best illustrates the advancement of official theoretical opinions on music, including all its specific segments. Analysis of the actual content confirms the interest in the phenomenon of ‘song’ as one of the highest contemporary musicological priorities – a priority also in terms of the active support for the creation of a new socialist mass music culture.

It must be added though, that the turn of the 1950s in Czech musicology brought a dogmatic shift towards the aesthetics of socialist realism – aesthetics whose principles, nonetheless, were already being defended in the interwar period by personalities such as Bedřich Václavek and Josef Stanislav. In 1949, a set of speeches by Andrei Alexandrovich Zhdanov, *O umění* („On Art”), was published in a Czech translation for the first time, and in 1952 came the book by Viktor Markovich Gorodinsky, *Hudba duševní bídy* („Music of Spiritual Poverty”). In 1951, the first comprehensive elaboration of the topic of socialist realism in music was published by a domestic author, the musicologist and significant member of the Union of Czechoslovak Composers Antonín Sychra (1918–1969), who attributed the new music with seven main features: 1) it is consciously realistic, programmatic, and ideological; 2) it is based on the needs of the national collective; 3) its content is consciously socialist; 4) it struggles consciously for beauty; 5) it is

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<sup>39</sup> P. Zapletal, *Svaz československých skladatelů*, [http://www.ceskyhudebnislovník.cz/slovník/index.php?option=com\\_mdictionary&task=record.record\\_detail&id=5881](http://www.ceskyhudebnislovník.cz/slovník/index.php?option=com_mdictionary&task=record.record_detail&id=5881) [accessed 21.01.2020].

deeply national; 6) its form is consciously democratic – based on the music of the people; 7) it highly appreciates professional technical mastery<sup>40</sup>.

The scholarly interest in the phenomenon of song, consistent with Sychra's theses, brought about several expert meetings at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s. The proceedings from the national conference of the Union of Czechoslovak Composers, organized in December 1955 and symbolically entitled „Píseň: Pravda o životě” („Song: The Truth about Life”), perfectly illustrated the contemporary discourse. Besides the main speakers, the musicologists Vladimír Karbusický (1925–2002) and Zdeněk Sádecký (1925–1971)<sup>41</sup>, the meeting witnessed debates between composers, music critics, poets, representatives of educational institutions, teachers, representatives of the youth union and the army, and stores selling music literature. Although the priority of the meeting was the so-called mass song, which was more or less linked to the tradition of the revolutionary 19th century song or the singing of the workers' movement at the turn of the 20th century – therefore, an optimistic battle song which was to help „build a better world” and which was supposed to „capture the masses and orient them to a big task” – the discussion covered other genres, too. In this respect, the contemporary radio employee and pre-war swing musician Karel (‘Harry’) Macourek marginally touched on the songs inspired by jazz. Although these included allegedly negative elements, such as the predominance of rhythm over melody or decadent Americanisms in the form of fashionable glissandos, the view that jazz as such was a reprehensible thing was, according to Macourek, completely flawed and ‘non-dialectic’<sup>42</sup>. In just a few years, the first comprehensive analysis of pop music in the widest style-genre spectrum was provided in a methodologically challenging and innovative book, *O novou českou taneční hudbu: vývojové tendence taneční hudby v ČSR v letech 1945–1958* („For the New Czech Dance Music: Developmental Trends of Dance Music in Czech Socialist Republic in 1945–1958”), by a graduate in conducting at Prague conservatory, the music journalist and later media

<sup>40</sup> A. Sychra, *Stranická hudební kritika: spolutvůrce nové hudby*, Prague 1951, pp. 168–172.

<sup>41</sup> More about them both see: <http://www.ceskyhudebnislovník.cz/slovník/> [accessed 21.01.2020].

<sup>42</sup> *Píseň: pravda o životě*, Prague 1956, p. 62.

analyst Dušan Havlíček (1923–2018). The Union of Czechoslovak Composers published the book in 1959.

The nascent process of liberalization of the Czechoslovak communist political system with a partial rehabilitation of Western cultural influences in the early 1960s contributed to a balanced view of the song during a conference entitled *O malých hudebních formách* („About Small Musical Forms”), organized by the Union in Banská Bystrica in 1961. The meeting, whose contributions were later published in the proceedings *Pro zpěv a radost lidí* („For the Singing and Joy of the People”), was judged by Kotek and Poledňák to have been a direct forerunner of the official establishment of domestic popular music research, wherein the attendees had viewed „the issue of non-artificial music in a consistent and focused manner, declaring at the same time the need for professionally based research in terms of the historical, aesthetic, sociological, psychological, and even economic perspectives”<sup>43</sup>. However, only an autonomous research centre could coordinate such a large-scale requirement – a centre which, in conjunction with all the existing foci, would be able to determine the basic conceptual, systematic, and methodological framework of the emerging musicological discipline<sup>44</sup>. As anticipated above, such a workplace (specifically one academic position) was established within the newly developed Institute of Musicology of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in February 1962. The appointed specialist was musicologist Josef Kotek (1928–2009).

It was precisely Josef Kotek who became one of the leading figures in Czech popular music research in the coming decades, finally reaching the highest professional level and an expertise fully comparable to his colleagues and field founders in the Western countries. This was done through Kotek’s extensive legacy of thematic expansion from the beginning of the 19th century to the second half of the 20th century. From a several years’ remove, Ivan Poledňák saw the importance of his co-worker at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in his concentrated lifelong work, in the course of which Kotek systematically proceeded

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<sup>43</sup> J. Kotek, I. Poledňák, op. cit., p. 303.

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem.

from orientation in the extensive source base to collections of partial materials (e.g. song editions), to cataloguing work (bibliographies, discographies, etc.), to supplementary sociological and other probes, to the publication of the contemporary documents (*Kronika české synkopy I–II* [„Chronicle of the Czech Syncope I–II“]), to partial or preliminary summaries (*Od rejdiváku k rocku* [„From Rejdivák to Rock“]) reaching to mature synthetic works at the end of his creative career (*Dějiny české populární hudby a zpěvu I–II* [„History of Czech Popular Music and Singing I–II“]). In this respect, Kotek created not only a relatively exhaustive synthesis, but a solid foundation for further research work<sup>45</sup>.

It should be noted that the early phase of the formation of Czech popular music research was particularly captured by the Institute's new academic journal „Hudební věda“<sup>46</sup>, founded in 1964.

For the sake of completeness, however, let us return to the line of theoretical reflection on jazz, which until the 1960s existed largely outside the sphere of official institutions. Today, the letters of Emanuel Uggé, among others, show the extent of the repression that was aimed at the supporters of Western forms of popular music in Czechoslovakia immediately after 1948. For example, in the letter of the 20th February 1950, the Prague journalist tried to explain to a young jazz enthusiast in the regional city of Olomouc, Ladislav Pospíšil, the minimal interest of the mainstream media in the given type of music – also with regard to his own existential crisis, as well as the censorship conducted by the Ministry of Information, headed by Václav Kopecký (1897–1961):

Although I issued the „Jazz“ magazine at Gramoklub two years ago, which is still the best source of information; although I spoke on the radio two or three times a week; although I was writing a larger book to be published soon; although I organized tours and lectures on jazz in all the major cities with the support of the Ministry of Information, the Youth Union, and

<sup>45</sup> Information on Kotek including detailed bibliography can be found here: I. Poledňák, *Josef Kotek*, 2009, [http://www.ceskyhudebnislovník.cz/slovník/index.php?option=com\\_mdictionary&task=record.record\\_detail&id=5353](http://www.ceskyhudebnislovník.cz/slovník/index.php?option=com_mdictionary&task=record.record_detail&id=5353) [accessed 21.01.2020].

<sup>46</sup> See: <http://www.digitalniknihovna.cz/knav/periodical/uuid:5284d5b3-4b45-11e1-a71b-005056a60003> [accessed 21.01.2020].

other institutions; although I was writing about jazz in „Kulturní politika”, „Mladá fronta”, and many other magazines; no one seems to be interested now. On the contrary, the official circles are even blaming me for all my work. Today there is no „Jazz” magazine, although it was financially successful; today I must not speak on the radio; today the Gramoklub is liquidated, and lectures are not allowed. The book lies in manuscript form and has been rejected by the publishing committee. At the same time, my cooperation with Gramophone Company in Prague has been cancelled<sup>47</sup>.

In another letter of the 3rd May, 1950, Uggé concludes with an ironic remark:

It is also a mistake that Louis Armstrong or Duke Ellington are not named Alexandrovich or Nikolaevich and that they do not play somewhere near Moscow. All the troubles would then probably disappear and I would likely get some star badge of honour. But when Armstrong is just a black man, this is racial discrimination in practice, isn't it?<sup>48</sup>

It was precisely on the issue of racial discrimination that Uggé built a defence of the genre in question in the totalitarian 1950s. The narrative of the oppressed black proletariat and its musical folklore was soon adapted by other jazzophiles, for instance Lubomír Dorůžka, one of the creators of the illegally reproduced amateur jazz magazine *Okružní korespondence* as early as during the Second World War<sup>49</sup>, and in 1958 the author of the pro-paedeutic publication *Hudba amerických černochoů* („Music of American Blacks”). Let us add that a year later, another book on the subject was published by composer Jan Rychlík – *Pověry a problémy jazzu* („Superstitions and Problems of Jazz”) – which was followed by Poledňák's popularization brochure *Kapitolky o jazzu* („Chapters on Jazz”) in 1961. As was already mentioned, the legitimization of the study of jazz in the context of Czech musicology was confirmed only by the joint synthesis of Poledňák and

<sup>47</sup> Correspondence between Uggé and Pospíšil, archive of the author.

<sup>48</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>49</sup> I. Poledňák, *Lubomír Dorůžka*, 2014, [http://www.ceskyhudebnislovník.cz/slovník/index.php?option=com\\_mdictionary&task=record.record\\_detail&id=1487](http://www.ceskyhudebnislovník.cz/slovník/index.php?option=com_mdictionary&task=record.record_detail&id=1487) [accessed 21.01.2020].

Dorůžka in *Československý jazz: minulost a přítomnost* („Czechoslovak Jazz: Past and Present”) in 1967.

The gradual recognition of jazz in communist cultural policy was conditioned both by the liberal atmosphere of the 1960s, culminating in the so-called Prague Spring of 1968, and the generational exchange with the incoming rock music, which became the new primary focus of the official institutions. In this regard, at the end of the 1960s Lubomír Dorůžka foresaw the establishment of an independent rock musicology with a habilitated expert for the given area within a horizon of twenty to thirty years<sup>50</sup>. However, nothing of that kind has happened so far; probably because, firstly, at the turn of the 1970s, after the onset of normalization, totalitarian practices were reintroduced into the culture, and over the next twenty years Czech sciences became more isolated; and then, after the fall of communism in 1989, social demands shifted to other topics.

## CONCLUSION

Despite the problems of normalization, a strong generation, especially of musicologists, that was scientifically maturing in the liberal 1960s, was able to carry out a number of remarkable projects over the next two decades, followed by the first syntheses. The unique research potential of the given generation was supported not only by the real as well as politically declared nationwide interests, but also by the accessibility of complete archives and data of state-owned institutions (Czechoslovak Radio, Czechoslovak Television, Art Agency Pragokonzert, Supraphon, etc.), after the privatization after 1989 unavailable in their entirety. A representative work in this sense was the collective creation *Encyklopedie jazzu a moderní populární hudby* („Encyclopaedia of Jazz and Modern Popular Music”), published with factual and name parts in four volumes between 1980 and 1990<sup>51</sup>. At the same time, a three-part collective book on the history of Czech musicology was prepared with an updated suggestion for the disciplinary organization of the field, where for the first time popular music had a firm

<sup>50</sup> L. Dorůžka, *Jazz a hudební věda*, „Melodie” 1968, No. 4, p. 158.

<sup>51</sup> A. Matzner, I. Poledňák, I. Wasserberger, *Encyklopedie jazzu a moderní populární hudby* (I – factual part; II/1 and II/2 – name part, world scene; III – name part, Czechoslovak scene), Prague 1980(I), 1986(II/1), 1987(II/2), 1990(III).

place within the system under the denomination of the Theory and History of Non-Artificial Music<sup>52</sup>.

Especially in the 1960s, Czech musicology significantly developed international relations and drew inspiration from foreign authors. Regarding the terminological and other theoretical issues of popular music, inspiration came not only from the communist countries<sup>53</sup>, but also from the West – the neighboring German-speaking countries were a special area in this respect. For example, the first Czech translations of T.W. Adorno were published in the early 1960s<sup>54</sup>. In 1973, *The Jazz Scene* (1959), by another Marxist, British historian Eric Hobsbawm (under the pseudonym of Francis Newton), was published under the Czech title *Jazzová scéna*. Lubomír Dorůžka, in particular, was already closely linked with international European jazz organizations in the 1960s, as confirmed by his report from the 1969 jazz musicological conference in Graz, Austria.

As we started this paper by commemorating the creation of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music in 1981, let us dedicate a few more words to the same organization at the very end. Czech musicology got in direct touch with the IASPM on the occasion of an international conference in Montreal, Canada in July 1985 through musicologists Ivan Poledňák and Jiří Fukač (1936–2002). The report on the meeting that the latter submitted to the journal „Opus musicum” in a certain sense confirms our introductory thesis that the specific tradition of Czech (Marxist) musicology preceded the establishment of the field in the West by several years, or even decades. In this regard, Fukač, with unconcealed humorous exaggeration, reported to readers how two seasoned congressmen, whose

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<sup>52</sup> *Hudební věda 1*, eds. V. Lébl, I. Poledňák Prague 1988, p. 333; *Hudební věda 3*, Prague 1988, p. 823–853.

<sup>53</sup> A frequently quoted scholar was Boris Vladimirovich Asafyev (1884–1949), either in connection with the concept of *bytová hudba*, which was supposed to label the sphere of popular music with its specific social functions, or regarding the so-called theory of intonation, which became the subject of the life-long academic work of the prominent Czech Marxist musicologist Jaroslav Jiránek (1922–2001).

<sup>54</sup> V. Macura, *Průvodce po světové literární teorii 20. století*, Brno 2012, p. 50.

average age already exceeded one hundred, were welcomed by 'children' at a Canadian airport<sup>55</sup>.

Concerning the actual comparison of scientific as well as world-view orientations, Fukač perceived the Association as a politically left-wing group of „young and angry men and women” who were critical of capitalism, neo-colonialism and racism, but also of traditional musicology that „does not want to reflect the current state of music”<sup>56</sup>. In this respect, he registered a negative stance towards „classical German bourgeois musicology”, and thus West German musicology, and other „historicizing and Hegelian aesthetizing Central European schools” in general<sup>57</sup>. Conversely, he noted a positive relationship to East German musicology<sup>58</sup>, which – according to the author – was a chance for Czechoslovakia as well. On the one hand, Fukač saw high quality analytical equipment, above-average education, and an impressive global outlook among the younger participants; on the other hand, they lacked anchorage in traditional systematicity and the refined definitions of particulars – the reason that the original Czech concept of the typological polarization of artificial and non-artificial music did not evoke the response that its authors hoped for probably lay for the most part precisely in the issue of terminology.

Contacts between Czech musicology and the IASPM culminated in the 1990s mainly through the activities of the pupil and colleague of the two aforementioned academics, rock musicologist Aleš Opekar (1957), who was a member of the IASPM Executive Committee from 1993 to 1997 and who even held the post of General Secretary from 1995 to 1997. However, the original expectation of the wider development of popular music research in the post-communist era without geopolitical boundaries and censorship has not been fulfilled, and the activities of the Czech branch of the IASPM, and eventually the musicology of popular music as such, ended in the late 1990s. Nevertheless, a more detailed analysis of the role and direction of Czech

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<sup>55</sup> J. Fukač, *Montreal 85: svět se točí kolem populární hudby*, „Opus musicum” 1985, No. 9, pp. II–VI.

<sup>56</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>57</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>58</sup> In the 1980s, authors such as Peter Wicke or Philp Tagg contributed to the journal „Opus musicum”.

humanities, including musicology, in the post-communist era is beyond the scope of this article.

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### Starting Points of 'Popular Music Studies' in Czechoslovakia

The story of the emergence of the field of Popular Music Studies is usually associated with the activities of Western researchers and historically set in the 1980s. Although the research conducted by academics from the Eastern

communist countries – due to the tradition of Marxist scholarship – preceded that of their Western counterparts in certain respects, by years or even decades, it is rarely mentioned. This article examines the origins of the musicology of popular music as it was officially established in the early 1960s in communist Czechoslovakia.

**Keywords:** Czechoslovakia, communism, musicology, popular music research, pop music, jazz, rock, IASPM