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# Fibich in Vilnius: Annus Horribilis 1874 and the Birth of a Composer<sup>1</sup>

*Fibichas Vilniuje: 1874-iejų ir kompozitoriaus asmenybės formavimasis*

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## Abstract

In 1874 Zdeněk Fibich (1850–1900) lived in Vilnius, arriving September 1873, to teach music at Vilnius schools. A sequence of unhappy events—the deaths of his twin children from his first marriage, the serious illness of his wife, the death of his mother-in-law's sister—permanently affected Fibich's life, and he eventually decided to end his employment in Vilnius and permanently return to Prague. Although Fibich had a rather restricted musical life in Vilnius, the situation in Bohemia was favorable, for the polarizing debate concerning Bedřich Smetana, who had become deaf in 1874, was reaching its peak. Despite these unfavorable circumstances, Fibich was able to develop a remarkable creative style during this time, and even began to create his first masterworks.

**Keywords:** Zdeněk Fibich, music life in Vilnius, symphonic poem *Toman and the Wood Nymph*, chamber music.

## Anotacija

1874-aisiais Zdenėkas Fibichas (1850–1900) gyveno Vilniuje, atvykęs čia 1873-ųjų rugsėjį mokytį muzikos Vilniaus mokyklose. Viena po kitos nelaimės – jo dvynių iš pirmos santuokos mirtis, sunki žmonos liga ir uošvės sesers mirtis – smarkiai paveikė Fibicho gyvenimą. Galiausiai jis metė darbą Vilniuje ir visam laikui sugrįžo į Prahą. Nors Vilniuje jo muzikiniam gyvenimui stigo intensyvumo, Bohemijoje sąlygos buvo palankios – tuo metu įsiplieskę ginčai dėl 1874 m. apkurtusio Bedřicho Smetanos pasiekė kulminaciją. Nors aplinkybės susiklostė nepalankiai, Fibicui pavyko tuo laikotarpiu išstbulinti puikų kūrybos stilių ir netgi pradėti rašyti savo pirmuosius šedevrus.

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** Zdenėkas Fibichas, muzikinis gyvenimas Vilniuje, simfoninė poema „Tomanas ir medinė nimfa“, kamerinė muzika.

When we examine the list in the Moser catalog<sup>2</sup> of the works that Zdeněk Fibich (1850–1900) wrote during 1874, we immediately notice a variety and abundance that seems inconsistent, not only with respect to the choice of subjects, but also of large forms and genre. While a bitter debate was raging in the Czech musical community, Fibich's private life was reaching a serious crisis. A combination of unfavorable circumstances, along with the turbulent romantic ideas about art that were directly connected to Fibich's music, produced conditions under which a professional composer was born. Fibich's artistic production around 1874 seems to be in relation with the events of his private life. We are convinced that this extraordinary psychological pressure caused him to sort out the basic decisions of his life and the positions he would take. The goal of this study is to reconstruct, as accurately as possible, the events around 1874, and to try to explain how Fibich developed to create his first significant works.

Before we provide an outline of this era, we will list the works that Fibich wrote from 1873 to 1875 as they are presented in Moser's catalog:

- MK<sup>3</sup>
- 1873
- 337 *Mass* for 4-part mixed choir and soloists with accompaniment (not orchestrated)
- 338 *Othello*, symphonic poem for full orchestra<sup>4</sup>
- 339 *Polka* for piano
- 340 *Záboj, Slavoj a Luděk* [Záboj, Slavoj and Luděk], symphonic poem for full orchestra
- 341 *Veseloherní ouvertura* [Comedy overture] for orchestra
- 342 *Waldnacht* (Hermann Lingg), [song / Lied]
- 343 *Tragödie* (Heine), [song / Lied]
- 344 *Ave Maria*, for solo voice and organ
- 345 *Jasná noc* [Moonlit night], for violin and piano
- 346 *Theme and variations*, for piano and violin
- 347 *Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh* (Goethe), for men's chorus
- 348 *Sterne mit den gold'nen Füßchen* (Heine), for men's chorus
- 349 *Frithjof*, music drama on a text by Petr Lohmann, 2 and 1/2 acts in a full piano sketch, in Vilnius by the end of 1873
- 1874
- 350 *Windsbraut* [Bride of the wind], ballad for chorus and orchestra (G. Kinkel), Vilnius 25 January, sketch completed 18 December, 1872

- 351 *Piano quartet*, Vilnius, February  
 352 *String quartet*, Vilnius, 6 March  
 353 *Wenn Abendsroth* [song / Lied] (Klaus Grothe), Vilnius, March  
 354 *Nur mach mir nicht* [song / Lied] (Klaus Grothe), March  
 355 *Ballada* for violoncello and piano, beginning of the year  
 356 *Sonata in C minor* for piano <sup>5</sup>  
 357 *Svatební scéna* [Wedding scene] for chorus, solo, and orchestra on national melodies<sup>6</sup>  
 358 *Motetto a capella Fürchte dich nicht* for six voices, Vilnius  
 359 *Sonata in C major*, for violin and piano <sup>7</sup>  
 360 *Fugue in c minor* for 4 hands; see no. 165, <sup>8</sup> arranged for 2 hands, Vilnius  
 361 *Fugue in F major in 4 voices*, for piano, Vilnius, 22 July  
 362 *Fugue in a minor in 3 voices*, for piano, Vilnius, 23 July  
 363 *Durch die wolkige Majennacht*, [song / Lied] (Geibel), Vilnius, 24 July  
 364 *Wie bist du meine Königin*, [Song / Lied] (Daumer nach Hafis), Vilnius, 25 July.  
 365 *Requiem* for soloists, choir, and orchestra (fragment)  
 366 *Song without words* for piano, Prague, December 12.
- 1875
- 367 *Toman a lesní panna* [Toman and the Wood Nymph], symphonic tableau for full orchestra, Prague, 22 February.<sup>9</sup>  
 368 *Štědrý den* [Christmas Eve], melodrama on a folk tale from Erben  
 369 *Festive men's chorus in D major*, Prague  
 370 *Sbor lodníků z Mořské fantazie* [Sailors' chorus from the Sea Fantasy], Prague  
 371 Overture to [Fibich's opera] *Bukovín*, for orchestra  
 372 *Fichtenbaum*, song for voice, violin and piano (Heine), Prague, 11 May.  
 373 *Ticho kolem* [Calmness around], 4 women's voices, 24 May.  
 374 *Dívčina jak dobrá hodina* [The kind-hearted maiden], 4 women's voices (also for men's chorus) (Čelakovský), Prague, 25 May  
 375 *Die Sennin* [song / Lied] (Lenau), Sadová, during the summer  
 376 *Sprecht ihr mitternächtigen* [song / Lied] (Herrmann Link [Lingg]), Prague, May 9  
 377 *Kytice* [Garland], song from the Dvůr Králové Manuscript, Prague  
 378 *Žežulice* [Cuckoo], song, text from the Dvůr Králové Manuscript, Prague, 1875? <sup>10</sup>

### The 1870s: the Czech musical battleground

Events within the Czech music community during the 1870s continue to attract the attention of musicologists for important reasons. The debate about what direction Czech national music should take was becoming so intensive that even its participants were surprised. At the very moment when Czech music life was taking shape in the direction of German

music culture, it was a shock to discover that this direction was arousing controversy at the very heart of its idealism: what mattered to the community. Music circles were polarized on this issue, debating it in competing musical periodicals, *Dalibor* and *Hudební listy*.<sup>11</sup> Bedřich Smetana's deafness worsened this situation. He was subjected to malignant personal accusations and blame; he was viewed as a suffering genius who could no longer be hailed as the obvious savior or messiah of Czech music. In this article, we will try to rise above this dispute and concentrate on one of its consequences—the connection between the polemics of the dispute and the works written by Czech composers during this decade.

The Czech community was reacting strongly to reviews about the frequent use of “improper” mixtures of Wagnerian ideas and compositional processes in the circle of Czech national music. A vital question was emerging: would it be possible to find an adequate counterbalance to German music, especially the music of the new German school? One of the most prominent figures to jump into the debate was Max Konopásek,<sup>12</sup> an opponent of the authoritative aesthete of that era, that Otakar Hostinský. Let us extract some important issues from Konopásek's extensive articles:<sup>13</sup>

1. The Slavs in all countries should unite to create an inherently Slavonic music; it could be written with “Slavonic melodies according to an archetype” (Konopásek, “Z jaké půdy” 1874: 93). It was necessary to search for new, original forms, for “the traits of the Slavonic soul” were to engage with ideals, to search for something “invisible” (Konopásek, “Z jaké půdy” 1874: 94). Konopásek respected Herder's concept of the natural, unspoiled spirit of humanity, which can be achieved calmly when a person has everything that they need for life, which, in the long run, is more civilized than an artificially produced political and pedantic culture (Konopásek, “Z jaké půdy” 1874: 97). Konopásek believed in the future of Slavonic music (Konopásek, “Z jaké půdy” 1874: 105). He exhorted his readers to take a strong-minded stance, and not avoid conflict:

We want to elevate Slavonic music, not as something resembling German music except for its accents, but as different from German music as far as possible, in every way. (Konopásek, “Z jaké půdy” 1874: 111)

Konopásek continually repeated his summons to take a firm, united stand—“The tenacity with which every Slav accepts his brothers as his own is well-known throughout history!”—and infers from that statement an authoritative, urgent need to surmount the present situation, to experience a collective unity by “researching and organizing” Slavonic national melodies:

There is still time—but it is already of supreme importance that we step up to work for Pan-Slavonic music, and let us search! The greatest gift for music to the world of Slavonic

nations would be to gain their interest with a collection of “musical pearls.” I hold to the conviction that preparations will be made and material will be collected for Slavonic music! (Konopásek, “Rozbor...” 1874: 133)

Konopásek saw the future in Slavonic music itself:

The Slavs are the only ones who do not have to worry whether their national stream of music might eventually dry up; only the Slavs! This national stream has completely dried up in Germany. They borrow against the “the music of the future,” (!) international music, (!) while neglecting their own true German music. (Konopásek, “Rozbor...” 1874: 169)

Konopásek inferred that a single authority could determine the course of German music history (he gave the example of Josef Haydn),<sup>14</sup> but he believed that Slavonic music could only be developed successfully if the entire community of Slavic nations were involved:

History and our national character evidently resist the idea that a single spirit will determine our music [...] Only in other nations are authorities accepted, and they generally make their determinations in unison; but among us, an individual can fight, endeavor, and persevere for his belongings and his convictions, even die! [...] Let us not wait for the Messiah of Slavonic music; let us set to work and contribute to attaining the great goal that we all have, according to our strength and possibilities. (Konopásek, “Rozbor...” 1874: 178)

Since Konopásek was convinced that the great musical talent of the Czechs would enable them to achieve a truly artistic, impassive—objective—position, he did not hesitate to exhort his readers to an enthusiastic, even ruthless geocentricism:

To have a biased interest in everything that belongs to us, Slavonic—would not be faith in shame. Egoism is patriotism in unity, and patriotism is the egoism of the multitude. Since everything conforms to this rule, I ask myself, why are my Czechs the only ones who do not conform to it? (Konopásek, “Hudební...” 1875: 136)

Konopásek wanted to infer a Pan-Slavonic “rhythmic basis” from folk song; a “rudimentary melody” would then necessarily be inferred from speech (Konopásek, “Rozbor...” 1874: 134).<sup>15</sup> Konopásek wanted to find the traits to create a model based on Slavonic folk song rather than to use a model with a “German combination” of traits. To do so, he turned to an idealized concept of archaic forms of folk song:

We search for Czech songs, those Slavonic songs; we search for songs that are ancient, that would be archaic Czech songs, the original songs. Everything that we identify as original, was not, is not, and never will be anything but veiled, simple, modest. (Konopásek, “Rozbor...” 1874: 142)<sup>16</sup>

Konopásek thought that he had found the oldest authentic Slavonic music in the Ruthenian countryside

(Konopásek, “Rozbor...” 1874: 170);<sup>17</sup> while in Galicia, he sought the music of the South Slavs and the Russians, Poles, and Czechs (Konopásek, “Rozbor...” 1874: 173).

2. Criticism of Czech songs and Czech musical approaches which did not give musical talent the opportunity to develop. Konopásek identified Slavonic melodies as those “that every Slav can recognize,” based on his experience with Polish and Ruthenian songs; but Czech songs were different (Konopásek, “Z jaké půdy” 1874: 93). According to Konopásek, “The practical Czech spirit” did not assume that the musician would devote “his entire life to art” and would not demand that the musician would adhere to a specific direction:

Unfortunately, German music is dominant in the Czech lands, and only German goods are sought—and valued. (Konopásek, “Z jaké půdy” 1874: 101)<sup>18</sup>

Konopásek thought that one-sided demands for modern music and the works of Richard Wagner were an obstruction:

“Only Wagner’s music can be modern now!” is the cry of the Czech antagonists of Slavonic music; but even this admission of musical dissent is evidently nothing other than mere boasting and perfidy; for modernism, modernism and again modernism has always been German music—and would, in the end, be merely a German spinning wheel. Well, then, what about modernism as an independent idea! It is a relative concept. In our opinion, modern music is significant when is appropriate for its time, it has refined taste, and enables the next step toward progress. Then German music is not the only modern music; in that sense, there is also modern Italian and French music; above all, the music of Chopin. We cannot permit the warlike slogan of certain Czech theorists, who always cry: “Modernism, modernism, and again modernism!” and we never publish their articles. (Konopásek, “Hudební...” 1875: 144)

Konopásek openly took a position against “Czech German modern traits” and believed that the mighty strength of structure would lead to success:

From the very first, we knew that we were not going to build a swallow’s nest; we had to dig the foundations for a massive work that would be feasible for others to build. But when we have scarcely begun in complete secrecy, a fight breaks out—not the fault of our first, earnest approach to our calling; the opposing side marshals itself for battle with the slogan: ‘You are modern!’ and our side—behaving properly—responds with the slogan: “You are naive!”—for all honest beginnings are naive; every true Slav is naive [...] And we ungodly beginners have to throw ourselves into the fight. I say explicitly that we have to do it. In the end, Czech music must find out what it actually has to do with us, and what the goal of our opponents really is; namely, we have to find out which side has the truth. For our opponents, it merely, it only has to do with German music. (Konopásek, “Hudební...” 1875: 181)



Although Konopásek positioned his battle lines on the sharp distinction between the alternatives “Slavonic or German,” he energetically turned to the future, toward young men “with Slavonic hearts” (Konopásek, “Hudební...” 1875: 198), who were not discouraged from their love of Slavonic matters:

The dispute about Slavonic music as a dispute of Slavonic artists has to be publicly fought for the sake of Slavonic honor. (Konopásek, “Hudební...” 1875: 201)

3. For a concrete example for artistic mastery that was typically Slavonic, he chose Fryderyk Chopin (Konopásek, “Z jaké půdy” 1874: 94),<sup>19</sup> who did not fear to continue “in the ingenious tradition of the nature of Polish-Slavonic music” (Konopásek, “Z jaké půdy” 1874: 97).<sup>20</sup> Konopásek’s idea of Chopin’s significance for the development of Slavonic music included a reference to Wagner’s operas:

In some of his mazurkas, Chopin served Slavonic music immeasurably more than [Wagner] did in all of his operas. (Konopásek, “Z jaké půdy” 1874: 141)

For Konopásek, Chopin emerged victorious, even in comparison with Franz Liszt:

The basis of Chopin’s music is music entirely independent from German music, [...] Chopin was not as easily enticed with compliments to enter the German camp as the Hungarian doctor Liszt was. (Konopásek, “Hudební...” 1875: 148)<sup>21</sup>

4. Konopásek gave actual examples from folk music praxis that could be used in music composition; prominent solos, improvisation, “wild counterpoint,” unusual tunings for instruments (Konopásek, “Z jaké půdy” 1874: 97–98), novel techniques for accompanying melodies,<sup>22</sup> dissonance, archaic forms of major and minor melody, and the possibility of metric manipulation (particularly changes from triple meter to duple or quadruple meter; see Konopásek, “Rozbor...” 1874: 154),<sup>23</sup> finding a variety of inspirations in “the traits of national forms” such as the *krakoviak*, *dumka*, *kolomejka* (Konopásek, “Z jaké půdy” 1874: 110),<sup>24</sup> *mazurka*, *kolo* [Serbian round] and *polka* (Konopásek, “Rozbor...” 1874: 141, 154, 158, 165). Konopásek expected national music to emerge where “work always progresses more and more without end [...] on the basis of successful national melody” (Konopásek, “Rozbor...” 1874: 158). Konopásek considered the analysis of melodic motifs extremely difficult but necessary: “national songs reveal the character of the nation” (Konopásek, “Hudební...” 1875: 197). From a passing reference about the importance of speech itself, of neglecting the phrases that merge into notable speech fragments, Konopásek drew inspiration for an article on “prosodic melody,” which—like

some of his previous ideas—recalls techniques used by Leoš Janáček. Here, we cannot neglect to mention that Janáček was also interested in speech fragments, identifying them as speech melodies:

Within the continuing development of the melodic prose of certain languages, melodic shapes in all of their variations take definite, continuing shape because of their basic traits. Then we must hear them not only in the language they are spoken, but also considering what they are spoken. (Konopásek, “Hudební...” 1875: 174)

5. Critical attacks on Bedřich Smetana. When Konopásek was thinking about the improving Czech music and about the “Czech Chopin,” he unambiguously stated:

Does Czech music have to be based on its Chopin? I maintain that it does not! To use that as the foundation for that wilderness of a musical field, whose original crops did not have the least scent of anything foreign; that it must appear that in the midst of such its very own forms of the national spirit, first-rank talent, and in the end must come to a position that will help success to go all the way to a very splendid outcome. (Konopásek, “Z jaké půdy” 1874: 98)

It occurred to Konopásek—let us admit, rightly—that the group associated with Otakar Hostinský behaved in an overly prejudiced way. The members of the Prague “comradely union” announced:

Our champion N. N. has cleared the path that leads our domestic art to its goal; may the endeavor to reach this sublime goal prosper!—Except for his path, there are no paths to the right or the left, and with respect to the goal for which one strives, we call: “Do not go a step further! Here you have the model for the Czech music style! Here is everything of you can desire!”—How comical it is, how out of date is that sort of behavior! Would that be the end of music? And particularly Slavonic music! And we are just at the beginning. How can that be understandable, when young Slavonic musicians are shouting the slogan: Only by stepping into the footprints of our champion N.N. can you go forward, if you want to reach a goal that is entirely true! (Konopásek, “Z jaké půdy” 1874: 110–111)

Konopásek’s anti-Smetanian spine is shown in his assessment of the value of “our” polka, which seems to indicate that he had never heard *Prodaná nevěsta*:

The polka is merely a national dance; it was not developed from a national song; [...] as yet, these two forms have not emerged from a single spirit. I think that would require the spirit of a true poet combined with the spirit of a true composer. (Konopásek, “Rozbor...” 1874: 141)

Konopásek deliberately avoided mentioning the obvious connection between the polka and Bedřich Smetana’s music to his readers:

Who can give me the name of the man who laid a strong foundation with his polka for the entire field of Slavonic musical forms? I do not know his name; I have never come in contact with him, although I have diligently observed for a long time everything that he has written in the Czech lands about music. (Konopásek, “Rozbor...” 1874: 141)

Yet he praised the tradition of the Czech cantors:

... the first polka was created by a Czech cantor. Glory to both, success to our polka! (Konopásek, “Rozbor...” 1874: 141)

Konopásek directly referred to Smetana when evaluating the qualities of Chopin’s compositions:

In an era of German enthusiasm for Chopin, he was understood there—we are glad to know it—in Czech lands there is one man with a legitimate creative musical talent, a far better composer than the Germans. He did not imitate Chopin’s mazurkas but began to work successfully on the polka, for Chopin had already excelled in ennobling the mazurka. Before long, Smetana took refuge in deafness and left this path—and we openly and honestly assert that we truly regret that has happened. If Smetana had been one of the composers who had set out on a path and not come back, he could have achieved his proper recognition without opposition. But he will have to be content merely with a little acknowledgement, and if that is withheld from him, Germany could throw alms to him. He cannot teach us anything at all about Slavonic music. (Konopásek, “Hudební...” 1875: 151)

According to Konopásek, Smetana had lost his way because of the people who use German music as the only model. Smetana therefore could not be “a true genius, a man who is aware of his ideas and a strong patriot” (Konopásek, “Hudební...” 1875: 151).<sup>25</sup>

When we examine the works of Czech composers during the 1870s, we can glimpse them as creative polemics influenced by the opinions of authors on music like Max Konopásek. And at the very time that Konopásek was promoting extensive use of folk songs and dances and marching as many Czech musicians as possible into this terrain, we are faced with an exceptional, extensive group of extremely varied forms and genres from the pens of perhaps all of the Czech composers. The group around František Pivoda and Max Konopásek literally compelled Czech composers to verify the possibilities of folk material. Bedřich Smetana had an approximately ten-year head start on these issues and could read Konopásek’s sorties quite selectively. Long before Max Konopásek appeared on the scene, Smetana had used direct quotations of folk song (see his variations on the song *Sil jsem proso* [I sowed a millet] and his Lisztian *Fantasie koncertní na české národní písně* [Concert Fantasy on Czech national songs], 1862); he knew the works of Chopin, he had worked through the polka idiom in several

transformations, he had developed a technique of writing Czech folk melody successfully in an operatic context (see *Prodaná nevěsta* [The Bartered Bride]), and he had experimented with modality long before (see his Polka in E-flat major, Op. 13, No. 2 from his *Vzpomínky na Čechy ve formě polek* [Memories of Bohemia in the form of a polkas] (1859–1860). And even more, by the age of 60 Smetana had completed his own defense of incorporating folk song into compositionally exacting contexts and had been able to recast simple types of dances into cohesive forms. In harmony with his artistic development, Smetana began the 1870s with the motto “national music for the advancement of the state of modern art” ([Procházka] 1871: 69). As Otakar Hostinský continued write about Wagnerism over the years, he significantly shifted the subject from national music to the progressive trends that followed it. During the 1870s, while Hostinský was working toward a demand for modernism in Czech music,<sup>26</sup> Konopásek was offering a relatively detailed analysis of another strong feature of Czech music: its inherent sound, which he recognized as a national trait. But he still maintained that any clarification of the issue of national music had to be pursued with the aid of folk song (see particularly Janáček’s folkloric works).

### Folk song and dance as source material for composers

The idea that musical form could be based on folk music, producing something like art songs instead of symphonic forms, seemed to be a denial of academic compositional practice. Nevertheless, this idea spurred composers to work with fully expanded compositional techniques, approaches, and forms. But that could raise the threat of primitivism or at least reproof from professional critics, who did not want to admit that Slavic folk songs had unusual forms that affected urban audiences more strongly than the obvious exoticism of works like Félicien David’s symphonic ode *Le Desert* did; they had known this work since the 1840s. For some composers, that meant experimentation that was soon abandoned, but the results of the experiments could be used as supporting techniques for their work. During the 1870s, a broad palette of compositional approaches to folk music material opened up, and a place was found in it for work with “abstractions of folklore elements” (Ottlová 2006: 172–183). Reactions to the 1870s debate appeared not only in quotations of folk songs in compositions, but also in a variety of archaic, traditional or modern (for their time) large forms and genres in combination with folk material—with somewhat awkward implementations of folk elements (including performance approaches), works echoing folklore, and the use of dance idioms and genre characteristics, including their virtuosic interpretations. But

**Example 1.** String quartet No. 1 in A major, without opus number, third movement, i.e. a trio from the last fifth movement of the suite *Dojmy z venkova* [Impressions from the countryside], Op. 54

it was the work with an abstraction itself—the intentional work with typical, strange turns of Czech and Moravian songs—that proved their worth for the compositional process.

Prejudiced critics were most likely to object to direct quotations of folk songs; setting a Slavic folk song with conventional music usually required an exceptionally resourceful approach, sometimes because of the text. But it was soon found that folk songs can produce satisfactory development in variation forms and function well in the genre of chamber music. Dvořák embodied the folk song in his symphonic music in this way. His *Symphonic Variations*, Op. 78, are based on his own folk-like theme written in Lydian modality; this theme dominates the last song of his *Sborové písně pro mužské hlasy* [Choral songs for male voices], *Huslař* [The fiddler]; it begins, “*Já jom guslar* [I am a wretched fiddler]. This set of songs from 1877 became part of the international repertory about ten years later, evidently in Dvořák’s 1887 revision (Šourek 1928: 269). Perhaps Dvořák may have had misgivings about the disparateness between the rigorously through-composed form and the imitation of folk theme; there is a note in Dvořák’s hand on the binding boards of the manuscript partitur, “composed and muddled up by Antonín Dvořák” (Burghauer 1996: 148).

An entirely successful grasp of folk text with corresponding musical processes is shown in the song *Zajatá* [The captive girl] from *Moravské dvojzpěvy* [Moravian duets], Op. 32 (1876). The modal conclusion (the initial D major with a Mixolydian seventh and a Phrygian second) rouses the enthusiasm of Czech musicologists.<sup>27</sup> We find an original, “thickened” use of Moravian modulation, for example, in Dvořák’s *Slavonic dance No. 7* (first set, Op. 46, written in 1878), in which the incipit of the theme is heard in three harmonically divergent variations (c minor, B-flat major, A-flat Lydian mode).

A remarkable topic of the 1870s is the entry of Czech composers into the string quartet repertory. Smetana and

Fibich included the polka in their first quartets, and Max Konopásek and other composers were tempted to discover the folk roots of this dance. The polka in the third movement of Fibich’s String Quartet No. 1 in A major was transferred to his orchestral suite *Dojmy z venkova* [Impressions from the countryside], written in 1898 (see Example 1). Fibich, with his habitual strict self-criticism, acknowledged only this movement as viable. However, we consider all four movements to be significant: the first movement is a stylized sousedská folk dance; the folk-like melody of the second movement is filled with Chopinesque runs in the first violins (see the virtuoso groupings of 14, 12, and even 18 notes in one beat); and the fourth movement is supported by polyphonic techniques, with dance-like accompaniments and bagpipe fifths (perhaps using the overture to *Prodaná nevěsta* as his model).<sup>28</sup> Still more expressive is the “Czech-Slavonic” tone that Fibich achieved in the fourth movement of the String Quartet No. 2 in G major (1878). We could describe its beginning as the entrance of folk musicians (see Example 2).<sup>29</sup> Among the many reactions to Konopásek’s requirements, we can also include simple forms in Dvořák’s works that significantly appear, for example, in the third movement of his String Quartet No. 7 in a minor, Op. 16, B 45 (1874).

**Example 2.** String Quartet No. 2 in G major, Op. 8, fourth movement



### “The Czech Chopin”

During the 1870s, composers worked toward goals that were imposed on them by others. This era is filled with unusual variety of expansion of forms and genres connected with folk culture. On the other hand, as a result of the debate, the entire community searched for all of the sources from which a national style could be gleaned. Everything that could be useful in attaining this common goal was defensible. In the 1870s, Konopásek’s ideas could not disrupt the almost magical attraction of the symphonic poem<sup>30</sup> or prevent Wagner’s operas from being performed by theaters throughout Europe. The group around Hostinský had to accept possibilities for many paths to the development of Czech music, rather than dictating required and idealized concept of progress, a “logically” derived historical necessity, a theoretically prepared hierarchy of musical genres, and large forms with music drama as its ultimate goal. Eloquent from this perspective is the appearance of an issue of the journal *Varyto* from the October 1, 1878. Its editor Emanuel Binko filled this issue with a combination of pieces that we can hardly imagine a few years earlier: along with the belligerent *Polka offensiv* by Max Konopásek, there appeared a very favorable review of Smetana’s opera *Tajemství* [The secret]:

For the sake of the genius of our Smetana, acknowledged as such even by the earlier enemies of our master, I do not feel that it is particularly necessary to repeat that, everywhere else, even here Smetana has generously brought together genuine jewels of our national art that have not appeared in our literature and have not been equaled. There are surely some sections of the partitur that are rather complex from a compositional viewpoint, one could say “higher” and perhaps less transparent to the lay listener than we find in the works of our earlier masters; but if we march in front as one in the spirit of the times, it is necessary that we achieve such things in art, particularly in art that is best able to speak to the heart of the public, through the art of music. And our public surely does remain silent about this gratifying progress in the work of our domestic composers. (Č. V.: 152)

Czech composers did not necessarily continue to refine the compositional styles that they have developed during the 1870s into the next decade. But their efforts were revitalized later by an external event again, by the Czech and Slavonic Ethnographic Exposition of 1895. The topics of debate now had to do with the music of the unified Slavonic nations,<sup>31</sup> refining one’s position toward the oeuvre of Wagner, the plunge of the researchers into folk music,<sup>32</sup> and the significant maturation of the individual styles of the best Czech composers. The quantity of the compositions is overshadowed by their expansive concepts. Despite his deafness, Bedřich Smetana continued to compose. He was attracted by expressivity; he surprised—and continues to

surprise—with his rich harmonic thoughts and his use of timbre in chamber and orchestral compositions. In a sovereign manner, Antonín Dvořák harnessed modality and the uninterrupted motivic and harmonic transformations that we find in certain forms of Slavic folk songs. Janáček felt that Dvořák’s admirable musical concepts were absolutely in harmony with the requirements of national music, and he did not fear to close his essay *O písni národní* [On national song] in 1891 with the words:

I am convinced that Dr. Hostinský does not understand how Dr. Ant. Dvořák composes. Even though Dvořák is known to him and close by, and folk composers unknown and so distant! (Janáček 2009: 44)

Zdeněk Fibich was intensively involved with the relationship of music and words in declamation, melodrama, and opera. In addition to composing, he researched material that he would use in his compositions into the 1890s as well as piano literature. During the 1880s, he was faced with the exacting task of opening the National Theater as well as establishing an international foothold for Czech music. No one would have been able to achieve such goals by following Konopásek’s relatively mechanical advice or Pivoda’s mindset. A surviving dictionary from the 1870s contains entries that are mindlessly repetitious and even comic. We quote, for example, the introduction to a proclamation from the sixteenth domestic Slavonic musical and declamatory evening (December 5, 1886):

We enhance and foster declamation, song, and music in the Czech spirit, in the spirit of independence, Slavonic! Let us protect ourselves against wretched advisors who demand that we continually ape the Germans and compose like Wagner! Let us continue song, music, and declamation, our independent Czech path, the original path, Slavonic!<sup>33</sup>

When we ask what remains from Konopásek’s ideas, we recall his habitual praise for the piano works of Fryderyk Chopin. This subsidiary theme does not have the intensity of the 1870s debate over Czech music, but it gives evidence of endurance and a personal style: love and admiration for the music of Chopin brings about communication of an extremely versatile individuality. Chopin’s music provided abundant source material for Czech composers for many years. When Konopásek spoke positively about Smetana, requesting that he elevate the polka to the level of Chopin’s pianistic stylization of the dance, his comments were read by Smetana himself. Smetana did not try to debate Konopásek’s arguments but replied with new piano compositions: see, for example, his *České tance* [Czech dances], Set 1, Polka in a minor No. 2 (1877). Dvořák also tried his hand at Chopin’s style. Although he may not have entirely identified with it, he never ceased to admire Chopin’s music; Dvořák’s *Mažurka* No. 5, Op. 56 (1880), for example, resembles Chopin’s



**Illustrations 1, 2.** Photographs of Zdeněk Fibich and Růžena Fibichová, 1873 (Private archive of the Fibich family)

Prelude, Op. 28 No. 15 with respect to the similarity of quoted material. Fibich was comfortable with Schumann's poetic approach to the piano, and of course, he was familiar with the lighter aspects of piano factura through Chopin. These traits would influence his mature works for piano. Chopin's music was also a remarkably strong inspiration for Leoš Janáček.

### Zdeněk Fibich's paradoxical situation in Vilnius

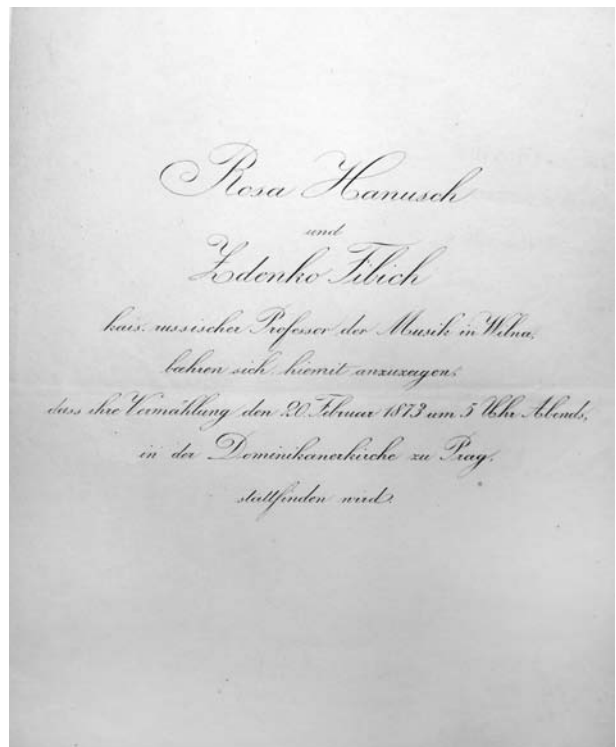
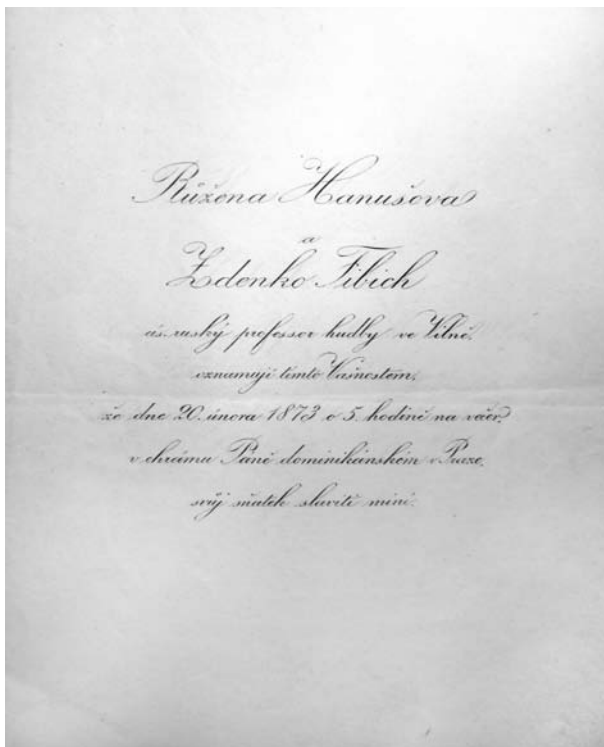
At the very time when there was a call for "Slavonic" composers in the Czech lands and for Slavonic or Czechoslovak color in music, Fibich must have been close to the "fundamental basis" of Slavonic music, for he found himself in the praised Slavonic East. In contrast, Fibich's professional responsibility in Vilnius was specified as representative of "mature" Western music. But more importantly, he stood irresolute among burning issues. Should he compose in Czech, in German, or under the influence of folklore, or in a modern spirit like Schumann, Liszt, and Wagner? How—and was it at all possible—to bring all of this together? Without jumping to conclusions, we can state that while Fibich was in Vilnius, he came to understand where his place was, what his Prague community expected of him, and what he could or could not expect in Vilnius. It was a period of searching for a creative path but also of finding a series of dead ends. He was aware of his own strength, and he demonstrated that he was able to compose intensively and to combine different approaches while composing.

The tragic events of Fibich's private life even seem to have accelerated his developmental phase and brought him back to the turbulent Czech debate: he was prepared to fight for Smetana's ideals.

Fibich had been negotiating for a position as music teacher in Vilnius as early as July 1872, thanks to his friend and supporter Ludevít Procházka.<sup>34</sup> In February 1873, he confidently thought that he would become "the Russian czar's professor of music in Vilnius" (quoted from the announcement for a wedding, see Illustration 3).

When Fibich signed his contract to teach in Vilnius on August 15, 1873, the conditions seemed very favorable: as a teacher of secular vocal choruses in five Vilnius schools, he had teaching duties for a maximum of fourteen hours weekly and a pay of 1500 rubles.<sup>36</sup> A few preserved sources successively witness the unpleasant circumstances of the young family when they moved to Vilnius in mid-September 1873. Fibich wrote to his family on December 11, 1873 that he intended to stay for a few years, even if he didn't want "to be buried in Russia forever." A letter that Růžena Fibich wrote to her mother on June 10, 1874 reveals that the financial situation of the family was not the best; Růžena's older sister Anna was already deathly ill. [Was it Anna or Fibich's wife who had tuberculosis? \*\*]<sup>37</sup> On top of that, Fibich felt isolated; he was supposed to direct a musical ensemble that did not materialize, and was unable to argue effectively with the prejudiced artistic tastes of his surroundings.<sup>38</sup> On the basis of letter sent to him from Vilnius, Fibich's close friend Karel Pippich expressed the opinion in 1910 that Fibich, for his "comfort and relief,





**Illustration 3.** Bilingual announcement of the wedding of Zdeněk Fibich a Růžena Hanušová (Private archive of the Fibich family)<sup>35</sup>

was very hard-working and productive in Vilnius.” In one letter, Fibich called an unnamed Vilnius director “a gigantic beast, insisting with full moral strictness that the students should play *The Awakening Lion* and *The Maiden’s Prayer*.”<sup>39</sup>

A set of letters in the Lithuanian State Historical Archive provides official communications among Fibich, the director of the Vilnius Jewish Teachers’ Institute, and the clerks of the Vilnius educational circle at the Ministry of National Culture.<sup>40</sup> In a letter dated October 2, 1873, Sergijevskij, the curator of the Vilnius educational circle, informed the director of the Vilnius Jewish Teachers’ Institute that Fibich was already in Vilnius and asked him to accept Fibich as a teacher of secular singing with a pay of 500 rubles yearly.<sup>41</sup> In a letter dated March 4, 1874, Sergijevskij confirmed to the director of the Vilnius Jewish Teachers’ Institute that Fibich had been granted a leave of absence for eight days to travel to Prague, beginning February 25,, 1874.<sup>42</sup> On March 22 1874, the curator was informed by the Vilnius Jewish Teachers’ Institute that, from the beginning of the course (September 19, 1873) to the spring vacation (March 19, 1874), out of the 44 hours allotted for singing, Fibich was absent 15 hours for sickness and granted three hours of leave, for a total of 18 hours.<sup>43</sup> A letter dated September 16, 1874, addressed to Kavaljer [spelling uncertain], the director of the Vilnius Jewish institute, is Fibich’s request to be released from his duties as a music teacher, citing “my domestic circumstances and the outdoor climate.”<sup>44</sup>



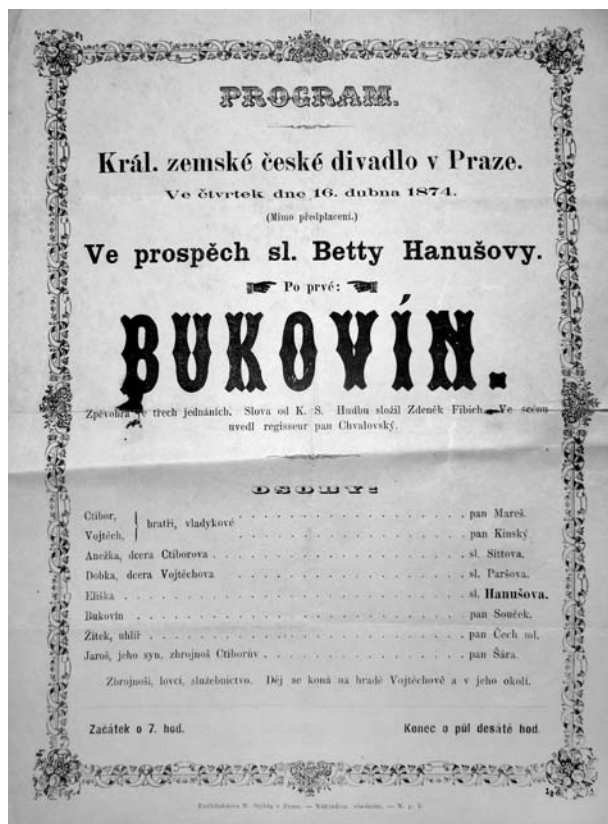
**Illustration 4.** Photographs of Anna Hanušová [undated] (Private archive of the Fibich family)



**Illustration 5.** Photograph of Elsa Fibichová with her nanny, 1874 (Private archive of the Fibich family)



**Illustration 7.** Photograph of Betty Hanušová with the note “To je Rosinčina [fotografie]” [“This is Rosa’s picture”], 1869 (Private archive of the Fibich family)



**Illustration 6.** Poster for the premiere of the opera *Bukovín*, April 16, 1874, benefit performance for Betty Hanušová, who sang the role of Eliška (Private archive of the Fibich family)

Otakar Hostinský wrote on Fibich’s overall feelings on the Vilnius period, and thus he would influence, somewhat one-sidedly, history’s perception of this important phase of Fibich’s life:

Fibich was not satisfied in Vilnius. The town was not sympathetic to him, the residents did not have the least understanding of his artistic activity. For the entire year that he worked in Vilnius, he did not feel at home there. He did not speak of the musical activity that would have privately pleased him much, even less about his personal artistic contacts. And all of this was followed by his unlucky family life. When he took the position in Vilnius, he married Růžena Hanušová, sister of Betty Hanušová, who was an alto soloist with the Czech theater. Twins were born to the young couple on Russian soil. One soon died, and his wife did not care for the Lithuanian climate. No wonder Fibich did not come back after spending his vacation in Prague. His wife died in October 1874. No wonder that a young artist whose thoughts were full of magnificent, daring plans, did not have pleasant memories of Vilnius and Russia. He would hardly ever speak of his stay in Vilnius, and then always with bitterness. (Hostinský 1902: 105)

Fibich himself might have expressed himself otherwise about his year in Vilnius; let us quote from Fibich’s request for the position of choirmaster dated May 4, 1878, sent to the presiding council of the royal town of Prague. In a paragraph describing his studies and subsequent activity, Fibich wrote:

It was an honor for the undersigned that a great happiness allowed him to pursue preliminary studies at institutes under the supervision of persons with an excellent musical reputation and splendor; he entered the gymnasium in Prague, where the worthy Kolešovský was his teacher; the undersigned studied in Leipzig under Mocheles, then in Mannheim under Lachner, obtaining substantial training. After a year in Paris, where he was employed to give lessons in private circles, he returned with honor to Prague, from where he was called to splendid conditions as professor of music and singing at the middle schools in Vilnius in Russia. Unfortunately, the undersigned was unable to enjoy this position for even a year; he was compelled to leave because of the illness and death of his wife as well as the unfavorable climate. (Rektorys 1910: 321)

The compositions discussed in the introduction of our study reflect Fibich's activity in Vilnius and his familiarity with the situation in Bohemia, as well as his personal life. For this reason, we provide a sequence of events for those years (disregarding significant gaps in the sources):<sup>45</sup>

February 20, 1873, marriage of Zdeněk Fibich a Růžena Hanušová (1851–1874)  
June 25, 1873, death of the mother of the Hanušová sisters at the age of 61 years  
December 7, 1873, Prague premiere of the symphonic poem *Othello*  
December 12, 1873, Prague premiere of the symphonic poem *Záboj, Slavoj and Luděk* (in a four-hand arrangement for piano)  
January 13, 1874, birth of the twins Richard and Elsa Fibich in Vilnius; Richard died the same day  
March 19, 1874, Prague performance of the String Quartet in A major  
March 24, 1874, Prague premiere of *Comedy overture* (Hostinský 1902: 43)  
April 16, 1874, Prague premiere of the opera *Bukovín*  
May 25, 1874, Prague performance of the symphonic poem *Záboj, Slavoj and Luděk* (orchestral version)  
May 26, 1874, Prague premiere of the cantata *Wedding Scene*  
June 19, 1874, death of Anna Hanušová in Vilnius (1840–1874)  
October 4, 1874, death of Růžena Fibichová  
February 1, 1875, Prague public premiere of the Piano Quartet<sup>46</sup>  
February 16, 1875, Prague premiere of the Sonata in C major for violin and piano  
August 23, 1875, marriage of Zdeněk Fibich and Betty Hanušová (1846–1901)  
From the 1875/1876 season to the 1877/1878 season, Fibich was the assistant conductor and choirmaster of the Prague Provisional Theater  
April 6, 1876, death of Elsa Fibichová, daughter of Zdeněk and Růžena Fibich  
September 3, 1876, birth of Richard Fibich, son of Zdeněk and Betty Fibichová

In the light of these events, Fibich's decision to break his contract in Vilnius seems to have been an unavoidable step. Nevertheless, the impression of his eleven months of "isolation in Vilnius" must be corrected a bit (Hudec 1971: 36). For example, the possibility cannot be excluded that the strikingly high number of chamber works that he wrote at this time attests to hopes for development of musical life in Vilnius.<sup>47</sup>

Polish culture had prevailed in Vilnius during the first half of the nineteenth century. After the unsuccessful Lithuanian revolt during 1863–1864, Lithuanian music, especially musical theater, was not able to expand under the government of the Russian Empire.<sup>48</sup> In the theater, operetta was predominately performed in the Russian language (it is known that, perhaps as an exception, Bellini's opera *Norma* was performed in Russian in 1871). However, the theater orchestra usually presented valued instrumental compositions before the theater performances or as entr'acte music (for example, works by Mozart, Bellini, Donizetti, Verdi, or Wagner). Independent concert life evolved very slowly, with a clear orientation toward music of the West—along with Russian composers such as Glinka, the repertory included works by Beethoven, Chopin, Meyerbeer, Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Gounod, and others.<sup>49</sup> This trend corresponded to the Germanization of Lithuania; it was customary for members of the orchestra to be Germans (Bakutyte 2014: 414–465). Zdeněk Fibich surely did not disown his Czech heritage in his compositions, but he had actually been engaged as a teacher trained in "classic" (meaning German) music. We can provide some details to fill out this background of the public cultural life that Fibich encountered during his stay in Vilnius:

1) Hans von Bülow gave two piano recitals in Vilnius during February (February 19, 1874 and February 21, 1874), in which he performed works by Bach (for example, the *Chromatic fantasy and fugue in d minor*), Händel, Gluck, Moscheles, Weber, Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Chopin, Moniuszko, and Liszt (Bakutyte 2014: 446–447). Since both appearances took place before Fibich's journey to Prague, the question arises: could Fibich have taken the opportunity to meet with, or at least hear, this remarkable artist?

2) In March 1874, the Vilnius music school was opened by the Vilnius Department of the Russian Musical Society (founded in 1873). The director of the school was Wolf Ebann, who was also active at the Vilnius Jewish Teacher Training Institute. It is possible that Fibich taught at this school for a short time.<sup>50</sup>

3) According to an item in the *Vilnius Journal*, a charity concert took place on April 21, 1874, in the General Governor's Palace Hall in Vilnius, at which Fibich performed his *Scherzo* for piano. The students of the Vilnius middle schools (the gymnasiums and Vilnius real school) took part in a "musical evening" in which the theater orchestra and



**Example 3.** Piano Quartet in E minor, Op. 11, third movement. In the “piano dolce”, violin and viola present the passage “co by mne těšilo” [what pleases me] from the folksong *Ach není, tu není*

musical amateurs participated. Among the works on the program, we find a chorus by Bellini and part of the *Lacrimosa* from Mozart’s *Requiem*. Since students took part, we cannot eliminate the possibility that Fibich prepared this work for the program, because he could have been teaching at the Vilnius real school (see *Виленский вестникъ* 1873: 2).

### The maturation of a composer

Fibich’s employment in Vilnius evidently determined the course of this work right at the moment when the possibilities of his life opened up before him—in 1872. Fibich completed most of the compositions begun in Vilnius in 1875 (let us recall that the premiere of the orchestral version of the symphonic poem *Toman and the Wood Nymph* did not take place until 1878). It has already been shown that Fibich, like all other Czech composers during the 1870s, grappled with the emerging Czech-Slavonic style in chamber music. Let us demonstrate the range of Fibich’s compositional activity by referring to other works that are less well known or were destroyed. Fibich was continually attracted to music drama as well as songs. He evidently was considering the possibility of presenting several lesser cantatas when he began to compose the ballad *Die Windsbraut* [Bride of the wind] on a text by Gottfried Kinkel in 1872. The core of this cantata for orchestra, chorus and five soloists (Meluzína and her suitors—the spirits of water, fire, earth, and air) was worked out in Vilnius by the beginning of 1874.<sup>51</sup> There was no opportunity to present an opera under the conditions that Vilnius had to offer; nevertheless, Fibich composed the opera *Frithjof* during autumn 1873. A trustworthy report, by tradition evidently directly from Fibich, appeared in the journal *Dalibor*:

Fibich, in order to continue in the dramatic current, is provisionally composing the music drama *Frithjof* to Lohmann’s successful text and has reached the second half of the second act. The composer himself considers the composition as preparation for his great musical drama *Blaník*, which is now in the hands of our excellent poet Miss Eliška Krásnohorská.<sup>52</sup>

There was enough time for composition, which enabled Fibich to try a variety of solutions and to experiment. And it is precisely the works that arose from Fibich’s Neo-Romantic longing for new discoveries that attract well-deserved attention today. According to Karel Pippich, Fibich commented in a letter about these compositions thus: “[...] he declares that his new piano quartet [Piano Quartet in E minor, op. 11], is “crazy”; its last movement combines and develops the themes of all of the movements, so that “the listener must put his hands over his ears.” He also mentions his “less crazy” sonata for violin and his ballad for violoncello, “which is ready now.”<sup>53</sup> The Piano Quartet in E minor is today rightly considered one of Fibich’s most splendid works; along with its high compositional quality, it clearly is his personal statement. He enriched the principal rondo themes in the last movement with the folk song *Ach není, tu není, co by mne těšilo* [Ah, nothing, nothing here pleases me] (see Example 3).

The artistic peak of the Vilnius period is *Toman and the Wood Nymph*, which is a synthesis of his interest in the so-called Czech-Slavonic style with modern forms such as the symphonic poem. Here, Fibich went beyond his previous achievements, he acknowledged his [studying] compositions, and the path to his masterworks opened. In fact, he quoted his own song on a German text as well as a Czech folk song in *Toman and the Wood Nymph* (see Examples 4 and 5). He mastered Liszt’s technique of motivic transformation without giving up the possibility of

**Andantino**

Example 4. *Toman and the Wood Nymph*, Op. 49

**Con moto** (♩ = c. 168)

Example 5. *Toman and the Wood Nymph*, Op. 49

working with different contrasting themes. In addition, the folk ballad suited Fibich well with its naturalism, which he was glad to view as an aspect of the balladic legend. Fibich himself described the years 1871–1872 as a time of “horrific increase in productivity” (Pippich 1910: 347) and did not rest during the immediately following years. The works written in Vilnius mark the beginning of Fibich’s career as one of the founders of Czech national music. It is possible to agree with Fibich’s friend Otakar Hostinský, but let us correct his impression of Vilnius as a town that could not offer anything to Fibich:

[Fibich] grew into a master in Vilnius. That was entirely natural. That was less a result of his artistic efforts to respond to the foreign atmosphere that he faced; he drew on his own resources, devoted himself to work more eagerly, penetrated deeper into the foundations of his art, raised his efforts to a higher level [...] In Vilnius, he consummated and completed his extensive and thorough studies of technique and acquired his uncommon capability for self-criticism. And from that time, an enviable and praiseworthy balance between intention and art came into his work, [...]. (Hostinský 1902: 105)

Fibich took the introductory motif from his lied *Sommerabend* (1866) on a text by Heinrich Heine and used it as the fundamental motif for the wood nymph in the symphonic poem (see Example 4; Hudec 1966: 46–47). At the moment when Toman finds out that his love is celebrating her engagement to someone else, Fibich uses a folk wedding song that appears as a variant in *Zlé tušení* [Evil expectation] (see example 5):

Ty se mně má milá nic nelíbíš, / zarmoucená chodíš, nic nemluvíš. / Nic nemluvíš, nic neříkáš, / ja se tebe bojím, že mne necháš.” [My dear, you do not please me, / you walk mournfully, you don’t say anything. / You don’t talk, you don’t speak. / I am afraid of you, for you are leaving me].<sup>54</sup>

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> This article was written as part of a project under Fond pro podporu vědecké činnosti [Institute for the Support of Research Activity], made possible by the Faculty of Arts of Palacký University, Olomouc, Czech Republic, with the title “Fibich, skladatel, který se nebál experimentů” [Fibich, the composer who did not fear experimentation] (FPVC2017/07). Translated by Judith Fiehler.
- <sup>2</sup> Viktor Moser compiled a thematic catalog of the works of his friend Fibich that contains information about the compositions that Fibich destroyed in the 1890s. It is a unique source that provides relatively reliable data about Fibich’s early creative activity. It belongs to a private archive of the Fibich family; copies are held in the musicological department of the Faculty of Arts of Palacký University in Olomouc. For access to this archive and his considerate help, I wish to thank the great-grandson of the composer, the MSc Zdeněk Fibich!
- <sup>3</sup> These numbers are taken from *Thematický seznam veškerých skladeb Zdeňka Fibicha od r. 1862 do 31. května 1885 sestavil Viktor Moser* [Thematic catalog of most of the compositions of Zdeněk Fibich from 1862 to 31 May 1885, compiled by Viktor Moser].
- <sup>4</sup> The symphonic poem *Othello* is the first orchestral composition that Fibich presented in Prague musical circles and has survived. Another surviving work is his *Fantazie ve formě ouvertury* [Fantasy in the form of an overture] for full orchestra in E major, 1872 (MK 284 – *Orchestrální fantazie*). This composition was

- found in the private archive of the Fibich family. When it was first discovered, Bedřich Čapek characteristically commented: “Fibich’s rapid development and the early maturity of his art are well known...” (Čapek 1910: 40–41).
- <sup>5</sup> This piano sonata was composed in three movements. A note at the beginning of the first movement reads: “This movement was completed on December 1.”
- <sup>6</sup> The catalog contains a rather extensive comment by Moser: “This composition was finished in 1872. Orchestrated in Vilnius, beginning on May 15.”
- <sup>7</sup> There is a remark under the incipit in the entry, “Adagio also arrang. for vcello.”
- <sup>8</sup> Number 165 in the Moser catalog is Fughetta for 4 hands from 1868.
- <sup>9</sup> In the entry is a note “Piano sketch 6 July 1874 in Vilnius.” Fibich worked on the piano sketch from July 3–July 6, 1874. The orchestration was completed in Prague on February 22, 1875 (see Hudec 1971: 42, footnote 15).
- <sup>10</sup> The composition numbered 379 evidently was written in 1876, but the entry for number 378 is followed by a supplementary piano cycle numbered 512: *Ofenheim Walzer* for piano.
- <sup>11</sup> From 1870 to 1872, *Hudební listy* supported the works of Bedřich Smetana but also published articles criticizing him (for example, Eliška Krásnohorská gave examples of lapses in correct musical declamation in Smetana’s operas). At the end of 1872, the ownership and the publisher of the journal changed; it became the principal anti-Smetanian journal under the leadership of Josef Richard Rozkošný and František Pivoda. Former contributors to *Hudební listy* found a refuge in the rejuvenated journal *Dalibor* (whose chief editor was Ludevít Procházka; from 1875, Václav Juda Novotný). See Kopecký 2016.
- <sup>12</sup> For concepts of other authors about the issue of Slavonic music (such as Ludvík Ritter z Rittersberku, Ján Levoslav Bella, Franjo Žaver Kuhač, and František Pivoda), see Otllová & Pospíšil 2006: 172–183.
- <sup>13</sup> Max Konopásek (1820–1879) was already considered to be a prejudiced figure in music history during the nineteenth century (see Otllová & Pospíšil 2006: 178–179, footnote 31). There are parallels between the careers of Konopásek and Smetana: they belonged to the same generation, were skillful pianists, and both were associated with Josef Proksch. Konopásek’s polemic articles in *Hudební listy* written while he was active in Galicia. Konopásek remained in contact with Czech musicians to the end of his life. See Zechová 2017: 108.
- <sup>14</sup> Konopásek wrote in detail about the significance of Haydn’s music in his serially published article “Hudební i nehudební stránky slovanské hudby” [Musical and extramusical aspects of Slavonic music], p. 143.
- <sup>15</sup> Konopásek found the “traits of the Slavonic rhythmic model” in polkas, and compared them with other Slavonic dances (Konopásek, “Rozbor...” 1874: 141).
- <sup>16</sup> Although Konopásek strongly promoted the study of “original” folk songs, he assumed that they would be performed in the Romantic style by capable geniuses in the future. For this reason, he strongly objected to ideas about the influence of archaic Russian music on [contemporary] Slavonic music, as well as Darwinian laws of the development of its musical forms (Konopásek, “Rozbor...” 1874: 145–147, 149–150, 153; see also Konopásek, “Hudební...” 1875: 128). Let us recall that [classical] Greek culture was of interest to Otakar Hostinský and others, and that Darwinian theory was being defended in the pages of *Dalibor* as the basis for the developmental line from symphony to symphonic poem.
- <sup>17</sup> Konopásek never ceased to admonish his readers that future generations of musicians should devote themselves to the study of the folk song, so that they would safely recognize “what has to be in Slavonic music for the Slavs”... however, we in the Czech lands cannot yet tell the difference between genuine Slavonic national folk songs and other folk songs.” See Konopásek, “Hudební i nehudební stránky,” p. 186.
- <sup>18</sup> Konopásek was surely aware that the Czech nation was the “most musical nation in the world,” with a gift for “its mission, and a unique ability to establish Slavonic music,” but he never stopped repeating that they were not creative; the Czechs did “not accomplish anything glorious or outstanding; they whittled everything down to mere journeyman’s work, to a mere imitation of foreign masters.” Of course, the situation might be different if Czech musicians would devote their thoughts to Slavonic music, “their talent, time and work, as Germans devote themselves to music,” but Slavonic music would have to be a joint effort of the masses, “a completed action.” Konopásek, “Hudební...” 1875: 159.
- <sup>19</sup> Konopásek literally warned against using Chopin, “the first Slavonic composer”, as a model to imitate: “[...] by God! Let us use a model for Slavonic music, not any model at all!”; Konopásek, “Hudební...” 1875: 202.
- <sup>20</sup> See also Konopásek, “Hudební...” 1875: 135.
- <sup>21</sup> Also see Konopásek, “Hudební...” 1875: 151–152.
- <sup>22</sup> Konopásek mentioned fujara players and fiddlers. See Konopásek, “Rozbor...” 1874: 177–178. He wrote piano arrangements of kolomejka [Ukrainian dance] that were certainly appreciated by Germans and Czechs, but not by “Ruthenians and Poles.” He followed his own advice by using an extract from Chopin’s Mazurka in B major, Op. 7 No. 1, to point out “a movement with traits of Slavonic music in an entirely simple harmonization” (Konopásek, “Rozbor...” 1874: 181).
- <sup>23</sup> About key changes (especially from major to minor), see p. 158. On page 170, Konopásek mentions “our beautiful Slavonic minor.” For Konopásek, the first Slavonic music was through and through the feminine minor, and he thought that the tendency for a masculine major mood in Polish and Czech folk music and the striking alternation of major and minor in Russian music were productive traits (ibid., p. 173–174).
- <sup>24</sup> Afterward, Konopásek strongly emphasized the importance of the kolomejka. See Konopásek, “Rozbor otázky,” p. 174, actual musical examples on p. 177–179, where he adequately demonstrates how to subvert a melodic form that is clearly in c minor through continual semitone changes (for example E-flat–E, D-sharp–e, F-sharp–F, C-sharp–D, A-sharp–B, B–C).
- <sup>25</sup> Konopásek’s lofty statements about the ideals of Slavonic music were connected with claims about how unsatisfactory the entire situation was: “In truth, among the real Slavs, i.e. those who now behave as Slavs, there are even among us no more than fingers on both hands!” (Konopásek, “Hudební...” 1875: 164).
- <sup>26</sup> Hostinský continually emphasized that any connection that Czech art might have with European art must be with German Neo-Romanticism, particularly the compositions of Liszt and Wagner. But he also wrote: “there is such overwhelming prejudice against these artists that the mere mention of their names seems repugnant to many—but that is a situation that our national art can overcome” (Hostinský 1885: 158).
- <sup>27</sup> In 1980, Jan Trojan called attention to so far unidentified scales in Moravian folk songs (see Trojan 1980: 206). Ivan Vojtěch wrote one of his best essays on Dvořák’s *Zajata* (Vojtěch 1998: 57–72).



<sup>28</sup> The String Quartet in A major was completed in Vilnius on March 6, 1874. Vladimír Hudec has shown that there is a correspondence between the second movement and the folk song *Ach není, tu není* [Ah, nothing, nothing here pleases me], which significantly appears in the finale of the Piano Quartet, Op. 11. The polyphonic structure of that work is connected with a folk song that Fibich used in the closing movement of the Piano Sonata in C minor—which, unfortunately, has not been handed down to us—which, according to an account from that time, ended with a fugue on the folk song *Horo, horo, vysoká jsi* [Mountain, mountain, you are so high] (see Hudec 1971: 38–39).

<sup>29</sup> The same inspirational source is used in the Violin Sonata in D major (1876). Significantly, Fibich did not continue with the genre of chamber music after writing this work and soon afterwards abandoned his intensive work with folkloric material.

<sup>30</sup> According to Vladimír Lébíl and Jitka Ludvová, the symphonic poem was considered to be “an optimal way to raise Czech concert music to the level of the struggle for national culture. The first Czech symphonic poems gave that idea a significant early consecration.” (Lébíl & Ludvová 1981: 126).

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Debrnov 1888: 218–219.

<sup>32</sup> Janáček, for example, undertook an analysis of Wagner’s *Tristan and Isolde*, around the same time (1885), wrote choruses on folk texts and established connections with folk musicians. See Drlíková 2004: 36–38.

<sup>33</sup> The program can be found in the private archive of the Fibich family.

<sup>34</sup> Procházka maintained active contacts with foreign artists; he especially cared about disseminating Russian music among Czech musicians and entered into the organization of the life of the Prague community in many ways; for example, he arranged concert evenings, led the music journal *Hudební listy*, and later *Dalibor*. See Hostinský 1902: 73, and especially Vojtěšková 2013.

According to Hostinský, it was actually Procházka who meticulously followed Fibich’s artistic progress:

Procházka, for example, who has continued to stay in touch with Fibich during his entire stay in Vilnius, wrote to me early in October 1874 from Prague to Salzburg: “The unhappy Fibich has lost his wife, but he is now composing with redoubled strength. He had taken a place in Vilnius, and will undoubtedly obtain a position as professor of theory in a musical academy in Leipzig, which would of course be very advantageous for him as well as for us. He and Dvořák are now developing with amazing productivity and are maturing into great masters—we can expect great things from both of them!” (Hostinský 1902: 91).

<sup>35</sup> This announcement was found in the private archive of the Fibich family.

<sup>36</sup> According to Vladimír Hudec, the contract should have been in the private archive of the Fibich family, but I unfortunately did not find it there (this information is taken from Hudec 1971: 36). According to a statistical survey of the schools and instructors in Vilnius in 1874, Fibich had the following duties: Vilnius Real School (Виленское реальное училище), teacher of the chorus of singers from October 10, 1873; and Vilnius Jewish Teacher Training Institute (Виленский Еврейский учительский институт), voice instructor from October 16, 1873 (see *Памятная книжка...* 1874: 94, 105).

<sup>37</sup> Anna should have taken care of her younger sister, Fibich’s wife. But Anna unexpectedly died in Vilnius. A nanny took

care of Fibich’s daughter Elsa, as shown in photographs from the family archive (see illustrations 4 and 5).

<sup>38</sup> Dissatisfaction may have also been caused by the Czech side. In March 1874, Fibich left for Prague to participate in the premiere of his first opera, *Bukovín*, which had been scheduled for March 15, 1874. Because of the tense atmosphere in the theater, in the very building where the fight over Smetana had come to a head, precedence was given to the premiere of Smetana’s *Dvě vdovy* [Two widows]. *Bukovín* was only performed three times, the first performance was a benefit for Betty Hanušová (see illustrations 6 and 7). The critics judged the poor quality of the libretto very severely (see Hudec 1971: 16, 41, footnote 4).

<sup>39</sup> Fibich’s artistic direction in these years clearly explains not only his compositions (a “Schumannesque” piano quartet, the “Weber-like” opera *Bukovín*, his adaptations of Liszt’s concept of the symphonic poem), but even in naming his children – the twins were given the Wagnerian names of Richard and Elsa. See Pippich 1910: 347.

<sup>40</sup> The folder containing these letters is kept in the Lithuanian State Historical Archives (LVIA), F 570 (Vilnius Jewish Teacher Training Institute), sign. 570 Ap. 1 B. 20, Bureau of the Vilnius Jewish Teacher Training Institute, October 6, 1873–October 23, 1874 (copies of these letters are in the Czech National Museum—Czech Museum of Music in Prague). In addition to in F 570, we have found other archives—unfortunately, entirely without holdings identified under Fibich’s name: F 567 (Vilnius Teachers’ District), F 1293 (Vilnius Real School), and F 574 (Vilnius I Gymnasium). For her extraordinary, devoted help with research in the Vilnius archives, I want to express my profound appreciation to Vida Bakutytė.

<sup>41</sup> The letter is dated October 2, 1873 (above on the left). The date of October 6 is found on the paper above on the right (letterhead paper, Ministry for Public Education—Curators of the Vilnius Educational District, LVIA, sign. 570 Ap. 1 B. 20, L. 1).

<sup>42</sup> LVIA, sign. 570 1 20, letter 2. Fibich evidently was absent from Vilnius for a longer time than he had been granted. According to Otakar Hostinský, he participated in a rehearsal of his opera *Bukovín*; its theatrical premiere was rescheduled for April:

On 16 [March], [Fibich] was present at a rehearsal given with full musical resources, and was satisfied [...] with the result. (Hostinský 1902: 13)

<sup>43</sup> LVIA, sign. 570 1 20, letter 3.

<sup>44</sup> LVIA, sign. 570 1 20, letter 4. The following three letters from September 18, September 25, and October 23, 1874 (sign. 570 1 20, verso of letter 4, letters 5 and 6) provide a formal acknowledgement of releasing Fibich from his obligations to teach singing at the Jewish Teachers’ Institute effective October 1, 1874. Another letter, written by Fibich and sent to his wife from Vilnius September 12, 1874, is our last evidence on Fibich’s stay in Vilnius (Private archive of the Fibich family): Fibich assumed that he would stay approximately four days to arrange everything, including selling a piano. He informed Rosa that he met his colleagues Wainer and Klineles [spelling uncertain] and had to confirm again not to continue in his employment.

<sup>45</sup> This chronology is reconstructed from material in the private archive of the Fibich family, and Hudec 1971. The events of family life are supplemented with the dates of premieres of chosen works (indented).

- <sup>46</sup> Fibich's friends could hear the opus 11 to the end of November 1874 by a performance at a musical entertainment in the music section of Umělecká beseda [Artist Society] (see Hudec 1971: 38).
- <sup>47</sup> It is necessary to understand that testing various compositional approaches in chamber music venues had certain advantages and motivations. Chamber music performances are less exacting than presenting orchestral works; the composer may better be able to resign himself to an unsuccessful outcome than destroy his orchestral score. We cannot eliminate the possibility that the public premieres in Prague of Fibich's works were preceded by private tryouts in Vilnius. Chamber music was an integral part of music in the home, and we must emphasize that the extraordinary impulse for musical life in Vilnius was the activity of Wolf Ebann (1835–1901) (see Bakutytė 2013: 8–24). The life of violinist, composer, teacher, and organizer Wolf Ebann significantly demonstrates how nineteenth-century Jews left the narrow circle of their activity within the Jewish community and effectively became part of public and international life (Melnikas 2014: 466–552). An article provides information about the possibility of direct contact between Fibich and Ebann when Fibich was teaching in the Vilnius Jewish Teachers' Institute (Rupeikaitė 2015: 224–236).
- <sup>48</sup> The education reform took place during 1866–1867. Even in the Jewish schools, the mandatory language used in the classroom became Russian, to the detriment of Hebrew studies. Let us recall that more than 100 synagogues stood in Vilnius until World War II, and that the city was called the Jerusalem of Lithuania (Rupeikaitė 2015: 226).
- <sup>49</sup> Vilnius benefited from concert tours from travelling virtuosos at the end of the nineteenth century. For example, the Czech violinist František Ondříček and the Czech Quartet appeared in Vilnius. Italian opera troupes performed in Vilnius during 1872–1879, decisively confirmed by the engagement of the troupe of Ludovic Caroselli, at the very time when we do not have sources for Fibich's activity in Vilnius (Bakutytė 2011: 251–252, 476).
- <sup>50</sup> Ebann led this institute in its first period of operation until 1884. It was reestablished in 1898–1918. The Lithuanian music encyclopedia contains a concise entry about Vilnius music schools that merely lists Fibich among the teachers, but it is possible that further information could be found in archives in St. Petersburg (see Karaška 2007: 626). The entry for Fibich is very brief and does not mention any institutions (see Tauragis 2000: 394).
- <sup>51</sup> This ballad was translated to Czech in 1876 by Josef Srb-Debrnov, and another translation was made by Adolf Piskáček in 1911. Zdeněk Nejedlý considered this composition to be a document of the time, although he recognized its musical quality:  
The principal subject of the ballad is certainly a bit outdated in our era of victories in aviation over obstacles and air, the fourth element. Its poetic value consists in the legend of Meluzina, and will surely endure. When the text was written, it certainly had a political tinge; it is Kinkel's apotheosis of freedom. (Nejedlý 1911: 139).
- <sup>52</sup> Quotation from an article published in *Dalibor* (1874), cited according to Nejedlý 1910: 338.
- <sup>53</sup> Fibich must have also worked on cantata called *Bouře* [The Tempest] on a text by Svatopluk Čech, a string sextet, and a requiem during this time. The Moser catalog evidently does not show all of the compositions on which Fibich worked in Vilnius (see Pippich 1910: 347).
- <sup>54</sup> Fibich may have been found this melody in *Nápěvy prstonárodních písní českých* [Melodies of national Czech songs], compiled by Karel Jaromír Erben in 1862 (see Kráčmar 2007: 132).

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### Private archive of the Fibich family

Photographs, programs and posters, autographs, letters.  
*Thematic catalog of most of Zdeněk Fibich's compositions from 1862 to 31 May 1885, compiled by Viktor Moser.*

### Lithuanian State Historical Archives (Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas)

F 570, Vilnius Jewish Teacher Training Institute, sign. 570 Ap. 1 B. 20; Bureau of the Vilnius Jewish Teacher Training Institute, 6. 10. 1873–23. 10. 1874 (correspondence about Fibich's employment).

### Santrauka

Nors Zdenėkas Fibichas (1850–1900) Vilniuje muzikos mokytoju dirbo mažiau nei metus (1873–1874), 1872–1875 m. parašyti darbai turėjo įtakos jo vėlesnei kūrybai. Nuo 1872-ųjų pradėjęs ruošti „rusų caro muzikos mokytojo“ tarnybai, Fibichas planavo atlikti įvairiausių žanrų veikalus, taip pat ir kantatas bei simfonines poemas. Grįžęs iš Vilniaus, ėmėsi užbaigti kūrinius, kurių buvo sukurti tik klavyro apmatau, tarp jų – simfoninę poemą „Tomanas ir medinė nimfa“, kurios premjera įvyko 1878-aisiais. Pasak išlikusių šaltinių, Fibichas nebuvo patenkintas nei savo profesine padėtimi Vilniuje, nei asmeniniu gyvenimu. Muzikinis gyvenimas šiame Lietuvos mieste nebuvo toks įkvepiantis kaip jo studijų miestuose Leipce ir Manheime. Vis dėlto šiokią tokią perspektyvą muzikinio ugdymo srityje žadėjo Wolfso Ebanno veikla, į Vilnių gastrolių atvykdavo ir žymių atlikėjų (pvz., Hansas von Bülowas). Viena po kitos ištikusios nelaimės – jo dvynių iš pirmos santuokos mirtis, sunki žmonos liga ir uošvės sesers mirtis – nulėmė Fibicho sprendimą grįžti į Prahą. Vis dėlto po to jis liko Vilniuje dar beveik metus ir sukauptė tiek vertingų kūrinių, kad galime neabejodami teigti, jog kaip tik šiame mieste subrendo Fibicho meistriškumas, nes čia jis galėjo apmąstyti drąsius kūrybinius sprendimus.

Fibichas ilgėjosi Prahos, o tuo metu, XIX a. aštunto dešimtmečio pradžioje, Bohemijoje užvirė ginčai dėl Bedřicho Smetanos kūrybos ir kompozicinės technikos. Čekų visuomenei karštai ir vieningai stojant prieš Wagnerio idėjų ir kompozicinių priemonių veržimąsi į čekų nacionalinę muziką, šios diskusijos atvėrė kelią klausimams, kokia turėtų būti atsvara vokiečių muzikai, ypač neoromantinei kryptiai. Kone visi kompozitoriai, tarp jų ir patys stipriausi, tokie kaip Smetana, Dvořakas, Fibichas ir Janačekas, eksperimentavo su Maxo Konopaseko ir kitų muzikos kritikų pasiūlyta medžiaga (iš liaudies dainų sudarytomis sekomis ir Chopino šokių stilizacijomis). Reaguodamas iš susidariusių padėčių, Fibichas kūrė neįtikėtinai plataus spektro kūrinius – nuo dainų (*Lieder*) vokiškais tekstais iki čekų liaudies dainų aranžuotųjų. Tarp jų buvo ir perėjimą nuo liaudies kūrybos prie kamerinės muzikos atspindinčių kūrinių (styginių kvartetui A-dur bei G-dur ir kt.). Jis taip pat rašė kantatas, užsibrėžęs sukurti vagnerišką muzikinę dramą, ėmėsi operų, tada susidomėjo Ferenco Liszto simfoninių poemų idėja. Fibichas parašė visą pluoštą kūrinių, praplėtusių folklorinės medžiagos panaudojimo galimybes; rinkdamasis medžiagą jis visada kreipdavo dėmesį, ar jos žanrinės ypatybės dera prie viso jo kūrybos audinio (pvz., polką laikė čekų nacionalinės muzikos simboliu). Geriausia Vilniaus laikotarpio partitūra – simfoninė poema „Tomanas ir medinė nimfa“, kurioje sėkmingai susilieja visų anksčiau minėtų darbų kompoziciniai laimėjimai, atveria kelią kitai, brandesnei, kūrybai.

Delivered / Straipsnis įteiktas 2019 08 06