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The Czech Lands and Sacred Music Before and After 1989¹

Čekų žemės ir sakralinė muzika prieš 1989-uosius ir po jų

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Abstract

Sacred music was barely tolerated in the former Czechoslovakia between 1948 and 1989, and composing or performing required courage. Liturgical and non-liturgical texts, biblical materials, and religious musical symbols expressed the distress that composers and performers felt and helped them find lost hope and spiritual balance. Czech liturgical and sacred music entered a new phase after the Velvet Revolution in 1989. The atmosphere of freedom had a positive impact on this genre: the increased number and artistic value of compositions as well as the increased number of concerts and new festivals enjoyed the great attention of the audience. Sacred music has remained popular with music artists, organizers, and the public and has not lost any of its topicality or artistic value throughout the first twenty years of the twenty-first century.

Keywords: sacred music, Czechoslovakia, the Czech Republic, composers, compositions, 1948, 1968, 1989, Petr Eben.

Anotacija

Buvusioje Čekoslovakijoje nuo 1948 m. iki 1989 m. sakralinė muzika buvo sunkiai toleruojama: ją rašyti ar atlikti reikėjo drąsos. Liturginiai ir neliturginiai tekstai, Biblijos medžiaga ir religiniai muzikiniai simboliai puikiai perteikė sielvartą, išgyvenamą kompozitorių ir atlikėjų, ir padėjo jems atgauti prarastą viltį bei dvasinę pusiausvyrą. Čekų liturginė ir sakralinė muzika jžengė į naują etapą po 1989 m. Aksominės revoliucijos. Sakralinė muzika populiarė tarp muzikos atlikėjų, organizatorų ir klausytojų; per pirmuosius du XXI a. dešimtmečius ji neprarado savo aktualumo ir meninės vertės.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: sakralinė muzika, Čekoslovakija, Čekijos Respublika, kompozitoriai, kūriniai, 1948-ieji, 1968-ieji, 1989-ieji, Petr Eben.

Introduction

The existence and development of few genres of classical music reflect the political and social developments in the twentieth century to such an extent as sacred music. The atmosphere of Communist Czechoslovakia between 1948 and 1989, in particular, fundamentally influenced the development of sacred music. The environment changed substantially following the 1989 political revolution. The role that sacred music played in contemporary culture in the first years of democracy was as strong as that of exiled literature and theatrical pieces by previously banned authors. And what has happened since? Has sacred music lost its meaning in the present liberal world?

The aim of this study is to describe the development of sacred music in the Czech lands between 1948 and 2020 across all music spheres, namely production/composition, interpretation, reception, and reflection.

Sacred music: the genre and its history in the twentieth century

Sacred music rests on Christian themes in the European tradition of music.² The history of the Czech lands is linked to the Roman-Catholic Church, to which 30% of the population belong.³ The text below therefore deals with the context related to this religion. We leave aside Evangelical and Orthodox music, as well as Jewish and Eastern music, although their recent history is also interesting.⁴

A description of sacred music on the music-speech level tends to present a challenge. Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht proposed the following, most comprehensive, definition in his essay:

It is a music where the relationship to God evolves in a peculiar act of relating. This can take place in different ways: through a verbal note which conceptually determines and directs the existence and meaning of tones; with a text, by writing lyrics or new lyrics; through purpose or function, or by transferring music, any music, to worship or only to the

cult space of the temple; by associations, historically created stylistic peculiarities, which provide music with an aura of spirituality; via idioms and quotations which, if recognized, represent spirituality as they have a similar impact as a text; and, above all, by a subjective or collective understanding, which declares a certain music or music in general to be related to God, sanctified by God, turning to God. (Eggebrecht 1997: 143–144; also see: Eggebrecht 1997: 132–133)

The most typical forms of sacred music include masses, requiems, and officiums, cantatas and oratorios, and in terms of smaller pieces, psalms, sequences, hymns, passions and prayer songs. Sacred music is most often vocal-instrumental, but it can also be orchestral, chamber, or solo.

The “sacredness” of each composition is primarily defined by the clear intent of the artist. Not every use of musical quotations, however, or idioms historically linked to religion is sacred music. An example is the sequence of *Dies irae* quoted in *Black Angels* by George Crumb (1970), where the composer protests against the Vietnam War, or the use of the Hussite chorale *Ktož jsú boží bojovníci* (*Who Are Warriors of God*) in *Music for Prague 1968* by Karel Husa to express the composer’s emotions over the invasion of Prague by the Warsaw Pact troops. These two pieces are not sacred, however, as the sacred songs used here only serve as a musical symbol.

Composers tended to be driven to compose sacred music by personal or professional circumstances; for the most part, these two aspects merged. Their personal reasons were as follows: composers drew on their religious beliefs and worldviews. They declared their faith or affiliation to the church, and their compositions praised and glorified God and pleaded for help or reconciliation. This group of composers includes those who chose the spiritual genre only on occasion. They would, for example, often at a mature or old age or some other stage in their lives, sum up their lives, philosophize about the meaning of human existence, or react to a difficult situation they or their loved ones were facing.

A great number of artists were involved in sacred music due to their job. These were artists connected with organ music, whether as choirmasters, church singers, or organ players. Their compositions were used at church masses. This category also includes custom compositions created for particular musicians, singers, vocal and instrumental ensembles, festival committees, or composer contests.

As a result of growing religious liberalism and atheism, the nineteenth century saw some composers begin to view spiritual themes as a cultural phenomenon. They thus acknowledged the roots of our civilization to remind us of core and timeless values and pass on humanism.

The sacred music of the twentieth century increasingly reflected on the contemporary world. Composers wrote music, for example, to lament the horrors of war (Bohuslav

Martinů *Polní mše* (*Field Mass*), 1939, Britten’s *War Requiem*, 1961). Some reflected on perverted ideologies,⁵ with Eastern Bloc artists protesting against the Communist dictatorship. They used liturgical and non-liturgical texts, biblical materials, and religious musical symbols as an allegorical or metaphorical expression of their distress or in order to seek out lost hope and spiritual balance.⁶ For other composers, sacred music was an escape from the dictates of socialist realism, mass songs, or celebratory cantatas.

The compositional style of sacred pieces, a reservoir of conservative music language for centuries, absorbed contemporary compositional techniques in the second half of the twentieth century. The compositions included timber pieces (György Ligeti *Requiem*, 1963–65, Krzysztof Penderecki *St. Luke Passion*, 1963–66), modal pieces (Olivier Messiaen *The Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, 1965–69), minimalist (Arvo Pärt: *The Berlin Mass*, 1990, Sofia Gubaidulina: *Sieben Worte*, 1982), Neoromantic pieces (Krzysztof Penderecki: *Polish Requiem*, 1980–84) and poly-style/postmodern pieces (Alfred Schnittke *Requiem*, 1974–75). Sacred themes and forms also entered modern popular music and jazz (Andrew Lloyd Weber: *Jesus Christ Superstar*, 1970, Leonard Bernstein: *The Mass*, 1971, Paul McCartney: *Liverpool Oratorio*, 1991). Catholic music tied to liturgical purposes was influenced by the recommendations of the Second Vatican Council, 1962–65.

Before 1989: totalitarian regime

The totalitarian Communist regime installed in Czechoslovakia⁷ by the 1948 Czechoslovak *coup d'état* naturally did not welcome sacred music. Communists strove to suppress the influence of Christian churches on society. Seminaries, except for the state-supervised school in Litoměřice, were abolished in 1950. Simply entering a church became an act of extraordinary courage in an atmosphere where many members of the church hierarchy were brutally interrogated, falsely accused, and given long sentences. Teachers and cultural workers with an active faith in God lost their jobs.

It is surprising how many church choirs continued to work at nearly the same pace under such trying conditions throughout the forty-one years of totalitarianism. Astonishingly, the membership hardly wavered. A great number of church choirmasters, organists, and singers were prominent in the local music culture. These musicians managed to skillfully merge their church and secular activities.

Scarcely any sacred music was composed in the 1950s, these being the years of flourishing socialism, political trials, and enforcement of atheist propaganda. The themes were based primarily on Old Testament texts and stories, which were more likely to be tolerated by the regime for being ancient and having historical value. Compositions written

in this period include the cantata *Žalm (Psalm) 116/117* (1951) by Jarmil Burghauser (1921–1997) and the oratorio *Noé* (1956–58) by Ilja Hurník (1922–2013). Another option was to compose strictly instrumental pieces, whose “ideological incorrectness” was difficult to prove. This was why the renowned organ music *Nedělní hudba (Sunday Music)* (1959) could be composed by Petr Eben (1929–2007) (see also Vondrovicová 1995 and Vítová 2004).

Composers did not dare to set the requiem text to music, as confirmed by Jaroslav Smolka. He calculated that out of the 108 vocal works made in the 1950s, not a single one was a Requiem (see Smolka 1991: 156).

A renaissance within the Communist Party and the new humanization tendencies of the 1960s brought some hope. Parishes and ecclesiastical orders were slowly re-established. The Catholic Church underwent a major shift after the Second Vatican Council introduced a number of groundbreaking changes to the Roman Catholic rite. The Missa Mundi was accompanied by “live and active” participation by the entire congregation of believers. Latin was permitted to be replaced by the national language. Adjusting church music to the church community also often meant a drop in its artistic quality and pushed the hitherto privileged role of church choirs into the background. The council, in contrast, opened churches to a wider musical public, which was also implemented in Communist countries.

The post-council times gave rise in the Czech lands to four mass ordinaries by Josef Olejník (1914–2009) (see Komárek 2001), Karel Bříza (1926–2001), Petr Eben, and Zdeněk Pololáník (b. 1935).

Youth scholas boosted the participation of young believers in the liturgy as their rhythmic masses were accompanied by guitars and flutes as well as other instruments. Their musical inputs responded to the sky-rocketing rise of rock and pop music and usually alternated with church choirs from week to week.

The sacred music of earlier epochs, the Baroque and Classicism-Romanticism, slowly began to be played by the media. Composers worked with the spiritual genre through biblical stories, liturgical texts, and prayers sometimes combined with modern poetry. Texts in Latin, Greek, or Hebrew were likely to be incomprehensible to censors. Examples include the mixed choir with three trumpets and timpani *Nabuchodonosor* (1961) by Zdeněk Pololáník; *Missa glagolitica* (1964) to the Old Church Slavonic text by Jiří Laburda (b. 1931); the composition on Hebrew texts *Zaklinání času (Incantations of Time)* (1967) by Miloslav Ištvan (1928–1990); the cantata *Gesta Machabaeorum* (1967) by Alois Piňoš (1925–2008); *Requiem* (1968) for solos, choir, and orchestra by Luboš Fišer (1935–1999); the motet on suffering *O sacrum convivium* (1968) by Jan Klusák (b. 1934); or the composition for solo voice and chamber ensemble *Ex libro psalmorum* (1968) to Psalm 144, with a plea for protection from enemies, by Jan Málek (b. 1938).

The turning point was 21 August 1968, when the troops of five “friendly” armies of the Warsaw Pact entered Czechoslovakia and society was gripped by disillusionment and disappointment. Occupation-protesting compositions included the choral *Modlitba (Prayer)* (1968) to the words of Ghanaian Christians; *Iudica me, Deus* (1969) to Psalm 63; the “Darmstadt” oratorio *Adam a Eva (Adam and Eve)* (1969–1970) to the words of Karel Šiktanc, by Zdeněk Lukáš (1928–2007); or the triptych *In extremis* (1969) with texts from the Gospel of St. Matthew by Alois Piňoš. The symphonic movements *Vox clamantis* (1969) for three solo trumpets and orchestra by Petr Eben combine John the Baptist’s words *Jaššerí messiláh l’elóhebú* shouted in Hebrew and a quotation from the oldest Czech sacred song *Hospodine, pomiluj ny (Lord, Have Mercy on Us)*. The composer’s intention was to explain “the development from wandering and searching to getting to know and having certainty.” Petr Eben expressed this goal through specific music idioms:

1. I use more polytonality at the beginning of the composition, while the harmony at the end is concentrated in the tonal centers.
2. The alternative rhythmical patterns and extremely fluctuating tempo of the beginning are changed by the metro-rhythmical stabilization.
3. The three trumpets mean a stabilizing tendency. (Vondrovicová 1995: 223)

The vocal-instrumental Symphony No. 8 *Antiphony (Antiphonies)* (1970) by Miloslav Kabeláč (1908–1979) became also very prized. The composer incorporated the Old Testament warning “Mene tekel ufarsim” and the praise of the righteous “Amen. Hosanna, Hallelujah.” This work was premiered in Strasbourg. Kabeláč was convinced that this city was the right place because it was the seat of the Conseil de Europe during the post-war period. This composition also begins with a warning and ends optimistically. As for the compositional style, Kabeláč stated:

The 8th symphony is based on the tone-group of perfect fourth interval. The small four-tone motif within the fourth interval is created here. It runs through the entire symphony. The time component is organized, f. e. the metro-rhythmical and tempo parts, in a similar way. [...] A similar principle is also used in the timbre: related colors are arranged and fixed, so they can be worked with as colored clusters. (Nouza 2010: 370)

The heroic act of the student Jan Palach, who set himself on fire on Wenceslas Square in Prague on 16 January 1969 in protest against the occupation of Czechoslovakia was commemorated by Petr Eben’s *Chordální fantazie na Svatý Václav (Chorale Fantasy: Saint Wenceslas)* (1972) and the cantata *Ignis pro Ioanne Palach* (1969) by Jan Novák (1921–1984).

The 1970s were marked by so-called normalization. Composers inspired by “flawed” ideas were repressed and had to avoid many public activities. Jarmil Burghauser, a leading composer, conductor, and editor of the work of Antonín Dvořák is an example. The Circle of Non-Members, a counterpart to the official Composers’ Union, which Burghauser headed, was abolished. The artist had to withdraw his membership from the Junák sports organization and was not allowed to participate in the production of his compositions. His name could not be included in the *Baker’s Dictionary* nor in the publication of selected volumes of the critical edition of Antonín Dvořák’s work. He began to compose under the name Michael Hájků (see Kittnarová 2013: 21).

The “religious” composers most active in this period included František Gregor Emmert (1940–2015, *Vánoční oratorium* (*Christmas Oratorio*) (1971), and *Stabat Mater*, 1976–1978) and Jiří Laburda. The genre was also composed in on occasion by Luboš Fišer (*Crux* for solo violin, 7 timpani, and 7 bells, 1971), Marek Kopelent (1932, *Jitřní chvalozpěvy* (*Morning Hymns*, 1978) and Klement Slavický (1910–1999, the six-part *Psalmi*, 1970, and *Cantus sacri*, 1971).

The most important representatives of Czech sacred music of the second half of the twentieth century (until 1989) included Jan Hanuš (1915–2004) and Petr Eben in Prague and Zdeněk Pololáník in Brno. These composers were open about their religious beliefs, and sacred music was one of their central themes. Hanuš resigned from his public office (chair of the Union of Czechoslovak Composers), Pololáník lived off royalties for the performance of his music abroad and worked as a church organist, while the public activities of Petr Eben (a lecturer at Charles University) were tolerated only because he was popular abroad and his work brought profits.

Hanuš composed, for example, *Poselství* (*The Message*) (1969) for mixed choir, chamber ensemble, and a tape to the Bible and Kamil Bednář, seven mass cycles, *Pašje podle Matouše* (*St. Matthew’s Passion*) (1977–78), *Pašje podle Jana* (*St. John’s Passion*) (1982), and the oratorio *Ecce homo* (1980) to Václav Renč and František Trtílek. Petr Eben composed three mass ordinaries (*Missa Adventus*, 1952; *České mešní ordinarium* (*Czech Ordinary of the Mass*) (1965); and *Missa cum populo*, 1981–1982), two mass propria, *Vesperae* (1968), the organ cycles *Laudes* (1964) and *Job* (1989). Zdeněk Pololáník wrote mass ordinaries and propria, the oratory *Šír haš-šírim* (1970), psalms and prayers.

The Communist dictatorship relaxed in the 1980s, as is evident from the gesture made by Cardinal František Tomášek in 1984. He invited Pope John Paul II to Czechoslovakia. Although only the papal envoy joined the nationwide pilgrimage to Velehrad to honor the Slav Apostles St. Cyril and Methodius, it was clear that the totalitarian regime was beginning to lose ground. Records show an

increase in the number of sacred works, but composers continued to be forced to compromise. They also faced repression. In a prominent case, the composer Miloš Bok (b. 1968) had the students of the Prague Conservatory perform his *Missa solemnis* (1986), for which they were suspended. Svatopluk Havelka (1925–2009) was met with great success with his oratorio *List P. Bracioliniho L. Brunnu z Arezza o odsouzení M. Jeronýma z Prahy* (*Epistle of P. Braccioli to L. Brunni of Arezzo on the Condemnation of M. Jeroným of Prague*) (1984), which was awarded the Golden Shield of the Panthon (1988) and marked the beginning of Havelka’s journey to sacred music.

The new generation of composers focusing on sacred music included, in addition to Miloš Bok, Ivan Kurz (b. 1947, five symphonic pictures calling for spiritual purification—*Nakloněná rovina* (*Inclined Plane*) (1979), *Vzlínání* (*Emergence*) (1981), *Podobenství* (*Parable*) (1982), *Bláznovská zvěst* (*The Gospel’s Folly*) (1987), and *K Tobě jdu* (*I Come to Thee*, 1988).

In summary, the spiritual genre of Czech composers during the totalitarian years brought together not only representatives of New Music and of the interwar avant-garde, whose compositions included the techniques of multimedia composition, concrete music, electronic music, timbre and modalism, but also musicians professing a traditional style, enriched by modern principles.

As concerns reception, many compositions would be left untouched for a number of years (for example, Luboš Fischer’s *Crux* waited for nine years), while others premiered in Western Europe (the abovementioned Kabeláč’s 8th Symphony in Strasbourg in 1971), and still others were never performed at all. Some composers, in contrast, succeeded at foreign festivals (*De passione St. Adalberti martyris* by Marek Kopelent, Warsaw Autumn, 1981, Prague premiere only in 1991) or established cooperation with colleagues abroad (for example, Marek Kopelent and Sofia Gubajdulina and Paul-Heinz Dittrich on *Laudatio pacis* to the texts of Jan Amos Comenius in 1975).

Traditional spiritual works of music history were added to the repertoire most often thanks to occasional concerts of sacred music held in cities, which the regime tolerated as interesting, location-specific culture. Organ concerts and organ music festivals gained in popularity at that time. Convinced these events would help secularize churches, the Communists supported them, while the Church viewed concerts and festivals as activities that drew believers to church.

Sacred music was also only rarely reflected on by newspapers or music journals, not to mention the lack of professional musicological literature (see Smolka 1970).⁸ Recordings of spiritual music were not created at all, apart from organ music, which Communists supported due to its historical and cultural merits.

After 1989: the 1990s boom

The post-1989 changes in the political and social environment triggered a boom in sacred music in Czech music culture in all areas: production/composition, interpretation, reception, and reflection. Free religious self-determination and a person's right to their own worldview were symbolized by the visits from Pope John Paul II to Prague (1990), Olomouc (1995), and Hradec Králové (1997), as well as by regular celebrations of national patrons, such as St. Wenceslas, St. Adalbert, St. Ludmila, and St. Agnes, and the arrival of the Slav apostles of Sts. Cyril and Methodius to Great Moravia. Believing in God and public declaration of this belief came into fashion in the early 1990s, with religious manifestations only recovering standard levels over time.

As concerns liturgical music, new church choirs were established and, in contrast, many ensembles disintegrated or struggled with the outflow of young singers, who began to prefer other musical styles. A weekday liturgy was ultimately only ensured by an organist in the majority of churches. The organ was accompanied by soloists, choir, or schola on Sundays and holidays. While church choirs were focused on a traditional musical repertoire based on the sacred music of various stylistic epochs, the repertoire of scholas, usually accompanied by guitars or other rhythmic instruments, drew on the songbooks *Koinonia*, *Hosana*, *Taizé Songs*, and others. This repertoire and its interpretation were criticized by many believers and composers. Amateur church musicians were free to organize their own concerts and charity events in cooperation with other musicians.

Sacred music remained or became the focus of many composers at a time of newly acquired freedom. The work of Petr Eben drew the greatest attention both at home and abroad. He quickly responded to the Velvet Revolution by composing the celebratory hymn *Pražské Te Deum* (*Prague Te Deum*) (1989). As Eva Vítová has found, while sacred music accounted for 50% of his total compositions during totalitarianism, the number rose to 75% after the coup (see Vítová 2004: 153). Eben states the following about his focus on sacred music:

When going over my work, you might think I was a religious fanatic, someone best avoided. I believe this is due to the artificially created spiritual desert, which made me express over and over a desire to free us from the burdensome bonds of materialism. (Vondrovicová 1995: 424)

Eben is the composer of the opera *Jeremias* (1996–97) based on Stefan Zweig's drama, oratorios (for example, *Posvátná znamení* (*Sacred Symbols*), 1992–93; *Anno Domini*, 1999), a series of organ, choral, and chamber works drawing on psalms and liturgical texts, prayers and others.

Jan Hanuš composed, for example, Symphony No. 7 *Klíče království* (*The Keys of the Kingdom*) (1989–90) with

the text of *Te Deum*; *Requiem: Missa VIII-Pro defunctis* (1991–95); the proprium *Prosha Sv. Vojtěcha za jednotu světa* (*The Plea of St. Adalbert for World Harmony*) (1996) for wind orchestra; and the symphonic fresco *Věže bablynské* (*The Towers of Babylon*) (1999). In addition to the ordinary *Setkání* (*The Meeting*) (1995), Zdeněk Pololáník created several synthesizer chamber oratorios (*Popelka Nazaretská* (*Nazareth Cinderella*) (1991); *Napřed je třeba unést kříž* (*The First One Must Carry the Cross*) (1992), and *Bůh je láska* (*God Is Love*, 1993), *Te Deum* (1991–1992), choral psalms and pastoral songs (*Chválospevy* (*Hymns*) (1993), *Cantus laetitiae*, 1994), prayer songs, and organ compositions.

The following members of the older generation of Czech composers, born in the 1920s and 1930s, were involved with sacred music in the 1990s: Svatopluk Havelka (for example, *Parénze*, a cycle of five chants based on Greek epistles for soprano solo, piano, two drummers, and a speaker, 1993, and the chamber cantata *Agapé je láska* (*Agape Is Love*) (1998), Zdeněk Lukáš (for example, *Requiem per coro miso*, 1992; and the oratory *Dies irae*, 1995), Jiří Laburda (for example, *Missa Sistina*, 1993; or *Missa Cum cantu populi*, 1992–94), Marek Kopealent (for example, St. Agnes oratory *Lux mirandae sanctitatis*, 1994) and Jaroslav Krček (b. 1939, for example, *Česká mše* (*The Czech Mass*) honoring Jan Amos Comenius, 1991).

The middle generation of composers with a strong focus on sacred music, those born in the 1940s, included František Gregor Emmert (for example, five spiritual symphonies and the oratorio *Ex aquam et Spiritus Sanctus*, 1995), Petr Fiala (b. 1943, three oratorios on the lives of St. Ludmila, St. Agnes, and Jan Sarkander, 1990–94), Ivan Kurz (for example, the tetralogy of oratorios on the apparitions of Virgin Mary and the spiritual opera *Večerní shromáždění* (*The Evening Assembly*) (1989–90), and Milan Slavický (two symphonies: *Porta coeli*, 1991, and *Dvě kapitoly z Apokalypy* (*Two Chapters of the Apocalypse*, 1995). Composers born in the 1950s were represented by Jan Bernátek (b. 1950, for example, the oratorio *Písň Č. Salamounovy* (*Songs of Solomon*, 1991), Juraj Filas (b. 1955, *Krvavé Te Deum* (*Bloody Te Deum*, 1991), Jan Jirásek (b. 1955, for example, *Missa propria*, 1993), Pavel Zemek Novák (b. 1957, for example, Symphony No. 2 *Pašije podle sv. Jana* (*St. John's Passion*) for nine soloists, mixed choir, and orchestra, 1990–97), and Radek Rejšek (b. 1959, for example, *Missa brevis*, 1999). The youngest generation of composers was represented by Miloš Bok, who renounced the secular sphere to fully focus on celebrating God (for example, the oratory *Skřítkové z Křinického údolí* (*The Gnomes from the Valley of Křinice*) (1993), and the finale of another oratory *Svatá Zdislava* (*Saint Zdislava*), 1998).

A unique project celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II and honoring all its victims

was *Requiem der Verzeihung* (1994), which premiered on 16 August 1995. The collaborative work was written by a number of composers, including Marek Kopelet and other European figures such as Krzysztof Penderecki, Luciano Berio, or Alfred Schnittke.

The compositional language in their works was rich, building, as in the previous period, on a synthesis of traditionalism, modernism, the avant-garde, and postmodernism and introducing a range of blends. Folk-inspired classical music was composed by, for example, Jiří Pavlica (b. 1953, *Missa brevis*, 1999) and Pavel Helebrand (b. 1960, *Jeslicky sv. Františka (Nativity Scene of Saint Francis*, 1997), while jazz penetrated sacred music in the work of Karel Růžička Sr. (1940–2016, *Celebration Jazz Mass*, 1991) and Ladislav Simon (1929–2011, *Requiem za zemřelé, pro které byla hudba životem* (*Requiem for the Dead, for Those Who Lived for Music*), 1994).

The premieres of contemporary works provided a boost to concert series of symphonic, chamber, and vocal ensembles, as well as numerous church concerts. Novel sacred music was also featured at renowned music festivals, such as Pražské jaro (Prague Spring) (1946), Olomoucké hudební jaro (Olomouc Music Spring) (1959), Moravský podzim (Moravian Autumn) (1966), and Janáčkův máj (Janáček's May) (1976), and as part of Dny soudobé hudby (Days of Contemporary Music) (1990), the Přítomnost (Now) association (1924 and 1990), and the festival of 13 cities Concentus Moraviae (1996).

A host of sacred music festivals cropped up. The year 1990 saw the birth of Forfest, mezinárodní festival soudobého umění s duchovním zaměřením (Forfest, International Festival of Contemporary Sacred Music and Art) in Kroměříž and Mezinárodní festival duchovní hudby v Nymburce (The Nymburk International Festival of Sacred Music). Three more festivals were established in 1992: Velikonoční festival duchovní hudby (Easter Festival of Sacred Music) in Brno, Svatováclavské slavnosti—mezinárodní festival duchovního umění (St. Wenceslas Festivities—International Festival of Sacred Arts) in Prague, and Mezinárodní festival adventní a vánoční hudby v Praze (The Prague International Festival of Advent and Christmas Music) of amateur ensembles. This was followed by the biennial Mezinárodní festival vokální duchovní hudby (International Festival of Vocal Sacred Music) in Šumperk in 1993, and in 1994 by Podzimní festival duchovní hudby (Autumn Festival of Sacred Music) in Olomouc, Festival duchovní hudby Odry (Odra Sacred Music Festival), and Musica Spiritualis Ecumenica. The year 1996 marked the beginning of Festival duchovní hudby v Brně—Musica sacra přes hranice (The Brno Festival of Sacred Music—Cross-Border Musica Sacra), a festival of amateur choirs held in South Moravian cities in cooperation with Austria. Other festivals included Milevské bienále duchovní hudby (The

Milevsko Biennial of Sacred Music) (1997), Trutnovský advent (The Trutnov Advent) (1998)—a display of regional sacred music, and Harmonia Moraviae (1999) held every other year in Zlín.

The repertoire of professional musical ensembles increasingly incorporated significant compositions of old sacred music. After Václav Havel was elected president of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic on 29 December 1989, for example, Dvořák's *Te Deum* was performed at St. Vitus Cathedral by the Czech Philharmonic and the Prague Philharmonic Choir, led by Libor Pešek. Czechoslovak, later Czech, Radio began to broadcast live services and programs on sacred music. Czechoslovak, later Czech, Television followed the same trend.⁹

Společnost pro duchovní hudbu (Society for Sacred Music) was reestablished (1942 and 1990),¹⁰ Jednota Musica Sacra (Musica Sacra Union) was founded in Brno (1993),¹¹ which provided church organist training, and new church conservatories were established in Kroměříž (1990; later moving to Olomouc) and Opava (1990).

Historical and contemporary Czech sacred music was recorded after 1989 mainly by Supraphon and Panton (until 1999), and since 1995 by Radioservis and a number of other private publishing and recording companies.

New art ensembles playing older music gained prominence in the 1990s, some attempting to authentically interpret early music. Their repertoire was naturally dominated by sacred music. Examples of the ensembles included Schola gregoriana pragensis (David Eben, 1987), Capella Regia Praha (Robert Hugo, 1992), Musica Florea (Marek Štryncل, 1992), En Arché Chamber Choir (Vojtěch Jouza, 1995), Collegium Marianum (Jana Semerádová, 1997), Schola Benedicta (Jiří Hodina, 1997), Gutta Musicae (Svatopluk Jányš, 1997), Czech Ensemble Baroque (Roman Válek, 1998) and Ensemble Inégal (Adam Viktor, 2000).

Sacred music was reflected in the context of Christian spiritual culture in newspapers and magazines; the journal *Varhaník* was founded in 1999.¹² The situation in sacred music was also covered by the specialized press.¹³ *Hudební rozhledy*¹⁴ published around forty articles on sacred music in the first ten years after 1989. *Harmonie*¹⁵ published around twenty articles a year on sacred music between 1993 and 2000. Sacred music was also covered by the Brno-based specialized revue *Opus musicum*¹⁶ and the science journal *Hudební věda*.¹⁷ Scientific and educational institutions encouraged the publication of studies and monographs on the subject (see Vyskočil 1993, Vondrovicová 1995, Buček 1999 and Sehnal 1999).

A review of articles and journals revealed that Petr Eben was, as expected, the most important composer of Czech sacred music in the 1990s. A brief quantitative survey of the composer was conducted to describe the general reception and impact of this composer on contemporary musical

culture. A total of 37 articles were published about him in the ten years under study, which means almost four articles per year on average. Eben's reception was studied with a focus on the year 1999, when he turned seventy. As Jaroslav Smolka reports (see Smolka 1999: 19), 37 authorial concerts were held in Prague and other cities, featuring the organ and other works; a number of church ensembles repeatedly performed *Truvérská mše* (*Trouvere Mass*) and *Missa cum populo*; the National Theatre put on his opera *Jeremias* twice, and each participant in the Prague Spring organ competition performed one of the composer's works. Six of Eben's compositions were featured as part of the concerts of this festival. In addition, the composer's work was performed at many other concerts throughout the Czech Republic. Czech Television premiered *Čtyři biblické tance* (*Four Biblical Dances*) for organ and two dancers and produced the documentary *Tribute to Petr Eben* (directed by Petr Šamánek). Eben's music was played by Czech Radio and a host of concerts were held abroad. The Czech audience, in short, was presented with Petr Eben's music at least once a week, which is excellent for a contemporary composer of classical music.

2000–2020: stability

Any objective evaluation of sacred music in the Czech Republic over the past twenty years naturally requires a greater distance. We could, however, argue that the genre has been following the 1990s trend and has retained a stable position across all categories of music.

The initial euphoria following from political and social change has waned, and classical music in general has entered the realities of everyday life. Faced with the relentless laws of the market and supply and demand, it has had to respond to social liberalism and the consumerist lifestyle reflected in the crisis of traditional values. The Church has been confronted with similar threats. So what position does sacred music hold in the Czech society of the twenty-first century? Has the attitude of composers and audiences altered towards sacred music? Has it become less socially relevant?

It has become the norm in liturgical music that church choruses and choirs typically perform at Christmas (the most popular piece being Jakub Jan Ryba's pastoral *Česká mše vánoční* (*Czech Christmas Mass*) (1796) and Easter, and hold spiritual concerts on All Souls' Day (1 and 2 November, usually a requiem by one of the world's leading composers), on the Day of Saint Cecilia, the patron saint of music, and during Advent.

The trend of renting church spaces for secular music events has also grown, which has been, however, protested by a number of believers and clergy. The daily press was

witness, for example, to a widespread controversy between the Church and the professional public in 2005 spurred by the article "Církev nechce Mahlera v kostele" ("The Church Does Not Want Mahler in Churches").¹⁸

As in the 1990s or before, composers continued to be driven by personal and professional reasons to compose sacred music. Their work thus responded to their personal lives, meditated on the meaning of life, sought objective order, and venerated God. Sacred music was for some composers the "depth of security" and "a terrain tested for centuries past," while others saw it as an escape from the pitfalls of the modern world and evil, or a cure for the sick society. A number of composers employed the form and text idioms of sacred music to strengthen national identity and integrity in this globalized world. Numerous works thus referred to Czech saints and thinkers, for example, Petr Eben's *Labyrint světa a ráj srdce* (*Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart*) based on the texts of Jan Amos Comenius (2002), Zdeněk Lukáš's *Kyrie eleison* for a large symphony wind orchestra to honor the memory of Saint Wenceslas (2003), Jaroslav Krček's cantata *Krédo Mistra Jana* (*The Credo of Jan Hus*) (2015), Jan Bernátek's choral work *Svatá Ludmila* (*Saint Ludmila*) (2019), Martin Kumžák's (b. 1966) oratorios *Svatý Václav* (*St Wenceslas*) (2015) and *Canticum St. Anges* (2019), or revisiting the origins of Christianity, like Jan Bernátek's oratorio *Nový Jeruzalém* (*New Jerusalem*) (2007), Silvie Bodorová's (b. 1954) oratorios *Juda Maccabeus* (2002) and *Mojžíš* (*Moses*) (2008), Juraj Filas's *Píseň Šalamounova* (*The Song of Songs*) (2011), and Jan Jirásek's *Píseň Davidova* (*The Song of David*) (2019). Certain composers mirrored events in the contemporary world, such as terrorist attacks (Juraj Filas's *Requiem "Oratio Spei,"* 2002, dedicated to the casualties of the September 11 attack) or religious diversity (Jan Jirásek's *Mondi paralleli*, 2009). For example, in *Mondi paralleli*—the seven-part choral cycle a cappella—the composer combines different cultures and religions. Jirásek uses the Latin texts of the Christian liturgy with Buddhist mantras, passages from the Koran, and Judaic ideas.

The most significant work of each composer's generation was as follows: Petr Eben was faithful to sacred music until his death in 2007, creating a number of organ and choral compositions, meditations, and prayers. Zdeněk Lukáš mainly wrote choruses (*Alleluia*, 2001, *Te Deum Laudamus*, 2001), Luboš Sluka (b. 1928) focused on sacred music, particularly after he fell ill in 2008 (for example, *Missa neratovensis*, 2010, and *Missa votiva*, 2013). Pavel Jurkovič (1933–2015) earned recognition with his *Missa de angelis* (2005). Zdeněk Pololáník composed *Missa solemnis* (2001) and the sacred opera *Noc pná světla* (*Night Full of Light*) (2013) inspired by Paul Claudel, while František Gregor Emmert wrote numerous small choruses and prayers as well as grand sacred symphonies. Petr Fiala composed the

oratorio *Regina Coeli* (2003), Ivan Kurz created several mass cycles and Symphony No. 4 *Ejble, Hospodin přijde (Behold, Our Lord Shall Come)* (2017), Vojtěch Mojžíš (b. 1947) *Missa solemnis* (2010), Milan Slavický *Requiem* (2000–2001), and Jan Grossman (b. 1949) *Žalmové kantáty I (Psalm Cantatas I)* and *II* (2005–2006). Otomar Kvěch wrote *Requiem temporalem* (1992–2007), Pavel Zemek Novák composed, for example, Symphony No. 6 *Chvála stvoření (In Praise of Creation)* (2017), Radek Rejsek created *Missa campanarum* (2016), Lukáš Hurník (b. 1967) wrote the oratorio *Křížová cesta* (Stations of the Cross) (2011), and Miloš Bok premiered the two-part oratorio *Apokalypsa (The Apocalypse)* (2015–17).

The youngest generation is represented by Slavomír Hořínka (b. 1980), who deals with spiritual themes in a number of orchestral, vocal-instrumental, and chamber compositions (for example, the symphonic movement for tenor and orchestra *Žalm (Psalm)* (2004–2005), and *Litaniae Sanctorum* (2013)).

The compositional language used by Czech composers writing sacred music over the last twenty years can be divided into two types:

1) The first group includes composers who, despite being inspired by the modern techniques of the twentieth century, cling to tradition, the late Romantic style combined with Neo-classicism.

2) The other group are composers working with multiple styles, often combining Medieval choral and polyphonic music with minimalism and sonorism. The blend may also involve folk music (for example, Jiří Pavlica's oratorio *Smíření (Reconciliation)* (2005), and *Brána poutníků (Pilgrims' Gate)* (2011), Pavel Helebrand's *Evangelium podle houslí (The Gospel of Violin)* (2001), popular music and jazz (Emil Viklický's sacred opera *Oráč a Smrt (The Plowman and Death)* (2003), and the project *Apokalypsa—Zjevení sv. Jana (The Apocalypse—The Book of Revelation)* by the David Dorůžka Jazz Trio and the Tiburtina Ensemble.

The current situation in Czech sacred music is illustrated by the fact that Zdeněk Lukáš's choir *Pater Noster*, undoubtedly due to the composer's death, won the 2007 award of the OSA (Society of Composers) copyright protection association for the most frequently played live piece of classical music, or that Zdeněk Král's traditionalist *Missa brevis* won the 2019 OSA Best Composition award.

Sacred music has been featured at sacred music festivals, of which those held in major cities such as Prague, Brno, and Olomouc have survived. The Kroměříž and Šumperk festivals are an exception testifying to the unrelenting hard work and enthusiasm of the organizers. The Zlín festival *Harmonia Moraviae*, in contrast, has adjusted its concept and opened up to other musical genres to boost its attendance rates. New projects worthy of attention are the ambitious *Svatováclavský hudební festival (St. Wenceslas*

Music Festival)

in Ostrava (2005), which held 59 concerts in Ostrava and its surroundings in 2018, and *Musica Figurata* (2010).

Sacred music naturally formed part of major music festivals, both traditional ones such as Pražské jaro (Prague Spring) and Smetanova Litomyšl (Smetana's Litomyšl) (1949), and new festivals such as Letní slavnosti staré hudby (Summer Festival of Early Music) (2000), Hudební festival Znojmo (Znojmo Music Festival) (2005), and Dvořákova Praha (Dvořák's Prague) (2008).

Sacred music was likewise featured at selected philharmonic concerts (for example, the Hradec Králové Philharmony opened the 2013/14 season with Dvořák's *Requiem*; the following season the FOK Prague Symphony Orchestra concluded with Leoš Janáček's *Glagolská mše (Glagolitic Mass)*; and the same orchestra put on two spiritual concerts at its 2010 Easter festival and incorporated Dvořák's *Stabat Mater* in its production in 2018 and 2020) and by leading Czech choirs (for example, in 2012 the Prague Philharmonic Choir dedicated two concerts of its choir cycle to the spiritual compositions of Penderecki and Eben; the same year three of the six concerts of the Czech Philharmonic Choir were spiritual).

Theater followed suit. The National Theatre in Prague prepared, for example, Dvořák's *Stabat Mater* for the 2007/08 season. Two years later, the National Theatre in Brno produced *Svatá Ludmila (Saint Ludmila)* by the same composer and in 2013 the Prague Estate Theatre premiered Rossini's *Stabat Mater* on Good Friday.

The dramaturgy of all these events drew more on historically successful works than on new productions. The most frequently played Czech composer was Dvořák (*Requiem*, *Stabat Mater*), and audiences demanded Czech music of older styles, chiefly Baroque (Jan Dismas Zelenka in particular). Popular composers included the Classicists Mozart and Haydn; the Romantics Liszt, Brahms, and Bruckner; and in terms of the twentieth century, above all, Rachmaninov, Stravinsky, Poulenc, Penderecki, and Arvo Pärt.

The "boom" of so-called Aufführungspraxis in interpretation, which began in the 1990s, and the demand for an older musical repertoire related to the rediscovery of the Czech Baroque and Classicism, along with the Medieval and Renaissance heritage, prompted the emergence of new music ensembles. Their repertoire was dominated by sacred music. Collegium 1704, Collegium Vocale 1704 (Václav Luks, 2005), Ensemble 18+ (Magdalena Malá, 2009), and *Harmonia delectabilis* (2010, Lukáš Vendl) earned the greatest respect in terms of artistic quality.

Czech Television and Czech Radio broadcast concert recordings and produced programs with sacred music. The non-commercial channel TV Noe (2006) and the Christian radio station Radio Proglas (1995) also play religious music. Recordings and sheet music have been mainly provided by

Radioservis, which launched its online store radioteka.cz in 2014, and by Supraphon.

Newspapers and journals also deliver information about spiritual music culture. All the magazines which were in circulation in the 1990s have survived until today. The Society for Sacred Music has been publishing the journal *Psalterium* since 2006.¹⁹ The volume of articles on sacred music has, however, decreased *Hudební rozhledy* publishes an average of 10 articles per year, and *Harmonie* even fewer in its printed version). The journals most often focused on, in addition to reviews, the popularization of older Czech sacred music.²⁰ This could have been due to the activities of the numerous art ensembles concentrating on Czech (spiritual) music of older epochs. The Internet portals *Harmonie on-line*, *OperaPlus*, and *KlasikaPlus*, in contrast, have published a myriad of articles (reviews and interviews).

Sacred music is also addressed by scientific and educational institutions. The annual conference *Duchovní proudy v současném umění* (Spiritual Currents in Contemporary Art), held as part of Forfest Kroměříž, is commendable and inspiring.²¹ Although several monographs on leading Czech composers have been published (see Vítová 2004, Fiala 2010, Nouza, 2010) and Michal Nedělka's book is an outstanding contribution (see Nedělka 2005), no comprehensive monograph on the development of Czech spiritual music is available.

Conclusions

The synthesis demonstrates that sacred music turned into a multifunctional musical genre during the twentieth century. In addition to its primary religiosity, it is able to respond to the contemporary world. Sacred music was composed in the Czech Republic/Czechoslovakia, as in other Communist countries, using a rich variability of compositional approaches and forms. It worked with liturgical and non-liturgical texts and biblical and religious themes to revive traditional Christian values and also to reflect on the difficult life under a totalitarian regime. The value and role of sacred music was reconfirmed after 1989. It has since enjoyed strong support from composers, performers, organizers, and audiences.

Endnotes

¹ This paper is based on my presentation given at the 47th Baltic Musicological Conference on 11 September 2020, which was held by the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre. The research of the years 2000 through 2020 was supported by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic and run by Palacký University Olomouc

(IGA_FF_2019_006). The text is also a summary of my previous research (see Vičarová 2013: 143–154, Vičarová, Janíčková 2019: 43–53 and Vičarová, Janíčková 2020: in print).

² Sacred music is an umbrella term or synonym for church music/sacred music/religious music, (German analogy: Kirchenmusik / geistliche Musik / religiöse Musik). The present text understands sacred music as religious music composed for a liturgy or concert. Liturgical music is, in contrast, composed exclusively for a mass or non-mass liturgy. For a detailed definition of Czech musicology terms, see Fukač 1997: 98–99, 170. See also Dyer 2001: 544–570 and Herbst 1997: 715–727.

³ For more on the Catholic Church until 1989, see Balík, Hanuš 2007. Almost 44 percent of the population professed faith in 1991, while ten years later it was 33 percent. Of these, eighty percent were Roman Catholics. The Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren and the Czechoslovak Hussite Church had about 100,000 active believers each at the turn of the millennium. The Orthodox Church had only about 10,000 believers (more see: *Czech Statistical Office*).

⁴ Particularly since 1989. A number of music events, for example, were ecumenical in nature (e.g. *Vox Clamantis*, an ecumenical Christian pop music festival held in Prague in 1992). The international festival *Archaion Kallos* (2010) is connected with the Orthodox musical culture; the festival *Musica Iudaica* was founded in 1992; and Vlastislav Matoušek's music was inspired by the Orient. For more on church music in evangelical churches, see Beneš, Estrele 2006: 117–125.

⁵ See Gottwald 1969: 154–161 and Schuberth 1995.

⁶ The context has been explored by several research symposiums, for example, *Musikgeschichte zwischen Ost- und Westeuropa: Kirchenmusik—geistliche Musik—religiöse Musik* in Chemnitz 1999 (see *Musikgeschichte* 2002) or *Kirchenmusik in sozialistischen Ländern vor und nach der Wende von 1989* in Graz 2003 (see *Kirchenmusik* 2003). Authors who point out the fact include Andraschke 1995: 125–137 and Green 1998: 2.

⁷ Czechoslovakia was founded in 1918 and comprised two separate countries. The two states have been separated since 1993. The text is only dedicated to the Czech lands.

⁸ The book naturally omits sacred works of contemporary composers.

⁹ *Pocta katedrále* (*Tribute to the Cathedral*) in 1994, eleven episodes of *To nejlepší z klasiky* (*The Best of Classical Music*), a series about sacred music from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century in 1997, *Hudba na českých kůrech* (*Czech Organ Loft Music*) in 1999, etc.

¹⁰ *Společnost pro duchovní hudbu*, accessed online.

¹¹ *Musica Sacra*, accessed online.

¹² The magazine offers practical advice to church organists, in particular tips on repertoire and accompaniments of mass songs.

¹³ The daily press dealt with sacred music only on rare occasions. It was not possible, due to time limitations, to research all dailies and their regional versions. A few articles about sacred music were in the weekly *Katolický týdeník*.

¹⁴ A popular-science magazine with a primary focus on classical music performed in the Czech Republic. Founded in 1948, a monthly.

¹⁵ A popular-science magazine about classical music, world music, and jazz. Founded in 1993, a monthly.

¹⁶ A science journal, published six times a year in the 1990s, now a quarterly. Founded in 1969.

- ¹⁷ A science musicological medium, published quarterly since the 1990s. Founded in 1964.
- ¹⁸ Drchal 2006, accessed online.
- ¹⁹ This information and discussion bulletin of the society is printed four to six times a year. The society also has its own web portal and blog.
- ²⁰ For example, *Hudební rozhledy* presented the educational series *Co snad nevíte o starší české hudbě* (*What You Might Not Know About Older Czech Music*) in 2006, and a year later the series *Duchovní píseň v českých zemích* (*Sacred Song in the Czech Lands*).
- ²¹ The output is an anthology of the texts presented.

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Santrauka

Komunistinės Čekoslovakijos (nuo 1948 m. iki 1989 m.) atmosfera įvairiai būdais darė įtaką sakralinės muzikos raidai. Liturginę muziką atlikdavo tik vargonininkai ar bažnytiniai chorai, veikę sunkiomis sąlygomis. Sakralinė muzika atliepė politinius ir socialinius pokyčius. XX a. šeštajame dešimtmetyje, ateistinės propagandos metais, beveik neatsirado naujų sakralinės muzikos kūrinių. Dėl komunistų partijos renesanso ir septintojo dešimtmecio humanizavimo tendencijų ankstesniųjų stilių dvasinė muzika pradėjo pamažu patekti į masines medijas. Kompozitoriai jungė biblines istorijas ir liturginius tekstus su šiuolaikine poezija. Vatikano II susirinkimo išvados sukėlė liturginės veiklos pokyčius. Pagrindinis lūžis įvyko 1968 m. rugpjūčio 21 d., kai penkių Varšuvos pakto „draugiškų“ armijų kariai įžengė į Čekoslovakiją. Antiokupaciniai kūriniai, pelnę pripažinimą, buvo Petro Ebeno (1929–2007) „Vox clamantis“ (1969) ir Miloslavo Kabeláčo (1908–1979) Simfonija Nr. 8 „Antifonija“ (1970).

Ašuntajame dešimtmetyje gyvenimas ėmė stabilizuotis. Dauguma sakralinės muzikos autorių buvo priversti atsisakyti valstybinių pareigų. Komunistinė diktatūra pradėjo silpti tik devintajame dešimtmetyje. Egzistavo nemažai sakralinės muzikos kūrinių, tačiau jie nebuvò skambėjè jau daugelį metų, o kai kurie apskritai niekada nebuvò atlikti. Apie sakralinę muziką retai rašyta laikraščiuose ar muzikos žurnaluose, trūko profesionalios muzikologinės literatūros šia tema. Tarp svarbiausių XX a. antrosios pusės (iki 1989-ųjų) čekų sakralinės muzikos kompozitorų minėtinės Janas Hanušas (1915–2004) bei Petras Ebenas Prahoje ir Zdeněkas Pololáníkas (g. 1935) Brno.

Politinės ir socialinės aplinkos pokyčiai po 1989-ųjų Čekijos muzikos kultūroje jau per pirmąjį laisvés dešimtmetylį sukėlė sakralinės muzikos suklestėjimą, apėmėsi visas muzikines sferas: kūrimą, interpretaciją, recepciją ir refleksiją. Liturgijoje giedojo bažnytinį mokyklų mokiniai pakaitomis su chorais. Šiuolaikinių kūrinių premjeros paskatino simfoninių, kamerinių ir vokalinių ansamblų koncertų ciklus bei gausius bažnytinius koncertus. Buvo surengta trylika naujų sakralinės muzikos festivalių. Atgaivinta Sakralinės muzikos draugija (1942 ir 1990); Brno įsteigta

„Musica Sacra Union“ (1993), teikianti bažnyčios vargonininkų kvalifikaciją; naujos bažnytinės konservatorijos buvo atidarytos Kromeržyže (1990; vėliau persikelė į Olomoucą) ir Opavoje (1990). Padaryta daugybė įrašų, sakralinė muzika aptarinėta laikraščiuose, žurnaluose ir monografijose. Didžiausio dėmesio tiek namuose, tiek užsienyje sulaukė Petro Ebeno kūryba.

Šios tendencijos išliko liturginėje bei sakralinėje muzikoje ir 2000–2020 m. Kompozitoriai naudojo sakralinės muzikos formų ir tekstų idiomas, siekdami sustiprinti nacionalinę tapatybę ir vienybę šiuolaikiniame globalizuotame pasaulyje, atsigreždami į čekų šventuosius ir mąstytojus, grįždami prie krikščionybės šaknų ir apmąstydami šiandieninio pasaulio reiškinius, tokius kaip teroristiniai išpuoliai

ar religinė įvairovė. Tarp pagrindinių kompozitorių pamintini Ivanas Kurzas (g. 1947), Jurajus Filas (g. 1955), Janas Jirásekas (g. 1955), Pavelas Zemekas Novákas (g. 1957) ir Milošas Bokas (g. 1968).

Sakralinės muzikos festivaliai vyksta ir toliau, kūriniai atliekami tradicinės muzikos festivaliuose ir rinktiniuose filharmonijos ansambliu, žymią čekų chorą bei teatrų koncertuose. Dramaturgija dažniau remiasi istoriškai sėkmingesiais nei naujausiais kūriniais. Vienas iš populiausių kompozitorių yra Antonínas Dvořákas. Sakralinės muzikos kūrinius transliuoja Čekijos televizija ir radijas, taip pat „TV Noe“ ir krikščioniška radio stotis „Radio Proglas“. Pristatymas profesionaliojoje spaudoje yra pakankamas.

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