

Leopold
KOŽELUCH
Symphonies • 3

Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice
Marek Štilec



Leopold Koželuch (1747–1818)

Symphonies · 3

As early as 1772 the English musician and music historian Dr Charles Burney described Vienna as ‘the imperial seat of music as well as of power’, drawing his readers’ attention to the presence there of a number of gifted and highly productive composers. Its rise in importance as a musical centre was due largely to a decision made in the late-16th century to transfer the court from Prague to Vienna. Where the court went the nobility followed, and Vienna soon eclipsed Prague as the greatest city in the far-flung Habsburg dominions. Like any imperial city, Vienna was a magnet for talented and ambitious artists and musicians from all over Europe, but one group in particular was unusually successful: the Bohemians. In the middle decades of the 18th century, many of the leading musical figures in Vienna were Bohemians, among them Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–1787), Florian Leopold Gassmann (1729–1774), Johann Baptist Wanhal (1739–1813) and Leopold Koželuch, while in other European centres composers such as Josef Mysliveček (1737–1781) and Antonio Rosetti (c. 1750–1792) enjoyed deserved fame as composers of international stature.

Visitors to Bohemia were universally impressed by the high quality of the musicians there. Burney observed that he ‘had frequently been told that the Bohemians were the most musical people of Germany, or, perhaps, of all Europe’, but on visiting there he realised that this apparent musicality was firmly rooted in excellent teaching:

‘I found at length, that, not only in every large town, but in all villages, where there is a reading and writing school, children of both sexes are taught music ... I went into the school [in Čáslav], which was full of little children of both sexes, from six to ten or eleven years old, who were reading, writing, playing on violins, hautbois, bassoons, and other instruments. The organist had in a small room of his house four clavichords, with little boys practicing on them all: his son of nine years old, was a very good performer’.

Koželuch, born in Velvary, a small town northwest of

Prague, may have begun his musical training in just this kind of environment, but his advanced education took place in Prague where he studied counterpoint and vocal writing with his cousin, Jan Antonín Koželuch (1738–1814), and piano and instrumental composition with František Xaver Dušek (1731–1799). Dušek, a former pupil of Georg Christoph Wagenseil in Vienna, was the leading keyboard teacher in Prague and a highly accomplished composer of instrumental music. Under his guidance, Koželuch (who changed his name to Leopold to avoid confusion with his cousin) developed into an exceptional pianist and a composer of great promise. A flirtation with studying law was abandoned after the successful performance of his first ballets and pantomimes in Prague, and in 1778 he moved to Vienna to pursue a career as a professional musician. Koželuch’s reputation as a pianist, teacher and composer was sufficiently well established by 1781 for him to decline the position as court organist to the Archbishop of Salzburg made vacant by Mozart’s dismissal. He began publishing his own works by 1784 and in 1785 he founded a music publishing house (the Musikalisches Magazin) which was later managed by his younger brother, Antonín Tomáš Koželuch (1752–1805). Koželuch also cultivated publishers elsewhere in Europe and his works seem to have been particularly successful in London. It is testimony to Koželuch’s reputation that the Bohemian Estates commissioned him to compose a cantata for the coronation in Prague of Leopold II as King of Bohemia. The success of this work almost certainly played a part in Koželuch’s appointment in June 1792 as Kammer Kapellmeister and Hofmusik Compositor at the court of Leopold’s successor, Emperor Franz II.

In 1797 Koželuch received a letter from the Scottish song collector and publisher George Thomson inviting him to take over from Ignaz Pleyel the task of arranging the songs he had selected for inclusion in his ambitious *A Select Collection of Scottish* [sic] *National Airs*. Having agreed on the terms, which also included a commission to write a series of accompanied sonatas incorporating Scots

airs, Koželuch set to work with a purpose and proved in short order to be an excellent if at times rather testy collaborator. The scope of the project, which expanded to include Welsh and Irish folk songs, and Koželuch’s teaching and duties connected with his court position, inevitably had an impact on his own work and from around 1804 his productivity as a composer declined.

Koželuch was an influential figure as a pianist and contemporary writers credited him with playing an important role in the development of an idiomatic style of piano playing at a time when the harpsichord was still widely played. Like his compatriot Wanhal – and to a certain extent, Mozart – Koželuch derived a significant proportion of his income from teaching. It was important therefore that his output as a composer reinforced his reputation as a leading exponent of his instrument. Unsurprisingly, he wrote a significant body of works for the piano including sonatas, piano trios and concertos, but he also composed in other instrumental genres. Some of this music has not survived which makes it difficult to assess whether the progressive tendencies seen in some of Koželuch’s piano music and chamber works extended to his operas, only one of which has survived.

Koželuch’s output of symphonies is relatively modest by the standards of the time. Recent research suggests that he composed 17 symphonies, one of which has not survived, and two *Symphonies concertantes*. All of these works appear to have been composed between c. 1779 and 1787 and therefore belong to the period after the composer’s move to Vienna. These years represent something of a flat period in the history of the symphony in Vienna. Owing to the declining demand for new works due in part to economic factors, a number of composers in Vienna curtailed their output around this time. The most important of these figures was Wanhal who seems to have ceased composing symphonies by c. 1778, focusing his efforts instead on chamber works and keyboard music. Even Mozart was not immune from this trend. During the ten years he lived in Vienna he composed only a handful of works: a symphony written in Linz, a symphony for Prague and the final three symphonies which may have been intended for a tour to England that did not take place.

Mozart had other priorities as a composer and was content to neglect the symphony until such time as a work was required.

With the retirement of Wanhal from the field, Koželuch became for a time his successor as Vienna’s pre-eminent Bohemian symphonist. His works bear a resemblance to those of the elder composer, sometimes strikingly so, but they differ significantly in many crucial stylistic details. Some of these reflect the influence of Koželuch’s teacher, Dušek, whose works were widely performed in Prague but do not appear to have been well known in Vienna. Koželuch’s later symphonies, however, surpass those of Dušek in scale and complexity and are as technically impressive as the finest of Wanhal’s works. Even Johann Ferdinand von Schönfeld, who described Koželuch in his *Jahrbuch der Tonkunst in Wien und Prag* (1796) as being ‘too pleased with himself [and] repeats himself or dwells too long in one place’ nonetheless praised his ‘very beautiful symphonies’. The four works on this recording confirm Schönfeld’s high opinion: they are fluent, attractive works, well-conceived and show an impressive command of the symphonic medium.

Unusually for Koželuch, who took a keen interest in the publication of his instrumental works, only one of the symphonies on this recording appeared in print: the *Sinfonia in C PosK I: 2*. Although it was published in Paris by Sieber in 1786, there are reasonable stylistic grounds to believe that the work is one of Koželuch’s earliest symphonies. The instrumentation of the work includes trumpets and timpani in addition to the customary pairs of oboes and horns and the composer handles these with consummate mastery. The addition of a solo flute to double the first violin line in the elegant, flowing second movement is a lovely touch after the brilliance of the opening *Allegro con brio* and demonstrates a sensitivity to orchestral colour that is a hallmark of his symphonies. Early though this work may well be, it has moments of great originality. The development section in the first movement appears on first hearing to be rather brief, but the early reappearance of the opening theme in the tonic launches another phase of development before the recapitulation proper begins; the opening material reappears yet again just before the close of the

movement allowing Koželuch to make striking use of his enlarged musical forces. Such is the quality of this symphony it is hardly surprising that at least one manuscript copy survives in an attribution to Haydn.

The *Sinfonia in A, PosK. I: 10* is one of two works on this recording to have a title – *À la Française* – but whether this originated with Koželuch is unknown. There is nothing obviously French about the work. It is certainly no parody in the manner of Dittersdorf's *Sinfonia Nazionale* which contains a *Menuet* in the French style signalled by extensive use of dotted rhythms. Koželuch's use of imitative string passages over pedal points in setting up important structural cadences, however, perhaps has a whiff of the exotic about it and may have been the unlikely inspiration for the title. In comparison with the *Sinfonia in C, PosK I: 2*, the present work is unusually rich in thematic material and highly sophisticated in the way this material is linked and manipulated. The first-movement recapitulation is atypical of Viennese symphonies in avoiding a statement of the opening theme with the return of the tonic. The development section is vigorous and highly enterprising. More surprises await the listener in the second movement which substitutes flutes for oboes and includes a pair of horns in the scoring. The movement is cast as a kind of rondo but the two episodes are disproportionately long in comparison with the theme and are also tonally unstable. There are moments of fleeting dissonance which give the music great piquancy. After a lively *Menuetto* and delicate *Trio*, the symphony ends with a bustling finale in which brief imitative passages over pedal points once again serve to animate the musical texture.

Koželuch's *Sinfonia in B flat, PosK I: 11* is without the question the most unusual of his extant symphonies. Titled *L'Irrésolu* (or *L'Irresoluto*) in two of the known sources, this work belongs to the subgenre of characteristic symphonies. These works typically evoke extra-musical images such as war, tempests or the countryside, and employ a range of well-recognised musical devices that act as signifiers. Characteristic symphonies differ from programmatic symphonies in that they do not attempt to sustain a narrative. At first glance, Koželuch's *L'Irrésolu* appears to

be a characteristic symphony. None of the individual movements carries any kind of extra-musical text that suggests the existence of a wider narrative framework. However, the varied depiction of irresolution in the individual movements suggests that such a narrative might once have existed in one form or another. The linking of the second and third movements and the third and fourth movements possibly indicates some kind of narrative trajectory. The use of recitativo-style writing towards the end of the first movement is not in itself original – Haydn uses the technique in his three 'programmatic' symphonies *Le Matin*, *Le Midi* and *Le Soir* composed in 1761 – but the return of the same material at the end of the *Finale* is noteworthy and surely has some kind of narrative significance. Koželuch uses a variety of musical techniques to depict irresolution: the music is at times disjointed; there are angry, agitated outbursts and unexpected introductions of new ideas. The musical structures are also singular at times even although they conform at a fundamental level with the conventions of the period. Whatever the underlying idea of the work might be, Koželuch's boldness as a composer certainly gives no impression that he is the irresolute one. It is possible that this symphony once served another purpose, perhaps accompanying a pantomime or some other kind of theatrical work and as such it might be considered alongside works such as Haydn's *Symphony No. 60 in C, 'Il distratto'*.

Sinfonia in C, PosK I: 9 represents Koželuch's symphonic writing at its most developed and was probably composed in the late 1780s. Why it was not published is a mystery since it is an impressive work, harmonically and tonally rich, masterful in structural thinking and abounding in attractive melodic ideas. A copy of the work, transposed into B flat, survives in an attribution to his compatriot Antonio Rosetti, Kapellmeister at the Oettingen-Wallerstein court, but there is little reason to doubt Koželuch's authorship. Like all of Koželuch's mature symphonies, *PosK I: 9* exhibits the freshness, verve and impressive technical finish that is characteristic of this immensely gifted composer.

Allan Badley



Marek Štílec

Marek Štílec began his musical studies on the violin at the Prague Conservatory and studied conducting with Leoš Svárovský at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. Štílec is an alumnus of the International Järvi Academy and Jac van Steen's Emerging Conductors Series, and has participated in the masterclasses of Michael Tilson Thomas and Jorma Panula, among others. He conducts a wide range of leading orchestras, including the New World Symphony, the Ulster Orchestra, Das Kurpfälzische Kammerorchester Mannheim, the Wiener Concertverein Orchester, the Orchestra of the Swan, the London Classical Soloists, the Berlin Camerata, the Kammerphilharmonie Graz and Sinfonietta Bratislava, as well as the top orchestras in the Czech Republic.

www.arcodiva.cz/en/agency/instrumental-soloists/marek-stilec/

Photo: Daria Kalinovska



Filip Dvořák

Filip Dvořák studied at the conservatory in Brno, the Janáček Academy of Music and the Hochschule für Musik und Theater 'Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy' Leipzig. He is a sought-after basso continuo player and the founder of Baroque orchestra Hipocondria Ensemble. He collaborates with many historical music ensembles such as Collegium 1704 and Musica Florea, and is a regular guest of the Hradec Králové and Plzeň Philharmonic Orchestras. He also performs with flautist and conductor Jakub Kydlíček as duo Concerto Aventino and collaborates with violinist and composer Jiří Sycha. He often participates in projects for Arco Diva and Naxos with conductor Marek Štílec and the Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice, and chamber orchestras Quattro and Wranitzky Kapelle. Dvořák has taught at the Conservatory of Teplice since 2014, which has resulted in the creation of the Musica Filipika ensemble. Dvořák is also the founder of the jazz-Baroque band Transitus Irregularis. He builds harpsichords at František Vyhnaněk's workshop.

Photo: Radek Havlíček

Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice

The Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice is valued for its stylistic interpretations and the extraordinary quality of its orchestral sound, and it is rightly ranked amongst the world's leading representatives of Czech musical culture. It often performs at the most prestigious festivals in the Czech Republic and venues throughout Europe such as the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, the Grosses Festspielhaus, Salzburg, the Herkulesaal and the Gasteig, Munich, the Musikverein, Vienna, the Brucknerhaus, Linz, and the Meistersingerhalle, Nuremberg, among many others. Outside Europe the orchestra has performed in Japan and toured extensively around America. The first principal conductor, Libor Pešek, quickly raised the orchestra to a high standard, and subsequent principal conductors have included Marco Armiliato and Mariss Jansons. The orchestra has also welcomed numerous world-renowned soloists such as Isabelle van Keulen, Vladimir Spivakov, Ludwig Güttler, Radek Baborák, Gábor Boldoczki and Sergei Nakariakov. Aside from concerts, the orchestra regularly engages in operatic and theatre projects and has recorded dozens of successful albums on record labels including Naxos, ArcoDiva, Supraphon, Classico, Monitor-EMI and Amabile. **www.kfpar.cz**



Photo: František Renza

In addition to his influence as a pianist and leading keyboard composer in Vienna, the Bohemian Leopold Koželuch wrote an important body of symphonies that rank among the most significant of their time. The four examples here, heard in original, corrected editions, show consummate mastery of proportion, instrumental control and thematic development and all exude characteristic freshness and sophistication. The *Symphony in B flat*, titled *L'Irrésolu* is especially noteworthy not only as his most unusual work in the genre but for its sheer boldness of expression. *Volume 1* can be heard on 8.573627 and *Volume 2* on 8.573872.



Leopold KOŽELUCH (1747–1818)



Symphonies • 3

Sinfonia in A major, 'À la Française', PosK I: 10

17:58

- 1 I. Allegro di molto 6:40
- 2 II. Poco adagio ma più andante 4:23
- 3 III. Menuetto 2:58
- 4 IV. Presto con fuoco 3:51

Sinfonia in C major, PosK I: 9

20:21

- 5 I. Allegro molto 7:49
- 6 II. Poco adagio 5:04
- 7 III. Menuetto: Allegretto 3:55
- 8 IV. Presto con fuoco 3:30

Sinfonia in B flat major, 'L'Irrésolu', PosK I: 11

24:57

- 9 I. Allegro ma più presto 8:02
- 10 II. Adagio 6:55
- 11 III. Menuetto: Vivace 4:00
- 12 IV. Allegro molto poco presto 6:00

Sinfonia in C major, PosK I: 2

14:34

- 13 I. Allegro con brio 6:27
- 14 II. Andante 2:29
- 15 III. Menuetto: Allegretto 3:14
- 16 IV. Allegro ma non presto 2:23

Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice
Filip Dvořák, Harpsichord
Marek Štilec

Recorded: 27–31 September 2018 at The House of Music Pardubice, Czech Republic

Producer: Jiří Štilec • Engineer: Václav Roubal • Booklet note: Allan Badley

Publisher: Daniel Bernhardsson, Edition: Czech Masters in Vienna 1–12, Czech Masters in Vienna 13–16

Cover photo: Upper Belvedere Palace, Vienna (© Ixuskmitl / Dreamstime.com)



8.574047

DDD

Playing Time
77:59



www.naxos.com

Made in Germany

© & © 2019 Naxos Rights (Europe) Ltd
Booklet notes in English