



Permanent Values and Variability in Janáček's Opinions on National and Regional Identity in Relation to Music

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DOI: [10.2478/prm-2021-0006](https://doi.org/10.2478/prm-2021-0006)

Leoš Janáček (born 3rd July 1854, died 12th August 1928) is considered as one of the most outstanding representatives of “Czech music” and, after Antonín Dvořák, the second most frequently performed Czech composer in the world as well as the best recognised 20th-century opera composer. Music history places him next to Béla Bartók, with whom he shared an active interest in folk music, which served as an intense inspiration permeating the so-called “artistic” music, frequently labelled as the neo-folklorist style.

The Social and Societal Determinants of Artistic Self-Identification

Janáček's views on national and regional identity can be investigated thanks to the fact that these questions were at the centre of his social and cultural awareness and were interrelated with his theoretical claims concerning the nature of music. Janáček expressed his views in several different ways: in

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his compositions, where the said trends manifested themselves in theme selection and the range of inspirations, in his manifestos or statements published on various professional and popular-media levels and in his personal communications.

This simplified list of sources should be approached with the awareness that these various types of expressions and media indeed overlap. In addition, they can be supported by indirect documents derived from his teaching practice, folkloristic work, and the various programmes Janáček drew up as an organiser of musical life.

As a matter of fact, the composer spent all of his life in an environment where Czech culture existed side by side or clashed with German culture. Although Janáček left his native Hukvaldy at the age of eleven, already his childhood memories include opposition to the local archbishops' chateau (residence), presented in the manner of how "we tried to evade the Germans."¹ After his arrival in Brno this confrontation with the German spirit, including German music and musical life, became everyday reality. Not only in Brno, but in the Czech society of the latter half of the 19th century at large, German inspirations were quite strong, which resulted in an increased awareness of the national past and enhanced the role of national symbols. These efforts to introduce an immanently Czech culture, however, frequently lacked a consolidated and distinct social base, which Janáček experienced personally in his arguments with Czech patriots. Admittedly, many of those disputes were caused by the composer's character, by his desire to assert his opinions and his reluctance to accept compromise. Janáček was convinced that his views were the correct ones, which can actually be confirmed in retrospect. All the same, he voiced them in a society that was not prepared to digest them.

In 1869, as a young student and member of the monastic foundation at Old Brno, Janáček participated in the grand celebrations of the millennium of the arrival of Slav missionaries Constantine and Methodius to Moravia

1 Leoš Janáček, "Autobiografie" [Autobiography], in *Literární dílo (1875–1928): fejetony, studie, kritiky, recenze, glosy, přednášky, proslovy, sylaby a skici, řada 1 / svazek 1–1*, eds. Theodora Straková, Eva Drlíková (Brno: Editio Janáček, 2003), No. 251, 625.

and, in particular, of Constantine's (Cyril's) death.² In the last quarter of the 19th century, the composer repeatedly expressed his conviction that Slav music must be revived on the basis of folklore and folksong, that it possesses the potential to become the "music of the future" and play a leading role. Janáček himself took care to review concert and theatre programmes with regard to including works by Slav authors and criticising their potential absence. He was one of the founders of the Russian Milieu in Brno and counted himself as one of those intellectuals who, until World War I, saw Russia as the major and leading representative of the idea of Panslavism.³ In addition, his output is largely based on Russian literary works, which he set to music. Examples include his *Pohádka* [Fairy Tale] for cello and piano based on Vasily Zhukovsky (JW VII/5⁴), his *String Quartet No. 1* after Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata* (JW VII/8), orchestral rhapsody *Taras Bulba* after the novel by Nikolai Vasilyevich Gogol (JW VI/15), the opera *Katia Kabanova* based on a novel by Alexander Nikolayevich Ostrovsky (JW I/8), and his last opera *Z mrtvého domu* [From the House of the Dead], on a text by Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky (JW I/11).

His convictions concerning the excellent prospects for Slav music development from the folklore of the Slavic nations became less fervent after 1900, when the above-mentioned streak of Russian inspirations in his output took a radically different turn. Janáček's disappointment with the Russian reality was based on a tragic personal experience (in 1903 his daughter Olga died of typhus caught in Russia, where Janáček had sent her to polish her Russian). Janáček's Russian inspirations were interpreted formerly (i.e. before the political changes of 1989) as deformed ideological influence. Manipulations concerning his views were coupled with evident shyness and uncertainty on the part of pro-Soviet aestheticians when it came to the topic of *The House of the Dead*. Please note that Janáček was contemporary to the

2 John Tyrrell, Janáček. *Years of a Life. Volume I (1854-1914): The Lonely Blackbird* (London: Faber and Faber, 2006), 59-62.

3 Přemysl Vrba, "Ruský kroužek v Brně a Leoš Janáček" [Russian Circle in Brno and Leoš Janáček], *Slezský sborník* 58 (1960), 71-85.

4 JW = Nigel Simeone et al., *Janáček's Works: A Catalogue of the Music and Writings of Leoš Janáček* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

post-revolution purges of the 1920s, when thousands of people disappeared in the revived death camps in Siberia. It was no coincidence that Janáček chose this timeless theme for his last opera, thus placing his early view of the “music of the future” in a horrifying, sarcastic context at the end of his life.

Tensions over Defining “Ours” and “Foreign”

Calls to compose Slav music derived from its own historical sources seem mainly associated with Janáček’s first period of artistic work. Nevertheless, his interest in folksong and folk music was the leitmotif of his whole life and work.⁵ The popularity of folk art in Moravia harmonised with the sense of detachment from the elitism of Prague’s high artistic society. The folkloric movement frequently made use of stage arrangements of folk rituals and customs. Simultaneously with writing his own works, Janáček created arrangements of folk music, from the first choral pieces of the 1870s to the ones (not very numerous but still present) prepared in the 1920s.⁶ A culmination of Janáček’s interest in folklore can be observed in 1890s, when in order to describe types of artistic expression the composer introduced the dichotomy of “ours” and “foreign” in his theoretical discourse, by analogy to the social categories of “we” and “the others.” Janáček thus creates an illusion of shared interest, an orientation towards a hermetic “clan,” and the feeling that it was necessary to protect “our” values from the impact of “foreign” ones, imposed by an imaginary enemy. Nevertheless, he applies these notions with maximum flexibility and hardly ever feels the need to set definite boundaries. The dichotomy of “ours” vs “foreign” suggests an analogy to Janáček’s individual musical terminology, where he invented new words whose largely unknown or only suspected meaning justified their liberal or arbitrary use.

5 See Jarmila Procházková, *Janáčkovy záznamy hudebního a tanečního folkloru: Komentáře* (Brno: Doplněk, Etnologický ústav Akademie věd ČR, 2006).

6 *Říkadla* [Nursery Rhymes], JW v/16, JW v/17; *Moravské lidové písně* [Moravian folksongs], JW VIII/23.

Throughout his publishing activity Janáček abundantly used terms such as “our” music and the culture of “our” people. If not for anything else, he certainly liked these notions for the following three reasons:

- 1 They generated the sense of community. The idea also worked in the wider social context, where it was related to nationalistic and linguistic issues and supported the distinction between Czech and German ethnicity;
- 2 In the same way, the idea of community worked in the professional context, where it represented the interests of the music circles;
- 3 Thanks to this general self-identification, Janáček avoided the necessity to distinguish between what was Czech, Moravian and Slovak.

The Issue of “Czech-ness” in Music

In this context one needs to discuss the ways Janáček’s rooted his argumentation in music theory, where he sought support for his views and frequent value judgements on the “Czech-ness” of Czech music, and where he even tried to define specific elements and phenomena which he classified plainly as Moravian, Lachian, or Slovak (in the former sense of Moravian Slovakia).

What is typical of Janáček’s writings is that in the sphere of artistic music he neither sought nor emphasised the issue of a distinct Moravian music. He expected his pupils at the Organ School to contribute to Czech music⁷ and he himself wanted to be recognised as a Czech composer in (or from) Moravia.

He commented on the “Czech-ness” of Czech music many times in his short but significant notes as well as in his more extensive texts. Let me quote the main points of his feuilleton “Obrátit” [Turn Back, 1912]:

Czech-ness is not an end in itself, a result of the political, nationalistic and social Czech national sentiment, with the consolations [one gets] from the residues of a dove’s blood and a smile, but [it is] a quality of the work itself. The work must be part of the chain of the national (in the sense of folk) art tradition. ... National

⁷ Leoš Janáček, “K organizaci hudebního života v Brně” [On the Organisation of the Music Life in Brno], in *Literární dílo 1-1*, No. 46, 79.

art tradition and its essential musical elements are the germs of our compositions' development.⁸

The “musical elements” mentioned in this statement were defined by Janáček several times in the following few years, mostly on the basis of his folksong and speech melody studies. This was one of the reasons why he wanted to compile a “speech intonation” dictionary, that is a dictionary of living Czech speech that would serve as a reservoir of motives and inspirations for musicians.⁹

Janáček's specific contribution may be seen in his intentional emphasis on the importance of the combination of Czech music with Czech texts for the national character to develop; this held true, he claimed, even for purely instrumental music. In order to inform instrumental motifs with Czech character, one needs to bring them close to the word. The characteristic Czech musical style is conditioned by the verbal structure of Czech speech, as he explains in his study “The Sense of Real Motifs” (1910)¹⁰. The idea of setting traditional folk music in the role of a powerful source of inspiration, manifesting itself throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries in the strong trend of musical folklorism, was in essence nothing new or territorially limited.

At the same time, Janáček warned his readers against simplistic use of these elements in the form of direct quotations, and against inorganically combining them with compositional procedures, which was a practice typical of Romantic music.

The essence of his criticism does not focus on either Czech-ness or Moravianism. Instead it cuts through both. Janáček was equally critical of the Czech composer Karel Bendl (1838–1897) and the Moravian composer Josef Nešvera (1842–1914); he spoke very openly not only of Bedřich

8 Leoš Janáček, “Obrátit” [Turn Back], in *Literární dílo 1–1*, No. 170, 411

9 Leoš Janáček, “Úvodní slovo k otevření konzervatoře hudby v Brně” [Introductory Address for the Opening of the Conservatory of Music in Brno], in *Literární dílo (1875–1928)*. No. 182, 458.

10 Leoš Janáček, “Váha reálních motivů” [The Sense of Real Motifs], in *Teoretické dílo (1877–1927): články, studie, přednášky, koncepty, zlomky, skici, řada 1/ svazek 2–1*, eds. Leoš Faltus, Eva Drlíková, Svatava Přibáňová, Jiří Zahrádka (Brno: Editio Janáček, 2007), 429–430.

Smetana (1824–1884), but even about his own otherwise greatly respected teacher Pavel Křížkovský (1820–1885).

Attributing Distinguishable Identity to Particular Musical Elements

In the context of his study of folksong tunes, the composer felt the need for territorial identification of some musical elements and specific intonations (not in the sense of his famous “speech intonations,” but as selected shorter sections of the song melody). These characteristics were identified by him on the basis of his observations of the local speech dialects (1901).

The term “Moravian modulation“ is sometimes briefly explained as Janáček’s term for a deviation from the basic key to the key of the flat seventh degree. Janáček, however, used the term as a composite one, since he understood modulation, which he certainly defined as a principle, in the context of other accompanying phenomena. According to Janáček, Moravian modulation was associated with the ternary (in exceptional cases also binary) music forms which contained modulation at the beginning of the second section and returned to the original key in the last, third part. The typical feature of such modulation was the oscillation between a major and a minor key. The shift of key-determining note to the seventh degree was considered by Janáček as most frequent but not the only one possible. Moravian modulation thus became synonymous with a temporary shift to another, secondary key (with the exception of a deviation to the key of the fifth degree, which was perceived by Janáček as “profaned” and over-used). The joint effect of the above-mentioned elements and their resulting impact seemed so frequent and so important to the composer that he felt it proper to employ this term to identify a typical kind of Moravian folksong, the so-called “Moravian-modulation song type.”¹¹

¹¹ Leoš Janáček, “O hudební stránce národních písní moravských” [On the Musical Aspects of Moravian Folksongs], in *Folkloristické dílo I (1886–1927): studie, recenze, fejetony*

A typical Lachian intonation takes from the Lach dialects their characteristic accent on the penultimate syllable, which manifests itself in musical language as an ascending melody, defined by Janáček as the “pronounced” (i.e. raised) feature of the tune. Looking for specific features of Moravian-Slovak intonation, Janáček found one in the combination of the rhythmical and melodic progression of the song.¹² A Slovak intonation is distinguished by the typical combination of a shorter note and the following longer note of the same pitch, the so-called “stagnation” (settlement of the melody) on the same pitch. This element was again illustrated by him with examples of speech intonations. He noted in this context that the relative lengths of the notes kept changing so as to avoid monotony. His comments on the characteristic Slovak intonation, however, are immediately followed by a section emphasising the relative character of both main attributes. Janáček studied what happened when the longer note came first before the shorter rhythmical value. He analysed the effects and the physiological causes of the changes in note pitch.¹³

In his articles about melodies, where he defined the features of the Moravian-Slovak and the Lachian intonations, he found key support for his statements in his studies of the language and dialects, especially in his extensive collection of speech intonations. According to Janáček, the very fact that language was enlivened by dialects was a guarantee that his theory could respect the changeable nature of the studied material and there was no danger of stagnation or schematic approach.

The constants in this area include the assessment of the “Czech” nature of music on the basis of its genetic principles in relation to the Czech language. Janáček does this in compliance with Herder’s idea of language as the soul of the nation. Janáček’s professional studies, based on practical examples and specific deductions, went beyond the formal linguistic orientation of early 19th-century nationalism which, though criticised even by

a zprávy, řada 1 / svazek 3-1, eds. Jarmila Procházková, Marta Toncrová, Jiří Vysloužil (Brno: Editio Janáček, 2009), No. 13, 204-206, 213-214.

¹² Ibidem, 158-167. Cf. also Jan Trojan, “Janáčková lašská modulace: k zapomenutému hudebně folkloristickému termínu,” *Český lid* 91, No. 4 (2004), 351-356.

¹³ L. Janáček, “O hudební stránce národních písní moravských”, 184-187.

František Palacký¹⁴, continued to affect the value systems at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, not only in music but in culture in general. Janáček obviously identified himself with the common interest of the nation, trying to improve the conditions of music life and the cultural sphere in general. He never stigmatised elements of culture that fell outside this group, and, conversely, did not praise mediocrity or low standards within it (a phenomenon that was rather common in similar situations).

When Eliška Krásnohorská, the librettist of Bedřich Smetana, defended (rather too eagerly and not adequately in Janáček's opinion) a mediocre Czech composer exclusively for the sake of his patriotic feelings, Janáček's reaction was as follows: "And yet there are composers who have nothing in common with Czech-ness [...]. The empty patriotic cliché alone is again deemed sufficient. They do not see, hear, or feel any deeper."¹⁵

Janáček represented a rational detachment from, and resistance to, the sacralisation of the national anthem. Nevertheless, he was one of the few who documented the anthem in an authentic traditional rural environment, as sung in a village in 1902, which was an immediate proof of its spontaneous popularisation.¹⁶ However, in his opera *Výlet pana Broučka do Měsíce* [The Excursion of Mr. Brouček to the Moon (JW 1/6, finished in 1917)] he followed the example of Svatopluk Čech's literary model and subjected the type of the petty "little Czech" to a biting satire. Like the librettist, he wrote a parody of the Czech national anthem, and above the score of this opera he asked the following questions:

Isn't the tone a little too soft, not sharpened enough? Isn't it flattering more than denouncing? Welcoming rather than rejecting? Isn't the depicted truth sweet rather than bitter? [...] Is the music tough enough to confront us with the merciless truth? Will this truth make us naked and blushing with shame about ourselves?¹⁷

14 František Palacký (1798–1876), a Czech historian and politician, the main figure of the Czech National Revival, often referred to as the "Father of the Nation."

15 *Korespondence Leoše Janáčka s Gabrielou Horvátovou*, ed. Artuš Rektorys, Janáčkův archiv sv. 6. (Praha: Hudební Matice Umělecké Besedy, 1950), 82.

16 Procházková, *Janáčkovy záznamy hudebního a tanečního folkloru*, 109–110, item *Hukvaldy*.

17 Leoš Janáček, "Výlety páně Broučkovy. Jeden do Měsíce, druhý do xv. století" [The Excursions of Mr. Brouček. One to the Moon, the Second to the 15th Century], in *Literární dílo 1–1*, No. 177, 431.

This critique targeting “ours” was not tantamount to the composer giving up his efforts to represent the culture of the new Czechoslovak state. In 1920s he was successful at the festivals of the International Society for Contemporary Music in Salzburg (1923), Prague (1924), and Venice (1925); he responded to invitations to England and Germany, and took active part in the exhibition titled “Music in the Lives of Nations” held in Frankfurt am Main (1927). The decline of the idea of political and cultural pan-Slavism led him to the recognition of his own country’s new cultural role in the centre of Europe, which he expressed in the following statement:

I come with the young spirit of our republic, young music, I am not one of those who like to look back; I prefer to look forward. I know we must grow, and I do not envisage this growth in pain, in the memories of suffering and oppression. Let us shake it away! Do not think of the bygone times, but imagine for once that you must look forward! We are a nation that can mean something in the world! We are the heart of Europe! And the heart must beat for Europe to live!¹⁸

All these circumstances meant that Janáček never became a nationalist in the music scene. His awareness of the objective qualities of “foreign” music prevented him from presenting negative value judgements that a nationalist approach would dictate. In his private life he behaved differently; compare, for instance, his individual documented unpleasant and critical statements about Germans, Jews, but also Poles, especially at the time of emotions kindled by World War I and in the period of the difficult postwar consolidation and reorganisation.¹⁹

Nationalism is generally defined as a trend towards preserving the allegedly traditional as opposed to enrichment in a tolerant environment. This opposition was overcome by Janáček’s continuing inspiration drawn

18 Leoš Janáček, “Projev Leoše Janáčka v Československém klubu londýnském v Anglii (2. května 1926)” [Janáček’s Address to the London Czecho-Slavic Club in England (2nd May 1926)], in *Literární dílo 1-1*, No. 226, 570–571.

19 L. Janáček, “Jablunkovské Mosty [Mosty by Jablunkov],” in *Literární dílo 1-1*, No. 160, 360–362. Cf. Thema con variazioni: korespondence s manželkou Zdeňkou a dcerou Olgou, ed. Svatava Příbáňová (Praha: Editio Bärenreiter, 2007), letter No. 466 of 11th July 1923, 246.

from traditional folk music on the one hand, and the curiosity that made him master and monitor the new composition techniques of the early 20th century on the other.

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BIOGRAM

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ABSTRACT

Permanent Values and Variability in Janáček's Opinions on National and Regional Identity in Relation to Music

Leoš Janáček (1854–1928) was one of those composers whose work was in many respects closely connected with current social events and yet it carried a deep and timeless ethical message. Janáček's activity as an artist, teacher and organiser reflected changes in the political and cultural paradigm disseminated in the European countries in the course of more than six decades. He himself went through an interesting inner development resulting from his studies, artistic and life experience, as well as his empathy related not only to his narrow individual but also a wider collective space. His relative isolation from the official artistic establishment of Prague

BIOGRAM

Jarmila Procházková — Ukończyła w Brnie klasę fortepianu w konserwatorium oraz studia muzykologiczne na Uniwersytecie Masaryka. Pracowała początkowo w Dziale Historii Muzyki Muzeum Ziemi Morawskiej, gdzie specjalizowała się w życiu i twórczości Leoša Janáčka. Od 1998 roku związana jest z Instytutem Etnologii Czeskiej Akademii Nauk (od 1998 jako pracownik naukowy bez stałej afiliacji, następnie od 2004 na etacie, w tym w latach 2004–2017 na Wydziale Historii Muzyki). Była m.in. współredaktorką krytycznego wydania dzieł wszystkich Leoša Janáčka.

STRESZCZENIE

Wartości stałe i zmienność poglądów Janáčka na temat tożsamości narodowej i regionalnej w odniesieniu do muzyki

Leoš Janáček (1854–1928) jest jednym tych z kompozytorów, których twórczość pod wieloma względami była ściśle związana z aktualnymi wydarzeniami społecznymi, a jednocześnie niosła głębokie i ponadczasowe przesłanie etyczne. W działalności Janáčka, jako aktywnego artysty, pedagoga i organizatora, znalazły odzwierciedlenie zmiany w paradygmacie politycznym i kulturalnym, jakie na przestrzeni ponad sześciu dziesięcioleci rozprzestrzeniały się w krajach europejskich. Sam przeszedł interesującą drogę rozwoju wewnętrznego, co było wynikiem studiów, doświadczeń życiowych i artystycznych, a także empatii, dotyczącej nie tylko wąskiej przestrzeni indywidualnej, ale i szerszej — zbiorowej. Jego wglądna

gave him an opportunity to formulate his original views on the European, national, and regional identity. In addition to various literary forms, music composition remained his fundamental means of expression. In this context, this paper will attempt to define the basic directions in Janáček's dynamic evolution and the areas in which his key values and priorities remained constant.

KEYWORDS Leoš Janáček, nationalism in music, regionalism in music, cultural identity, neo-folklorism

izolacja od oficjalnego establishmentu artystycznego w Pradze dała mu możliwość sformułowania oryginalnych poglądów na temat tożsamości europejskiej, narodowej i regionalnej. Obok rozmaitych form literackich jego podstawowym środkiem wyrazu była kompozycja muzyczna. W tym kontekście niniejszy artykuł jest próbą określenia podstawowych kierunków dynamicznej ewolucji Janáčka oraz tych parametrów, w obrębie których jego poglądy pozostały niezmiennie.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE Leoš Janáček, nacjonalizm w muzyce, regionalizm w muzyce, tożsamość kulturowa, neofolklorizm