

# The Enchanting Music of Blades and Bullets: Visions of Violence in Janáček's World-War Symphonic Poems

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*Andriy was [...] wholly absorbed in the enchanting music of blades and bullets, because will, oblivion, death, and pleasure are nowhere united in such a seductive, terrible charm as they are in battle.<sup>1</sup>*

Leoš Janáček is undoubtedly best known today as a composer of operas. Yet at the beginning of the First World War, no one could have imagined that this would ever be the case, least of all the composer himself. In the first half of 1913, it had become obvious that his *Osud* (*Fate*) would not be performed in Prague, and he had

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<sup>1</sup> 'Andriy takzhe pogruzilsya ves' v ocharovatel'nyu muzyku mechey i pul', potomu chto nigde volya, zabvenie, smert', naslzhdenie ne soedinyayutsya v takoy obol'stitel'noy, strashnoy prelesti, kak v bitve' (Nikolay Vasil'evich Gogol, *Mirgorod, povesti, sluzhashchiya prodolzheniem Veчерov na khutore bliz Dikan'ki* [Mirgorod: Tales Serving as a Sequel to "Evenings on a Farm near Dikan'ka"], St Petersburg, 1835, 'Taras Bulba', chap. 4; the second half of this sentence was suppressed in the corresponding passage in chap. 5 of the 1842 version known to Janáček).

abandoned work on *Mr Brouček's Excursion to the Moon*; he did not work on *Brouček* or any other opera until after the success of his *Jenůfa (Její pastorkyňa)* in Prague in 1916.<sup>2</sup> Indeed prospects for performances of any large-scale works must have seemed bleak after the outbreak of war in 1914. But in these years the composer turned enthusiastically to the symphonic poem, writing three major works, *Šumařovo dítě (The Fiddler's Child, JW VI/14, 1913)*, *Taras Bulba (JW VI/15, 1915-18)*, and the *Balada blanická (The Ballad of Blaník, JW VI/16, c1919)*.<sup>3</sup>

Two of these commemorate the war, *Taras Bulba* and the *Balada blanická*,<sup>4</sup> and they raise numerous intriguing questions. Both are based on literary models, but there is an apparent mismatch between the models and the programmatic construction of each piece.<sup>5</sup> Both culminate with impressive final apotheoses, quoted

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<sup>2</sup> For details, see John Tyrrell, *Janáček: Years of a Life*, (London, 2006-7), I, *The Lonely Blackbird*, 803-6.

<sup>3</sup> My JW references are to the numbering in the standard catalogue: Nigel Simeone, John Tyrrell, and Alena Němcová. *Janáček's Works: A Catalogue of the Music and Writings of Leoš Janáček* (Oxford, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Janáček also commemorated the war in a patriotic male-voice chorus, *Česká legie JW IV/42* (November 1918), a setting of a poem published a few days after Czechoslovak independence, celebrating the part played by the Czechoslovak Legion at the Battle of Amiens in August 1918.

<sup>5</sup> Hugh Macdonald has expressed this view particularly strongly (in his 'Narrative in Janáček's Symphonic Poems', in Paul Wingfield (ed.), *Janáček Studies* (Cambridge, UK, 1999), 36-55); it was noted earlier by Jaroslav Vogel in his standard biography (*Leoš Janáček: život a dílo* (2nd edition, Prague, 1997), 241, with reference to the *Balada blanická*). On the composer's attitude to programme music in general, see also Tyrrell, *Janáček: Years of a Life*, II, *Tsar of the Forests*, chap. 17, 248-78.

below as exx. 2 and 9 respectively; such apotheoses are sometimes regarded as questionable these days, allegedly representing empty rhetoric or displaced violence.<sup>6</sup> Suspect or not, these apotheoses point to the strong connection between these pieces and the symphonic poems of Liszt; such a connection has hardly been noticed hitherto, even though it might have been expected, especially in view of Czech writing on music at the time, in which Liszt's symphonic poems of the 1860s are placed at the centre of modernist interest. One text in particular, by the composer and writer Václav Štěpán, is a manifesto dealing with this issue, and is apparently almost unknown in the secondary literature; it is discussed here and reproduced in translation in an appendix.

Moreover, a comparison of the two works may cast light on other music of the period, not merely in Czechoslovakia, more broadly. The *Balada blanická* seems entirely pacifist, and *Taras Bulba* seems, on the contrary, to glory in slaughter; yet there is much that they share very specifically in musical terms. This is possible, I conclude, partly because they refer to multiple intertexts, and partly because the conception of programme music that they exemplify is broader—and truer to life psychologically—than is often recognized.

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<sup>6</sup> See the discussion below of ideas explored in Alexander Rehding, *Music and Monumentality: Commemoration and Wonderment in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (New York, 2009), and in Lydia Goehr, *Elective Affinities: Musical Essays on the History of Aesthetic Theory* (New York, 2008).

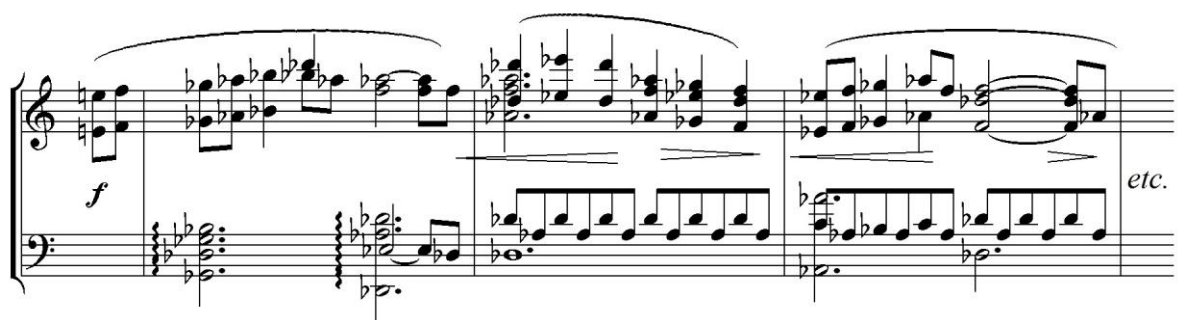
The composer's own comments on these works are not entirely revealing, however, apart from demonstrating his love of Russia in general terms. His retrospective dedication of *Taras Bulba* in 1923 to the new postwar Czechoslovak Army, in particular, seems a little less than convincing, even if one ignores the puzzling asides about the earlier chamber works:<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> 'Byl jsem přesvědčen již dávno, že teplou melodií Smetanovou, mdlou něžností tónů Fibichových, svěžestí rytmů Dvořákových, ba ani věhlasem našich učenců, ani světlou památkou Komenského, ani mučednictvím Husovým—že tím vším svobody národa se nedosáhne. Kulturní zbraně jsou zářivé, ale tupé. V "Pohádce" pro cello a klavír kmital mi na mysli svit ostré ocele, v "Sonátě" pro housle a klavír z r. 1914 slyšel jsem v podrážděné mysli již její třeskot. V "Rapsodii" z r. 1915 plesal jsem vidině našeho pluku vstříc. Roku 1918 rozhlaholil se její hymnický motiv: [Ex. 1]. A když branné ochraně našeho národa tuto svou práci připisují, je to z důvodu, že nechráníte nám jen naše pozemské statky, ale i náš celý myšlenkový svět' (Leoš Janáček, 'Našemu vojsku' (To Our Army), dated 'Brno, 15 September 1923', in Rudolf Tschorn and Richard Wolf (eds.), *Československé armádě pozdravy a vzkazy* (Greetings and Messages to the Czechoslovak Army) (Prague, 1923), 61.) This brief greeting to the army is JW XV/247 in Simeone, Tyrrell, and Němcová, *Janáček's Works*; Janáček's (characteristic) original layout has a fresh paragraph for each sentence. It is reprinted in Leoš Janáček, *Literární dílo: fejetony, studie, kritiky, recenze, glosy, přednášky, proslavy, sylaby a skici* (Literary Works: Feuilletons, Studies, Criticism, Reviews, Glosses, Lectures, Speeches, Syllabuses, and Sketches), ser. 1, I/1, ed. Theodora Straková and Eva Drlíková (Brno, 2003), 527, where it is arbitrarily renumbered 207. Unless it also contains an unnoticed programmatic allusion, the Violin Sonata may have been mentioned in this greeting merely because of the date of its composition—between May 1914 and October 1915/

I have long been convinced that it is not with Smetana's warm melody, nor with the languid tenderness of Fibich's music, nor with the freshness of Dvořák's rhythms, nor even with the high repute of our scholars, nor even with the illustrious memory of Comenius or the martyrdom of John Hus – that with none of all these is the freedom of the nation attained. Cultural weapons are splendid, but blunt.

In my *Pohádka* for cello and piano there flashed into my mind the lustre of sharp steel; in my sonata for violin and piano of 1914 I was on the point of hearing its clang in my anxious mood. In my Rhapsody of 1915 [i.e. *Taras Bulba*], I rejoiced in the premonition of our own army. In 1918 [i.e. at the inauguration of the Czechoslovak Republic and its army], its hymn-like motif rang out:



[Ex. 1: Janáček's own short-score reduction of *Taras Bulba*, third movement, bb. 195–8)

And when I am dedicating this work of mine to [you,] the armed forces of our nation, it is because you do not defend only our earthly goods, but also our entire intellectual world.

Though this affirms the continuing centrality of the gleaming steel of warfare in his mind's eye, one might suspect that Janáček had been mentally revising the meaning of *Taras Bulba* since its composition eight years earlier. He cannot have meant to tell the fledgling Czechoslovak army that its glorious future lay in 'oblivion' and 'death', however 'enchanted' that prospect may have seemed in 1914. I shall be suggesting, in fact, that the enthusiasm motivating the composition of *Taras Bulba* in late 1914 was not quite the same as that inspiring the *Balada blanická* in 1919, let alone that suggested in 1923—but that none of these is unambiguously embodied in this richly allusive music.

### **Gogol's *Mirgorod* and *Taras Bulba***

To untangle these problems, it may be best to begin with an account of the two divergent versions of Gogol's long short story, not least because none of the Janáček literature (and little of the older Gogol literature, as far as I am aware<sup>8</sup>) deals with it

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<sup>8</sup> Although I have worked from the Russian texts for this article, I am not a Russianist and lay no claim to comprehensive expertise concerning Gogol. I owe a good deal to the outstanding discussion of Gogol's stories in Richard Peace, *The Enigma of Gogol: An Examination of the Writings of N. V. Gogol and Their Place in the Russian Literary Tradition* (Cambridge, UK, 1981), and I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr Rajendra Chitnis for his help with the Russian and his useful comments on my text. Dr Chitnis is not responsible for the views, interpretations, and translated excerpts offered here. Others to whom I owe special thanks include John Tyrrell and Katharine Ellis, both of whom have generously read and commented on this paper, and one in particular of the anonymous reviewers of my text.

in a way that is adequate to present purposes, and it seems the more misunderstood of the two literary models for these symphonic poems.

Gogol's *Taras Bulba* is the longest of a collection of four stories written for a metropolitan Russian readership and first published in 1835. Set in Ukraine, they are together entitled *Mirgorod*, the name of an old Ukrainian garrison town (Mirgorod, or Myrhorod in Ukrainian).<sup>9</sup> Each story draws on a separate genre (epic, comedy, idyll, and folklore), to present very different facets of Ukrainian society and history. There is no realistic documentation, even if Gogol is called a "realist" in some of the older literature: 'the Little Russia of . . . *Mirgorod* . . . is a world of proud, boastful Cossacks, of black-browed beauties, of witches, devils, magic spells and enchantments, of drowsy farms and muddy little towns—that is, a stage-set Ukraine, more operatic than real.'<sup>10</sup>

There is an underlying theme uniting the stories: the contrast between an enormously stirring, bellicose Cossack epic past, and its replacement, a weak,

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<sup>9</sup> *Taras Bulba* exists in two different versions, as discussed here. That of 1835, in Gogol, *Mirgorod*, is reprinted in the Gogol collected edition (Moscow, 1967) and available online in modern orthography at <http://public-library.narod.ru/Gogol.Nikolai/taras35.html>. That of 1842 is quoted here from Janáček's own copy of the book in the Janáček Archive in Brno (Nikolay Vasil'evich Gogol, *Taras Bul'ba: povest'* (Taras Bulba, A Tale), 5th edition, St Petersburg, 1901).

<sup>10</sup> Richard Pevear, preface to Nikolay Vasil'evich Gogol, *The Collected Tales of Nikolai Gogol*, trans. and ed. by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (London, 2003), p. XI.

philistine present. The name Mirgorod, 'peace town', itself provides an ironic gloss on this theme, in the light of the earlier history of the town as a centre of warfare.<sup>11</sup> Larger-than-life distinctions between good and evil are depicted as having been terrifyingly present in an earlier, heroic period of Cossack history (a vague Golden Age somewhere in the sixteenth or seventeenth century), and still liable to erupt into the modern scene in both natural and supernatural ways, though modern Cossack society is represented as banal, lacking in true conviction, and feminized. The women in these stories, whatever the period, are sidelined; they are a constant danger to the idealized masculinity of this imagined Cossackdom, and are often agents of pure evil. Generally, these stories express a longing for the certainties and hyperbolic excitement of an imaginary, truly masculine, past, now vanished; but this longing is not presented as bald propaganda, for it is continually undercut with ironic and downright comic detail.

In the story *Viy*, for example, a philistine 'modern' Cossack seminarist is plunged into a mysterious, but crucial, and explicitly sexual, encounter with a witch; he leaves her to die, but is then forced into a threefold nightly vigil in a church with her corpse, which rises from its coffin and flies about the building, accompanied by supernatural monsters, which confront and eventually kill him, for his failure to understand the force of good and evil. Yet this Gothic story, like many of its modern movie counterparts, is interlaced with comic detail. In this respect (though not in

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<sup>11</sup> On the name Mirgorod, see Peace, *The Enigma of Gogol*, 30-31.



others), it is very similar to *Taras Bulba*, a mock-Homeric epic set in early modern times, where the sensationalism and violence of Gogol's idealized, vanished Cossack society is asserted as a virtue, but at the same time exaggerated for comic effect. I shall discuss these aspects further below.

### **The 1842 Version of *Taras Bulba*: A Patriotic Russian Epic**

In fact, the version of these stories which became familiar to a later readership (including Janáček) is not Gogol's *Mirgorod* of 1835, but a revision, from 1842, in which *Taras Bulba*, in particular, was enlarged and given further layers of ideology. In the 1835 version of *Taras Bulba*, the Cossacks are Ukrainian, with Russia barely on the horizon. In the 1842 version, by contrast, they have become Russian patriots. As Saera Yoon writes, 'the Cossacks in the 1842 *Taras Bulba* completely internalize a form of the Russian identity. They have adopted the patriotically charged epithet "Russian" to describe themselves, and in so doing [they] express their animosity toward Poland within the framework of the opposition between Russia and the West.'<sup>12</sup>

Some important episodes in the 1842 version of *Taras Bulba* are not present in the 1835 version at all. Examples are Andriy's subterranean entry into Dubno, through its Gothic cathedral with its thundering organ music (quoted below), and

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<sup>12</sup> Saera Yoon, 'Transformation of a Ukrainian Cossack into a Russian Warrior: Gogol's 1842 "Taras Bulba"', *The Slavic and East European Journal* 49/3 (2005), 431.

Taras's 'crucifixion', together with his prophecy of Russian survival and supremacy that meant so much to Janáček in 1914. On the one hand, these additions underline the contrast between Catholic (Polish) luxury and feminized decadence and Orthodox (Cossack) masculinity, and on the other, they introduce a new identification of Cossackdom with Russian nationalism. Yoon has suggested that the alterations may be due to the withering of Gogol's personal sympathy for Catholic culture. Though descended from Cossacks, he spent time in Western Europe between 1837 and 1839, cultivated friendship with Poles in Rome, and was suspected of intending to become a Catholic convert; but he closed the door on this possibility in 1839,<sup>13</sup> and had become an increasingly rigid adherent of Orthodoxy by 1842. But within the texts of these stories, rather than within his biography, even in the 1842 versions, Catholicism is only one of a number of false creeds and evil forces against which the Cossacks fight with a conviction lacking in Gogol's own time.

In either version, *Taras Bulba* deals with the warlike exploits of the Zaporozhian Cossacks, a group historically descended from disenfranchised Russians who had migrated from Russia to Ukraine (literally, the 'borderland') during the consolidation of Muscovy by Ivan III Vasil'evich ('the Great', 1440-1505). Gogol sets the story in a vague, mythical past, mingling fiction with elements of 17th-century history. Taras Bulba is a Cossack leader who introduces his two young sons, Ostap and Andriy, to the Sech, the principal Zaporozhian encampment, and to warfare

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<sup>13</sup> Yoon, 'Transformation of a Ukrainian Cossack', 433.

against the Poles, as coming-of-age rites. While the Cossacks are besieging the Polish city of Dubno, Andriy is led clandestinely into the starving city, and transfers his allegiance to the Poles, on account of his love for the Polish voevoda's daughter. As he leaves the city to fight, now dressed as a Polish officer, he encounters Taras, who summarily shoots him dead as a traitor. Subsequently, Ostap is captured by the Poles and tortured to death in Warsaw; Taras, smuggled into Warsaw, witnesses the public execution, and, risking his own life, openly acknowledges Ostap as his son before escaping into the crowd. In the 1842 version, while wreaking vengeance on the Poles, Taras, stopping to retrieve his pipe, is finally also taken by them, tied to a tree and burned alive. As he dies, he prophesies the future glory of Russia:<sup>14</sup> 'Word has already spread through every nation: a Russian czar will spring forth from the Russian earth, and there will be no power in this world that shall not yield to him!'

The Cossacks depicted in this story are a rough brotherhood, united in allegiance to Orthodoxy and the Sech. Their society is comically extreme, excluding outsiders, women, and, for that matter, any productive labour whatsoever. It is under the authority of a democratically elected ataman, but he and it are at almost all times subject to the unpredictable and dangerous whims of mob rule. The Sech, though seen by the Cossacks as a spiritual centre from which 'freedom and

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<sup>14</sup> 'Uzhe i teper' chuyut dal'nie i blizkie narody: podymetsya iz Russkoy zemli svoy tsar' i ne budet v mire sily, kotoraya by ne pokorilas' emu' (Gogol, *Taras Bul'ba*, 5th ed., 169; Gogol, trans. by Constantine, *Taras Bulba*, 141).

Cossackry had spilled over the whole of Ukraine',<sup>15</sup> seems to be full of the rabble of the earth, and its initiation rites involve no careful investigation of ethnic origins or convictions, but merely a crude, cursory confession of Orthodox faith. Even so, those who do not make this confession are outsiders, ripe for being brutally butchered. Such outsiders include Muslims, Tatars, Turks, and Jews, but in this story it is the Catholic Poles, apostates and deniers of true Orthodox belief, who are the arch-enemies.

Gogol goes so far as to imply in *Taras Bulba* that it is only male Cossacks, those who have publicly acknowledged Orthodoxy, who are real people, for only they (and Yankel, 'heel-grabber', Taras's pet Jew) are allowed to have names in the story. Indeed the names of the Cossacks are ceremonially listed in a way recalling the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and this supplies the reason for the celebration of their violent deaths,<sup>16</sup> as in Homer, the names of the Cossack heroes are to be immortalized in epic song in their violent exploits and gory deaths. By extreme contrast, no Pole, male or female, is permitted to bear a name. Even the Polish vovoda's daughter for whom Andriy

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<sup>15</sup> '... razlivaetsya volya i kazachestvo na vsyu Ukraynu' (Gogol, *Taras Bul'ba*, 5th ed., 31; Gogol, trans. by Constantine, *Taras Bulba*, 25).

<sup>16</sup> The Homeric echoes of the story (which also include some of the similes describing Taras and his sons) were noticed very early in the Gogol reception, and are highlighted by John Cournos in his introduction to the Everyman edition: Nikolay Vasil'evich Gogol, *Taras Bulba and Other Tales*, trans. Constance Garnett, and ed. John Cournos (London and New York, 1918 and later editions). See also Carl R. Proffer, 'Gogol's *Taras Bulba* and the *Iliad*', *Comparative Literature* 17/2 (1965), 142-50.

betrays the Cossacks remains anonymous; the reader is not allowed to know her name even at the moment when the dying Andriy is pronouncing it. There is a single exception to the anonymity of the Poles, Mikołaj Potocki, the genuine historical figure who, as hetman of the Polish crown, negotiated a treaty with the Cossacks in 1651. This exception gives Gogol's fiction a seamless connection with the real history which, Gogol says, is omitted because it 'can be read in the pages of the chronicles'.<sup>17</sup>

With the three deaths of Taras and his sons, however, particularly in the 1842 version, hyperbole serves ideology and patriotism. These deaths are given parallels to the Christian Passion, and implications of redemptive suffering. Taras's death is almost explicitly a crucifixion, as, high on a tree, he utters his prophecy; Andriy, dying impenitent, recalls Judas Iscariot as well as the impenitent crucified thief; Ostap as he dies calls to his father as if in one of Christ's words from the Cross.

The opposition of Russians and Ukrainians to Poles is admittedly curious in a work celebrating Slavic invincibility.<sup>18</sup> Even if Latin-rite Christians had been vilified in the Orthodox East since the sack of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade in

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<sup>17</sup> '... vse eto vneseno v letopisnyya stranitsy' (Gogol, *Taras Bul'ba*, 5th ed., 162; Gogol, trans. by Constantine, *Taras Bulba*, 135).

<sup>18</sup> Macdonald, 'Narrative in Janáček's Symphonic Poems', 43. The point is repeated in other recent accounts. Macdonald is particularly critical of Gogol's story, taking its depiction of the prejudices of the Cossacks at face value: 'Despite some humorous touches it is hard not to see Gogol's evocation of a relentlessly barbarous world as a cynical mockery of the soldier's debased ethics' (also 43).

1204, it might have seemed natural for Gogol to select a wild, non-Slavic tribe, Muslim or pagan, as the Cossacks' principal enemy, rather than another Slavic nation. Events of Gogol's time included wars in the Caucasus—Chechnya, Dagestan, and Ingushetia—waged by the Russian Empire, facing declarations of *jihad* by Muslim leaders during its expansion southwards in the mid-1830s. But for Gogol to have alluded to these would have made this masterpiece much tamer—even if the element of Russian patriotism might have been strengthened. This story overturns any opposition that a reader following Edward Said might expect between a normative self and a seductive or threatening Oriental other, to be brought under hegemonic control.<sup>19</sup> Like Stravinsky's *Sacre du printemps* later, it is an example of 'hard' Russian primitivism, though in Gogol with more of a smile.<sup>20</sup> Cossack society

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<sup>19</sup> A large literature has been generated by Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London, 1978 and later editions); here I take for granted the criticisms and qualifications of Said's ideas in David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration* (New Haven, CT, 2010). Contrary to received opinion, Said's ideas have been shown to owe less to Michel Foucault than to Russian Oriental studies, received at second hand through the Egyptian Marxist scholar Anwar Abdel-Malek: see Vera Tolz, 'European, National, and (Anti-)Imperial: The Formation of Academic Oriental Studies in Late Tsarist and Early Soviet Russia', in Michael David-Fox and others (ed.), *Orientalism and Empire in Russia* (Bloomington, IN, 2006), 107-34.

<sup>20</sup> The term 'hard primitivism' is borrowed from Arthur O. Lovejoy and George Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity* (Baltimore, MD, 1935). Lovejoy and Boas, in their analysis of classical texts concerning the earliest history of the human race, usefully distinguish between the 'soft' primitivism

is portrayed as Asiatic and Oriental—more exactly, as an unruly steppe society, like that of the Mongol hordes—with stereotypical irrationality and violence. But it is represented as fundamentally sound, for the enemy that is constructed for the reader is not wild barbarism but false civilization. In the first chapter of the tale, the opposition between ‘bad’ Latin civilization and ‘good’ Cossack freedom is already established. Taras criticizes the Classical Latin culture of Horace—which his sons have been taught at seminary in Kiev—as irrelevant to Cossack life, which, like the physical appearance of the young Cossacks, is fundamentally ‘healthy’ (*zdoroviy*). Indeed the contrast between Andriy’s physical robustness and the sickness around him in Dubno is heightened in the 1842 version: Cossack society has unbounded vitality, but the confined, luxurious society of the Poles has decay and death close to its surface.

Cossack society finds its true metier, suggests the Zaporozhian ataman, with Taras’s complete approval, in warfare: ‘As you know, a young man cannot make do without war. What kind of Zaporozhian can he be if he has never killed a Mussulman?’<sup>21</sup> In this comic hyperbole, the Cossacks are prepared to break even the

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of the perpetual sunshine and summertime of traditional Arcadian pastoral, and the ‘hard’ primitivism that stresses the uncomfortable, fraught aspects of supposed early human existence.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Molodomu cheloveku, – i sami znaete, nanovi, – bez voyny ne mozjno probyt’. Kakoy i zaporozhets iz nego, esli on eshche ni razu ne byl busurmana?’ (Gogol, *Taras Bul’ba*, 5th ed., 45; Gogol, trans. by Constantine, *Taras Bulba*, 39.)

most solemn pledges of peace, in order to perfect their authenticity and submit to the 'enchanted music of blades and bullets'.

Since the ideal of Russian patriotism is added, in the 1842 version, to the ties of Orthodoxy and the Sech which bind the Cossacks together, the story can reach a great culmination in that version in Taras's half-ecstatic prophecy of future greatness for Russia, and the rhetorical authorial question, 'Is there fire, torture, or force powerful enough in all the world to subjugate the Russian spirit?'<sup>22</sup>

### **The Context of Janáček's Composition of *Taras Bulba***

This prophecy of Taras's was no doubt one of the chief elements in Gogol's tale that secured its success as a Russian school text. It seems also to have been the element that most appealed to Janáček, who selected only the most patriotically charged and serious of the episodes as the basis for his orchestral piece. Janáček's Gogol has had his comic element expunged, though as I shall argue later below, the naked glorying in slaughter that remains is mitigated in other ways. For its first Prague performance in 1924, Janáček wrote:<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> 'Da razve naydutsya na svete takie ogni, muki i takaya sila, kotoraya by peresilila russkuyu silu!' (Gogol, *Taras Bul'ba*, 5th ed., 169; Gogol, trans. by Constantine, *Taras Bulba*, 141.)

<sup>23</sup> 'Ne proto, že ubil vlastního syna pro zradu na národu—I. díl (Řež u Dubna); ne pro mučednickou smrt druhého syna—II. díl (Varšavské trýzně); ale že nenajdou se na světě ty ohně, muka, jež by zničila sílu ruského lidu—pro tato slova, jež padají do palčivých jisker a plamenů hranice, na níž



Not because he killed his own son for betraying the nation (first movement, the carnage at Dubno); not because of the martyr's death of another son (second movement, the torture at Warsaw); but because there are no fires, there is no torture, in all the world that would destroy the strength of the Russian people--for those words, which fall into the burning sparks and flames of the stake at which the famous Cossack ataman, Taras Bulba, ended his sufferings (third movement and peroration), did I compose this rhapsody in 1915-16, based on the story written by N. V. Gogol.

Janáček had read *Taras Bulba* in Russian in 1905, but took it up again in late 1914, and had completed a first draft of his piece by 22 January 1915.<sup>24</sup> John Tyrrell

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dotrpěl slavný hejtman kozácký Taras Bulba—III. díl a závěr, složil jsem roku 1915-16 tuto rapsodii podle pověsti sepsané N. V. Gogolem' (letter from Janáček to Richard Veselý, 26 October 1924: Brno, Janáček Archive, B01746: Veselý regularly wrote programme notes for concerts of the Czech Philharmonic, and was presumably doing so for the performance of *Taras Bulba* on 9 November that year). Janáček sent similar notes to Rosa Newmarch for a planned performance in London in 1926, which did not take place: the first London performance was conducted by Sir Henry Wood at Queen's Hall on 16 October 1928. For the wording that Janáček supplied to Newmarch, see Zdenka E. Fischmann (ed.), *Janáček/Newmarch Correspondence* (Rockville, MD, 1986), 144; it is also reprinted in Tyrrell, *Janáček: Years of a Life*, II, 270.

<sup>24</sup> The earliest compositional history of *Taras Bulba*, as evidenced in the surviving drafts and sketches, is not completely understood, and is not considered here. However, one suggestion about the possible *Urform* of the work, which has surfaced in recent writing, may merit brief mention. Jarmil Burghauser reproduced one of the deleted verso pages of the autograph (call-mark A23505 in the

has suggested three plausible reasons for his seemingly pointless composition of a major orchestral work with no prospects of performance at the time; these were '[Artuš] Rektorys's suggestion on 11 May 1914 that Janáček might write another piece especially for [Otakar] Ostrčil and his band; the publication of his previous orchestral work *The Fiddler's Child* [(*Šumářovo dítě*)] in November 1914; and the battles then being fought in East Prussia and Galicia'.<sup>25</sup>

The third of these reasons deserves further thought. In late 1914, no one could have anticipated Russia's October Revolution three years later and her consequent withdrawal from the war, still less the dissolution of the Habsburg monarchy in 1918. Might Janáček have imagined or hoped at that time that a quick Russian

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Janáček Archive, Brno) in the Collected Edition as his 'Supplemento IV', and called it the 'incipit of the original version' (Leoš Janáček, *Taras Bulba: rapsodie pro orchestr (1915-1918), partitura*, Souborné kritické vydání děl Leoše Janáčka, series D, VII, ed. Jarmil Burghauser and Jan Hanuš (Prague, 1980), 150-51). This undated page includes three staves of music bracketed together and labelled 'Solo' by Janáček, without further identification. Two of these staves lack clefs altogether, but the middle one has a C clef, and for this reason Burghauser suggested in his critical commentary that the page provides 'hitherto unnoticed evidence that the work may originally have been conceived as a triple concerto' (*dosud nepovšimnutý doklad toho, že bylo dílo koncipováno snad jako trojkonzert*) for violin, viola, and cello (Janáček, *Taras Bulba*, 186). This flimsy speculation, though unsupported for the time being by any other evidence, has hardened into established fact in Mírka Zemanová, *Janáček: A Composer's Life* (London, 2002), 149: 'The piece was originally conceived as a cyclical concertante work, with solo violin, viola and cello, and only later reworked as a large-scale orchestral piece'.

<sup>25</sup> Tyrrell, *Janáček: Years of a Life*, II, 20.

victory was imminent, despite the casualties, and that he might produce a composition that would worthily celebrate it in due course, perhaps to be conducted by Ostrčil, even though Janáček had first met him only in May 1914? If so, Gogol's tale, and its prophecy of the invincibility of Russia under its czar, would have provided an attractive model.

And such a victory may indeed have seemed possible in late 1914. Austria-Hungary had declared war against Russia on 6 August, Russia invaded East Prussia shortly after that, and Austria-Hungary invaded Russian Poland (Galicia) late that month. Despite a decisive defeat at the Battle of Tannenberg (late August), which practically wiped out the Russian Second Army, Russia's vast remaining resources, evocatively including the Cossacks, overran East Galicia and the Bukovina in September, and for a time seemed unstoppable:<sup>26</sup>

Panic-producing thrusts by Cossack horsemen and sheer weight of Muscovite manpower {... necessitated] retreat by the Hapsburg troops, civilians in tens of thousands fleeing with the soldiers [...] Compared with the fearsome Hapsburg setbacks, the Russian disaster at Tannenberg seemed to be simply of local significance. Faint-hearted Viennese were heard to say that an armistice must be sought with the Slav colossus.

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<sup>26</sup> Arthur J. May, *The Passing of the Hapsburg Monarchy, 1914-1918* (Philadelphia, PA, 1966), 95-6.

And as the Austrian army retreated from Galicia, many of its Slav soldiers (especially the Czechs) surrendered or defected to the Russians.<sup>27</sup> No one can have expected the war to continue for years, and the toll in human life during those weeks had already been enormous. 'By the end of 1914 the number lost on all Austro-Hungarian fronts totalled over a million, a figure then compounded by the devastating Carpathian campaign of early 1915.'<sup>28</sup>

Janáček had a personal stake in these events. He was too old to serve in the army himself, but a number of his ex-students were soldiers on active service, and he received a stream of postcards from them, which continued throughout the war. Besides, he had a particular interest in the fortunes of the Russians; he had been the chairman of the Russian Circle in Brno since 1909, and was known to the police during the war as 'politically suspect' (*politisch verdächtig*). (From 1915, the Russian Circle was banned, and its archives were searched by the police.) If the memoirs of Janáček's wife Zdenka are to be believed, the family may have been hoping that the Russians were about to enter Moravia through Ostrava and bring the Czechs instant

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<sup>27</sup> The Russians had been targeting the Polish soldiers with largely antisemitic leaflets promising liberty from Germans and Jews. See Zbyněk A. B. Zeman, *A Diplomatic History of the First World War* (London, 1971), 342.

<sup>28</sup> Mark Cornwall, 'Morale and Patriotism in the Austro-Hungarian Army, 1914-1918', in John Horne (ed.), *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge, UK, 1997), 175.

liberty.<sup>29</sup> This, then, may supply the purpose of the piece, even though the idea of having a pro-Russian piece performed was then impossible, and the composer knew this (on 2 July 1915, he wrote to Otakar Ostrčil asking for a private play-through ‘without any thought of a public performance---merely so that I can be certain where and how to make improvements’.<sup>30</sup>

## The Literary Models for Janáček’s *Balada blanická* (Vrchlický, Masaryk)

The *Balada blanická* was written after the war had ended, probably between late August and late September 1919.<sup>31</sup> Its primary literary model and main subject is the

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<sup>29</sup> The memoirs were written by Marie Trkanová as if in the words of Zdenka Janáčková; for the issue of their authenticity, see the introduction to Marie Trkanová, *My Life with Janáček: The Memoirs of Zdenka Janáčková*, trans. John Tyrrell (London, 1998), pp. ix-xviii. For the reactions of the Janáček family to the fortunes of the Russian army in 1914, see Trkanová, *My Life with Janáček*, 120-23, and for events of the period in general, see Tyrrell, *Janáček: Years of a Life*, II, especially chapter 2.

<sup>30</sup> ‘. . . beze vší myšlenky na veřejné provedení: abych jen na určito věděl, kde a jak polepšit’, quoted in Svatava Příbáňová, ‘K otázce vzniku Janáčkovy Tarase Bulby’ (On the Origin of Janáček’s *Taras Bulba*), *Časopis Moravského musea, vědy společenské* 49 (1964), 224.

<sup>31</sup> A date of 1920 appears in early work-lists and (after consultation with Janáček himself) in publicity for a concert in 1926, and is accepted by Procházková as the date of composition (Leoš Janáček. *Balada blanická (1919-1920)*, Souborné kritické vydání děl Leoše Janáčka, series D, VIII, ed. Jarmila Procházková (Brno, 2003), p. IX). But Tyrrell argues plausibly (*Janáček: Years of a Life*, II, 352-3) that it

poem of the same name by Jaroslav Vrchlický (1853-1912);<sup>32</sup> this is less easily misunderstood than the model for *Taras Bulba*, but will also need discussion.

Vrchlický's poem is one of several literary reworkings of a legend, well-known in the 19th century, of an army of Czech knights sleeping under the hill of Velký Blaník, who will wake and march out to war under St Wenceslas in the hour of the nation's need. His version prophesies the liberation of the nation; it draws on Christian imagery of passion and resurrection, and on Old Testament imagery of the future messianic age when swords will be beaten into ploughshares and spears into pruning-hooks,<sup>33</sup> but it suggests that truth and salvation lie in nature and the Czech landscape rather than in the church. It also alludes to the myth of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, an early parable of resurrection: the Christian 'sleepers' escaped persecution under Emperor Decius (c250 AD) by taking refuge in a cave, which was sealed by the emperor; when it was opened much later, the sleepers awoke, to find

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must have been composed between late August and late September 1919, in the light of Janáček's known commitments.

<sup>32</sup> Vrchlický, 'Ballada Blánická' (the original title is spelt thus), in his *Selské ballady* (Peasant Ballads), Poetické besedy, XXII (Prague, 1885), 71-6.

<sup>33</sup> *Isaiah* 2: 3-5, *Micah* 4: 3.

that they knew no one, that Decius had been dead for centuries, and that Christianity had meanwhile been established.<sup>34</sup>

In the poem, the mountain of Blaník is open once a year on Good Friday, during the reading of the Passion in church, but anyone who ventures in is cursed and must remain there at least a year. A village chronicler (*písmák*), Jíra, seeks out forest and mountain one Good Friday instead of church. Finding Blaník open, he challenges the curse, encounters the armed warriors inside, and also falls asleep, despite himself.<sup>35</sup>

Suddenly Jíra feels a great drowsiness in his limbs;

he sits, thinking it is for a brief moment of rest, –

he sits, and is already asleep in that living tomb.

‘God knows how long he slept’ (*Bůh ví, jak spal dlouho*), and Jíra awakens to find in astonishment that he has aged immensely, but that warfare has been miraculously

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<sup>34</sup> Commemorated in the Roman Martyrology on 27 July: ‘Ephesi natalis sanctorum septem Dormientium, Maximiani, Malchi, Martiniani, Dionysii, Joannis, Serapionis, & Constantini’ (*Martyrologium romanum* (Venice, 1784, online at [http://openlibrary.org/books/OL24614671M/Martyrologium\\_romanum](http://openlibrary.org/books/OL24614671M/Martyrologium_romanum)), 142).

<sup>35</sup> ‘Náhle Jíra cítí v údech těžkou mdlobu, / sedne, myslí, malou odpočinu dobu, / sedne a již dřímá ve živém tom hrobu’ (Vrchlický, ‘Ballada Blánická’, 73). The poem is printed in full, with modern spelling and punctuation, in Janáček, *Balada blánická*, with German, English, and French translations.

banished, weapons have become agricultural implements, and the nation is joyfully working the land, with a skylark singing above.

As Macdonald has shown, Janáček's piece avoids simple story-telling, and even avoids the undoubted opportunities which the poem offers for sound effects marking significant events.<sup>36</sup> But there is an immediate reason for the failure of the piece to match the story, not taken into account by Macdonald. Besides Vrchlický's poem, a second text also forms a model for it---the well-known essay, *Česká otázka* (The Czech Question), of 1895, by the future Czechoslovak president, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, to whom the piece was dedicated.<sup>37</sup>

The work was first performed to celebrate Masaryk's seventieth birthday, and its pacifism is apparently derived from his politics, since notes drafted by Janáček for a speech for the occasion show that he intended this piece specifically as a response to *Česká otázka*. In this essay, Masaryk criticizes the mentalities of the opposing Czech political parties of the 1890s, the Young Czechs and the Old Czechs, seeing them in terms of personalities of the 15th-century Hussite movement---Jan Žižka, the

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<sup>36</sup> Macdonald, 'Narrative in Janáček's Symphonic Poems', 51-4, echoing remarks in Vogel, *Leoš Janáček*, 241.

<sup>37</sup> Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, *Česká otázka: snahy a tužby národního obrození* (The Czech Question: The Endeavours and Aspirations of the National Revival) (Prague, 1895). Quotations and references here are from the following edition: Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, *Česká otázka---O naší nynější krisi---* Jan Hus, ed. Zdeněk Franta (Prague, 1924).



belligerent warrior, and Jan Hus, the martyr, respectively—and he calls for a higher, spiritual union of the two types, for which his exemplar is Petr Chelčický, the Hussite pacifist and founder of the Czech Brethren. This will supply a basis for what Masaryk calls *humanita*, a rationalist, liberal, non-clerical ‘humanitism’. He also suggests directions for Czech culture, calling for a new ‘philosophy of Czech music’, defined in sociological and national terms, and for a rejection by composers of ‘formalism’, very much in the spirit of Liszt, as transmitted to the Czech sphere through Smetana:<sup>38</sup>

As for the composition of art music, here, too, a new generation is being ushered in, in the spirit of Smetana’s progressive demands, against the older formalism.

Janáček’s notes show that he was in agreement with Masaryk’s views, and that he interpreted them as calling for a new sobriety in music. They also show that he slightly misinterpreted the president: where Masaryk hoped that the opposition between Žižka and Hus would be resolved dialectically in Chelčický, Janáček saw simply an opposition between Žižka and Chelčický, personifying war and peace respectively:<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> ‘Co do umělecké produkce hudební hlásí se v duchu Smetanových požadavků pokrokových i zde generace nová proti staršímu formalismu’ (Masaryk, *Česká otázka*, 185, from §65 of the essay).

<sup>39</sup> ‘V našem programu jsou to blaničtí rytíři: zbroj odložili, aby rádlo zachytli. Ne jedno neb druhé, ale omezení jedno druhým’ (Janáček, *Balada blanická*, p. X).

It is the knights of Blaník in our programme. They have laid down their arms to take hold of the plough: neither of these [exclusively], but each restrained by the other.

So the intrusion of Masaryk's text as a reference may explain the partial mismatch with Vrchlický; and the concluding section of the piece might represent the peace resulting from the abolition of war, as in Vrchlický, or the establishment of a peaceful brotherhood united in high ideals, as in Masaryk, or neither.

In fact, Janáček's procedure here, drawing together disparate texts that together rhetorically illumine a theme, while avoiding a literal, programmatic representation of any of them, was not new in the *Balada blanická*. The composer had already done this in the earliest programmatic work he wrote for orchestra, the *Žárlivost* (Jealousy) overture, JW VI/10 (1894-5). The theme in *Žárlivost* is the jealous desire of a man to possess a woman, so passionate that he will harm or kill her rather than yield her to another man. In Gabriela Preissová's *Její pastorkyňa*, the play set by Janáček as his opera of the same name (later known outside the Czech sphere as *Jenůfa*), jealousy of this sort motivates Laca's slashing of Jenůfa's face to prevent her marriage to his half-brother Števa. But to illumine and enrich this theme by analogy, the overture reworks motives from an entirely different model, a folk-song, published in František Sušil's collection of Moravian folk-songs in 1860 with the title 'Žárlivec'

(The Jealous Man).<sup>40</sup> The song tells of a young swain (*šohajek*), mortally wounded and unable to move, who is tended by his sweetheart. He asks her for his gleaming sabre, as a mirror, to inspect the pallor of his face – but in reality so that he can kill her with it. The final verse, as if sung by him, reads:<sup>41</sup> ‘My dearest, I would have beheaded you, so that no one would have you after my death’.

The song—and the overture based on it—have nothing directly to do with the opera, and this overture seems never to have been performed with the opera in Janáček’s lifetime;<sup>42</sup> yet the poetic impulse informing the overture adds a dimension to the understanding of the opera, rather as the Vrchlický and Masaryk texts reinforce and deepen one another as intertexts of the *Balada blanická*.

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<sup>40</sup> František Sušil, *Moravské národní písně s nápěvy do textu vřaděnými* (Moravian Folk-Songs with Interpolated Melodies) (Brno, 1860; 3rd edition, Prague, 1941). The song is at pp. 115-16 in the 1941 edition.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Byl bych ti, má milá, / byl bych ti hlavu sťal, / aby po mej smrti / žádný ťa nedostal’ (Sušil, *Moravské národní písně*, *ibid.*)

<sup>42</sup> In fact the orchestral parts prepared for the Brno premiere of *Jenůfa* in 1904, and also those copied in 1906, 1911, and 1913-14, include this overture, ‘although there are no signs—such as performance annotations—to indicate that this was ever used in performances of the opera in Brno’: see Mark Audus, *The 1904 Version of Leoš Janáček’s Jenůfa: Sources, Reconstruction, Commentary* (PhD diss., University of Nottingham, 2007), I, 36; available at <http://etheses.nottingham.ac.uk/511/>).

## The Centrality of Liszt's Symphonic Poems to Czech Modernism

### around 1914

From the musical point of view, Janáček's interest in the symphonic poem as a genre has at least two roots. The first, and the more obvious, is the example of Dvořák. Janáček wrote analytical articles on four symphonic poems written by the older composer in the 1890s (*Vodník* (The Water Goblin), B.195 (op. 107); *Polednice* (The Noon Witch), B.196 (op. 108); *Zlatý kolovrat* (The Golden Spinning-Wheel), B.197 (op. 109); and *Holoubek* (The Wild Dove), B.198 (op. 110)), expounding them in terms of simple story-telling.<sup>43</sup> The first three of these were published in 1897 and the fourth in 1898. And Dvořák's approach to writing such pieces, including the construction of the music by setting words of the model and then suppressing the text, corresponds to that taken by Janáček in the *Žárlivost* overture.<sup>44</sup>

His approach had changed by the time he composed the wartime pieces, however, and the other root of his interest, which is probably more directly relevant to them, is the symphonic poems written by Liszt in the 1850s and 1860s. The reception of these works, old as they were, seems central to some of the modernism

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<sup>43</sup> The articles are JW XV/152, XV/153, XV/154, and XV/156, respectively, in Simeone, Tyrrell, and Němcová, *Janáček's Works*. They are reprinted in the collected edition, again with arbitrary renumbering as 133, 134, 135 and 137 respectively: Janáček, *Literární dílo*, 234-42, 242-8, 248-59, and 260-65 respectively.

<sup>44</sup> See Tyrrell, *Years of a Life*, I, 263.

in Czech music of the period around the First World War (though this is a subject yet to be fully understood, especially in view of Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht's argument that no variety of symphonic poem can be regarded as having any real significance for modern music after Mahler<sup>45</sup>).

Janáček's change of approach to programme music seems to have involved a thorough revision of his opinion concerning Liszt. In 1879, writing to Zdenka Schulzová from Leipzig, he had remarked that Liszt provided him with a melancholy example of a composer, once celebrated, whose works, 'long-forgotten' (*längst verschollen*), had become nothing more than examples of orchestration, and who, in his final years, must have realized he had squandered a great career in

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<sup>45</sup> 'Despite the continued existence of the genre even in the late 20th century . . . , the music of Mahler marks the end of the symphonic poem as a genre in Liszt's sense: although he adopted the concept, he transformed it into non-programmatic symphonic music once more' (*Unbeschadet des Fortbestands der Gattung noch im späteren 20. Jahrhundert . . . , markiert Mahlers Musik das Ende der Symphonischen Dichtung als Gattung im Lisztschen Sinne, indem er ihre Idee zwar aufgriff, jedoch in die programmlose Symphonik zurückverwandelte*): Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht, 'Dichtung, Symphonie, Programmmusik, I: Symphonische Dichtung', *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 39/4 (1982), 231. In fact, this thesis is not necessarily in conflict with the ideas about the future of programme music expressed in Václav Štěpán, 'Včerejšek a dnešek hudební formy' (Musical Form Yesterday and Today), in Otakar Theer and others (ed.), *Almanach na rok 1914* (Prague, 1913), 68-74, discussed below.

following 'false paths' (*Irrwegen*).<sup>46</sup> Yet only a few years later, on 29 March 1885, Janáček conducted Liszt's *Mazeppa* at the Brno Beseda; and this, as John Tyrrell suggests, signalled a major 'shift in [his] aesthetic views, one that would eventually lead to [his] writing symphonic poems of his own'.<sup>47</sup>

Unfortunately, this new interest in Liszt's symphonic poems is barely reflected in Janáček's writings of the period between the 1880s and the composition of his own symphonic poems, although there are passing comments on Liszt's *Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne*, for example, in Janáček's article on Dvořák's *Vodník*.<sup>48</sup> So we lack any full expression of his opinions on the subject; and his library does not contain Liszt's symphonic poems, although they may have been available in the library (now dispersed) of the Organ School. But in 1913 Václav Štěpán (1889-1944) published three substantial essays in which Liszt's compositions, and their relevance to Czech modernism, were brought into the public eye. (Although Štěpán had been taught by

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<sup>46</sup> Letter to Zdenka Schulzová, 28 November 1879 (Jakob Knaus (ed.), *Leoš Janáček: "Intime Briefe" 1879/80 aus Leipzig und Wien* (Zürich, 1985), 107: printed in Czech translation in František Hrabal (ed.), *Leoš Janáček: dopisy Zdence* (Leoš Janáček: Letters to Zdenka) (Prague, 1968), 64).

<sup>47</sup> Tyrrell, *Janáček: Years of a Life*, I, 270. It is worth noting that Janáček conducted a Liszt chorus for women's voices, harp, and piano at the Brno Beseda on 13 November 1876, and later (1901) arranged Liszt's *Messe pour orgue* for chorus and organ.

<sup>48</sup> The mention of *Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne* (called 'Příroda a lidstvo' (Nature and Humanity) by Janáček) is in Janáček, *Literární dílo*, 237-8.

Zdeněk Nejedlý, one of Janáček's principal opponents, he became Janáček's main public defender against Nejedlý's hostile 1916 criticism of *Jenůfa*.<sup>49</sup>)

The first of these essays is a long study on programme music, serialized in the journal *Hudební revue* and reprinted as a monograph;<sup>50</sup> it mediates between the camps in the 19th-century debate, which rallied elsewhere under the names of Brahms and Wagner, and in the Czech lands under the names of Dvořák and Smetana.<sup>51</sup> Next is a short introductory essay at the beginning of the same volume of *Hudební revue*, characterizing the debate between Czech 'conservatives' and 'progressives' with gentle irony.<sup>52</sup> These two articles cannot be expounded here; they

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<sup>49</sup> Nejedlý had published his hostile review of *Jenůfa* in 1916 (Zdeněk Nejedlý, *Leoše Janáčka Její pastorkyňa* (Janáček's *Jenůfa*) (Prague, 1916), and Štěpán published a long rebuttal of it the following year (Václav Štěpán, 'Její pastorkyňa dra Leoše Janáčka' (Dr Leoš Janáček's *Jenůfa*), *Hudební revue* 10 (1917), 28-40.

<sup>50</sup> Václav Štěpán, 'Hudební symbolika a příbuzné zjevy v programní hudbě' (Musical Symbolism and Related Phenomena in Programme Music), *Hudební revue* 7 (1913), 57-61, 119-24, 311-28, 446-55, 508-19; reprinted as *Symbolika a příbuzné zjevy v programní hudbě* (Prague, 1915).

<sup>51</sup> The debate in the Czech sphere is well set out in Brian S. Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague: Polemics and Practice at the National Theater, 1900-1938* (Rochester, NY, 2006), chapters 1-3.

<sup>52</sup> Václav Štěpán, 'Mírní konservativci a rozhodní pokrokovci: situační úvodník' (Moderate Conservatives and Decisive Progressives: Leading Article on the Current Position), *Hudební revue* 7 (1913), 1-8.

would take the argument too far afield, and Janáček is not discussed in either of them, as he had not yet made his mark as a composer.

The third of these essays deserves comment here, however. It is a remarkable manifesto for a distinctive modernism in Czech music, the sole essay on music in a celebrated literary almanac for the year 1914, edited by the poet Otakar Theer (1880-1917), who has been described by Robert Pynsent as a 'bridge between two generations'—the modernists of the 1890s (Symbolists, Decadents and others), and postwar modernists, who moved into quite different realms.

This essay (reproduced here in translation as an appendix), which seems to have been almost entirely ignored in musicological literature hitherto, is entitled 'Včerejšek a dnešek hudební formy' (Musical Form Yesterday and Today).<sup>53</sup> Its vision of Czech modernism probably has the symphonic poems of Vítězslav Novák and Josef Suk principally in mind, particularly Suk's great orchestral works of this period such as the *Asrael* symphony (1905-6) and *Zrání* (Ripening, 1912-17).

However, it will need to be brought into the argument, if we are to understand Janáček's symphonic poems in their modernist context as contemporaries must have done. Although Janáček would never have taken Štěpán's essay as a blueprint for composition, his choice of free form, and his interest in endings that represent

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<sup>53</sup> Václav Štěpán, 'Včerejšek a dnešek hudební formy' (Musical Form Yesterday and Today), in Otakar Theer and others (ed.), *Almanach na rok 1914* (Prague, 1913), 68-74. For the characterization of Theer, see Robert Pynsent, *Czech Prose and Verse: A Selection with an Introductory Essay* (London, 1979), p. lxii.



'logical' culminations of the entire course of each piece, situate his work of this period centrally within Štěpán's sphere of interest.

The essay reformulates the critique of Classical form published in 1857, more than half a century earlier, in Richard Wagner's defence of Liszt's symphonic poems.<sup>54</sup> For Wagner, the derivation of symphonic form from dances and marches (forms based on the 'alternation' of sections, in symmetrical or other repetitive schemes) had led to an artistic inadequacy, especially in operatic overtures (he singles out the overture to Gluck's *Iphigénie en Aulide* for criticism):<sup>55</sup>

A symphonic movement in the accepted sense cannot be conceived without alternation and reprise [of sections], and [the formal principle] that is obviously manifest in the third movement of a symphony as a minuet, a trio and a reprise of the minuet, can be traced in every other movement as the nucleus of the

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<sup>54</sup> Richard Wagner, 'Über Franz Liszt's Symphonische Dichtungen' (letter to Marie Sayn-Wittgenstein), in Richard Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, 3rd edition (Leipzig, n.d.), V, 182-98.

<sup>55</sup> 'Ohne . . . Wechsel und . . . Wiederkehr ist ein symphonischer Satz in der bisherigen Bedeutung nicht zu denken, und was sich im dritten Satze einer Symphonie offenbar als Menuett, Trio und Wiederholung des Menuetts erweist, ist, wenn auch verhüllter (und namentlich im zweiten Satze mehr der Variationenform sich zuneigend), in jedem anderen Satze als Kern der Form nachzuweisen. Hieraus wird aber ersichtlich, daß beim Konflikte einer dramatischen Idee mit dieser Form zunächst der Zwang entstehen muß, entweder die Entwicklung (die Idee) dem Wechsel (der Form), oder diesen jener aufzuopfern' (Wagner, 'Über Franz Liszt's Symphonische Dichtungen', 190).

form, though in a more disguised form (and tending towards variation form, particularly in the second movement). From this it is clear, though, that in the case of a conflict between a dramatic idea and this form, the constraint must arise that either development (the idea) must be sacrificed to alternation (the form), or vice versa.

The problem can be solved through the use of programme music, and Liszt's symphonic poems supply an excellent model:<sup>56</sup>

Which form would be the new one? Necessarily, that which is demanded each time by the subject and the development [required] to portray it. And which subject might this be? A poetic impulse. In other words (how appalling!) 'programme music'!

Štěpán takes up Wagner's idea that Classical form is inadequate for modern music, because it necessarily involves repetition of material already heard, and goes on to assert that this 'motion in a circle' (pohyb v kruhu) is static in essence; this static quality is particularly evident in rondo form, but infects sonata form as well, since any 'development' must be planned so that a smooth return to the material of the opening is possible in a necessary 'recapitulation'. For this reason, he says, even

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<sup>56</sup> 'Welche würde nun . . . die neue Form sein? – Nothwendig die jedesmal durch den Gegenstand und seine darzustellende Entwicklung geforderte. Und welches wäre dieser Gegenstand? – Ein dichterisches Motiv. Also—erschrecken Sie!—“Programm Musik“.' (Wagner, 'Über Franz Liszt's Symphonische Dichtungen', 191).

the music of Haydn and Mozart is fundamentally flawed. Classical forms tend towards academicism, thinks Štěpán; and in the history of music there is a constant oscillation between this academicism, the 'punctilious refinement of formal rules' (minuciosní vypilování formových příkazů), and formal anarchy, where the focus has shifted from form to content.

Modern music, says Štěpán, feels obliged to avoid the redundancy intrinsic in Classical forms by cultivating 'free form' (volná forma); this principle, emerging first in the late quartets of Beethoven, reached its full expression in the symphonic poems of Liszt. Even after fifty years, these works of Liszt still point the way to modernism, though programme music in the older sense must be replaced by a renewed 'absolute music' (whose nature remains vague in this essay):<sup>57</sup>

The forces with which Liszt's revolution was borne still function; it is still the same reaction against the bolting together of Classical formulae, and against the impoverishment of music through the one-sidedness of the static formal principle; but they must be freed from their ballast, and led back from extraterritoriality into the realm of pure, 'absolute' music.

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<sup>57</sup> 'Síly, jimiž byl nesen převrat Lisztův, působí dále, jest to stále táž reakce proti sešňorování klasické formulky a proti ochuzování hudby jednostranností statického formového principu; mají však býti zbaveny přítěže, mají býti svedeny se zámezí do oblasti čisté, "absolutní" hudby' (Štěpán, 'Včerejšek a dnešek hudební formy', 71).

Although most modern music still depends either on traditional forms--- admittedly sometimes loosely---or on the slavish following of an extra-musical programme, it is the free form of Liszt's symphonic poems that provides the true model for modern music:<sup>58</sup>

It is only in free form that there is real present progress; it is only this perfect formation, indefinable in words and formulae, which is the prize which the present age brings in the history of musical forms.

And in this music, the principle governing the creation of forms is one of organic growth towards unity, fully revealed in the conclusion of the work. It involves the construction of a fictitious 'logic' to persuade the listener of the existence of this organic growth, which in Liszt, perhaps, had been achieved through the principle of continual transformation of a theme until it reaches a satisfactory, climactic final form:<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> 'Pouze ve volné formě je faktický pokrok přítomnosti, jedině tento, slovy a schematy neurčitelný dokonalý tvar, jest v historii hudebních forem ziskem, jež přináší dnešek' (Štěpán, 'Včerejšek a dnešek hudební formy', 73).

<sup>59</sup> 'Ideálem vývinu skladby je nám dnes řetěz živých článků, kde by každý následující logicky vyplýval z předcházejícího a poslední ze všech, kde pozdější v sobě chová existenci dřívějších, kde poslední jest uskutečnitelný teprve, když dožili všichni jeho předchůdci' (Štěpán, 'Včerejšek a dnešek hudební formy', 72).

The ideal of the development of a composition is for us at the present day a network of living elements, in which each successive one logically grows out of the preceding one, and the last out of all of them; where the last holds within itself the existence of the preceding ones; where the last is realizable only when all its predecessors have been superseded.

### **Janáček's Re-Imagining of Lisztian Programme Music in *Taras Bulba* and the *Balada blanická***

The excerpts I have quoted from Štěpán's essay will demonstrate, I hope, that his model for musical development, derived from Liszt, with rhapsodic form progressively evolving into a final section that 'holds within itself the existence of the preceding ones', is that which is adopted, or, better, reimagined in *Taras Bulba* and the *Balada blanická*, despite the substantial differences between Janáček's style and Liszt's. Both pieces conclude with impressive tonal perorations in D flat major, a favourite key for the purpose with Janáček, as with many 19th-century Romantic composers. That in *Taras Bulba* is reinforced with the organ, and that in the *Balada blanická* with two harps.

In *Taras Bulba*, this final section, beginning at bar 166 in the third movement, is labelled 'coda' in the score, although 'peroration' might be a better translation here of Janáček's word 'závěr', since the musical argument reaches closure during it, not

before it begins. Before settling into the great melody already quoted above as ex. 1, it begins as in ex. 2:

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system is for 'Full organ, brass' and 'Cellos, double basses'. The organ and brass part is written in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a 3/2 time signature. The organ part features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, with a dynamic marking of *f*. The cellos and double basses part is written in a grand staff with a dynamic marking of *f*. The second system is for 'Upper strings and woodwind' and 'Cellos, double basses'. The upper strings and woodwind part is written in a grand staff with a dynamic marking of *ff*. The cellos and double basses part is written in a grand staff with a dynamic marking of *mf*. Both systems show a progression of chords and a rhythmic pattern in the bass line.

Ex. 2 Janáček, “Proroctví a smrt Tarase Bulby” (third movement of *Taras Bulba*), bb. 166–75

In this example the full organ enters, for the first time in the work, memorably supported by a seemingly unstoppable swinging rhythm in the orchestral bass. Through this final section, passages for full organ and brass alternate with passages with bells, harp, and percussion, until in the final five bars there is a tutti with full

brass, full percussion, and full organ; the hair-raising theatricality of this conclusion is, no doubt, one of the main reasons for the popularity of the piece in the concert hall. The fanfare motives it contains, at bars 169-70 and 174-5 in ex. 2 above, are final triumphant versions of a mysterious horn motive first heard briefly at the beginning of the movement (ex. 3), where it seems already to bear the signification of an extra-musical reference:

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is in treble clef, 3/4 time, and is labeled 'Horns in F'. It contains a short melodic phrase starting with a sharp sign (F#) and a dynamic marking of *ff*. The bottom staff is in bass clef, 3/4 time, and is labeled 'Bassoons, cellos'. It contains a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with a dynamic marking of *ff dim.* and several sixteenth-note runs marked with a '6' above them. The tempo is indicated as 'Con moto'.

Ex. 3 Janáček, "Proroctví a smrt Tarase Bulby" (third movement of *Taras Bulba*), bb. 1-2

This motive is extended midway through the movement into an imitation of a bugle call, which is preceded by a strong dominant preparation on E flat (whose last bar is the first bar of the example), which seems to prepare a section in A flat. In terms of extra-musical imagery, it might be a call to battle, but, with the echo effects, it seems to be heard at a great distance; and it is defamiliarized with ominous muted strings, and a turn away from the expected key (ex. 4):

The image displays three systems of musical notation for Ex. 4. The first system is for Percussion and Horns. The Percussion part starts with a *rit.* (ritardando) and a *ff* (fortissimo) dynamic. The Horns part begins with an *Allegro* tempo marking, followed by a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic and a *f* (forte) dynamic. The Muted trumpet part enters with a *p* (piano) dynamic. The second system is for Muted strings and Muted horn. The Muted strings part starts with a *Tempo I* marking and a *sfz* (sforzando) dynamic. The Muted horn part enters with a *f* (forte) dynamic. The third system is for Muted horn and Muted strings. The Muted horn part continues with a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic. The Muted strings part continues with a *sfz* (sforzando) dynamic.

Ex. 4 Janáček, “Proroctví a smrt Tarase Bulby” (third movement of *Taras Bulba*), bb.

128–40

The powerful peroration into which this is finally transformed brings the motive into sharp focus, now apparently as part of a chorale (as Janáček said, in the commentary to ex. 1, a ‘hymn-like motive’), whose full extra-musical significance is once more best sought in terms of the introduction of further intertexts, rather than in the detail of Gogol’s story. And this should be done before we examine the apotheosis of the *Balada blanická* and its implications.

For Janáček, there are various reasons why a reminiscence of a chorale might have been introduced at this point. One might have been the association of the Hussite warriors with songs such as ‘Ktož jsú Boží bojovníci’, their well-known



battle hymn (c1430), which was a source of inspiration for many Czech composers, including Smetana.<sup>60</sup> No Hussite chorale is quoted in this work, however; indeed the 'chorale' melody may represent a quotation, as I shall suggest below, of a folk-song to do with war.

For the general conception of this movement, on the other hand, specific musical intertexts have indeed previously been suggested. The apotheosis, in particular, as a triumphant summing-up of the movement, seems to Paul Wingfield to recall 'the grandiose diatonic climax' of the finale of Tchaikovsky's *Manfred* symphony, which also includes a part for full organ.<sup>61</sup> I would not wish to rule out the possibility of regarding that symphony as an intertext to this piece, but a closer cross-reference (particularly in view of considerations advanced above) would be to one or more of the symphonic poems written by Liszt in his maturity; and one in particular, also a celebration of warfare, seems a likely candidate.

This is Liszt's *Hunnenschlacht* of 1857, which, like Gogol's 1842 *Taras Bulba*, interprets slaughter on a horrific scale as somehow redemptive and cosmic, in the style of the Armageddon imagery of the biblical book of *Revelation*. It is based on a painting with the same name, dating from around 1850, by Liszt's contemporary

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<sup>60</sup> Jaromír Černý and others (ed.), *Historická antologie hudby v českých zemích (do cca 1530)/ Historical Anthology of Music in the Bohemian Lands (up to ca 1530)* (Prague, 2005), no. 91, 167-9; the anthology also includes other songs of that period.

<sup>61</sup> Paul Wingfield, editorial footnote 9 in Macdonald, 'Narrative in Janáček's Symphonic Poems', 46.

Wilhelm von Kaulbach (1805-74), depicting the Battle of the Catalaunian Fields (451 AD), at which the barbarian forces of Attila the Hun were defeated by a Catholic army under Emperor Theodoric, and in which the slaughter was so comprehensive that, according to myth, and as shown in the painting, 'the souls of dead warriors rose into the air and continued the battle in the sky'.<sup>62</sup> Liszt's programme music is more literal than Janáček's; he evokes this image with an extraordinary orchestral texture at the beginning, with muted strings and timpani to be played with sponge sticks, and with the explicit programmatic direction, printed in the score, addressed to conductors of the work:<sup>63</sup> 'The entire colour must be kept very dark at the beginning, and all the instruments must sound like ghosts' (Das ganze Colorit soll Anfangs sehr finster gehalten sein, und alle Instrumente geisterhaft erklingen).

Resemblances between *Taras Bulba* and *Hunnenschlacht* were first noticed long ago by Richard Gorer, with reference to the violent Allegro unison passage commencing at bar 200 in the first movement of *Taras Bulba*.<sup>64</sup> (Gorer mentions the similarity merely as an aside, in passing, within a very brief article whose main

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<sup>62</sup> Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: The Weimar Years 1848-1861* (London, 1989), 312. Kaulbach's oil painting is in the Neue Pinakothek in Munich.

<sup>63</sup> Franz Liszt, 'Hunnen Schlacht', in *Symphonische Dichtungen für großes Orchester: Partitur* (Leipzig, n.d. (plate no. V.A. 519)), III, 187.

<sup>64</sup> Richard Gorer, 'Janáček and *Taras Bulba*', *Music Review* 22 (1961), 302-6. Gorer unfortunately does not identify the passage in *Hunnenschlacht* of which he was thinking.

thrust is to demonstrate the motivic construction of Janáček's piece; it is no wonder that his point has been overlooked in the literature hitherto.) But it is the last movement of *Taras Bulba* where the similarities are strongest, particularly in the introduction of the chorale and the use of the full organ. In *Hunnenschlacht*, the chorale is 'Crux fidelis', symbolizing the faith of the Christian army, and it is present throughout the piece, strongly contrasting with the violent 'battle music'. It is heard at first from the organ, *piano* and *dolce religioso* (ex. 5), when its power is nevertheless sufficient to quell an orchestral *fortissimo* of extreme violence—which resumes, *fff*, as soon as it falls silent again:

*Lento*  
*Organ*

*Chorale: Crux fidelis, inter omnes*

Ex. 5 Liszt, *Hunnenschlacht*, bb. 268–72 (= rehearsal letter I, bb. 10–14)

And the same melody blazes out at the end, now *fortissimo* and in a transfigured version, rather as Janáček's does in ex. 2, for the apotheosis of the piece (ex. 6):

Ex. 6 Liszt, *Hunnenschlacht*, bb. 418–24 (= rehearsal letter Q, bb. 1–7)

Such apotheoses are not universally admired these days; the narrative of musical modernism can be suspicious of them, or even dismiss them for ideological reasons *a priori*, regardless of how composers imagine and construct them in particular instances. Alexander Rehding expresses a prevalent modern catch-all view, though without quite committing himself to it:<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Rehding, *Music and Monumentality*, 49, 52. Rehding's comments, especially on the totalitarian demands allegedly made by musical apotheoses, depend to some extent on ideas expressed in Leonard B. Meyer, *Style and Music: Theory, History, and Ideology* (Chicago, 1989).

To today's ears, this kind of musical apotheosis has become the paragon of late nineteenth-century bombast. . . . The particular technique in which it was achieved is particularly associated with Liszt [and his notion of 'thematic transformation']: the main theme, which may by and large be considered as characterizing the hero, is . . . blown up beyond all proportions. . . . If the theme characterizes the hero, the technique used for the apotheosis presents it . . . as the gigantic, larger-than-life--in short, superhuman--object of admiration and glorification. . . . The apotheosis is not a subtle rhetorical device; it persuades the listener by sheer force[; . . . it] is a climax that does not permit objections. . . . Most critics view it with suspicion; they tend to regard the very superhuman quality of the music as vacuous bombast.

Such a view possibly reflects the fact that 20th-century Cold War politics on the Soviet side of the Iron Curtain used the device of the great musical apotheosis to serve the rhetoric of Socialism. This is unfortunately relevant in the present instance, since Janáček's music was not immune from political interpretation: it was not a foregone conclusion that it would take its place within the new Czech canon after the communist assumption of power in Czechoslovakia in 1948, especially in view of Zdeněk Nejedlý's persistent opposition to the composer. It may therefore be ironic that it was the association of *Taras Bulba* and its final apotheosis with the violent 'struggle for peace' idealized in the Soviet bloc, that seems to have played a part in legitimating Janáček at that time. The piece was quoted in a slightly grudging

endorsement of the composer's music by Igor Belza, published in Moscow in 1951, in which some official approval is obviously implicit.<sup>66</sup>

In the score of *Taras Bulba*, features of the crisis of expressionism are undeniably present: in particular, the intensity and complexity of the harmonic progressions, the sharpness of the dynamic contrasts, and the occasional perversity of the melody. However, together with this, the rhapsody is full of

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<sup>66</sup> 'V partiture "Tarasa Bul'by" neosporimo nalichie krizisnykh chert ekspressionizma, skazavshikhся, v chastnosti, v napryazhennosti i slozhnosti garmonicheskikh obrazovaniy, v rezkosti dinamicheskikh kontrastov, a podchas i v nekotoryy izlomannosti melodiki. No vmeste s tem rapsodiya izobiluet realisticheski-vyrazitel'nyimi epizodami, posledovatel'no raskryvayushchimi tot obraz "sily russkogo naroda", kotoryy sam kompozitor schital tsentral'nym. Chetko obrisovyvayas' uzhe v Allegro pervoy chasti (epizod etot vosprinimaetsya kak poyavlenie Tarasa pered synom-predatelem), obraz etot dostigaet osobennoy emotsional'noy yarkosti v zaklyuchitel'noy kul'minatsii proizvedeniya. Poetomu ideyno-khudozhestvennaya tsennost' rapsodiy Yanachka opredelyaetsya prezhde vsego ee geroiko-patrioticheskoy kontseptsiey, sushchnost' kotoroy kompozitor raskryl s dostatochnoy ubeditel'nost'yu, v rezul'tate chego ekspressionistskie tendentsii, prostupavshie v pozdnykh sochineniyakh Yanachka, v etom proizvedenii okazalis' ottesnennymi na vtoroy plan' (Igor' Belza, *Ocherki razvitiya cheshskoy muzykal'noy klassiki* (Sketches on the Development of Czech Classical Music) (Moscow, 1951), 489). (There is a significant misprint in the Russian text, corrected in the quotation here: "synom-poedatelem" (сыном-поедателем) instead of "synom-predatelem" (сыном-предателем); my thanks are due to Rajendra Chitnis for noticing this.) *Taras Bulba* is also mentioned by Belza, more briefly, in Igor' Belza, *Cheshskaya opernaya klassika: kratkiy ocherk* (Czech Classical Opera: A Short Sketch) (Moscow, 1951), 112-13.

expressive, realistic episodes, cumulatively depicting the image of the 'strength of the Russian people', which the composer himself considered central. Clearly outlined already in the Allegro of the first movement (this episode is perceived as the appearance of Taras before his traitor son), this image achieves particular emotional clarity in the final climax of the work. The ideological and artistic value of Janáček's rhapsody is determined primarily, therefore, by its conception of heroic patriotism. The conviction with which Janáček reveals the essence of this patriotism is enough to render the expressionist tendencies which come to the fore in his later works quite secondary.

So the very feature of *Taras Bulba* that most contributed to securing Janáček's reputation in Czechoslovakia in the age of Socialist Realism, its Lisztian apotheosis, is the feature that may now seem most suspect to those who lack the stomach for the composer's 'heroic patriotism', whether or not they prefer his 'expressionist tendencies'. And another objection might be raised to *Taras Bulba*, and other such pieces, which seem not only to glorify their heroic subjects, but also to glorify and indeed mirror violence *per se*. If their 'bombast' were indeed no more than vacuous, it and they could simply be ignored. But if the music is successful in commemorating violence, then, especially post-Holocaust, and in a world where music is sometimes used for deliberately violent purposes, there is an ethical issue at stake. Lydia Goehr

has suggested that this can take place typically through a process of ‘displacement’, transferring the violence to an apparently safer location, and aestheticizing it:<sup>67</sup>

Violence may be so harmonized or aestheticized that it ends up satisfying a desire for beauty and pleasure more than revealing humanity’s darker side. . . . To speak of the musicality of violence is to recognize music’s sometimes inhumanity. We like to think that music is always put to good ends, that it consoles and reminds us of our humanity. . . . However, music no more guarantees humanity’s positive side than does anything else. . . . There is nothing in music’s form or use that guarantees those who play or listen a safe haven from the world.

Undoubtedly, it cannot be assumed that Janáček’s music offers any kind of ‘safe haven’ to players or listeners as a cushion against violence and inhumanity. But some further reflection may suggest that the issues are not entirely simple in this case.

First, in *Taras Bulba* Janáček takes over the same contrast in the use of the organ as we have observed in *Hunnenschlacht*, between a quiet, *religioso* passage at first (in the first movement) and the full organ in the final apotheosis. The final version is

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<sup>67</sup> Goehr, *Elective Affinities*, chapter 6 (‘The Musicality of Violence: On the Art and Politics of Displacement’), 171-203; this quotation at 177.



shown in ex. 2 above, and ex. 7 shows the beginning of the version in the first movement:

Ex. 7 Janáček, “Smrt Andrijova” (first movement of *Taras Bulba*), bb. 22–8

But in *Taras Bulba* there is a complication with this reference and a consequent difficulty in interpreting it. There are at least two intertexts, and the organ has opposite meanings in them, though in each case symbolizing the Catholic faith: in Liszt’s piece it embodies a triumphant affirmation of that faith, but in Gogol’s tale it represents the poisonous appeal of the same faith, which confronts Andriy as he traverses the Gothic church on his way into Dubno, and which ought rightly to be resisted. The passage below from Gogol is written entirely from Andriy’s point of view, which is already corrupted with false values; Andriy finds the sound of the organ both seductively feminine, and ominously overwhelming:<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> ‘Okno s tsvetnymi steklami, byvshee nad altarem, ozarilos’ rozovym rummyantsem utra, i upali ot nego na pol golubyje, zheltje i drugikh tsvetov kruzhki sveta, osvetivshie vnezapno temnyyu tserkov’. Ves’ altar’ v svoem dalekom uglublenii pokazalsya vdrug v siyanii [...]. Andriy ne bez

The rosy flush of dawn suddenly lit the stained-glass window above the altar, and many-colored curls of light fell on the floor, illuminating the dark church. The whole altar in its deep niche was suddenly bathed in light. . . . From his dark corner Andri gazed in amazement at this miracle of light. Suddenly the majestic roar of the organ filled the church, growing deeper and deeper, swelling, changing into a powerful peal of thunder and then suddenly becoming heavenly music that soared up to the cathedral's vaults, its chanting tones like the high voices of girls---and, turning again into powerful thunder, it fell silent. For a long time the sound rose trembling to the vaults, and Andri stood dumbstruck with amazement at the majesty of the music.

Gogol's imagery here in fact has little in common with that evoked by Janáček's organ parts, loud or soft, even if the improvisatory, quiet organ passage in ex. 7 above, at the beginning of the first movement, is sometimes held to represent the desperate prayers of the Poles for deliverance from their plight. Even that passage is ambiguously undercut, since it alternates with throbbing triplets that explode more

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izumleniya glyadel iz svoego temnago ugla na chudo, proizvedennoe svetom. V eto vremya velichestvennyy rev organa napolnil vdrug vsyu tserkov'; on stanovilsya gushche i gushche, razrastalsya, pereshel v tyazhelye rokoty groma i potom vdrug, obrativshis' v nebesnuyu muzyku, ponessya vysoko pod svodami svoimi poyushchimi zvukami, napominavshimi tonkie devich'i golosa, i potom opyat' obratilsya on v gustoy rev i grom, i zatikh. I dolgo eshche gromovye rokoty nosilis', drozha, pod svodami, i divilsya Andriy s poluotkryтым rtom velichestvennoy muzyke.'

(Gogol, *Taras Bul'ba*, 5th ed., 73-4; Gogol, trans. by Constantine, *Taras Bulba*, 63.)

than once into violence with clanging bells, and these are usually a symbol of Russia (as they certainly seem at the end of the third movement).

Another puzzling motif in *Taras Bulba* with a corresponding motif, more easily interpreted, in *Hunnenschlacht*, is the fanfare. The example quoted above from Janáček (ex. 4) corresponds to a much less ambiguous motive in *Hunnenschlacht* (ex. 8):

The image shows a musical score for two parts: Trumpets I/II in F and Trombones I/II. Both parts are marked with a forte dynamic (*ff*) and a tutti marking (*ten.*). The fanfare is specifically labeled as '(Schlachtruf)'. The notation includes a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure of each part, followed by a series of eighth notes. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#).

Ex. 8 Liszt, *Hunnenschlacht*, bb. 175–9 (= beginning 4 bars before rehearsal letter F)

Here, the fanfares (against rapid scales in the strings) are specifically labelled ‘Schlachtruf’ (battle cry) in the score; the narrative of which they form a part is easily reconstructed. Janáček’s fanfares in ex. 4, already mentioned, equally seem referential and to form part of a narrative, as I have outlined above, but are again much harder to interpret than Liszt’s.

The *Balada blanická* is yet more difficult to interpret. It is shorter and less histrionic than *Taras Bulba*, perhaps on account of Masaryk’s call for sobriety in music, as understood by Janáček, but it too culminates in a great expressive

apotheosis in D flat, whose yearning lyricism, with clarinets, horns and harps, is reminiscent of Mahler even if there is no clear evidence that Janáček ever encountered any of his music (ex. 9):

*Meno mosso*

Clarinet

Bassoons

Harps I/II

*Adagio*

Horn in F

Muted strings

Clarinet

Ex. 9 Janáček, *Balada blanická*, bb. 273–81

No doubt this work is radically different from *Taras Bulba* in its stance and in the attitude it reflects towards the commemoration of warfare. The correspondences that the two works display may suggest, however, that both of them, in their

different ways, reflect a yearning, perhaps typical of the first two decades of the century in Central Europe more generally, for clarity and for sharply-drawn contrasts between good and evil--of a sort curiously presaged in Gogol's tale of more than half a century earlier.

But there is a further dimension yet in Janáček's wartime symphonic poems, which complicates this view of them. Jaroslav Vogel, Janáček's biographer, who thought it self-evident that these pieces dealt in simple story-telling, and who claimed the composer's own authority for his interpretation of *Taras Bulba*,<sup>69</sup> pointed out long ago that the apotheosis in the *Balada blanická* not only corresponds in key and mood with the apotheosis of *Taras Bulba*, but that it seems to be based on the same melody--as a comparison of ex. 9 with ex. 1 above should make immediately plain. And he also mentioned that both appear to be derived from the melody of a Moravian folk-song, published in 1913, just before the composition of *Taras Bulba*. This song, whose incipit is reproduced in ex. 10, also has to do with war, but adopts yet another point of view on the subject: unlike Gogol, Vrchlický, or Masaryk, it understands it as folk-songs from Central Europe commonly do, as a cause for

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<sup>69</sup> Vogel attended the 1924 Prague performance, and much later claimed that the account of the piece in his biography transmitted explanations 'which I managed to get from the composer, [normally] laconic in this respect' (které se mi podařilo . . . dostat ze skoupého v tom směru skladatele): Vogel, *Leoš Janáček*, 2nd edition, 231.

lamentation on the part of the young man pressed into the army and forced to leave home, sweetheart, and safety:<sup>70</sup>

*Volně [Freely]*

Keď já smut - ný pŕ - jdem na tu voj - nu,  
 ko - mu já za - ně - chám mo - ju mi - lú,  
 ko - mu já za - ně - chám mo - ju mi - lú?

Ex. 10 First stanza of folk-song from Moravian Slovakia (Kunc, *Slovácké*, no. 79, pp. 64–5); rhythm emended in b. 3 (the first note is a dotted semiquaver in the original)

On account of the text (‘When I’ll be setting out sadly for war’ (Keď já smutný pŕjdem na tu vojnu), Vogel was inclined to reject the possibility, first raised by Jarmil Burghauser,<sup>71</sup> that this song has anything to do with either of Janáček’s symphonic poems—since it fails to fit either Vogel’s image of the Blaník knights or his over-literal notion of the references that are permissible in programme music. But

<sup>70</sup> The opening of the song is quoted here from Vogel (*Leoš Janáček*, 2nd edition, 241), who refers to Burghauser (see n. 71), though with the wrong page number, and to Jan Kunc (ed.), *Slovácké [písňe]: 200 jednohlasných písní* (200 Monophonic Songs from Moravian Slovakia) (Ostrava, 1913).

<sup>71</sup> Jarmil Burghauser, ‘Janáčková tvorba komorní a symfonická’ (Janáček’s Chamber and Symphonic Works), *Musikologie* 3 (1955), 289, n. 186.

with a different model, one that allows for cross-reference between different intertexts, as I have suggested the *Žárlivost* overture does, it would seem a natural choice for an allusion.

It seems to follow, then, that Janáček's idea of programme music is more subtle and allusive, and less confused, than most commentators are prepared to admit; and it would seem flexible enough to allow the same melody and intertextual cross-reference to serve both for a piece notionally glorifying violence in war and one notionally repudiating it. Indeed the situation seems analogous to Hanslick's famous example, which he hoped would demolish the notion of programme music altogether, of Gluck's aria, 'Che farò senza Euridice?', where the exquisite expressiveness might as well serve a text of ecstatic joy as one of total desolation.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> 'Als die Arie des Orpheus:

"J'ai perdu mon Eurydice

Rien n'égale mon malheur"

Tausende (und darunter Männer wie Rousseau) zu Thränen rührte, bemerkte ein Zeitgenosse Glucks, Boyé, daß man dieser Melodie ebenso gut, ja weit richtiger die entgegengesetzten Worte unterlegen könnte:

"J'ai trouvé mon Eurydice

Rien n'égale mon bonheur"

(Eduard Hanslick, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen: Ein Beitrag zur Revision der Aesthetik der Tonkunst*, 2nd revised edn. (Leipzig, 1858), 25).

When thousands (including men like Rousseau) were moved to tears by Orfeo's aria [in Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, 1762]:

'I have lost my Eurydice,

Nothing can match my sorrow',

Boyé, a contemporary of Gluck, remarked that words of the opposite sense could be fitted to this melody just as well, indeed far more appropriately:

'I have found my Eurydice,

Nothing can match my joy'.

In *Taras Bulba* and the *Balada blanická*, too, and even without the benefit of a sung text, completely opposing sentiments are capable of being conveyed with essentially the same intense music: a jingoistic glorification of slaughter and carnage on the one hand, and an ecstatic acceptance of peace and repudiation of carnage on the other—and, conceivably, either of those contains the other within itself. And the reminiscence of the folk-song in both of them adds a further element of pity for the young men who left homes and families to go to death and oblivion. Such ambiguity and multiplicity of reference by no means invalidate the concept of programme music; in Janáček's two symphonic poems on the First World War, on the contrary, they ensure psychological truth, and demonstrate the richness of allusion that is possible in programme music. They reflect the way in which the unimaginable



violence of modern war can be met by a thoroughly human reaction, that is, at least in part, also humane.

### **Appendix: Václav Štěpán, 'Musical Form Yesterday and Today' (1913)**

#### **Musical Form Yesterday and Today**

The essence of Classical musical form is motion in a circle---the return of every current to the point from which it sprang. The rondo type expresses this idea particularly clearly, for as soon as contrast has been achieved in it through one of the subordinate themes, the main theme always returns once more in precisely its previous form; in bringing the movement to a close, the predominant aim is not to obscure the identity of the ending with the beginning through variation that is too divergent. If some 'progress' occurs here, it is counteracted through the regressive return of the opening section. The sonata type is conceptually richer only halfway, in that the 'development' suggests possibilities of further unfolding that are latent in the theme; the principal requirement of this development is, however, that in due course it reaches a point from which it can return to the beginning without obstacles, so that the third section, despite all changes, remains a recapitulation of the first section. The formal aspects work here against the principle of all music---motion; the nature of Haydn's and Mozart's movements is in reality static. It is only the multi-movement totality of a symphony or sonata that can express the motion of the [musical] idea in this period, though thus it must create a primitive structure of closed images, whose content lacks dynamism and whose [mutual] relationship is given in advance. If an allegro is followed by a slow movement, then a dance movement, and then

a lively finale, these are alternate steps to right and left more than a conscious progression linking the point of departure with the goal. An attempt at reform, proceeding from the recognition of this inadequacy, coincided in the mid-19th century with a corresponding trend in the development of form which was the result of other aspects of the historical situation. The history of the arts that are realized in time, poetry and music, is characterized by a swing between two extremes, of which one is formal anarchy, caused by a total displacement of focus on to content, and the other is a punctilious refinement of formal rules, leading to academicism. Although pictorial art also proceeds through the same periodization, it does not move within these bounds. Its general principles, for example, triangulation in painting, always remain broad frameworks, even encompassing significant differences of form; here we find no analogies of form as precisely worked out as the sonnet or some of the above-mentioned musical forms. The explanation of this lies at least partly in the greater difficulty in contemplating a poetic or musical work, where perception requires the reader and also the listener to maintain its previous progress in [his or her] consciousness. The attempt to aid memory through meter and through regular verse, stress, and periodicity, in the frequent inadequacy of these means, is an encouragement towards further development. However, if perception [of an artwork] occurs at once, as in the pictorial arts, and there is no such need of help, the psychological impulse is lacking that would have led to the laying down of laws concerning detail. In classical music the swing was found precisely at that boundary point, when formal prescriptions developed into the most submissive of mechanisms, when each element in the structure finds its place in a prescribed code of musical architecture. The contrary movement, originating here, transmits the impulse provided by a new way of thinking

about the content of a musical work, and both together give birth, in the preparatory period of Schumannesque Romanticism, to the symphonic poem of Liszt.

The modern period feels all too keenly the stereotyped character caused by the obligatory symmetrical repetition of everything that has already been said at the beginning; it declares as redundant musical material that does not set up some new state; it castigates a play with tones, music that runs in a circle or exhausts itself in one and the same place. It requires motion, 'drama'; it consciously sets up a dynamic ideal of composition, whereas the previous period, unaware of this, remained satisfied with static form. However, it is unable to achieve this reversal under its own strength; it needs the helping hand of another art, and it turns to poetry. A poem, in which (except in a refrain) the static principle is absent and not even feasible to the extent it is in music, has a far more diversified succession of sections than [those of] meagre musical prototypes, and moreover bears within itself the solution to the puzzle of how to progress to something that did not exist at the outset, and yet preserve unity. Music cannot solve this problem alone, and indeed it sees its salvation in this. For this reason it elevates the poem to the status of its authority, it casts off merely musical logic, it abandons its autonomy and, at the price of its independence, gains, at least in part, the formal diversification of poetic structures. The Neo-Romantics correctly diagnosed the sickness from which Classic form was dying under the hands of its epigones: an inartistic mechanism of the whole, and stagnation at the conclusion; but they were unable to restore it to health by a satisfactory method. This is already clear in that they had to resort to a second art for help. Every breaking of the bounds clearly prescribed by the material, if it is prompted only by an attempt at diversification and enrichment of one art by another, is a cul-de-sac, considered

in terms of development; perhaps it is possible to make one's way far enough with it, perhaps it is even possible, in its thrall, to create works of relatively significant value, but, nevertheless, a return is finally necessary to the main path followed by each individual art in the purity of its own resources. Polychromy in sculpture, genre and historical painting in fine art, the exclusive cult of sound effects in poetry, and also programme music, are evidence of this. In practice, the new movement soon compromised itself with the constant concessions that the poetic component had to force on music, and also through the monstrosities that were created by a slavish following of the chosen text. So that appearances should at least be preserved, the concept of programme music [was] gradually disseminated, and also modified, in such a way that those who concern themselves today with its theory (Hohenemser, Calvocoressi, Klauwell<sup>73</sup>), wholly under the suggestive power of the term, do not even notice how incompatible phenomena are amalgamated under a single term.

Under the wings of the genuine programme music of Liszt, there developed something new, which places itself in opposition to that; there developed that tendency, hard to define, which so far is not a tendency at all, because it lacks a solid formulation of its method and aims, because it is barely aware how far it is removed from its origin;

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<sup>73</sup> The references that Štěpán has in mind are Richard Hohenemser, 'Über die Programmmusik', *Sammelbände der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft* 1/2 (1900), 307–24; Otto Klauwell, *Geschichte der Programmmusik von ihren Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Leipzig, 1910), and M. D. Calvocoressi, 'Esquisse d'une esthétique de la musique à programme', *Sammelbände der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft* 9 (1907–8), 424–38.

there developed today's 'free form'. One cannot therefore call the modern era a new epoch. The forces with which Liszt's revolution was borne still function; it is still the same reaction against the bolting together of Classical formulae, and against the impoverishment of music through the one-sidedness of the static formal principle; but they must be freed from their ballast, and led back from extraterritoriality into the realm of pure, 'absolute' music. Today's task is to create a form which is not obliged to seek the basis for its justification elsewhere than in music itself, but for which this would also not mean a return under the yoke so recently thrown off. Psychological states---the exclusive domain of the art of tones---hold out the offer of material, as they have always done. Objects in the exterior world are able to be incorporated as the stimuli that evoke some states---and that provided a programme---but they will always be incorporated only in relation to the creating subject, in what they have provoked in him, or in what emotions he has brought to bear on them. It seems that this movement also brings with it new form-generating musical elements, that against the exclusive domination of the motive (melody) and the key (harmony) there are now being added rhythm, dynamics, and timbre, of which the second particularly evinces a strong cohesive power. The result is the 'free form' already mentioned, though basically it is of course once more only binary or ternary, because all musical rhythm---and structure is also rhythm---is able to be reduced to the succession of one or two arses after an initial thesis. However, the place where a new theme is introduced, where it is developed, how it is joined on, the relationship of one motive with another, the length of a section, their genuine number, their combination into higher units, and finally the manner in which the two possibilities for structure fostered by a musical process are used, namely, repetition and change---all this is

connected solely with the idea that the work is to express. And this idea is particular to the musician in whom it originated and in whose composition it is realized for the first time; it is neither a copy nor the equivalent of an already existing product of another art. The implications correspond wholly with the implications of the Neo-Romantics, unless they penetrate more deeply still into the organism of the work, but the foundation is different and more solid. Besides, the reaction against the static art of the Classical period emerges more clearly than hitherto into the foreground, hand in hand with the changes in form, and in such a way that it is difficult to say what is primary and what secondary; it proceeds also by a transmutation of content, a gradual change from image into action, of mood into movement, of a circle into an association of two distinct points. The ideal of the development of a composition is for us at the present day a network of living elements, in which each successive one logically grows out of the preceding one, and the last out of all of them; where the last holds within itself the existence of the preceding ones; where the last is realizable only when all its predecessors have been superseded (here there is a clear opposition to a movement such as those of Mozart, where the conclusion is merely a repetition of the opening); and where the whole process is able to be expressed in one, or a few related, lines. If we regard the beginning as the expression of some emotional state, we immediately grasp it as a foundation on which all further expression must be based; we desire this central idea to develop through gradual change, through attenuation, through conflicts, and we are satisfied when the whole process ends somewhere that is either higher or lower or at least somewhere other than the beginning, and of course always at such a distance, that the course that has been run is a natural, closed whole. In this the musical image---a work that seeks not to be a river but a wellspring---will not lose

its existential rights. The freedom of expressive and also conceptual development, the freedom of form, which are the main slogans of this most recent movement, are concepts that are so broad that they extend to cover even the possibility of forms used in the past. But in our opinion it is not right if it is the mere fulfilling of a given template that leads to it, and it is also not right if it is the demand of the poetry that leads to it. Only inner creative necessity provides the direction here; if from the realization of [the composer's] conception there emerges sonata form, perhaps, no objection can be made to this, just as free verse contains within itself all the older poetic forms; and just as it is imaginable that the most convinced author of free verse should create a form that is only slightly different from a sonnet.

It would not be correct to imagine composers, categorized by some composition among the co-creators of what I call free form, as a school with a conscious aim, which cultivates a single type. The great majority of composers today either make use of Classical forms, loose, of course, and sometimes altered under the influence of modernism, or they depend on a poem. There are only very few works that are consciously created outside those two categories, that confess that their structure is determined by a single conceptual development, where some section of them is displayed to the composer as a whole. Despite this, however, it is only in free form that there is real present progress; it is only this perfect formation, indefinable in words and formulae, which in the history of musical forms is the prize which the present age brings: otherwise we are totally rooted in the past. Apart from this, it is only the freedom, as a principle, and the musical independence which we encounter here, that fully answer to anything new that the present day is able to say in music, and it is precisely this form, now at the

beginnings of its existence, that is the most capable of further development---although even free form is not a complete novelty. Late Beethoven, especially in his quartets, may serve as an example of how a beginning was made even in the Classical period to follow the right direction. However, at that time a programmatic intermezzo interrupted the direct line [of progress], and it is only today, to the extent that there are 'renaissance' tendencies, that a turn is again being made to the path pointed out, so to speak, a century ago.

There still remains the question whether we should consider the fixing of form in the period of Haydn and Mozart as progress, and thus, conversely, the period in which we now live as decadence. None of those who live through today's art admit that we should be aiming downwards; it is only those who remain fascinated by yesterday's art who judge thus. But we have a more powerful reason than one based on feeling, for being able to maintain that our longing to free form from the shackles of formulae and also to throw off the crutch of a programme signifies a step not only forwards, but also upwards. Whereas reactions hitherto against formal petrification reached out boldly to the opposite extreme, proudly boasting in amorphousness, whereas the Liszt movement still pilloried merely musical logic, alleging that a poem itself must determine the structure of a work, we are not reacting with similar lack of consideration towards formal principle in music, but on the contrary we fully acknowledge its necessity, and we disown only the exclusive validity of some of its rules. Although we are distancing ourselves from the ideal of form as Classicism created it, nevertheless for that reason we are fixing our eyes with all the greater humility and faith on the great rhythm that generates music and also the



symphony, whose symmetrical pulse is the sole sovereign law of musical form.

## **Abstract**

Two of Janáček's symphonic poems commemorate the First World War, *Taras Bulba* and the *Balada blanická*. It has not hitherto been appreciated that their free form and final apotheoses probably represent Janáček's re-imagining of Liszt's late symphonic poems, which are the focus of a modernist manifesto for Czech music (1913) by Václav Štěpán.

Moreover, the contrast between the two disguises an essential link. The main intertexts of *Taras Bulba* seem to be Liszt's *Hunnenschlacht* and a Gogol's story, *Taras Bulba*, both glorifying warfare; those of the *Balada blanická* are a poem by Jaroslav Vrchlický and an essay by T. G. Masaryk, both apparently pacifist. Yet the apotheoses of the two pieces are curiously similar, since both quote the same principal theme, a folk-song about war. Together the two pieces demonstrate the ability of Janáček's programme music to hold different intertexts in tension, in ways that ensure psychological truth.