

MUSIC EDUCATION AT THE BUSINESS COLLEGE IN MORAVSKÁ OSTRAVA IN THE YEARS 1919–1939

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ABSTRACT

The study deals with music education at the Business College in Moravská Ostrava in the interwar period of 1919–1939. On the basis of the research of literature, the study provides the reconstruction of music-educational and artistic activities at the Business College in Moravská Ostrava, documents major events and primarily points out the contribution by teaching personalities Zdeněk Mlčoch and Karel Hofírek.

Key words: music education, Business College in Moravská Ostrava, Zdeněk Mlčoch, Karel Hofírek

INTRODUCTION

It is possible to trace back the music-educational activities in the environment of Ostrava to the 1890s. They especially took place at grammar schools in Moravská Ostrava, Přívoz and Slezská Ostrava (Matice Grammar School, National Czechoslovak Real Grammar School in Moravská Ostrava, Municipal Reform Real Grammar School in Přívoz, Girls Lyceum / Girls Reform Real Grammar School in Slezská Ostrava). In addition to the above grammar schools, interesting music education was also carried out by other specialized secondary schools, for example the Business College in Moravská Ostrava¹ and specialized schools of a charitable women's society called Dobromila. Music education at the Business College in Moravská Ostrava represented, with regard to the focus of its studies, a significant element in terms of axiology as it cultivated the students' personalities.²

METHODS

The research of musicology consisted primarily in the study of archival materials – annual reports of the Business College in Moravská Ostrava, which are deposited in the Archive of the Town of Ostrava. As concerns methodology, we applied musicological methods in the habilitation thesis.

They primarily include the historical-comparison method comprised of the following specific ones:

1. Method of philological-historical study of literature;
2. Method of critical comparison of related manifestations;
3. Cultural-historical analysis.

¹ The study is based on an unpublished part of the manuscript of the habilitation thesis by KUSÁK, Jiří. *Ostrava hudebněvýchovná. Hudební výchova, odborná hudební výchova, hudební výchova v učitelské přípravě, hudební lidovýchovné a popularizační aktivity v Ostravě od 90. let 19. století do roku 1945*. Ústí nad Labem, 2017, 302 pp. Habilitation Thesis. Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem, Faculty of Education.

² It must be noted in this respect that the issue of the value cultivation of a personality is a current topic as well. In his study, David Kozel believes that an important feature of art is its ability of transcendence. For more details, see Kozel, David. Znovuobjevování numinozity uměleckého zážitku člověka počátku 21. století. *Hudební výchova*. 2014, vol. 22, issue 2, pp. 23–24. ISSN 1210-3683.

As regards additional methods within the covered issue, we also applied the synthetic method.

MUSIC EDUCATION AT THE BUSINESS COLLEGE IN MORAVSKÁ OSTRAVA – BETWEEN PROGRESS AND STAGNATION

The Business College was founded in 1919 at the initiative of the municipal council.³ Having studied their annual reports, we can partly reconstruct the music-educational activities in that institution. Like with the grammar schools of Ostrava, the reports mention the celebration of the anniversary of T. G. Masaryk, which included, besides poetry reading, musical performances. On 06 March 1920, on the occasion of the president's 70th birthday, for example, the Business College held a school academy (musical performances not specified in detail),⁴ the same on 07 March 1923,⁵ 07 March 1925,⁶ 07 March 1933, etc.⁷

Other celebrations (with musical performances not specified in detail) focused on significant historical moments of the Czech nation (500th anniversary of the Battle of Vítkov on 26 June 1920) and on important personalities of Czech history (Jan Hus on 29 June 1920).⁸ The Annual Report also refers to the celebration of Czech autonomy (like at grammar schools of Ostrava), for example on 29 October 1929⁹ and on 28 October 1930 (an event with recitation and musical acts not specified in detail).¹⁰

More details on the programme of the Business College events are available within the celebration of T. G. Masaryk's 80th birthday on 07 March 1930. Besides musical acts by not very renowned authors, we can mention primarily Smetana's compositions, such as Dance of the Comedians from the opera *The Bartered Bride*.¹¹ Students of the Business College in Moravská Ostrava were also invited by their teachers to participate in other leisure activities to "get a better understanding of music", e.g. to attend musical evenings and productions by the Cultural Council for the Region of Ostrava, Philharmonic Society in Moravská Ostrava, and Musical School of the Singing Company *Záboj* in Slezská Ostrava.¹²

The Business College also organised celebrations of writers and poets, for example the Goethe celebration of 19 March 1932. Within the literary-musical programme, the audience could enjoy the overture *Egmont* by L. v. Beethoven (a four-handed piano piece); in addition, according to the Annual Report, there was a performance by a women's choir accompanied

³ *První výroční zpráva Obchodní akademie v Mor. Ostravě za školní rok 1919–20*. Moravská Ostrava, 1920. At the very beginning of its existence, the Business College comprised a single-year course for graduates of secondary schools, follow-on merchant schools and specialised courses. *V. výroční zpráva Obchodní akademie v Mor. Ostravě za školní rok 1923/24*. Moravská Ostrava, 1924.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *IV. výroční zpráva Obchodní akademie v Mor. Ostravě za školní rok 1922/23*. Moravská Ostrava, 1923, p. 12.

⁶ *VI. výroční zpráva Obchodní akademie v Mor. Ostravě za školní rok 1924/25*. Moravská Ostrava, 1925, p. 12.

⁷ *XIV. výroční zpráva obchodní akademie v Moravské Ostravě za školní rok 1932–33*. Moravská Ostrava, 1933, p. 17.

⁸ *První výroční zpráva Obchodní akademie v Mor. Ostravě za školní rok 1919–20*. Moravská Ostrava, 1920.

⁹ *XI. výroční zpráva obchodní akademie v Mor. Ostravě za školní rok 1929/30*. Moravská Ostrava, 1930, p. 15.

¹⁰ *XII. výroční zpráva obchodní akademie v M. Ostravě za školní rok 1930–31*. Moravská Ostrava, 1931, p. 12.

¹¹ *XI. výroční zpráva obchodní akademie v Mor. Ostravě za školní rok 1929/30*. Moravská Ostrava, 1930, p. 15.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 16.

by two violins, a violoncello and a viola and conducted by a student of the Business College (O. Střílek of III b class).¹³

As regards the music-educational activities of the Business College in Moravská Ostrava, we must mention the activity of the school orchestra, which participated in the school celebrations, e.g. during the celebration of T. G. Masaryk's anniversary and of Czech autonomy, for example on 28 October 1931. The programme focused especially on various compositions by composers that technically and artistically corresponded to the instrumental skills of the Business College students (A. Boieldieu, J. Labský, J. Fučík, K. Noack). The Annual Report also mentions a performance given by the school string quartet.¹⁴

On 26 October 1935, the school string orchestra also gave a performance, playing compositions by V. Vačkář, A. Dvořák (an unspecified aria from the opera *Rusalka*), etc.¹⁵

We have evidence of remarkable progress in the area of musical education under the management of ing. Zdeněk Mlčoch from the second half of the 1930's as there was a school orchestra, a trumpeter orchestra, a drum orchestra, and a choir at the Business College.¹⁶ As far as quality is concerned, we must emphasize the high level of the orchestra, which is proven by the artistic and technical demands of the interpreted compositions, by the frequency of their performances and by the overall personnel development of the body. The Annual Report reads that for example in the school year of 1936-1937, the school orchestra was almost complete (20 members) and consisted largely of the Business College students. In addition, the Annual Report mentions that the orchestra performed compositions by Czech composers (A. Dvořák: *The Slavonic Dances*, B. Smetana: excerpts of operas *The Kiss* and *The Bartered Bride*).¹⁷

In the school year of 1937-1938, the Business College in Moravská Ostrava was joined by Karel Hofírek (previously working at the Czechoslovak Business College in Olomouc), who also engaged in the school orchestra activities.¹⁸ In that school year, the school orchestra accepted fifteen more members (a total of thirty-five) and practised once a week on average. In that school year the school orchestra, conducted by ing. Zdeněk Mlčoch and Karel Hofírek, performed frequently e.g. as part of the celebration of 28 October, on the occasion of the public holiday of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 20th anniversary of the Battle of Bakhmach, the public holiday of the Kingdom of Romania, and Edvard Beneš's birthday. However, the orchestral body also performed outside the Business College, for example at the Folk House in Slezská Ostrava during a party for the military personnel of Ostrava. The orchestra specialised in works by Czech and European authors (Boieldieu, Dvořák, Rossini, Smetana, Vačkář).¹⁹

In the school year of 1936-1937, the trumpeter orchestra was comprised of twelve members (six first trumpeters and six backup members) from Year I and Year II and was

¹³ XIII. výroční zpráva obchodní akademie v Moravské Ostravě za školní rok 1931/32. Moravská Ostrava, 1932, p. 15.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁵ XVII. výroční zpráva Československé obchodní akademie v Mor. Ostravě za školní rok 1935-36. Moravská Ostrava, 1936, p. 22.

¹⁶ 18. výroční zpráva Městské československé obchodní akademie za školní rok 1936-1937. Moravská Ostrava, 1937, p. 20.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁸ 19. výroční zpráva Obchodní akademie (33. veřejné obchodní školy) v Moravské Ostravě za školní rok 1937-1938. Moravská Ostrava, 1938, pp. 15-16.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 29.

completed by two drummers.²⁰ This orchestra developed its artistic activity by opening school celebrations with fanfares and accompanied other students during military exercise (the students were taught by a privatist of the college and musician of Radiojournal, Mr. Šálek).²¹

There was also a men's choir at the Business College. It consisted of Year Four students (the choirmaster was J. Papala, a student of the Business College) and performed primarily on the occasion of T. G. Masaryk's anniversaries. The Annual Report also mentions the artistic activities of the teaching staff, for example a trio consisting of František Cabicar (violin),²² Karel Hofírek (viola) and Zdeněk Mlčoch (piano), gave a performance during the celebration of the public holiday of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.²³

As regards music-educational activities, we must mention a certain stagnation of the late 1930's. "Compared to previous years, the activity was negligible. Due to a shortage of rooms, the school orchestra did not practise and no choir was established that year. The school trumpeter orchestra consisting of students of BC and MS [Business College and Merchant School, note by the study author] opened the school celebrations with fanfares, (...) participated in the Mothers Celebration at the exhibition grounds in Mariánské Hory and in the celebration of the public holiday of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in Cinema Ráj."²⁴

RESULTS

1. In comparison to the grammar schools of Ostrava, the music-educational activities at the Business College can be evaluated as more limited; on the other hand, it must be pointed out that those music-educational activities completed the overall condition of the formation of the secondary-school music education in Ostrava.

2. From 1919 to the end of 1930's, the inner dynamics of the music education development at the Business College was changing - in the mid-1930's that area progressed; in contrary, at the end of 1930's it rather stagnated.

3. The music-educational activities at the Business College were realised through a string orchestra (or rather a string quartet), a trumpeter and drum orchestra and a choir.

4. Students of the Business College in Moravská Ostrava participated in the programme of events held on various occasions: during the celebrations of T. G. Masaryk, Edvard Beneš, and other personalities.

5. Teachers Zdeněk Mlčoch and Karel Hofírek, who were connected especially to the activity of the school orchestra, made a substantial contribution to the development of music education at the Business College.

²⁰ In the 1937-1938 school year, the trumpeter orchestra consisted of nine first trumpeters and three backup members, students of the Business College and Merchant School.

²¹ The name of the teacher Mr. Šálek was not traced back. *18. výroční zpráva Městské československé obchodní akademie za školní rok 1936–1937*. Moravská Ostrava, 1937, p. 20.

²² The Annual Report for the 1938-1939 school year states the surname Cabisar. *20. výroční zpráva Obchodní akademie (34. veřejné obchodní školy) v Moravské Ostravě za školní rok 1938–1939*. Moravská Ostrava, 1939, p. 31.

²³ *19. výroční zpráva Obchodní akademie (33. veřejné obchodní školy) v Moravské Ostravě za školní rok 1937–1938*. Moravská Ostrava, 1938, p. 30.

²⁴ *20. výroční zpráva Obchodní akademie (34. veřejné obchodní školy) v Moravské Ostravě za školní rok 1938–1939*. Moravská Ostrava, 1939, p. 31.

CONCLUSION

The study tried to provide a picture of development of secondary-school music education in Moravská Ostrava, specifically at the Business College. The ascertained facts fill the gap in the area of the music and historiographical research focused on the history of regional music education.

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