



Janáček Piano Music

On an Overgrown Path
In the Mists • Piano Sonata

Radoslav
Kvapil

alto

Leoš Janáček

Piano Music

Po zarostlém chodníku "On an Overgrown Path", JW 8/17

[1]	I Rada: I. <i>Nase vecery "Our Evenings"</i> . Moderato	4:15
[2]	I Rada: II. <i>Lístek odvanutý "A Leaf Blown by the Wind"</i> . Andante	3:37
[3]	I Rada: III. <i>Pojďte námi "Come With Us"</i> . Andante	1:21
[4]	I Rada: IV. <i>Frydecká panna Maria "The Virgin of Frydek"</i> . Grave	3:58
[5]	I Rada: V. <i>Stebetaly jak lastovicky "They Chatted Like Little Swallows"</i> . Con moto	2:10
[6]	I Rada: VI. <i>Nelze domluvit "Words Fail Me"</i> . Andante	2:26
[7]	I Rada: VII. <i>Dobrou noc! "Good Night!"</i> . Andante	3:30
[8]	I Rada: VIII. <i>Tak neskonale úzko "Unutterable Anguish"</i> . Andante	3:23
[9]	I Rada: IX. <i>V pláči "In Tears"</i> . Larghetto	3:06
[10]	I Rada: X. <i>Sycek neodletel! "The Little Owl Still Calls"</i> . Andante	4:11
[11]	II Rada: I. Andante	2:58
[12]	II Rada: II. Allegretto	4:02
[13]	II Rada: III. Più mosso	2:45
[14]	II Rada: IV. Vivo	2:44
[15]	II Rada: V. Allegro - Adagio	5:51

Piano Sonata "1.X.1905", JW 8/19

[16]	I. Predtucha, Con moto	6:11
[17]	II. Smrt. Adagio	6:30

V mlhách "In the Mists", JW 8/22

[18]	I. Andante	3:36
[19]	II. Molto adagio	4:33
[20]	III. Andantino	3:40
[21]	IV. Presto	4:10

Radoslav Kvapil, *Steinway piano*

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Leoš Janáček (1854–1928) is often thought of as a 20th century composer, since his first success occurred in 1904 with the Brno production of his opera *Jenůfa* when the composer was 50. And it was not until *Jenůfa* had its production in Prague, leading to renewed effort from his publishers, Universal Edition of Vienna, to publicize his works, as Janáček approached the age of 62, that he gained recognition outside his own country.

Following the First World War, Janáček's inspiration sprang into fifth gear with an extraordinary sequence of final works including the operas *Kát'a Kabanová*, *The Cunning Little Vixen*, *The Makropulos Affair* and *From The House Of The Dead*, the *Sinfonietta*, *Glagolitic Mass* and the two *String Quartets*. Although the piano works of Janáček span almost all of his creative life, the works on this CD are concentrated on a relatively small period. Ten early pieces have not survived; the earliest surviving piano works date from 1880 whilst the last *Vzpomínka* (Reminiscences) was composed in 1928, not long before he died.

The 15 pieces which comprise the cycle *Po zarostlém chodníku* (*On An Overgrown Path*) were created between 1901 and 1911. Half of these (nos 1, 2, 4, 7 and 10) were composed for harmonium and were published in 1901 -2, whilst the remaining five form part one of the cycle. These were added in 1908, by which time Janáček had decided to give up most of the teaching posts that had occupied him since 1880 in order to concentrate on his career as a composer (the only such post that he retained was at the Brno Organ School, an institute that he had founded in 1881). These 1908 additions were composed for piano rather than harmonium; and five more pieces were added in 1911.

Janáček had for many years maintained an interest in Moravian folk-song and the title *On An Overgrown Path* is taken from one such song: 'The path to my mother's house is grown over with weedy clover'. In this song a young bride looks back over events and remembers places that mean so much to her. In this cycle Janáček does the same: the ten pieces that form Book One of the collection are given titles that provide clues to the evocations and memories. Some are poignant as in 'Unutterable anguish', about which he wrote 'you will sense the tears in the penultimate piece' (this was originally placed ninth in Book One). 'The premonition of certain death. During hot summer nights that angelic person lay in such deathly anguish'. The 'angelic person' was his daughter Olga who died in 1903. The morbid theme returns in the tenth piece of Book One: 'The Little Night Owl Still Calls' for in certain cultures the hoot of this bird

presages death. All is not doom and gloom however: number five 'They Chatted Like Swallows' is a lively depiction of some women gossiping at a picnic whilst number three 'Come With Us' has the air of a folk song.

The five pieces that form the second set are untitled and so doubts remain as to whether they contained personal and perhaps painful memories.

Janáček's *Piano Sonata* which bears the subtitle '1: x: 1905' was published in 1924, but was first performed much earlier in January 1906. The subtitle refers to an incident in Brno on 1 October, 1905, in which a young carpenter František Pavlik was bayoneted and killed during clashes between Czech nationalists and the German section of the population. The troubles had flared up following a demand from the Czechs to found their own university in Brno. Both sides held rallies which threatened to get out of hand and the German-run city council authorised the use of force to break up the demonstrations. It was during this period of tension that Pavlik 'who came only to protest about university teaching, was struck down by brutal murderers on the white marble steps of the Brno Guildhall'. Janáček's solidarity with the Czech demonstrators, as expressed in these emotive words, translates into a work that not only represents vividly the tense atmosphere leading up to the stand off between the nationalists and the forces of law and order, but also dejection and anger in the second movement over the waste of the loss of a young life.

The sonata originally had three movements. However at the final rehearsal the composer actually burnt the final movement in front of the astonished soloist Ludmila Tucková. It is thought that he assumed his new sonata would be less well received than two other new works by Suk and Novák that were also being premiered and was thus attempting to avoid being humiliated in public. Tucková nevertheless pressed ahead with the surviving movements and followed this with a second performance in Prague. However, Janáček once again attempted to destroy his own work, this time by throwing the manuscript into the river Vltava. Miraculously, the paper did not sink, and in any case Tucková had taken the precaution of making a copy of the work. Janáček attached titles to the surviving movements, the first being headed 'Presentiment' whilst the second movement, originally referred to as 'Elegy', was later changed to 'The Death'.

At the time of the composition of *V mlhách (In The Mists)* in 1912 Janáček was almost sixty years old but had yet to establish himself as the leading composer in Prague. It was this insecurity, coupled with his tragic

domestic life following the loss of both his children that, according to his biographer Jaroslav Vogel, led to the composition of this, his penultimate piano work.

Janáček's piano works, thanks to pioneering work from artists such as Radoslav Kvapil and Rudolf Firkusny, is now reaching ever wider audiences. As well as the *Second String Quartet 'Intimate Letters'*, some pieces, such as the second, fourth and tenth movements from the First Book of *On An Overgrown Path*, the *Allegro* movement from the Second Book, and above all, the unsettling slow movement from *In The Mists* have even achieved near cult status thanks to their use in the 1988 film *The Unbearable Lightness Of Being*.

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NOTES ON THE ARTISTS

Radoslav Kvapil is considered by many international critics to be the finest exponent of Czech piano music. He has specialised in the performance of the Czech repertoire world-wide all through his life. His knowledge and understanding of these works remains unrivalled (cf. the Grove Dictionary, the International "Who's Who in Music", the "Musicians 'Directory'", the annual British "Music Year Book", The American Biographical Institute (USA), the European Biographical Directory (Belgium).

Kvapil was born in Brno, Moravia and was taught privately from childhood by Dr. Ludvik Kundera, Janáček's successor and Director of the Janáček Academy, where Kvapil later became a graduate. In 1967-69, Radoslav Kvapil recorded Antonín Dvořák's complete piano works for the first time in history. The complete piano works by Leoš Janáček followed and those by J.V. Voříšek in 1975. A second complete Janáček came in 1989, and in 1990, the first two volumes of Bohuslav Martinů's complete piano works (reissue of these to follow). Between 1993-6, Unicorn-Kanchana released eight volumes of Radoslav Kvapil's comprehensive Anthology of Czech Piano Music containing works by A. Dvořák, B. Smetana (2), B. Martinů, J.V. Voříšek, Z. Fibich, L. Janáček and J. Suk.

He had recorded piano and chamber music works by V. Novák for ASV. Also, in 1999, he recorded two CDs on Dvořák's 1879 Bösendorfer piano, containing that composer's piano works. In 2002, he recorded the last three Piano Sonatas by V. Ullmann, and all the Sonatas for Czech Radio.

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