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EMMA

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Joe Vanek & Janáček

My father's home town of Olomouc lies on a wide, rolling plain in Moravia, midway between the opulent 19th century elegance of Brno and the bosky charms of the village of Huckvaldy in the steeply wooded Beskydy foothills. This summer, a family pilgrimage in search of roots and faded memories, was to be entwined, ironically, with research for Brian Friel's meditation on the nature of musical inspiration and private obsession.

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* COMMA

Among my father's record collection was an ancient Supraphon LP of highlights from Janáček's opera *Jenufa*, and following his untimely death in 1974, it found its way into my own expanding classical collection. During the ensuing decades the astonishingly diverse musical output of Leoš Janáček was to become increasingly central to my own musical world.

In the year 2000, a wonderful opportunity presented itself to design *The Makropulos Case*, in a production directed by Patrick Mason for Opera Zuid in the Netherlands. This is generally considered to be his most profound and mystical operatic work, expressed in a mere ninety minutes of urgent and passionately sung dialogue. At the other end of his musical spectrum is the ~~and~~ and haunting Second String Quartet - *Intimate Letters* - a work composed three years later. In a totally different musical form, it conveys the same sense of urgency and passion that this time relates directly to his personal life and the role played in it by Kamila Stösslova.

* COMMA
* PRESENTED ITSELF
* LYRICAL

Janáček's later years were passed in two contrasting homes, both now official museums. It was not until 1910 that he and his wife Zdenka moved from the large, but basic flat in Brno, to the newly built villa in the grounds of the city's organ school. His family village of Huckvaldy was to be home to him only until the age of 11 when he was sent to Brno to become a chorister. In the intervening years he stayed on his visits with a local gamekeeper and his family, and it was not until 1921, when he bought his brother's cottage, that he was to have his second home. It was here that he was to write his final work, *Intimate Letters*, and it was whilst living here that he was to die in 1928.

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Images

The Forest

A forested hillside rises from the village, dense with ancient, knarled trees, through which a road winds in lazy loops towards the castle above. It was whilst out searching on these slopes for Kamila's lost son on their fateful last visit that Janáček was to catch a chill. This underlying cause of his death (pneumonia followed by a heart attack) has been somewhat disputed depending on which biographer is read, but it adds a melancholic edge to a ramble here on a blistering summer's afternoon.

* THESE

The Vixen

In all probability his most loved opera is *The Adventures of Vixen Sharp Ears*, inspired by a cartoon series in a local newspaper. Here she crouches on a sunny rock by a bend in the forest path. He wrote this exuberant work for the sake of the forest and sadness of old age. He died four years later.

* < quotation marks >

The Pond

Tucked away at the side of the church is further evidence of the esteem in which Janáček was held in the village. This modest fountain, fashioned in the form of a lyre, is a charming marker for this local man and unique composer. In 1926 he was to be further honoured with a memorial plaque on the wall of the house of his birth.

The Cottage

Nestling in an orchard of tall cherry trees, this cottage was to be much restored and extended following its purchase and now houses an extensive museum of papers and artefacts. Amidst its exhibits are his harmonium used for composition, an inlaid writing desk and his carved music stand. For Mrs. Stösslova's last visit, he had it redecorated. The attic was converted ~~into~~ a bedroom and electricity ~~was~~ installed.

INTO

WAS

INTO +
* comma
WAS +

Mrs. Stösslova

Kamila Stösslova and Janáček met in the spa town of Luhacovice in 1917, she was 25 and married to an antique dealer. Janáček was 63. Over the following 11 years he was to write almost 600 letters to her.

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Leoš Janáček

This somewhat gaunt and forbidding statue graces the wide square directly in front of the new Janáček Opera House in Brno. It shows a very different side to his personality, most presenting him as an avuncular yet benign presence. The city also houses a Music Academy named after him and his archives are to be found in the building of the old organ school.

The Villa 1927-2003

On arrival this summer at "the villa", I found it to be undergoing a complete renovation, its contents temporarily in storage. Brian Friel's play brings past into present and the white, echoing, empty rooms seemed the ideal metaphor for this dislocated world.

+ 2 IMAGES - ONE - THE JANÁČEK AT NO ME - OR
TWO - HIM ALONE IN GARDEN +
JU'S PHOTO OF IF NOW!

VISUAL

* ^ ADD
VISUAL

EMMA — THANKS FOR COPY — TYPED UP —
NOT SURE ABOUT THE TITLE? I'LL THINK
OF AN ALTERNATIVE — WHAT DOES M.R. THINK???

ACTUALLY — ON RE-READING IT I'VE FOUND
NOTHING TO CUT (unless length is a problem??).