

Interview with Miroslav Hosek (b. 1931)

Marlen Vavrikova

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I wanted to meet **Miroslav Hosek**, a Czech oboist, since my studies at the Eastman School of Music where I discovered his *Oboe Bibliography I*. As a native of the Czech Republic I was pleasantly surprised to find such an important book to be compiled by a fellow countryman. My dream of meeting Mr. Hosek came true this winter, when I visited Olomouc. The scope of his projects is amazingly broad. In addition to *The Oboe Bibliography* he also published the *Catalogue of Czech and Slovak Authors of Oboe Music* (1969), *The Woodwind Quintet Bibliography* (1979), *Technical Studies for the Oboe* (1981), *The Introduction to New Possibilities of Oboe Playing* (1992 – in Czech), and the *School for Youngest Oboists*, Vol. 1-5 (1992) – the first and only oboe school of this kind in the Czech Republic.

Mr. Hosek graduated from the Kromeriz Conservatory in the Czech Republic in 1954, in the studio of **Prof. Ladislav Michalik**. He was a member of the Moravian Theatre for thirty-six years and for four years of the Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra in Olomouc. He taught the oboe, recorder, and accordion at music schools in Olomouc and the oboe at the Kromeriz Conservatory. He was one of the founding members of the International Double Reed Society in 1972, and published various articles in the IDRS Journal, *Hudebni Nastroje*, *Hudebni Rozhledy*, and *Opus Musicum* about such topics as his pedagogical experiences



with young oboists, reed making, Beethoven's and Martinu's concertos, the acoustics of the oboe, technical studies, new oboe techniques, and the lives of the famous Czech oboists: Hebdá, Novák, and Tancibudek. His enthusiasm and passion for music are inspirational to everybody who has an opportunity to meet him.

When and why did you decide to compile your Oboe Bibliography? How did you collect so much information and how long did it take you? What do you consider to be the hardest part of publishing an oboe bibliography?

Already at a music conservatory I started to write down titles of compositions. It was said that there are only a few concertos written for the oboe. In 1962, during my employment at the Olomouc Theatre, I spoke with Dr. Vaclav Smetacek (conductor of the Prague Symphony Orchestra FOK), who was very understanding and offered me help. He sent me music catalogs from each trip abroad. I was finding more and more addresses and writing to all of them requesting their catalogs. Hundreds of letters! Hundreds of catalogs! I also wrote hundreds of letters to leading oboists asking not only about oboe compositions, but also about their teaching experiences and methods, reeds, instruments, and everything concerning the oboe, and I also asked for their biographies. Except for China and Japan I was corresponding with the whole world.

My card catalog grew so much that I decided to transform all the titles into a book. I started to offer this manuscript to publishers, but with no results. One day I went to Leipzig to attend an international book fair. I spoke with Florian Noetzel from the Heinrichshofen Verlag who agreed to publish my *Oboen Bibliographie I*. The first edition came out in 1975 and the second one in 1984. Based on the first volume I was receiving hundreds of catalogs and lists of unpublished works from library archives in the USA and Europe. I compiled the second volume for Heinrichshofen. At that time they already changed their name to Florian Noetzel Verlag. The second volume was published in 1994 without my knowledge or any editorial corrections. Noetzel stopped corresponding with me and did not respect any of my new additions or corrections. I also did not receive any payment. I had to buy the second volume in Nuremberg, Germany after one of my colleagues from France said that he saw it in a music store there.

You invited oboists from around the world to continue on your efforts. What was the response?

The response to my first volume was great, including a book review in many European magazines and in the *Double Reed* in the USA.¹

One of your copies of the Catalogue of Czech and Slovak Authors of Oboe Music (1969) is located at the Czech Music Fund in Prague and also in the IDRS library. Does this book contain only published or also unpublished compositions?

I included both published and unpublished works that were composed before 1969 when this book was published in German as a representation of the Czech Republic abroad. The list consisted of over 500 works . . . I obtained titles of works by visiting libraries and also by writing to contemporary composers (piles of letters!).

You also collected a bibliography of works written for the woodwind quintet and English horn. What are your other bibliographical projects?

Das Blaesserquintett was a very successful book. It was intended only as one volume. I was not thinking about compiling a second volume. The English horn bibliography (Heckelphone, Shawm, etc.) is a work in progress but due to lack of interest from any publishers it has neither been finished nor published. *The Bibliography of New Techniques for the Oboe and English Horn* (after Bartolozzi) is part of a textbook, *The Introduction to New Oboe Techniques*, published by the 'Statni pedagogicke nakladatelstvi Praha' for the Academy of Musical Arts in Prague (300 copies - in Czech). Periodically, I also update my private catalog of oboe players from around the world. It contains biographical information from Philidors to contemporary players. A part of this catalog was used in the fourth

volume of my *School for Youngest Oboists*.

In your School for Youngest Oboists you used a new composition by Dr. Pavel Cotek called Miniatury. Could you tell us a little bit about this work?

When I commissioned *Miniatury* from Dr. Cotek (in my school published as *Metamorfozy*), I asked him to accommodate the level of difficulty and music material to the third volume of my oboe school. My students and I have performed this work several times. Other Czech oboists also played it on various occasions. For example, Jana Macurova in Olomouc and Mgr. Dusan Foltyn in Ostrava. Four parts of this work were mandatory repertoire at the Olomouc Oboe Competition 2000. While attending this competition I was glad to see that students enjoyed this piece very much.

Besides working with Dr. Cotek, have you asked any other composers to write a piece for you? Could you recommend a few contemporary compositions by Moravian composers to players abroad?

Yes, I did ask but nobody wrote any oboe compositions other than Dr. Cotek. Oboe colleagues Haba, Vyselak, and Vlcek wrote a few works for my method books. Miroslav Haba (cousin of the brothers Haba - famous composers of quartertone music) composed an oboe solo piece that uses 'new sounds' and is called *Papilio Machaon*. This composition is played at the Janacek University of Musical Arts in Brno and at the Music Conservatory in Kromeriz.

In our earlier conversation you mentioned your oboe etudes published in 1981, in Amsterdam. What is the scope of these studies and for what level are they intended?

These etudes are for all ages and levels. (For more information you can go to the *School for Young Oboists*, volume 4.) They do not have a strict methodical progression - each person can choose a part of a technical passage and practice a chosen section accordingly to his technical skills. I believe this etude book can serve as a good sight-reading exercise and also for practicing phrasing, legato, staccato, etc. Interested oboists of any age and technical level can find 'their' exercises and 'invent' new ways of how to practice their technique.

You teach in a music school in Olomouc. Could you tell us more about what you do there and how many students you have? How do you choose your students for your class and what instruments do they play?

I taught the oboe only part time while working full time at the Olomouc Theatre. I used to have ten to thirteen oboe students in my class. I prepared fifteen oboists for entrance exams to conservatories around the Czech Republic. By retiring from the Olomouc Theatre I also had to leave Zerotin and was moved to a smaller

school, where there were no possibilities of teaching any young oboists. These days I teach beginners to play recorders, clarinet, and accordion.

You are one of the founding members of the IDRS. Are you still a member of this organization? What are your plans for the future?

I have been a member of the IDRS since the very beginning. I am happy to see each new journal and especially happy to hear about all successes that this society has achieved – by having annual conferences and competitions for oboes and bassoons. My plans for the future are to sort through published materials about the oboe and create a bibliography of articles.

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FOOTNOTES

¹ August, 1975, no.2, vol III

Marlen Vavrikova graduated from the Janacek

Conservatory in Ostrava, Czech Republic at age 20 and earned a Master of Music degree in Oboe Performance and Literature from the Eastman School of Music in 1998. She is presently completing her DMA at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where her doctoral project is an annotated survey of oboe literature written since 1969 by Moravian composers. In July 2003, she will give the world premiere of Leon Jurica's *Sonnets for Voice and Oboe* at the University of Illinois's Contemporary Music Festival. The piece was written in January 2003 and is dedicated to Ms. Vavrikova. Her teachers have included Mgr. **Gabriel Sykora**, Mgr. **Josef Zidek**, and Drs. **Richard Killmer**, **Nancy Ambrose King**, and **Daniel Stolper**.

