

# JAN SEIDEL

## CONCERTO No. 2 FOR OBOE AND ORCHESTRA

JOSEF SHEJBAL - oboe

CZECH PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Conductor: KAREL ANČERL

The Czech composer Jan Seidel (born 1908) is one of the most prominent figures in Czechoslovak contemporary music. He did not begin life as a musician and started composing comparatively late, devoting himself to composition only after 1945. He comes from a working class family living in the Czech industrial town of Nymburk on-the-Elbe where he grew up in the socialistic atmosphere of the working class movement which certainly influenced his development as an artist. After leaving college he became an art master in a high school, and only after being convinced of his abilities, did he begin an intensive study of composition. He became a pupil of the national artist, Josef Bohuslav Foerster and later attended the lectures on quarter-tone music which were then being given at the Prague Conservatoire by the composer Alois Hába. At the Conservatoire he received a thorough technical grounding which has since proved its worth in his composing.

Jan Seidel's musical interests are manifold. Folk music in particular attracted him and during the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia he composed a work which he called „Zpěvy domova“ (Songs of My Country) consisting of several thousand Czech folk songs for which he arranged simple accompaniments.

After the liberation of Czechoslovakia Seidel's creative activity suddenly became intensified. He threw himself wholeheartedly into the development of the new cultural life not

only as a composer but also as an organizer. He became the artistic director of the nationalized gramophone industry, a post which he held until 1953, and he is a prominent member of the Union of Czechoslovak Composers. His works show him to be a bold innovator and he was one of the first composers to write successful mass songs on socialist themes. He has written several cantatas of which the most popular as well as being on the largest scale is his „Lidé, bděte“ (People, behold!), to words smuggled out of a Nazi prison on odd scraps of paper by the Czech martyr of Nazi brutality, Julius Fučík. He has also composed several orchestral and choral works as well as music for many Czech films.

Jan Seidel's second oboe concerto was composed in 1955. It is an important work as may be seen from its variety of thematic material and its ingeniously worked out form which leaves no doubt that the composer set out to do much more than merely write a virtuoso concertante work for the oboe. Various sections of the composition as for instance the waltz episode in the first movement and the passages in folk style in the second and third movements add to the atmosphere of healthy optimism which prevails throughout the concerto.

The first movement, Allegro agitato, begins with a short orchestral introduction followed by the main theme — a broad, inspiring melody. In contrast is the secondary theme which is a simple melody in dance rhythm. Not until the exposition reaches its conclusion is the solo instrument he-

ard. It then presents the main theme worked out in a variety of interesting virtuoso passages. There follows a less fully worked out episode making use of the secondary theme, after which the music returns to the main theme. Instead of the usual development section, the sudden introduction of a waltz with unusual orchestral colouring for a time takes possession of the orchestra before the other themes are worked out in what may be called a folk dance scene. Before the recapitulation there is yet another slower episode where the melodiousness of the solo oboe is attractively used. In the recapitulation some interesting counterpoint is produced by the combination of the main theme with the secondary theme which then heads up to the final climax.

The second movement is a set of variations on a tranquil melody based on one Czech folk song „Je-li pak to pravda nebo ne, že plyne dudáček po vodě“ (There's bagpiper coming down the river). In this movement Seidel creates a pastoral atmosphere and makes full use of the similarity in tone quality between the oboe and the bagpipes.

The third movement is a rondo in quick tempo in which the basic thematic material is ingeniously ornamented in passages of great virtuosity for the solo instrument. Several themes based on Czech folk dances appear in the episodes which add to the mood of carefree gaiety which brings the work to a close.

# FRANZ ANTON RÖSSLER-ROSETTI

## CONCERTO IN E FLAT MAJOR FOR TWO HORNS AND ORCHESTRA

Cadenza by VÁCLAV SMETÁČEK • MIROSLAV ŠTEFEK and VLADIMÍR KUBÁT - horns

PRAGUE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Conductor: Dr VÁCLAV SMETÁČEK

This very interesting and melodic composer creates a natural link between Haydn and Mozart. It is clear today that he belongs among the leading figures in the large category of composers in the classical style.

Rössler-Rosetti was born in about 1746 in northern Bohemia (either in Litoměřice or Mimoň). It is difficult to determine his nationality, but there are many reasons to classify him among Bohemian Germans. He originally decided on the priesthood, and as of 1767 is among the graduates of the Jesuit College in Olomouc. In 1769 he permitted his head to be shaved but refused ordination, left the priesthood and decided to devote his life to music. He

lived through years of adventurous wanderings until 1780 he obtained a post as bass viol player in the orchestra of Count Ernest Ottingen-Wallerstein in Wallerstein. A number of musicians originally from Bohemia were employed here, among them the cellist Josef Rejcha and the oboist Josef Fiala, both composers as well. From this period in Wallerstein date a number of his concertos, a form of which the Count was particularly fond. From 1785 on, Rössler held the position of conductor, and in 1789 he passed into the service of the Duke of Mecklenburg in Ludwigslust in the same position. He died at a relatively early age, in 1792.

The concerto for two French horns and orchestra in its structure follows the standard form of similar compositions of the Vienna school. Rössler remained true to this style his entire life, even in north German Ludwigslust, which had not yet been reached by the wave of Vienna classicism. What raises the work above the average is its tonal achievements. The composer has succeeded in creating a stream of emotionally-stirring music within the technical limitations of the solo parts. Its melody is rich and lively, the mood is typical for the French horn, but the whole spirit of the composition is symphonic. In it Rössler-Rosetti reveals great symphonic talent and creative power.