Volume 24

The 2026 Annual Issue

The Kapralova Society Journal

A Journal of Women in Music

Special points of interest:

Vítězslava Kaprálová

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LIVES: VÍTĚZSLAVA KAPRÁLOVÁ

Karla Hartl

This is an English translation of the original (uncut) version of the script written for a five-part radio series, produced on the occasion of Kaprálová's 110th birthday anniversary by Czech Radio 3.

Today's *Lives* will be a bit different from what the listener is used to. And it cannot be otherwise when people are not talking about themselves or about those closest to them, with whom they have lived their whole life. In this case, it will be the story of a life that I got to know only from period documents and the recorded memories of those very few who knew Vítězslava Kaprálová intimately. But the most reliable source of information will be the words of the composer herself, whether it is her diaries, notes, or correspondence with her parents, loves, and friends. Correspondence is not only a primary source of information; it is also a living document that cannot be replaced by a third-person narrative. Only in her letters will we hear Kaprálová's authentic voice—her candor, wit, thoughts; in fact, her entire character will be revealed to us. And that is why I have to give it pride of place in my narrative.

But first, let me say a few words about the composer's parents. Kaprálová was an only child so her parents played, for a very long time, a major role in her life. The family ancestry can be traced to central and southern Moravia where Kaprálová's parents were born into modest rural circumstances and large families. Kaprál was born in 1889 in the village of Určice near Prostějov, in the Haná region; Kaprálová's mother was born a year later in the village of Medlánky, which today is a suburb of Brno. Both belonged to Čapek's[1] generation that was affected by the horrors of the First World War and the collapse of established values and certitudes. All this marked Václav Kaprál with lifelong pessimism and melancholy that are reflected in his music. Indeed, it is the melancholic lyricism, rooted in the melody of Moravian folk song, in which the music of the father and the daughter interconnects.

Despite his modest background, Václav Kaprál eventually received a very decent education. Given his delicate physical constitution, his parents chose Václav from among his siblings to put through school. Kaprál first attended a secondary school in Brno but showed so much musical promise that, in the sixth grade, he transferred to Brno's organ academy, founded by Leoš Janáček, with whom he studied composition. He graduated from the academy in 1910, and the following year the authorities allowed him to open his own private music school. And Kaprál took his teaching job most responsibly and continued advancing his piano playing skills for a long time—first with Adolf Mikeš in 1919, shortly after returning from the war, and later, in the mid-twenties, with Alfred Cortot in Paris. This ensured that his private music school had an excellent reputation and a whole host of pupils.

But prior to that, in 1913, Kaprál married classically trained singer Viktoria Uhlířová, and his private school became a family business—his wife also taught there as a qualified voice teacher. Mrs. Kaprálová studied singing with Kristina Morfová, then a soloist at the National Theater in Prague. Her talent must have been quite significant, since the theater director Karel Kovařovic himself showed interest in her voice. In the end, however, she failed to show up for the audition, overcome by great stage fright and such a physical weakness that her husband, Václav Kaprál, had to take her back home to Brno.

On her birth certificate, Mrs. Kaprálová's first name is recorded as *Viktorie*, but soon after the proclamation of the independent Czechoslovak Republic, she changed it to the Czech equivalent *Vítězslava* and used this name throughout her life in correspondence as well as in official documents.

And two years after the couple's wedding, in the first month of 1915, their first and only child was born.

The first mentions of little Vitulka, as her parents lovingly called her, can be found in the

letters of Vítězslava Kaprálová Sr. to her husband, and in several of her short reminiscences that she wrote down. According to these written records, Vitulka was born at 6 p.m. on Sunday, January 24, 1915. The baby was to have steel-blue eyes and curly hair of chestnut color. Until she was six months old, she lived in her parents' house in Metodějova Street in Brno-Královo Pole, but after Václav Kaprál enlisted in the army in June 1915, she moved with her mother to Medlánky, to live with her mother's parents.

The first years of Vitulka's childhood, from September 1915 to May 1918, have been captured in some detail by Mrs. Kaprálová in the letters to her husband. For example, at the beginning of September 1915, she wrote to him:

> If you could see how big, plump, and pretty she is. Her eyes are steel blue, the cheeks red, her hair like chestnut, and the lips are as red as raspberries. She laughs all the time – if I give her toys, she will play with them contentedly – and only cries when she's hungry or sleepy. We sleep together and every now and then at night she's searching around with her hand if I am next to her, and when her little fingers find me, she cuddles up to me, and as if she wanted to give me a kiss, she opens her mouth and drools all over my face. She's such a cutie but will grow up to be a little rascal. You'll be proud of this child nevertheless, if God preserves her for us, because I sense something great hidden in her.

Indeed, Kaprálová's mother was not to be wrong about that.

In November of the same year, she shared another of her observations:

> She is a cute little rascal, so cheerful and lively that no boy can compare to her. She has two dolls, a toy bear, rattles, a bell, empty matchboxes, and who knows what else. Her favorite toy is the bell and anything that she can bang on. So she bangs on the bird cage, and the poor canary surely thinks that this is his last moment. She likes best our dog Pozor who puts his head in her lap and lets her beat him with a drumstick.

From a report to her husband from March 1916, we learn that Vitulka was a healthy, lively, downright hyperactive child: "I am unable to keep her inside the house," writes Mrs. Kaprálová to her husband, "she wants to be outside all the time and, to get out, she runs around the yard barefoot. When I take her with me for a visit, she won't stop talking. It's going to be a demanding upbringing and a lot of work with such a brainy child. I want her to be healthy and strong so that she won't succumb to the slightest blow later. She's strong like a beech tree." In another letter, from November 1917, we read that "it is quite unusual how easily Vitulka remembers words and how she can apply the expressions she has learned. She even lectures a local 6-year-old child. And the ideas that she has, if you could hear her, and when she plays with the children, they do what she does, instead of the other way around."

Unfortunately, the long separation took its toll on the couple's marriage. After Kaprál returned from the war, and especially after he met in 1920, in the choir that he led as choirmaster, his soulmate Otýlie Humlová, the marriage ceased to function completely, and in 1923 the couple divorced. They must have kept it private, as hardly anybody knew about it; in any case, they did not talk about it and continued to live in the same household, not only out of concern for the social future of their daughter, but also for the pragmatic reason that Kaprál simply could not afford to finance two households.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Kaprál devoted himself fully to teaching, first at his own private school and, beginning in 1935, at the Brno Conservatory, where he was appointed and soon tenured as professor of composition and related subjects. His teaching job at the Brno Conservatory improved the family's economic situation so that they could move from Metodějova Street in Brno-Královo Pole, from the place where their piano school was also located, to a residence in a more upscale apartment building on Wilsonova Street (now Husitská). Their simple house on Metodějova Street is no longer standing today, having been demolished to make way for a new housing development.

Kaprálová's parents were born Catholics, yet it seems that, according to a mention in one of Kaprálová's letters, they later converted to protestantism as members of the Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church. Kaprálová's mother was also attracted to anthroposophy, which was gaining some popularity in Czech artistic circles at the time; composer Alois Hába, for example, was also a follower. The esoteric spirituality of her mother irritated the daughter quite a bit—she wrote several letters to her on this subject, in which she vented her frustration rather vehemently, and I will quote from one such letter in the course of this story.

In 1934, thanks to the financial assistance of Kaprál's brother Jan, the Kaprál family built a family retreat in the village of Tři Studně in the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands. The house became Kaprálová's mother's main source of income—she rented rooms to summer vacationers who were mostly recruited from the family's circle of friends and acquaintances. Besides looking after her guests and the house, Mrs. Kaprálová also did some painting during her stays there. She was mainly self-taught but gradually achieved the level of a regional artist—four of her paintings still turn up now and then at auctions today. She felt at home in Tři Studně, and this was respected by Václav Kaprál who visited only rarely. The village also became the most beloved place for Vítězslava Kaprálová, who considered it her true home; she held on to it and the landscape of the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands in her imagination during her later exile in France.

But let's return to Kaprálová's childhood. In one of her handwritten reminiscences, Mrs. Kaprálová mentions their joint holidays at the Dražils in Velká Routka, where little Vitulka had at her disposal their whole farm. Mrs. Kaprálová describes their stays in this idyllic way:

> She talked with all the animals on the farm, said something nice to each of them and then hugged them. It soon became clear that the animals returned the affection: the cats ran to her as soon as they saw her, the dog rolled around in front of her and howled with joy – and she had to pat and stroke him. The little goats made friends with her – she seemed to

bring joy and love everywhere she went. Both adults and children from the whole village liked her, and Vitulka became the most popular person of all the guests. When I look back at the summers we stayed there, I have to admit to myself that these were moments spent in happiness. There I and Vitulenka[2] made our unforgettable excursions into the surrounding nature. What a wealth the blooming border hid for us – here I taught Vitulenka living natural history – every little bug was examined there – an interest in its life was aroused – every flower was studied. This is where her love for Him who created it all, and for all of nature, emerged. This inner awakening led Vitulka to express herself – she began to write fairy tales, short stories, and even little poems, and she also began to compose. She tried to express in tones her impressions from fairy tales, from nature, from the stories she had read. She struck a chord on the piano and listened, then tried to capture a fixed idea with a few notes – thus a small motif was created – another small pause – a new motif – its development and again more listening – until a small composition was born.

Elsewhere, Mrs. Kaprálová mentions:

In Medlánky, I had a piano that I played and sang along to. Thus Vitulka was growing up with music from the earliest childhood. She learned fifty songs from Malát's *Poklad*,[3] which she herself tapped out with her little finger on the piano after I had sung them for her. When her father came on leave from the war, he accompanied the little singer, and all family members listened to her first concert. She began learning from me the basics of piano playing at the age of six, and later, when she showed a great interest in music, her father too was giving her piano lessons. At the age of nine, she began composing small pieces and playing them to her father who wrote them down.

One of these short pieces, titled "Na dalekou cestu,"[4] Vitulka composed as a farewell present to her parents before leaving for a children's sanatorium in Smokovec, Slovakia. Many years later, as a graduate of the Brno Conservatory and in her first year at the Master School of the Prague Conservatory, Kaprálová spoke about her earliest compositions in an interview for the women's magazine *Moravanka*:

I was strumming the piano keys as soon as I could reach them, but, of course, I didn't even know musical notation. No one bothered to teach me that either. My Dad left for the war, my Mom ran the family school, so there was no time left for me, especially when it was still not clear whether I would become someone truly musical one day. I was able to recognize the tones only by ear then; and since I didn't have anything to play, I composed my own pieces from imagination. Most often I set to music the scenes I knew from the fairy tales that were read to me, mainly the witches and other ghastly beings. The collection is titled "From my earliest compositions" and was intended for private use and not for the public, although one of the little compositions was eventually published. I certainly don't value these little pieces much. I look at them as my first attempts at composition, but it does puzzle me sometimes that even back then I was able to succeed at it.

It is worth mentioning that Vitulka's parents sent this collection of piano miniatures to the Office of the President of the Republic, as the opening piece, "Po bitvě bělohorské,"[5] was dedicated to Masaryk.[6]

During her stay in the children's sanatorium in Smokovec, in the winter of 1925 and spring of 1926, Vitulka also wrote her first letters home. Her parents sent her to Smokovec, because she was rather underweight for her age and not because of a lung disease, as is often mistakenly stated in popular literature. Originally, Vitulka's stay at the sanatorium was supposed to be shorter, but it was extended by quite a few weeks when she fell ill with scarlet fever, which she contracted during her all-day stay among children.

The letters from Smokovec already reveal much about the little girl's character—her deep social empathy and lifelong love of nature. In one of her first letters, for example, we find this request: "Mommy, if you have that beanie there, please send it to me, for one poor little girl, and if you also find a scarf, send it too. But don't be cross with me!" This would not be the only such request; just a few weeks later she wrote home: "I received the dresses, but the green one is a bit torn and the new one is so short that I can't wear it. Please, Mom, could I give that green dress to one poor little girl. She is very, very poor." And Vitulka was not satisfied with just gifts, as is evidenced in Mrs. Kaprálová's further recollections: "When she entered the first grade, there was a poor, pale girl – Anina – her father had left the family and her half-blind mother had to support two children. When Vitulka found out about it, she came home and said: 'Mommy, there's a poor girl – we'll bring her home and she'll be my sister' – and Anina stayed with us until she was eleven, when she finished school." And, again, it wasn't the last time Vítězslava tried to help those in need: even in the last year of her life, when she herself had to manage on a very tight budget, she wrote a letter to her benefactor Pavel Deutsch, imploring him to provide financial assistance to the neediest of the Czech refugees—a single mother with a sick child.

But let's return to 1925. In Smokovec, Vitulka began writing short stories that she was sending to her parents. They are all about nature and attest to maturity beyond her age:

I am sitting in a clearing, listening to the song of the rustling forest. It whispers: Come, man, come to our shade, do you hear the birds singing sweetly? Come, lie down in the lush moss, listen to what mother earth is telling you. Come, observe. But man does not understand, no, he does not want to understand, he walks away indifferently and carelessly, destroying everything that comes his way. Here a little bird fell out of the nest, he catches it, puts it in his pocket and tortures it. A bug comes his way, so he tramples on it. Look, here is an anthill. He takes a stick.

In her written reminiscences, Mrs. Kaprálová also mentions Vitulka's first school years. Before she entered the first grade of the school on Slovanské náměstí[7] at the age of six, she had already read Karafiát's *Broučci*[8] and allegedly also Němcová's novel *Babička*,[9] which was to become one of her favorite books. From the very beginning, she showed a natural aptitude for learning, and, according to her mother, she did not require much preparation; it was enough for her to read the lesson before class. Even at this early age, Vitulka had already demonstrated leadership skills, soon becoming the class president, popular with both the teachers and her classmates. She liked to organize extracurricular activities, especially theater and dance numbers that she alone later accompanied on the piano. She also wrote poems and painted, but in the end, it was music that won out among her interests, so she decided to enroll in the Brno Conservatory. Not to study piano performance, as her father might have wished, but the double major of composition and conducting; she was the first girl at the Brno Conservatory who graduated from this demanding program.

According to one recollection of Mrs. Kaprálová, Václav Kaprál allegedly did not want Vítězslava to study composition, so she accompanied her daughter to take the entrance exam without his knowledge. Vítězslava passed the exam with flying colors and was accepted into the departments of professors Vilém Petrželka (composition) and Zdeněk Chalabala (conducting). —In defense of Václav Kaprál, I must add that he would not have objected to his daughter studying at the Conservatory had she chosen piano performance as her major; after all, to whom else would he bequeath the family piano school? But he saw her choice from a pragmatic point of view: the prospect, that a woman could succeed or directly make a living by composing and conducting, seemed simply impossible at the time. At the very least, one could expect much prejudice and many obstacles on her way to a truly professional career in either field. But once she was accepted into the program, he was very supportive; in fact, throughout his life he defended and promoted her music also in his role of a self-proclaimed agent who represented her interests in negotiations with publishers.

Mrs. Kaprálová mentions in her written memoirs that Vítězslava's teacher of composition, Vilém Petrželka, initially suspected that it was her father who did her school work, but during the first year Kaprálová convinced him that her talent was truly extraordinary. She never warmed up to him, however, and did not have much respect for his teaching, in opposite to Vítězslav Novák, her teacher of composition at the Prague Academy.

Mrs. Kaprálová describes Vítězslava's studies at the Brno Conservatory as follows:

> Our life settled into a regular routine. My husband devoted his time to teaching, I looked after our household, and Vitulka was studying at the conservatory. Our evenings were spent in sharing recollections of our daily experiences. Everyone talked about what the day had brought them, and Vitulka in particular had to tell her Dad what happened at school – that was what interested us both the most. The topic was then broadened to include other interests of public musical life – the works that had been recently performed were subjected to a critique – which composition was liked best and how it was interpreted. Finally, the score was found in the bookcase and subjected to an analysis: the first theme and the second, a complete overview of all movements, and then followed a four-hand playing of some sonata. Vitulka, when she could not measure up to her Dad technically, did not fall off the pace – she kept up with him and what she could not play she skimmed over and carried on regardless. Their performance then ended with Vitulka's victorious laughter that she swam across the treacherous currents from the start to the finish line.

Kaprálová studied at the Brno Conservatory for five years, from 1930 to 1935. The demanding double major program included subjects such as harmony, which she studied with Max Koblížek and Jaroslav Kvapil; instrumentation, in which she was guided by the composer Osvald Chlubna; and composition, which was taught by Vilém Petrželka. As to conducting, Zdeněk Chalabala's orchestral lessons were complemented by choral conducting with Vilém Steinman. Kaprálová also studied piano performance with Anna Holubová, piano accompaniment with Jaroslav Ušák, music history with Gracian Černušák, and aesthetics with Ludvík Kundera. And in her final year, she was able to consult about orchestration her mentor and friend Theodor Schaefer who in 1934 joined the faculty at Kaprál's piano school, later becoming professor of composition at the Brno Academy.

Kaprálová enrolled in the composition class with four classmates: Otto Lustig, Hanuš Weigl, František Vrána, and Ota Vach, but she alone graduated from the program in the prescribed five years. Lustig and Weigl dropped out of the program one after the other; Ota Vach, who simultaneously studied law, fell ill during the second half of the first year, and did not return for the second year. Three years older than Vítězslava, he was her first love. Although they eventually grew apart, they remained lifelong friends, and it was Vach who arranged for Kaprálová's remains to be cremated in Paris and brought her ashes home to her parents after the war. The letters that he sent to Vítězslava in February and March 1931 from the Smokovec sanatorium in Slovakia, where Kaprálová had once spent several months as a ten-year-old, show how much she meant to him then and how tender that love was. But their love relationship was never consummated and eventually also suffered from his lack of interest in her music and his failure to support her artistic goals. I suspect that he never realized how remarkable her talent was.

Kaprálová experienced her first love almost painfully, yet it also inspired her, starting with her first song cycle. It was originally planned as a cycle of three songs, but she eventually composed only two—the first and the last. The songs are also worth mentioning because of their lyrics: it is conceivable that in these songs Kaprálová set her own poems to music. She was only sixteen years old at the time. The texts are melancholic and represent her early poetry. Her later poems are in free verse and much less romantic; yet this early poetry is worth quoting:

> I. Yesterday two people met
> to give each other their hearts.
> The cruel city watched them,
> saw them take each other's hand.
> The love's wound bloomed
> with the sadnesses of today

and unspoken doubts.

II. And more than the days their love had known
it was a brief night that brought them together.
This was the saddest moment of all,
her eyes grew dark in silence.
Are you only a passing passion,
did you come just to inflame my heart
to a white glow?

III. When one day you will ask
why I don't ask you about your love
why I don't ask Do you love me?
But then you suddenly realize
the heaviness of my heart and fate
and that you are my light, my air, my earth,
and like the thicket branches fused with the underwood
I meld into you in my dream.
So silently I am yours. (Translation L. Hatrick)

Her second opus, *Smuteční pochod*[10] for piano, which Kaprálová composed in January 1932, is probably also related to this relationship. And a year later, she dedicates another song cycle to Vach, this time the four songs *Jiskry z popele*,[11] set to melancholic stanzas written by Bohdan Jelínek to whose poetry she was introduced by Vach. He later recalled that "Jiskry z popele was her response to my accidental remark that in the feverish effort to cleanse myself of my past, I had burned my youthful poetic creations, and from what was left I gave Vitka only a notebook with motifs and Jelínek's poems."[12] That Kaprálová considered the opus 5 songs highly private is evidenced by the fact that the cycle, although beautiful, was never performed during her lifetime.

In the second year at the conservatory, Kaprálová also composed her first chamber music for violin and piano—*Legend* and *Burlesque*.[13] The latter piece also marked her first publishing success: in 1933, it was published by Oldřich Pazdírek in Brno. Her first success, but not the last: others were to follow . . .

Part II

During her studies at the Brno Conservatory, Kaprálová composed some truly remarkable compositions. Whether it was her song cycles op. 4 and 5, *Sonata Appassionata*, or the neo-romantic Piano Concerto in D Minor with which she graduated, in Vítězslava Kaprálová the Czech Music of the 1930s gained a voice that could not be ignored. The piano concerto is also the first composition Kaprálová mentions in her correspondence, so we can get a glimpse of the preparations for the concerto's first performance that was to take place in Brno on June 17, 1935. Four days before the premiere, she wrote a letter to Ota Vach, in which she apologizes that they cannot see each other that week, because "the concert is on Monday and, as a result, I must now have several hours of orchestral rehearsals every day (it was all left to the last minute)." "You were never interested in my music," she scolds him in another letter. That is true. Despite Kaprálová being the love of Vach's life, he never understood her well; more importantly, he failed to recognize her exceptional talent and dismissed her compositions as mere student works.

Yet, someone else followed Kaprálová's musical development with great interest and respect from her very first attempts at composition—the musicologist Vladimír Helfert, Kaprál's close friend. In 1936, he even mentioned Kaprálová in his groundbreaking study *Modern Czech Music*[14] as one of the biggest hopes that the youngest generation of Czech composers would offer. On the day of the premiere of her concerto, he encouraged her with a beautiful letter that deeply impressed her, and his advice became her life and artistic credo. That letter is worth quoting from:

> Dear Miss Vitulka,
> Today is a day particularly significant for your entire life. You are meeting the public as a mature, accomplished artist, as well as a professional interpreter. . . . I still have one of your childhood compositions – your waltz. I was already intrigued then by the freshness and wealth of your ideas. And now you are graduating! How the years fly by! Just think about it: from a waltz to a concerto! How much life, how much of an inner, beautiful development is in it. How much your soul grew in those years, how rich it has become! —And so I wish you today that all that beauty you have garnered inside by now will bear abundant fruit. But please also accept from me a few sincere words. There's no need to write about your remarkable talent. Yet, keep in mind, please, that a talent, however original, is not everything; that it is imperative to cultivate that talent in order to create something permanent and great. In other words: that one must work hard and improve oneself technically to overcome all the possible challenges posed by the complexity of art. Do not be misled by alluring voices of those who say that it is not necessary to know this or that, that one just needs to write whatever comes to mind. Everywhere, in every field of human endeavor, it is not only talent that is needed, but also knowledge. —You must always pursue the ideal of truth and artistic profundity. And now we've come to the second thing: integrity. Dear Miss Vitulka, this is an enormously important thing! To be morally authentic in your art (and in life)! Perhaps today you do not yet understand the significance of these words. But one day life will knock on your soul and the devil-seducer will place before you all those old lures and enticements to lead you astray from the true path of art. You may then find it hard to resist your temptation. Everybody has to face theirs at some point in their life. But these are the very internal struggles without which one cannot live a rich inner life; the moments that reveal one's character and temperament – not to give in to temptation, to soldier on, to be faithful to the ideals of beauty and truth. This often requires sacrifice and great courage. Without them, however, there is not great art. For this journey, I wish you, on this day, a lot of mental strength for the rest of your life!

An echo of these words will be heard in Kaprálová's later correspondence with Ota Vach. Vach was a pragmatist who did not

believe one could ever make a living from serious music, and so he tried to steer her, without success one might add, toward popular, commercial music. In one of her letters, Kaprálová reacted to this: "Even if the times work against me, if everything tries to stop me, nothing will uproot me and lead me astray from my path. I don't care about your 'practical ends,' they are not for me and I would not consider them, as no truly committed musician would. Such a musician is too idealistic – almost naïve – yet courageous."[15]

But let's return for a moment to the premiere of the piano concerto. The soloist was Prof. Ludvík Kundera, the orchestra, conducted by Kaprálová, was a student orchestra reinforced by the faculty and alumni. The performance of the concerto[16] was a great success, winning Kaprálová her first major recognition, the František Neumann Prize,[17] awarded for the best composition and performance by a Brno Conservatory graduate. It was the first, but certainly not the last prize she would win.

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"On Monday, I'm leaving for Prague with my daughter who wants to study with Novák and Talich at the Master School,"[18] writes Václav Kaprál to his friend and colleague, composer Emil Axman, on September 24, 1935. Thanks to the dating, we can determine the exact date of Kaprálová's arrival in Prague: it was on September 30, 1935. And she did not arrive empty-handed: in the five years of her studies at the Brno Conservatory, she gained a solid foundation in composition and conducting, as well as in piano performance. Her catalog from the 'Brno period' is already respectable: several song cycles, a song for voice and instrumental quintet, two pieces for violin and piano, a piano suite, and, above all, the remarkable *Sonata Appassionata* with which Kaprálová significantly enriched the Czech sonata literature at the age of eighteen. And, finally, the neo-romantic piano concerto with which she graduated. The concerto and Kaprálová's highly competent performance at the premiere earned her respect from the public and critics alike.

In Prague, Kaprálová stayed in Střešovice, at 33 Cukrovarnická Street, where her uncle and aunt, Antonín and Leopolda Uhlíř, lived with cousins Věra and Kamil. Kaprálová had her own room in the villa from which she wrote four days later, on October 4, 1935, a letter to her mother and 'Teoš' Schaefer, a friend and mentor who taught at Kaprál's family's music school:

> Dad will tell you how it went with Talich, and you already know how it turned out with the room. But now I have it much nicer here. Yesterday, they hung curtains, brought in the piano, a carpet, a washbasin, and it is now much different from what Dad will remember. The only thing missing, and I am going to ask Polda for it, is a framed picture. I sleep well here, the bed is wide and well sprung. The first night I felt itchy all over, but that was from fatigue. I have a view of St. Norbert church, and a carousel below it plays for me all day long "Cikánko ty krásná."[19]

The letter also mentions her first school assignment—passacaglia, a first among several musical forms covered in the academic syllabus that Kaprálová had to master at the very beginning of her two-year graduate studies with Vítězslav Novák. Novák required that his students learn counterpoint, but once they satisfied the program's mandatory requirements, he let them work freely on their own compositions, which they then presented to him in class for comments. Kaprálová at first struggled a bit with this contrapuntal form. She initially composed it for string quartet at Novák's suggestion, but later, also at his suggestion, she substituted piano for the strings. Even the piano version of the passacaglia underwent several changes before Kaprálová won Novák's approval for her unconventional and witty treatment of the form. She titled it *Grotesque Passacaglia*, sent it to a recently announced *Tempo* competition[20]—and won it. This gave her much satisfaction and freed her of the initial uncertainty about whether she would be able to succeed at the Master School.

In her letters home from October 1935, Kaprálová also describes her busy daily schedule that included both the academic and the extracurricular activities. The graduate program at the Master School included subjects such as Composition, Musical form and analysis, Conducting exercises, and Problematics of meter changes; she studied the latter in relation to the score of Igor Stravinsky's ballet *Petrushka*. Stravinsky's work made a huge impression on Kaprálová, and echoes of it can be found in several of her compositions, particularly in *Suita rustica*.

And then there was the rich extracurricular program—as a student, she was allowed to attend rehearsals of orchestral concerts, which she then reviewed in letters home. For example, in her letter dated 12 October 1935 she writes:

> I didn't go to the Dvořák concert because, first, the tickets were too expensive, and, second, they were sold out, which is a more compelling reason; but mainly because I went to rehearsals and attended the final rehearsal. It is an adorable thing, but I find it more funny than sacred, because on one hand, Dvořák is storming in the trombones as if they were possessed by demons, and, on the other hand, he's chirping with the angels in the strings so childishly that – well, that it was sweet.

Dvořák's composition so described was his—*Requiem*.

On December 26, 1935, Kaprálová sent a letter to Hanuš Weigl, her former classmate from the Brno Conservatory, in which she gives a behind-the-scenes description of Prague's musical milieu, as perceived by a newcomer student of the Prague Conservatory Master School:

> Here in Prague, one must really fight one's way to get noticed by the public. For instance, you can't get to the conductor's stand unless you pay 5,000 Kč[21] in advance, and even more in the case of composition. Music by Smetana, Dvořák, Beethoven, etc., thrives here but not a single composition by a young person has been showcased in the last three years. They barely allow graduation works, despite the government regulations in place to encourage their performance. So it is downright hopeless here; in Brno, there's at least the Club of Moravian Composers that in-

> cludes many new works. Prague has "Přítomnost," of which I am a member, but the past reigns there, led by Novák, Suk, and such; the only exception is Hába, the quartertoner.[22] There's nothing happening in the theater either. The cheapest ticket (standing only) is 8 Kč and so it is no wonder that they can barely fill half of the hall (and that hall is not even as big as our auditorium). Well, you only hear me whining, don't you, and yet I fear the day when I will have to leave this place. I truly love it here. I live in Ořechovka,[23] have a lovely room, and peace and quiet for composing that I completely lacked in Brno.

In March 1936 she reported home on the state of her finances, which gives us an idea about the resources she had at her disposal:

> As to the question of finances, they are not doing well, I'm afraid. I have no clue how it happened, but here you have it: 140 Kč—the room, 80 Kč—piano rental, 28—coal, 20—Faninka,[24] 8 Kč—pharmacy, 10 Kč—theatre, 14 Kč—repair of shoes, 10 Kč—admission to the exhibition grounds, 20 Kč—concert tickets, 465—Polda.[25] In total, 795 Kč. Well! And a fiver fell victim to various coat checks, etc., so I already had to borrow 5 Kč. My second shoes have been at the shoemaker for a whole week, they chose to get torn just now! So there's no other way, but you will have to send me something, at least 50 crowns.

One of the best compositions from Kaprálová's 'Prague period' is her string quartet whose first movement she sketched during the summer just prior to commencing her graduate studies at the Prague Conservatory. On March 4, 1936, she wrote home with her typical candor about the consultations with Novák concerning the quartet, specifically the variations in the third movement:

> In the morning I wrote the theme of the variations for Novák. I will jot it down for you somewhere. And while I am at it, today in class he was correcting them. He left them as they were, including the first variation, only corrected a note here and there, voicing his disapproval with the usual "carelessness," "willfulness" (woah!), etc. He said that he also wanted to look at the second movement again, that he was already thinking about it. Well, he'd better not touch it. I thought that the theme was banal to the point that I felt embarrassed about it, but apparently even an ordinary C major seems modern to Novák.

And her paraphrase of Novák's opinion of Foerster's opera *Bloud*,[26] which was performed at the National Theatre at the time, is also delightful:

> Then I asked him what he thought of *Bloud*. He got restless, and – that's a very delicate question. But I insisted, "Sure, sure, but overall, what do you think about it?" "Well, you see, you see, that's difficult. You know that I have nothing personal against anyone ever, that even if he were a drunkard, a scoundrel, a rogue, but wrote good music, I'd say 'Yes, I like it,' you see, you see?" Then after much pressure he blurted out that the thing has no contrast, that Foerster lacks the superlative in life, and that never-ending asceticism of his . . . well, in short, he didn't go and isn't going to see *Bloud*. We parted most cordially and next time in class he will whine about my carelessness, willfulness, etc.

In May 1936, as her first year at the Prague Conservatory was coming to a close, Kaprálová also managed to pass a state examination in piano performance, officially becoming a qualified piano teacher. She took the exam at the request of her father; she herself had no intention to make a living as a teacher but wasn't prepared to admit this to Kaprál as yet. In any case, it was time to start thinking about a composition with which she would graduate. Kaprálová's inclination had always been toward vocal works. Already during her studies at the Brno Conservatory, she had become captivated by the storyline of *Lesná panna*,[27] a ballad by Slovak poet Ľudmila Podjavorinská. It is a tale about a maiden who, born as an unwanted daughter instead of an expected male heir, turns against the human race and joins the forest spirits to live as one them. Kaprálová wanted to set the poem to music as a cantata with a large cast—soli, mixed chorus, large orchestra, and a narrator—but first needed to practice writing for choir, since choruses were to be the heart and soul of the composition. In the end she did not graduate with the cantata, although she did return to it a year later in Paris. Instead, it was *Military Sinfonietta* that became Kaprálová's graduation work and that was to bring the composer her first international recognition.

Kaprálová sketched the first theme of her sinfonietta at the end of May 1936, and she completed the composition in January 1937, simultaneously working on the orchestration about which she consulted with both Novák and Schaefer. Some of these discussions have been preserved in writing in the autograph sketches. The sinfonietta underwent several major changes during its development, and we also find the record of those in Kaprálová's letters home. For example, on November 3, 1936, she wrote:

> In Novák's class it was fun, but with a bad ending. I have to redo the sinfonietta, compose a completely new opening, and insert a slow inter-movement. But he said, "You know, if I did not have so much confidence in you and in this work, which has, among other things, such a great energy, I would leave it, but I want you to shake off all that excess and learn to compose with more economy." Well, he means well, but it will be so much work.

Yet she was immensely proud when Novák praised the "firm, vigorous expression" of her composition in which—in his words—"one won't find any traces of femininity"; that she expresses herself in "a manly and determined manner that few lads can do." While this is hardly surprising coming from Novák, who was a child of his time, it will disappoint those who consider Kaprálová a feminist. On the contrary, she seems to have succumbed to the general opinion, so widespread in her profession, that women are not gifted with creative genius, that

their music generally does not compare to that of their male colleagues, and that there is a difference between women's and men's music. I suspect that these prejudices have not been completely eradicated, otherwise women's music would be heard in the concert halls more often and their names would appear in music history textbooks in far greater numbers.

The *Military Sinfonietta*'s orchestration was officially completed in February 1937, although Kaprálová made a few additional changes to the instrumentation at the turn of March and April, in consultation with Novák. At about the same time she also wrote home the great news: Novák recommended her sinfonietta to the attention of the Women's National Council for their annual gala concert. The Council decided to program that year an orchestral piece by a woman composer from the youngest generation, and so the Chair of the Council, Senator Františka Plamínková, asked Novák which one of his female students he would recommend as the most talented—and Kaprálová's name came up first. Kaprálová also saw this as a great opportunity to conduct an orchestra again, but in this regard she ran into a stone wall. Plamínková had been counting on the collaboration of Václav Talich, principal conductor of the Czech Philharmonic, and did not wish to consider any conducting engagement for a former student of his. While Kaprálová did end up conducting her piece at the gala evening of the Women's National Council, it was under rather dramatic circumstances that will be mentioned in some detail later.

Since the negotiations with the Women's National Council regarding the premiere of her sinfonietta seemed stalled, Kaprálová began to look for another potential presenter. She offered the work's first performance to Czech Radio where the head of the music department was the composer and conductor Karel Boleslav Jirák. She met with Jirák a few times to discuss the matter, and even though nothing came of it in the end, it was a beginning of Kaprálová's collaboration with Jirák, which proved to be beneficial on more than one occasion in the future. At one of their meetings Kaprálová also confided in him about her personal plans—at the time she was considering postgraduate studies in Vienna with Weingartner. The reason for her choice may have been practical, given the geographic proximity of Vienna and Brno. But Jirák was vehemently against it. "He told me," Kaprálová wrote to her parents in April 1937, "that I would gain absolutely zilch there, both from the city and Weingartner. He definitely recommended Paris to me, that while there might not be anyone outstanding to teach conducting, it would surely be enough; and, most importantly, Paris would truly broaden my horizons." Jirák's recommendation did make sense, although he was wrong about one thing. Kaprálová was incredibly lucky that during the time she was studying at the École normale de musique, a private conservatory co-founded by Alfred Cortot and Auguste Mangeot, her teacher was Charles Munch, one of the best conductors of the time.

In Kaprálová's letter to her father, dated 9 April 1937, we also have a record of one, very significant, meeting for Kaprálová—with Bohuslav Martinů:

> At a dinner in Metro, I met Martinů, and so Vavrdová[28] introduced us; and although there were a lot of women who were clinging to him, he only talked to me, about everything I had done so far. He asked me to send him (via Vavrdová) some of my things, along with an exact list of my compositions, and that he'll have them performed in Paris. He looked at the songs and said nothing. He's sending you his regards, and so is everybody else.

The fate of the premiere of Kaprálová's *Military Sinfonietta*—whether it would be presented in Lucerna Palace by the Women's National Council, or on the radio—was resolved at the beginning of May 1937. Kaprálová decided in favor of Lucerna. The gala evening was to be held under the auspices and in the presence of President Edvard Beneš, and Novák was teasing her: "Imagine what happens when he calls you and, after such a monumental thing, a girl shows up, and he will say, so where is he, where is he?" "He (Novák) is so good to me," she wrote home: "Today we were alone in class, so I played for him the second prelude, and he: 'Well, you know, there's nothing to correct here anymore, these are finished pieces, and . . . and . . . well, it'd be difficult,' and closed the cover." The finished pieces in question were the four preludes for piano that Kaprálová later titled *April Preludes*; to this day they remain her most often performed and recorded piano composition.

In May 1937, Kaprálová wrote to Václav Kaprál:

> I am not surprised that you feel depressed in that beauty outside, because, admit it to yourself, spring is the most annoying time of the year for our temperaments. I just don't understand how you can complain, you, who has Helfert and that other "someone." What should I, poor thing, say, when I am mentally so lonesome. —Vavrdová rehearsed your Lullabies with me, and, you know – without laying it on thick – for me, you are our greatest living composer. Yesterday I poked at your Bucolica[29] with a pencil out of pure envy, knowing that I won't be able to write such a "majstr-štick"[30] in a hundred years.

In June, Kaprálová made the ultimate decision not to return after her graduation to Brno, where her father wanted to entrust her with running the family music school, but to further advance her studies, this time abroad, at the École normale de musique, where she wanted to pursue the double major of composition and conducting. She spent the first week of June collecting all the documents that she needed for her application for a French Government scholarship, but there was one major obstacle: Kaprálová was required to take a French language proficiency test, which she would not have passed at the time. What helped her in the end was the popularity and respect that she had enjoyed among the faculty at the Prague Conservatory.

"Darlings," she wrote to her parents on June 9, 1937, "first of all, let's take a deep breath. What a chase this has been!," and she continued:

> And the money that all those stamps and the medical certificate cost, when I couldn't get it from the Krombholz Foundation in one day.[31] Everybody was telling me that it would take about 2–3 days, so I

> decided to see the first doctor I ran into. The French language certificate was even bigger fun. Vavrdová mentioned to me that Dr. Štěpán knows the chairman of the committee, Dr. Fichelle,[32] (the French exam was held two weeks ago), and so I went to see him. I wanted to ask him to give me the chairman's address and also put in a good word for me so that my exam could be postponed till the fall. At least that was the plan.

(Václav Štěpán was Kaprálová's teacher at the Master School; as a concert pianist, he greatly admired her piano music.)

> Well, Štěpán immediately sat down and wrote such a letter that when I went to see director Fichelle, he didn't even say a word to me and issued a certificate about the excellent state of my French; basically he gave me the same report that those who passed the exam with distinction received. Isn't that Štěpán a darling? So my reports are all excellent. I was also very pleasantly surprised by Talich who wrote a nice letter of recommendation; he also suggested that I pay close attention to the situation, and, should things get complicated, to give him a call, and he would speak to the Minister whom he knows well.

A week later Kaprálová and her friend, soprano Jarmila Vavrdová, premiered the composer's new song, *Sbohem a šáteček* (*Waving Farewell*) at Victoria College.[33] *Waving Farewell* is a composition that occupies the most important place not only in Kaprálová's song catalogue but it is also one of the most valuable Czech art songs of the twentieth century. Kaprálová composed it in the last days of her studies at the Prague Conservatory (she noted it in her diary with the date 3 June 1937). Vítězslav Nezval's text, which Kaprálová set to music in this song, was not chosen randomly: the lyrics captured the composer's feelings about her upcoming farewell—to her studies, to the "most beautiful city of Prague" to which the song was dedicated, to her teacher Vítězslav Novák whom she learned to cherish and whose judgment she trusted. She showed him the song during their penultimate class (on June 9, 1937, according to her diary), and was overjoyed by his comment that in this song she achieved a genuine operatic style. "He couldn't have said anything better," she noted in her diary. The motif of a falling major second on the word "sbohem" (goodbye) permeates the music and emerges again and again as the basic structural element as well as the message of this magnificent song.

And with *Waving Farewell* Kaprálová's 'Prague period' was brought to a close. During her two-year stay in Prague, Kaprálová was able to expand her catalog with a number of important works: a string quartet, opus 9 piano pieces, song cycles *Jablko s klína* (*Apple from the Lap*) and *Navždy* (*Forever*), songs *Smutný večer* (*Sad Evening*) and *Waving Farewell*, *April Preludes*, and *Military Sinfonietta*. With the sinfonietta, Kaprálová won the Smetana Jubilee Foundation Prize (she shared it with Pavel Haas who received it for his opera *Šarlatán*), as the first woman composer to do so in the foundation's history. And contrary to what she had written to her friend Hanuš Weigl about a year earlier, it was Prague platforms of contemporary music that programmed all of her new works and, with a single exception, always as a world premiere.

Part III

Kaprálová arrived in Paris on October 28, 1937. She traveled with her classmate from the Prague Conservatory, cellist František Smetana, who was to study at the École normale with Pierre Fournier. Smetana was reasonably proficient in French, so Kaprálová hoped to rely on him as her guide during the first days in Paris. But it wasn't to be: Smetana was traveling in another carriage which was disconnected from the train during the night, and, as a result, Kaprálová found herself without a guide. Yet luck worked in her favor, as she reported home upon her arrival:

> In my car I traveled with a Hungarian – a great gentleman who looked after me; he took me for snacks, dinner, breakfast, so I had only the lunch to take care of. We conversed in German the whole time, and how good I was at it! It was a smoking car, but he didn't smoke, so the ride was pleasant and, by and large, I endured the journey perfectly, without any fatigue. . . . So we rode in peace and quiet all the way to Strasbourg, where even in our sleep we felt that the train was shunting back and forth for about an hour, but we didn't expect that when I woke up in the morning, my colleague Smetana and the third-class car would be gone. Only the second-class car continues from there, the third is disconnected. So here I am, standing in Paris at last, alone, because I don't even know Smetana's address. But that Hungarian was so kind (he considered it a matter of course) that he took me here in a taxi and helped me fill out all sorts of forms that I wouldn't have known how to do. Well, the silliest tend to be the luckiest!

As it happened, her benefactor took her to Le Foyer, a student residence in the Latin Quarter, which is still at the same location and serves the same function today. Kaprálová was only given emergency accommodations for a week, because the residence was otherwise fully booked, so she had to look immediately for another place to stay. Fortunately, she found it just a few blocks away at 1, rue de Médicis, in a corner apartment building opposite the entrance to the Senate and the Luxembourg Gardens. She rented a small but nicely furnished room on the top floor with a balcony from which she had a view of the surrounding area. Not far from here was also the church of St-Étienne-du-Mont that was to play a role in Kaprálová's life. The building on the Médicis street belonged to the Betz family. Kaprálová probably wasn't aware that her landlady's husband, Maurice Betz, was a French novelist, remembered today as a translator of Rilke. She paid about 450 francs for the apartment; the rest of her scholarship, which amounted to 1,500 francs per month, was more or less spent on food. She sometimes dined at Le Foyer, where there was a student canteen, but more often at Madame Da Rosa's, the landlady of Líba Houžvičková, a friend

she knew from Brno. The two soon became inseparable. Líba studied French and could therefore be helpful to Kaprálová, especially during her first months in Paris.

And two days after Kaprálová's arrival, on October 30, 1937, she and Martinů met at Le Dôme, a café on boulevard du Montparnasse and a meeting place of some of the most important artists of the time. Martinů immediately began to introduce his young colleague to the local artist community, mainly to the musicians and composers associated with the contemporary music society known as La Société Triton.

Triton was founded in 1932 by composer Pierre-Octave Ferroud as a platform for contemporary composers based in Paris.[34] The society organized seven to twelve concerts a year, with their home base at the École normale de musique. During the thirties, Ferroud traveled around Europe to establish collaboration with composers from different countries; their repertoire was performed at Triton, and, vice versa, the local music societies then presented contemporary French music. He also visited Prague where he established contact mainly with the composers associated with the Mánes group.[35]

And on November 3, 1937, Martinů accompanied Kaprálová to the École normale to assist her with her enrollment in the conservatory. She eventually registered for the conducting course alone, because the renowned pedagogue Nadia Boulanger was only offering composition in combination with instrumentation, two demanding courses that could not be studied separately. And so "Martinů and I agreed that when I learn some French, we would arrange for a meeting and ask her to let me audit the course but nothing more," Kaprálová wrote home on November 4, 1937. "So today I attended my first class," she continued,

> and it took me quite a while to find it. Everybody was sending me to different doors, until Monsieur Directeur Général saw me, grabbed my hand and took me there. . . . Mr. Munch didn't remember me, of course, so I sat there timidly without a word, while he was explaining something in French. When the class was over, I gave him the letter I had previously prepared (Líba translated it, Madame Da Rosa, her landlady, corrected it), and asked him to be kind enough to read it, which he did. At that moment I was back in the game, because we started in German, and: "So, you famous person, what else should I teach you?" I told him that there's still so much to learn, and so we went through the score of the sinfonietta (—he stayed with me after class for about 45 minutes, although he had an orchestra rehearsal and the other colleagues had to wait). He really liked it and my gestures too. Next time we will all be practicing with the score. If only they could also perform it here (he's the conductor of the Paris Philharmonic and a wonderful person). Tomorrow I am going with Martinů to see Šafránek[36] at the legation, supposedly to make new acquaintances and – "to make you a bit famous in Paris." (He knows everyone here.)

From the very beginning, Martinů was Kaprálová's main and very generous source of contacts. In the spring of 1938, he connected her with the owner and editor of the Parisian publishing house La Sirène éditions musicales[37] that later published Kaprálová's piano variations *Variations sur le carillon de l'église St-Étienne-du-Mont*. In June 1938, he entrusted her with conducting his harpsichord concerto and then accompanied her to London for the festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music (more about that is yet to come). He took great interest in her music and encouraged her to consult with him about her new compositions. His influence on Kaprálová's music has been largely overestimated, however, as the music of Igor Stravinsky had a stronger influence on her and, what is often completely ignored, so had the music of her father, Václav Kaprál.

Not only did Martinů hold Kaprálová's music in high esteem, but he was also captivated by her energetic, charismatic personality. It was more or less predictable that their original relationship of two colleagues—albeit the older one was also playing the role of a mentor—would quickly turn into a much more personal connection. Kaprálová was not only exceptionally musically gifted, but she was also intelligent, full of life, and passionate about her field of study. They understood each other well because they shared the same passion for music and had cultural context in common; but what brought them even closer together was the threat looming over their little republic—with all of this Martinů's wife Charlotte just could not compete. This is yet to come, however; right now it is the beginning of November 1937 and Kaprálová writes home:

> It's 10 o'clock and I, according to a French custom, am getting up. Yesterday I attended a concert at Triton, where they played Honegger, Bartók, and someone else whose name I can't remember. We went to meet with them after the concert (which seems to be another custom here), and Šafránek introduced me to a lot of people, among whom I remember meeting Honegger, Milhaud, Flor. Schmitt; the other names have slipped my mind. Schmitt was very kind to me, and so were the others; they said that it was very nice that I write, and I thought 'and why not, you Hottentots,' and limited my conversation to "oui" and "enchantée." . . . I've already received the scholarship of 1,500. I will barely manage with it, given the travel home. I am departing on Sunday,[38] so figure it out when I arrive in Brno. Martinů is going to Nice for two months on Monday. I am annoyed with him; what kind of order is this, leaving me here all alone.

She left Paris on November 15, returning for two weeks to Czechoslovakia, where she was to conduct the premiere of her *Military Sinfonietta* on November 26, 1937, in the Lucerna Palace in Prague. She first headed to Brno to see her parents, arriving there on November 17. The following day she wrote a letter to Karel Boleslav Jirák, inviting him to her concert. She did not suspect that in just a few days she would have to contact him again, this time about his replacement for Václav Talich who cancelled his participation three days before the concert (on November 23). That caused a dramatically tense situation, which at one point seemed to put the concert in jeopardy and was a stressful psychological test for all involved. Fortunately,

Jirák agreed to take over Talich's role almost immediately, undoubtedly owing to Kaprálová's prompt action, and so the event was saved.

It is admirable how Kaprálová managed to stay calm and focus solely on her upcoming performance under such circumstances. She had only two rehearsals with the Czech Philharmonic at her disposal: the first on Thursday, November 25; and the second on the day of the concert, on Friday, November 26, 1937. According to the only surviving photo documentation related to the event, one of the rehearsals took place in the Smetana Hall at the Municipal House. Kaprálová later noted in her diary: "The first rehearsal quite good. The second rehearsal on Friday very successful, members of the orchestra congratulate." And on November 29, 1937, she wrote home already from Paris:

> I am sitting in my room with Dezik (the dog) next to me, totally exhausted and glad that it's over. Not so much the concert, that could be repeated, but the journey, the running around, arguing with Mme. Plamínková, etcetera. Don't forget to send me all the reviews, especially those in German. I am still infatuated with Mr. President and at the same time desperate that I won't see him any time soon. So, to describe to you and especially to Dad how it all went, I repeat: when the usher took me in to see him, he was cornered by a secretary of the Women's Council, who was pestering him about some report or other. When she finished, Plamínková took me by the shoulder and introduced me: "Here, may I present to you, Mr. President, our composer and conductor." Mr. President bowed to me and I said to him: "Mr. President, I don't know what to say, except that today I am on cloud nine." He laughed, shook my hand and handed me over to Mrs. Hana[39] to whom I said that I was delighted and honored to make her acquaintance. Then they were talking again, in their monotonous voices, the various women treasurers etc., but suddenly the President didn't even let them finish, broke away from their circle (I stood modestly at the back, just devouring him with my eyes, half smiling and half whimpering) and returned to me. That he has yet to thank me for the dedication.[40] That he liked it, "but we must wait to see what the experts will say in the newspapers." Plamínková, taken aback by his escape in the middle of the conversation, stood there staring for a moment, but then she pulled him back (more precisely, barged between us) and continued with some of her interesting bull. And now there was the most beautiful moment of all, which is simply impossible to describe. Mr. President secretly sighed and looked at me so mischievously and boyishly – with the look that expressed: 'oh yeh, they give us so much trouble the mademoiselles here, but he who gets drafted must fight even if he faces such a terrifying soldier like Madame Senator Plamínková.' And at that moment his face changed to deadly serious, and he stood to attention. There was something so comical in those two contrasts, first the mischief and then the grave look, that I had to laugh behind Mme. Plamínková's back, which he saw. And then he interrupted her for the third time and said to her: "Well, why don't you put all those reports in writing, Madame Senator, and we'll see what can be done," and while still talking, he went around her and – returned to me for the third time, starting the conversation: "You were Novák's pupil, right?" "Yes, please, but now I am in Paris." "Oh??" "Yes, I received a French government scholarship, so I am breathing in some of that international air." "Well, that's nice! Keep up the good work so that I can hear about you again, and, for the last time – goodbye and have a great time." Then he held my hand and was shaking it wholeheartedly for about five minutes.

In another letter home, dated at the beginning of the following year, she returned once more to her Czech Philharmonic performance:

> I always forget to tell you how it was with my conducting at the premiere. Well, that the stupid trombonist jumped ahead (in the middle) by six measures, that you might have recognized yourself, Dad. He held onto it tenaciously for about forty measures. That infuriated me, (– didn't make me nervous but infuriated me), and I wasn't able to feel the ending through as I did during the final rehearsal and get it out of them. And so I didn't conduct with as much gusto as I did in the morning, because that gusto usually came after the exposition in the development section, where that moron screwed up. Well, I'll make it up to myself in London.

To clarify the mention of London: at the end of 1937, Kaprálová received the good news that her *Military Sinfonietta* was selected to be programmed at the 16th annual festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music, which was to be held in London in June 1938. Her composition was to represent new Czech music at the festival (along with compositions by Iša Krejčí, František Bartoš, and Viktor Ullmann), and she herself was to conduct it.

That is yet to come, however. At the moment, Kaprálová is about to spend her first Christmas away from home. She celebrated it with Líba Houžvičková and other young tenants of Mme. Da Rosa. Kaprálová had her Christmas presents well thought out: she composed a piano miniature for each of the guests on a small sheet of paper, put it in an envelope with a graphic illustration of Paris, and during the gift-giving handed out the envelopes. Her musical presents were received with much enthusiasm as the most original gift; it is just a pity that these minute pieces have never been found. Kaprálová refers to them as *Profiles* in her diary; in the thematic catalog of Kaprálová's works, they are listed as *Christmas Wishes*. When it came to piano music, Kaprálová knew how to express herself perfectly even in a small space—she composed dozens of such little pieces for her friends, but, unfortunately, very few of them survived.

Just before Christmas, Kaprálová also took part in two big social events. One of them was organized in partnership with the Czechoslovak Legation in honor of the Czechoslovak army, and we have a detailed record of it in one of the letters to her

parents, which she wrote shortly after the event:

> It was like being present at some royal audience, all those wonderful, red uniforms of French officers (with golden epaulettes), civilians in the tallest top hats you can imagine and with lots of medals, ladies in gold and silver and ermine fur coats, and there suddenly appeared these two young kids – terrifyingly young. So we attracted due attention with our fresh and charming faces. Líba was very shy, but I moved around as if I were at home – and I felt at home. Everyone smiled at us, Mr. Osuský nodded to us kindly, General Gamelin (the greatest commander of the French army) also noticed us, and so we went to sit down, happy that we had that social baptism behind us. Many gentlemen were talking and it was all broadcast on the radio. If I had known about it earlier, I would have written to you to listen, and coughed en lieu of a greeting. During the intermission I was introduced by Šafránek to various gentlemen from the consulate and the legation, as well as to a lot of officers of the Czechoslovak army, who paid us great compliments on our beauty and charm (we surely looked the part!), and when the program ended, I confidently dragged Líba, who assured me that I had gone crazy, to toasts of champagne. Two young gentlemen doctors, whom I already know from the Études des Slaves, accompanied us. So I went to get a glass of champagne and also scooped up a full handful of salted almonds, which I really like, but quite inconspicuously. It was my first time drinking champagne, but I didn't like it and one glass was enough for me. My head was spinning a bit after emptying it, but it otherwise put us in a wonderful mood, and so we became the centre of the group that laughed a lot, had a good time, and . . . kept bringing me salted almonds.

After Christmas, Kaprálová began working on several new compositions that also included the cantata *Ilena*, set to the text of the ballad "Lesná panna" by Ľudmila Podjavorinská. Kaprálová first became acquainted with Podjavorinská's ballad during her studies at the Brno Conservatory, and originally intended to graduate with her setting of it from the Prague Conservatory, but in the end opted for an orchestral composition. She returned to the ballad in December 1937 in Paris. *Ilena* epitomized for Kaprálová a piece of home in a new, foreign environment, so the work on it progressed quickly at first: the piano sketch of the cantata's first movement was completed on December 10, the second on January 4, 1938, and a week later she finished the third, but then the project came abruptly to a halt, as the composer's initial confidence in the work's value dissipated and resulted in a creative crisis.

On January 11, 1938, she wrote home:

> Today I finished the third movement of the Ballad, but I'd rather throw the whole thing in the oven. That damned Paris challenges one to ponder on so many things, including how I make my music, and because I am coming to the conclusion that I am only getting worse at it, I have been feeling completely miserable for two days now. It no longer satisfies me if I write better than any ox in Prague, no, I want to trump all three BBB!!! So today I bawled for the first time, and for the first time I am homesick. Back home I would go and buy myself 50 grams of deli salad to get out of a bad mood, but here one can't even get that. My French is just awful, I can't do anything right, and by and large. . . Nothing is happening here, Martinů irritates me with deep philosophizing, . . . What I would give for being among the plain folks in Tři Studně right now. Well, I guess I have to live through all the doubts and bitterness like everyone else who's worth their salt.

While composing the cantata, Kaprálová simultaneously worked on a reed trio and the *Carillon* variations—both compositions of a completely new sound that made her realize that *Ilena* was a brainchild of her musical past, which she had already put behind and in which she now found impossible to continue. Only with the encouragement of Martinů, who liked the composition, was she able to complete at least the sketch: the choruses, solos, and piano reduction of the orchestral score. The cantata has a rather unusual structure: the homophonic first movement is contrasted with the second, polyphonic movement that is solely dedicated to the chorus; the third movement is conceived as a melodrama; and the fourth movement represents a final synthesis in which the composer utilizes the whole apparatus at her disposal. From today's perspective, *Ilena* occupies a unique place in the context of Kaprálová's oeuvre as her largest choral work—besides *Ilena*, she composed only two choruses for women's voices a cappella (op. 17); and *Matičce,* for three children's voices, which she composed at thirteen.

From January 1938 Kaprálová began to attend Triton concerts regularly and reported on them to her father who was curious about the latest international repertoire. The Triton concertgoers were largely composers and active musicians, so it was a similar audience to the one that attended the concerts of the Přítomnost Society and Hippmann's Tuesdays in Prague. Given Triton's knowledgeable and critical audience, the concerts' program was carefully curated and well executed. One of Kaprálová's descriptions captures the atmosphere of the Triton concerts:

> We sneaked in without tickets . . . First I sat behind Milhaud in a 16-franc seat, but we kept moving from seat to seat, depending on the arrival of the ticketholders; at one point we were sitting on the floor, and he looked really amused. Should they want to throw us out, he would surely have prevented it. —The concert was nice and very interesting. I enclose the program. The songs, those on the back of the program, were wonderful, and the lyrics too. I liked the most the two numbers by Mr. Barraud, for which I got scolded by everyone – the gentleman doesn't know how to compose, and I like it! But what can I do; I did, and the most of all the works on the program. Then came Milhaud. He was the most interesting and also had the greatest success. Imagine that one stanza was just whispered, the second was *hm, hm, hm*, the third was the counterpoint and the voices yodeling together. . . . Or: a trumpet and a counter violin pizzicato,

> playing the same. A very good effect. Similarly, bass clarinet and counter clarinet, the same notes. It was exactly like the babbling of a stream. Should I forget it, Dad, remind me, all of this has to be copied. Hindemith sounded solid and pretty, but nothing more.

With Mom they exchanged more personal letters, mainly the news about the family's circle of friends and the folks from the village of Tři Studně. They must have also corresponded about Kaprálová's mother's interest in theosophy, because in one of her letters Kaprálová voices her frustration with her mother's devotion to this esoteric movement, pointing out the simple Christianity of St. Francis and formulating her philosophy of life:

> It seems to me that I have to scold you a little. I'm getting afraid that religion might eventually cloud your brain. The book about St. Francis achieved the exact opposite that I had hoped for. . . . I hold him up as an example for you to see how there's no need to search somewhere in the universe, in the abstract, in theosophy and so on, but it is enough to look around with open eyes. Everything is a gift in this world, even evil is a gift, and one should be grateful for everything and accept it with a smile. I have neither time nor am I in the mood to write about these things, but your letters always disappoint me, because I always find some nonsense in them, and so I finally have to mention it to you. First of all: everything is good! Do you rant about night following day? About a storm taking turn with a beautiful day? That things are not nice but ugly? No! And so why are you so terribly dissatisfied with people? There will never be only good people, should there come ten Christs, because what we call bad is given in them by – God. And so it should be! The whole world revolves according to a tiny but wonderful rule: positive and negative. So why take this balance away from people? There are extremes that step up evil a little, but the catastrophe will not be long in coming. And so all that remains is to find the good with open eyes and harden oneself against evil. To enjoy simple little things; to always sing; to smile as much as one can. Although evil now dominates a little, let everyone first look for it in themselves and counterbalance it there, and only then turn to the others. St. Francis was an innocent fool, but he had a very wise attitude toward life. He did not reject the law. He laughed, sang, suffered, and was grateful for the beauty that surrounds us, as well as for the pain.

But in just a year, after the German invasion of her homeland, Kaprálová would no longer be so sure of this pragmatic, albeit courageous, life philosophy . . .

Part IV

"Dearest Dad," thus warmly begins, in contrast to what follows, Kaprálová's letter dated 7 February 1938:

> I am cursing you like a starling! I've just received the proofs from Matice,[41] but all those mistakes you've made there, and I don't mean in terms of intonation but editing. No. 2, the beginning, came out the worst. I don't know how they will publish it now, when it is all crossed out, and the second will have to be typeset all over again. Well, I will get scolded terribly in any case. How could you do such stupid things! From now on, you must send it to me for proofreading first, if you want to have something published.

What is she talking about? About her father's proofs of *Dubnová preludia* or *April Preludes* that were about to be published by the HMUB in Prague: yes, those preludes of which Vítězslav Novák had said the previous year that they were finished pieces that could no longer be corrected. Compared to Novák, Kaprál comes across as an authoritarian pedant and a rather unbearable parent. This requires some clarification: Kaprál often represented his daughter in negotiations with publishers and also took part in editing, sometimes with the author's knowledge and consent, but more often without it. But let's not be mistaken: Vítězslava was able to stand up for herself, as we can see from this letter. She was often brutally direct with her father, especially if she didn't want him to get involved in her affairs, as was the case here. And yet the two loved each other immensely. In April 1942, a few months before his imprisonment in the Svatobořice internment camp, Kaprál wrote to his friend, the publicist Otakar Šourek, how much he missed his deceased daughter, how he had realized that she had been his dearest friend. And less than a year before his death, in a letter dated 5 June 1946, he wrote to his wife:

> I have taken it upon myself to take care of all matters concerning Vitulka, notwithstanding the costs, because Vitulka was, is, and always will be the main meaning of the rest of my life. And so I take everything upon myself, since I need neither comfort nor money, they are of no value to me. And should I, in my old age, starve to death or be afflicted with diseases, I will gladly undergo that, because I was so very lucky to have Vitulka. And it is she of whom I think all the time, whether I am sad or happy.

It was a truly crucial relationship for both of them. In one of the letters to her friend Rudolf Kopec, Kaprálová writes about her father: "That you prefer Dad of the two is no secret and no surprise for me. Only I can fully appreciate Mom's devotion and bravery, you don't see into her," and continues:

> But Dad has something that I too have. He attracts people. And he's a being whose judgment, and I repeat that, matters most to me, and if you were like him – oh my, that would be such a joy. I would certainly prefer him to Mom, hadn't he become estranged from me. I can't share someone, I'm just too selfish, and he paid a price for it.

Kaprálová is hinting here at her father's relationship with Otylka Humlová, for which she was unable to forgive him precisely because she knew that in Otylka Kaprál had found his

soulmate. That relationship burdened her entire childhood, there is no doubt about it. At the very least, it deprived it of carefreeness. Kaprálová must have seen how her mother bore her loneliness with quiet resignation but also bitterness. Perhaps it was these memories that led Kaprálová to sober up from her love relationship with Martinů. And it was she who ended it, twice: first, when she became engaged to Rudolf Kopec in the fall of 1938, and for the second time and definitely, by marrying Jiří Mucha. But that is yet to happen. For now, her relationship with Martinů is only developing, reaching its first peak in the early spring of 1938, when she writes home:

> I was dining at Martinůs the other night, and we played his new work Ricercari,[42] also Špalíček, Hry o Marii, trio, Julietta, and compositions from earlier years. He thinks very highly of me and keeps saying that I have to take over from him (that I will even surpass him), and that he will pass on to me everything he knows and all he has learned. And although he's sometimes a silly (as I call him), he knows a lot of valuable things.

From another letter home we also learn about her daily schedule:

> I spend the whole morning composing, from about 9:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m., when Hauner (who studies at the Bibliothèque Nationale) whistles outside and we go for lunch either to the Foyer or a small pub in rue des Écoles. The lunch is *finni* at about 1:30 p.m., then I go for a walk until 3 p.m., when Mr. Martinů arrives 4x a week (newly introduced) to teach me (Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday) until 4:30 or 5 p.m. After that I study French for a while (or copy a score or write to you), and at 7 p.m. I go for a dinner and then out, either to a lecture, cinema, theater, performance, and now mostly to rehearsals for our concert.

At around this time Kaprálová began writing her Partita, a composition that is, to an extent, influenced by Martinů. The two spent hours discussing the work's texture, on which Martinů explained his compositional principles. And while he didn't interfere with the original invention of the composition, he helped to prevent that "excess" of which Novák had wanted to rid her just a year earlier. There's such a difference between the music of the Partita and the cantata *Ilena*, on which Kaprálová had worked just two months earlier, that she commented on it in a letter to her father: "For God's sake, don't judge my style based on the Ballad. It is the final word of what I once did, and that's why it's so difficult to continue in it."

At the end of February 1938, Kaprálová sent home the score of *Šest malých variací na zvony kostela St. Étienne* or *Variations sur le carillon de l'église St.-Étienne-du-Mont,* a remarkable piano composition that already reflects her new artistic development. It was premiered by Ludvík Kundera on March 27, 1938, in Brno. Kaprálová was annoyed by the concert reviews, however, as we can read in one of her letters to parents: "The reviews are extremely stupid, because it is indeed remarkable to write about 'a certain church' and about a 'characterization' of church bells." And in reaction to one of the reviews, she added vehemently: "And once for all, I am not a female talent but a male talent!"

In March Martinů left for Prague to participate in the preparation of the premiere of his avant-garde opera *Julietta*. During his absence, Kaprálová started a letter campaign to garner support for the renewal of her scholarship application so that she could continue her studies for one more year at the École normale. The school alone didn't give her that much: she did not study with Boulanger because Nadia wasn't in Paris at the time, she was touring in the United States for several months (and went on another tour again in 1939), and Munch's conducting classes were often cancelled due to his external professional workload. But there was Paris, with its rich cultural and artistic life and the Triton music series in particular. Kaprálová also became actively involved in the musical promotion of Czechoslovakia, which was gaining in importance in the increasingly lukewarm allied France. She was participating in student productions, rehearsing performances, and arranging compositions for a student choir—her arrangement of the Hussite chant *Ktož jsú Boží bojovníci* also dates from that time.

In Kaprálová's letter to her parents dated 21 March 1938, we find the first indication that her relationship with Martinů had begun to be perceived at home with some concern: "Don't get me upset with that thing about Martinů, I wouldn't have divulged it so naïvely if it were true," she reacted in the letter. But from that moment on, she began covering up things in her correspondence home with frequent mentions of her so-called "suitors," especially certain Dr. Hauner and Eng. Kopec. The first of the two, Edgar Stanislav Hauner, didn't stand a chance with her; but the one who gradually won her over was Rudolf Kopec—a young aeronautical engineer, ten years older than Kaprálová, who, like she, had come to Paris in the fall of 1937 to study. He was a politically active young conservative whom Jiří Mucha did not hesitate to label a fascist in his autobiographical novel *Podivné lásky*. And although Kopec was neither a member of a fascist party nor a supporter of the fascist movement in pre-war Czechoslovakia and disengaged from politics during the war, Mucha's label stuck to him and made it into official historiography.

In April 1938, Kaprálová wrote to her parents: "I am having difficulty composing; what I write, Martinů crosses out, and what I cross out, he approves." She was referring to her Partita for strings and piano. Yet we find few revisions in Martinů's hand in the work's autographs. Kaprálová reworked the composition multiple times and in the end she discarded many of the sketches, including those approved by Martinů. There's no doubt, however, that the Partita represents a turning point in the composer's musical thinking, to which Martinů had certainly contributed.

At the end of April Kaprálová departed on a student trip to Monaco, where she and Rudolf Kopec booked accommodation in a small hotel on Rocher Street. She spent two weeks there, while Martinů remained in Paris, where he worked on his String Quartet No. 5, whose sketch he later gave to Kaprálová. The score of the sketch contains a number of small drawings illustrating Martinů's growing frustration at his separation from Kaprálová—partly because he knew that among the students was Kopec who had been courting her, but mainly because he found it hard to accept that she had not written to him for a number of days while on this trip. And thus, in order to put her

in the most favorable mood upon return, he made sure that the Parisian publishing house La Sirène would accept for publication her "Zvonky,"[43] as Kaprálová called the *Carillon* variations; and he also asked her to conduct his Harpsichord Concerto on June 2 in Paris. Her performance was well received and the Czech diaspora began to take notice. All these were important successes that brought her not only attention and admiration, but also envy and perhaps even hostility from some of her colleagues, as she wrote home:

> So after the concert Martinů had an argument with Pálenda[44] who reproached him for not paying the same attention to him, that it could have saved two years for him, etc., upon which M. asked him coldly: "And how many compositions do you actually have?" – he only has a piano sonata and a cello sonatina, that's all – and Jožka said: "Well, it's true that I don't have that many, I'm such an unlucky person, I have so much to do and so little time, and so I've written two things so far, but I have a lot of good ideas, and they're of very high quality." "Well, look, you know, those would be useless to me, as I only devote my time to fully committed, mature artists." And that's how he made him my biggest enemy.

Bohuslav Martinů, in his letter to Václav Talich from June 1938, even writes about a conspiracy of a kind. He turned to his conductor friend with a request that he intercede for Kaprálová so that she would be awarded a new scholarship:

> Kaprálová is my pupil and I will make her a very good composer, but I must have her here for another year, partly because I'd like to prove to some gentlemen in Prague that I also have pedagogical skills,[45] and then because she's a real talent. She had some small successes here, upon which emerged a mysterious "black gang" that is doing everything possible to ruin her chances for a new scholarship, perhaps it is also against me, and they spread such rumors that she has tuberculosis, which is not true at all; in short, they are doing everything to ruin the scholarship for her, and I am doing everything so that she gets it.

František Kupka, who was at the time a student affairs officer at the Czechoslovak Legation in Paris, did not even hesitate to report Kaprálová's alleged tuberculosis to the Ministry of Education, as we know from Kaprálová's correspondence with Otakar Šourek, who later refuted Kupka's allegation in a meeting with the Minister at Kaprálová's request.[46]

On June 14, 1938, Kaprálová wrote home that she was about to depart, in the company of Martinů, for the ISCM Festival in London, where "I will appear on television, probably in a rehearsal." In the end, it was just a brief footage in a report about the opening of the festival, possibly shown as part of *Picture Page*, a two-hour BBC news program that was broadcast live from the BBC television studio in Alexandra Palace every week between 1936 and 1939. Kaprálová had only two rehearsals at her disposal: the first was 45 minutes long and took place in the building of the BBC Orchestra on June 16, from 11:45 to 12:30; the second was 30 minutes, from 10:00 to 10:30, and it took place the day of the concert in Queen's Hall. And in this famous concert hall, at 8:15 p.m. on June 17, 1938, Kaprálová and the BBC Orchestra opened the first orchestral concert of the 16th Festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music.[47] The opening night program was broadcast by BBC Radio and transmitted on shortwave across the ocean to the United States, where it was put on air by the American broadcaster CBS (Columbia Broadcasting System). Kaprálová later wrote in a letter to her parents that the broadcast was transmitted by a "Columbian" radio, and her error ended up in the official historiography.

Both rehearsals and the opening night performance have been captured in one of Kaprálová's letters home:

> I communicated everything in French! During the rehearsals Wanda translated it to Mr. Foss,[48] and he explained it to the orchestra, but I more or less sang it to them, and they understood. I earned their approval during the first rehearsal when I took them through the score with short stops, told them what I wanted here and there, then took them through it again, but seeing that they were already tired and playing carelessly, I ended the rehearsal (after the slow movement) and said that I thanked them for today. They responded with a thunderous applause. Martinů writes in his review that the orchestra acclaimed me enthusiastically during the rehearsals, which is de facto true. They liked playing the sinfonietta. The final rehearsal was the weakest, I was sleepy and had a full stomach after an English breakfast (the rehearsal was at 10 a.m.), but unlike the Prague performance, the concert was without a single error. The final gradation sent chills up my spine and that of people's too, as I was told. It was really an appropriate continuation of the state anthem, and whether people liked it or not, everyone must have taken away a strong and fresh impression. The orchestra overdid it a bit, but the sinfonietta can bear it. I didn't get stage fright, none whatsoever, but Martinů did, for both of us, and when I finished my performance, he rushed into the dressing room with tears in his eyes . . .

By the end of June 1938 Kaprálová was back in Prague where Martinů joined her for the opening of the jubilee edition of the Sokol festival. In July he joined her again, this time for two weeks in Tři Studně—it was to be his last visit to Czechoslovakia. Rudolf Kopec replaced him in Tři Studně in August. He and Kaprálová eventually got engaged later that fall, with the blessing of Kaprálová's parents who preferred the 33-year-old aeronautical engineer to Martinů as their daughter's life partner.

The fall of 1938 began dramatically. Two days after the Munich Agreement was signed, Kaprálová wrote to Rudolf Kopec: "We are sheltered here and only learn about the situation from sketchy reports on the radio and some newspapers. And it would be better not to receive the news, because it makes one's blood boil and anger rush to the head. But not only over Europe's Judas betrayal, but also over our weakness." A few days later she wrote to him:

> For me, it never was and never will be about politics but about the individual (that is also why I cannot become a communist) – about an honest, cultured, intelligent individual. . . . I cannot describe what I felt after the loss of our republic (I will not call this mutilated substitute a republic). I am a great patriot and these things can completely crush me. I wasn't at home all day after the news of this catastrophe. Oh, Rudek, I am so sad, sad, sad! —If you could see me how I am working now, working so hard that my eyes hurt from writing and my hand too, but it is as if my luck was disappearing with the republic. The Sinfonietta will not be performed now; the Ballad was done in vain (it was only yesterday when I delighted at its relevance); they didn't include my music in the program of the Přítomnost Society but Mr. Páleníček is there 3 times (!); the edition of Zvonky[49] hasn't arrived yet from France; the Sinfonietta has also fallen asleep, but whatever: I believe, firmly and idealistically, that a good thing will again find the way!

The mention of the Sinfonietta concerned the publication of the score by Melantrich, whose editors cautiously put the manuscript on ice; suddenly, the adjective "military" was no longer desirable, and nor was the dedication to Edvard Beneš who abdicated as the republic's President on October 5, 1938, and shortly after disappeared into English exile. The so-called "second republic" that followed was a truly peculiar era; indeed, a shameful political period full of opportunism, anti-democratic measures and harsh restrictions of civil liberties—and all this was happening at the time when the German protectorate was still almost six months away.

Fortunately, Kaprálová's hope of the good cause winning was eventually fulfilled: the Sinfonietta was published by Melantrich at the end of the year, although without the original dedication to Beneš. Kaprálová even won with it a prestigious prize of the Bedřich Smetana Jubilee Foundation. She shared the prize with Pavel Haas who received it for his opera *The Charlatan*. "To insult Haas like this," Kaprálová wrote collegially in a letter to Rudolf Kopec:

> How can such a 15-minute thing be compared to a full-length opera? If I were him, I would throw it at them. It is indeed a scandal but very profitable for me. It's just a pity that by now I am so spoiled that I no longer experience that warm feeling. Or maybe not spoiled, but – well, it does not excite me anymore. Yet, if I manage to compose something beautiful, warmth and happiness spread throughout my body, without other people's recognition.

In the meantime, the processing of her application for a renewed French scholarship came to a standstill. Martinů spent the entire fall writing to everybody he knew in some position of power to support Kaprálová's application so that he could bring her back to Paris (and eliminate not only the influence of Kopec but also of her parents). When Kaprálová was unsuccessful with her scholarship application in the first round, he turned to the most esteemed personalities in the wider cultural community, including the writer Karel Čapek. Otakar Šourek, who was an influential member of an advisory committee of the Department of Education and National Enlightenment at the time and had direct access to the Minister, also became involved, at Martinů's request, in the matter of Kaprálová's scholarship. It was his intervention that eventually made the difference. It turned out that the alleged obstacle to Kaprálová's application approval was not a "black gang" but Kaprálová's repeated absence in Paris during the school year (in November 1937, she travelled back home for two weeks to prepare for the premiere of her *Military Sinfonietta* in Prague; in April 1938, she went on a three-week student trip to Monaco; and in June she took part in the London festival) and the lack of progress in her French (as reported by Monsieur Alleon who was, for a short time, Kaprálová's French teacher).

Meanwhile back at home in Moravia, Kaprálová had not been idle. She continued working on her Partita, but she interrupted the work after receiving a letter from the London office of Universal Edition, whose director Alfred Kalmus, impressed by the success of her *Military Sinfonietta* in London, commissioned from her a suite based on folk melodies and dances. Kaprálová wrote about it to her friend Ota Vach in early November:

> Just before the summer holidays, I received a large commission from Universal Edition London for an orchestral suite from Czech songs and dances. I didn't take it seriously enough, I thought that Director Kalmus got intoxicated with my success at the festival and merely overreacted. But a month ago he followed up with me inquiring whether I was about to finish the suite, as he had already put it on the programs as the hottest item of the season. (Indeed!) Receiving the news I almost fainted, but then I quickly recovered and started working right away, because the deadline is the 15th of this month. And despite the gloomy mood reigning over our little Republic, the suite danced out of my hands so that it will really be finished by the required date, although no one will know of my ordeal, only perhaps you, who paid for it by waiting for my letter.

Owing to recurrent interventions by Otakar Šourek, Kaprálová eventually received her scholarship in November, but suddenly she wasn't ready to depart. She hesitated, pondering over her choices: whether to marry Kopec and stay at home, or to return fully into her relationship with Martinů and continue her international career in France, yet with a strange premonition that she should not leave her homeland. She did not hide her doubts from Martinů; she felt she had the right to live her own life, as Martinů continued to remain married, and so she wrote to him about her intention to get engaged to Rudolf Kopec. Martinů begged her to consider such a serious matter most carefully, not to rush into it but postpone the engagement for a year of studies in Paris. In one of his letters sent before Christmas 1938, he even hinted at his readiness to leave Charlotte and to start a family with her. He knew how much not only her artis-

tic career, but also a future of marriage and children meant to her. And the day before Christmas Eve, he wrote to her about his wish that she loved him as much as he loved her and that she wouldn't forget

> that you belong to me and that one day you will be mine! Tell me that you will! And for good and for ever! And despite everything! . . . And then there will be holidays, so beautiful, don't you agree, and every day will be a holiday and a Sunday. And so it will be and so it will happen, should you get engaged five more times, still you won't be able to change that . . .

Part V

Kaprálová returned to Paris on January 11, 1939. She stayed briefly at the Pantheon Hotel in the Latin Quarter and immediately began looking for a more permanent place to stay. Her apartment at the Betzs near the Luxembourg Gardens was already taken, but she eventually managed to rent a room at the hotel Beauvoir, on today's Avenue Georges Bernanos, right next to the Port Royal subway station. She stayed there from January 23 to July 7, 1939. In one of her first letters home she described her new place:

> In front of my windows is a statue of H. Berlioz,[50] so I have a great role model indeed. Across the street there's a bus station and café Closerie des Lilas (a meeting place of the most prominent artists of the recent past); up from there is the boulevard Montparnasse, down the boulevard Port Royal. In front of the windows there's a subway station, a few steps further a pissoir, and just a bit further a florist stand. My room is on the fifth floor, with a large and sunny balcony, and it has a central heating that works perfectly; behind a Spanish wall there's a small cabinet with running hot (!) and cold water. Stairs are not steep so they can be climbed easily, not like at the Betzs. Who wants more? And all this for only 440 Fr. I am really well off, because it is so cold outside that the other students sleep in tracksuits, sweaters, slippers, but my room is a warm paradise. At first I found it really noisy here, but now I'm so used to it that when I sometimes wake up at night and it's quiet for a while, it makes me quite nervous. It's pleasant and creates wonderful harmonies (the noise). The hotel is close to the Foyer, and the Institute is just a few steps away.

At the Czechoslovak Legation the poet Viktor Kripner replaced the painter František Kupka as the student affairs officer. Kripner confided in Kaprálová that it was indeed Monsieur Alleon, her one-time French teacher, who was responsible for the delays in the receipt of her scholarship. Kripner and Kaprálová struck up a friendship from the very beginning. Kripner gave her his newest poetry collection *Světy beze jména*,[51] and was overjoyed when she set to music three of the poems in the beautiful song cycle *Sung into the Distance*.

No progress had been made, however, in the matter of *Suita rustica*. Alfred Kalmus, director of the London branch of Universal Edition, indicated to Kaprálová in a letter from early December 1938 that while he liked the selection and arrangement of the songs very much (the suite is based on six folk songs and dances in contrasting rhythm, each movement on two) that he also had some reservations about the composition, which he promised to share with her in about two weeks. When his letter did not follow in the indicated time frame, Kaprálová began to worry whether he would deliver on his promise to publish her composition.

Her relationship with Martinů was not unfolding as expected either. She wrote to Rudolf Kopec:

> Martinů and I – that is such a strange relationship. He's probably not normal and neither am I. We are sarcastic and mean to each other, which brought me such a grief during the first days. Even now it is hard for me sometimes, so hard, but one gets used to even the gallows. You don't know what I am losing with this man, how many ideals I'm burying.

The day before, she wrote in her diary: "What's going on with Šp.?[52] Why can't it be like last year?"

Her only joy now were the letters with the news from home, because the day before her birthday she received a rejection letter from Universal Edition. Kalmus justified his decision as follows: "The impression of my musical advisors is that the Suite does not meet the requirements that must be fulfilled if the work is to be successfully placed in the radio and concert repertoire." Fortunately, the future did not validate his judgment; on the contrary, *Suita rustica* is Kaprálová's most widely performed orchestral work today.

Kalmus's bad news shook Kaprálová's self-confidence quite a bit, but fortunately only briefly. As always, it was the work that saved her—she had several compositions in progress, so she didn't have much time to think about the matter, nor did she want to. She was also commissioned by the local student association to write something for the so-called 'Čapek's evening' that was organized to commemorate the late writer who died on Christmas Day the previous year. For this commemorative event Kaprálová composed two pieces of chamber music: an elegy for violin and piano, and the melodrama *To Karel Čapek*, for reciter, violin and piano.

Given all that emotional strain she was under, however, she eventually came down with the flu and spent most of the month of February in her hotel room. She only managed to enroll at the Sorbonne (we don't know in which program or whether she studied there at all) and in a French course at the Alliance Française. Martinů discouraged her from taking classes with Boulanger at the École normale, which Kaprálová explained to her parents, "because then I would have to go there regularly, at least in the beginning, and that I am not strong enough, so I should wait until it gets warmer, it is such a long way, and Nadia teaches four times a week. And since he stood his ground and diplomatically: 'he speaks on your behalf,' I complied. Kripner also told me not to rush into it."

And thus in the meantime Kaprálová accepted the consulta-

tions offered by Martinů. Her daily schedule did not differ much from that of the previous year: in the mornings, from 9 to 12, she worked on her compositions or their orchestration; in the afternoons, from 3 to 5, she had consultations with Martinů. As for Nadia's class, she again missed an opportunity to take it, since by the spring, Boulanger was long gone on another American tour. Munch was not teaching either, due to the lack of students, but Kaprálová made a deal with the school director, Monsieur Mangeot, that he would open a conducting class with Munch after Easter just for her, so that she could complete the course and receive her diploma.

But then came March 15. That day Kaprálová wrote home:

> Dearest Mom and Dad, with the deepest pain I read in today's morning newspapers about the end of our republic. Here's how it went: I woke up crying at about 6 o'clock in the morning and cried until about 9, when Martinů arrived, and as soon as I looked at him, I knew what happened. This afternoon I can't cry anymore and just wish I were home . . . .

March 15 brought the two—Kaprálová and Martinů—close again. This was another area in which Charlotte Martinů could not compete with Kaprálová: sharing love for their little country, now occupied.

Kaprálová's letters home too grew tender, more affectionate. She suddenly realized their complete separation, her uncertain future, and the deep love for her parents that she placed above all other relationships. "My dearest Dad," she wrote on March 23, 1939, on the occasion of Kaprál's birth anniversary:

> All the best for your 50th birthday! I wish you an additional 50 years, which would also fulfill my dearest wish to be together for a long time to come. Thank you for everything you have done for me – and the older I get the more I realize you have done a lot. I would love to give you much in return so that your 'mature years' would be filled with happiness and good health. I cherish the memories of us together, from you bathing me as a baby to our 'mutual revising' of each other's compositions. Well, you didn't expect it, did you, when you were warming up your baby's back with hot handkerchiefs, that the baby would grow up to become your competition. But she is very open-minded and of all the music in the world she likes best — her Dad's. Why wouldn't I admire it when it is only Prof. Vitališ[53] Kaprál, among the thousands of people, who is not ashamed of his emotions; indeed, who is proud of them. —So now you only have to take care of your health because there's nothing more precious to me as the two of you there, in my dear Moravia. I strongly believe that in the end everything will lighten up into F major and A major, the same way my music for your birthday ends. I kiss both your hands and your dear head, and may the Lord God give you all you want and all you wish for. Your Vitulenka. —And hug Mom for me, will you. I'll make it up to her next time. And be merry because who can take our love away from us? Love you both and always thinking of you.

At about that time she put aside the unfinished orchestral score of her Partita and began working on a new composition—the Concertino for violin, clarinet and orchestra, her darkest and most avant-garde work. She decided not to show the score to Martinů this time, "to his great displeasure," she reported back home. To Rudolf Kopec she wrote: "Everything here in Paris makes me restless, thank God for Martinů, even though he wants to wave farewell to our sweet France and go to America. He wants me to go too, on a tour." As it happened, in the aftermath of the German invasion of their republic, Martinů contacted the former diplomat of the Czechoslovak Legation in Paris, Miloš Šafránek, who had already moved to the United States by that time, with the request to help him obtain American visas for himself and Kaprálová. At home, they took her at her word and wanted to know how she had decided: whether to return home or go to America. "Things are not that simple," she responded, "so far we only inquired about what we should expect, and only based on that information shall we decide. Of course, if nothing were assured, we wouldn't go there." And, on Šafránek's advice, she also applied for a scholarship at the Juilliard School in New York.

"My dearest Mom and Dad," she wrote on April 23, 1939,

> I don't know who has a bigger void inside and whose burden is heavier: whether it is you – there, or I – here. And there's nothing to hold on to, only to faith in oneself and that goodness, good thing and good person are stronger than all that evil, the grotesqueries and mundanity of the life around us. And the biggest disappointment is people. It causes me so much pain. Apart from Martinů I can't talk to anyone here, yet I worry about it, as I don't want him to know how much I rely on him. I don't want to annoy him with my moodiness, because I'm so dependent on him, and that is what he shouldn't know most of all. Yet I'm unable to reward him for all his care and concern with a good mood, a smile; well, there's no trace of that Butulenka[54] who used to give off sunshine and light all around her. I only know one thing: that if I come out of this, I'll be hard as steel and that worries me.

And in the sketch of the Concertino, on which she was working at the time, Kaprálová noted a passage from the Bible: "Yet when I hoped for good, evil came; when I looked for light, then came darkness." (Job 30:26.)

In April 1939, Jewish Czech actor and film director Hugo Haas arrived in Paris where he was invited to work on two French features; for one of them he requested Kaprálová's musical collaboration (—unfortunately, not a single sketch of film music was found in her papers). By that time Kaprálová was no longer considering returning home, as only bad news was coming from there. In Paris she faced a difficult situation, however, because her parents could no longer support her financially, as sending money abroad became subject to very strict rules, and her scholarship was about to expire. And so she joined a group of young Czech exiles who pooled their resources to get by from one day to another. The group of these young artists and intel-

lectuals included Rudolf Kundera, Otakar Španiel's son Ivan, Jaroslav Stein, and Jiří Mucha. Since the invasion, Rudolf Kopec had been constantly urging her to return home, but Kaprálová felt increasingly estranged from him; moreover, she had already decided to stick to her plan to leave for the United States with Martinů. In June 1939, she wrote about it to her parents: "America means a breakup with Kopec, not seeing you for a long time, and an uncertain success, as bigger names returned from there sorely disappointed; on the other hand, it does mean something for the future, since Martinů would go there with me and this question would eventually get resolved, so be prepared for that."

Her parents must have reacted to her letter with panic, because a week later she reassured them:

> As to Martinů, nothing needs to be decided right away, if you don't wish it. He himself thinks that I shouldn't return home in any case. Without any personal motive! He conducts himself wonderfully and you don't have to worry that it would be heading in some strange direction. Yet parting from him would leave in me a deep wound. Those six months of shared pain and tears brought us even closer together. You yourself, Dad, know well what it means to live with someone only on the basis of family arrangement and social conventions, even if that someone is such a good person like Mom or Kopec. These are difficult problems that make my head spin and are actually centered on the two of you – how much happiness I would bring you with it. Nevertheless, the two are the best examples I have ever come across: Kopec – a good husband – children – household; Martinů – love and deep connection. And there's one more thing – should Martinů become naturalized, I would have the right to move freely around, to be able to enter and exit my home country. So this must be considered! Age difference has never bothered me, though it is certain that with passing time I would be a bit bitter about it every now and then. But by that time there would be children and that would solve it all.

But then everything suddenly went quiet—Kaprálová failed to obtain the Julliard scholarship, at least there's no mention of it in her correspondence or her papers, and the plan to go to America with Martinů also fell through. Her parents, especially her father, began to question whether it was a mistake that they agreed to her return to Paris. "Whether it was a good thing that you let me go to Paris or not, remains to be seen," Kaprálová replied in a letter to Václav Kaprál, "I think that this year has been much more useful to me than the previous one. The fact that they did not accept me into any program is not a disaster; I came to terms with myself and worked harder than anywhere else, especially compared to home, where I compose comfortably and for pleasure." But to her mother she wrote: "You can't imagine how much I miss you. Every time I see a cloud in the sky, I'm wondering whether my dear Mommy can see it, too? When I see a flower, you instantly appear in front of my eyes. In short, of all my loves you are the biggest, and I wish I could go home right away."

But she never did . . .

At least she got a chance to spend the summer at a country mansion in Augerville-la-Rivière, made available to a group of Czechoslovak refugees thanks to the connections of Pavla Osuská. Here Kaprálová spent her last carefree holidays.

In September 1939 she was back in Paris. And in her correspondence to her parents, one name begins to appear ever so often—Jirka (Jiří) Mucha. In her letter dated 21 October 1939, she informed them:

> Jirka Mucha offered me his hand in marriage because he's in love with me, but I rejected it. While he's the smartest and kindest boy and knows as much about music as I do or more and has awesome connections all over the world, I dislike his silly bourgeois manners. He's terribly spoiled and used to the 100,000 annual spending, just like it has always been in Muchas' household. And that I don't like. . . . R. F.[55] is terribly jealous of our friendship because he met most of his contacts through Jirka, and he now claims that I pushed him away from him for selfish reasons. . . . Mart.[inů] suffers silently and looks miserable, but he's taking care of me in such a touching way. He's an angel!

The relationship with Mucha eventually helped Kaprálová overcome her breakup with Martinů who continued looking after her, and it was through his intercession that she gained a patron in Jewish Czech entrepreneur Pavel Deutsch. Despite their breakup, Martinů didn't give up and was always looking for opportunities to have his protégé to himself at least for a few precious moments. She no longer accepted consultations from him, but they collaborated on a few musical projects—one of them was music for a folk theater play, the *Folk Suite* by E. F. Burian; another was music for the ensemble of the military battalion of the newly formed Czechoslovak Infantry Division in Agde. Kaprálová's acquaintance from Brno and former accompanist of the Brno Opera, the bandmaster Vilém Tauský, was entrusted with setting up and leading this military band. Martinů began writing *Field Mass* for him, and Kaprálová followed the lead with several marches; however, only basic sketches of both the military and the theater music were found in her estate.

Kaprálová's biggest commission came just a few days before Christmas 1939. It was negotiated for her by Jiří Mucha who had begun to collaborate with the public broadcaster Radio Paris PTT. On Christmas Day Kaprálová wrote home:

> I'm writing to you in the morning after Christmas Eve; well, sort of a morning, actually at noon, because we stayed up till 3 a.m. The main thing I want to know before I describe to you the course of yesterday's evening: did you hear my little present for you, my "Christmas Prelude," broadcast on Sunday (at 11:00 a.m., your time)? I couldn't let you know sooner, because it was on Tuesday when Jirka came home and: "I need an orchestral Christmas piece by tomorrow morning, and you will conduct it on the radio. Hurry up!" So I sat down to it with terribly sour face, making annoyed remarks that it

> wouldn't be worth anything because I was being rushed, and that he should've told me sooner, and so on. But it was finished by Wednesday morning, written directly in the orchestral score, so that's why I can't send you a piano sketch because it doesn't exist. On Friday it was recorded on tape, together with other things (it was the whole program), and I had a chance to conduct again; very badly by the way, because I couldn't hear a single note and when a cornet in E-flat played instead of a horn in F, I didn't register it until Mart.[inů] poked me in the back. But otherwise they liked my performance and the piece . . .? Well, a complete success and an engagement a half-hour every month on the radio. It is a really neat little thing and everyone here has been whistling its tune. Another beautiful thing about it was that I was paid 400 Kč, which came in handy for Christmas.

Another joy awaited her at the beginning of the new year when Rudolf Firkušný finally performed her *April Preludes*, a composition she had once officially dedicated to him. The French premiere of the preludes took place on January 28, 1940, in the hall on Vital Street, the new home of the Triton concerts that were now being presented by the Societé de la musique contemporaine. The preludes were programmed alongside chamber music by Igor Stravinsky and Albert Roussel and performed to rave reviews. One reviewer mentioned their "astounding success," and added that "this young woman is destined to be a rare exception to the rule about the lack of musical creativity in women." Genuinely surprised, Firkušný, who did not believe in women's creativity on principle, immediately ordered a new piano composition from the composer: Two Dances for Piano. Only a sketch of the first dance has survived, however, in Kaprálová's estate.

The success of the preludes and the promise of her engagement with the Paris radio were a great encouragement for Kaprálová. She began making preparations for a radio performance of her sinfonietta, and collaborated on a script for a special program for the soldiers of the Czechoslovak Infantry Division. In the end, however, the project did not materialize due to the constantly worsening political climate. During this time Mucha became one of the editors of the exile press *La Cause Tchécoslovaque* to which Kaprálová contributed with reviews of Czech music performances and assisted with proofreading. In the spring of 1940, she finally enrolled in the composition class at the École normale but had little time left for studying. The reason for enrolling at the conservatory may have been entirely pragmatic—to obtain a scholarship. The question, whether Kaprálová studied composition with Boulanger, has yet to be answered, however. The information, which originated from Mucha, was adopted into official historiography, but there's no mention about it in any document, be it Kaprálová's diary or correspondence with her parents, although it is well possible that the collection of letters from 1940, preserved in Kaprálová's papers, is incomplete.

Kaprálová's studies at the conservatory resulted in only one composition—the song *Dopis* (*Letter*). It was premiered at the beginning of May at the École normale, a few days after Kaprálová's wedding that will be mentioned in more detail further. *Dopis* was sung by baritone Otto Kraus who was accompanied by Kaprálová on the piano. Petr Křička's text is conceived as a farewell letter: two people have parted ways, but one of them still harbors the hope that their paths will cross again one day. The choice of the lyrics and the timing are odd, and one cannot avoid the impression that it had personal meaning for Kaprálová, possibly related to a significant change that occurred in her life: on April 28, 1940, she married Jiří Mucha. She described the wedding to her patron Pavel Deutsch with her typical humor:

> The wedding witnesses were Messieurs Pik and Puc, which caused a genuine amusement in the hall; another followed later on when I, tired of the long speech of the mayor who was at length praising Czechoslovakia, let my mind wonder and began watching with interest how dogs are chasing each other in the street and thus completely missed the mayor's question, if I wanted to marry Monsieur Mucha, the man standing next to me. It was only when Jirka started to poke me and implore me: "Say yes, say yes!" that I came to my senses and stammered "a - a - a - a[56] oui!" The guests were departing hugely entertained; but, of course, it wasn't they who were getting married!

Humor notwithstanding, Kaprálová must have felt far from being amused. It seems that she had thought hard about this step; according to Šafránek's handwritten notes that have been preserved in his papers, she even spent the morning before the wedding with Martinů. And, according to Marie Bauer's testimony, Kaprálová was crying on the eve of the wedding day, asking her friends if she was doing the right thing. Her friends assured her that she was, that she could not remain on her own, unprotected in a foreign country on the brink of war. Whether we can rely or not on this testimony, it appears that she entered the marriage with less than emotional certainty; however, this was to change in the last weeks of her life, especially after she became ill.

Her health problems began soon after the wedding. It was at the end of April that she first felt pain in her lower abdomen, in the appendix area, which grew so severe that on May 2 she made a visit to her doctor Josef Brumlík. The following day she mentioned the visit in a letter to Mucha who had already left Paris: "Yesterday, at Brumlík's, they explicitly forbade me to leave, but they can say whatever they want, I won't be without you." Shortly after the wedding, Mucha had to go back to his military unit in Agde, in southern France, while Kaprálová was held up in Paris by work. She was working on her last composition, *Deux Ritournelles pour violoncelle et piano*, trying to make it ready for the premiere that was originally scheduled for May 17, 1940. One of the two ritornels has survived, and it is remarkable how it does not show in any way that Kaprálová was already in much pain—it is a strong, energetic piece. On May 8, she wrote to Mucha: "Today I'm going to the hospital for a checkup and may stay there for a surgery – of what, I don't know yet, but I have terrible pain in the area of my appendix, but appendicitis it is not." The very next day she informed him: "I'm going to the hospital today at 11 a.m., and they will proba-

bly keep me there." Kaprálová remained in the Vaugirard hospital, near the Latin Quarter, until May 20, when Mucha came for her; four days later she was admitted to the Saint-Eloi faculty hospital in Montpellier. In those last weeks of her life, Kaprálová became deeply attached to Mucha, but those precious moments were to be her last; by then she had exhausted all her luck. Just three weeks after her admission to the Montpellier hospital, on June 16, 1940, Kaprálová died. The cause of her death remains unknown.

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She gave off brilliant light like a comet and disappeared from our horizon just as quickly. But she has remained with us in her music that continues to amaze us to this day with its abundant imagination and tremendous vitality.

Notes

[1] Czech writer and playwright Karel Čapek (1890–1938).
[2] Vitulka and Vitulenka are diminutives of the name Vítězslava.
[3] *Treasure trove*. This collection of 700 songs, harmonized by Jan Malát, was published in seven volumes (the first in 1884) under the title of *Český národní poklad: sbírka písní lidu českého*.
[4] "Before a Long Journey."
[5] "After the Battle of the White Mountain."
[6] Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk served as the first president of Czechoslovakia from 1918 to 1935.
[7] Slovanské náměstí is located in Brno-Královo Pole.
[8] *Broučci* is a classic Czech children's book written in about 1870 by Jan Karafiát (1846–1929). It was translated into English in 1942 under the title *Fireflies*.
[9] *Babička* (*The Grandmother*) is a novel written by Božena Němcová (1820–1862). The book is considered one of the main literary achievements of the Czech National Revival. It was first published in 1855, with many subsequent editions.
[10] Funeral March, op. 2.
[11] *Sparks from Ashes*, op. 5.
[12] Ota Vach, 1991.
[13] Two Compositions for Violin and Piano, op. 3.
[14] Published in 1936.
[15] Quoted in Lenka Vojtíšková, 1949.
[16] Only the first movement of the concerto was performed at the graduation concert.
[17] František Neumann (1874–1929) was principal conductor at the Brno National Theater.
[18] Vítězslav Novák and Václav Talich.
[19] *Cikánko ty krásná*, or *My Beautiful Gypsy* in English, was a popular tango composed in 1931 by Karel Vacek (1902–1982).
[20] *Tempo* was a music journal published by HMUB from 1922 to 1938.
[21] Koruna československá (Czechoslovak crown in English).
[22] Kaprálová refers to the quarter-tone scale used in compositions by Alois Hába (1893–1973) who founded his own department of microtonal music at the Prague Conservatory Master School.
[23] A desirable Prague neighborhood.
[24] Probably a maid.
[25] Possibly for meals provided by her aunt.
[26] *The Simpleton*, an opera by Josef Bohuslav Foerster (1859–1951).
[27] Forest maiden.
[28] Soprano Jarmila Vavrdová premiered several of Kaprálová's songs.
[29] *Sonatina Bucolica*, from 1936.
[30] Phonetic Czech spelling of Meisterstück (German for masterpiece).
[31] Krombholz Foundation paid students' medical costs.
[32] Alfred Fichelle was the Director of the Ernest Denis Institute in Prague.
[33] The private college for young women in Libeň, Prague 8.
[34] Roussel, Ibert, Milhaud, Prokofiev, Stravinsky, Honegger, Barraud, Ferroud, Mihalovici, Schmitt, Manziarly, and Martinů had their composition performed there on more than one occasion.
[35] The Mánes group composers included Iša Krejčí, Pavel Bořkovec, František Bartoš, and Jaroslav Ježek.
[36] Miloš Šafránek was Martinů's first biographer. When Kaprálová arrived in Paris, he served as cultural attaché at the Czechoslovak legation.
[37] Their catalog, including Kaprálová's *Carillon* variations, was eventually bought by Eschig.
[38] She left in early hours on Monday, November 15.
[39] Hana Benešová, the President's spouse.
[40] Kaprálová officially dedicated her Sinfonietta to Beneš.
[41] Hudební matice Umělecké besedy (HMUB) was the oldest and largest publisher of sheet music in Czechoslovakia, operating from 1871 to 1951.
[42] *Tre Ricercari* (1938).
[43] Little bells.
[44] Nickname for the pianist Josef (Jožka) Páleníček.
[45] Martinů was considering applying for a position at the Prague Conservatory Master School at the time.
[46] Šourek was an influential member of one of the advisory committees to the Minister.
[47] The 1938 ISCM Festival brochure and rehearsal schedule.
[48] Wanda Jakubíčková, a fellow citizen of Martinů from Polička, guided them during their stay in London; Hubert Foss headed the music department of Oxford University Press under whose patronage the festival was held.
[49] *Carillon* variations (op. 16).
[50] Kaprálová's mention is puzzling, since the statue standing in the street in front of the hotel window is in fact that of the naval officer Francis Garnier.
[51] Worlds without a name.
[52] *Špalíček* was Kaprálová's nickname for Martinů. The meaning of the word is a little chunk of wood but also a little song book or a hymnal.
[53] Kaprálová playfully changes her father's first name into a quasi-masculine version of her own first name.
[54] One of the nicknames she gave herself.
[55] Rudolf Firkušný.
[56] a - a - a, the first letter of the Czech word *ano*. Absentminded Kaprálová was about to say yes in Czech.

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Letter of Vítězslava Kaprálová Sr. to Jaroslav Bužga. Undated draft letter (ca. 1955), 4 pp. Private collection.
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Vach, Ota. "Ke vzpomínkám na Vitku." Typewritten copy of an unpublished manuscript (ca. 1991), 17 pp. Private collection.
Vojtíšková, Lenka. "Přednáška o V. Kaprálové. K uložení jejího popela do čestného hrobu v Brně 16. 6. 1949." Typewriten eulogy, 3 pp. National Museum-Czech Museum of Music in Prague, Lenka Vojtíšková Papers.

Q: Vítězslava Kaprálová is a composer relatively unknown to music lovers. What qualities of musical innovations in her Suite en miniature do you believe deserve to be highlighted for a contemporary audience?

M.H.: Kaprálová's *Suite en minature* is a fascinating work that truly deserves to be discovered! Kaprálová masterfully combines great expressiveness with refined technique. What stands out most is her ability to convey complex emotions through concise forms, as seen in her work's short sequence of miniature pieces. Each movement is like a vignette, a snapshot revealing extraordinary depth and creative energy. Moreover, Kaprálová's inventive manipulation of instrumental timbres is truly remarkable, as she masterfully explores the full range of each instrument's potential to craft distinctive tonal hues. I hope audiences will recognize her genius and the relevance of her music today. She reminds us of the importance of the female voice in classical music and I believe her work can deeply resonate with current generations seeking fresh perspectives.

From the CD booklet *Bohême: Nedbal, Kaprálová, Dvořák, Fibich*. Orchestre Appassionato, Mathieu Herzog. Recorded January 18, 2025 at the Auditorium de la Seine Musicale in Boulogne-Billancourt, France. Appassionato APP005 (2025).

When I looked for light, then came darkness: Unfinished Concertino of Vítězslava Kaprálová

Amaya Sardá

In one of my first sermons this year, I mentioned the Concertino for Violin, Clarinet and Orchestra by Vítězslava Kaprálová. It is a unique work in many respects, both in terms of composition and the story behind it. So let's take a closer look at it together.

Vítězslava Kaprálová's catalogue of works offers a number of compositions in a fairly diverse range of styles; however, I chose the Concertino for several reasons. It is more often talked about and written about rather than performed—in this regard, the *Military Sinfonietta*, *Suita rustica*, *Sonata Appassionata* or some of her songs are presented much more often.

Some people claim that Kaprálová composed many works that are better than the Concertino, but I personally rank the Concertino among my favorites of her works. Musically, it is a downright fascinating composition that reflects both the political events of Kaprálová's time and the events in her personal life. Another interesting fact about the Concertino is that Kaprálová never finished it.

Unfinished opus

The Concertino for Violin, Clarinet and Orchestra is opus 21 in Kaprálová's oeuvre. It is preceded by the Partita for Piano and Strings and succeeded by the song cycle *Sung into the Distance*. Many consider the Concertino Kaprálová's most avant-garde work. Its duration is just over 13 minutes, and its premiere—apart from the Czech Television documentary *The Last Concertino* which will be mentioned at the end of this article—took place in Hradec Králové on January 10, 2002, when it was performed by the Hradec Králové Philharmonic under the baton of Tomáš Hanus. Pavel Bušek played the clarinet, and Pavel Wallinger played the violin.

Three autographs of the Concertino are archived at the Moravian Land Museum under the call number A 27.717. All three were used for a reconstruction of the composition several decades later. It was recorded by the Vienna Concert-Verein under the baton of Doron Salomon, and released in July 2018 on the album *EntArteOpera Festival: Concertos / Double Concertos*.

Written with the war behind one's back

Kaprálová's Concertino came into being simultaneously with the onset of the Second World War in Europe. The unspeakable pain caused by the gradual destruction of the composer's beloved homeland is poignantly recorded in her letters, intertwined with the process of composing the Concertino.

> It was with the deepest pain that I read in today's morning newspaper about the end of our republic. It was like this: I woke up at about 6 o'clock in the morning, burst into tears, and cried until about 9, . . . This afternoon I can't cry anymore and I just wish I were home.[1]

These words were written by Vítězslava Kaprálová in Paris, in one of the letters to her parents. History has recorded the day as March 15, 1939, when the remaining territory of the former Czechoslovakia was occupied by the Nazis. Just three days later, Kaprálová began composing her Concertino for Violin, Clarinet and Orchestra. Interestingly, she wasn't initially clear about which solo instrument would join the violin in the composition:

> I began writing something new, if only I knew what it is. For two solo instruments and orchestra, but I don't know what the second instrument is. The first is surely violin, but the second—oboe? clarinet? trumpet? The character is very explosive, the extent fairly large. Now, after about forty measures, I stopped and must resolve this before I can continue. I probably wrote it for clarinet, but what a strange combination.[2]

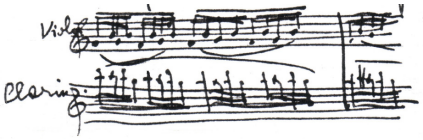

Fig. 1: Concertino, op. 21. Autograph sketch.

Another mention of the Concertino to her parents is in the composer's letter from April 1939, which documents that she had yet to come up with the title for the piece. In the letter, she calls it "XY for solo violin, clarinet and large orchestra." She jotted down a short excerpt from the score to illustrate her comments, and mentioned that she had kept the score from her teacher, Bohuslav Martinů as "a big secret," to his great displeasure.[3] Hand-drawn illustrations were frequently an integral part of many Kaprálová letters.

Kaprálová must have made relatively quick progress with the composition, because less than a week later she informed her parents that she was already thinking about the second movement. At that time, she had finally played the first movement to Martinů who, according to Kaprálová, was enthusiastic about it. Another letter to her parents, dated 11 April 1939, contains an excerpt from the Concertino's orchestration, and a sketch of the main motif carried by the two solo instruments. Twelve days later, Kaprálová was about to finish the second movement of the Concertino, and on June 28, she began composing the third movement, still referring to the work as "XY". As to the world's political situation, the young composer maintained a relatively optimistic view: "Nevertheless, I don't believe much (once again) that there would be war but trust instead that everything will

turn around in 2 years."[4]

The date is May 1939, Europe is being gripped ever more tightly by the Nazi reign of terror, and Kaprálová uses the word "concertino" in connection with her composition for the first time in her letters home. She briefly interrupted working on it to devote some time to her song cycle *Sung into the Distance*, op. 22. "Shoot at those fascists over there, if only with stones," she commented furiously on the situation in her distant homeland.[5] She returns to her Concertino again in a letter dated June 7, writing the title with a capital letter for the first time, but her progress on the third movement is much less brisk than in the case of the first two movements. During the last week of June, Kaprálová admits to her parents that the composition came to a sudden halt and is "resting".[6]

In July, Kaprálová left Paris to stay at the Augerville-la-Rivière castle, where she remained till the end of August. In September she's back in Paris, where she returns to the Concertino and, in her own words, she is "orchestrating and simultaneously reworking" the score but the work is progressing slowly.[7] She simultaneously composes several marches—perhaps this is what influenced her decision to rework the Concertino and revise the instrumentation: "I need wind instruments, my music always has something of the military spirit and you need a lot of power for that."[8]

The year 1939 was slowly coming to an end. Due to the war, the situation became more complicated in many respects. Returning home was now out of the question, and the prospect of studying at the Juilliard School overseas faded away, as Kaprálová failed to obtain a scholarship. Furthermore, the composer found herself without financial support from her family due to the new restrictions affecting international financial transactions, and thus the Concertino had to be pushed aside for paid commissions. One of them was *Christmas Prelude*, written under a very tight deadline and almost immediately recorded for broadcast by a Paris radio station. Since September 1939, Kaprálová had been sharing accommodation (in a villa rented by Rudolf Kundera at 57 Rue Reille) with a group of other artists who included her future husband Jiří Mucha. "We are doing well, trying to make up for the warmth of family."[9] At that time Kaprálová also resumed her studies at the École Normale. She also became active in the Czechoslovak community in Paris, founded a choir, and composed music for radio, theatre and film.

The following year was filled with events, of which the most important were Kaprálová's wedding to Jiří Mucha in April and the planned but unrealized premiere of *Deux ritournelles* (op. 25), Kaprálová's last work, in May. In the spring of 1940, Kaprálová also developed serious health problems that eventually resulted in the young composer's death on June 16, 1940 in Montpellier, where Jiří Mucha had taken her after the German troops began to approach Paris. She left behind a valuable musical legacy, including an unfinished score of the Concertino. In the margin of one of the pages of the score Kaprálová noted "Job 30:26", referring to a biblical quote that reflected her feelings about the war and the painful separation from her family and homeland: "When I awaited the good, evil came; when I hoped for light, then came darkness," —this is how the aforementioned passage reads in the Kralice Bible.[10]

Concertino resurrected with a fade-out

In 2000, the documentary about Kaprálová, *The Last Concertino*, featured, among other things, a musical excerpt from her Concertino, reconstructed by Miloš Štědroň and Leoš Faltus. The act of composing is a unique and inimitable reflection of the soul and creative process of a given composer, which is why the reconstruction of unfinished works is such a difficult nut to crack. Štědroň and Faltus dealt with Kaprálová's Concertino quite aptly—they simply used a fade-out for the third, unfinished movement.

What should never fade out, however, is the legacy of this remarkable composer and conductor. The Canadian organization The Kapralova Society has been promoting her music for decades, and on their website you will find valuable, comprehensive, constantly expanding, and—above all—relevant information about the composer's life and work.

Notes

[1] Vítězslava Kaprálová to her parents, 15 March 1939. In *Dopisy domů*, 227–28.
[2] Kaprálová to parents, 28 March 1939. In ibid, 230.
[3] Kaprálová to parents, 5 April 1939. In ibid, 232.
[4] Kaprálová to parents, 28 April 1939. In ibid, 239.
[5] Kaprálová to parents, 20 May 1939. In ibid, 249.
[6] Kaprálová to parents, 22 June 1939. In ibid, 252.
[7] Kaprálová to parents, 29 August 1939. In ibid, 261.
[8] Kaprálová to parents, September 1939. In ibid, 262.
[9] Kaprálová to parents, 21 October 1939. In ibid, 263.
[10] "Když sem dobrého čekal, přišlo mi zlé; nadál sem se světla, ale přišla mrákota." In Job 30:26, *Bible kralická,* 2024, 980.

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About the author: Amaya Sardá is an active member of the Czechoslovak Hussite Church in České Budějovice, Czech Republic, where she serves as a lay preacher. In her spare time she also writes for *Klasika Plus*.

Life in the Bugatti Step: Czech Avant-Garde between the World Wars. A film by Anne-Kathrin Peitz. 56'. Euroarts (2024), in co-production with MDR and Czech Television.

Czech musical avant-garde between the two world wars included Emil František Burian, who made an impact on more than one artistic discipline; Alois Hába, who founded his own department of microtonal music at the Prague Conservatory Master School; the members of the Mánes group—Jaroslav Ježek, Pavel Bořkovec, Iša Krejčí; Jewish composers Viktor Ullmann, Erwin Schulhoff, Gideon Klein, and Pavel Haas (whose image briefly flashes through the film together with that of the conductor Karel Ančerl); Bohuslav Martinů; and Vítězslava Kaprálová.

In her documentary, or rather *docufiction*, German filmmaker Anne-Kathrin Peitz presents portrayals of five of the above artists: Jaroslav Ježek, Bohuslav Martinů, Vítězslava Kaprálová, Erwin Schulhoff, and Viktor Ullmann. Each of the five selected composers received their own ten-minute segment in the film; however, the one on Kaprálová is only seemingly independent; it is, in the unfortunate Czech tradition, absorbed in the segment about Martinů. As a result, not only does her vignette convey nothing new but it follows the notorious script of popular Czech magazines. The filmmaker also went to some lengths to include in Kaprálová's segment an animated anecdote, allegedly from Kaprálová's life, which was first introduced into literature by Jiří Mucha (*Podivné lásky*, p. 244); in the documentary, it is made unwittingly funnier by confusing the two male characters in the story. (Curiously, in the Czech television premiere of the film on May 7, 2025, this particular animated skit was edited out.)

Although several musicologists were interviewed for the film, their time on screen is is limited, in the case of Kaprálová to fleeting forty seconds. Instead, the narratives concerning Kaprálová, Ježek, and Schulhoff are performed in the film by actors (in Kaprálová's case also via animated skits, in Schulhoff 's case via teledrama).

So why see this film? The strength of the documentary is the composers' music, and not just reproduced music but live performances recorded specifically for the film. The chamber pieces in particular receive such fine performances that you'll wish they were not just sampled. And then there is the historical footage that is particularly powerful in the case of Jewish composers. It documents artistic productions from the Terezín concentration camp, which send shivers down the viewer's spine, especially when watching the faces in the captive audience. So if you can tolerate a few badly-acted scenes, you will also find gems in this documentary whose true heroes are the musicians performing some great music. *Karla Hartl*

KAPRÁLOVÁ. A film by Petr Záruba (2025). Script and direction: Petr Záruba. Producer: Alice Tabery. Editor Josef Krajbich. Dramaturgy Eliška Andršová Cílková. Photography Nina Bernfeld and Petr Záruba. Sound Martin Stýblo. Narrator Antonie Formanová. Live performances by Fabrice Vestadt, Les Apaches, students of École normale de musique, Orchestre Le Sympho, conductor Bianca Maretti, Karolína Alena Bartoňková, Kamila Holíková, Lauren Fleming, Julian Grabarek, Erik Entwistle, Renata Arado, Alena Hron, members of the South Bohemian Philharmonic, Adam Plachetka, Timothy Cheek, Steven Isserlis, and Connie Shih. Premiered at the Jihlava Documentary Film Festival on October 26, 2025, where it received the festival's award for best sound.

The 70-minute documentary—a co-production of an independent film production company Cinepoint and Czech Television—focuses on the last two years of Kaprálová's life in France, in Paris in particular. While Kaprálová's life story is presented via some general historical footage and read excerpts from her correspondence, the true theme of the film is the composer's music and its passionate performers. We will get an opportunity to observe several voice coaches and conductors in action, leading their student singers and ensembles in chamber and orchestral works composed by Kaprálová. There will also be a few stars, notably the British cellist Steven Isserlis and the frequent guest artist of the Metropolitan Opera, Czech bass-baritone Adam Plachetka.

Kaprálová's music that is performed live in the film includes *Variations sur le carillon de l'église St-Étienne-du-Mont*, songs *Jitro*, *Koleda milostná*, *Navždy* and *Dopis*, *Military Sinfonietta*, and *Ritournelle pour violoncelle et piano*. The documentary was filmed on locations in Paris, London, Basel, University of Michigan Ann Arbor, and Sanibel Island, with a few short scenes shot in Prague, Brno, and České Budějovice.

Reports

The Kapralova Society: Year in Review 2025

The year 2025 was one of the most productive to date, owing to a good number of major projects realized during the year, including: two sheet music publications, two radio and film documentaries, and a record number of new recordings of the composer's music that continued to be performed around the globe.

Sheet music

In early spring of 2025, Czech Radio Publishing House made available a piano reduction of Kaprálová's Piano Concerto in D Minor. The project was initiated by Amy I-Lin Cheng, an assistant professor at the University of Michigan School of Music, Theater & Dance, and financially assisted by the university and the Kapralova Society. About the same time, Faber Music published the *Women Composers Piano Anthology* that included Kaprálová's April Prelude No. 3.

Radio and film documentaries

At the very beginning of 2025, the national broadcaster Czech Radio produced a 150-minute radio documentary on Kaprálová's life on the occasion of her 110th anniversary, in collaboration with our society (script Karla Hartl). The documentary was first broadcast on January 20–24, in five 30-minute episodes, as part of the radio series OSUDY. Also in 2025, Cinepoint, in partnership with Czech Television, produced KAPRÁLOVÁ, a feature-length film documentary by Petr Záruba (see the preview in this journal on p. 25).

New Recordings

The year 2025 saw four re-releases and seven new recordings of Kaprálová's music, produced by both established and independent Canadian, German, Austrian, Czech, French, British, and US labels. In January, Canadian label Leaf Music released a recording of Caitlin Broms-Jacobs and Madeline Hildebrand, which included an arrangement for oboe and piano of Kaprálová's song *Jitro* from Two Songs, op. 4. In March, Genuin Records released *Herstory*, an album recorded by pianist Mitra Kotte and dedicated to women's music—her collection included Kaprálová's *April Preludes*. Another Austrian label, HNE, released *Female Composers Vol. II: Lost Traces*, a recording by Duo Artdeco Wien, which included Kaprálová's Elegy for violin and piano. In April, Czech label ArcoDiva produced, in collaboration with the University of Michigan School of Music and the Kapralova Society, an album that has earned an important place in Kaprálová's discography. The disc *Apple Train*: *Music of Bodorová and Kaprálová* features seven works composed by Kaprálová, performed by foremost Czech ensembles and soloists, and includes three world premiere recordings: Two Choruses for Women's Voices, and the songs *V zemi české* (In the Bohemian land) and *Píseň dělníků Páně* (Song of the workers of the Lord). In June, French orchestra Appassionato, conducted by Mathieu Herzog, released their fine recording *Bohême*, showcasing orchestral pieces by Nedbal, Dvořák, Fibich, and Kaprálová (*Suite en miniature*). Kaprálová's *Tales of a Small Flute* was included in the album of miniatures for recorder and piano, *A Few More Surprises*, released by Prima Facie in July. In August, Chandos Records released *Sparks from Ashes*, an album of songs by Dvořák, Bartók, Křička, and Kaprálová, recorded by tenor Nicky Spence and pianist Dylan Perez. Kaprálová is represented on the disc with her art song *Waving Farewell* and the song cycle *Sparks from Ashes*. The four re-releases were compilation discs produced by Naxos, featuring individual movements from Kaprálová's *Suite en miniature* (performed by the University of Michigan Orchestra under the baton of Kenneth Kiesler).

Performances

Besides Kaprálová's songs and her piano preludes that continued to be immensely popular with international singers and pianists, it was the composer's string quartet and orchestral *Suita rustica* that were most frequently performed in 2025. Kaprálová's music was programmed by soloists and ensembles in as many as fifteen countries: Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, and the US. It is worth mentioning that over the past two years, and for the first time in the performance history of Kaprálová's music's, there has been a sharp increase in the number of performances of her works in German speaking countries.

Reviews

The recordings that garnered much attention in 2025 included the previous year's two releases: the double album of Kaprálová's orchestral works, released by cpo, and Cedille's album of songs by Schreker, Ullmann, Zemlinsky, and Kaprálová, recorded by Ian Koziara and Bradley Moore. The cpo recording, which was financially assisted by our Society, was already well received at the time of its release in 2024, but it has since been shortlisted for the 2025 Gramophone Awards and, at the end of the year, it received Diapason d'or de l'année 2025, a prestigious prize awarded by a jury of critics from *Diapason magazine* and France Musique. The Koziara and Moore disc continued to receive rave reviews, this time in *Fanfare*, *Hyde Park*

Herald, and *Third Coast Review*. Of the 2025 releases, the Chandos album of songs by Dvořák, Bartók, Křička, and Kaprálová, with the latter composer's art songs prominently featured on the disc, was the most successful, becoming PrestoMusic's disc of the week in August, and being favourably reviewed in the *BBC Music Magazine*, *Gramophone*, *La Scena Musicale*, and *Opera Now*. Other 2025 CD releases were reviewed by *Klasika Plus* and *Dvorak Society Newsletter* (*Apple Train*), *Whole Note* (*Sing to Me Again*), and *Dvorak Society Newsletter* and webmusicinternational (*A Few More Surprises*). —As to concert reviews, Marek Kozák's performance of Kaprálová's *April Preludes* was reviewed by *Opera Plus*, Bard Festival's presentation of the composer's only string quartet was reviewed in *St. Louis Arts Scene* and *BershireEdge*, whereas Zorman and Jokubaviciute's rendition of her *Legend* for violin and piano was reviewed in *Strad*. As to the composer's orchestral music, a performance of the *Military Sinfonietta* (Leon Botstein and The Orchestra Now) was reviewed in *New York Classical Review* that also reviewed NY Repertory Orchestra's performance of her *Suita rustica*. Another performance of the *Military Sinfonietta*, this time by Trinity Laban Symphony, was reviewed in the *Dvořák Society Newsletter*, and a rendition of Kaprálová's *Suita rustica* by Prague Summer Nights Festival Orchestra was reviewed in *OperaPlus*.

Women in music

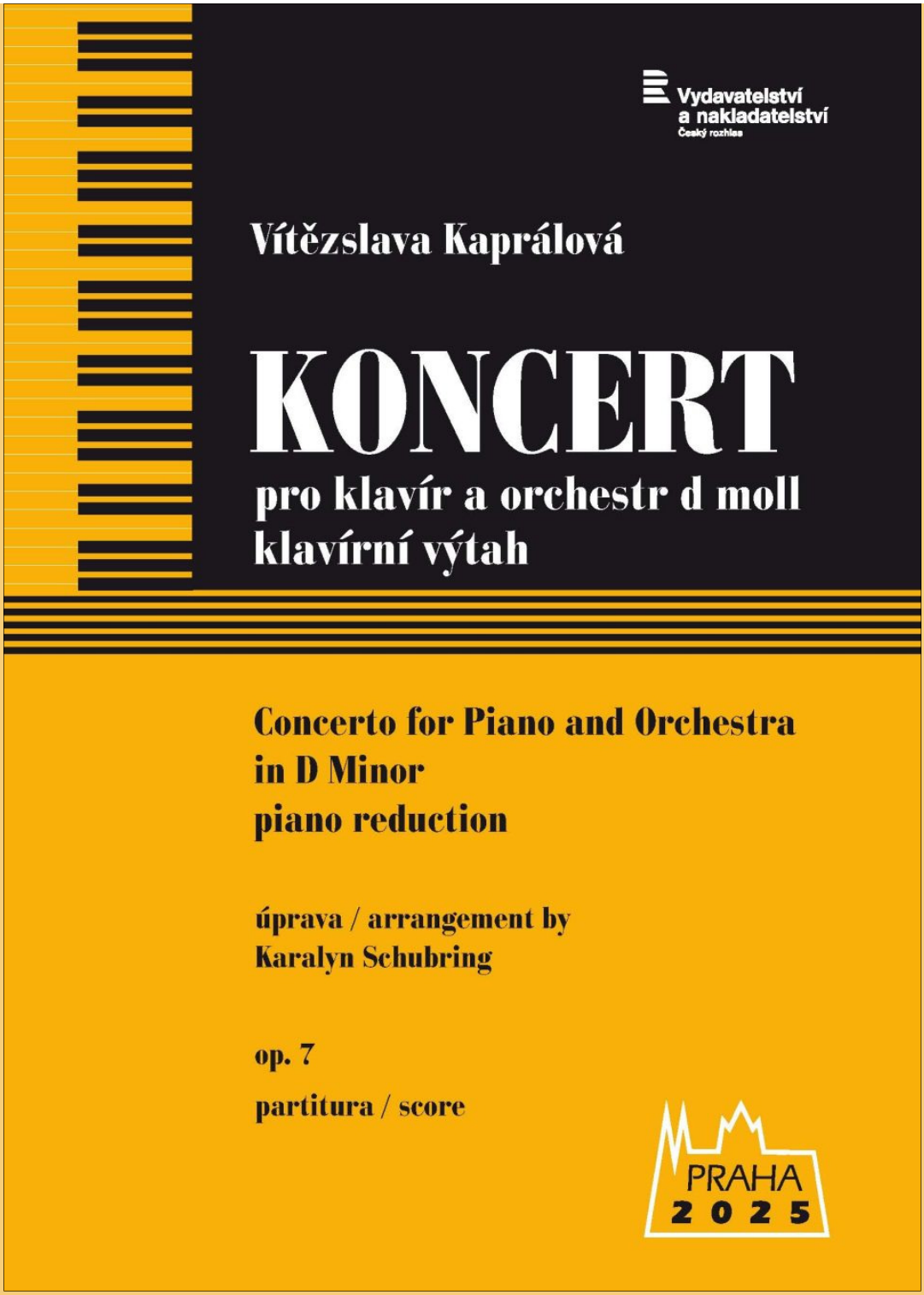
In 2025, the German label CPO released the world premiere recording of Agnes Tyrrell's *Grand Sonata* whose score was published in 2021 by the Kapralova Society. The sonata is the most substantial piece on the album, which also includes Tyrrell's smaller pieces for piano and some choral music. Also in 2025, our open-access journal of women in music changed the frequency of publication, becoming a yearly journal. The first annual issue (volume 23) opened with Asher Ian Armstrong's feature *Vítězslava Kaprálová's Sonata Appassionata: A Pianist Perspective*, followed by Erik Entwistle's article *Kaprálová's Bell Tower* that presented the author's research of the interesting history of Kaprálová's *Carillon* variations. Tom Moore's series *Women of the 19th-Century Salon* continued with a vignette on Mme Esther Becquie. The issue carried the Kapralova Society's report *Year in Review 2024,* and was rounded off with the usual *In Review* section that included two reviews of Kaprálová's debut at the 2024 BBC Proms, written by Patrick Lambert and Chris Kettle. *Karla Hartl*

This recording includes works by two Czech composers, both of them women. Vítězslava Kaprálová (1915–1940) lived in the first half of the twentieth century, and the career of Sylvie Bodorová (b. 1954) has spanned the final decades of the twentieth century up through the most recent years of the twenty first. Both composers have excelled in all musical genres, except that Kaprálová' s short life precluded her from exploring the world of opera, her final planned project.

From the liner notes by Timothy Cheek

This recording has been supported through funding provided by the University of Michigan Office of Research; the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA; and the Kapralova Society, Canada.

Recorded in 2022–24 in Prague and Ostrava.



The Kapralova Society Journal
Editors: Karla Hartl and Eugene Gates
kapralova.org/JOURNAL.htm
society@kapralova.org

ISSN 1715 4146