

The charming miniature suite for small orchestra, *Suite en miniature*, op. 1, by Vítězslava Kaprálová, came into being in autumn 1935, at the beginning of the composer's composition studies with Vítězslav Novák at the master school of the Prague Conservatory. Its ideas are much older, however; the composition is based on the musical material of the composer's piano suite from 1931, still rooted in Slavic romanticism combined with French impressionist elements. That would also explain the opus number, because chronologically the work neighbours in the Kaprálová catalog *Grotesque passacaglia* and *Three Piano Pieces*, op. 9, both from the same period.

The seriousness of purpose and emotional maturity as well as increased pianistic demands of the original piano suite (1931), which Kaprálová composed when she was merely sixteen years old, set it apart from her earlier juvenilia. Its colorful harmonic language at times evokes an almost orchestral sound; Kaprálová must have been aware of this quality when she later decided to orchestrate it. First, however, she utilized it in another composition: a year later, she added to its original four movements (Maestoso, Cantabile – moderato, Andante con moto and Tempo di menuetto) a fifth movement, Tempo di marcia funebre, and under the title *Five Piano Compositions* had it performed in April 1932 at a recital of the Brno Conservatory.¹

Despite the close connection with the *Five Piano Compositions* however, the *Suite en miniature* can be considered as a separate work, for it differs from Five Compositions not only in scoring, the number of movements and their titles (Praeludium, Pastorale, Lullaby and Menuetto²), but, to some extent, also in musical material.³ Its instrumentation is interesting as well. The dark Praeludium, with its mystical, almost tragic atmosphere, is scored for strings and the contrasting lyrical Pastorale for wind instruments; the gently melancholic Lullaby is scored for a small orchestra to which Kaprálová added a trumpet, timpani, triangle and cymbals in the final Menuett, ending the composition in a lightened mood. She dedicated the *Suite en miniature* to the Brno Radiojournal Ensemble that gave it its premiere (under the baton of Theodor Schaefer) at the Brno Radio on February 7, 1936.

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¹ Kaprálová later renamed the fifth piece *Funeral March* and gave it its own opus number (op. 2).

² In the autograph score, the title of the last movement is identical to its original piano version, i.e., Tempo di menuetto; in our published score, we take the title from the performance score which was authorized by the composer and used for the premiere radio performance.

³ Kaprálová expanded the first two movements: she re-composed and newly composed eight measures in the first and two measures in the second movement; in the last two movements she added an introductory measure and made a number of stylistic changes.