

Listening Class Prof. Salemmi Carducci

Project - Activities --

Objectives of our work on historical repertory

Repertory for Wind Ensemble

- A better understanding of one of the most famous pieces for Wind Ensemble and most important Composers
- Seminary and Class of Composition and Analisi ,
- to Know some significant examples of the influence that this pieces and contemporary repertories has had in the repertory for wind Ensemble
 - History of Music in relation to history of anthropology and human affairs, linked to social events in Europe



"Different techniques of composing as well as orchestrating have been used in *Music for Prague 1968* and some new sounds explored, such as the percussion section in the Interlude, the ending of the work, etc. Much symbolism also appears: in addition to the distress calls in the first movement (Fanfares), the unbroken hope of the Hussite song, sound of bells, or the tragedy (Aria), there is also the bird call at the beginning (piccolo solo), symbol of the liberty which the City of Prague has seen only for moments during its thousand years of existence". **KAREL HUSA**

Music for Prague 1968

For WIND ENSEMBLE --- is a programmatic work written by Czech-born composer Karel Husa for symphonic band and later transcribed for full orchestra, written shortly after the Soviet Union crushed the Prague Spring reform movement in Czechoslovakia in 1968. Karel Husa was sitting on the dock at his cottage in America at the time, listening to the BBC broadcast of the events on the radio. He was deeply moved, and wrote *Music for Prague 1968* to memorialize the events. This piece is a standard among wind ensemble repertoire.

The work was commissioned by Ithaca College and was premiered in January 1969 in Washington, DC at the Music Educators National Conference by Dr. Kenneth Snapp and the Ithaca College Concert Band.

The piece is in four movements:

- Introduction and Fanfare
- Aria
- Interlude
- Toccata and Chorale

Although he had been an American citizen for a decade, a fierce stirring of pain, anger, and patriotism for the besieged land of his birth set **Karel Husa's** pen in motion. The result was *Music for Prague* (1968), along with *Apotheosis of this Earth*, the composer's most celebrated works. Although not a tone poem, the composer gives the listener a gripping account of the invasion and conquest of the Czech capital in that year of seemingly universal tragedy, made all the more eloquent by implication rather than delineation. For the Western musical world, Husa became a modern **Sibelius**, Prague his own grimly defiant Finlandia. The work's final triumph would be long in coming but eventually complete. The work was commissioned by the **Ithaca College Concert Band** and premiered by that ensemble under Kenneth Snapp on January 31, 1969. There soon followed an orchestral arrangement which the composer gave with the **Munich Philharmonic** in that city one year later to the day. But the work would not be heard (understandably) in his homeland until 1989. With the fall of the old regime and the election of Vaclav Havel, Husa returned to give the Czech premiere of *Music for Prague* in that city with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra.

As with many of his other works, the composer, as eloquent with word as with tone, has provided insightful notes to *Music for Prague*, and the interested listener is urged to read them on the recording jacket or the preface to the score. The three-movement work begins softly, nebulously (as so often with Husa), yet discordant, as though an unspecified anxiety was descending upon a metropolis as it goes about business as normal. Suddenly there is a brass alarum. A smattering of an old medieval Czech hymn tries to rise. Snare drum tattoos break out; as in **Shostakovich's** *Leningrad Symphony*, the former heroes are now the oppressors. A solo piccolo, said by Husa to be a bird call, a symbol of liberty, closes the first movement. The following one opens with **Mussorgskyan** bell chords, but here there is no rejoicing, forced or otherwise. Rampant long-held siren-like tones and an anguished wandering melody evoke barren nocturnal streets. The finale opens with a muffled side drum; flecks of pitched percussion glint and vanish. A sharp unmuffled snare tattoo and brash fanfare announces a vigorous and ironic section of nervous counterpoint, grows to a forte, and moves inexorably forward until checked by resolute declamatory brass. Chaos ensues, and the scene is repeated to carry through as the coda. It could be considered an open ending, for at the time of its composition, vindication -- social and personal -- would be a long time in coming.



Karel Husa, a Czech-born American composer who won the Pulitzer Prize for music in 1969 and the Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition in 1993, died on Dec. 14 at his home in Apex, N.C. He was 95.

His death was announced by [Cornell University](#), where he taught composition and conducting for 38 years.

Mr. Husa created works in most of the standard concert-music forms apart from opera, including two symphonies, several concertos, four string quartets and three ballets.

Among his works for concert band are two compositions that have become staples, [“Music for Prague 1968”](#) (1969) and “Apotheosis of This Earth” (1970).

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Those pieces illustrate Mr. Husa’s mature style: a mix of formal rigor, dramatic vitality and avant-garde techniques used to illuminate ethical concerns.

In “Music for Prague 1968,” a response to the Soviet Union’s crushing of the Prague Spring reform movement, he incorporated a 15th-century Hussite anthem used previously by Dvorak and Smetana to connote solidarity and resistance, alongside eerie, unsettling microtonal passages and instrumental effects evoking bird song, church bells, Morse code and gunfire.

The piece, given its premiere by the Ithaca College Concert Band in January 1969, became one of the most-played works in the wind-ensemble repertoire, with more than 10,000 known performances to date. Mr. Husa also created an orchestral version, a rendition of which was included in “Shadow of Stalin,” a live album by Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic released in 2008.

“I don’t think of it as a political message for one country,” Mr. Husa said of the work in a 1986 Los Angeles Times interview. “It is universal.”

Karel Jaroslav Husa was born in Prague on Aug. 7, 1921. Following early training on violin and piano, he trained at the Prague Conservatory from 1941 to 1945, studying composition with Jaroslav Ridky and conducting with Pavel Dedeczek and Vaclav Talich. He wrote his first published work, a sonatina for piano, in 1943.

A French government scholarship allowed Mr. Husa to pursue training from 1946 to 1951 at the École Normale de Musique in Paris, where he studied composition with Arthur Honegger and conducting with Jean Fournet. He continued his compositional studies under the eminent teacher Nadia Boulanger, and conducting with Andre Cluytens.

