

VLADIMÍR GODÁR

Vladimír Godár (b.Bratislava, 1956) is one of Slovakia's leading composers. His large and varied output includes an oratorio, a ballet, works for orchestra, many chamber works, educational pieces and over 50 film scores. His music was little-known outside Eastern Europe until ECM Records released his choral/vocal cycle *Mater* in 2006, causing Rob Cowan on BBC Radio 3 to comment "It's as if Janáček, Górecki and Monteverdi have settled on a universal language. A wonderful listen".

Godár began learning piano at aged 8 while at elementary school in Bratislava and then private composition lessons from the age of 13. He went on to attend the Conservatory in Bratislava, and then studied composition at Academy of Music and Performing Arts there, leaving in 1980, graduating with his *Symphony No 1* for orchestra. His student works were influenced by Bartók, serial technique and the sonorities of the Polish school. However, even then he had begun to take a keen interest in older European music, stimulated by his continuo playing with early music groups at the house of the distinguished Slovak musicologist Ján Albrecht. From 1979 he worked for nine years as the editor of the music books department of the OPUS publishing house. He became a member of the Union of Slovak Composers in 1984, and in 1988 became a postgraduate student at the Institute of Musicology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences for four years. He later worked there as a musicologist from 1992. From 1991-6 he was Chief Editor of the *Slovenská hudba* (Slovak Music) review. He was Composer-in-Residence at the Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra from 1993-4, and since 1996 has been a lecturer at the Department of Aesthetics of the Faculty of Philosophy of The Comenius University. From 2001-7 he taught composition at the Academy of Arts in Banská Bystrica. He was also the director of the publishing department of National Music Centre from 1997-9 and is director of the publishing house Scriptorium Musicum.

Godár's music has been recorded on numerous labels including ECM Records, Slovart Records, Pavian Records, Diskant, Titanic and Hevhetia. He has been championed by many distinguished performers, including Iva Bittova, Andrew Parrott, Julian Lloyd Webber, Milos Valent, Libor Pesek, Peter Breiner, Skampa Quartet, Emily van Evera, Scottish Ensemble, Clío Gould, Robert Cohen and Josef Luptak.

His key large-scale compositions include the oratorio *Orbis Sensualium Pictum* (1984), *The Garden of Daryatchangui* (viola, cello and orchestra - 1987), *Tombeau de Bartok* (1995/2002), *Concerto Grosso* (12 strings and harpsichord - 1985), *Barcarolle* (violin, viola or cello and strings - 1993/94), *Stabat Mater* (alto voice, solo violin and chamber orchestra - 2001) and the *Little Suite for Little David* (electric violin, electric guitar and chamber orchestra - 2005). His wealth of chamber and instrumental music includes *Ricercar* (piano quartet - 1977/95), *Déploration sur la mort de Witold Lutoslawski* (piano quintet - 1994), *Talisman* (piano trio - 1979-83), *Emmeleia* (various combinations - 1994/2002), *Sonata for Cello and Piano* (1985), *Sonata for Solo Violin* (2004/5) and *Lullabies of Jan Skácel* (soprano and piano trio - 1986/2005). His film scores have achieved much success, in particular those for the distinguished Slovak director Martin Sulik, many of which have been released on DVD, and have resulted in a complete Godár/Sulik soundtrack album.

Godár has been described as a "musical archaeologist", and certainly his music often draws its inspiration from the music of the past, from folk traditions and from Baroque and early music. Consequently, he often makes use of the harpsichord, and chant-like melodies and drones are a recurring feature. However, his style retains a striking, contemporary sound, ranging from his beautifully wrought *Lullabies* (part of his 'Mater' cycle) to other more acerbic passages such as the intense central movement of his *Concerto Grosso*. He fuses both the past and present in his distinctive style that engages and moves the listener, in a variety of approaches that remain long in the memory.

December 2009



LIST OF WORKS AVAILABLE FROM FABER MUSIC LTD

ORCHESTRAL

Barkarola / Barcarolle (1993 / 1994 / 2008)

solo violin, (or viola, or cello), & chamber orchestra
harp – harp – strings (33321)

Duration 15 minutes

Commissioned by the Festival Melos-Ethos

FP (vln vrsn): 17.11.1993, Moyzes Hall, Bratislava, Slovakia:

Juraj Ľi marovič/Slovak Chamber Orchestra/Bohdan Warchal

FP (vlc vrsn): 26.6.1996, The Hellenic Centre, London, UK:

Julian Lloyd Webber/BT Scottish Ensemble/Clio Gould

FP: (vla vrsn) 20.11.2008, Théâtre Royal de Mons, Belgium:

Daniel Rubenstein/Ingrid Procureur/ Orchestre du

Conservatoire Royal de Mons/Daniel Gazon

Score and parts for hire

Concerto Grosso for strings & harpsichord (1985)

12 strings (33321) & harpsichord

Duration 29 minutes

I. Adagio sostenuto; II. Presto e molto agitato; III. Ground.

Largo e quieto

Written for Cappella Istropolitana

FP: 12. 2.1987, Concert Hall of Slovak Philharmonic,

Bratislava, Slovakia: Cappella Istropolitana/Andrew Parrott

Score and parts for hire

Malá suita pre malého Davida /

Little Suite for Little David (2005)

electric violin, electric guitar, harpsichord & strings

Duration 22 minutes

I. Preludio; II. Fanfarinette; III. Sarabande; IV. Haydu –

Rondeau; V. Pieseð labute (The Swan Song); VI. The Little

Afro-American; VII. Goralské variácie (Goral Variations)

Commissioned by the Bratislava Music Festival

FP: 4 & 5.10.2005, Bratislava Music Festival, House of Arts

Fatra ilina & Concert Hall of the Slovak Philharmonic,

Bratislava, Slovakia: Stano Palúch/Andrej Šeban/Slovak

Sinfonietta of ilina/Peter Breiner

Score and parts for hire

INSTRUMENTAL

Sonáta na pamäť Viktora Šklovského /

Sonata in Memory of Viktor Shklovsky (1985)

cello & piano

Duration 21 minutes

I. Largo; II. Presto agitato; III. Largo

FP: 11. 2. 1986, Concert Hall of the Czechoslovak Radio,

Bratislava, Czechoslovakia: Ján Slávik/Marián Lapšanský

Score and part on special sale (in preparation)

CHORAL

Dormi Jesu (2008)

soprano solo, SATB choir & harp (or harpsichord)

Duration 6 minutes

Text: Anon. (Latin)

Written for the Fribourg Festival

FP: 11.7.2008, Fribourg Festival, Eglise du Collège de Saint-

Michel, Fribourg, Switzerland

(preview 9.7.2008, Piarist Church, Prievidza, Slovakia: Hilda

Gulyášová/Bratislava Conservatory Choir (choirmaster

Dušan Bill)/Maxine Eilander/Stephen Stubbs

Score 0-571-52237-8 on sale

Magnificat (2003)

mezzo-soprano, SATB choir, harpsichord & strings

Duration 9 minutes

Text: Magnificat (Latin)

Written for Dušan Bill

FP: 1 & 2.10.2003, BHS, Church of St. James, Trnava &

Concert Hall of the Slovak Philharmonic, Bratislava,

Slovakia: Iva Bittová/ Conservatory Choir in Bratislava

(Dušan Bill)/Solamente naturali/Marek Štryncl

Score and parts for hire

Regina coeli (2003)

mezzo-soprano, SATB choir, violin solo, strings &

basso continuo

Duration 5 minutes

Text: Regina coeli (Latin)

FP: 1 & 2.10.2003, Bratislava Music Festival, Church of St

James, Trnava & Concert Hall of the Slovak Philharmonic,

Bratislava, Slovakia: Iva Bittová/Miloš Valent/ Conservatory

Choir in Bratislava (Dušan Bill)/Solamente naturali/

Marek Štryncl

Full score, vocal score & parts for hire

Regina coeli

SATB chorus & organ

Duration 5 minutes

Text: Regina coeli (Latin)

FP: (recording session) July 2009, Oxford, UK: Schola

Cantorum of Oxford/James Burton

Score 0-571-52158-4 on sale

VOCAL

Ecce puer (1997)

soprano & chamber ensemble of 7 players

Duration 6 minutes

harp – harpsichord – chitarrone – 2 vln.vla.db

Text: James Joyce (Eng)

Dedicated to Emily Van Evera and Andrew Parrott

Commissioned by Days of Early Music Festival

FP: 15.10.1997, The Castle, Bratislava, Slovakia: Emily van

Evera/Musica aeterna/Andrew Parrott

Score & parts for hire

Majkomašmalon / Maykomashmalon

(2005, 2006)

a) *alto solo, viola & cello*

b) *alto solo, SATB chorus, solo viola, harp & strings*

c) *alto solo & piano*

d) *alto solo, violin, cello & piano*

Duration 4 minutes

Text: Avrom Reisen (sung in Yiddish)

Written for ECM Records CD "Mater"

FP: (a) 8.11.2006, Ludwigshafen, Friedenskirche, Jazz–

Festival, Germany: Iva Bittová/Miloš Valent/Michal St'ahel

FP: (b) 8.11.2006, Ludwigshafen, Friedenskirche,

Jazz–Festival: Iva Bittová/Miloš Valent/Solamente

naturali/Marek Štryncl/Conservatory Choir in Bratislava

(Dušan Bill)

FP: (c) 19.10.2005, Besední dům, Brno, Czech Republic: Iva

Bittová/Barbara Willi

FP: (d) 11.4.2006, Pálffy Palace, Bratislava, Slovakia: Iva

Bittová/Juraj Ľi marovič/Ján Slávik/Vladimír Godár

Score & parts for hire

Stálá Matka / Stabat Mater/ Mother Stood (2001)

- a) alto solo, violin solo, harp, chitarrone, harpsichord, strings (44221)
- b) alto solo, violin solo, bass guitar, harp, harpsichord, strings

Text: Stabat mater (sung in Slovak)

Duration 22 minutes

Commissioned by Mosty-Gešarim (Slovak Tv)

FP: 15.9.2001, Articulated Wooden Church, Svätý Krí, Slovakia & Synagogue, Liptovský Mikuláš, Slovakia: Iva Bittová/Miloš Valent/Solamente naturali/Martin Majkút

Score & parts for hire

Uspávanky / Lullabies (2002 / 2008)

- a) alto solo & string quartet
- b) alto solo & string quintet (2 vln, 2 vla, vlc)
- c) alto solo & piano

Duration 8 minutes

Text: folk texts

I. Preludio; II. Hojda, hojda / Swing-swang; III. Hajaj, belaj / Hushaby; IV. Interludio; V. Beli e mi beli / Lull, Lull; VI. Usni e mi usni / Go to Sleep, Go to Sleep; VII. Postludio

Written for Iva Bittová

FP: (a) 5.2.2002, Concert Hall of the Slovak Philharmonic, Bratislava, Slovakia: Iva Bittová/Moyzes Quartet

FP: (b) 1 & 2.10.2003, Bratislava Music Festival, Church of St. James, Trnava & Concert Hall of the Slovak Philharmonic, Bratislava, Slovakia: Iva Bittová/Solamente naturali

FP: (c) 8. 6. 2008, Mirbach Palace, Bratislava, Slovakia:

Petra Noskaiová/Vladimír Godár

Score & parts of each version on special sale from the Hire Library

PRESS COMMENTS

"It's as if Janacek, Gorecki and Monteverdi have settled on a universal language. A wonderful listen."

(Rob Cowan, BBC Radio 3, March 2007, on "Mater")

"The atmosphere of timeless, serenely enraptured mysticism is maintained beautifully, and is most mesmerising in the Magnificat with its gorgeous vocal line hovering over ghostly tolling and a low string drone. Being on ECM, the sound is predictably impeccable, doing full justice to Godár's ravishing scoring and the superb performances: Bittová will break your heart in the Stabat Mater."

(Barry Witherden, BBC Music Magazine, February 2007, on "Mater", both performance and sound acquired five stars (out of five))

"Entering the world of "Mater", Godár's hour-long rumination on the subject of motherhood, is rather like stepping into the living continuum of music history. Drawing you into a labyrinth of musical memories, this outstanding overview of the composer's recent work work references everything from the ancient intonational patterns of folk music and archetypal Baroque-like textures to the ghostly remembrance of a Monteverdi madrigal and startling dissonances. If this suggests that "Mater" is no more than an assemblage of cultural bricolage, this certainly isn't the case. There's a powerfully distinctive authorial voice at work here, and a rich arterial force courses its way through the collection. [...]

[...] the most substantial work in the collection is the setting of Stálá matka ("Stabat Mater"), which mines a seductive palette of sound from hushed contemplation to impassioned outburst. [...]

Bittová is a thrilling protagonist. I can think of no other

singer whose voice traverses such a vast emotional range, caressing the lyric one moment, raging and wailing the next."

(Peter Quinn, International Record Review, March 2007, on "Mater")

"Rich, raw and uplifting music reveals an important new voice..."

[Godár] uses a vocabulary in the works recorded here that will inevitably recall Górecki, and also at times Pärt and Tavener, though the music's emotional intensity, the particular way in which repetition is used and the use of certain sonorities and chords, relate much more to the Polish composer than the other two, very noticeably in the Stabat mater; aficionados of these composers will certainly enjoy what is recorded here. But though the music may recall them, it does not sound like any of them for any length of time: Godár has his own way of saying what he wants to say, which is, for him, intimately connected with what he calls "musical archaeology", specifically Slovak culture, musical, literary and religious. [...]

There are conscious references to the Baroque at various points but folk monody – the archetypal lullaby of the mother – is what really holds all this material together. Godár's transparent but strong style is greatly helped in this by the powerfully raw voice of the amazing Iva Bittová, but also by the precision of Solamente naturali and the Bratislava choir. I predict a great future for this recording."

(Ivan Moody, Gramophone, May 2007, on "Mater")

"(...) Godár's creation is the stuff of – to use a word I have used seldom in more than 30 years of music writing – genius. No contest for most played album of 2006."

(Ken Hunt, Jazzwise Magazine, Dec 06/Jan 07, on "Mater")

There are hints of Arvo Pärt's devotional minimalism here, with Gorecki and Monteverdi not far behind, but the decidedly Slavic tinge to the music makes it unique... There are repeated melodies and instrumental motifs, and the music has great character; it is immensely moving. The Czech singer Iva Bittová is neither an opera nor pop singer; her singing is "cultivated folk." Her voice has intense colors: it can be warm as well as edgy, it throbs but can be occasionally as cool and vibrato-free as a Celtic storyteller. One can report on what goes on musically here – the way the strings stab dissonantly at times, the way long melodies keep showing up, the way the chorus interjects and takes over in one selection – but the emotional impact is more important and can't be described. Suffice it to say that Godár never lapses into sentimentality or bathos, but he does touch the soul. A ravishing, important CD."

(Robert Levine, Editorial Reviews, Amazon.com, on "Mater")

"A rich collection of works for voice (both solo and choral) and instrumental ensembles... There's a distinctive, possibly major personality here and some welcome surprises."

(David Patrick Stearns, Philadelphia Inquirer, on "Mater")

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