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## Janáček's and Freud's Vienna: the Fight for Recognition of Two Great Contemporaries\*

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### Abstract

The common denominator in the careers of two contemporaries and great men, citizens of Austria-Hungary – Leoš Janáček and Sigmund Freud – was that, in spite of their status as outsiders, they managed to achieve well-deserved recognition. Both non-Germans, they had to surmount a number of obstacles in order to attain their professional goals. The Slavophile Janáček dreamed for a long time of success in Prague, which came at last in 1916, two years before a triumph in Vienna. Freud had serious difficulties in his academic career because of the strengthening of racial prejudices and national hatred which were especially marked at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. After the dissolution of the Empire things changed for the better for the composer, whose works got an excellent reception in Austria and Germany, whereas the psychiatrist had to leave Vienna after the *Anschluss*.

### Key words

Leoš Janáček, *Jenůfa*, Sigmund Freud, Austria-Hungary 1878–1918.

At first sight, it seems strange to draw connections between the biographies of two men exercising very different professions – a composer and a psychiatrist – who moreover had no personal relationship and made no particular observations about each other. Some common traits noticed in the courses of their careers, however, were provocative enough for me to try to establish some parallels between them that could provide us with a little more insight into the position of non-German creative men in the Austro-Hungarian Empire during the last decades of its existence. The stability of the complex multinational “Double monarchy” was illusory and its slogan *Ruhe und Ordnung* (Peace and Order) was more a dream than reality. However, Vienna's unique university and art traditions and

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the whole cultural environment still had a strong appeal for people inclined towards creative work, be it in the fields of science, the arts or philosophy. The works of outstanding individuals in all those areas proved to be of immense importance for future developments on a global level: suffice to mention the physicist Ernst Mach, the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, the psychiatrist Sigmund Freud and the composers Gustav Mahler and Arnold Schoenberg.

Both Freud and Janáček were born in Moravia (the psychiatrist-to-be two years after the composer-to-be, 1854 /1856), but whereas Freud lived almost all his life in Vienna, Janáček stayed in the deep province of what was Brno at that time, although only 100 km away from Vienna and 180 km from Prague. Both of them had many obstacles to overcome on the way to full recognition of their original ideas. Freud dreamed of his work being accepted in the city where he lived, but for Janáček it was most important to be applauded in the Czech capital, Prague. When he was eventually recognised in Vienna, this seemed to be of much less importance to him than a triumph in Prague, which came earlier.

Confronted by the mixture of cultures and the “awakening of nations” in Austria-Hungary, the Austrian population found its supremacy threatened, which resulted in more or less pronounced nationalistic attitudes. The activities of the anti-Semite Pan-German union further damaged the already tense relationship between the Austrian / German people and the others in the Empire – Jewish, Slav and Hungarian peoples. In his *Autobiography*, Freud wrote that when he was a student he was “affected by the expectation of his environment to feel less worthy and not equal to them [i.e. to the Germans] because [he] was a Jew”. “I renounced”, he added, “without much sorrow to belonging to that people [...] and very early I got to know the fate of a man who is in the opposition and is excluded from a compact majority” (Frojd 1979: 9). Leoš Janáček was also a non-German inhabitant of the Monarchy, but living on historically Czech territory. Like Freud, he certainly wished to be treated as equal with the Germans, but contrary to him, Janáček would surely never have wished to be regarded as belonging to the German people. There are many records of his hostile feelings towards the Germans, the earliest of which probably being a letter to his uncle accompanied by a poem of his when he was only 15 (Knaus 1985: 53–4). The explanation can be found in the young Janáček having been strongly impressed by two important events taking place that year: the celebration of the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of St. Cyril who, with his brother St. Method, introduced Christianity to the Slavs, and the Memorial to their contemporary, Prince Svatopluk, the founder of the kingdom of Great Moravia. There are many testimonies to

Janáček's nationalistic, anti-German attitudes evident also in his later years, such as not taking trams in Brno as they were owned by the Germans and not going to the German concert house (Gojowy 1991: 27). His marked inclination towards Russian culture is well-known, as were his activities in the Russian club in Brno which he founded in 1897.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, it was his own decision – though taken only after not receiving an answer to his inquiries about studying in St. Petersburg – to continue his music studies after Prague in German cities, Leipzig and Vienna. He was highly critical of his professors' pedagogical and compositional work, which caused several conflicts between them, but it can be claimed with certainty that those were not political (nationalistic) clashes, but strictly musical ones (Helfert 1939: 121–175).

When Milan Kundera compared Max Brod's fight for Janáček with Émile Zola's for Alfred Dreyfus (Kundera 1994: 224), he probably overestimated the composer's problems in gaining recognition in Prague. It is nevertheless quite true that Janáček faced obstacles that are difficult to understand today. It is interesting, be it said in passing, that Brod served the causes of two of the most outstanding artists the Czech lands have given to the world – Janáček and Kafka.<sup>3</sup>

Janáček's position – like Freud's – is to be observed against the background of the complicated multiculturalism of the Double monarchy. Germanisation was something greatly feared by all the non-Germans in the country. The opinion of Heinrich von Srbá, the great Austrian historian of Czech origin, was typical – he thought that only German blood was the cement of civilisation, of the *Kultur* in Central Europe. Members of other nations could rise to the heights of culture, but only by becoming Germanized, becoming German in fact. The alternative was to stay at the level of their own ethnic origin – that is, at a lower level, respected but subordinate (Magris 1990: 32). The conflict between Germans on one side and Czechs and other non-Germans on the other manifested itself principally through the questions of autonomy and language. Perhaps it was the general obsession with native languages that was the source of Janáček's marked interest in rendering the melodic-rhythmic inflections of the spoken language in his music. The Czech language bearing very distinct features, the wish to transpose them into music could be in-

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting that Freud joined the Jewish community "B'nai B'rith" in Vienna the same year (1897).

<sup>3</sup> Kundera 1994: 290. Kundera believes that they are the two greatest artists to have lived in his country. He also writes that living in Prague was an enormous handicap for Kafka, since as such he was separated from the literary world of his (German) language and from the German publishers, which proved fatal for him. Kundera observes Prague as only a provincial town for the Germans, just as Brno was for the Czechs, from which it could be concluded that both Janáček and Kafka were provincials (*ibid.*: 290, 291).

terpreted as an effort – conscious or subconscious – to assert and emphasize the differences in relation to the German-type music. Of course, Janáček aimed primarily to suggest all the psychological subtleties contained in speech, but it is possible that his method also had the meaning of demonstratively proving the worth of a principle derived from the characteristics of the Czech language, viewed as representing the true identity of the people using it. He conceived this principle comparatively late in his career and the same could be said of the maturation of his attitude towards folk music. Like Bartók, he had not been brought up in a rural environment amidst a living and rich folk tradition; they both discovered authentic folk music later in their lives through field work, which constituted a decisive moment in their development as composers. Having had rather conservative attitudes in their youths, they gradually started producing original, individually conceived works. The common denominator of their compositions could be found in anti-romanticism, but their overall artistic results differed a great deal. It is mainly this anti-romantic attitude that divided Janáček from the creative world of Bedřich Smetana, so it is to be expected that of all the leading Czech musicians, Janáček felt most alien to Smetana (Jiránek 1985: 36). On the other hand, it is likely – as has been posited by Jiří Fukač – that Janáček had a complex of the father-founder of Czech national music. Since he was aware that Smetana was that figure in reality, he tried to surpass him and gain his position (Fukač 1970: 58). Why would Janáček wish that? Maybe the answer could be found in his deliberately opting for an Eastern orientation in music, whereas he most probably viewed Smetana's aesthetic position as too Western. Such a division in the frame of so-called national schools is not exceptional – in fact, it could easily be observed as a rule. It was to be expected, since the first manifestations of national ideas in the music of Eastern Europe appeared at the time of Romanticism, that the spirit of those works would bear features of “romanticisation”, which Walter Wiora wrote about.<sup>4</sup> The next generation, to which Janáček belonged, was active

<sup>4</sup> Wiora was probably the first to use that term in that context in his book *Europäische Volksmusik und abendländische Tonkunst*, Kassel, 1957. In the chapter “Romantisierung und Realismus” we find the following sentences: “Im Übergang vom Weltalter der Glocke zu dem Fabriksirene kämpfte sie (i.e. die bisherige Volks- und Hochkultur) gegen die begonnene Vernüchterung, Entzauberung, Entgötterung der Welt und beschwor die entgegengesetzten Sphären zu neuem Leben: das Poetische, das Romaneske, das Wunderbare. Indem Romantiker diese Sphären auch und besonders in Volkstradition suchten, haben sie Schönes und Köstliches entdeckt, das vorher verborgen war. Aber wie der Liebende zwar tiefer erkennt als der Nüchterne, doch zugleich umschwärmt und verklärt, so haben sie das Lied des Volkes ‘romantisiert’. Sie umhüllten es mit einer poetischen Aura, sie liessen es wunderbar schimmern und leuchten; sie gaben, gemäss dem Begriff der Romantisierung bei Novalis, gemeinen hohen Sinn und Gewöhnlichem geheimnisvolles Ansehen” (146-147).

at the time of the anti-romantic reaction and had more profound and scientific relations with folk music, which brought a marked appreciation of realism. Such an outlook led to the stressing of specific musical characteristics that differed essentially from those present in the Western tradition. By implementing this new aesthetics, Janáček showed his abandonment of Smetana's tradition, thus creating discontinuity in Czech music. On the other hand, Janáček is closer to Smetana than to the younger generation of Czech composers who made their appearance after the First World War. Seen from that point of view, his output marks the end of an evolution.

Czech musicologists have already dealt with this aspect of Janáček's creative personality (Jiránek 1997: 24; Fukač 1970: 58–9), but it is noteworthy that, as early as 1938, the great Serbian composer Petar Konjović wrote about Janáček as being an important exponent of the Eastern orientation in Slavonic music (Konjović 1947: 127–32). Konjović also wrote that together with Mussorgsky<sup>5</sup> and Borodin, Janáček represented this Eastern orientation in that, among other features, his works showed that he had a feeling for primitive/ archaic qualities in music, that he sought simplicity and directness of expression, that the formal processes in his compositions were more evolutionary than constructed and that he was especially attracted to transposing the real world by musical means (ibid.: 126). It can be added that Konjović felt closer to those composers of Eastern orientation and that their influence can be noticed in his own compositions – thus, for instance, he paid special attention to the inflections of speech in his vocal music. When Konjović's masterpiece, the opera *Koštana*, was successfully staged in Brno (1932) and Prague (1935), critics such as Jan Racek, Ludvík Kundera and Otakar Šourek noticed analogies between that work and *Jenůfa* (Mosusova 1973: 259). Konjović, however, didn't know of Janáček before the end of the First World War, although he had studied at the Prague Conservatory from 1904–06 and this is no wonder, since Janáček was almost unknown in the Czech capital before *Jenůfa*'s premiere there in 1916.

When he finally saw the realisation of his dream – the staging of *Jenůfa* in Prague – Janáček was already 62, older by more than a decade than Freud when he was finally elected professor extraordinarius. The story about the reluctance of Karel Kovařovic to allow *Jenůfa* to be performed in Prague is well known. In *Jenůfa*, Kovařovic mostly resented what he described as “inartistic” and “naturalistic”, even the word “dilettantism” was used. Both former

<sup>5</sup> Mussorgsky and Janáček have so much in common that it is strange indeed that Janáček never acknowledged any debt to the Russian composer and is generally taken as “underivative” (See Jiránek 1996: 43).

qualifications being related to Janáček's speech-melodies, it must have been strange for the composer that the special attention he paid to speech, that is to the Czech language, met with such obstacles in the Czech capital; he probably would not have been surprised that something like that would happen in a non-Czech town, but it was painful that it was so in Prague.

The writer Milan Kundera called *Jenůfa*'s triumphant premiere in Prague "a humiliating victory" because it was performed by a man who for 12 years had shown only disdain for the work, had staged it only on the condition that he would be allowed to make "corrections" to the opera, and Janáček was obliged to be grateful to him after all this (Kundera 1994: 226). The composer obviously thought that such a concession was worth the reward of being performed in the National Theatre of his dreams. This can be seen as another common point between Janáček's and Freud's careers, since the psychiatrist (as mentioned earlier) also accepted help from influential people to reach an important personal goal. For both men those were their first really significant successes that gave powerful impetus to their future creative work. There was, of course, still much resistance to be overcome, but from then on their positions were steadily improving.

The success in Prague cleared the way for *Jenůfa* in Vienna, where it had its premiere in February 1918, only a few months before the collapse of the Empire. The opera was staged by special order of the Emperor – against the interpellation of a German nationalist deputy in the parliament (Gojowy 1991: 27) – and continued to be performed afterwards, in the newly-formed Austrian republic and across Europe. Janáček must have been especially hurt by the Prague music circles trying to underestimate his successes even after *Jenůfa*'s triumph abroad, as for him the most important thing was to be seen not only as the most outstanding Czech composer of his time, but also as the father-founder of Czech national music. At the height of his fame, two years before his death, he had to deal with being called a Moravian, not a Czech composer, by his Prague colleagues.<sup>6</sup>

Janáček's fame grew continuously as the opera and his other works found their way to many European stages and concert halls. Did this turn of events soften Janáček's anti-German feelings? It certainly did, the more so as his beloved country finally won its independence at the end of the war. Here are his words: "One day I saw a miraculous change in the town [Brno]. My antagonism to the gloomy town hall [=the symbol of the Austrian rule – M.M.] vanished... Over the town the light of freedom blazed, the rebirth of October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1918..."<sup>7</sup> Both

<sup>6</sup> Janáček wrote to a German musicologist: "I am a Czech composer, not a Moravian one as people in Prague want to designate me" (Muller 1930: 85).

<sup>7</sup> From Janáček's feuilleton "My town", quoted in: Fukač 1988: 150.

as a composer and in his private life Janáček experienced a specific rebirth in the last decade of his life. However, not all his undertakings were successful. For several years he worked on *The Danube*, a large orchestral work which was probably intended to rival Smetana's *Vltava*, but eventually he was unsatisfied with the result and left the work unfinished. Maybe Janáček would have been able to finish the work to his own satisfaction, had he made his continually–postponed journey from Bratislava down the Danube. This, the largest European river that connects the centre of the continent with its Eastern border had for many centuries been the symbol of the Austrian Empire and as such not very attractive for Janáček to compose a work about. Now that there seemed to be no dangers threatening the new Czechoslovak Republic, Janáček perhaps felt free to compose the work, purely to celebrate the beauty of the landscapes surrounding the Danube on its flow to the Black Sea. Maybe he wished at the same time to consolidate his new international career by choosing a subject that would not be labelled as national since it related to the Danube's literal crossing of the borders, of its linking several countries. It is however difficult for composers coming from so-called peripheral areas of Europe, even for outstanding composers like Janáček, to escape the designation of exterritoriality. We can take the example of Theodor W. Adorno who, although estimating Janáček's overall achievement as valuable, saw Janáček and Bartók alike as exterritorial composers who, thanks to their living in agrarian areas of South-Eastern Europe in which the developments of Western music were not fully accepted, did not need to be ashamed of using tonal material (Adorno 1968: 63, fn 3). Such ideologically distorted views mostly belong to the past and both composers are today rightly seen as authors whose ways of solving the crisis of late Romanticism – through a novel approach to folk music – were as legitimate as those of Schoenberg or Berg (Danuser 1983: 48 passim).

It is interesting that Janáček was not only regarded as exterritorial from the Western point of view, but also as somebody extrinsic even to a provincial town like Brno (Fukač 1988: 150). In this light, his magnificent ascent from a Moravian provincial composer to an outstanding figure of early 20<sup>th</sup> century music seems almost a miracle. He would not have reached this position without his perseverance in wanting to have one of his works, *Jenůfa*, staged in Prague. The novelty of the work would certainly have been much more highly appreciated had it been performed at the right time, after the Brno premiere, not having to depend on the good will of one conductor and waiting 12 years for its chance.

In the analyses of some of his own dreams, which he published in *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1900, Sigmund Freud has left

most valuable accounts of his painstaking professional ascent. As Carl Schorske has pointed out in his remarkable book on Fin-de-siècle Vienna (Schorske 1980), the 1890s had been especially hard for Freud. He failed to obtain a professorship, as the academic promotions of Jews in the Medical Faculty became more difficult in the crisis years after 1895. It was in that year that Karl Lueger's German nationalists and anti-Semites won the elections in Vienna, causing the strengthening of racial prejudice and national hatred. Freud's position on the social ladder sank and he became an ordinary doctor, since he was not able to continue his scientific endeavours. The death of his father in 1896 aggravated his personal crisis. All these painful events Freud found in disguised form in his dreams.

Freud's basic analytic principle, that "a dream is a *disguised* fulfilment of a *suppressed* wish" was effectively applied by himself on his own four "Rome dreams". Five times he travelled to Italy between 1895 and 1898, without ever reaching Rome. Some inhibitions held him back. At the same time, Rome became, literally, the city of his dreams (Schorske 1980: 190). In one of those dreams Rome appears as "the promised land seen from afar", implying Freud's relation to Rome to be the same as that of Moses to Israel. Schorske is probably pointing in the right direction when he sees there an expression of a forbidden wish: a longing for an assimilation to the gentile world that his strong waking conscience would deny him (Ibid.: 190). In another dream he identifies Rome with Carlsbad (Karlovy Vary), Bohemia's renowned spa, a city of pleasure and recreation (re-creation) – of resurrection. In fact, Rome was perceived ambivalently by Freud – not only as an object of desire, but also of hate – for in some of his dreams Rome figured also as a symbol of the Catholic Church, the oppressor whom he wished to defeat. Further evidence for such an interpretation of his dreams is given by Freud himself, who explained that Hannibal – the Semitic general who fought against the Romans and whose lifelong wish was to enter Rome – had been a favourite hero of his childhood. As a child, Freud was deeply affected by an event demonstrating his father's "unheroic behaviour" when humiliated by a Christian. These two facts combined lead to the conclusion that Freud subconsciously viewed himself as a "Hannibal" who would avenge his feeble father against Rome, which symbolised the organisation of the Catholic Church and the Habsburg regime that supported it (Ibid.: 191). Hannibal's personality awoke in Freud one more association: "Like him", he writes in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, "I had been fated not to see Rome" (Freud 1956–74: 121).

Freud actually visited Rome in 1901, one year after the publication of his important book. The next year, in 1902, he was promoted to professor, but, as was observed by Schorske, at high

moral costs: "For, against his conscience, Freud had recourse to what was known in Austria as 'protection' – the help of socially influential individuals to secure personal preferment" (Schorske 1980: 203).

Freud knew that he needed to be far above his rivals if he wished to be accepted as an equal in the Viennese society. In analysing his Rome dreams he had to confront himself with the symbolically transmitted evidence of his conspicuous ambition. He asked himself if his "longing towards greatness" had its source in his knowledge of an old woman's foreseeing at his birth that he would be a great man when he grew up (Frojd 1970: 196). Freud also recalled how impressed he had been at the age of 11 or 12 when an unknown man in Prater declared that it was quite possible that he would be a minister one day (ibid.: 197). Another event, this time very unpleasant, was deeply engraved into his memory: after a minor incident, his father remarked that nothing would ever become of the boy (then aged 7) (ibid.: 220). The sphere of Freud's academic success was obviously narrowly connected with his relationship to his father. It is clear that public (professional) and private (personal) aspects of Freud's path to success and glory intermingle to present a vivid image of the status of a non-German, an outsider in the Austrian society of the Fin-de-siècle. That his revolutionary ideas had received a largely positive reception speaks of the prevailing civilized standards in the Empire that was drawing towards its final years.

Both Janáček and Freud belong to the personalities that left lasting impressions on the domains of art and science in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the former marking the end of an evolution, while the latter stood at the beginning of another. They fought persistently for recognition and their efforts were crowned with great success. With the passing of time, Janáček slowly made peace with the German political and cultural pressure, which was helped by the favourable result of the war and the founding of the Czechoslovak Republic. He could not but be happy to see that the successful conquest of the world stages and concert halls passed through German opera houses. Janáček died before noticing the signs of the future catastrophe of the Second World War. Freud, on the other hand, endured the misery of having to leave his country in his old age, seriously ill, after the *Anschluss*. He died in London in September 1939, a few days after the beginning of the war.

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### Мелиїа Милин

## ЈАНАЧЕКОВ И ФРОЈДОВ БЕЧ: ДВА ВЕЛИКА САВРЕМЕНИКА У БОРБИ ЗА ПРИЗНАЊЕ

(Резиме)

Заједнички именилац каријера двојице великих људи, савременика и грађана Аустроугарске – Леоша Јаначека (Leoš Janáček) и Сигмунда Фројда (Sigmund Freud) – може се наћи у чињеници да су, упркос статусу аутсајдера, после доста напора успели да остваре жељено заслужено признање. Будући да нису били Немци, морали су да савладају разне препреке да би реализова-

ли своје професионалне циљеве. Словенофил Јаначек је дуго сањао о успеху своје опере *Јенуфа* у Прагу, оствареном тек после вишегодишњег одгађања, 1916. године, а до тријумфа у Бечу дошло је две године касније. Фројд је имао озбиљних тешкоћа у својој академској каријери због јачања расне нетрпељивости и националне мржње у држави, нарочито изражених крајем XIX века. После распада Аустроугарске ствари су се промениле набоље за композитора, чија су дела доживела изванредан пријем управо у Аустрији и Немачкој, док је оснивач психоанализе морао да напусти Беч после Аншлуса.

Фројд је у својој *Аутиобиографији* написао да је још као студент доживљавао да се од њега очекује да се осећа мање вредним и искљученим из компактне већине због тога што је био Јеврејин. Одустао је од жеље да припада владајућем, већинском народу, док Јаначек, закупањен остварењем својих идеја о чешкој музици, томе никада није ни тежио. Сукоб између Немаца с једне стране и припадника других нација, с друге, у држави се испољавао првенствено кроз питања аутономије и језика. Можда је готово општа опсесија језиком била извор Јаначековог наглашеног интересовања за преношење мелодијско-ритмичких флексија говорног чешког језика у његову музику.

Примери професионалног успона Леоша Јаначека и Сигмунда Фројда и тешкоћа које су на том путу морали да превазиђу пружају увид у један мали сегмент друштвеног и културног амбијента Аустроугарске током последњих деценија њеног постојања, и то нарочито на плану односа према немцима. Чињеницом да су Јаначек и Фројд, после упорног стваралачког ангажовања и доказивања доживели успех, не може се оспорити да је сложена средњоевропска империја привилеговала немачко становништво на рачун других етничких група и да је неуспех у постизању равноправности на ширем државном плану судбоносно утицао на њену историју.

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