

HAAS, Pavel

(\*21.6 1899 Brno, + 17. 10.1944 Auschwitz) - Czech composer and publicist.

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Son of the footwear dealer, brother of famous Czech actor Hugo Haas.

After matric he studied at Brno conservatory with Jan Kunc and Wilem Petrželka, afterwards at the Brno branch of Prague conservatory under L. Janacek. (1921-22). He worked as a secretary of Moravian Composers Club, as an accompanist in Brno theatre and a music critic for National News and National Lists. For race reasons he was arrested in December 1949 by gestapo, dragged to Terezin and from there to Auschwitz, where he died.

Haas developed as a composer first under the influence of L. Janacek. ("Saddened scherzo", op. 5, 1921). Latter he was more orientated towards French modern music. Drawing from a wide musical universe, he was using Hebrew psalm melodies, old Czech chorals, jazz dance elements and new sounds of avantgarde music, following Stravinsky, Honegger, a. o.

Tragicomical opera on medieval theme named "Charlatan", and his own libretto, produced in Brno in April 1938, is assumed to be the best of his works.

The refined composer left us 3 string quartets, brass quintet, Suite for piano, incidental music to plays (Buchner's Vozzek, a. o.), and also some film music.

"Suita", for oboe and piano (1939), citing St. Wenceslas Choral and a famous hymn of protestant rebels "Fighters of God" (Kdož jsů boží bojovníci), is one of first protest compositions against nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia.

Haas did not abandon his music even in the concentration camp, where he composed a feisty song for male choir "Al's fod", with Hebrew text, "Studies for string orchestra" and also "Four songs on Chinese poetry texts", for bass voice and piano.

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KRASA, Hans,

(\* 30.11.1899 Prague, + after 16.10.1944 in Auschwitz) - Czech-German composer and pianist

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His father was a wealthy Prague advocate, mother originated from Zatec and directed the family towards the German world. Krasa was growing up as a pampered "wunderkind".

After matric he studied composition under Alexander Zemlinsky on Prague Deutsche Akademie für Musik und darstellende Kunst and graduated in 1920 by composing "Orchestral songs", op. 1, on 4 texts of Morgenstern's Gallows' Songs. Critics praised composer's sense for musical grotesque.

This is showing in his following compositions even as a persiflage of romantic style's cliché.

Financially secure, Krasa - thanks to his "inborn lethargy" - was not a prolific composer. Between 1920-38 he completed only 8 compositions, but all had been published by renowned European publishers.

In Prague, closest to his artistic orientation were the members of Mánes group (P. Bořkovec, Iša Krejčí).

"Five songs, op. 4" presents a departure from aphoristic short forms, then follows the cantata "Die Erde ist des Herrn" (The Earth belongs to the Lord). In 1933, at the New German Theatre and under the baton of chief dirigent George Szell, Krasa's opera "Dream Engagement" after Dostojevsky's novel, was produced.

In 1935 Krasa composed an incidental music for A. Hoffmeister's play "Youth at play", which was produced by E.F. Burian, then, after 3 years, a short children's opera "Brundibár" - also on

libretto of A. Hoffmeister.

On 10.8.1942 Krasa had been deported to Terezín where he yet managed to compose "Trio for strings and" 3 Songs after Rimbaud poems". In September 1943 his opera "Brundibár" had been staged there and in the extreme conditions of this concentration camp succeeded to have the run of 55 performances.

The composer and all the children - actors/singers - than perished at Auschwitz. Thus Krasa's opera became a symbol : An art , represented by the pure children's play as an antithesis of the murderous totalitarian power.

As from the 70ties , opera "Brundibár" has a wide international publicity and has been presented in many countries all over the world.