Musicologica Austriaca

“This the Czechs Can Teach Us”: National Conflict, Transnational Opera, and Imperial Politics at the 1892 International Exhibition of Music and Drama

Christopher Campo-Bowen

All content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Received: 14/05/2021
Accepted: 05/07/2021
ORCID iD Christopher Campo-Bowen : 0000-0002-1754-1255
Institution (Christopher Campo-Bowen): Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Published: 31/07/2023
Last updated: 31/07/2023
How to cite: Christopher Campo-Bowen , “This the Czechs Can Teach Us”: National Conflict, Transnational Opera, and Imperial Politics at the 1892 International Exhibition of Music and Drama, ‘Visualizing Music Histories? The 1892 International Exhibition of Music and Drama and Beyond,’ special issue, Musicologica Austriaca: Journal for Austrian Music Studies (July 31, 2023)
Tags: 19th century; Central Europe; Czech music; Habsburg monarchy; Imperialism; National identity; Opera; Prodaná nevěsta; Smetana, Bedřich; Transnational history; Vienna

This article is part of the special issue “Visualizing Music Histories? The 1892 International Exhibition of Music and Drama and Beyond,” ed. Melanie Strumbl (July 31, 2023).

I would like to thank the editors of this special issue, particularly Melanie Strumbl and Alexander Wilfing, and the peer reviewers, who have all contributed to the improvement of the present article. My thanks also to Annegret Fauser, Andrea Bohlman, Michael Beckerman, Tim Carter, and Mark Evan Bonds, all of whom provided valuable feedback on various versions of this text along the way. This chapter would not have been possible without the help and guidance of the staff of various archives, including the National Archives of the Czech Republic, the National Library of the Czech Republic and its periodicals division, and the music library of the Philosophical Faculty of Charles University Prague.

Abstract

This article explores how national conflicts were defined, negotiated, and resolved (or not) during the 1892 Vienna International Exhibition of Music and Drama. Through a combination of archival research and reception history, I analyze the various approaches to the organization of the exhibition, which institutionalized political formations in the structure of the event and coopted preexisting institutions that straddled imperial and national lines, such as the Prague National Theater. I then go on to explore the transnational resonances of the Czech delegation's wildly successful residency at the exhibition, and how groups both within and outside the Austro-Hungarian Empire instrumentalized the Czechs' triumphs and recast them with an eye toward advancing their own national narratives. While approaches to nationalist issues may have differed greatly among the various stakeholders at the 1892 exhibition, they all agreed on one thing—the power of theater to potentially upend the political status quo.

previous article

back to index

next article

Introduction

> Once a nation, even one that numbers but a few million, feels itself to be a nation and becomes firmly established, centuries of oppression by a foreign nationality will give way. This nation will not tolerate foreigners to conquer them or rule over the opposition by force. This the Czechs can teach us. Nowhere does this lesson appear more eloquently and influentially than precisely in the Czech National Theater.[1]

This passage, written by a correspondent for the Copenhagen newspaper *Dagbladet* in 1892, contains two very powerful assumptions. One is explicit: that once a nation has "firmly established" itself, it will be able to cast off or otherwise evade control by a different nation. In the context of late nineteenth-century Europe, this oppression at the hands of foreign nationalities primarily referred to imperial control of territories within Europe—to be thought of as a nation was already to have access to historical and cultural legitimacy in a way that other subject populations, such as those inhabiting overseas colonial territories, did not.[2] Indeed, the Czech lands of Bohemia and Moravia (today's Czechia), where the members of the Czech nation largely resided, then belonged to the multinational Austro-Hungarian Empire, ruled by the long-lived Habsburg dynasty. The second assumption in this quotation is even more critical than the first: that a nation can "feel itself to be a nation" and firmly establish its existence in the eyes of others through artistic production, especially opera. For that is the original context of this quotation—a review of the performances of the Czech National Theater at the 1892 International Exhibition of Music and Drama in Vienna. Taken together, both assumptions advanced a key thesis about the power of art. They suggested not only that opera could serve as a means for national groups to define themselves in a way broadly legible to European audiences, but that opera could also help resist imperial pressures, whether cultural or political.

That the existence of the "Czech nation" was accepted as more-or-less settled fact by Czech artists, international critics, and Habsburg authorities does not make its character any less slippery. Matthew Riley and Anthony D. Smith propose the following definition for nation, which undergirds my understanding of it here:

> an historical type of cultural and/or political community, one which can be defined as a named and self-defined human community whose members cultivate shared memories, myths, symbols, values and traditions, reside in and are attached to a perceived historic homeland, create and disseminate a distinctive public culture, and observe shared customs and common laws.[3]

Cultural products like music and opera provided opportunities for attaching national significance in such a way that particular styles or works could be seen to stand for or embody the nation as a whole; the work of making these attachments was and is accomplished by composers, critics, writers, academics, administrators, politicians, and other such individuals. In this way, the political work of nationalism as an ideology—defining the nation and working toward the autonomy, if not sovereignty, of that nation—could be done through the purposeful deployment of particular artworks.[4] The 1892 Vienna International Exhibition of Music and Drama was thus a site where nationalist political conflicts could be staged, figuratively and literally. This was especially true for Austria-Hungary as an imperial entity, which included a multitude of different national / ethnic groups in its territory, including Germans, Czechs, Poles, Hungarians, Slovaks, Slovenians, Ruthenians, and others.[5]

This diversity of national belonging almost necessarily encourages another analytical framework when discussing the music and history of Austria-Hungary: the transnational. If the category of the national relied on a commonly accepted, shared set of cultural referents, then the transnational helps account for what happens when ideas, people, and objects move between these different contexts. More importantly, it helps account for the new meanings attached to objects—including more abstract cultural objects like operas—that arise precisely through such transfers.[6] The International Exhibition of Music and Drama presents a unique opportunity from this perspective, in that the stated goal of the exhibition was to bring together different musical and theatrical cultures in one place so that they might be examined, compared, and (perhaps tacitly) ranked. Nineteenth-century opera shared a common musical language in its reliance on tonal harmony that was legible across Europe, and even if the particulars of plot, setting, melodic and harmonic forms were marked by national discourse—as was the case for Czech opera—the intelligibility of the musical aspect of music theater meant that it could move relatively easily in a transnational fashion.[7]

Figure 1: Costume sketch for the role of Kecal, by František Kysela; by courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

In this article, I explore how national conflicts were defined, negotiated, and resolved (or not) during the 1892 exhibition in two interconnected arenas. First, I analyze the various approaches to the organization of the exhibition, which institutionalized political formations in the structure of the event and coopted preexisting institutions that straddled imperial and national lines, such as the Prague National Theater. I then go on to explore the transnational resonances of the Czech delegation's wildly successful residency at the exhibition, and how groups both within and outside the Austro-Hungarian Empire instrumentalized the Czechs' triumphs and recast them with an eye toward advancing their own national narratives. My research shows that, while approaches to nationalist issues may have differed greatly among the various stakeholders at the 1892 exhibition, they all agreed on one thing—the power of theater to potentially upend the political status quo. Finally, I argue that the reception of the Prague National Theater in Vienna can help address a methodological issue. The transnational legibility of opera as musical culture, as represented by the success of the National Theater's performances of Bedřich Smetana's operas *Prodaná nevěsta* (*The Bartered Bride*) and *Dalibor*, allowed for the transfer of / desire for the artform's potential political impact in new and different national contexts. Following from this, the degree to which opera's meaning can be apprehended and reprocessed in new contexts can help us determine the extent to which we can consider it a transnational art form.

National Representation at the Exhibition: Periodicals, Bureaucracy, and Politics

The International Exhibition of Music and Theater drew the attention of commentators from across Europe, both for the stage works it hosted as well as its political theater. Performances by the Czech National Theater alone were reviewed in Polish, Russian, Slovenian, Hungarian, German, English, Danish, and French-language newspapers, not to mention the large volume of coverage published in Viennese and Prague periodicals. The director of the National Theater, a journalist, writer, and playwright named František Adolf Šubert (1849–1915), knew well the power of such geographically diverse reviews. Immediately prior to the National Theater company's departure for the exhibition, on May 27, 1892, the executive committee of the National Theater Association, which ran the theater financially, resolved to publish a small commemorative brochure memorializing the residency. It was supposed to feature "short descriptions of diagrams of the National Theater as exhibited in the Viennese rotunda [of the exhibition theater]" and not much more.[8] What was eventually published under the auspices of the association, however, was instead a 222-page volume titled *The Czech National Theater at the First International Exhibition of Music and Theater in Vienna 1892*, edited by Šubert, that assembled a collection of reports on the theater's guest residency as a chronology of the performances.[9] Šubert created both German- and Czech-language editions, indicating that its intended audience included not only readers in Czech-dominated spaces like Prague, but also those in other parts of the Habsburg Empire and abroad.

Šubert's volume represents a valuable source for writing about the National Theater's performances, but as with any published source, and especially promotional ones, its use occasions some caution. The response to the performances was overwhelmingly positive, especially that of the first night, when the National Theater company presented *The Bartered Bride* with its original Czech text, a fact that can be ascertained by examining the coverage of various Viennese newspapers.[10] Šubert did make an effort to appear objective about the

logistical and political difficulties surrounding the exhibition, especially in detailing the early concerns of stakeholders in Prague about the advisability of taking part in an exhibition in the imperial capital. However, as some slight differences between the German and Czech versions of the text make clear, Šubert was careful about how he included or did not include certain passages in reviews, indicating an awareness of audience and the potential impacts of the publication. For example, Šubert included the following passage, originally published in the *Wiener Tagblatt (*Vienna daily*)*, in the Czech-language version of his volume, but not the German-language one:

> Let it be noted that, to the honor of the Viennese, it did not occur to any of them to consider the Czechs evil, that the Vltavian sounds in no way uncomfortably offended anyone, that on the contrary, our guests from Prague and also Czechs living in Vienna found everywhere the friendliest and most affable interest, even though, as is understandable, they rather ostentatiously put their nationality on parade.[11]

As a member of the Old Czech political party, Šubert was of a more conservative orientation that favored compromise with imperial authorities. The Old Czech party was dominant in Czech regional and imperial politics during the 1870s and 1880s, fading from electoral prominence only with the elections of 1891. Initially, the Old Czechs had advocated for passive resistance to imperial governance by boycotting both the Bohemian diet and the Reichsrat. With the appointment of Count Eduard Taaffe as minister-president of the Reichsrat in 1879, negotiations began for Czech reentry to political institutions, and eventually both the Young and Old Czechs returned to the diet and Reichsrat. The latter held more seats, especially in the Reichsrat, where they helped form a pro-government majority in concert with Galician landowners and German clerical conservatives in exchange for a few relatively small but notable concessions.[12] Šubert's accommodationist view may have led him to emphasize the friendly, if somewhat paternalistic, response of the Viennese to Czech artists and sounds in the midst of the imperial capital embodied by the above quotation.

Exhibition organizers were nevertheless keenly aware of the national politics inherent in organizing the exhibition. Various national committees were established in order to organize the acquisition and display of items in the exhibition halls; this act alone displayed and helped further reify not only the existence of particular nations, nation-states, and empires, but also the idea that these nations could be represented through appeals to specific musical ideas, artworks, and their creators. These committees included groups from Italy, Spain, Great Britain and Ireland, and Russia, all of which were sufficiently well-organized and unified (whatever the internal diversity or political stability of these states) to produce catalogues of their exhibition contributions.[13] Austria-Hungary, however, faced a number of issues in how it organized the various contributions of its component nations. Hungary initially displayed very little in the physical exhibition, despite its political status as equal of Austria in the Dual Monarchy, which the press attributed to unintentional neglect by cultural authorities in Vienna. It was not until September 1892 that the Hungarian Ministry of Culture got involved and decided to open a larger exhibit and commit the Hungarian National Theater to a series of performances. It ended up being the last group to perform in the exhibition theater, from October 1–6, 1892.[14]

Poland, having been partitioned at the end of the eighteenth century, proved complicated from a national committee perspective. The lead organizers were members of the landowning nobility of Galicia, otherwise known as Austrian Poland, and many were involved at high levels in Taaffe's government. Galicia was part of Cisleithania, a designation that refers to the Leitha River:

Cisleithania included those lands to the west of the river, and Transleithania those to the east. In practice, Transleithania encompassed the Kingdom of Hungary and the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia, and Cisleithania was everything else, including parts of what are today Poland and Czechia. By choosing to name their committee the "Committee for the Participation of Polish Art," the Galician nobles relied on the slippage inherent in using national descriptors for both polities and cultural affairs, appealing to a broader sense of national culture and evading the narrower provincial status of Galicia. By focusing on Polish culture writ large, they could lay claim to musical works and composers who were, in geographic terms, subjects of Prussian Poland, Russian Poland, and the former Republic of Kraków, and in so doing distinguish themselves from Austria.[15]

If Polish organizers managed to avoid being subordinated to Cisleithanian oversight through their appeals to a greater Polish culture, if not their status as nobility and high-level government functionaries, no such option was available to Czech organizers. A Bohemian national committee for the permanent exhibition was established in 1891 under the leadership of Prince Ferdinand Lobkowicz, who sat in both the Reichsrat and the Bohemian Diet as representative of the landowning Bohemian nobility, and that committee was then further divided into parallel Czech and German sections. The Czech section included National Theater director Šubert, composer Antonín Dvořák, music journalist Emanuel Chvála, and music publisher Augustin Velebín Urbánek, while the German section included, among others, Antonín Bennewitz, director of the Prague Conservatory, and Alfredo Neumann, director of the German Theater in Prague. Further subcommittees were established for music history, theater, music literature, and musical instruments, each of which featured two co-presidents, one Czech and one German.[16]

This organizational structure reveals a number of issues at play. For one, Bohemia was regarded as fundamentally divided between Czech and German national / ethnic groups, each with its own respective culture and potential contributions to the exhibition, and overseen in part by the hereditary nobility.[17] Not coincidentally, this mirrored the political debate occupying the Reichsrat at the time: the controversy over the so-called *punktace*, or sometimes called the Bohemian Compromise. In 1890 minister-president Count Taaffe helped initiate negotiations between German liberals and the Old Czech party that would have divided Bohemian "judicial districts and circuits, chambers of commerce and industry, and school boards according to national criteria, in effect splitting Bohemia into German and Czech zones."[18] The more vocally nationalist Young Czech party had not been invited to these discussions, and with their control of the influential Prague newspaper *Národní listy* they successfully turned Czech public opinion against the *punktace*, which were simultaneously being celebrated by the German press as a victory. So total was Czech opposition to the *punktace* that the Young Czechs devastated the Old Czechs in the Reichsrat election of early 1891, winning thirty-seven seats to the Old Czechs' two; Young Czech deputies proceeded to fight the *punktace* and obstruct proceedings in the Reichsrat, eventually leading to the fall of Taaffe's government and his resignation in 1893. At the time of the exhibition in mid-1892, the Reichsrat was in the midst of the uproar, and the political antagonism it engendered between Czech and German factions was on everybody's minds as the National Theater prepared to make its theatrical debut in Vienna. However, Šubert, Dvořák, Chvála, Bennewitz, and their associated institutions—the National Theater, the music journal *Dalibor*, and the Prague Conservatory—were all linked with the Old Czech party by the end of the 1880s, and thus the model of a nationally bifurcated Bohemia, one that eschewed radical nationalist politics and was loyal to the Habsburg dynasty, came to be instantiated not only in parliamentary debates over the *punktace* but also in the organization of the 1892 exhibition.[19]

The involvement of various Prague institutions in the physical and performance sides of the exhibition, especially the National Theater, was a key example of how the imperial state managed nationalist conflicts and organizing. As Pieter Judson has argued, the ideological bases for both nationalist and imperialist arguments relied on similar assumptions and led to similar outcomes: "the [Habsburg] imperial state facilitated a cultural turn in politics by increasingly justifying its existence in terms of its ability to promote the development of its constituent nations. The self-appointed representatives of the different national communities in turn fought to gain a better place for themselves within the framework of the empire."[20] That the International Exhibition of Music and Theater gained the attention of the Habsburg dynasty, and indeed could be considered a quasi-official extension of the state, was communicated by a number of factors, such as the membership of the exhibition's honorary presidium: besides Princess Pauline von Metternich, the initiator of the exhibition and its *eminence grise*, members included Marquis Olivier de Bacquehem, minister of trade, Baron Paul Gautsch von Frankenthurn, minister for culture and education, Count Elrich von Kielmansegg, governor of Lower Austria, and Johann Prix, mayor of Vienna. The Margrave Johann de Pallavicini, an influential diplomat and nobleman, served as president, and Archduke Carl Ludwig, the emperor's brother, took on the role of the exhibition's protector, while Emperor Franz Josef I himself led the official opening of the exhibition.[21]

The event was thus a way for Austria to communicate not only its high degree of artistic advancement and sophistication, but also promote itself as a civilizing guardian of culture in Central Europe.[22] Figures like Šubert, Neumann, and Bennewitz were not only indebted to the Habsburg state as directors of institutions that benefitted from imperial financial support, but also as elite representatives of national groups that utilized the stage offered to them by imperial officials to advance their respective causes through music. In this light, the 1892 exhibition can be read as means of managing nationalist conflict by letting it play itself out on theatrical stages, rather than in more explicitly political arenas, glorifying Austrian rule through its association with the event. At the same time, it reified a variety of understandings of national belonging and gave opportunities for the strengthening of those causes, particularly through musical and theatrical performance.

Transnational Lenses on National Opera

The Czech national cause, as embodied by the National Theater's performances, certainly benefitted from the stage offered by the exhibition. Despite the political tensions of the moment, the Viennese had welcomed their imperial compatriots while making a show of warmly accepting their Czech otherness, and after the performance of *The Bartered Bride* on the first night of the residency, journalists from all corners of the Viennese establishment went wild with enthusiasm over Czech opera. As one Prague newspaper put it, Czechs and Czech art, especially opera, had suddenly "come into fashion."[23]

The National Theater had prepared performances of nine different works for their residency, but after the rave reviews for *The Bartered Bride*, Šubert changed the program around to emphasize Smetana. Originally, the program featured six operas: Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* and *Dalibor*, Antonín Dvořák's *Dimitrij*, Karel Bendl's *Lejla*, Karel Šebor's *Nevěsta husitská* (*The Hussite Bride*), and Pyotr Illyich Tchaikovsky's *Evgeny Onegin*. Also to be performed were a melodrama, Zdeněk Fibich's *Námluvy Pelopovy* (*The Courtship of Pelops*), and two plays, Šubert's own *Jan Výrava* and

František Věnceslav Jeřábek's *Služebník svého pána* (*The Servant of his Master*). The melodrama and spoken plays went ahead as planned, but Bendl, Šebor, and Tchaikovsky's operas were dropped in favor of three more performances of *The Bartered Bride* and another of *Dalibor*. This meant that the reception of the Czech performance was heavily influenced by conceptions of Smetana—enthusiastically promoted by both the Prague and Viennese press—as the quintessential Czech composer, whose music perfectly represented the essence of the Czech nation.[24]

Figure 2: Bedřich Smetana, 1824; by courtesy of Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Bildarchiv Austria

Outside commentators, representing publications from both independent nation states and other provinces of the Habsburg empire, were no less enthusiastic about Smetana and *The Bartered Bride* than their Viennese and Prague colleagues. Director Šubert included a variety of reviews from different places in his official history; responses there and elsewhere indicated a very suggestive split in terms of the reception of the Czech triumph in Vienna, one drawn along imperial lines. In nation-states and empires with stable borders and powerful governments, the press treated the exhibition in Vienna as an event of mild interest. British papers made very little mention of the exhibition up until the arrival of their delegation towards the event's close. Aside from articles covering the opening ceremonies, only a few papers mentioned the Czech contribution, and just one short article, published in *The Times*, mentioned the widely shared excitement over the performances.[25] "According to universal opinion," the unnamed correspondent stated, the Bohemian national opera "is excellent in every respect…perhaps the best in Austria. They have had a well-earned success in Vienna, and certainly deserve to be heard abroad…[it] has little to envy its Vienna rival."[26] The writer alluded to the unstable relationship between Prague and Vienna, but his primary focus was artistic quality and not political conflicts.

Parisian newspapers were far more interested in accounts of French performances at the exhibition, and while the Czech sojourn to the imperial capital was mentioned only in passing, French writers were acutely aware of the political resonances of the larger exhibition. Walter Vogt, Viennese correspondent for *Le Figaro*, observed that the emperor had not come to see either the company from Berlin that opened the exhibition or the French group that had immediately preceded the one from Prague. "And if he had," Vogt continued,

> would he not be obliged to go and see the Czech actors, the Hungarians, the Poles, the Dutch, the Japanese, who knows what else? To political augurs it was well understood that this would be absolutely impossible; that the emperor, poor crowned dilettante, could not swallow all these more or less exotic literatures; that he would surely awaken all national sensitivities if he entered the theater of the Tower of Babel and did not come back every day.[27]

Vogt's commentary summed up the political importance of the Vienna exhibition in a somewhat backhanded way. The exhibition theater was an international stage, and the emperor's presence at a particular performance might be seen as a gesture of approval, while his absence at another performance could be read as disapproval. Franz Joseph's presence at the Czech performances, for example, would have been read as implicitly supporting their cause, and thus completely upending Cisleithanian political calculus, which relied on granting piecemeal concessions to Czech interests while denying them a similar degree of autonomy as Hungary had achieved for itself following the Settlement of 1867.[28] International concerns were also in play here. Had the emperor gone to see either the Berlin theater or one of the French performances, it would have no doubt been seen as supporting a particular side in the ongoing tensions between Paris and Berlin over Alsace-Lorraine, which had been annexed by Germany following French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War.

Yet for regions and states with much less firm political and territorial footing, the success of the Czechs in Vienna held great promise, for the transnational legibility of European opera refracted

along imperial lines. Writers representing groups like the Galician Poles and the Belgians saw in the triumph of *The Bartered Bride* and Czech art the possibility of more clearly and definitively articulating their own national causes through opera. The National Theater performances paradoxically functioned, in their claims to Czech national specificity, as a blank slate onto which other nationalists could project their own dreams of artistic autonomy. By following the Czech example and demonstrating a clear, artistically outstanding vision of national identity, these other groups could hope that political security might then follow. Yet in aspiring to the grandeur and cachet of opera, critics and musicians reinforced a cultural hierarchy closely aligned with the functioning of empire, whereby the justification for domination rested upon the uncontested assertion of being at a more advanced stage of cultural, political, and/or human development. Such assertions could take myriad forms, whether embodied by tonality, opera, literature, or parliamentary democracy.[29]

In contrast to the scanty coverage from powerful empires like Britain and France, multiple newspapers from the capitals of the three partitions of Poland—Lviv, Poznań, and Warsaw—sent correspondents to Vienna, as did at least one newspaper from the former city-state of Kraków, which had been annexed by Austria in 1846. Šubert included articles from each of these cities in his commemorative collection. While there is little doubt the director's selection of writings was intended to paint a positive picture of the Czechs' reception, the wide variety and differing scope of the various reviews testifies to the fact that Šubert was not single-mindedly including only reviews with overtly political content. Nevertheless, writers from Lemberg / Lwów / Lviv and Warsaw, the capitals of Austrian and Russian Poland, respectively, noted the potential for national self-definition through artistic excellence demonstrated by the Czechs.[30]

That the works presented by the Czech National Theater were both of high quality and quintessentially Czech was an opinion held widely in the Polish press. A critic for the Kraków *Kurjer Polski* (Polish courier) closed his article with the following general reflection on the Czech residency in Vienna:

> Many a lesson could be drawn for us from the Czechs' visit to Vienna with a view to the future output of Polish society. The first thing would be to make sure to perform things that are Polish, original, and ours. After the experience that the Czechs created, there is no doubt that only in this way can the benefits and interest of the artistic world await us. It is an important question and deserving of consideration, because our art will not be exhibited only for the Viennese, but for the entire world.[31]

Though the critic's review dealt primarily with the spoken plays and secondarily with the operas, his conclusion speaks to the transnational resonance of Smetana's operas, which were the focus of the majority of journalists writing about the National Theater. Despite, or perhaps because of, the widely agreed-upon Czech national character of operas like *The Bartered Bride*, these works became examples of how other nations could focus on their own national characteristics in creating artworks, musical and otherwise, and in turn achieve their own political and cultural goals. In effect, the message was about specialization: consolidate and strengthen one's own national voice through art, the Czech example seemed to say, and reap the rewards of worldwide recognition.

By contrast, the writer at the Lviv *Dziennik Polski* (Polish journal) brought up the underlying political situation between Prague and Vienna almost immediately in his review, noting that "perhaps no other nation will gain such a triumph [as did the Czechs], and, considering the political antagonism, it was quite a difficult triumph."[32] He recounted his amazement that, on the

tram ride home from a performance in Vienna, he heard enthusiasm for Czech opera from Germans at practically every stop. By his account, only one individual had expressed the opinion that Czech art could not measure up to German culture, but the critic ascertained that person was a German from Tarnopol / Ternopil, at the time a city on the far eastern border of Galicia. The implication here was that those in the know—i.e. the cultured inhabitants of the Viennese metropole—were fully convinced of the excellence of Czech opera, as opposed to those from the far-flung backwaters of the empire. Those reading the review in Lviv, the provincial capital of the same region, could thus feel as though they too were associated with the culture and sophistication of the imperial capital, irrespective of the hundreds of kilometers between the two cities.

In an unusual twist, the author partially dismissed speculation in the German press that the Czech victory would have an influence on political relations between Czechs and Germans, a view that was otherwise pervasive in the reception of the National Theater performances. Instead, Czech artistic success was indicative of a deeper, inexorable, even teleological process:

> Those are obvious fairy tales. The battle between Czechs and Germans is not waged over such trifles; inalienable sociological law directs and guides this battle, and indeed the newly documented productivity of the Czechs confirms—a thing I reverently believe—that in the end their side will be victorious. Last year's Jubilee Exposition was a triumph of Czech industry and Czech skill; the current guest performances a triumph of Czech art. When will our politicians and press realize that to join with the Czechs in Austria is to join with the future, and on the contrary, in joining with the Germans we give our hand to the past? It is for us to learn from the Czechs how to win national existence through hard work, even under the most difficult conditions.[33]

While on the surface, this passage seems to downplay the excitement in Vienna, it ultimately strengthens the argument that the Czechs had, through their operatic triumph, become a model for the process of national self-definition. Whatever this writer thought of the deeper implications of "sociological law," it was only by recognizing and understanding artistic success as an indicator of national maturity that his argument could be made.

Other Polish writers wanted to put this new Czech model for artistic self-determination into practice. Osvald Obogi, correspondent for the Lviv *Gazetta Narodowa* (National gazette) was so impressed by the National Theater performances that he became concerned when he thought of Polish efforts to present their own art to the Germans:

> It is certain that after the Czechs it will be a difficult situation, especially after they established what national music really means, and how it is necessary to cultivate it so that it is brought to such perfection. It is not easy to believe the strange opinion of the committee that to present Polish art means—to perform French opera—in French.[34]

This otherwise strange comment can be explained by what eventually happened to the Polish delegation from Lviv that presented its theatrical efforts at the exhibition in September 1892. The program under consideration for presentation in Vienna featured the Polish composer Stanisław Moniuszko's operas *Halka* and *Straszny Dwór* (*The Haunted Manor*) and one act of a Polish vaudeville entitled *Krakowiacy i Górale* (*Krakówians and Highlanders*) with music by Jan Stefani. It also included Charles Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* as the final performance and even excerpts from Giuseppe Verdi's *La Traviata* and Giacomo Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*. Galician theater authorities in Lviv delayed their decision to send a delegation to Vienna until July, giving them no time to prepare new productions, and their star soprano Marcella Sembrich cancelled at the last

minute. The Polish delegation to the exhibition was reduced to staging *Halka*, *The Haunted Manor*, and a revue of other operatic excerpts, many of them not even Polish (though sung by Polish singers), over the course of four days.

The residency was an unmitigated disaster in the eyes of the Viennese press.[35] The critic for the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* (New Vienna daily) was exceedingly blunt in his initial assessment: "Stanisław Moniuszko is, so far as his opera *Halka* allows for a judgment, no national composer, and yesterday's opera is no national work."[36] In the writer's estimation, Moniuszko had drawn too much from the Italian examples of Bellini and Donizetti, the French tradition as represented by Auber, and even the eighteenth-century minuet, creating a potpourri without a clear national character. Thus "what was supposed to be properly Polish-national [was] reduced to the dances," suggesting that some more fundamental element of national character was missing. In a rhetorical flourish that showed the extent to which Smetana and *The Bartered Bride* were now measuring rods for precisely that fundamental *sine qua non* of national opera, the critic further declared that "to want to put Stanisław Moniuszko in line with Bedřich Smetana would be just as bold as to ascribe to *Halka* the value that is inherent in *The Bartered Bride*."[37] After the success enjoyed by the latter opera earlier in the exhibition, this was particularly damning. However, in its negativity, this review ended up confirming the strategy some Polish musicians and writers had seized on after the Czech National Theater's triumph in Vienna—while Moniuszko's opera had not had the desired effect, no one disagreed that to emphasize the national element in opera was a desirable goal.

If Obogi's concerns would be borne out to tragic effect, the correspondent for the Warsaw *Echo muzyczne, teatralne i artystyczne* (Musical, theatrical, and artistic echo), located in Russian Poland, had higher hopes for domestic efforts in the wake of the Czech triumph. For him, their victory had brought to mind the hope that Moniuszko might eventually find international success, though he was clearly writing before the Viennese lambasted *Halka*. He lamented that

> up to today, we have never seen to it that the name of our composer sounds beyond the borders of our lands. Today, when the de Reszke brothers vowed that they will sing the quartet from *The Haunted Manor*, the world can be convinced that even our musical literature has things that do not remain in the shadow of the sextet from *The Bartered Bride*.[38]

The sudden success of Smetana among the Viennese was now a call to action for other ethnic groups who likewise felt their national composers had been unjustly neglected by the arbiters of international operatic taste. The de Reszke brothers, internationally renowned operatic stars from Warsaw then engaged at both the Metropolitan Opera and Covent Garden, would have proved formidable allies in any attempt to perform Moniuszko for a wider audience. Or so the Warsaw critic thought—the Lviv theater did indeed recruit the de Reszke brothers, but even their star power could not overcome Viennese demands for more legibly and self-consciously Polish theatrical performances.[39]

Critics in other Habsburg lands besides Poland likewise saw an example to be aspired to in the National Theater's victory in Vienna, especially through Smetana's operas. Having reported on the success of *The Bartered Bride* and *Dalibor*, an author for *Pesti Hirlap* (Pest gazette) asked "When Prague can give these two operas to such great success, why could the Royal Hungarian Opera, with all its strength, not also attain the same victory via these operas?"[40] This critic seems to have considered Smetana's operas the larger heritage of Austria-Hungary generally, and rather than use them as a means to advance the cause of Hungarian opera, he advocated

using them to heighten the profile of the Hungarian theater itself. If this indicated the extent to which Hungary considered itself to be on a level similar to that of Austria in the imperial hierarchy, a report from the Austrian Littoral town of Gorizia showed that Slovenian nationalists were on a similar page as the rest of the Dual Monarchy's Slavs.

The newspaper *Nova Soča* (New Soča) published a celebratory passage stating that "the successes of the Czechs must fill the hearts of every Czech, every Slav with pride. We wholeheartedly congratulate our Czech brothers on the great acclaim [bestowed upon them] by our national opponents, for it is the best proof of how justified and deserved such praise and glory is!"[41] Whatever the nationalist stances of the various ethnic groups in the Habsburg lands, it is worth pointing out that nationalist rhetoric or a pan-Slavic attitude did not signify a de facto anti-imperial stance, even if national groups were frequently defined by their exclusion of Others. As noted earlier, in the case of the Habsburg monarchy, nationalism and empire were frequently mutually constitutive, with nationalist rhetoric utilized and even encouraged in order to unite local identifications with imperial loyalty.[42] For example, narratives of union between nationalist or pan-Slavic ideas and Austrian state patriotism could be found in school textbooks. An 1895 Slovenian school primer explicitly linked pan-Slavic feeling and Habsburg togetherness. In describing the inhabitants of the Dual Monarchy, the authors listed the Slavs of the empire first, followed by the Germans and other groups. Primacy was given to the familial links between all Slavs, but cooperation was emphasized over particularity: "each person [works] for everyone, all [work] for each."[43] The resonance of pan-Slavic pride in the transnational appreciation of the Czech National Theater's achievement thus allowed for the expression of national and/or imperial loyalties, depending on the individual or institution.

Outside the confines of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, there were some burgeoning nation-states for whom the Prague National Theater's victory resonated with their own struggles for national identity and cultural independence. A writer for the Brussels newspaper introduced his review of the Czech visit to Vienna by tying the raison d'être of the National Theater to the mythologized history of Czechs suffering under German oppression.[44] This conflict resonated with a Belgian sense of having been oppressed by its powerful neighbors, France and Germany. Having established solidarity through a narrative of subjection, he went on to laud Šubert for proving "that nationalist agitations could powerfully assist in the intellectual development of nations that until recently languished in an ignorance in which they were held by a class or race that arrogated to itself a superiority of, or even monopoly on, intelligence." The victory that the National Theater won, the author concluded, would be politically more effective than "one hundred speeches and two hundred motions in the Reichsrat."[45] Brussels had an elite French ruling class with a large Flemish working class; musicians and intellectuals in that city, typically Francophone, saw in music a means of uplift and integration for their lower class neighbors.[46] Nationalist musical agitation could achieve that uplift, at least in the opinion of this critic, which would in turn lead to national harmony between opposing ethnonational groups, uniting the historically contentious factions of Francophone Walloons and the Dutch-speaking Flemings to create a more unified Belgium. To some extent this echoed post-exhibition hopes for reconciliation between Czechs and Germans in the local context of the Habsburg monarchy. Overall, the anonymous author of the article adapted the National Theater's display of national self-definition and specificity to the quite different local conditions of nation building in Belgium.

Along similar lines, the reporter for the Copenhagen *Dagbladet* (Daily news) saw the Czech performances not only as evidence of Bohemian readiness to stand on the world's stages as musical and dramatic equals, but also as examples of how to elevate their own national causes

through music. In a series of by now familiar rhetorical moves, the Copenhagen correspondent marveled that the Czechs had triumphed in Vienna against all odds and prejudices from their very first performance of The Bartered Bride; he further highlighted the fact that Viennese newspapers suggested the opera deserved to spread around the world; and he felt that the performances confirmed that the personnel of the Prague National Theater measured up against those of any world-class stage.

However, it is the concluding paragraph of the Copenhagen critic's article that most clearly demonstrates how highly politicized the Czech operatic triumph in Vienna could become. This was especially true in a European context where questions of foreign domination and national belonging were transnationally legible in much the same way as opera:

> And alongside the artistic impression that one feels, perhaps one will also take home another, much more valuable feeling; namely the impression of what a nation can do when, in the full consciousness of its rights, it arises to the struggle for them. If we Danes look at what the Czechs, under adverse conditions, have delivered for the uplift of their nationality, we would have to trust that the affairs of our southerly Jutlandic brothers, who really are and will remain ours, will grow in strength, and that any talk of surrender will fall silent.[47]

This passage thus equates the struggle for Czech self-determination, as understood through the National Theater's artistic triumph in its imperial capital, to the struggle of Danish nationalists in the Duchy of Schleswig, which had been fully annexed by Prussia after the Austro-Prussian war of 1866. As in so many other provinces, regions, and nations throughout Europe, this Danish critic was captivated by the idea that Czech patriots could mobilize opera and artistic excellence as means to resist foreign influence, perhaps leading to political autonomy. In its malleability, the significance of the National Theater's artistic success appears distinctly amenable to transnational shifts in its meaning. The fact that this success was accomplished primarily through opera suggests that examining the reception of a given opera in foreign contexts can be an effective means of determining the transnational character of the genre at different points in history.

Conclusion: Czech Teachings

That so many different writers from so many different national backgrounds saw a learning opportunity in the success of Czech opera on the imperial stage in Vienna speaks to the transnational character of the genre and its public importance at the end of the nineteenth century. At the same time, the reception surrounding the Prague National Theater at the 1892 International Exhibition of Music and Drama shows the mutual reinforcement between such purportedly "universal" lessons and the hardening of the bounds of national identity. The methods and frameworks employed by those organizing the exhibition likewise not only presumed the existence of readily legible national identities, but helped solidify those categories by institutionalizing them in the display of musical artifacts and the performance of opera and theater.[48]

Figure 3: Harvest Festival, engraving after a drawing by Carl Huth Publisher and date: Illustrite Zeitung, vol. xxxix, 24 August 1867; by courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

In supporting the exhibition and offering the capital as the stage for these displays, Habsburg officials danced along a razor's edge between national and imperial loyalties.[49] In mobilizing institutions like the Prague National Theater, the German Theater in Prague, the Prague Conservatory, and members of the press, organizers gave support and opportunities to groups whose actions could be used by nationalists in furthering their respective causes—whether those internal to Austria-Hungary or in other, international settings. At the same time, by supporting such institutions financially, logistically, and morally, as well as tapping local elites to contribute to causes positioned as representing the Habsburg Empire as a whole, the imperial bureaucracy strengthened its necessity for the overall functioning of the state in its cultural endeavors.

Among the lessons that the Czech National Theater at the 1892 exhibition can teach us in the present, two things in particular stand out. The experience of the National Theater serves as a case study of the extent to which national categories, especially in European music, were the product of imperial political structures and ways of thinking.[50] Far from being a given, such categorizations were based on the hierarchical classification of different populations along lines of ethnicity and race, if not class and gender. In continuing to deploy national designations without a critical eye we run the risk of perpetuating the nineteenth-century prejudices and modes of thinking that gave and have given rise to so much pain in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The other lesson we might draw concerns the extent to which late-nineteenth-century artists, intellectuals, and politicians believed in the power of art to change the political and cultural status quo. While their efforts and writings may seem rather dated or naïve to us today, the influence of artworks and the ideologies that undergirded them was clearly pervasive. In our efforts today to foster community and effect positive change, we must, as Czech musicians, journalists, and their international admirers did, attend carefully to what music communicates about us, our identities, and the collectives, national or otherwise, of which we are a part.

previous article back to index next article

References

1. Original wording: “Že národ, jenž i málo miliónů čítá, jakmile se cítí jako takový a jest pevně ustanoven, že si nedá vnutiti cizí národnosť, vládne takovou silou odporu, proti níž staleté utlačování konečně musí prasknouti, tomu nás mohou učiti Čechové a nikde nevystupuje toto poučení výmluvněji a dojemněji nežli zrovna v českém Národním divadle.” Quoted in *České národní divadlo na první mezinárodní hudební a divadelní výstavě ve Vídni r. 1892*, ed. František Adolf Šubert (Prague: Družstvo Národního Divadla, 1892), 174. A German version is given in František Adolf Šubert, *Das Böhmische National-Theater in der ersten internationalen Musik- und Theater-Ausstellung zu Wien im Jahre 1892* (Prague: Verlag des Nationaltheater-Consortiums, 1892), 201. ↑

2. This kind of thinking was deeply indebted to the idea that individual populations could be found simultaneously along different points of a single path of linear historical development. For an overview of stadial theories of anthropology and history, especially as they relate to music, see Kevin C. Karnes, “Inventing Eastern Europe in the Ear of the Enlightenment,” Journal of the American Musicological Society 71, no. 1 (2018): 75–108. Such historicist thinking was also a key way that imperial authorities justified their control of subject populations, asserting that the latter were not yet historically advanced enough to rule themselves. See Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 3–23. ↑

3. Matthew Riley and Anthony D. Smith, *Nation and Classical Music: From Handel to Copland, Music in Society and Culture* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2016), 8. Joep Leersen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 21–24, also points out that “nation” frequently bounces between three different poles of meaning, further complicating its usage: the social, the cultural, and the racial. ↑

4. It is a commonplace of European music history that certain composers are regarded as “universal” while others are relegated to a merely “national” position, despite the fact that the “universal” composers largely belonged to a distinctly Austrian and German national environment. This is bound up within the historiographical politics of whose music was considered more valuable, which was undergirded by all sorts of assumptions with regard to the class, gender, and ethnicity / race positions of both composers and those writing about composers. This in turn relates to the problem of methodological nationalism, whereby the fact of discussing certain traditions, groups, or musics only in the context of national issues perpetuates nineteenth-century narratives to the exclusion of other ways of understanding cultural products and their histories. While to some extent this article reproduces the methodological nationalism of talking about Czech music in the context of national conflict, I attempt to counter this by situating my discussion in both imperial and transnational frameworks. On the question of universal vs. national musics, see Riley and Smith, Nation and Classical Music, 1–17. For a discussion of methodological nationalism in the context of historical inquiry into Habsburg Central Europe, see Johannes Feichtinger and Gary B. Cohen, “Introduction,” in *Understanding Multiculturalism: The Habsburg Central European Experience*, ed. Johannes Feichtinger and Gary B. Cohen, Austrian and Habsburg Studies 17 (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), 6–9. ↑

5. Though the terms nation and ethnicity are not fully interchangeable, they are closely related. Scholars have proposed “ethnie” as an alternative to nation. Leersen, National Thought in Europe, 23–24, defines it as “a group bonded intersubjectively by a chosen common self-identification, involving a common sense of culture and historical continuity.” This then leads to a definition of ethnicity as the “collective acceptance of a shared image,” emphasizing the cultural roots of ethnic self-definition. However, I depart from Leersen in that I do not think it possible, or indeed advisable, to remove the accreted connotative baggage of ethnicity, which has come in many cases to be regarded as a euphemism for biological conceptions of race. ↑

6. For a general overview of transnationalism as a concept, see Patricia Clavin, “Defining

Transnationalism," in "Transnational Communities in European History, 1920–1970," ed. Patricia Clavin, special issue, *Contemporary European History* 14, no. 4, (2005): 421–39. A discussion of the relationship between transnationalism, empires, and opera can be found in Axel Körner, "Transnational History: Identities, Structures, States," in I*nternationale Geschichte in Theorie und Praxis / International History in Theory and Practice*, ed. Michael Gehler and Wolfgang Mueller, Internationale Geschichte / International History 4 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2017), 265–90. ↑

7. For examples of how opera could create transnational meaning artistically and politically, see Tamsin Alexander, "Decentralising via Russia: Glinka's A Life for the Tsar in Nice, 1890," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 27, no. 1 (2015): 35–62; and Claudio Vellutini, "Opera and Monuments: Verdi's Ernani in Vienna and the Construction of Dynastic Memory," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 29, no. 2 (2017): 215–39. ↑
8. Original wording: "krátké popisy k diagramům Národního divadla, vystaveným ve vídeňské rotundě." *Protocol* 52, vol. 5, 27 May 1892, "Protokoly Správního výboru Družstva Národního divadla" (Protocols of the Executive Committee of the National Theater), book D50, Archive of the National Theater Collection, National Archive, Prague. ↑
9. Table of contents in Šubert, *České národní divadlo* or Šubert, *Das Böhmische National-Theater*. ↑
10. For an overview of Viennese responses to the 1892 performances, see Vlasta Reittererová and Hubert Reitterer, *Vier Dutzend rothe Strümpfe: Zur Rezeptionsgeschichte der Verkauften Braut von Bedřich Smetana in Wien am Ende des 19. Jahnhunderts*, Theatergeschichte Österreichs 3/4 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2004); David Brodbeck, "'Ausgleichs-Abende': The First Viennese Performances of Smetana's The Bartered Bride," *Austrian Studies* 17 (2009): 43–61; David Brodbeck, *Defining "Deutschtum": Political Ideology, German Identity, and Music-Critical Discourse in Liberal Vienna, The New Cultural History of Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 265–81; and Philip Ther, *Center Stage: Operatic Nation Building in Nineteenth-Century Central Europe*, trans. Charlotte Hughes-Kreutzmuller, Central European Studies (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2014), 170–75. An analysis of Czech responses to the exhibition and their connection to ethnoracial politics can be found in Christopher Campo-Bowen, "'A Promising, Political Sound': Epistemologies of Empire and Bedřich Smetana's The Bartered Bride at the 1892 Vienna International Exhibition of Music and Theater," *The Musical Quarterly* 102, no. 1 (2019): 31–81. ↑
11. Original wording: "Na všech místech slyšet bylo český hovor a ke cti konstantováno budiž Vídeňanům, že nikomu z nich nenapadlo pokládati to Čechům za zlé, že zvuky povltavské nikterak nedotkly se nikoho nepříjemně, že naopak naši hosté z Prahy a také ve Vídni žijící Čechové našli všade nejpřátelštější a nejpřívětivější účast, ačkoli, jakž i pochopitelno, národnost svoji dosti ostentativně stavěli na odiv." Šubert, *České národní divadlo*, 16. See also Šubert, *Das Böhmische National-Theater*, 19. ↑
12. For more on the Old versus the New Czech parties, especially in the political battles of the early 1890s, see Hugh LeCaine Agnew, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown*, Studies of Nationalities (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2004), 133–39 and 146–50. ↑
13. My descriptions and analysis here draw from Theophil Antonicek, *Die Internationale Ausstellung für Musik- und Theaterwesen Wien 1892* (Vienna: Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich, 2013), 65–99. ↑
14. Ibid., 93. ↑
15. Ibid., 86. ↑
16. Ibid., 70–71. ↑
17. Another organizational unit was apparently constituted in Brno in March 1892, but it was only mentioned once in the records of the exhibition. Whether this was an attempt to create a specifically Moravian part of the exhibition is unclear, but ultimately the Czech organizers would include exhibits that showcased musical activities in both Bohemia and Moravia. Ibid., 71–72. ↑

18. Agnew, *The Czechs*, 139. ↑
19. For more on the political alignment of Prague institutions and their relationship to ongoing musical debates, see Kelly St. Pierre, *Bedřich Smetana: Myth, Music, and Propaganda*, Eastman Studies in Music 139 (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2017), 81–84. František Palacký, the patriarch of the Old Czech party and a revered figure in Czech nationalist circles, had deftly summed up his and his party's stance on Austria and the Habsburgs when he famously uttered that "if Austria had not existed already for centuries, it would be necessary in the interest of Europe, nay of humanity itself, to create it as quickly as possible." Agnew, *The Czechs*, 188. ↑
20. Pieter Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 270. ↑
21. Antonicek, *Die Internationale Ausstellung*, 32–35. ↑
22. For more on the ways in which Austria echoed contemporary discourses of empire and imperial knowledge production, see Campo-Bowen, "A Promising, Political Sound," 8–12. ↑
23. Original wording: "Čechové přijdou ve Vídni do módy."A correspondent for Národní listy (National leaves) noted that it was a Prague German-language newspaper that had first made the comment about fashion in a mocking way, but the Czech critic took it as a compliment with political resonances: Š—, "Feuilleton," *Národni listy*, June 9, 1892, 1. ↑
24. For more on the mythologization of Smetana and his music, see St. Pierre, *Bedřich Smetana*, 25–45, and Campo-Bowen, "A Promising, Political Sound," 17–25. ↑
25. The London-based Standard published a short paragraph on June 3, noting that the Czech performances had begun, and the Scottish Evening Telegraph published a small note incorrectly alleging that Dvořák's *Dimitrij* had been performed for the first time in Vienna: "Austria," *The Standard*, June 3, 1892, 5; and "New Opera by Dvorak," *The Evening Telegraph*, June 4, 1892, 4. ↑
26. "Austria-Hungary," *The Times*, June 9, 1892, 5. ↑
27. Original wording "Et s'il le faisait, ne serait'il pas obligé d'aller voir les acteurs tchèques, les hongrois, les polonais, les hollandais, les japonais, que sais-je? Pour les augures de la politique, il était bien entendu que cela était absolument impossible, que, pauvre dilettante couronné, l'Empereur ne pouvait pas avaler toutes ces litératures plus ou moins exotiques, qu'il éveillerait sûrement toutes les susceptibilités nationales s'il entrait dans ce théâtre de la tour de Babel et n'y revenait pas tous les jours." Walter Vogt, "Courrier de Vienne," *Le Figaro*, June 8, 1892, 4. ↑
28. For a discussion of the circumstances leading up to the Settlement of 1867 and the means of its implementation, see Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, 259–64. Judson does note that despite never achieving the same measure of political autonomy as Hungary, both Galician Polish and Bohemian Czech nationalists managed to gain an impressive degree of control over language use, education, and welfare in their respective provinces. ↑
29. Ronald Radano and Tejumola Olaniyan, eds., "Introduction," in *Audible Empire: Music, Politics, and Global Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 7–8. ↑
30. For more on cultural and artistic life in Poland at this time, especially as it related to opera, see Irena Poniatowska, *The History of Music in Poland*, vol. 5, Romanticism: Part 2A, 1850–1900 (Warsaw: Sutkowski Edition Warsaw, 2011), 57–146. ↑
31. "Z pobytu Čechů ve Vídni dala by se čerpati nejedna nauka pro nás vzhledem k budoucím výstupům společnosti polské. V prvé řadě by bylo pečovati o to, aby se dávaly věci polské, původní, naše. Po zkušenosti, jakou učinili Čechové, není pochybnosti, že jen takto může nám kynouti užitek a zájem uměleckého světa. Jest to věc důležitá i hodna úvahy, poněvadž umění naše nebude vystaveno jen pro Vídeňany, nýbrž pro celý svět." Quoted from the original Polish in translation in Šubert, *České národní divadlo*, 148. See also Šubert, *Das Böhmische National-Theater*, 162. ↑

32. “Takového triumfu nedobude si na výstavě již snad žádný národ, a uvažte, že vzhledem k politickému antagonismu byl to triumf docela nesnadný.” Quoted from the original Polish in translation in Šubert, České národní divadlo, 140. See also Šubert, *Das Böhmische National-Theater*, 165. ↑

33. “To jsou zřejmé báchory; boj mezi Čechy a Němci nevede se o ořechy, boj ten řídí a vedou nezadatelná práva sociologická, a právě na novo dokumentovaná dělnost Čechů potvrzuje—věc svatě věřím—že na jejich straně konečně bude vítězství. Výstava lonská byla triumfem české práce a české dovednosti, nynější pohostinské hry triumfem českého umění; kdy konečně seznají naši politikové a sezná náš tisk, že spojujíce se v Rakousku s Čechy, spojujeme se s budoucností, naopak však spojujíce se s Němci podáváme ruku minulosti? Od Čechů jest nám se učiti, jak se prací nabývá národního bytu a to i za nejkrušnějších podmínek.” Quoted from the original Polish in translation in Šubert, *České národní divadlo*, 141. See also Šubert, *Das Böhmische National-Theater*, 166. ↑

34. “To jest jisté, že po Češích bude postavení obtížné, zvláště když dokázali, co znamená hudba národní, a jak jí třeba pěstovati, aby byla privedena k takové dokonalosti. Neuvěří se tak snadno divnému mínění komitétu, že představovati polské umění znamená — hráti francouzské opery — po francouzsku.” Quoted from the original Polish in translation in Šubert, *České národní divadlo*, 146. See also Šubert, *Das Böhmische National-Theater*, 164. ↑

35. Ther, Center Stage, 119–20; and Poniatowska, Music in Poland, 91. ↑

36. Original wording: “Stanislaus Moniuszko ist, soweit seine Oper Halka ein Urtheil zuläst, kein nationaler Komponist und die gestrige Oper ist kein nationales Werk.” W.[ilhelm] Fr.[ey], “Die Musik- und Theater-Ausstellung: Die polnische Oper,” *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, September 11, 1892, 6. ↑

37. Original wording: “was eigentlich polnisch-national sein soll, reduzirt sich auf die Tänze…Stanislaus Moniuszko mit Friedrich Smetana in eine Linie stellen zu wollen, wäre eben so kühn, wie der Halka den Werth beizulegen, der der Verkauften Braut innewohnt.” Ibid., 6. ↑

38. “Až do dnešního dne jsme se o to nikdy nestarali, aby jméno našeho skladatele znělo za zemskými hranicemi. Dnes, kdy bratří Reszkové přislíbili, že zapějí kvartetto ze ‘Strašného dvora’ může se svět předsvědčiti, že i naše hudební literatura má věci, které nezůstávají za sextettem z ‘Prodané nevěsty.’” Quoted from the original Polish in translation in Šubert, *České národní divadlo*, 143. See also Šubert, *Das Böhmische National-Theater*, 172. ↑

39. Ther, Center Stage, 119. ↑

40. “Když může Praha tyto dvě opery s tak velikým úspěchem dávati, proč by jimi nemohla také král. uherská opera se svými silami téhož úspěchu dosíci?” Quoted in Šubert, *České národní divadlo*, 158. See also Šubert, *Das Böhmische National-Theater*, 183. ↑

41. “Úspěchy Čechů musejí hrdostí naplniti srdce každého Čecha, každého Slovana. Gratulujeme z plna srdce bratřím Čechům k tolikerému uznání od našich národních odpůrců, poněvadž jest nejlepším důkazem, jak odůvodněná a zasloužená jest taká chvála a sláva!” Quoted in Šubert, *České národní divadlo*, 154. See also Šubert, *Das Böhmische National-Theater*, 178. ↑

42. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, 331–32. ↑

43. Ernst Bruckmüller, “Patriotic and National Myths: National Consciousness and Elementary School Education in Imperial Austria,” in *The Limits of Loyalty: Imperial Symbolism, Popular Allegiances, and State Patriotism in the Late Habsburg Monarchy*, ed. Laurence Cole and Daniel L. Unowsky, Austrian and Habsburg Studies 9 (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 19–21. An 1889 Czech textbook devoted significant space to descriptions of the Slovene and Slovak areas of the Habsburg monarchy. Its approach to historical narrative emphasized the medieval history of the Czech lands but segued into more “Habsburg” history precisely when controversial figures like Rudolf II or Jan Hus arose. ↑

44. As Andrea Orzoff deftly summarized the Czech national myth, “under Habsburg rule, the innately democratic, peace-loving, tolerant Czechs were viciously repressed by bellicose, authoritarian, reactionary Austrians, under whose regime the Czech language and national consciousness almost died

out. Czech identity was rescued by a heroic, devoted group of intellectuals, dubbed the Awakeners, who brought the dormant nation back to life by recrafting literary Czech, retelling Czech history, and making political claims on behalf of a 'Czech nation.'" The National Theater was figured as a part of this lineage in its efforts to support Czech music, opera, and theater: Andrea Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle: The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914–1948* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 11. ↑

45. Original wording: "et il a prouvé que les agitations nationales pouvaient aider puissamment au développement intellectuel des peuples qui naguère croupissaient dans l'ignorance où les tenait une classe ou une race qui s'arrogeait la supériorité ou même le monopole de l'intelligence…le fait que vient d'entreprendre au Prater la troupe du théâtre tchèque sera plus efficace que cent discours et deux cents motions au Reichsrath." F. K. -A., "La Vie à Vienne," *L'Indépendance Belge*, June 14, 1892, 2. ↑

46. For more on the interaction of class, language, and nation in the context of late nineteenth-century Belgium, see Catherine Hughes, "Branding Brussels Musically: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism in the Interwar Years" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2015), 10–17. ↑

47. "A vedle uměleckého dojmu, který pocítí, snad si také odnese domů jiný, ještě mnohem cennější, totiž dojem, co dovede národ, když v plném vědomí svého práva povstane k zápasu pro ně. Kdybychom my, Dánové, pohlédli na to, co Čechové za nepříznivých poměrů vyřídili ku povznesení své národnosti, musila by důvěra ku záležitostem našich jižně judských [sic] bratří, kteří vlastně jsou a zůstanou našimi, se rozmoci a jakýkoliv hovor o vzdání se, utichnouti." Quoted from the original Danish in translation in Šubert, *České národní divadlo*, 174. See also Šubert, *Das Böhmische National-Theater*, 201. ↑

48. In this manner the Vienna exhibition was very much of a piece with other World's Fairs and related exhibitions. For more on the discursive functioning of such events, see Timothy Mitchell, "The World as Exhibition," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, no. 2 (1989): 217–36; and Raymond Corbey, "Ethnographic Showcases, 1870–1930," *Cultural Anthropology* 8, no. 3 (1993): 338–69. For an examination of the 1889 Paris World's Fair in connection with music's power to help define different communities, see Annegret Fauser, *Musical Encounters at the 1889 Paris World's Fair*, Eastman Studies in Music 32 (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005). ↑

49. This dance on the razor's edge in many ways paralleled the development and history of the *Kronprinzenwerk*, another example of the Habsburg dynasty's strategy of uplifting itself through exhibiting the cultures of its various subject populations. For more on the work and its negotations of difference, see Regina Bendix, "Ethnology, Cultural Reification, and the Dynamics of Difference in the Kronprinzenwerk," in *Creating the Other: Ethnic Conflict & Nationalism in Habsburg Central Europe*, ed. Nancy M. Wingfield, Austrian and Habsburg Studies 5 (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 149–166. ↑

50. For more on this idea more broadly, see Radano and Olaniyan, eds., "Introduction," in *Audible Empire*, 7.↑

Cover picture: Set design to Bedřich Smetana's The Bartered Bride, act I (Prague National Theatre, 1883), by courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.