

# The Kapralova Society Journal

*A Journal of Women in Music*

## Ephemeral Incandescence: the *April Preludes* of Vítězslava Kaprálová

Asher Ian Armstrong



### Special points of interest:

Kaprálová's piano preludes

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Judith Mabary recently noted that “a survey of (Kaprállová’s) music discloses the fact that it contains selections appropriate for both amateurs and professionals, as attractive to students in university music departments as to world-renowned soloists;”<sup>1</sup> this observation applies especially well to the piano music. Exploring any of her works for piano will resoundingly echo the impression that Kaprálová is truly “Europe’s great forgotten female composer”<sup>2</sup> in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time, her biographical context points up the tectonic loss of many other composers in the repertoire, not only Czech,<sup>3</sup> but from all across Europe: “It is not difficult to imagine the chaos, fear, hopelessness, and disintegration of that terrible time.”<sup>4</sup>

In the world of piano pedagogy and performance, students, teachers, and concert artists are often crucially concerned with the interpretative aspect of a composer’s work during study and presentation. While much of the established concert repertoire benefits from well-developed exegeses which have been assembled over time and with consistent performance, the case of Vítězslava Kaprálová underlines the urgent need for published interpretative guidance and for a robust, consistent performance practice to enable her interpretative “puzzle” to be assembled.

One keyboard work which is making inroads on the concert stage and in recordings is Kaprálová’s masterful Op. 13, the *April Preludes*. These four brief but expressively rich pieces are both easily accessible (the score is in the public domain) and constitute one of the best rep-

resentations in the piano oeuvre of her (still developing) “mature” voice. This is not to say, of course, that piano works which precede the *April Preludes* are less attractive or original; there are numerous highlights in her earliest keyboard music (and of these, a special highlight is surely the “Sonata Appassionata” with its huge pianistic appeal and unique synthesis of Romantic and Impressionistic thinking).<sup>5</sup> At the same time, in the *April Preludes*, “everything sounds fresh and persuasive.”<sup>6</sup>

The *April Preludes* come with a somewhat humorous story. Dedicated to the Czech pianist Rudolf Firkušný, their origin was related anecdotally by the pianist: “(Kaprállová) was at the concert, and shortly after the performance she told me that she was composing something for me, some kind of preludes. And since the idea to compose for me occurred to her in April, they would be ‘April’ preludes.”<sup>7</sup> The impression of Kaprálová’s dry wit is further illuminated by Firkušný’s description:

[S]pending a lot of time with Vitka and getting to know her helped quite a bit when I was interpreting her music. Her personal instructions also helped. Her music speaks to everyone in the same language, but people who knew her personally would perhaps understand it a little bit more. Vitka’s personality was unpredictable, like the weather at home in the month of April. We never knew how she would be: sometimes very happy,

funny, and full of life, and sometimes, on the contrary, quite serious. She was well aware of the world situation and the unfolding events. Her personality was charming and her work irresistible, just like she was. We can see many signs of a great talent in her work and the towering heights it might have reached.<sup>8</sup>

I.

Allegro ma non troppo

Vítězslava Kaprálová op. 13

PIANO

Example 1. Vítězslava Kaprálová, *April Preludes*, No. 1, mm. 1–5.

One of the most uniquely exciting aspects of Kaprálová's music for a pianist is surely her distinctive tactile language; the way her music "feels." Stepping into her pianistic world is exciting and illuminating—the personality in her music takes on a new significance, in the same way that it does in the music of Chopin or Debussy. The opening prelude immediately emphasizes this with its sense of keyboard topography: the murmuring helix which opens the piece being immediately followed by a spread chordal "splash." On another, pictorial, level, this is equally fascinating, perhaps evoking for some students the idea of a rainy April day.

For first-time readers of this music, the tactile feeling of this opening passage is enough to acknowledge Kaprálová herself was an accomplished pianist (unsurprising, given her graduating work in Brno—a Piano Concerto). Indeed, throughout all four pieces, one comes to appreciate her understanding of *how* to write for the piano; even where technical hurdles occur, they are more in the manner of athleticism than "contortionism"! See, for instance, the transition back into the opening section:

Example 2. Kaprálová, *April Preludes*, No. 1, mm. 23–24.

An appreciation for the keyboard landscape makes this little "lick" a fun challenge which remains well within reach. Similarly, the end of the prelude fits comfortably under the hand, with chordal collections which seem influ-

enced by how triads "feel"—the difficulty rightly grows with the *crescendo* to the final octave (—and hints at some of the outbursts to come in the second prelude). (Ex. 3 on p. 3)

The second of the set is in some ways the most dramatic and striking. There is immediately a sense that it belongs to the first as a sort of structural/motivic "sibling"<sup>9</sup>—this can be detected in the initial predilection for unison octave writing and the masterful way Kaprálová references the first prelude's opening circling figure in mm. 6–9 (Ex. 4).

The harmonically coloured melody in the opening of this prelude provides fertile territory for developing a vibrant tone colour palette in any artist's playing. The effect is not unrelated from Debussy's in a piece such as the *La cathédrale engloutie*, in which a recurring motive is coloured in a breathtakingly different way by a shifting harmonic background. In Kaprálová's concentrated vision, the sinewy melodic thread seems to go nowhere at first while its expressive underpinning shifts in flashes of harmony. However, this spare unison soliloquy will quickly cast off its harmonic colouring and come to alight on C-natural. A further colouristic effect appears in the form of celestial bells high in the treble; in another composer's hands this kind of writing might invite a reflective, narrative standstill, but here, exhilaratingly, it precipitates the first large outburst in the piece. Kaprálová picks up, discards, and alters ostinato figures restlessly, coming to fixate on one in particular which skeletonizes two jarring tritones (Ex. 5).

At this point, "the music abandons its dreamy quality and becomes cataclysmic,"<sup>10</sup> with an explosive cascade of notes creating an expressive conflagration out of this smoldering ostinato. One cannot but admire yet again the pianistic effectiveness of Kaprálová's writing (was Rautavaara aware of this piece when writing his 1969 *Etudes*?).

*Ephemeral Incandescence: the April Preludes of Vítězslava Kaprálová*Example 3. Kaprálová, *April Preludes*, No. 1, mm. 35–38.Example 4. Kaprálová, *April Preludes*, No. 2, mm. 1–10.Example 5. Kaprálová, *April Preludes*, No. 2, mm. 39–42.

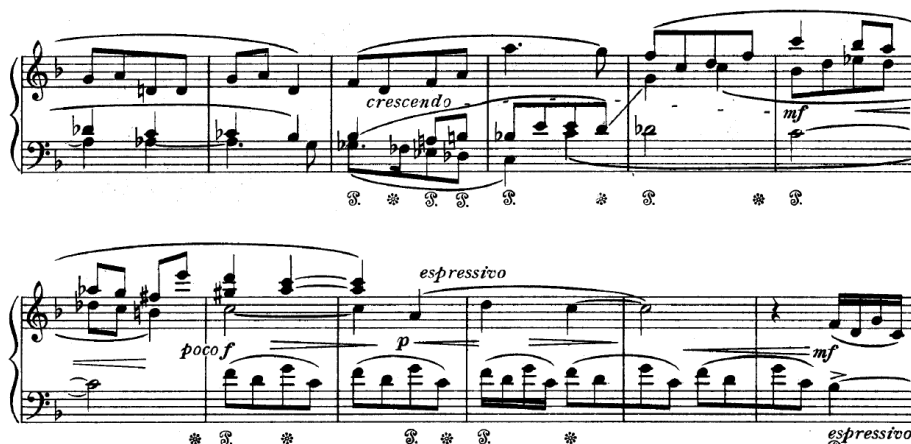
In the next prelude, Kaprálová showcases her compositional prowess with a captivating juxtaposition of simplicity (bringing to mind the “folk-song characteristics” of the earlier Sonata Appassionata’s second movement theme).<sup>11</sup> This melodically-driven canvas seems to similarly channel created folk song or poetry, opening with a perfect 4-measure phrase; its distinctive 3-note lilt gently repeated at the end, as if in a folk lyric. (And this little 3-note motive is an idea

which will keep coming back). The unruffled *cantabile* character is slightly interrupted by the striking moment (Ex. 6 on p. 4).

A student of mine working on the *Preludes* gleefully noted this “mistake” in our first lesson on the third Prelude! Indeed, most pianists who have studied a bit of counterpoint will immediately note the physically and audibly conspicuous parallel 5ths; their appearance here in context of the song-like surroundings seems intentionally cheeky. In moments like this, the personality radiating from the page becomes almost corporeal; in turns “happy, funny, and full of life.” As with the previous companion pieces, Kaprálová exploits every colouring of the theme possible (particularly the closing statement in sepulchral bass octaves which proves an eerie foil to the *dolce*, sparkling recapitulation of the opening which precedes). (Ex. 7 on p. 4)

Entwistle describes the final piece as “...a toccata-like romp in the manner of Prokofiev with a rather macabre sense of humor,”<sup>12</sup> noting additionally that its “theme has been transformed into something grotesque (by now clearly a favorite device of the composer). The melody is now staccato and features a downwards tritone leap, followed in measure two by a chromatic gesture that seems to be laughing at the new transformation, akin to the infernal spirits heard in the finale of Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique*.<sup>13</sup> Pianists interested in the *Aphorisms* or *Sarcasms* of other composers might do well to take this piece into their repertoires. While it seems to synthesize much of the diabolical pianism of Prokofiev, it arrives at an intersection of something more witty and perhaps, even for some, somewhat festive in character (one thinks of the bustle and



*April Preludes*Example 6. Kapralová, *April Preludes*, No. 3, mm. 13–24.Example 7. Kapralová, *April Preludes*, No. 4, mm. 1–8.Example 8. Kapralová, *April Preludes*, No. 4, mm. 14–23.

excitement of a Czech Christmas market). The manipulation of jarring interruptions (mm. 5–6) works perfectly with the teetering, skater-like grace of other passages (mm. 16–23), again set in relief by a sensitivity to colour and tessitura, and the piece closes in satisfying, virtuosic fashion, a fact which alone ought to be enough to attract many pianists. (Ex. 8)

Op. 13 is, in so many ways, a perfect entry-point to Kapralová's music for piano—an incandescent repertoire inviting reclamation and interpretative invigoration. The absence of her meteoric if ephemeral voice from the concert repertoire is astonishing, but there is hope: "[A]fter several decades of undeserved neglect, (Kapralová's) considerable worth as a composer is being rediscovered both in her homeland and internationally. The time is long overdue."<sup>14</sup>

## Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> Judith Mabary, "Vítězslava Kapralová and the Benefits of Advocacy," *Kapralova Society Journal* 13, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 4.
- <sup>2</sup> John Allison, "The Tragedy of Europe's Great Forgotten Female Composer," *Telegraph*, 24 January 2015, [telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/classicalmusic/11365848/The-tragedy-of-Europes-great-forgotten-female-composer.html](http://telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/classicalmusic/11365848/The-tragedy-of-Europes-great-forgotten-female-composer.html).
- <sup>3</sup> Jindřiška Bártová, "Kapralová in the Context of Czech Music," in *The Kapralová Companion*, ed. Karla Hartl and Erik Entwistle (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), 21.
- <sup>4</sup> Michael Henderson, "Bohuslav Martinů and Vítězslava Kapralová," in *Martinů's Mysterious Accident: Essays in Honor of Michael Henderson*, ed. Michael Beckerman (New York: Pendragon Press, 2007), 55.
- <sup>5</sup> Erik Entwistle, "Kapralová's Piano Works," in *The Kapralová Companion*, 38.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 48–49.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.
- <sup>11</sup> Karla Hartl, foreword to Vítězslava Kapralová, *Sonata Appassionata* (Prague: Amos Editio, 2006), 4.
- <sup>12</sup> Entwistle, 49.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.
- <sup>14</sup> Karla Hartl, "The Voice of an Artist: The Life and Music of Vítězslava Kapralová," *Czech Music Quarterly* no. 3 (2008): 19.

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## Vítězslava Kaprálová: Thematic Catalogue of the Works. An Introduction.

Karla Hartl

Vítězslava Kaprálová (Brno, 24. 1. 1915–Montpellier, 16. 6. 1940) is one of the most remarkable composers of her generation. The exceptional vitality of her musical legacy is attested to not only by the continuous interest of performers in her oeuvre, both in her homeland and abroad, but also by the number of monographs that have been dedicated to her life and music, with several in foreign languages.<sup>1</sup> Despite the brevity of her creative life, which spanned only a decade, Kaprálová managed to leave behind a substantial and relatively sizeable catalogue of works, including piano, chamber, orchestral and vocal compositions—forty-six in all, if we exclude the juvenilia, torsos and missing pieces that would amount to about twenty additional compositions.

### *Kaprálová's Oeuvre in the Context of Czech Music*

Among the most valuable works by Kaprálová are her highly sophisticated compositions for piano. She significantly enriched Czech piano literature not only with her sonata, preludes, variations and passacaglias for solo piano, but also with a late romantic piano concerto and a neobaroque partita for strings and piano. The composer's songs occupy a similarly important position; they represent one of the late climaxes of Czech art song and are also notable for the exceptional quality of the poetry she chose to set. Among Kaprálová's chamber works, the string quartet and the ritornel for violoncello and piano stand out; of her orchestral oeuvre, it is the compositions from her Parisian period—the aforementioned partita and the double concertino. Her sinfonietta (so-called *Military*), composed in reaction to the military threat to her beloved republic, also occupies a unique place in the Czech orchestral repertoire. It was with this work that Kaprálová represented new Czech music at one of the last pre-war festivals of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM).

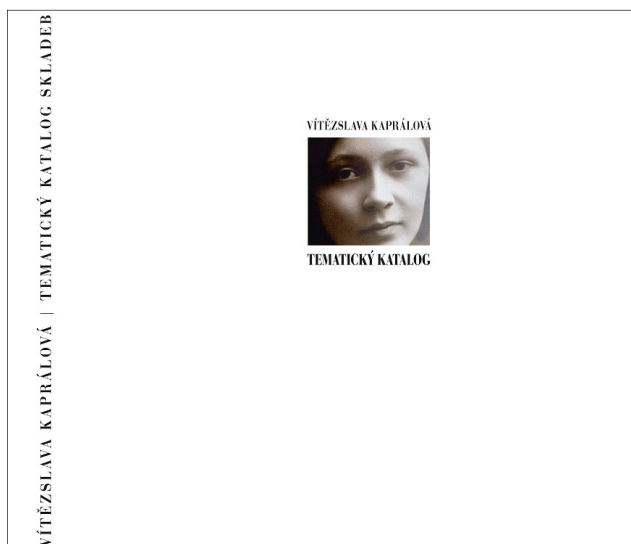
### *The Status of Manuscripts*

In addition to some major musical works we find in Kaprálová's catalogue, there is also a small group of charming short pieces the composer wrote for solo piano (*Dvě kytičky*), voice and piano (*Koleda*), two instruments (*Povídky malé flétny*), and chamber orchestra (*Prélude de Noël*). They constitute just a fragment of an originally much larger collection of miniatures which Kaprálová composed for various occasions, often as musical presents for her friends. They are not the only manuscripts considered lost, however; missing or hidden from sight at unknown locations are also several autograph scores of more sub-

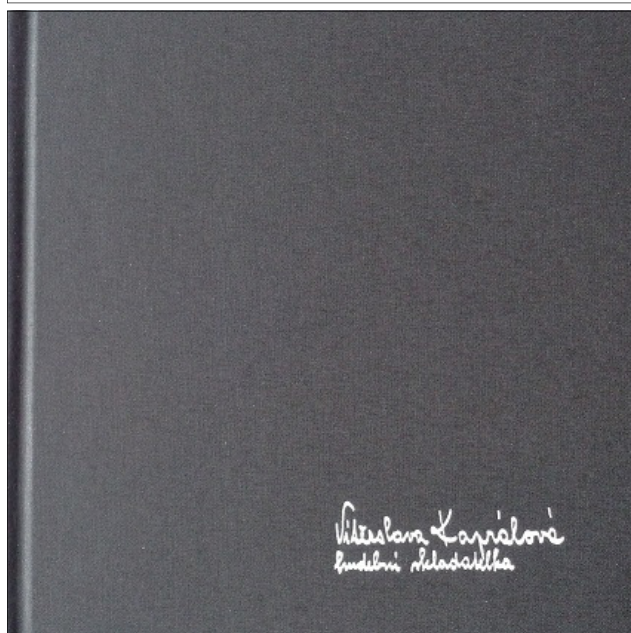
stantial compositions, although some of them have been preserved in printed editions published during Kaprálová's lifetime. What remains from the one and only known autograph of *Dubnová preludia* (or *April Preludes*) is the title page, printed as a facsimile in the 1949 collective monograph on the composer.<sup>2</sup> The reproduced page bears the work's original title *4 praeludia* (Four Preludes) under which it was premiered at a concert of the Přítomnost Society.<sup>3</sup> Another autograph, which does not seem to have survived, is that of *Groteskní* (Grotesque) *passacaglia*. In October 1935 Kaprálová entered and won a competition, organized by *Tempo*,<sup>4</sup> with that very composition; it was published as a supplement to the December issue of the named journal. Also presumed lost are autograph scores of the complete song cycle *Navždy* (or *For Ever*), *Elegie* (or *Elegy*) for violin and piano, and the orchestral suite *Suita rustica*. Kaprálová presented the latter as a gift to musicologist Otakar Šourek in gratitude for assisting her to secure a French government scholarship,<sup>5</sup> but the score was not found in his archive.<sup>6</sup> The whereabouts of the yet-to-be-identified opus 24 also remain unknown.

While several of Kaprálová's compositions are extant in historical editions or at least in copyist copies so that we know their final version, quite a few other works in her catalogue are incomplete. In some cases it is not clear whether the composer consciously abandoned the score or just stopped working on it with the intent to resume her work at some later point, but destiny intervened and life circumstances no longer allowed it. Fortunately for us, it was possible to reconstruct five of these compositions in recent years and thus give them a new lease on life. They include the first (and only) extant movement of Kaprálová's reed trio; the first dance of her two dances for piano, one of the composer's last works; the three-movement concertino for violin, clarinet, and orchestra; the orchestral song *Smutný večer* (or *Sad Evening*); and the four-part cantata *Ilena* for soli, mixed choir, reciter, and orchestra. In the case of Kaprálová's reed trio, the reconstruction was enabled by a motif sketched by the composer in a margin of the incomplete score; the orchestration of the works for large ensembles was made possible by available reductions and commenced orchestration.<sup>7</sup>

There is also an issue of access to Kaprálová's manuscripts, for they are not kept in one place but divided among a number of public and private archives with various degrees of accessibility, including locations yet to be

*Vítězslava Kaprálová: Thematic Catalogue of the Works**Vítězslava Kaprálová: Tematický katalog skladeb a korespondence s nakladateli. Czech Radio (2020).*

Tematický katalog skladeb Vítězslavy Kaprálové představuje nejúplnější a nejpodrobnější soupis díla jedné z nejpozoruhodnějších skladatelských osobností české meziválečné hudební kultury. Popis relevantních pramenů—od skic, autografů a autorizovaných opisů skladeb až po vydání jejich definitivní verze—umožňuje sledovat vývoj skladatelčiny tvorby. Katalogové jednotky obsahují množství málo známých detailů a zároveň upřesňují informace a opravují chyby a omyly předchozích soupisů skladatelčina díla. Tematický katalog obsahuje kompletní hudební odkaz Kaprálové, tedy i juvenilia, torza a nezvěstné skladby. Publikace je doplněna o obvyklé seznamy a rejstříky pro rychlou a snadnou orientaci.



identified.<sup>8</sup> The largest collection of Kaprálová's autograph scores, copyist copies,<sup>9</sup> and other manuscripts has been acquired by the Moravian Regional Museum Department of Music History in Brno. It consists of a large family archive, donated to the museum by the composer's mother<sup>10</sup> and supplemented over the years with a few less significant acquisitions. A small group of autographs, fragments of autographs, and authorized copyist copies remain in the possession of the composer's relatives. Other important manuscripts are deposited with the Czech Museum of Music in Prague and the Radio France Documentation musicale in Paris. The museum owns the definitive autograph score of Kaprálová's Partita for strings and piano, which was the source for the first edition; the radio archive holds the composer's reduced score of the *Military Sinfonietta* and authorized performance materials of her *Prélude de Noël*, an orchestral piece commissioned from Kaprálová by Radio Paris PTT.<sup>11</sup> Period performance materials can also be found in the Czech Radio Archives in Brno (*Sbohem a šáteček* for voice and orchestra, *Suita rustica*, Partita, *Suite en miniature* and *Prélude de Noël*<sup>12</sup>). The only known autograph of the song "Čím je můj žal" (from the song cycle *Navždy*) and several copyist copies of this and other Kaprálová songs are held by the Janáček Academy Music Library in Brno.<sup>13</sup>

There is, however, yet another problem, this time inherent in the manuscripts themselves. The handwritings of a scribbled sketch and a clean manuscript will invariably differ, at times raising the question of authorship; autograph scores may contain corrections and insertions whose writer cannot be always identified. The issue is further exacerbated by the fact that Kaprálová changed her handwriting in the course of her studies at the Prague Conservatory; as a result, her father's handwriting in his copies of her later songs could be mistaken for her own.<sup>14</sup> One prominent example is Kaprál's copy of his daughter's song "Můj milý člověče," published in October 1939 as a facsimile in E. F. Burian's art revue *program D 40*,<sup>15</sup> which could pass, at first glance, for her autograph. Perhaps Kaprálová agreed to publishing her father's copy in the revue because in Paris she no longer had access to the original which she sent to her mother a few months earlier as a gift for her 49th birthday;<sup>16</sup> or it is also possible that the format of the original manuscript did not conform to the graphic design requirements of the revue. Besides, Kaprál never hesitated to take over his daughter's affairs, often-times without consulting her first; he acted as Kaprálová's self-appointed agent who represented her interests in dealings with publishers and presenters, and was also involved in editing some of her compositions in preparation for their publication.

While Kaprálová was willing to consider her father's suggestions and occasionally let him correct her music notation and vocal declamation, she was vehemently opposed to any of his interventions in the structure and texture of her compositions, as evidenced in their correspondence. In one of the letters



to Václav Kaprál she expressed bluntly her outright frustration with his corrections of *April Preludes* whose publication she was overseeing from Paris:

I have just received the proofs from Matice with your revisions, and I am swearing like a starling at you! How could you make so many stupid errors! The II. [*prelude*] came out worst, especially the beginning. . . . I don't know if they publish it now, it is crossed out all over and the II. will have to be printed again. From now on, you let me review first anything you want to get printed.<sup>17</sup>

In another letter she reacts to her father's intervention in her chorus *Vězdička*:

I don't like the way you corrected *Vězdička*. It's too fractured, and it has too many climaxes, weakening the dynamics. So you will have to send me those scribbles of mine, because I can't work with this.<sup>18</sup>

We also find the following message on the title sheet of the aforementioned song that Kaprálová composed for her mother's birthday:

I owe you a song; it has been a long time since I sent you one, so here it is. I think you will like it a lot, maybe as much as I like the words. Tell Dad not to mess with it in the least.<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, she was always ready to accept advice pertaining to orchestration that she perceived as her weakness. Since Václav Kaprál did not have much expertise in this area and thus could not assist her in any substantial way,<sup>20</sup> she directed the questions regarding instrumentation to her friend Theodor Schaefer whom she consulted about her piano concerto and sinfonietta. Later she also turned to her Parisian mentor Bohuslav Martinů who assisted with the orchestration of the song *Sbohem a šáteček* (or *Waving Farewell*).<sup>21</sup>

### *Lists of Works*

Historical inventories of a composer's works often provide important information about their genesis. Kaprálová alone created several such inventories that can be found in her diaries and correspondence; other early lists were produced by her father. One of the compilations by Kaprálová is preserved in her diary of 1937. It is presented in two parts: the first shows all her works registered with the authors' rights organization OSA, the second comprises only the works with opus numbers,<sup>22</sup> also providing the year of

their creation. The list ends with the song *Sbohem a šáteček*, op. 14, and the dating of the first three compositions differs from later inventories authored by Václav Kaprál.<sup>23</sup> Another inventory of the works, building on the one in the 1937 diary, can be found in Kaprálová's letter to her parents from January 1938.<sup>24</sup> The composer expanded the previous list with the scores on which she was working (or which she was revising) at the time: her cantata *Ilena* (listed as op. 15 under its subtitle "Symf. Balada"), the collection of seven songs and a piano interlude *Vteřiny roku* (or *Seconds of a Year*, here as op. 16), and two choruses for women's voices "Ženské sbory," op. 17. She also reserved a number for her reed trio (op. 18), but the trio is conspicuously absent from the next list of works, for she stopped working on it a month later, in February 1938.<sup>25</sup> Her comment "[A]nd write it down somewhere the way I have it and don't keep changing it!!!" implies that Václav Kaprál may have already been maintaining his own catalogue of her compositions.<sup>26</sup> At the beginning of February 1938 Kaprálová sent an edited list of works, together with her brief résumé, to composer Alois Hába for publication in the program brochure of the 16<sup>th</sup> edition of the ISCM Festival.<sup>27</sup> Although only a selection, it is important for the mention of one particular title that we do not otherwise find in Kaprálová's catalogue: *Orchestral Songs*.<sup>28</sup> One can only speculate which songs would have been included in the cycle, a project Kaprálová later abandoned. It must have been her song *Waving Farewell*, on whose orchestration she was working at the time, and most likely also *Sad Evening* for voice and orchestra, from 1936, set to words of an unknown poet (possibly her own), which she failed to mention, at least by title, in any of her inventories; it is also omitted from the lists produced by her father and her first biographers, despite the extant autograph.<sup>29</sup>

Another list compiled by the composer can be found in her diary of 1939.<sup>30</sup> It again consists of two parts: the first includes the compositions registered with OSA, the second comprises only the works with opus numbers. The titles (and dates) of the compositions more or less correspond to the list from 1937, only the "suite miniature" is now recorded under the official name *Suite en miniature*, and the opus 15 is listed (in the inventory for OSA) as "Ilena—balada." While the women's choruses retained their opus number (op. 17), the opus 16 has now been re-assigned to piano variations "Zvonky—Variace," and the opus 18 to the collection *Vteřiny roku*. Partita, *Suita rustica* and "Concerto" (Concertino for violin, clarinet and orchestra) follow with numbers 19, 20, and 21 (the partita and the suite would later switch the numbers), and the inventory ends with the song cycle

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*Zpíváno do dálky* (Sung into the Distance, op. 22). In the OSA inventory we find four songs from the collection *Vteřiny roku* also registered individually; furthermore, the list includes *Elegie* for violin and piano, small piano works *Písnička* (or *Little Song*) and *Ostinato fox*, and “Dětské skladbičky,” three small instructive piano pieces for children, from 1937, whose scores have been presumed lost. Some of the listed compositions are also provided with their duration.

The last inventory produced by Kaprálová can be found in her correspondence with her uncle Bohumil Kaprál from April 1940.<sup>31</sup> It only includes the works from her last creative period. One of these compositions, *In memoriam* for violin and piano, is the *Elegie* from the previous list. Other previously mentioned compositions are “Partita pro smyč. orch. a klavír” (“Partita for string orchestra and piano”), “Concertino pro vel. orchestr a solové housle a klarinet” (“Concertino for large orchestra and solo violin and clarinet”), and “Zpěvy do dálky” (*Zpíváno do dálky*, op. 22). Mentioned for the first time are her two piano dances *Dva tance pro klavír* (op. 23) and the “čelová sonáta s klavírem” (“cello sonata with piano”) which would eventually become her *Deux ritournelles pour violoncelle et piano*, op. 25. The last title on the list is puzzling: “Příležitostné skladby (8)” (8 occasional compositions). Unless Kaprálová was referring to her collection *Vteřiny roku*, she must have meant the number of small commissions on which she was working in the last months of her life. We can only speculate about what might constitute the group: was it the repertoire for the newly-formed military ensemble of bandmaster Vilém Tauský, which we know of thanks to several extant sketches, or her music for radio, stage and film, mentioned in passing in the composer’s correspondence?

The two lists of works that follow were written by Václav Kaprál. They have survived in both manuscript versions and typewritten copies, and are deposited with various private and public archives. Likely created during 1946, they share the same format: juvenilia, compositions with opus numbers, and compositions without opus numbers. The details provided for each listed composition are more or less identical in both. The first inventory, entitled *Seznam skladeb Vítězslavy Kaprálové* (List of Compositions by Vítězslava Kaprálová), survived as a manuscript with two typewritten copies: one original, the other a carbon copy.<sup>32</sup> The former copy is missing the last page,<sup>33</sup> the latter copy the last two pages which Kaprál later replaced with a one-page handwritten account. The original typewritten copy was produced for the archive of musicologist Lenka Vojtíšková<sup>34</sup> who in 1946 became involved in Kaprálová’s parents’ repatriation efforts to bring their daughter’s remains home.<sup>35</sup> The second inventory, a manuscript with the title page

*Seznam skladeb*, was created by Václav Kaprál for editor Přemysl Pražák who later made a typewritten copy that would become the source for the list of Kaprálová’s works printed in his collective monograph.<sup>36</sup> While it provides more details than the first inventory, the last section (the compositions without opus numbers) is written in a rather haphazard order that was likely the cause for the notable omission of Kaprálová’s song *Le-den* for voice, flute, two violins, violoncello and piano from the section. Although the lists compiled by Václav Kaprál contain several errors and inaccuracies,<sup>37</sup> they remain invaluable as the first, more or less complete, inventories of Kaprálová’s oeuvre. Their only substantial flaw is the absence of several compositions.<sup>38</sup>

Next come the inventories that have been published. Several of them appeared during Kaprálová’s lifetime: in her 1936 interview for a women’s weekly;<sup>39</sup> in Pazdírek’s music dictionary from 1937;<sup>40</sup> and in the 1938 ISCM festival brochure. All of them are incomplete, with the date of their publication as their cut-off point. The first complete (or nearly complete) list of Kaprálová’s works appeared in 1949 in the collective monograph edited by Přemysl Pražák; the second in the 1958 monograph by Jiří Macek.<sup>41</sup> Since the former list is based on one of the inventories produced by Václav Kaprál, it also shares some of its shortcomings.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, Pražák’s book was one of the pillars on which Macek built his analytical monograph nine years later. His list of Kaprálová’s works, however, is not without errors and omissions either.<sup>43</sup> The next inventory came out in 2011 as part of the first English-language monograph on the composer, *The Kaprálová Companion*.<sup>44</sup> It offered many new details concerning Kaprálová’s oeuvre, while also avoiding most of the mistakes of the previous lists. It is, however, far from being as comprehensive as our thematic catalogue<sup>45</sup> which has been informed exclusively by primary sources—the composer’s autograph scores, their authorized copies, and historical editions. The dates and circumstances of their creation and first performance have been meticulously verified by comparing period documents, such as Kaprálová’s diaries, correspondence, published texts and interviews, concert invitations and programs, concert announcements and reviews in period press, historical inventories of her works, school annual reports, and other relevant documents.

### *Publishers*

Published scores, particularly authorized or critical editions, also provide a valuable insight into a composer’s creative process. Publishing one’s work is crucial for increasing the longevity and performance opportunities for a composition; in addition, it represents a first



necessary step towards its potential inclusion in the musical canon. Kaprálová's music attracted the attention of the publishing industry from the start, and not only during her life but also after her death. The first among those who recognized the quality of Kaprálová's music was the Brno publisher Oldřich Pazdírek. As early as in 1926, when Kaprálová was just a school girl, he printed one of her childhood compositions, the piano miniature *Na dalekou cestu*, in his magazine for youth *Hudební besídka*;<sup>46</sup> and in 1933, when she was still a teenager, he published her *Burlesque* for violin and piano.<sup>47</sup> In 1936 he included Kaprálová's *Písnička*, which she composed during her studies at the Prague Conservatory, in an anthology of instructive piano music for youth; it was published in partnership with the esteemed Prague publisher Melantrich.<sup>48</sup> Between 1935 and 1937, several of Kaprálová's piano compositions and songs appeared in various periodicals and the daily press: *Grotesque Passacaglia* and the song *Ukolébavka* were published as inserts;<sup>49</sup> the piano interlude *Posmrtná variace* and songs *Velikonoce*, *Koleda*, and *Můj milý člověče* as facsimiles;<sup>50</sup> and the song *Novoroční* was printed by Melantrich as their New Year's postcard.<sup>51</sup> In 1938 alone, four of Kaprálová's compositions appeared in print: *April Preludes* and *Jablko s klína* were published by Hudební matice, the *Military Sinfonietta* by Melantrich, and the *Variations sur le carillon de l'église St-Étienne-du-Mont* by Paris-based La Sirène éditions musicales.

During the years of the German Protectorate of what had remained of Czechoslovakia in the aftermath of the Munich Agreement, Kaprálová's music was blacklisted, and any planned editions of her music had to be cancelled; however, they were resumed soon after the war.<sup>52</sup> In 1947 Hudební matice published Kaprálová's song *Waving Farewell* (the version for voice and piano) and two years later her song cycle *For Ever*. In 1948 the composer's partita was published by Svoboda; ten years later, Czech Music Fund printed the second edition of her sinfonietta.<sup>53</sup> Nearly two decades of publishing inactivity ensued, ending in the mid-1970s, when Supraphon issued two scores by Kaprálová: her song *Koleda milostná* and the *Potpoliš*, a women's chorus a cappella.<sup>54</sup> It was only thirty years later, however, in connection with the founding of the composer's society in Toronto,<sup>55</sup> that the publishing activity resumed at full speed. At the beginning of the new millennium, three publishing houses—Czech Radio Publishing House, Editio Bärenreiter Prague and Amos Editio—joined the Society's ambitious project of the Kaprálová Edition. Today, thanks to the effort of all partners, Kaprálová's music has been published in its entirety. More than half of her published oeuvre have been critical editions.<sup>56</sup>

## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> The first book dedicated to the life and music of Vítězslava Kaprálová was the collective monograph edited by Přemysl Pražák, *Vítězslava Kaprálová, studie a vzpomínky* (Prague: HMUB, 1949). The monograph of Jiří Macek, *Vítězslava Kaprálová* (Prague: Svaz čs. skladatelů, 1958), followed nine years later. The foreign language books on Kaprálová were all published in the second decade of this century, building on the research groundwork laid by the Kapralova Society a decade earlier. They include the monograph and collective monographs of these authors: Karla Hartl and Erik Entwistle, eds., *The Kaprálová Companion* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011); Nicolas Dery, *Vítězslava Kaprálová. Portrait musical et amoureux* (Paris: Éditions Le Jardin d'Essai, 2015); and Christine Fischer, ed., *Vítězslava Kaprálová (1915–1940). Zeitbilder, Lebensbilder, Klangbilder* (Zürich: Chronos Verlag, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Pražák 1949, between pp. 56 and 57.

<sup>3</sup> The concert of the Přítomnost Society, a contemporary music society in Prague, active between 1924 and 1949, took place on February 5, 1937. The pianist was Dana Šetková, pupil of Prague Conservatory piano teacher Ilona Štěpánová. Kaprálová seems to have pondered on the most fitting title for her preludes, as evident from her letter to editor Karel Šebánek: "[P]rosila bych Vás, jestli byste mohl to zaonačit tak, aby se přece jmenovaly Dubnová preludia. Usnesli jsme se s Martinů, že je to přece jen hezčí název." ["May I ask you to revert the name to April Preludes. We agreed with Martinů that it is a prettier title, after all."] Vítězslava Kaprálová to Karel Šebánek, 15 February 1938. Karel Šebánek Papers, Municipal museum and gallery of Polička.

<sup>4</sup> *Tempo* was a monthly journal published in 1922–1938 and 1947–1948 by sheet publisher Hudební matice Umělecké besedy (HMUB).

<sup>5</sup> Vítězslava Kaprálová to Otakar Šourek, 24 November 1938. In Vítězslava Kaprálová, *Dopisy přátelům a jiná korespondence. 1935–1940*, ed. Karla Hartl (Toronto: The Kapralova Society, 2017), 40.

<sup>6</sup> Otakar Šourek's personal archive is currently divided between the Dvořák Museum in Prague (letters and documents) and the Czech Museum of Music (scores and sheet music).

<sup>7</sup> The reed trio's first movement was reconstructed by musicologist Stéphane Egeling, first oboist of the Aachen Orchestra; *Smutný večer* was reconstructed by Timothy Cheek, professor of voice at the Michigan University School of Music in Ann Arbor; and the reconstruction of Kaprálová's Dance no. 1 (from Two Dances for piano) was made possible thanks to Swiss pianist Giorgio Koukl. The process of their reconstruction is described in *The Women in Music Anthology*, ed. Eugene Gates and Karla Hartl (Toronto: The Kapralova Society, 2021), 290–315. The orchestration of the double concertino was finished by Brno composers-musicologists Miloš Štědroň and Leoš Faltus; and the cantata was orchestrated by Brno-based composer Martin Kostaš.

<sup>8</sup> As evidenced by Věra Bednářová: "V té době ji navštěvovalo hodně zájemců o oba skladatele. Hřešili na její zdánlivou naivitu, vypůjčovali si a nevraceli, nebo vrátili opis, ona to ale poznávala a když to zjistila, pronešla medláneckým nářečím: 'Tá potvora, opis vrátil a originál si nechal,' ale mávla rukou a

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velkoryse odpouštěla.” [“At that time, she (*the composer’s mother—ed.*) received visitors who were interested in the music of both composers. They mistook her kindness for naiveté and abused it by borrowing autograph scores and not returning them or returning instead copyist copies. When she found out about it, she remarked in her Medlánky dialect: ‘What a scoundrel: he returned a copy and kept the original,’ but she let it go and ‘the scoundrel’ was generously forgiven.”] Věra Bednářová to Jiří Mucha, August 1988. Moravian Museum in Brno (further referred to as MZM), shelf no. G 3.877a.

<sup>9</sup> Among the most frequent copyists of Kaprálová’s scores, mainly songs, was her father; the copyists of her violin compositions included Richard Kozderka, Oldřich Uher and a certain Mr. Laštovka; one of the copyists who transcribed the composer’s song cycle *Navždy* was Jar.[oslav?] Vejmla; and several small pieces were copied by the composer’s mother. The copyists of other works have not been identified.

<sup>10</sup> The gift of Vítězslava Kaprálová Sr., from 1957, comprises manuscripts with shelf nos. A 29.716–A 29.758.

<sup>11</sup> Radio Paris PTT was a public radio administered by the Ministère des Postes, Télégraphes et Téléphones (hence the acronym). Kaprálová’s collaboration with the broadcaster began in December 1939 with her orchestral miniature *Prélude de Noël*, commissioned by the radio for its Christmas feature “Noël à Prague.” In Vítězslava Kaprálová, *Dopisy domů. Korespondence rodičům z let 1935–1940*, ed. Karla Hartl (Toronto: The Kapralova Society, 2015), 269.

<sup>12</sup> Czech Radio in Brno also owned the autograph of *Prélude de Noël*; the current location of the score, however, is unknown. Zdeněk Cupák to Karla Hartl, 17 July 2000. Binder 15. The Kapralova Society Archive.

<sup>13</sup> The copyist copies include the songs “Čím je můj žal” (from the song cycle *Navždy*) and *Vteřiny roku*. The copyist was Václav Kaprál.

<sup>14</sup> This is the case with Kaprál’s copy of the song cycle *Navždy* (MZM, shelf no. A 40.597), which is noted erroneously as an autograph in the museum’s card catalogue and the published guide to its archival collections. See Vojtěch Kyas, *Průvodce po archívních fondech II* (Brno: Moravské zemské muzeum, 2007), 51.

<sup>15</sup> *Vítězslava Kaprálová: Bez názvu* (1939), program D 40, vol. 1, no. 1 (24 October 1939): 20.

<sup>16</sup> Vítězslava Kaprálová Sr. celebrated her birthday on June 2; the autograph score of the song is dated May 31, 1939.

<sup>17</sup> “Nadávám jako špaček na Tebe! Přišla mně už korektura z Matice, ale těch chyb, které tys tam nadělal, a to né intonačních, ale revidentních. Nejhuř doplatilo na to II, začátek. . . . Nevím, jestli mně to vydají, jak je to celé přeškrtané a II<sup>hé</sup> musí znovu tisknout. No vynadáno dostanu na každý pád hrozně. Jak jen jsi mohl tam nadělat takové pitomosti! Ať mně všechno zašleš k opravě, chceš-li nyní něco tisknout.” Vítězslava Kaprálová to Václav Kaprál, 7 February 1938, in *Dopisy domů*, 137. About a week later, she writes to Karel Šebánek: “Nevím, viděl-li jste tak poškrtnou korekturu, ale já si umývám ruce a svádím vinu jednak na vašeho sazeče (který si v chybách zahýřil) a pak na mého pana otce, který po mém odjezdu do Paříže převzal stránku revidenční.” [“I don’t know whether you have ever seen such messed up proofs, but I am washing my hands of the matter and point my finger first

at your typesetter (who indulged in errors) and, second, at my father who, following my departure for Paris, took over editing.”] Vítězslava Kaprálová to Karel Šebánek, 15 February 1938, in Karla Hartl, *Vítězslava Kaprálová: Tematický katalog skladeb a korespondence s nakladateli* (Prague: Czech Radio, 2020), 277.

<sup>18</sup> “Takhle se mně na př. tá ‘vzdička’ vůbec opravena nelíbí. Je to moc roztrhané a několikrát se to dotýká určitého vrcholu, takže dynamicky je to moc oslabené. Tak mi nejprve pošli ještě ty mé škrábanice, neboť takhle nemohu nic s tím pracovat.” Vítězslava Kaprálová to parents, 17 January 1938, in *Dopisy domů*, 126.

<sup>19</sup> “Jsem Ti už dlouho dlužna písničku, zde Ti ji tedy posílám, myslím, že se Ti bude hodně líbit, asi jako mně ty slova. Táta ať do ní nerejpá ani v nejmenším.” “Můj milý člověče,” MZM, shelf no. A 29.752a.

<sup>20</sup> In addition to his larger cycle *Uspávanky* for voice and small orchestra, Kaprál composed only two small orchestral pieces: *Dvě Idylky* and *Svatební pochod*. Ludvík Kundera, *Václav Kaprál* (Brno: Blok, 1968), 160, 161.

<sup>21</sup> *Dopisy domů*, 139, 144.

<sup>22</sup> Opp. 1–14 are recorded in the diary as “Suita miniatura, Smuteční pochod, 2 houslové skladby (2 violin works), Cyklus písní [*Two Songs*, op. 4—ed.], Jiskry z popele, Sonata appassionata, Klavírní koncert (piano concerto) [*Kaprálová writes the adjective ‘Klavírní’ in her Moravian dialect without diacritics—ed.*], Kvartet I, 3 skladby pro klavír (3 compositions for piano), Jablko s klína, Vojenská symfonietta [*period spelling—ed.*], Navždy, Dubnová praeludia [*period spelling—ed.*], and Sbohem a šáteček.” The 1937 Diary, MZM, shelf no. G 154a.

<sup>23</sup> *Suita miniatura* (for piano) and *Smuteční pochod* are dated 1930, 2 *houslové skladby* 1931. Compare with Kaprál’s 1931, 1932 and 1932 respectively; his dates, however, correspond with those noted on the extant autograph scores.

<sup>24</sup> Kaprálová to parents, 17 January 1938, in *Dopisy domů*, 126–127.

<sup>25</sup> “Trio jsem chtěla poslat do Vídně, ale nyní se mně to nezdá být dobré. Totiž kompozičně moc, ale né instrumentačně. Tak se půjdu kouknout do archivu na nějaká tria. Potřebovala bych moc, aby mně to někdo přehrál.” [“I wanted to send the trio to Vienna, but now it doesn’t seem to me good enough. Well, as a composition very much so, but it doesn’t seem to work for the instruments. I am planning to have a look at some trios in an archives. I would really need to hear it performed.”] Kaprálová to parents, 27 January 1938, in *Dopisy domů*, 133. A few days later she wrote: “Trio totiž jsem poslala do věčných lovišť, nebylo vůbec dobře psané instrumentačně, ač kompozičně nebylo špatné. Nechci být také taková, aby každá nota, co napíše, byla mně tak posvátná, jako je těm mazálkům v Praze.” [“I decided to bury the trio. It was not written well for the instruments, although as a composition it wasn’t bad. But I don’t want to become one of those schmucks in Prague for whom every note they write is sacred.”] Kaprálová to parents, 2 February 1938, in *Dopisy domů*, 136.

<sup>26</sup> Vítězslava Kaprálová to parents, 17 January 1938, in *Dopisy domů*, 126.

<sup>27</sup> Hába was the managing director of the Czech Section of the International Society for Contemporary Music whose festival took place in London on June 17–24, 1938. Kaprálová was one of the four composers selected to represent Czech contemporary music at the festival, and her *Military Sinfonietta* was given the honour to open the first orchestral concert on June 17. In the edited list of her oeuvre, printed in the festival brochure, we also find mentioned both versions of her early suite: “for piano” and “for small orchestra.” Vítězslava Kaprálová to Alois Hába, 3 February 1938, in *Dopisy přátelům*, 52–53.

<sup>28</sup> The title was first mentioned in an interview given by Kaprálová in October 1936 to *Moravanka*, a women’s weekly magazine. *Moravanka*, 11 November 1936, 19.

<sup>29</sup> MZM, shelf no. A 29.725. The song is mentioned for the first time in the list of works compiled by Hartl (2011), 166, 183n7.

<sup>30</sup> MZM, shelf no. G 8.123.

<sup>31</sup> Vítězslava Kaprálová to Bohumil Kaprál, 7 April 1940. MZM, acq. no. 1/2022.

<sup>32</sup> The original manuscript and the carbon copy are a part of a private collection.

<sup>33</sup> The last extant page contains twelve numbered items out of fourteen; the missing page contained the last two items: 13. *Prélude de Noël* and 14. *Povídky malé flétny*. See the next note.

<sup>34</sup> Lenka Vojtíšková Papers, Czech Museum of Music, File S 205, shelf no. 2/565. A carbon copy of the complete list was only discovered in 2022 among the recent acquisitions of MZM (acq. no. 1/2022).

<sup>35</sup> See *Kauza Kaprálová v dobové korespondenci a dokumentech* (The Kaprálová Case in Period Correspondence and Documents), ed. Karla Hartl (Prague: Klíč Books, 2021).

<sup>36</sup> See note 1. The handwritten original, which Pražák returned to Kaprálová’s mother (who would later update it with a few more details), is deposited with MZM, shelf no. G150; the typewritten copy is a part of Přemysl Pražák Papers, purchased in 2018 by the Bohuslav Martinů Foundation.

<sup>37</sup> E.g., wrong names of first interpreters and/or dates for premieres of several works, erroneous inclusion of *Grotesque Passacaglia* in Three Piano Pieces, op. 9, and incorrect order of seven songs and a piano interlude in the collection *Vteřiny roku*.

<sup>38</sup> *Písně* for voice and piano (c.1931), “Scherzo Passacaglia” (1935), orchestral song *Sad Evening* (1936), *Pochod* (c.1939), *Dopis* for voice and piano (1940), and sketches or torzos of several additional compositions (the composer’s reed trio in particular).

<sup>39</sup> *Moravanka*, 11 November 1936, 18–19. The list mentions compositions up to *Jablko s klína*, op. 10. See also note 28.

<sup>40</sup> Gracian Černušák, “Vítězslava Kaprálová,” in *Pazdírkův hudební slovník naučný*, ed. Oldřich Pazdírek, Vladimír Helfert, and Gracian Černušák (Brno: Ol. Pazdírek, 1937), 524. The short entry lists Kaprálová’s works until the spring 1937. It contains errors in dating of opp. 1–3 and in the titles of two compositions: *Dvě houslové skladby*, op. 3 are listed as *Tři houslové skladby*, op. 3 and the title of the song cycle *Jablko s klína* is distorted as *Jablko a hlína*.

<sup>41</sup> Pražák, 1949, 153–157; Macek, 1958, 206–209. It was preceded by a complete list of Kaprálová’s works with opus number, published in 1945 by Kaprál’s former student Miroslav

Barvík in *Rytmus* 10, no. 2 (31 October 1945): 6–7.

<sup>42</sup> Mainly the absence of several compositions, as was the case with the source document produced by Kaprál.

<sup>43</sup> One of his major errors is assigning the op. 1 to Five Piano Compositions.

<sup>44</sup> Karla Hartl, “Vítězslava Kaprálová: An Annotated Catalog of Works,” in Hartl and Entwistle, 2011, 155–188. This inventory was the source of Nicolas Deryn’s “Catalogue des oeuvres,” published in his French language monograph on the composer. Deryn, 2015, 171–173.

<sup>45</sup> *Vítězslava Kaprálová: Thematic Catalogue of the Works*, currently being prepared for publication, is an English-language version of *Vítězslava Kaprálová: Tematický katalog skladeb a korespondence s nakladateli* (Prague: Czech Radio, 2020).

<sup>46</sup> *Hudební besídka* 2, no. 6 (February 1926): 84–85.

<sup>47</sup> Vítězslava Kaprálová: *Burlesque* (Brno: Edition Ol. Pazdírek, 1933).

<sup>48</sup> Vítězslava Kaprálová, “Písnička (Little Song–Ein Liedchen–Песенка),” in *Moravští skladatelé mládeži*, ed. Václav Kaprál (Praha–Brno: Melpa, 1936), 10–11. The year 1936 marked the beginning of the commercial partnership of publishing houses Melantrich and Pazdírek, hence the acronym Melpa.

<sup>49</sup> *Tempo* 15, no. 6 (17 December 1935); *Eva* 9, no. 4 (15 December 1936).

<sup>50</sup> *Lidové noviny*, 18 September 1937, 3; *Lidové noviny*, 28 March 1937, 6; *Lidové noviny*, 25 December 1938, 4; *program D 40* vol. 1, no. 1 (24 October 1939): 20.

<sup>51</sup> With the subtitle *Přátelům hudby Hudební oddělení Melantricha k Novému roku 1937* (To friends of music from the Melantrich’s Music Department, for the New Year of 1937).

<sup>52</sup> *Věstník pěvecký a hudební* 49, no. 8 (15 October 1945): 137. Other blacklisted composers included Václav Kaprál, Bohuslav Martinů, Jaroslav Ježek, E. F. Burian, Rudolf Karel, and Vít Nejedlý. In 1946, Kaprálová, Nejedlý, and Ježek were elected to the Czech Academy of Arts and Sciences as members in memoriam. *Věstník pěvecký a hudební* 50, no. 7 (15 September 1946): 117. At that time, only 10 out of 648 members of the Academy were women; Kaprálová was the only female musician. Derek Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 343n125.

<sup>53</sup> Vítězslava Kaprálová, *Partita per pianoforte ed orchestra d’archi*, op. 20 (Prague: Svoboda, 1948); Vítězslava Kaprálová: *Sinfonietta militare*, op. 11 (Prague: Český hudební fond, 1958).

<sup>54</sup> Martinů / Kaprálová, *Koleda Milostná–Liebesliedchen* (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1974); *Potpoliš*. Supraphon’s Choral Edition no. 9 (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1976).

<sup>55</sup> Founded in 1998, the society was named after the composer The Kapralova Society (spelled without the Czech diacritics).

<sup>56</sup> Several compositions were also published by Schott, Certosa Verlag and EGGE-Verlag.

*This article is an abbreviated version of an introduction to Vítězslava Kaprálová: Thematic Catalog of the Works, to be published in 2025.*



## Women of the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Salon: Mlle. N. Philibert

Tom Moore

One of the many successful and now forgotten women who were active both as performing pianists and as composers in Paris, a city that was probably the piano capital of the world around 1850, was **Mlle. N. Philibert** (c.1834–after 1867), whose activities can be traced there during the years 1854–1859. I am able to give her at least a first initial, N., by matching one of her surviving published works, *Les Cloches*, op. 10, with a list of her compositions given in a contemporary report in the press. Her three surviving works are numbered as op. 10, op. 12, and op. 13. In total, there are fourteen compositions that I can identify as coming from her pen.

Philibert first appears in the press in 1854, with a mention of a performance and an upcoming concert at the Salle Herz.<sup>1</sup> Her name is also mentioned internationally in Germany, England, and the United States, as she appears among the pianists, performing in Paris during the first four months of 1854, who are listed in *Niederrheinische Musik-Zeitung*,<sup>2</sup> as well as in a report from Paris that is included in the *Musical World* (London) and the *Musical World and New York Musical Times*.<sup>3</sup>

The first review that I have found for Philibert is for the aforementioned concert at the Salle Herz, on April 26, 1854, which also mentions four of her compositions, as well as providing her age.

After the pianist of less than five years old, the pianist of twenty. The latter, Mlle. Philibert, a young and beautiful person, composes or arranges some very pretty fantasies that she performs extremely well, playing them a little too forte, however, in the view of some isolated and backward-looking pessimists who want a young and beautiful woman, even in music, to pay tribute to grace and sweetness. *Les Cloches*, *Un Soir d'été*, the *Berceuse* and a *Tarentelle*, without which no pianist can appear in the musical world, were given by Mlle. Philibert who was enthusiastically applauded at her second and last concert which she gave at the Salle Herz on the 26<sup>th</sup> of this month.<sup>4</sup>

Her composition *Les Cloches*, a mélodie-nocturne for piano, was also issued around this time by C. Prilipp in Paris.

One might surmise that Philibert, like many of her contemporary pianist-composers in Paris, supported herself by teaching, since her recitals in Paris take place annually in the spring. Her 1855 recital took place on February 26 at the Salle Pleyel, and the review provides a list of six more compositions from her pen.<sup>5</sup>

Mlle. Philibert, who believes that she can produce similar effects with modern works, her own for example, is not too far off the mark. She was justly applauded in the concert that she gave chez Pleyel on February 26, presenting a sort of sonata including an allegro, largo, a scherzo and a finale; *Le Regret*, an expressive waltz, a chasse-ballade, the *Sérénade orientale*, followed by a *Marche turque*, all her own compositions. Were it not for the Grand Fantasy on

the *Sonnambula*, par Liszt, which she executed skillfully, Mlle. Philibert could have said, regarding the make-up of her concert, along with Corneille's Medea: Me, I say, and that is enough!<sup>6</sup>

The *Revue et Gazette* reported on Philibert's annual recital also in 1856. Once more, her own compositions were prominently mentioned, with a new addition to the list, the salon-etude *Le Trémolo*. In addition, there were compositions by Liszt, Weber and Blumenthal.

Mlle. Philibert is a grand and beautiful pianist through her size, physiognomy, and her fingers. She performs classical music very well, that by Weber, by Liszt, and even her own, for Mlle. Philibert is a composer; she has written a very nice salon étude called *Le Trémolo*, the *Berceuse*, and a *March turque* which she had to encore. The concert she gave on February 25 at the Salle Herz, the romance *Rappelle-toi*, by Blumenthal,<sup>7</sup> which has a charming melody, and was sung deliciously by Gardoni,<sup>8</sup> was encored.<sup>9</sup>

Philibert is also mentioned in the *Signale für die musikalische Welt* in a list of notable women pianists performing in Paris:

The following women pianists have already given concerts here: Madame Cecile David, Mlle. Zelina Vautier, Mlle. Adrienne Picard, Mlle. Laguesse, Madame Mennechet Barival, Madame Deloffre, Mlle. Ida Boullé, Mlle. Philibert, Mme. Tardieu, Mme. Mattmann, Mlle. Judith Lion, Mme. Sudre, and Mlle. Devançay is still to come. We make no claims to completeness – but this is probably enough.<sup>10</sup>

I have found no mention of Philibert for 1857 and just one for 1858:

What shows that Paris is the center for the arts, and especially for musical art, is that it has a Russian, Spanish, German, Italian, Polish, Norwegian, etc. audience for each virtuoso that comes here from every country, a numerous and naturally benevolent audience for its compatriots. The French public shares this good will especially when it hears pianists such as Mesdames Mattmann, Szarvady, Tardieu, Charlotte de Malleville Massart, Mlles. Philibert and Nannette Falk. —We will mention as a novelty in piano music, since one must always return to this instrument, the pretty *étincelles musicales* composed by Mlle. Philibert and nicely performed by her at her concert on February 21 at the Salle Herz.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, one last brief mention of Philibert appears in 1859 in the *Revue et gazette musicale*, informing about her upcoming concert on February 15, at the Salle Herz.<sup>12</sup> It seems likely that Philibert continued to be professionally active at least until 1867, since that is the year that her opp. 12 and 13 were published. After this, she falls into oblivion.

### List of Works

*Cloches, mélodie-nocturne pour piano*, op. 10. Paris: C. Prilipp, 1854. Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF).

*Gondole, barcarolle pour piano*, op. 12. Paris: E. et A. Girod, 1867. Bibliographie de la France, 1867, no. 1428. BnF.

*Visite à l'Exposition, marche pour piano*, op. 13.<sup>13</sup> Paris, E. et A. Girod, 1867. Bibliographie de la France, 1867, no. 1428. BnF.

Other piano works by Philibert that did not survive: *Berceuse, Etincelles, March Turque, Regret, Un Soir d'été, Sérénade orientale, Sonata* (Allegro, Largo, Scherzo, Finale), *Tarentelle, Trémolo* (étude), a chasse ballade and a waltz.

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> *Le Ménestrel : journal de musique*, April 16, 1854.

<sup>2</sup> *Niederrheinische Musik-Zeitung* 2 (May 6, 1854): 140.

<sup>3</sup> *The Musical World* 32 (May 6, 1854): 299; *Musical World and New York Musical Times* 9 (June 17, 1854): 75.

<sup>4</sup> *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* 21 (April 30, 1854): 144.

<sup>5</sup> The only work that was not her composition in the recital was Liszt's *Grande Fantaisie de Concert* on Bellini's *Sonnambula*, for which the second edition had appeared in 1853.

<sup>6</sup> *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* 22 (March 4, 1855): 67.

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Blumenthal (1829–1908), pianist, composer. The song is a setting of a poem by Alfred de Musset.

<sup>8</sup> Italo Gardoni (1821–1882), tenor.

<sup>9</sup> *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* 23 (March 2, 1856): 69.

<sup>10</sup> *Signale für die Musikalische Welt* 14 (March 1856): 167.

<sup>11</sup> *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* 25 (March 7, 1858): 74.

<sup>12</sup> *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* 26 (February 13, 1859): 55.

<sup>13</sup> The exposition in question is likely to have been the Exposition Universelle held in Paris in 1855. Although the piece was not published until 1867, it may have been composed in 1855.

### ***The Women in Music Anthology*, edited by Eugene Gates and Karla Hartl (Toronto: The Kapralova Society, 2021).**

The nineteenth-century prejudice against women participating in public life, particularly strongly held views that appropriate sex roles must be maintained, made it extremely difficult for them to achieve success as professional composers. As Paige<sup>1</sup> observes, historians need to understand how qualifiers (such as Czech, African American, woman) shape the creation and reception of a composer's music. *The Women in Music Anthology* is an excellent place to begin exploring the impact of being female on the possibility of professional success as a composer or performer.

The Kapralova Society had its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2018. Founded and continued under the passionate stewardship of Karla Hartl, the Society has been a steady base for advocacy and support for scholars interested in the life and career of Vítězslava Kaprálová, specifically those undertaking detailed research into her music. The Society's major English language publications, aside from the Society's *Journal*, begin with *The Kaprálová Companion* (2011).<sup>2</sup> This advocacy and support for scholars addressing issues of professional women in music is continued by the publication of this present *Women in Music Anthology* (2021). It broadens the research reported in the previous publications to contextualize Kaprálová's life and work by examining those of other professional women in music.

Specifically, the anthology is designed "to extend the lifespan of the best articles" published between 2005 and 2022 in the *Kapralova Society Journal*, so far only available online.<sup>3</sup> However, each chapter of this publication is a revised and updated version of the original article. Together, the chapters make a compelling argument regarding the ongoing maintenance of the "malestream" status-quo domination of both contemporary music discourse and present-day concert life.

The book comprises a Preface by the editors and nineteen chapters divided into Part I on the topic of 'women in music' and Part II on the topic of Vítězslava Kaprálová's life and music; the Editors' Notes; a 16-page Bibliography; a 9-page Index; and a page of author credits. Part I forms the bulk of this book with thirteen chapters, eight written by Eugene Gates, beginning with two major overviews of why women composers are rarely included in general accounts of music history, and why the same attitudes generally mean that music composed by women is still not performed in present day mainstream concerts and recordings. He argues that evidence for this systemic cultural oppression can be found through comparing the socially and culturally accepted pathways in music for women as opposed to men, and the possibilities for women to break through these endemic barriers by looking at life experiences of those rare individual women who achieved a successful public career in music. His citations are drawn from both primary and secondary sources, and I found these chapters to be of great value because they provide an excellent overview of the theme of this *Anthology*, as well as earlier scholarly research into the ongoing omission of women from the Western art music canon.<sup>4,5</sup>

Each of the remaining eleven chapters in Part I probes the particular factors that brought contemporary critical success of individual women's ventures into professional music. They explore in depth "the lives and legacies of nine women musicians who made an impact on their respective fields."<sup>6</sup> Sev-

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eral chapters stood out as particularly informative because they dealt with women who successfully worked outside of mainstream art music establishments. I found Ege's analysis on Florence Price, which strongly frames her music and career in the context of the broader racial oppression of African-Americans, to be a highly insightful investigation of the determination of an individual woman to achieve for both herself and others.<sup>7</sup> The penultimate chapter of Part I describes the origins of several popular all-female orchestras,<sup>8</sup> while the final chapter explores the life and career of popular WWII British singer Vera Lynn.<sup>9</sup>

Part II is dedicated to the latest research on Vítězslava Kaprálová (1915–1940), in six chapters, two written by Karla Hartl. The chapters in Part II primarily provide biographical information within the historical and Czech art music cultural context of the times in which Kaprálová lived and worked. Several other brief chapters are concerned with the process of reconstruction of individual pieces of Kaprálová's music from sketches and autograph score fragments.<sup>10, 11</sup>

The final chapter in Part II, the full material amassed by Karla Hartl for the 2015 BBC Radio 3 program,<sup>12</sup> would have provided a comprehensive introduction to the whole of Part II, even though many of the citations refer to the earlier *Kaprálová Companion*. I found this final chapter a very useful introduction to the central figure of Part II, particularly because the detail this chapter contains helped to make sense of single sentence statements in other chapters that glossed over life events which, with our 21<sup>st</sup> century psychological insights, would have been considered significant as having a profound effect on Kaprálová. I found this final chapter engaging to read, and was delighted to discover the wide-ranging background research using varied sources as described in the endnotes, including contemporary citations for the positive reception of Kaprálová's music, which also justifies the ongoing research and promotion of Kaprálová as a significant composer, while clearly suggesting that similar work needs to be done with other professional women musicians.

Generally, the writing style throughout the *Anthology* is informal and personable, telling and retelling of the lives (and career highlights) of these women composers, each one widely recognized, with international careers in their time. However, being unfamiliar with many of the cited texts, I found the complete Bibliography at the end of the *Anthology* a very helpful source of information regarding the quality of citations, particularly when several cited sources were intermingled throughout the argument of any particular chapter. Specifically, I needed the Bibliography to identify individual citations as original archival material or as secondary source. Being able to identify the nature of the source material was enormously helpful in understanding how and what the author of each chapter had themselves contributed to the particular aspect under discussion, as

well as the broader topic of 'Women in Music'.

This anthology is also particularly valuable because feminist investigation into the systemic root causes of women's professional contributions being undervalued has fallen out of favour in music discourse over recent decades. Thus to have feminist theory and research once again brought to the fore brings a refreshing reminder that cultural change in the art music sector is still necessary to promote equality of opportunities.

It becomes compellingly clear from the case studies in this book that in order to pursue a professional career, women composers need access to all levels of theory and composition classes, as well as mentors and advocates and professional connections to get their music performed; that they need to be regarded as seriously intent on achieving success as professional musicians; and that women's study of music is not simply a fanciful time-filling hobby based on the assumption that domestic and family life is the dominant priority in every woman's life and that they biologically lack the innate potential capacity to engage in any professional career. The conclusions drawn in this book acknowledge and explore the wide-ranging impact of systemic oppression through patriarchal cultural assumptions regarding women's social roles that are designed to keep women out of the public and professional spheres of life. Despite their contemporary successes, women's creative achievements in music are still not widely recognized as part of the historical musical canon, and without ongoing advocacy, individual professional women composers are likely to continue being overlooked by future generations.

Wendy Suiter, [wendysuiter.wordpress.com](http://wendysuiter.wordpress.com)

## Notes:

1. Diane M. Paige, "Kaprállová and the Muses: Understanding the Qualified Composer," in *The Women in Music Anthology*, ed. Eugene Gates and Karla Hartl (Toronto: The Kapralova Society, 2021), 288.
2. Karla Hartl and Erik Entwistle, eds., *The Kaprálová Companion* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011).
3. Preface to *The Women in Music Anthology*, ed. Eugene Gates and Karla Hartl, ix.
4. Eugene Gates, "The Woman Composer Question: Philosophical and Historical Perspectives," *ibid.*, 3–29.
5. Eugene Gates, "Women Composers: A Critical Review of the Psychological Literature," *ibid.*, 30–46.
6. Preface to *The Women in Music Anthology*, ix.
7. Samantha Ege, "Florence Price and the Politics of Her Existence," *ibid.*, 209–29.
8. Maria Noriega Rachwal, "Feminizing the Stage: Early Lady Orchestras and Their Maestras," *ibid.*, 230–43.
9. Erin Hackel, "Dame Vera Lynn: Voice of a Generation," *ibid.*, 244–58.
10. Stéphane Egeling, "Kaprállová's Trio for Oboe, Clarinet and Bassoon (1937–1938)," *ibid.*, 304–11.
11. Giorgio Koukl, "Vítězslava Kaprálová: Two Dances for Piano, op. 23 (1940). An Attempt at Reconstruction of the Autograph," *ibid.*, 312–15.
12. Karla Hartl, "Kaprállová as a Composer of the Week: The BBC Interview," *ibid.*, 316–37.





### La Vita. Leonie Karatas. EuroArts (2022).

Vítězslava Kaprálová's piano music is, despite her tragically early death putting a stop to its continual development, a body of finished work, which can seem complete in itself and which, about eighty years later, is still refusing to sound dated or parochial. Leonie Karatas has interpreted these works subjectively, immersing herself in Kaprálová's writings and the personality of her music to indulge the intentions thus revealed, playing up the wit or emotions of each piece.

Karatas also has a wonderful ear for rhythm; thus the passacaglia, one of the **Three Piano Pieces, op. 9** (three very diverse pieces which feel linked in this recital) is no longer disjointed by its rubatos and pauses, but flows around them in a dance, not unlike one of Samuel Barber's *Souvenirs*.

In the **April Preludes, op. 13**—a unique and original work even by the standard of a unique and original composer—the “pop” melody of the 3<sup>rd</sup> movement flows like a well-produced track even as its tonality darkens and revives; the difficulty of even these most complex pieces is made light of by the player in a way that banishes it for the listener. As Karatas says in her insightful and compelling liner notes, if Kaprálová had a fault it was that she put everything in where an older (or colder) composer might have pruned. This tendency not only gives her piano work extraordinary vitality but, as brought out in this recording of the

*April Preludes*, even suggests the fine, busy scoring of a work for orchestra like *Suita Rustica*.

The **variations** which Kaprálová wrote **on the chimes of St-Etienne-du-Mont**, the church near her apartment in Paris, are presented as a set of fireworks.

The lovely suite of Kaprálová's five earliest pieces for piano includes a funeral march that I have tended to skip past on other recordings; Karatas manages to play it in a way that refreshes its repeated melodic idea, and that makes the paused transition to the contrasting middle section believable. Her playing style brings out the considerable yet subtly-worked jazz influence in Kaprálová's work—compare the central movements of the **Five Piano Pieces** with the final composition of modern jazz pioneer Bix Beiderbecke, *In The Dark*, also composed in 1931: the idiom is almost identical, both compositions remove the popular dance rhythm (foxtrot, as the 78 rpm record labels state) from jazz, while preserving its harmonies, and combine those with the influence of Stravinsky and Impressionism to anticipate the post-war modern jazz sound.

Beside these four collections are a small number of individual compositions, including the bouncy **Písnička**, the left-hand theme which was quoted by Martinů in his 5<sup>th</sup> string quartet<sup>1</sup> (we can also find quotations from the first of the *April Preludes* in Martinů's collage-like Piano Sonata), the impressionistic short pieces **Two Bouquets of Flowers**, and the avant-garde **Dance for piano, op. 23** which was arranged from Kaprálová's barely legible notes by Giorgio Koukl and debuted on his 2017 CD collection of Kaprálová's piano works, again played with a breeziness that understates its difficulty and brings the “dance” to the fore. An aesthetic decision is a trade-off where one quality is preferred to another, and Karatas's sensitive reading of the **Sonata Appassionata** misses the pomp of its opening statement heard in the versions by Alice Rajnohová and Giorgio Koukl, to be compensated for by a Prokofiev-

like playful flow not previously heard in the variations of the second movement, demonstrating the value of multiple readings of the same work.

Somewhere in her Penguin “best of” collection, Dorothy Parker quotes with approval words of Edmund Wilson to the effect that genius is the capacity to instill one's personality into a thing. Kaprálová's personality has come to life again in Leonie Karatas's collection.

George Henderson

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> For more about the *Písnička* theme and its use in the work of Kaprálová and Martinů see my review of string quartets by Kaprál, Kaprálová and Martinů in this journal, volume 19, issue 2, p. 14.



With early works of a particularly strong character, Alicia Terzian and Vítězslava Kaprálová provide a frame anchored in the 20th century for the women musicians from the Romantic period who take the centre stage: Clara Schumann, Luise Adolpha Le Beau, Mathilde Berendsen-Nathan, Maria Parczewska-Mackiewicz, Cécile Chaminade and Hilda Kocher-Klein. *Opus 1* attracts more than academic interest. The featured composers are all represented by pieces which deserve to be rescued from oblivion and given a new lease on life. As a pianist, Swiss artist Kathrin Schmidlin (1990) specializes in performance of women composers. She teaches piano at the Musikschule Konservatorium Zürich.

The KS Journal Reader



# THE WOMEN IN MUSIC ANTHOLOGY

Eugene Gates & Karla Hartl

## **The Kapralova Society Journal**

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