Judith Mabary recently noted that “a survey of (Kaprálová’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;”¹ 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”² in the first half of the 20th century. At the same time, her biographical context points up the tectonic loss of many other composers in the repertoire, not only Czech,³ but from all across Europe: “It is not difficult to imagine the chaos, fear, hopelessness, and disintegration of that terrible time.”⁴

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 representations 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).⁵ At the same time, in the April Preludes, “everything sounds fresh and persuasive.”⁶

The April Preludes come with a somewhat humorous story. Dedicated to the Czech pianist Rudolf Firkušný, their origin was related anecdotally by the pianist: “(Kaprálová) 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.”⁷ 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 seri-
ous. 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.


One of the most uniquely exciting aspects of Kaprálová’s music for a pi-
anist 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 empha-
sizes 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 pas-
sage 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 in-
stance, the transition back into the opening section:


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”—this can be detected in the initial predilection for unison octave writing and the masterful way Kaprá-
lová 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,” 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

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). This melodically-driven canvas seems to similarly channel created folk song or poetry, opening with a perfect 4-measure phrase; its distinctive 3-note lilj 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 unruflled 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,” 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.” 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
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 Kaprálová’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, (Kaprálová’s) considerable worth as a composer is being rediscovered both in her homeland and internationally. The time is long overdue.”

Notes:
6 Ibid., 48.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., 48–49.
9 Ibid., 50.
10 Ibid., 54.
12 Entwistle, 49.
13 Ibid., 55.

About the author:
American pianist and musicologist Asher Ian Armstrong (DMA University of Toronto) is a member of the Piano Faculty of the University of Arkansas.

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.1 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 a passacaglia for solo piano, but also with a late romantic piano concerto and a neoclassical 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 concerto. 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 substantial compositions, although some of them have been preserved in their printed editions published during Kaprálová’s lifetime. What remains from the one and only known autograph of Dubnová préludia (or April Preludes) is the title page, printed as a facsimile in the 1949 collective monograph on the composer.2 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.3 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,4 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 Suits rustica. Kaprálová presented the latter as a gift to musicologist Otakar Šourek in gratitude for assisting her to secure a French government scholarship,5 but the score was not found in his archive.6 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 concerto 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 piano reductions and commenced orchestration.7

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

The largest collection of Kaprálová’s autograph scores, copyist copies, 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 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 piano reduction of the Military Sinfonietta and authorized performance materials of her Prélude de Noël, an orchestral piece commissioned from Kaprálová by Radio Paris PTT. Period performance materials can also be found in the Czech Radio Archives in Brno (Sbohem a šáteček for voice and orchestra, Suite rustica, Partita, Suite en miniature and Prélude de Noël). 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.

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. 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, 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; 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

identified.
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.¹⁷

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

I don’t like the way you corrected Vězdička. It is too fractured, and it touches a certain peak a few times, weakening the dynamics. So you will have to send me those scribbles of mine, because I can’t work with this.¹⁸

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, as I like the words. Tell Dad not to mess with it in the least.¹⁹

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,²⁰ 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).²¹

**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,²² 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.²³ 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 1938.²⁴ 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 1938.²⁵ 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.²⁶ 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 16th edition of the ISCM Festival.²⁷ 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.²⁸ 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 its extant autograph.²⁹

Another list compiled by the composer can be found in her diary of 1939.³⁰ 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 “suita miniatuра” 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 num-
Vítězslava Kaprálová: Thematic Catalogue of the Works

bers), and the inventory ends with the song cycle 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 skladišky,” 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. 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. orchestra 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 Doux 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 sklady (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 Vílém 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 both in 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. The former copy is missing the last page, 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 who in 1946 became involved in Kaprálová’s parents’ repatriation efforts to bring their daughter’s remains home. 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. 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 Len-den for voice, flute, two violins, violoncello and piano from the section. Although the lists compiled by Václav Kaprál contain several errors and inaccuracies, 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.

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; in Pazdírek’s music dictionary from 1937; 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. Since the former list is based on one of the inventories produced by Václav Kaprál, it also shares some of its shortcomings. 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. The next inventory came out in 2011 as part of the first English-language monograph on the composer, The Kaprálová Companion. 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 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 their 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 besídká; and in 1933, when she was still a teenager, he published her Burlesque for violin and piano. 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. 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 insert; the piano interlude Posmrtná variace and songs Velikonoce, Koleda, and Můj milý člověče as facsimiles; and the song Novoroční was printed by Melantrich as their New Year’s postcard. In 1938 alone, four of Kaprálová’s compositions appeared in print: April Preludes and Jablko s křína were published by Hudební matice, the Military Sinfonietta by Melantrich, and the Variations sur le carillon de l’église St-Etienne-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, however, they were resumed soon after the war. And any planned editions of her music had to be cancelled; 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 besídká; and in 1933, when she was still a teenager, he published her Burlesque for violin and piano. 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. 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 insert; the piano interlude Posmrtná variace and songs Velikonoce, Koleda, and Můj milý člověče as facsimiles; and the song Novoroční was printed by Melantrich as their New Year’s postcard. In 1938 alone, four of Kaprálová’s compositions appeared in print: April Preludes and Jablko s křína were published by Hudební matice, the Military Sinfonietta by Melantrich, and the Variations sur le carillon de l’église St-Etienne-du-Mont by Paris-based La Sirène éditions musicales.

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Notes:


2 Pražák 1949, between pp. 56 and 57.

3 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 mohli za načtít tak, aby se přece jmenovaly Dubnová preludia. Usvětíte jméno 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.

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


6 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).

7 The reed trio’s first movement was reconstructed by musicologist Stéphane Egeling, first oboist of the Aachen Orches- tra; 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 reconstruc- tion is described in The Women in Music Anthology, ed. Eugene Gates and Karla Hartl (Toronto: The Kapralova Soci- ety, 2021), 290–315. The orchestration of the double concer- tino was finished by Brno composers-musicologists Miloš Štědroň and Leos Faltus; and the cantata was orchestrated by Brno-based composer Martin Kostaš.

8 As evidenced by Věra Bednárová: “V té době ji navštěvovalo hodně zájemců o oba skladatele. Hřešili na její zdánlivou na- nitu, vypůjčovali si a nevraceli, nebo vrátili opis, ona to ale poznávala a když to zjistila, pronesla medlánecím nářečím: ‘Tá potvora, opis vrátil a originál si nechal,’ ale mávla rukou a
Vítězslava Kaprálová: Thematic Catalogue of the Works

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 naivety 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.

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


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 (Prague: Czech Radio, 2020), 269.

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

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 archivních fondech II (Brno: Moravské zemské muzeum, 2007), 51.


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

“Nadávám jako špaček na Tebe! Přišla mně už korektura, a to ne vůbec dobře psané instrumentačně, ač kompozičně nebylo vůbec dobré. Nechcím být také taková, abych každá nota, co napsal, měla v této hrozně. Jak jen jsi mohl tam nadělat takové pitomosti! Ať mně všechno zašleš k opravě, chceš-li nyní něco jen proškrtat, a pak na mého pana otce, který až do čtyřiceti let zde byl (teržer si v chybách zahýřil) a pak na mého pana otce, který po mém odjezdu do Paříže přežval 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 engraver (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.

“Takhle se mně na př. tá ‘věděicky’ vůbec opravena nelibí. Je to moc roztrhané a několikrát se to dotýká určitého vrcholu, takže dynamicky je to moc oslabené. Tak mi nejpře pošleš její ty mé škrabánce, neboť takhle nemohu nic s tím pracovat.” Vítězslava Kaprálová to parents, 17 January 1938, in Dopisy domů, 126.


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.

Dopisy domů, 139, 144.

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.], a Sbohem a sáteček.” The 1937 Diary, MZM, shelf no. G 154a.

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.


“Trio jsem chtěla poslat do Vídně, kam zadává i Mart. (také Trio), ale nyní se mně to nezdá být dobré. Tolik kompozice moc, ale ně instrumentačné. Tak se půjdu kouknout do archivu na jenáká tria. Potřebovala bych město, a mně to někdo přehrál.” [“I wanted to send the trio to Vienna like Mart.[inu] (also a trio), but now I don’t think it is good enough. Or, more precisely, it is very good in terms of composition but not in terms of instrumentation. I am planning to have a look at some trios in an archive here. 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 větších lovišť, neboť vůbec dobro právě psané instrumentačné, ač kompozičně nebylo špatné. Nechci být také taková, aby každá článek, co napiši, byla mně tak posvátná, jako je témazákům v Praze.” [“I decided to bury the trio. It was not written well for the instruments, although as a composition it was pretty good. 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.

Vítězslava Kaprálová to parents, 17 January 1938, in
Dopisy domů, 126.
27 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.
28 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.
29 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.
30 MZM, shelf no. G 8.123.
31 Vítězslava Kaprálová to Bohumil Kaprál, 7 April 1940. MZM, acq. no. 1/2022.
32 The original manuscript and the carbon copy are a part of a private collection.
33 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.
34 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).
36 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, deposited in 2018 by the Bohuslav Martinů Foundation.
37 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.
38 Písnička 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).
39 Moravanka, 11 November 1936, 18–19. The list mentions compositions up to Jablíko s klína, op. 10. See also note 28.
40 Gracian Černušák, “Vítězslava Kaprálová,” in Pázdirkův 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: Dué houslové skladby, op. 3 are listed as Trí houslové skladby, op. 3 and the title of the song cycle Jablíko s klína is distorted as Jablíko a klína.
42 Mainly the absence of several compositions, as was the case with the source document produced by Kaprál.
43 One of his major errors is assigning the op. 1 to Five Piano Compositions.
45 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).
46 Hudební besídka 2, no. 6 (February 1926): 84–85.
49 Tempo 15, no. 6 (17 December 1935); Eva 9, no. 4 (15 December 1936).
50 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.
51 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).
52 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 Karél, and Vít Nejedlý. In 1946, Kaprálová, Nejedlý, and Ježek were elected to the Czech Academy of Arts and Sciences as members in memoriam. Věstnik 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.
55 Founded in 1998, the society was named after the composer The Kapralova Society (spelled without the Czech diacritics).
56 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 Catalogue of the Works, to be published by the Kapralova Society in 2025.
Women of the 19th-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. 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, 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.

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 26th of this month.

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.

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!

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 Marche turque which she had to encore. The concert she gave on February 25 at the Salle Herz, the romance Rappelle-toi, by Blumenthal, which has a charming melody, and was sung deliciously by Gardoni, was encored.

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. 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.

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.
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. 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


Other piano works by Philibert that did not survive: _Berceuse, Étincelles, March Turque, Regret, Un Soir d’été, Sérénade orientale, Sonata_ (Allegro, Largo, Scherzo, Finale), _Tarentelle, Trémolo_ (étude), a chasse ballade and a waltz.

Notes:

5. The only work that was not her composition in the recital was Liszt’s *Grande Fantaisie de Concert* on Bellini’s *Sonambula*, for which the second edition had appeared in 1853.
7. Jacques Blumenthal (1829–1908), pianist, composer. The song is a setting of a poem by Alfred de Musset.
8. Italo Gardoni (1821–1882), tenor.
13. 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 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 Vitězslava 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.

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.”
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. The penultimate chapter of Part I describes the origins of several popular all-female orchestras, while the final chapter explores the life and career of popular WWII British singer Vera Lynn.

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.

The final chapter in Part II, the full material amassed by Karla Hartl for the 2015 BBC Radio 3 program, 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 21st 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 on the 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 Sutter, wendysuiter.wordpress.com

Notes:

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 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 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 Pisnička, the left-hand theme which was quoted by Martinů in his 5th string quartet (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 Rajnölová 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 instil one’s personality into a thing. Kaprálová’s personality has come to life again in Leonie Karatas’s collection.

George Henderson

Notes:
1 For more about the Pisnička 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.