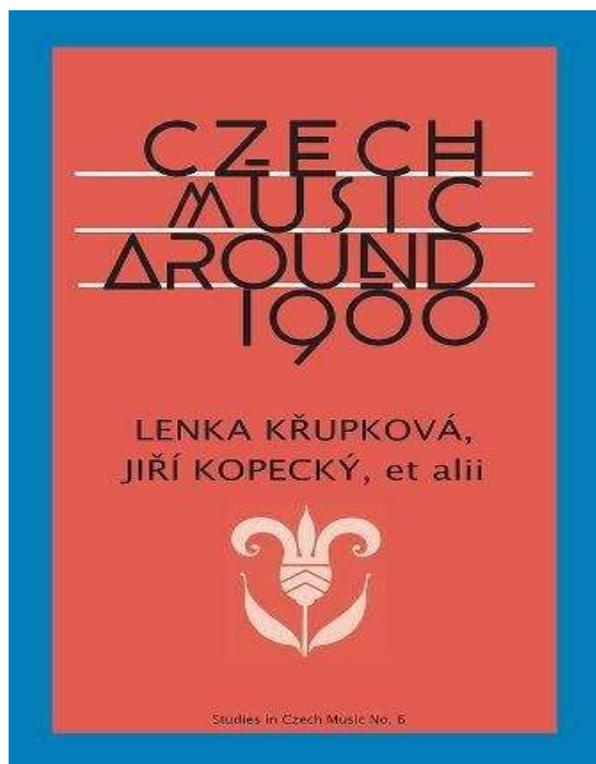




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Czech Music around 1900



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Czech musical culture around 1900 saw itself as the culminating phase of the development of Czech national music. At the same time, however, it exhibited many contradictory phenomena mirroring the inexorable dissolution of unified Czech patriotic life, which especially in the second half of the nineteenth century had encountered resistant forces in the Germanophilic environment of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The extraordinary dynamics of the period of about two decades before the outbreak of World War I were determined by the rise of a young generation of composers who now accepted the "global" character of Czech music as a matter of course, thanks to the international success of works by Bedřich Smetana (the opera *The Bartered Bride*) and Antonín Dvořák (works for orchestra and chamber ensembles, large choral works).

Composers like Leoš Janáček, Josef Bohuslav Foerster, Josef Suk, and especially Vítězslav Novák had extraordinary talent, received good training, and gradually won support from influential publishers. With courage and critical perspective they came to terms with the bequest of the "fathers", the "founders" of Czech music, as well as with the works of their own more famous contemporaries like Richard Strauss, Gustav Mahler, and Gustave Charpentier. They gained successes abroad.

Reactions by the public, critics, and their colleagues, however, were mixed, as though Czech society were not capable of accepting divergent approaches to artistic creation. Many works (if not many composers) came out of this "battleground" weakened and fell by the wayside. One of the aims of this book, *Czech Music Around 1900*, is to draw attention to some unjustly forgotten treasures of Czech music.