

Let me start by extending my warm congratulations to Mr. Kodýtek. His thesis is a wonderfully polished and thoughtful piece of writing, and his rigorous engagement with source material and emphasis on deconstructing Romantic myths make this a valuable piece of scholarship. His contribution is already extraordinary; that he might have completed any part of it during the extraordinary circumstances of the past month make it doubly so. (And let me also express the same for the work of Drs. Havelková and Zdrálek as reviewers and advisers.) The success of the thesis means that the feedback I offer here is only with the hope that the author develops the project further, either as a Ph.D. dissertation, article, or book.

My strongest recommendation towards further developing the project is that the author even more prominently distinguish his contributions from existing scholarship. He offers generous and thorough summaries of the current scholarly conversation in the literature review portion of his “Introduction,” but I think it is possible for him to be even more explicit in his following main arguments (and their corresponding representations in the subsequent chapters) about the new insight his research offers into those conversations. The author’s first statement offers a useful example: “the Smetana myth, particularly with reference to the meaning of *Má vlast* and *Libuše*, was updated...[so that it] expressed the idea of an independent national state of the Czechs that Masaryk then brought to realization.” (p. 25.) Additionally, the author’s second and third arguments—that Smetana’s music was turned into a political tool and that his myth reflected the different ideologies of its proponents—in some ways mirror the first. Although all of these claims are valid, they also feature prominently in my own writing (Smetana’s myth is “rewritten time and time again to suit shifting political perspectives,” p. 2), and Brian Locke extensively explores how individual actors also continually reconstructed Smetana towards their own shifting political aims in his book. This author, rather than repeating previous insights, could strengthen his contribution by naming exactly how his investigation uncovers previously neglected and overlooked nuances. His investigation does fill an important scholarly gap—Smetana’s centennial has remained relatively unexamined—but filling a gap is not always the most compelling argument for why research matters.

The author might gain new frameworks towards articulating his unique insight by engaging even more with secondary literature, especially theoretical writings. On the topic of nationalism, for

example, the author prominently features Benedict Anderson and mentions Philip Bohlman, but he might also find Pieter Judson’s *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (2007) helpful for its discussions of class systems and the elite. Ernest Gellner’s writings are particularly interesting because they are modeled on Czechoslovakia, and Richard Taruskin’s theorizations of “vertical” and “horizontal” nationalism in his entry on the topic in *Oxford Music Online* could help structure discussions to do with “national, yet global” and related themes. Taruskin also takes on “universalism” in the same entry, versions of which appear frequently in the thesis, and a wide body of scholarship is available exploring the ways both “universalism” and “cosmopolitanism” played important roles especially in German nationalism, which might provide even more tools. Beyond nationalism, I imagine the project might well benefit from engaging with a second large body of scholarship to do with “the myth of [Masaryk’s] Czechoslovakism.” Mark Evan Bonds’ work on the Beethoven myth might also be an excellent touchpoint, as might the work of authors taking on canon formation as a whole.

Finally, I did wonder if it was a deliberate choice to avoid engaging with Michael Beckerman’s “In Search of Czechness in Music” in this thesis? Although this author is concerned with a search for notions “Czechness” in an idea (Smetana’s myth) and not music itself, Beckerman’s writing might be an interesting point of dialog.

If I were evaluating this research in a peer review, I would recommend that a publisher offer a very promising revise-and-resubmit for its valuable contributions. I also imagine a revise-and-resubmit to be one of the best possible outcomes for a thesis, a direct translation of which on a scale from 1-4 might be a 2. However, in reality I think this document is very deserving of a “výborně” (1), even when I am supposedly an opponent.

Congratulations again, Mr. Kodýtek, on all of your work. I sincerely hope to see more in the future.