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Women in 19th-Century Czech Musical Culture and Their Representation in Encyclopaedias: Thoughts on Selection Processes in Music Lexicography (and/or Musicology)*

Keywords: women in music, 19th century, Czech musical culture, music encyclopaedias

In 2016, Anna-Lise P. Santella described her job as publishing editor of *The Grove Dictionary of American Music* as falling “somewhere in the cracks between musicologist, lexicographer, and professional shepherd” (Santella 2016: 213). She explained that the process of conceiving, editing, and publishing large-scale encyclopaedias constituted a constant juggling of conflicting ideals, yet she is convinced that the work of lexicographers “helps scholarship grow” (Santella 2016: 214). In this paper, I examine a variety of music and art encyclopaedias dating from the 19th to the 21st centuries with regard to their inclusion of musical women within the context of 19th-century Czech musical culture. First, following a brief presentation of my methodology, I ask whether there are differences in coverage regarding the women’s birth-dates and/or fields of activities, and regarding the individual encyclopaedias. Second, while I am hesitant to speculate as regards the possibility of system-

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atic censorship, I explore possible regularities (and irregularities) in selection patterns across the sample. In the light of this, the purpose of my paper is two-fold. Quantitative in nature, section one sheds light on hundreds of lesser-known 19th-century female musical protagonists within the context of Czech musical culture. In the spirit of space and scope, I am not able to enclose the full data sample in this paper. However, I am happy to share the database with interested readers upon personal request. Section two is devoted to a contextualisation of my findings with regard to discussions typically encountered in lexicography and encyclopaedia writing.

METHODOLOGY

This project originates in the idea of exploring media representations of musical women in the contemporary print media in Prague, Berlin, and Vienna during the first half of the 19th century. Through this process of tracking names, activities, venues, and taking note of journalistic text genres, text lengths, and short synopses, I came across many women who evidently contributed to musical culture in their own time through performance, composition, musical support, patronage, musical organisation, and pedagogy.¹ Most of these women, however, were unknown to me, and I began to wonder about historiographical selection processes over the course of time. If ephemeral media such as newspapers and magazines were full of evidence that women took an active part in cultural life during their own time, how are these women represented in such more permanent media as encyclopaedias? Furthermore, do encyclopaedias represent the “musical canon” I was familiar with, or might they, too, include many more women than are known within the wider musicological canon today?

In this study, I focus on Czech musical culture, meaning the whole geographical area now associated with the Czech Republic (that is Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia); and any language community covered by this region. The timeframe of the study embraces the long 19th century, thus taking into account all women born between 1750 and 1890. I consider all women mentioned in these encyclopaedias, no matter whether they were of local or international importance, and regardless of their nationality. The process of data collection consisted of two steps. First, I examined systematically four publications:

¹ The project was financed by the Czech Academy of Sciences through their funding programme for research and mobility support of starting researchers (MSM), project ID MSM300332101 (duration 2021-2022).

- Gottfried Johann Dlabacz, *Allgemeines historisches Künstler-Lexikon* (see Dlabacz 1815);
- Oldřich Pazdírek, *Pazdírkův hudební slovník naučný* [Pazdírek's Educational Dictionary of Music], A-M (see Pazdírek 1937);
- *Československý hudební slovník osob a institucí* [Czechoslovak Music Dictionary of Persons and Institutions], published in two volumes (see Černušák et al. 1965-1967);
- *Český hudební slovník osob a institucí* [Czech Music Dictionary of Persons and Institutions], published online with frequent updates (see Macek et al.).

In step two, I checked which of the women gathered through the first systematic search are mentioned in the two biggest current general musical encyclopaedias – *Oxford Music Online*, and *MGG Online*. To be clear: I did not examine *Oxford Music Online* or *MGG Online* systematically from A to Z. Rather, I cross-checked every name that emerged during step one in those two large online encyclopaedias in order to find out whether there were differences in encyclopaedia writing originating in chronological, regional, or editorial nuances.

FINDINGS

Step one of the process resulted in an overall sample of 540 female musical protagonists relevant for Czech musical culture of the long 19th century, born, with two exceptions, between 1750 and 1890. For 81 of these women, the birthdate is unknown; otherwise the majority of them was born in the second half of the 19th century.

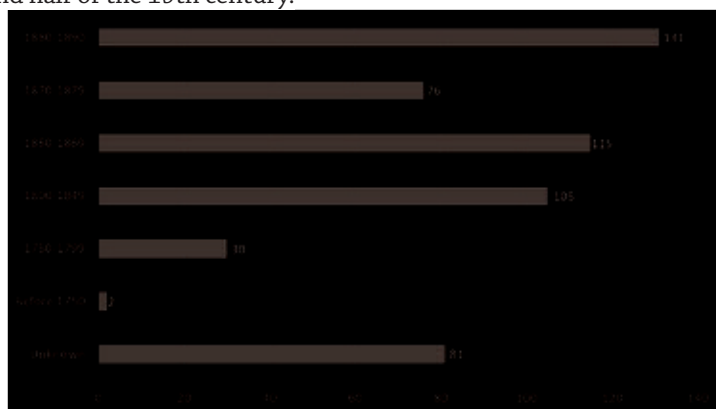


Table 1. Birthdates of 19th-century musical women, total 540.

The youngest women, born between 1880 and 1890, form by far the largest group (and their most active periods would most likely fall into the 20th rather than late 19th centuries). Although this data suggests at first glance a gradual development or correlation between coverage and birthdates along the lines of “the younger the women, the more of them were included in encyclopaedias”, two aspects must be considered here. First, Dlabacz’s encyclopaedia was published in 1815, and thus long before most of these women were even born. Second, each encyclopaedia scrutinised here had its own editorial and socio-cultural circumstances. Dlabacz published in German and his music-related entries are heavily based on the *Jahrbuch der Tonkunst*, published by Johann Schönfeld in Vienna in 1796, thus covering naturally even fewer 19th-century women than one might assume. In general, the book includes few musical protagonists (as opposed to painters or writers, for instance), as it is an art encyclopaedia – not a music one – and very few women overall. The other three sources are published in Czech during different eras of cultural orientation and (self-)discovery, though all during the 20th century. Therefore, I centre my comparison of encyclopaedia coverage on the three Czech-language books.

Of all 540 women depicted in this study, 253 received entries in *Pazdírkův hudební slovník naučný*, A-M (1937) (see Pazdírek 1937); 233 were covered by individual entries in *Československý hudební slovník osob a institucí* (see Černušák et al. 1965-1967); and 266 were covered in *Český hudební slovník osob a institucí* (see Macek et al.), although 121 of them are shown only by way of names without linking to an actual entry.

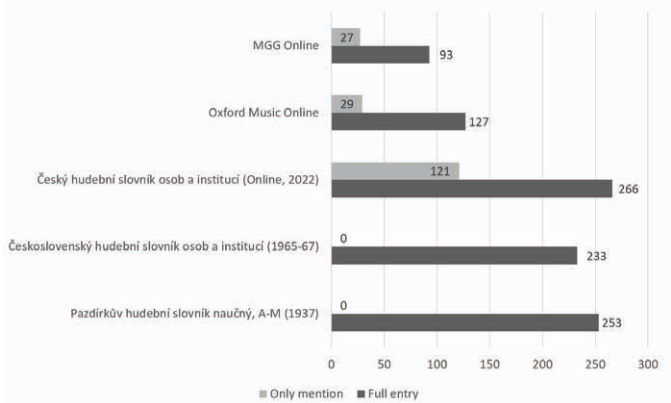


Table 2. Coverage in individual modern encyclopaedias, total max.: 540.

This is surprising, considering that *Pazdůrkův hudební slovník naučný* is incomplete and only ranges from letters A to M. Assuming similar book lengths and selection criteria, one would expect for the 1965-1967 publication (which covers the full alphabet) to include twice as many women. By contrast, the latter book actually includes fewer entries on 19th-century musical women. This may point to two aspects: a smaller focus on (then already more distant) history, and/or perhaps a stronger orientation towards contemporary artists, who would not have been recorded in my study, as their births would date after 1890. Both these considerations are plausible in the light of the socio-political and cultural priorities of the mid-1960s (as opposed to the mid-1930s). The second unexpected result is that the most recent Czech-language online platform does not have the highest number of entries, although it does have the most mentions. Overall, thus, in terms of basic biographical information on female protagonists in the Czech lands, the online platform has actually less to offer than both previous publications.

So how about *Oxford Music Online* and *MGG-Online*? Of the 540 women listed here 127 appear in *Oxford Music Online*. 29 of them, however, are only mentioned in other people's entries – for instance, the folk song collector Lucie Bakešová in Leoš Janáček's entry. *MGG-Online* includes a total of 93 of these women (27 without their own entry). Regional preferences and categorisations of relevance certainly play a role here, besides availability of knowledge – language and otherwise, accessibility of sources, and familiarity with relevant archival structures and research networks. Furthermore, the women's fields of activities might play a role here.

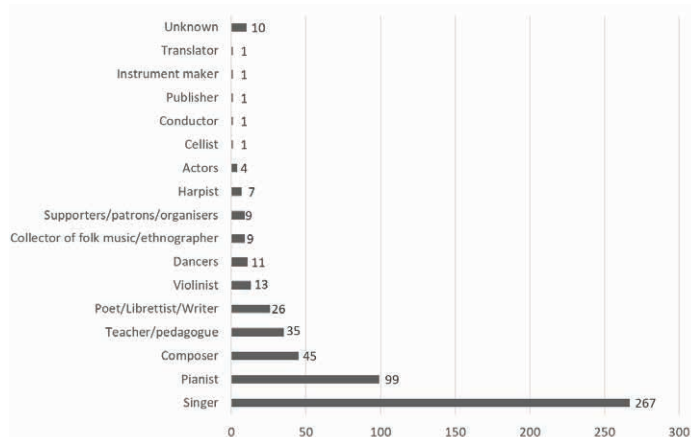


Table 3. Field of activity pursued by 19th century musical women, total 540.

The majority of these women were professional singers (267) or pianists (99), which would explain the explosion of entries regarding protagonists active towards the end of the century, followed by composers (45), pedagogues (35), literary figures (26), performers in other instruments, collectors/ethnographers, supporters, and some others. Most of these women, however, covered at least two fields of activity (for instance, professional singers often taught singing; pianists were quite often also composers), which, in the spirit of simplicity, I was unable to take into account here. I recorded only the first activity mentioned in the encyclopaedia entries. Going by the aforementioned project analysing media representations of musical women in Berlin, Prague, and Vienna, this ratio of different activities is representative of these women's perception in the public domain, although these receptions were heavily subjected to bias based on gender, class, origin, and also activity.

CONTEXTUALISATION OF FINDINGS

Some general considerations may shed light on the representations of these women and possible decisions of inclusion (or, indeed, exclusion). First, it seems remarkable (and surprising) that there is no single one woman that is included in all encyclopaedias (one needs to bear in mind the timeframe, however, as mentioned above). Among those with the most prominent representation across the different publications are, of course, such international protagonists as Jenny Lind, Henriette Sontag, Fanny Hensel, Maria Jeritzka, Marie Jaëll, and Maria Anna Mozart. Their impact was and/or is considered crucial in various language and cultural contexts, and was noted in the scrutinised publications either on account of their own appearance in the Czech lands during concert tours, or because of their aesthetic, pedagogical, or social influence on other protagonists relevant for the history of music in the Czech lands.

More surprisingly, however, many Czech (Bohemian) protagonists receive(d) attention of equal measure, although many of us probably do not even know their names: for instance, the singer, pianist, and composer Juliane Reichardt-Benda (1752-1783), the piano teacher and writer Růžena Kurzová (1880-1938), the pianist Kateřina Kolářová (1827-1859), the harpist and writer Helena Kličková-Nebeská (1878-1951), the singer Gabriela Horvátová (1877-1967), the singer and teacher Etelka Gersterová-Gardiniová (1855-1920), the pianist, singer, harpist, teacher, and composer Kateřina Dusíková [Veronika Rosalia Dusik] (1769-1833), the singer and teacher Tekla Podlěská (1764-1852), or the violinist Vilemína Nedurová (1839-1911). An exception might be the librettist Eliška Krásnohorská (1847-1926), who, I dare saying, is well-known in both Czech and international musicology (and who,

bafflingly, did not receive her own entry in either *MGG-Online* or the Czech-language online encyclopaedia). As the lifespans indicate, these women were born across the century, and their musical activities are manifold, although most of them were, indeed, performers. Yet it is not clear to me why the first group I listed is so much more well-known internationally than the second, if all are equally covered in encyclopaedias.

A look at the women with the smallest radius of representation might perhaps provide further insights. My sample clearly indicates a cut between the 1937 publication, which includes a large number of international protagonists, and the 1960s publication, which seems to be focused more on Czech women. While Pazdírek included the pianist Ellen Andersson (1884-?), the singer Valentine Bianchi (1839-1884), the pianist and teacher Marianne Biedermann (1889-?), the Ukrainian pianist, pedagogue, and conductor Olga Cipanovská (1866-?), or the musicologist Alice Fletcher (1845-1923); the 1960s publication (as well as the Czech online encyclopaedia, which is partially based on the 1960s book) has entries, for instance, on the singers Anna Frýdlová (1851-1879), Emilie Hallová (1848-1928), Leopolda Hanušová (1875-1941), Marie Jandová (1817-1897), the writer Růžena Jesenská (1863-1940), and the pianist Anna Keglevichová (1813-?). Neither of these women are listed in any other publication examined here.

It seems that during the 1960s Czech musicologists made an attempt at quantifying Czech contributions to musical culture by adding many performers (but also others) to the canon, although, as the most recent online platform shows, these efforts did not seem to have a lasting effect. Moreover, the 1960s publication and the Czech online encyclopaedia added the strands of dance and ethnomusicology – for instance through entries for the ethnographer Karla Absolonová-Bufková (1855-1941), the poet and librettist Feodora Bartošová (1884-1941), and the folk song collectors Emílie Čermáková (1868-1940) and Pavla Kříčková (1886-1972). With regard to this, I suggest that 1960s ideology did play a role, as these avenues served to place emphasis on Czech folklore, national identity, and collective musical experience, and these aspects were important ideological pillars during that time. Finally, ideological phenomena also become evident in the way people's names are spelt. Interestingly, some protagonists seemed to have been considered "one's own" across a wide range of time – for instance, the Viennese supporter of music and salonnière Pauline von Metternich (1836-1921), sometimes referred to as Pavlina Metternichová, or the music publisher Emilie Hoffmann (1816-1882) – Emílie Hoffmannová. I do not believe that these differences in spelling are mere coincidence; rather, I pose that they express a posthumously

added sense of belonging, and a clear desire of ownership with regard to these protagonists' and the encyclopaedia editors' cultural identities.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, my study is very small-scale, as time and scope of this paper did not allow for an extensive examination. I did not (yet) correlate the combinations of musical activity with each other; I did not trace aspects of ethnic belonging or identity of the individual protagonists (if these were not stated in the entries); and I also did not collect details regarding the individual lengths of each entry. It would be interesting to expand this research in order to find out more about how these women are represented in large-scale projects focused on female musicians (for instance, the bilingual platform "Musik und Gender im Internet" at Musikhochschule Hamburg, which includes entries in German and English), or through a search of RME (*RILM Music Encyclopaedias*), especially because, as Tina Frühauf has pointed out, "music encyclopaedias provide the potential to reflect thoroughly upon musicological approaches" (Frühauf 2016: 175). Furthermore, it might be worthwhile conducting similar projects with regard to men in order to be able to correlate aspects of biography and musical activity with that of gender. Finally, as always when studies are conducted at low cost and within a short period of time, I cannot exclude human mistakes. Sometimes names in languages other than English (or German) are transcribed in an unusual way in *Oxford Music Online* or *MGG-Online*, an aspect which may have led to errors when searching names in these online encyclopaedias. And, as, during step one, I counted the entries manually (and entirely by myself), it is possible that I might have overlooked something. All these limitations, however, should not affect the representativity of my preliminary findings.

20th-century encyclopaedias cover far more protagonists considered relevant for 19th-century Czech musical culture than I would have thought, although most of them are unheard of within the general musicological canon. Against my own expectations, the stable canon of protagonists who would show in all examined Czech-language and international encyclopaedias is really quite small, while there is a lot of fluctuation between the different encyclopaedias with regard to their coverage of female musical protagonists. I believe that some such differences can be explained by way of ideology and editorial lines – for instance, Dlabacz's orientation towards the *Jahrbuch der Tonkunst* and his strong focus men; the inclusion of many international artists by Pazdírek; or the addition of Czech folklore and dance in the 1960s. However, the data collected in this study is not suitable in order

to draw informed conclusions regarding the level of institutional censorship and state-led propaganda for any of the publications, as one would need to explore “the other side”, that is correspondence, minutes of board meetings, or preliminary drafts of the encyclopaedias in question. (And even if these documents had been scrutinised, censorship might be subtler and might not be immediately visible). After all, there are many influences on the publishing business; state, editorial, or self-censorship is only one of them. Anna-Lise P. Santella points to this when addressing aspects of readers’ expectations, competition with such platforms as Wikipedia, or nuances between standardization and exceptionalism (Santella 2016: 213-221). And Jeff Loveland and James Rettig both suggest that aspects of popular culture, entertainment, and the encyclopaedia as an experience rather than a product play a role in the decision making behind the scenes as well (Rettig 1998: 133-138; Loveland 2012: 233-254). All these influence factors, of course, are also political to some extent. With regard to the individual encyclopaedias scrutinised here, it seems worth noting that the highest density of women protagonists can be found in Pazdírek’s 1937 book (not, with a view to those 540 women, for instance, in *MGG-Online* or *Oxford Music Online*), and some women were *exclusively* mentioned by Pazdírek and nowhere else. It seems, thus, that selection processes started sometime between 1937 and 1965/67. In the light of space and usage of paper, this is plausible, as economy, efficiency, cost, and cultural relevance were (and, indeed, are) important details when encyclopaedias still appear(ed) as hard copies in print.

This poses the question then why the three current online encyclopaedias represent relatively few women (that is, fewer than older publications). It seems that mere space (that is printed pages, shelf space etc.) is not relevant here, although there might be similar considerations concerning finances and cloud space. Perhaps, however, another challenge is that of memory culture. It may be difficult to challenge research principles and standards that have been established over the course of time when new editions of already existent works are being conceptualised – for instance, notions that composers were more relevant for musical culture than performers; that women could be important singers or pianists, but not so influential composers; that amateurs might have played an important role as consumers of sheet music, but not so much as active contributors to the history of ideas; and so on. Melanie Unseld (2010; 151-161) has shown in her analysis of the *Goldene Buch der Musik* how established narratives may, despite some smaller changes, survive several editions of a publication once they have been accepted as status quo – either through inclusion or exclusion of specific protagonists, or through

specific formats of presentation (Unseld 2010: 151-161). On the other hand, however, if encyclopaedia writing is based on memory and recent scholarship available to current editors rather than on previous works, these encyclopaedias are likely to continue the narrative set within the canon. Repertoire and names that were en vogue half a century before (and which were thus covered in the corresponding encyclopaedic predecessors), might be dismissed without further investigation as outdated and irrelevant, thus creating a new pool of knowledge subject to great fluctuation.

Laurenz Lütteken has pointed out that modern online encyclopaedias, more specifically, in his case, *MGG-Online* “will be able to respond to changes much easier than any printed volume” (Lütteken 2016: 226). Whether this is true remains to be seen, as all these online endeavours are still relatively young. More importantly, perhaps, is the question what these changes may entail. They might be geared towards consumer-friendly orientation (for instance, through better search functions, more audio-visual materials, easy reading, available translations etc.); towards a more simplified and comprehensive understanding of music history responding to shorter concentration spans and smaller time resources at the user’s end (for instance, through different types of periodization, categorisation, or representation); towards a more exhaustive depiction of musical cultures around the globe and across the past centuries; or, and this would be my (admittedly hard-to-achieve) favourite, a combination of all of these.

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