

### **The North Czech Philharmonic Teplice**

The first official document from the National Council, which is responsible for Teplice's spa music, dates back to February 1831. From the onset of 1838, preparations took place to get the spa orchestra up and running. The key was a document provided by the governor of the district of Litomeric which enabled the orchestra to gain full statute on April 14, 1838. It was no longer necessary to dismiss the 36 members of the seasonal orchestra as half of the players were soon fully engaged all year round. In 1886, Karl Wosahlo took hold of the town orchestra's baton, primarily taking credit for being the first to establish symphony concerts on a regular basis. At that time, Teplice's spas were at their prime hosting concerts with the finest personalities the world of music had to offer. For example, conductors Eugen d'Albert, Richard Strauss, pianists Ferruccio Busoni, Conrad Ansoerge, Emil Sauer, Ernö Dohnányi, Frederic Lamond, violinists Pablo de Sarasate, Eugéne Ysaye, Bronislav Hubermann, Fritz Kreisler, Alexander Pečnikov, Henri Marteau, celloists David Popper, Julius Klengel, Hugo Becker, Anton Hekking, singers Lili Lehmannová, Ernestina Schumann-Heinke and many others. All great Czech violinists performed here from Josef Slavic to Jan Kubelik. A more notable character that succeeded Johannes Reichert in 1922 was Oskar Konrad Wille, who divided the orchestra into four categories according to the level of demand and with corresponding entrance fees – spa concerts, working-class concerts including an introductory text, people's concerts and philharmonic concerts with world acclaimed soloists while increasing the number of members to 90 musicians. In the summer, the orchestra performed approximately 150 spa and 18 symphony concerts and cycles of symphony music during the winter season. The orchestra was not only led by Wille himself, but also by guest conductors like Siegfried Wagner, Alexander Zemlinsky or Felix von Weingartner and Richard Strauss. In the years 1938 - 1945 Bruno Schestak was the last Chief conductor of the orchestra in Teplice, but at the end of the Second World War, the closing of the town's German theatre marked the end of the thriving orchestra's concerting era.

After 1945, orchestras from other places started to come together in Teplice. On January 11, 1948, the town's council gave Sedmidubsky a proposal for restoring the once renowned spa orchestra. Next in line was twenty-seven year old graduate of Prague's conservatoire Josef Hrnčíř whose main concern was to stabilise the orchestra. Within its first year, the Town Spa Orchestra performed 180 concerts. The orchestra was transferred to the care of the Regional Authorities in Usti nad Labem, expanding to 60 musicians. Following Bervíd's departure in 1956, the post of artistic director and head conductor was granted to Bohumil Berka, graduate of Prague's conservatoire, who came from Moravia's Philharmonic in Olomouc where he worked alongside of František Stupka. Following Martin Turnovský was Libor Pešek from the season of 1963 until the end of the season of 1969 and the next three seasons were led by Vladimír Válek – both amongst the best of the Republic and highly acclaimed around the world.

In 1972, Jaroslav Soukup was named director and head conductor. At that time, the orchestra had established a good reputation and stable contacts with several Czech cities. Jaroslav Soukup worked on solving the needs of the orchestra and on increasing the size of the body that had been bearing the name North Czech Philharmonic of Teplice since 1979. Jaroslav Soukup belonged to those who came with the idea to build a concert hall in Teplice that would meet the criterion of contemporary requirements. Regional authorities accepted his plans and needs and soon a concert hall was created in the newly built Cultural Centre. In 1983 and 1985, the philharmonic set out on concert tours to Spain and later on to Italy, Austria and Germany, always achieving excellent results and receiving positive responses and invitations.

In November of 1989, the philharmonics situation didn't differ much from other orchestras in the Republic. This is what led to changes of head conductors during December of the very same year. The post was assigned to Jan Štván, who had previously been working as second director. The desire for higher quality led the new management to offer the position of head conductor to Tomáš Koutník, who had previously had several years of experience with artistic leadership of Ostrava's Janáček Philharmonic. It was soon clear that the step was a positive one shown by the gradual increase in attendance of season subscription concerts and also in the quality of the orchestra's

performances. In the summer of 1997, Tomáš Koutník left his post as Teplice's head conductor nevertheless leaving behind what is regarded by avid followers of the orchestra and the public to be an unforgettable era in the history of the NCP.

An equivalent substitute was discovered at the State Philharmonic of Brno for the resigning head conductor. Taking over as head conductor in July 1997 was young Canadian conductor Charles Olivieri-Munroe. A new interpretation of music appreciated by and accessible to a wide range of listeners caused a notable increase in the attendance of season subscription concerts. The new head conductor and the NCP artistically influenced each other creating a unique relationship. Charles Olivieri-Munroe brought to Teplice a number of world famous artists including the Princess of Monaco Caroline Murat. This collaboration reached its peak in 1999 with a concert in Monaco in the presence of numerous world renowned personalities of society. World celebrated violinist Maxim Vengerov also performed at the concert which donated its proceeds to the Weizman Foundation. Head conductor Charles Olivieri-Munroe was invited to prestigious concert podiums all over the world. He conducted acclaimed orchestras and perfected his work as a conductor which reached its peak in 2000 when he was awarded first prize for conducting at the Prague Spring competition.

Based on the results of the ensuing recruitment, Roman Dietz was appointed director by the council of Teplice on October 1, 2000. At that time, the orchestra found itself in a complicated financial situation and the only way out was to find new resources, to increase tour activities and to gain sponsors. From 2001, the NCP markedly increased its activities at home and abroad. During 2004, the philharmonic of Teplice performed 142 concerts of which 52 took place abroad. A very significant project was the undertaking of tours across Europe – the most extensive yet by the orchestra, in which it visited 25 cities in 11 European countries from Slovakia and Hungary through Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, France, Spain, Portugal to Denmark and Germany. The orchestra played in cities such as Bratislava, Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana, Madrid, Lisbon, Berlin, Munich, Basil, Paris, Valencia, Prague and many other cities which would follow in inviting the prestigious NCP to perform for them. Foreign critics remarked on the predominance of young musicians in the orchestra, the teamwork and the overall musical impression. In January 2005 the Philharmonic was invited to give a concert in conjunction with the National Orchestra of Malta in the Mediterranean Conference Centre of Valletta to celebrate the recent joining of Malta and the Czech Republic into the European Union.

The North Czech Philharmonic regularly performs in prestigious domestic music festivals like the Prague Spring International Festival, the Antonín Dvořák Festival, the Beethoven Music Festival, the Český Krumlov Festival, the Gustav Mahler Festival, the Leoš Janáček Festival and others.

In autumn 2013 the North Czech Philharmonic Teplice absolved a concert tour to Asia, where the orchestra visited Vietnam, Cambodia, Hong Kong, Singapur, Malajsia and Brunei. The orchestra played by the attendance of the royal families as in the capital of Malajsia, Kuala Lumpur, in the concert hall Dewan Filharmonik Petronas or in Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia or in Brunei in Bandar Segi Begawar. In the future years there are planned concert tours to Thailand and China, but also to Brasil, Chile, Argentina or Uruguay. Foreign critics often point out the mostly young make up of the orchestra, and its energetic, emotional and soulful ensemble playing. At home in Teplice the North Czech Philharmonic performs alongside the most famous contemporary musicians, such Misha Maisky, Sharon Kam, Shlomo Mintz, Kun-woo Paik and others. At the same time the orchestra devotes many concerts to younger audiences in the form of educational concerts.

Since 1964 the North Czech Philharmonic is also responsible for running the Ludwig van Beethoven Music Festival in recognition of the composer who not only visited this urban home of the orchestra but was also inspired by the town and its surroundings to write several of his most famous compositions.

From 2013 Alfonso Scarano (Italy) is appointed to the position of the Chief conductor of the North Czech Philharmonic Teplice.