

An Analysis of Václav Nelhybel's *Prelude and Chorale*

by

Amy Dunker

www.amydunker.com

Instrumentation: Solo Instrument

Piccolo
Flute 1 – 2
Oboe 1 – 2
Bassoon
Bb Clarinet 1 – 3
Bass Clarinet/Contrabass Clarinet
Eb Alto Saxophone 1 – 2
Bb Tenor Saxophone
Eb Baritone Saxophone

Bb Trumpet 1 – 3
Horn in F 1 – 2
Trombone 1 – 3
Baritone
Tuba

Timpani
Chimes

Harmonic Language: Tonal (g minor with chromaticism)

Meter: Mixed Meter 4/4 2/4 3/4 6/4

Texture: Counterpoint, Melody and Accompaniment

Duration: 3 ½ Minutes

Grade: 3 - 4

Composition Date: 1992

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Dedication: To Joel Blahnik

Composer Bio:

Internationally renowned composer Vaclav Nelhybel was born on September 24, 1919, in Polanka, Czechoslovakia. He studied composition and conducting at the Conservatory of Music in Prague (1938-42) and musicology at Prague University and the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. After World War II he was affiliated as composer and conductor with Swiss National Radio and became lecturer at the University of Fribourg. In 1950 he became the first musical director of Radio Free Europe in Munich, Germany, a post he held until he immigrated to the United States in 1957. Thereafter, he made his home in America, becoming an American citizen in 1962. After having lived for many years in New York City, he moved to Ridgefield and Newtown, Connecticut, and then, in 1994, to the Scranton area in Pennsylvania. During his long career in the United States he worked as composer, conductor, teacher, and lecturer throughout the world. At the time of his death on March 22, 1996, he was composer in residence at the University of Scranton.

A prolific composer, Nelhybel left a rich body of works, among them concertos, operas, chamber music, and numerous compositions for symphony orchestra, symphonic band, chorus, and smaller ensembles. Over 400 of his works were published during his lifetime, and many of his over 200 unpublished compositions are in the process of being published. (Nelhybel's passion for composing was all encompassing and left him little time for "marketing" his works; for this reason, many of his compositions, though commissioned and performed, remained unpublished.) Although Nelhybel wrote the majority of his works for professional performers, he relished composing original, challenging pieces for student musicians and delighted in making music with young players.

Nelhybel was a synthesist and a superb craftsman who amalgamated the musical impulses of his time in his own expression, choosing discriminately from among existing systems and integrating them into his own concepts and methods. The most striking general characteristic of his music is its linear-modal orientation. His concern with the autonomy of melodic line leads to the second, and equally important characteristic, that of movement and pulsation, or rhythm and meter. The interplay between these dual aspects of motion and time, and their coordinated organization, results in the vigorous drive so typical of Nelhybel's music. These elements are complemented in many of his works by the tension generated by accumulations of dissonance, the increasing of textural densities, exploding dynamics, and the massing of multi-hued sonic colors. Though frequently dissonant in texture, Nelhybel's music always gravitates toward tonal centers, which makes it so appealing to performers and listeners alike.

Nelhybel received numerous prizes and awards for his compositions, among them, in 1947, a prize at the International Music and Dance Festival in Copenhagen, Denmark, for his Ballet In the Shadow of the Limetree, in 1954, the first prize of the Ravitch Foundation in New York for his opera A Legend, and, in 1978, the "Oscar" of the band world, an award from the Academy of Wind and Percussion Arts. Four American universities honored him with honorary doctoral degrees in music. The many music reference books that have entries about Nelhybel include Alfred's Essential Dictionary of Music, Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians, International Who's Who in Music, The Heritage Encyclopedia of Band Music, The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, and The New Grove Dictionary of Opera.*

*Information copied directly from the following:

Václav Nelhybel Official Website – Nelhybel.org
<http://academic.scranton.edu/departments/bandsing/nelhybel-bio.shtml>

Notes:

A common trait in the Nelhybel "*sound*" would seem to be a panchromatic melodic system, not serial in the deodecapronic sense, but one which has a strong relation to one gravitational center. This relation to the 'gravitational center' generates and releases tensions which Nelhybel calls the human element in music and is the *sine qua non* of communication between composer and listener. He is not a revolutionary innovator. He is rather a synthesist, bringing all of past techniques into a harmonious entity. He discriminately chooses existing principles and integrates them into his own concepts and art. He is a man fascinated with the joys of explorative involvement and the transmission of aesthetic excitement. His personal magnetism and dynamism encompass the entire range of human emotions—the common denominator through which his artistic expression carries its universal appeal. A desire to communicate is a real important concern of Nelhybel and it is his striving for reaching and touching the souls of humanity that make this man so noble—he finds it impossible to surrender his affection for humanity. It is in this 'touching' between composer, performers and audience, no matter what the method of the composition may be, that best characterizes and typifies his heart and soul; therefore, his music.

Prelude and Chorale on Svatý Václav was commissioned by the **Czech Music Alliance**—Joel Blahnik and Anita Smisek—in 1987 and premiered by them with euphonium and organ in New Prague, Minnesota at St. Wenceslaus Church, December 6, 1988. Later, in early 1992, Nelhybel transcribed it for symphonic band as an extension of his gratitude to Joel Blahnik for finding and meeting his oldest son while visiting Prague, Czechoslovakia (still under the communist regime at that time) with whom he had lost contact for many years. Bridging this relationship gave Václav new life and the proud realization of being a grandfather as well. A man of few words at times, Nelhybel was over-joyed and expressed it through this gift of music, ***Prelude and Chorale for Symphonic Band***.

Prelude and Chorale for Symphonic Band received its premiere on April 13, 1992 at the **Czech Music Festival** organized and conducted by Peter Schmalz, Band Director at Oshkosh North High School in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Joel Blahnik, was the euphonium soloist. Prior to the band's performance, Anita Smisek sang the *a cappella* 12th-century chant, *Svatý Václave*, on which it is based. [A vocal copy is enclosed with each set of band parts to give directors the option to have it sung before their performances as well.]

As with many of his compositions, Nelhýbel often employed thematic material from his musical heritage and native land. This work, originally for organ and trombone or euphonium, is a prelude on the theme of the second oldest extant chant from the 12th century known and sung by the Czech people—a prayer to the patron of their country, pleading St. Wenceslas (10th c. Prince of the Czech lands) to preserve it from perishing. This venerated tune takes the form of a *Kyrielle*, each verse, after invoking the intercession of St. Václav on behalf of his people, ends with the *Kyrie eleison*. Further verses, in litany form, call upon the other Czech patron saints, eg. Ludmilla, Prokop, John Nepomuk, Agnes. It also became a famous ceremonial song bonding the people together.

Form:

Prelude:

Introduction	ms. 1 – 4
A	ms. 4 – 15
B	ms. 15 – 30

Chorale:

A	ms. 31 – 43
B	ms. 43 – 56
Coda	ms. 57 – 59

**The Prelude and Chorale is to be performed without a break between movements.*

Prelude:

Theme 1 (Solo, ms. 4 – 9):

p cantabile espressivo

Solo

Theme 2 (Solo, ms. 15 – 26):

poco f

Solo

Solo

Chorale:

Theme 1 (Solo, ms. 31 – 43):

cantabile (quasi legato)

f

Solo

Solo

Theme 2 (Solo, ms. 43 – 56):

The musical score for Theme 2 (Solo, ms. 43-56) is presented in three staves. The first staff is in treble clef, one flat key signature, and 6/4 time. It begins with a melodic line in the right hand, featuring a dynamic marking of *piu f*. The second staff is in bass clef, one flat key signature, and 6/4 time, labeled "Solo". It contains a melodic line with dynamics including *p* and *molto f*. The third staff is also in bass clef, one flat key signature, and 6/4 time, labeled "Solo". It contains a melodic line with dynamics including *p* and *molto f*.

Recording Information: Contemporary Czech Symphonic Band Music
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Dr. Amy Dunker is an Associate Professor of Music at Clarke College in Dubuque, IA, USA where she teaches composition, theory, aural skills, trumpet and directs the new music ensemble.

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