

Report to the Finzi Trust
Research and development of *My Life with Janáček* - a play focussing on the
experiences of Leoš Janáček's wife, Zdenka Janáčková

David Sulkin
Brno, Czech Republic. March 2017

Zdenka Janáčková 1865 – 1938
Leoš Janáček 1854 – 1928

Their children

Olga Janáčková 1882 – 1903
Vladimir Janáček 1888 – 1890

Their maid

Marie Steiskalová 1873 - 1968

Background

When her husband died, Zdenka Janáčková decided that she would not write a memoir about her life with her husband. At the same time, Zdenka found that she was unexpectedly responsible for all aspects of her husband's estate. This was a complicated task since Janáček had not shared any details of his professional or financial arrangements with his wife. His publishers had managed royalties licensing but they did not have access to much of what now constitutes the Janáček Archive held by the Music Department of the Moravian Museum in Brno. Zdenka thought she knew her husband from the creative point of view.

Janáček had not be especially careful about cataloguing his work or arranging any kind of filing system for his extensive correspondence and his academic writing. As he had not worked closely with his wife, she had no kind of guide or compass to help her. She was accustomed to tidying her husband's study which was in the Organ School across a small garden from their tiny bungalow. This was also Janáček's bedroom from 1914 onwards.

Zdenka was at first overwhelmed and later exercised and distracted by the legal case surrounding her husband's estate. Janáček had tried to amend his will on his deathbed in Ostrava in August 1928 but as he was delirious and his signature rough and indistinct his, wife successfully challenged its validity. Janáček had wanted to leave most of his estate to Kamila Stösslová – a supposedly happily married woman, almost forty years younger than him, with whom he had developed a close relationship over eleven years from 1917. In that time Janáček wrote Mrs Stösslová around 800 letters writing, sometimes, three times a day. Zdenka was suspicious of the motives of Mrs Stösslová and her husband. In addition, she was very anxious about her future as, if the lion's share of the estate were to go to Stösslová, what was she to live on?

To help her manage Janacek's affairs, Mrs Janáčková engaged the help of a friend, Marie Trkánová who was the wife of the viola player in the Moravian Quartet, Josef Trkán. Mrs Janáčková had known Mrs Trkánová for a long time, they were friends. Janáček also knew Mrs Trkánová and had a low opinion of her and thought of her as a gossip and a trouble-maker. It was clear that, in turn, Mrs Trkánová had a low opinion of the way in which Janáček had treated his wife especially in relation to

Mrs Stösslová. An unexpected outcome of Mrs Trkánová helping Mrs Janáčková administratively, was a suggestion that Mrs Janáčková write a memoir – a suggestion initially dismissed. Instead, soon after Janáček died, Zdenka, conscious of protecting her husband's reputation, began to destroy incriminating letters and notes that she felt showed her husband in a bad light along with what she regarded were unimportant items like bills and invoices. Luckily the bowdlerisation of her husband's correspondence was not systematic.

Ultimately, the determined Mrs Trkánová devised another way of collecting Mrs Janáčková's memories. She suggested that they meet regularly, Mrs Janáčková would talk about her life and forty-seven-year marriage and Mrs Trkánová would write notes. Zdenka felt sufficiently reassured to agree to the plan. They met every week for two years. It's likely that Mrs Trkánová added to the mix by stirring her own opinions into the mix; picking up additional information from Janacek's correspondence or gossip and comment in her social circles in Brno.

When the note-taking sessions were over, Zdenka read and corrected them, but she didn't make a statement or sign off the notes as a true and accurate record of her life with Janáček, which would have validated them for future generations. There was no reason why Mrs Janáčková should have thought of signing the notes of a trusted friend or that she blamed her husband for his behaviour when it was also clear that she too behaved unsteadily when the going got tough.

Zdenka Janáčková died in 1938. In the same year, Hitler annexed the Sudetenland which was then dominated by German culture within Czechoslovakia. In 1939 Hitler invaded Bohemia and Moravia calling it the Reich Protectorate¹. By this time Janáček was firmly established as a composer with a world-wide reputation. Until her death, the complexities of Janáček's private life were downplayed – partly to maintain respect for his wife and partly because Mr and Mrs Stössel were both Jewish. This position was maintained by the Communist regime from 1948 onwards. No one thought it wise or desirable to unveil the complexity of the suffocating relationship between the composer and his wife, the tragedy of the death of two children and his dalliances with multiple women, in case views of Janacek's musical reputation was damaged.

The musicologist, Professor John Tyrrell has worked on the life of Janáček since the 1960s. He is fluent in one of Europe's most complex languages.² John is the most trusted foreign Janáček scholar. In the early 1990s a bookseller sent John a mysterious typescript. It was a carbon copy of the typed Trkánová memoir. John had often asked contemporaries at the Janáček Archive in Brno if they knew of the whereabouts of the Trkánová document but they said that it was lost and, on occasions, not available – even to their trusted British colleague.

John took the typescript with him on his next visit to Brno. The head of the Janáček Archive explained that there were, in fact, two slightly different versions of the memoir and that consecutive generations of archivists had decided not to release them for the original reason of respecting Mrs Janáčková's memory and protecting Janacek's reputation.

The staff of the archive also had a view that as the memoir was not officially authorised and that Mrs Trkánová had an axe to grind about the way Janáček had treated his wife, there was a distinct possibility that the details were coloured, made more vivid or even altered by Mrs Trkánová.

As a result of the carbon copy typescript coming into the public domain in the UK, the Trkánová memoir was published in Czech in the Czech Republic and John Tyrrell set about editing it and

¹ Slovakia remained an independent state as it suited Hitler. The President was the pro-Fascist Jozef Tiso who was also a Catholic priest. It was Tiso who accepted per-head payments for Slovak Jews who were sold to the Nazis as slave-labourers

² Hungarian and Finnish are the most complex languages for foreigners to learn. Czech is a close third.

adding an impressive commentary, tracking and comparing evidence in the Archive to confirm or contradict details mentioned by Mrs Janáčková and noted by Mrs Trkánová. John Tyrrell's *My Life with Janáček* was published in English in 1999.

I read Tyrrell's *My Life with Janáček* at the time of publication. I left English National Opera in 1995 and was then an Associate Director at Janáčkovy Hukvaldy – the International Festival in Janáček's home village in Northern Moravia. While at English National Opera I had worked closely with David Pountney, Sir Charles Mackerras and Sir Simon Rattle on Janáček's operas. These included *Katya Kabanová*, *The Adventures of Mr Brouček*, *Osud*, *The Makropulos Case*, *The Diary of the One Who Disappeared* and *The Cunning Little Vixen*. It made me a convinced Janáčekovian.

When I read *My Life with Janáček* it occurred to me that the story behind Janáček and his music should be more widely told. Mrs Janáčková's fate was not unusual for her generation. Her sister-in-law, Josefa Janáčková-Dohnalová, who lived in Hukvaldy, often told her that her brother's behaviour was nothing short of normal and that normal women usually dealt with it in their own ways.

There are many examples of women who, through insidious domestic abuse, hormonal changes brought on by stress, or a collapse in mental well-being, were committed to mental asylums or bizarre and barbaric treatments to enable their husbands to explore their own sexual personalities. In this story there is also the long years of endless energy and obsessive commitment of a genius-composer, the horrible deaths of two children and their two cramped and claustrophobic apartments and, from 1910, the tiny bungalow where Janáček and his wife lived.

I wanted to develop the Trkanová–Tyrrell take on Janáček's life and make it into a play for many years. While Tyrrell's work is highly-readable and compelling for one who is obsessed by detail, it does not have the wide readership that it deserves and I feel that Janáček would be better understood if more was known about this provincial genius and his ostensibly ordinary life. My work will never replace the scope and scholarship of Tyrrell but may provide a pathway to his outstanding writing and multiple volumes for those who become more interested in Janáček's music as a result of seeing my play.

After a chance meeting with the Czech pianist, Lada Valešová, who lives and works in London, I realised that she would be an ideal collaborator if she would agree to work with me. The objective being to create a dialogue between Zdenka and her husband. She would speak and he would respond only in music. My friendship with Henrietta Bredin extends back to 1985 when we began to work together at English National Opera. Henrietta, a skilled editor, offered to act as advisor and critic.

John Tyrrell's help.

In January 2016, at a conference at the University of Cardiff, about one Janáček's students, the composer Pavel Haas, I was able to ask John Tyrrell for his permission to use his work on Janáček as source material for my play. Since the start of my interest in Janáček, Tyrrell has published his magnum opus *Janáček, Years of a Life 1854 to 1914 – the Lonely Blackbird and Janáček, Years of a life 1915 to 1928 – The Tsar of the Forest*. These outstanding volumes overflow with tiny immaculately researched detail set the stage for writing about Zdenka. While her memoir is all about *her* view of her husband, their marriage, his work, his apparent selfishness and her role – sometimes complicit – in the turbulence of their relationship, Tyrrell takes the widest possible overview of the details of Janáček's life, his obsessive need to work, his relationship with Zdenka, his dalliances with other women, his finances, his health, the medical causes of his daughter's death - every detail of his life, including, for example, the time Janáček travelled from Prague to Brno in a first class railway

carriage having only paid for a second class ticket and then apprehended or, when travelling to Venice, staying overnight in Trieste and not booking a hotel room for him and his wife, having to put up in a cheap, low-grade hostel in front of which a man turned the handle of a barrel-organ, which played tunes from *Aida* until the small hours.

John Tyrrell was willing and keen to allow me to use his works as source material for my play. So, in the early summer of 2016 I began re-reading all Tyrrell's works and structuring the play about Zdenka. In October I spent two weeks in Southern Spain tidying my draft, cross referencing to Tyrrell's work and giving the play a rough shape. What I decided, with Lada Valešová and Henrietta Bredin, was that a play about Mrs Janáčková without Janacek's music would not be an effective or truthful work. The key to understanding Janáček is to listen and respond to his music; to get to know his musical personality; to allow him to speak to you through his music. Janáček wrote:

'...and I say that [music] means nothing unless it is thrust into life, into blood, into an environment. Otherwise it's a worthless toy.'

The newcomer to Janacek's music needs know nothing more about the composer than this. He will always do the rest. The circumstances and episodes from his married life are, perhaps incidental but they also give us an almost chilling sense of his determination to be his own man; his own individual musical voice. Zdenka, after say ten years of marriage might have predicted what the future would hold.

Lada, Henrietta and I also discussed the risk that Janacek's music might become a peripheral accompaniment to the play. We agreed that 'musical wallpaper' would not help tell the tale, not least because of Janáček's views on the role and function of music. In consequence, the early drafts of the play were written to include Janacek's music - and a smaller amount of music from other sources - and for music to be a quasi-dialogue between Zdenka and her husband.

In November 2016, a reading of an early draft was given with the help of actor, Diana Payan. This reading set the scene for the overall challenge of telling the complex story in a short time. We discussed the ambition that the total running time of the play would be about ninety minutes, if possible

After the reading, I became concerned about the authenticity of Mrs Janáčková's views and her tone of voice. It occurred to me that the text had an unhelpful monochrome quality and lacked dramatic contour. My collaborators suggested that it included too many details about Moravian life at the time, too many references to peripheral political tides and far too many complicated Czech names, including charming yet very confusing Czech diminutives. In December 2016, I began simplifying and editing the play and allowed myself more freedom to write words for Mrs Janáčková to speak and express views about events, rather than – as she had, in fact done, dictated her memoir.

Application

Also in December 2016, I had a message from Martin Lamb, a former Finzi scholar, asking me if I knew deserving people with interesting projects requiring investment since the closing date for the 2017 scholarships was fast approaching. I know a significant number of creative people with fascinating projects in development and asked myself who would fit the Finzi criteria and momentarily didn't consider myself as a potential candidate.

At the same time, I was considering the obvious need for me to visit Brno where the Janáčeks had spent their married life. I had visited Brno in the past, but didn't know the city well. I was keen, for example, to understand the geographical relationship between where Janáček lived as a choirboy at the Augustinian Monastery, where he worked, where Mrs Janáčková lived and grew up as a child,

the location and proximity of Janacek’s grave to the others in his family in the Central Cemetery, to see the salon in the Brno Theatre where Janacek’s body was laid to rest before he was interred, to note the relationship between the important Czech Cultural House [Besední Dům], the current Philharmonic Hall, the location of the china shop in Rudolfská [now Česká] much favoured by Mrs Janáčková along with other larger and smaller landmarks that featured in their lives. I also wanted to completely focus on my writing – hard to do in London - as well as visit the Janáček Archive.

The process of making an initial on-line application was easy. After an assessment at the Finzi end, I was asked to submit my application by 4 January 2017 which I was pleased to do. I was interviewed by trustees at RIBA on 21 January and I set off for Brno on 27 February and left on 1 April having visited, the spa, Luhačovice, Hukvaldy and Ostrava, the city where Janáček died at Dr Klein’s Sanatorium in August 1928.

Establishing a timetable

At the conference at the University of Wales I was also introduced to Professor Pavel Drábek, University of Hull, who was keen to help me and introduce me to people who subsequently became essential to my research and writing. Professor Drábek previously worked in the Theatre Department at the Masaryk University, Brno. He was a key contact enabling me to establish connections and helping me prepare to leave London only a month after having been offered the Finzi Scholarship.

In addition to Professor Drábek’s help, I was able to call on former Czech friends colleagues who helped me with many aspects of my planned research.

As I had an existing draft of the play and was, by this point, familiar with much of the relevant source material and familiar with Janáček’s principal works including both opera and chamber works, devising a plan of action was relatively straight-forward.

In preparation for establishing a timetable I developed four key areas of research:

1. **Janáček and speech-rhythms.** Their origins and development. How they were stored? Systematically? Role and function as Janáček became more confident and experienced?
2. **Focussing on the correspondence between Janáček, his brother František and Olga when Olga was sick in St Petersburg.** There is an important, recently published, collection of the letters between Janáček, Zdenka and Olga throughout their lives. This collection does not include letters from Janáček’s brother and his brother’s wife, Marie. I decided that I especially wanted to see the postcards that Olga sent home and the telegrams from František when the situation in St Petersburg became acute.
3. **Tales of Hukvaldy.** As I have a long-standing relationship with key players in the Hukvaldy community, I felt that some specific questions may reveal some new stories and themes of life in the village.
4. **The role of Luhačovice** in Janáček’s dalliances.

Key people and their freely offered and endless assistance:

Contact	Background and help provided
Dr Nora Hodečková	Studied musicology and examined in detail, the correspondence between Janáček and his daughter when Olga was ill in St Petersburg as part of her PhD study. Nora helped me with introductions to and meetings with Professors Zahrádka and

	Štědroň as well as giving views and opinions on the correspondence between Janáček and his daughter while she was in St Petersburg
Associate Professor Jiří Zahrádka	Musicologist at Masaryk University. He is a world renowned Janáček expert and Head of the Janáček Archive at the Moravian Museum. Prof Zahrádka is the gate-keeper of the Janáček Archive. As well as his own academic work and collaborations with John Tyrrell, Prof Zahrádka advises academics, scholars, conductors, opera directors, orchestra administrators and students about all aspects of Janáček's life and work.
Prof Miloš Štědroň	Musicologist, composer and Janáček expert, Emeritus at Masaryk University. As a young man, Professor Štědroň was involved with the establishment of the radical theatre company, Divadlo Husa na Provázků [Theatre of the Goose on a String] in the 1960s. He has some contentious views of some incidents in Janáček's life which are not shared by Professor Zahrádka. Prof Štědroň is highly creative and enthusiastic. He is cherished by his current and former students. Professor Štědroň is the nephew of Bohumír Štědroň who wrote <i>Leoš Janáček, Letters and Reminiscences</i> in 1955.
Marie Kvapilová	Archivist and librarian at the Centre for Experimental Theatre [CET] which is now the parent body of a group of theatre companies, including Divadlo Husa na Provázků. I visited the theatre in the 1980s and 1990s but Ms Kvapilová was able to show me the renovated 18th century palace that is now occupied by CET. I saw three performances included in the current repertoire in the newly built theatre behind the palace.
Dr Veronika Vejvodová	A researcher at the Antonín Dvořák Museum, Prague. Extensive academic knowledge of Janáček's work especially in the area of speech-rhythms and Janáček's view of that part of his work which he regarded as scientific. Dr Vejvodová and I met at Vila Amerika, the Dvořák Museum in Prague as I made my way home to the UK at the end of my study period. On discussing issues connected with Janáček's commitment to speech-rhythm collecting as a science, she told me about Janáček's interest in and purchase of a Hibbs Chronoscope as a means of measuring microscopic periods of time in musical notes and phrasing - played or sung and also about Janáček's desire for an institute or university department to be set up to develop his scientific ideas after his death. This was an unfulfilled instruction in his will.
Milena Hrbáčová	Luhačovice was Janáček's spa holiday resort of choice. It was the Czech not a German spa. Luhačovice catered Czech visitors, where Czech was spoken and Czech social life and culture was promoted. Luhačovice was developed from a set of medicinal springs into a resort by a Czech physician, Dr František Veselý who worked for a consortium of businessmen who created the fashionable spa by forming a limited liability company.

	<p>Although I had visited Luhačovice in several previous occasions I was taken on a tour on foot through the resort by the current Director of Festivalu Janáček a Luhačovice Lázně Luhačovice [the Janáček Festival in Luhačovice], Milene Hrbačková. Ways of relaxing included forest walks, good food, many small bars and coffee houses in small wooden pavilions, concerts for listening and dancing [indoors and outdoors], socialising, business discussions and romantic encounters [flirting]. Luhačovice played a very significant role in Janáček's life from 1902 onwards. He met both Mrs Urváková and Mrs Stösslová there. He also took a holiday with Mrs Horvátová there.</p>
Petr Sobotík	<p>Retired Mayor of Hukvaldy. Mr Sobotík's grandfather was Mayor of Hulvaldy when Janáček was alive. The Sobotík house is opposite Janacek's cottage in Hukvaldy. I have known Mr Sobotík for about twenty years. When we met on this occasion, he mentioned that as a teenager he had seen but did not meet Marie Steiskalová. Marie Steiskalová acted as the maid to the Janáčeks from 1894 until Mrs Janáčková died in 1938. Steiskalová died in 1968. I also knew that Mr Sobotík's grandfather had known Janáček and he told me that it was customary even in the 1960s to visit one's grandfathers on their birthdays and kiss their hands. So the current Mr Sobotík had kissed the hand that had held the hand of Leoš Janáček.</p>
Mrs Alena Levová	<p>Headteacher of the Základní Škola, Leoše Janáčka [Leoš Janáček Elementary School, Hukvaldy] and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Janáčkovy Hukvaldy [Janáček in Hukvaldy] Festival.</p>
Svatopluk Lev	<p>Mr Lev is Mrs Levová's husband and retired Head Forester of the obora [nature reserve] in Hukvaldy.</p> <p>The obora has an impact on all who visit Hukvaldy. It was originally a forest husbanded and formed into a reserve by the Catholic Church in the 18th century. All land and property was nationalised during the period of Soviet-Czechoslovak communism from 1948 onwards. Two years ago the Czech government restored ownership of the obora to the Church. On the highest hill of the obora sits a 12th castle which protected what is known as the Amber trade route from the Adriatic Sea to the Baltic coast.</p> <p>As well as being a playground for Janáček as a child and a place of relaxation throughout his life, Janáček was advised by the head forester of the time where he could observe fox-cubs playing with a vixen when the composer was working on <i>The Cunning Little Vixen</i>. This location is known to current forestry staff but is not marked on a map and not visited by tourists or Janáček enthusiasts without the permission of the current Head Forester. Any visitor must be guided to the location by a member of the Forestry team.</p>
Mrs Klecková	<p>Village archivist and oral historian. Not well at the time of my visit.</p>

Jarmila Sysalová	Assistant opera director, translator, interpreter for many years associated with Janáčkovy Hukvaldy. Jarmila assisted me with research concerning Dr Klein's Sanatorium in Ostrava where Janáček died. She also attempted to track down records of guests who stayed at the Imperial Hotel in Ostrava in August 1928 one of whom was Kamila Stösslová who stayed at the hotel after Janacek had died. I was keen to know the exact location of the room Kamila Stösslová occupied when she met Mrs Janáčková who had travelled from Brno to collect her husband's body from the Sanatorium. No records were found as Ostrava was very badly damaged during WWII
Dr Martin Flašár	Musicologist at Masaryk University. Specialist focussing on Modernist music and its cultural contexts.
Ivan Kolman	Mr Kolman, a contact made through the Chairman of the Finzi Trust, was especially helpful to me on my arrival in Brno. On my second full day he very helpfully gave me an orientation tour of the city as well as visiting the Augustinian Monastery where Janáček sang as a child, where he was married and where his body lay before being transferred to the Mahen Theatre. We also visited the Central Cemetery and to see the graves of Janáček, Zdenka Janáčková, Olga Janáčková, Vladimír Janáček, Emilian Schultz [Zdenka's father] and Marie Steiskalová [

Additional contacts and supporters that I met while in Brno include:

Contact	Background and help provided
Associate Professor David Drozd, PhD	Dr Drozd runs the Department of Theatre Studies at the Masaryk University, Brno. On my arrival in Brno he asked me to give a guest talk to the students of the department, which I did. The talk was entitled <i>The Arts in the UK After Brexit</i> . During my stay in Brno Prof Drozd helped me on several occasions with new contacts and advice.
Vojtěch Orenič	Assistant Director at the Janáčkovovo Divadlo [Janáček Opera House], Brno. He helped me with tickets for performances at the opera house and also gave me a guided tour of the Mahenovo Divadlo [Mahen Theatre] in Brno including the salon where Janáček's body lay before his interment.
Dr Eliska Poláčková	Dr Poláčková was awarded her Doctorate while I was in Brno. She was especially helpful in accompanying me on several occasions to the reading room of the Music Department of the Moravian Museum where the Janáček Archive is kept. This was especially useful help since reading handwritten Czech from the start of the 20 th Century is an impossible task for a person with limited Czech.
Patricie Častková	Patricie Častková is the Dramaturg at the Janáčkovovo Divadlo [Janáček Opera House]. I was introduced to her by Pamela Howard, designer and Emeritus Professor of Scenography at the former Central St Martin's School of Art and now working extensively in the Czech Republic.

Jiří Heřman	Director of opera at the Janáčkovo Divadlo [Janáček Opera House]. I met Mr Heřman on two occasions. He expressed interest in the play. I was invited to the first night of his outstanding production of <i>L'Amour de loin</i> by Finnish composer Kaija Anneli Saariaho.
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Process

The opportunity to work in Brno without distractions and following my plan of action proved to be exactly what my play needed. Having decided on four branches of research in advance to address weaknesses in the first drafts, plus the benefit of having a long list of contacts before leaving for Brno meant that I was able to begin work on arrival in Brno. My initial orientation tour of the city, visit to the Augustinian Monastery and the Central Cemetery meant that I immediately established a triangulated map of the city in my mind into which everything else, geographically, later fitted. The map helped me understand the physical layout of the world of Mrs Janáčková's memoir. This was expressed, for example, in minute detail; the distance between the young married couple's first apartment [now demolished] and Mrs Janáčková's parent's house, between the house behind the Organ School in Smetanová where the Janáček's lived from 1910 onwards and the china shop in Rudolfská [now Česká] which was run by Janáčková's friend.

Findings

I decided to space my meetings out to allow writing time between. This proved to be wise as I could assimilate new information, views, opinions and observations and decide how to knit them into the narrative, or not. The question of being selective was crucial. As a writer, I have a habit of including far too much detail. I decided to meet specialists by way of addressing each area of my research in turn with the exceptions of meeting with Professors Zahrádka and Štědroň. Through Nora Hodečková, I was able to set up three meetings with each Professor. Nora advised me that as they have contrasting [contradictory] views and opinions, separate discussions would prove more fruitful, avoiding possible differences of opinion over the same glasses of beer.

There were many opinions about Janáček underpinned by facts recorded by Tyrrell. Nora Hodečková, for example, advised me that the correspondence that I wanted to examine between Olga Janáčková and her parents while Olga was in St Petersburg was much less vivid than I may have anticipated. Nora thought that I was hoping that the letters would reveal Olga's state of mind while in fact all of them are factual. 'Felling a bit better'. 'Had an awful night.' 'At home with Auntie and Uncle.' 'Back in hospital.' etc. etc. The result was that I was able to convert the short messages into a telegraphic theme in the play. Text from a very touching letter from Olga in Brno to Pepka Jungová in Hukvaldy, has been, in part, incorporated into the play.

During my work in Brno, I realised more clearly that the role of archive of correspondence left by Janáček should play an important symbolic role in the play. Mrs Janáčková was in two minds about what to do with the mass of letters and associated papers left by her husband at his death. She was very concerned about the future of his music and worried too about his reputation. There is evidence that she selectively destroyed letters that she thought were damaging. It is also likely that she destroyed what she believed to be inconsequential material; bills and receipts and so on. It was in Brno that I decided to give the letters and papers a role in the play. I also decided to be clear about the time date and time of the action of the play. The question of Mrs Janáčková being overwhelmed and angry at the requirement to sort out the archive up are condensed into an afternoon and an evening.

At my second meeting with Professor Zahrádka, I sensed that he was not animated or excited about the prospect of my play. He said that, that day he had already advised a young Slovak opera director about a new production of *The Adventures of Mr Brouček* and had met two other foreign researchers before our meeting at 17.00. At the end of the meeting I asked my final question: 'If you were writing a play about Mr and Mrs Janáček, what advice would you give yourself?'. This was key moment since his demeanour changed, he brightened and told me the following:

- In the context of being fair to Janáček and Mrs Janáčková, the Trkanova memoir should be considered as biased since Mrs Trkanova had a poor relationship with the composer before he died and was naturally inclined to take Mrs Janáčková's side.
- That Mrs Janáčková often found herself in stressful situations within her marriage that may have given rise to an element of instability and lack of mental equilibrium.
- That I should balance the relationship between Janáček and Mrs Janáčková by recognising strengths and weaknesses on both sides of the relationship.
- Not to overlook Janáček's tenacity and staying power or his enthusiasm and physical energy which Mrs Janáčková blamed for her bringing on her husband's pneumonia after warm summer walks in the forests of Manchester and subsequent rain showers. Janáček's drive, energy and determination shouldn't be under-estimated.

I spent many hours reorganising and rewriting the play on the detailed advice of Professor Zahrádka. This work continued along with visiting specialists to discuss detailed aspects of the play and to understand Janáček's life better. I also made visits to the house where Janáček lived with his wife from 1910. I also made multiple visits to the Reading Room of the Music Department of the Moravian Museum to examine correspondence.

After my first meetings with the Professors Štědroň and Zahrádka, I felt glum about the task I had set myself work. When I read the draft, I thought it dull, conservative, too respectful and not courageous. I bought thirty sheets of A4 paper and four permanent markers. I worked at aspects of the play by drawing maps with illustrations and questions addressed to myself. I was able to rework sections of the play, trying to define dramatic contours. I created a story-board. This was a task which could only have been achieved in the quiet of a retreat in Brno.

Camila Urváková. A significant discovery.

The most enigmatic dalliance that Janáček had was with Camila Urváková whom he met in Luhačovice in the summer of 1903, after the death of his daughter, Olga. He wrote to his wife that he had met a beautiful girl who had a heart defect 'like the daughter we have lost'. Mrs Janáčková thought that her husband had met was a little girl, or at very least a teenager. Mrs Urváková was in her late 20s and was married with a young son and became the inspiration for Janáček's opera, *Osud*. Janáček was enamoured. He compared her to the viola d'amore which, in time, became his own symbol of someone who he thought extraordinarily attractive. While at Luhačovice, he wrote on her fan '*To the most beautiful woman I have ever met.*' Janáček was often impetuous. During their summer flirtation, Mrs Urváková sent Janáček a bouquet of red roses and for the greater part of the writing of *Osud*, he toyed with the idea of calling it *Red Roses*, *Scarlet Roses* and several other variations on the rose theme. In the end, it was Mrs Urváková's use of the word 'osud' [fate] that changed Janáček's mind about the title of the opera.

John Tyrrell details Camila Urváková life in detail noting that this Camila spelt her name with a 'C' whereas the later and more significant Kamila Stösslová, spelt her name with a 'K'. As far as I can tell, Mrs Urváková's letters have not been published in English. There are three in the Archive though more probably existed since Janáček was such an enthusiastic letter-writer and Mrs

Urváková would have wanted to reply. The correspondence lasted from summer 1903 until early spring 1904 when Mr Urválek wrote to the composer demanding that the exchange of letters should stop.

The Urváková letters are surprising. They are gushing, meandering, self-indulgent and self-centred. The middle letter was written just after Christmas 1903 when Mrs Urváková reports how she has been spoiled by her husband with diamonds and emeralds. How her maid is amazed at how generous 'Baby Jesus has been.' In the preceding letter and the last one, she mentions that she is constantly ill and depressed, unfit to be seen in society and uncertain that she will be able to meet Janáček in Luhačovice in the summer of 1904. She says that she is under constant surveillance at home and that Janáček should address his correspondence to her maid who will be on the look-out for letters. There is also a fascinating comment from Mrs Urváková asking Janáček to tell her what it is to be a successful and famous artist surrounded by success and flowers. Janáček, at this time his life, was by no means successful.

In one of her photographs, Urváková looks grand and modish and in another winsome and girlish. The descriptions of her sicknesses are florid. She claims to be at death's door. She lived to be 81.

The discovery of the Urváková letters was another turning point. Mrs Janáčková mentions Urváková in the memoir but not the content of the letters. The letters proved that this was not the case and that the meeting meant much to Janáček and resulted in a new opera. Given that his daughter had just died, a more predictable man might have given himself breathing space.

I realised after the Urváková revelation that the effect of living and working in Brno had a much greater impact on my writing than had anticipated. Quite late on in my stay found the house where Zdenka lived with her parents. The description in the memoir is accurate. I was able to imagine her as a lonely little girl looking out of the windows up towards Špilberk Castle. The house is about 400m from the Augustinian Monastery where Janáček sang as a choirboy.

Outcome

In my application to the Trust, I quoted Richard Holmes book *The Long Pursuit*:

The serious biographer must seriously and physically pursue his subject through the past. Mere archives are not enough. The biographer must go to all the places where the subject had ever lived, worked, travelled or dreamed. He must examine them as intelligently as possible, looking for clues. He must step back, step down and step inside the story.

In the case of Janáček, I was fortunate that his sphere was relatively limited. Knowing the lie of the Czech lands and being familiar with the Czech language helped me see the Janáčeks' world more clearly. The intensity of being in Brno with no distractions enabled me to create a new draft of the play at a pace that I could not have matched in London. Brno, new contacts and influences, space and time, encouraged me to be both more reflective and intrepid in my writing and to feel that, where I needed to create some fiction elements, to enable the drama to unfold, that fiction had an authentic feel and ring of truth.

Thanks

The Finzi Trust scholarship gave me the opportunity to work in Brno. Since April I have continued to edit and shape the play in London.

A play is not a play until it has been released to a director and actors. In the case of both actors and directors, they draw themes, highlight incidents and redefine the contours of a play in a way that the writer often cannot. They make much more of a work than the writer.

In the case of this play the added magical element will be Janáček played through his musical voice. Having worked hard to construct a truthful vulnerable and often injured Zdenka, Janáček's voice will add an exceptionally vivid and authentic quality to the play. Janáček never expected to provide a musical narrative for the relationship between him and his wife and that significantly increases the potential impact of the work with the chance of finding a new audience who comes fresh and unknowingly to his music.

I have spent the summer of 2017 editing and shaping the play further with the assistance of advice from several trusted sources. I sent myself more recent challenges.

Enclosed with this report is the most recent draft of the play. I would be very happy to hear from any trustee's who'd like to give feedback.

The next step is to complete the musical framework, improve the end of the play which remains flawed and to work with a young director of presenting what will be a rehearsed reading. I am also planning to apply for an Arts Council England – Grant for the Arts to premiere the play.

David Sulkin
1 September 2017.