



THE CZECH BOYS CHOIR

BONI PUERI

*The young men of the Boni Pueri
will steal your heart away!*



BONI PUERI - THE CZECH BOYS CHOIR

The Czech Boys Choir **BONI PUERI** was founded in 1982, since when it has become one of Europe's notable musical bodies. It has 350 members and has given more than 2500 concerts all over Europe, America and Asia, made eight records of its own and taken part in 19 more (Supraphon, EMI, BMG, ArcoDiva etc.)

Boni Pueri performs with eminent artists (José Carreras), it makes recordings for TV and radio and performs with important ensembles and orchestras all over the world. It makes regular tours of the **USA** (Grace Cathedral San Francisco), **Japan** (Tokyo Bunka Kaikan Hall), **South Korea** (Seoul Arts Centre), **Great Britain, the Netherlands** (Concertgebouw Amsterdam, De Doelen Rotterdam), **Denmark, France, Italy** (Basilica di S. Maria Maggiore Bergamo) etc.



The choir has appeared at many international music festivals (**The Prague Spring Festival** 1994, 1995, 1998, 2004 and 2005, **Europalia** - Brussels 1998, **AmericaFest** - Minneapolis 1998, 2002, **Jeonju Sori Festival** - South Korea 2002) and in July 2004 became the first ever European host to the **World Festival of Singing for Men and Boys**. Members of Boni Pueri appear also as soloists in opera performances (W. A. Mozart: The Magic Flute – **Teatro dell'Opera di Roma** 2004).

The choir's important projects of recent years include double-choir performances of Bach's **St Matthew Passion** and of **Requiems** by Mozart and Fauré, a staging of Hans Krása's Terežín children's opera **Brundibár** and a premiere recording of music by the baroque composers Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer, Pavel Josef Vejvanovský and Jan Dismas Zelenka. In 2003 the Boni Pueri recording of Zelenka's **Sub olea pacis et palma virtutis** received the prestigious **Cannes Classical Award**.

Czech Boys Choir Boni Pueri is cultural ambassador of the "**European Federation of Choirs of the Union**".



PAVEL HORÁK - MUSIC DIRECTOR



Boni Pueri's professional choirmaster since 1991 and from 1996 its artistic director. He has more than a thousand appearances with the choir to his credit, including many tours at home and abroad (Europe, USA, Japan, South Korea). His top achievement has been a complete production of Bach's St Matthew Passion in the choir's repertoire and from 1998 on give regular performances of it at prestigious venues in the Netherlands.

In 1999 he completed his choirmaster doctorate studies under Prof. Jiří Kolář at Charles University in Prague, also gaining his doctorate degree in philosophy. From 2000 on he has been teaching choir conducting at the Charles University Faculty of Education. He is a member of the Rotary Club.

JAKUB MARTINEC - CONDUCTOR



He has devoted himself to choral and solo singing since his childhood. He first sang in the Boni Pueri boys' choir in 1991. He studied music education and solo singing at the University of Hradec Králové, and choir conducting with Pavel Horák. As his assistant he gained his first valuable experience of working with a boys' choir.

From 2000 on he has been working professionally as choirmaster of the Boni Pueri's concert groups and has taken part in the choir's regular tours of the USA, Europe and the Czech Republic.



THE CITY OF HRADEC KRÁLOVÉ

The history of **Hradec Králové** has been very long, its beginning dates back to year 1225. It was recorded at that time as a royal fortress town. It had already become the centre of East Bohemia in the Middle Ages. It did not lose its importance in any of the following historical periods, for example during the Hussite movement, later as the Bishop's seat, as a military fortress (the battle at Chlum in 1866) etc. Its unique collection of historical sights and structures consists of gothic, renaissance and baroque monuments. The city also takes pride in its modern architecture monuments from the 20th century. The masterpieces of such architects as Gočár or Kotěra and others contributed greatly to gaining the title The Salon of the Republic.



Today, Hradec Králové is a natural regional metropolis, a traffic junction, a seat of many authorities, state institutions, banks and industrial enterprises. It is also a seat of universities and often becomes a venue of professional conventions and symposiums. Many important cultural institutes operate here, e.g. the Czech Boys Choir Boni Pueri, Klicpera's Theatre, the Drak Theatre, the Gallery of Modern Art, the Hradec Králové Philharmonic Orchestra, the Museum of Eastern Bohemia - etc. The city became famous also due to its plentiful musical festivals with international participation. Hradec Králové is not only a city of congress tourism, but also a starting point of interesting routes following historical sights or natural beauties in the vicinity. Today's development of the city thus deliberately follows in the footsteps of its grand tradition.

Hradec Králové is a cultural metropolis of Eastern Bohemia. It is a seat of outstanding professional performing ensembles. Choral singing is a phenomenon of Hradec Králové (Boni pueri), as well as high-quality ballroom dancing, and a renowned student theatre.

Thousands of visitors are attracted by Commemorative Festivities held on the occasion of the anniversary of the 1866 Battle of Chlum, Queen Eliška Festivities, Museum Advent and Christmas markets, Hradec Králové Easter, national show of majorettes etc. In June the theatrical festival "Theatre of European Regions" takes place. It offers more than a hundred performances in ten days and the city comes alive with street theatre almost as French Avignon does. Entrée to Dance is the title of an international festival of modern dance, in September and October chamber and symphonic music sounds through concert halls, churches and chapels during Hradec Music Days. The entire week in October is devoted to the festival "Jazz Goes to Town".



JAN DISMAS ZELENKA: DIE RESPONSORIEN ZUM KARFREITAG



Immerse yourself in an artistic experience with Boni pueri and Musica florea.

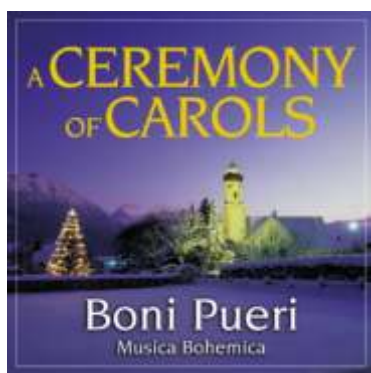
Jan Dismas Zelenka: Die Responsorien zum Karfreitag (Good Friday Responsories)

František Ignác Antonín Tůma: Sonatas in A minor and E minor, Symphony in B-flat major

*Boni pueri; conductors Pavel Horák and Jakub Martinec
Musica florea; Conductor Marek Štryncl*

- The responsories, together with the antiphons, are among the most important sung portions of the mass.
- The Good Friday Responsories by J. D. Zelenka are selected from the composer's 27 responsories for Holy Week. They are written for 4-part choir, strings, trombones and basso continuo.
- The Czech boys' choir Boni pueri performs with admirable mastery and range of color.
- The Musica florea ensemble performs on Baroque instruments.
- An excellent recording of sacred music. A noteworthy artistic experience.

BENJAMIN BRITTEN: A CEREMONY OF CAROLS



RECORDING OF THE MONTH

This CD should be high up on the wish-list of all music-lovers this Christmas. It is full of interest, and also strikes a great balance between the familiar and the novel. In the interpretations of Boni Pueri with Musica Bohemica, even the most well-worn traditional favourites such as 'Adeste Fideles' or 'Ding, Dong Merrily' come up sounding fresh and lively. But the CD opens with a welcome addition to the catalogue, namely Julius Harrison's 4-part SATB (or more accurately TrATB) version of 'A Ceremony of Carols', made in 1955, thirteen years after Britten's original.

Any arranger would approach a work of such perfection with trepidation, but Harrison has done a superb job, and has, in my opinion anyway, sacrificed little of the original's beauty. Britten's lightness is happily preserved, especially with the young tenor and bass voices of Boni Pueri. Such is this Czech choir's natural musicality and the beauty of their voices that I found it easy to accept their occasionally idiosyncratic pronunciation of the English language. 'Balulalow' brings a breathtakingly beautiful solo contribution from Jakob Kubin (who fortunately graces a number of other tracks) and a bonus is the sensitive harp playing of Hana Müllerová-Jouzová, who gives a haunting interpretation of the Interlude on track 8. The only little reservation comes in track 7,

'This Little Babe', where the boys do not quite manage to deliver the tricky words and rhythms at the very fast tempo set by conductor Jakub Martinec. Unusually, the harp-accompanied version of the Processional and Recessional that frame the piece is used, and no attempt has been made by the production team to suggest the approach and departure of the voices, which seems a pity.

Jaroslav's Krček's arrangements of thirteen 'Old European Christmas Carols' bring more delights. They have the virtue of being straightforward harmonically and texturally, thereby allowing the simple beauty of the melodies to be enjoyed. As well as the familiar carols, we have some less well-known ones which will captivate listeners who, like me, love the magic of Christmas music but are always looking out for something new. The 'Polish Lullaby' is utterly charming, as is the Czech carol 'Žežulka z lesa vylitla', better known as 'The Cuckoo'. In this one, as elsewhere, the brightly coloured folk instruments of Musica Bohemica make an unforgettable contribution, with a quail and some turtle-doves joining our friendly cuckoo. The disc is completed by an irresistible 'Stille Nacht', rendered not at the usual slow tempo, but as a swaying waltz with harp and zither – the Angel Gabriel meets the Third Man!

Buy this and give it to your Best Friend – you'll be rewarded with eternal gratitude.

Gwyn Parry-Jones

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Benjamin Britten (1913 - 1976)
1 - 12 **A Ceremony of Carols, Op. 28**
arranged for SATB and Harp by Julius Harrison (1885 - 1963)

13 - 25 **Old European Christmas Carols**
arranged by Jaroslav Krček (1939) and Josef Krček (1946)

13 *Adeste fideles*
14 *Dormi, dormi bel Bambin*
15 *Ding, Dong! Merrily on High*
16 *Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen*
17 *Vstávajte, pastieri*
18 *Lulajže Jezuniu*
19 *Los animales ante el nacimiento*
20 *Žežulka z lesa vylitla*
21 *Deck the Halls*
22 *Les anges dans nos campagnes*
23 *Byla cesta, byla ušlapaná*
24 *A vint-i-cinc de desembre (Fum, fum, fum)*
25 *Stille Nacht*

BONI PUERI Czech Boys Choir
Choirmasters: Pavel Horák, Jakub Martinec

MUSICA BOHEMICA PRAHA
Artistic director: Jaroslav Krček
Harp: Hana Müllerová-Jouzová
Flugelhorn: Miroslav Kejmar
Conductor: Jakub Martinec

Recorded on 27- 29 August 2004 at Domovina Studio Prague
Music Director Jaroslav Krček
Sound engineers, editing Václav Roubal, Karel Soukeník
Producers Jana Černá, Jiří Stěpánek

ZENTIVA

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PROGRAMME TIPS OF THE CZECH BOYS CHOIR

“Hallelujah”

concert of sacred music ranging from the Gregorian chant through Baroque, classicism to romanticism - including the famous Hallelujah by G. F. Händel

“Boni Pueri on Tour Concert”

a cross section of sacred music as mentioned above together with the Czech folkloristic music and traditional songs from countries like Argentina, the U.S.A., Africa, Japan, Australia etc.

“Christmas with Boni Pueri”

christmas carols from all over the world

Orchestral tips:

- J. S. Bach: **St Matthew Passion**, BWV 244
- L. Bernstein: **Chichester Psalms**
- G. Fauré: **Requiem**, op. 48
- J. C. F. Fischer: **Missa Inventionis S. Crucis**
- W. A. Mozart: **Coronation Mass**, K. 626
- W. A. Mozart: **Requiem**, K. 317
- P. J. Vejvanovský: **Vesperae Sancti Venceslai**
- J. D. Zelenka: **Die Responsorien zum Karfreitag**
- J. D. Zelenka: **Sub olea pacis et palma virtutis**

Children’s operas:

- H. Krása: **Brundibár** (The Bumble-Bee)
- K. Pospíšil: **Námořníci** (The Sailors)



CZECH BOYS CHOIR: YOUNG AND FLAWLESS

Boni Pueri, the 28-voice-strong Czech Boys Choir, has to be among the finest happy-at-the-job ensembles of its kind. The group ended its American tour Monday with a bang-up concert at the Czech Embassy, matching the contrasting flavors of its three-part program with clever switches of attire: formal white-and-gold robes for the classical European opener; multicolored folkish shirt-and-breeches combinations for Czech folk songs; and a flashy show-biz finale in vaudeville regalia - top hats and red velvet vests

-- for a tuneful romp through Broadway and other lighter tunes.

The young singers offered a multinational array of music in nine lucidly enunciated languages, even the English "th" rarely tripping them up. All this, plus clear phrasing, perfect intonation (both a cappella and accompanied singing) and 100 percent attention to conductor Jakub Martinec. Ranging in age from 9 to 20, the group included eight superb tenors and basses. Soprano and alto voices remained true to head-tone clarity, larynxes

thankfully free of pop's stranglehold. While maintaining a "properly" disciplined boy-choir stance, the singers also radiated joy, as in the Gloria from Mozart's "Coronation" Mass. It included a solo quartet of operatic caliber and the two youngsters introducing the music did so with the pizzazz of weathered impresarios.

Vilem Valkoun was the group's responsive accompanist.

-- Cecilia Porter
The Washington Post



CHOIR PUTS ON A MOST MUSICAL PROGRAM

Thursday's Rapid City Concert Association performance by the Czech Boys Choir Boni Pueri was one of the most musical programs I have attended.

The choir, in its 22nd year, consists of boys and young men. It has more than 350 members between 4 and 20 years old, and the traveling concert group has 28 selected singers from 10 to 20.

Jakub Martinec conducts the choir. The excellent accompanist is pianist Vilem Valkoun.

The concert was in three sections with two intermissions. The first section was "European Classical Music," opening with an impressive entrance by the choir onto a dark stage. Each singer carried a lighted candle as they sang a Gregorian chant.

This was followed by "O la! O che bon eccho" by Orlando di Lasso. The beauty of the sound and the superb musicianship of the ensemble established at once that this was going to be a wonderful

musical evening for the audience.

During the first section, the choir also performed a beautiful version of "Goin' Home" based on the "Largo from the New World Symphony" by Antonin Dvorak.

The final work of the first section was a spirited and technically perfect performance of the "Hallelujah" chorus from the "Messiah" by George F. Handel. The audience rose for the performance, which is the traditional response whenever the work is performed.

The second section of the concert was dedicated to "Czech Music and Folklore" and included a variety of compositions.

The choir members were dressed in traditional folk costumes, which added to the quality of the program. It was during this section of the concert that the choir members proved they could sing, dance and act at the same time. Especially enjoyable was the opening composition, "Crazy Songs" by Marek Kopelent.

The final work of this section, "To the Mountains," based on Moravian folk poetry and arranged by Jan Vicar, was a real crowd pleaser. This work was dedicated to the choir in 2004 and the performance was a theatrical success.

After a short intermission, the third section, "Around the World with Music," was performed. It included music from the United States, Japan, Brazil, Italy and Africa. The opening was a "Broadway Medley" that included "Chattanooga Choo-Choo" and "Hello Dolly." I especially enjoyed the "Sakura" from Japan and the wonderful theatrical and musical presentation of the Zulu spiritual "One by One" from Africa, arranged by Lebo.

After the final composition the audience gave the choir a standing ovation in appreciation for the excellent musical evening.

-- Victor Weidensee

THE MUSICAL MAGIC OF BONI PUERI

As Walt Disney has created his "Magic Kingdom" with many heroic characters of fantasy, portrayed in visual animated art, likewise have "The Good Boys of Hradec Kralove" created a "magical world" of choral art. One has to experience this magical musical choir of BONI PUERI to realize that something this extraordinary exists in the world today. During their 2004 USA tour, this reviewer was honored to witness 3 of their 38 concerts. To clarify their magic, let us continue

"Beyond the extraordinary!"

"Perfection and musicality beyond comprehension!"

"A musical marriage made in heaven!"

"A choir of angelic musical ambassadors from the Czech Republic that far exceeds any standard we admire here in the USA!"

"A freshness and vitality which is truly inspirational!"

"Incredibly Beautiful!"

"Inspirational!"

These are statements were provided by members of the various audiences who experienced BONI PUERI performances. Bravo, bravissimo--yes! Now the question arises: "What is the magic of the unique ensemble from the Czech Republic?"

First, it is the incredible training

of voices and musicianship developed in these lads from age 10-20.

Secondly, it is the superb repertoire which they have selected to showcase their talents.

Thirdly, it is the concept of programming. In the case of this 2004 tour the trilogy of: European classical music; Czech music and folklore; international music around the globe, provided a gallery of stars shining in the musical heavens (musical rainbow of culture that graced the sky). Truly comprehensive and encompassing. Smart.

The education and training these lads are receiving is unique, existing on a musical level which exceeds far beyond the norm.

Personally, I have witnessed this choir for 3 years. I have observed their phenomenal growth during this time. They were marvelous when I first experienced them, but now I sense a degree and a level of sophistication and musicality beyond the 'extraordinary.'

CONCERT PROGRAM TRILOGY:

Part One is an example of sheer musicianship--totally heart and soul. One witnessed the perfection of dialoguing in the di Lasso "Echo". The Mozart absolutely sparkled...as champagne on New Year's Eve. The phrasing of "Goin' Home" provided a nuance that would have placed a

smile upon Antonin Dvorak's face! If Dvorak only knew that boys voices could achieve musical finesse beyond the impact of the original orchestral scoring of this famous Largo section . . . he would smile with a twinkle in his eye! "Deo Gracias" danced with delight and the "Hallelujah chorus" from "Messiah" flowed effortlessly with perfect pitch and intonation. It never labored--it flowed purely as a river of gold.

Part Two illustrated magnificently the color, passion, and humor of Czech music and folklore. Dressed in traditional Czech costumes, the Boys had great fun with their vocal prowess. "Crazy Songs" exhibited the 'devil's interval of the augmented 4th' and showcased the choir with body movements that gave drama to the clever 'crazy music'. Again, Dvorak returned with his "Songs My Mother Taught Me" which exhibited a tenderness as a mother would hold a child to her bosom. "The Farmer is Going" provided the listener with a feeling of riding a horse in a brisk gait with one of the boys "out of tempo" with the up & down knee bend action, simulating the horse ride--an antic to the delight of the audience and performers! "Prsi, Prsi" was sung at such a fast tempo that the diction created the impression of a down-pour of rain! Incredible diction--who can talk that fast

Besides singing at that great speed? Concluding with "Folksong Medley", the Boys not only sang with great precision and character, but also their choreography provided a vehicle of motion on stage which complimented their musicality.

Part Three to this reviewer was a culminating force, celebrating the cultures of the world. The exquisite American medley was a delightful 'alpha to omega' American personification: from "Chatanooga choo-choo" to pure heart. What a rendering! The Boys command of the Japanese tongue was incredible. Australia was characterized with its folksong sincerity. Their African portrait had incredible energy and projection of sound, enhanced by authentic African instruments and, again, mastery of tongue and musical style. The costuming in this section was very cleverly conceived, not too much, and enough to give color and dash and have enough props so that the costumes did not get in the way of the music-making.

During this 90 minute program, which was as fresh at the end as its beginning, was a testimony to the physical, emotional and musical conditioning of these lads, the conductor never spoke a word. A cleverly-designed dialogue between one of the youngest and oldest lads in the choir, gave great charm and provided a wonderful wealth of information. Truly, it was

'The Boy's' program!

In addition this reviewer has witnessed the splendid musical growth of the young conductor, Jakub Martinec. As a former member and soloist of the choir, Mr. Martinec has climbed the mountain of musical interpretation in a short two years. He demonstrated magnificently a musical sensitivity and depth of a conductor thrice his age!

The music growth on the 2004 tour has been phenomenal. This reviewer witnessed their 1st and 3rd concerts on their tour and then also their 26th concert. The musical cohesion, interplay, tonal growth and interpretation has been incredible. Truly, a sky-scraper (Sears Tower) experience! Nary a hint of fatigue or boredom with the singers on their 26th concert, to the contrary, even more zest and freshness of life was experienced! "Bravo!" The mastery of diction and the projection of the vocal texts in the various languages of the world, no matter the culture, is a tribute to the training of these young voices. What ears--what memory!! Incredible! The Boys sing in English with a perfection of diction rarely attained by 40% of America's university and professional choirs! Truly masterful!!!

The unique timbre of BONI PUERI is to be recognized and applauded. With 11 sopranos,

7 altos, 5 tenors, and 5 basses...they are in perfect balance because of voice character and strength. A most delicate palette of choral color and tone was exhibited. The delicacy of the tonal texture, the support of pitch at phrase cadences and endings---that is to take the song into silence with perfect pitch is an art attained by few professional choirs! Some attain it periodically by luck. BONI PUERI does it masterfully and consistently!!! Again, Bravo!!

The musical traditions of the fabled Vienna Boys Choir and the American Boys Choir are well founded. Joining their league and in many ways surpassing these standards are the "Good Boys" from the Czech Republic. BONI PUERI, you've got the world stage---believe in your dreams!

The world is in need of Youth Ambassadors such as BONI PUERI. Truly, respect, understanding, and peace would reign on Earth if modern politics could learn a lesson from these "Boys." The trust and family togetherness of these Boys exemplify and demonstrate by their artistry and command of their vocal art, is an exhibition to the world that music touches the soul of every person, for it is the universal language of humanity.

-- Joel Blahnik
conductor/composer/
music publisher