

LISA MARKETTA AND THE LONDON CZECH TRIO

David C F Wright, DMus

The London Czech Trio established themselves in London playing for the BBC and, during the war, despite regular bombings, they presented concerts in the National Gallery.

They were the successors of the exiled Czech Trio founded in Prague in 1934 by the Czech-American pianist and conductor Walter (Jan) Susskind (1913-1980). The Czech violinist was Marie Hlounova, who was born in 1917, and the cellist was the Jewish Karel Horic, born 1913, who escaped the German occupation of Czechoslovakia and fled to England where the Czech Trio performed from 1938 to 1942.



A pupil of the great Max Rostal was Berlin-born Maria Lidka who succeeded Hlounova and, with Susskind, had left the trio in 1942. The cellist, Horic, stayed on because he had fallen in love with Lidka but she left shortly afterwards. Horic invited Jan Sedivka to join and replace Lidka. Margaret Rousten was a fine pianist, a pupil of Solomon, and was invited to join the trio. Sedivka was reluctant to join as he was not well, he suffered from tuberculosis, and he was not a chamber music player.

Solomon Cutner was born in London's East End on 9 August 1902. He was a child prodigy but had no formal tuition, but at the age of seven performed his own arrangement of part of Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture. He gave his first concert at the age of seven with part of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto no. 1 in B flat minor and was then sent to live with his teacher, Mathilde Verne, a tyrant of a woman, who had been a pupil of Clara Schumann. In 1929 he began making records and took some pupils who were gifted and worthy of his tutorialship. In 1939 he premiered Bliss's excellent Piano Concerto. He objected to working with Furtwangler because of his alleged Nazi connection.

There is also that unbelievable but true story of the conductor Barbirolli telling Solomon how to play a cadenza!

Solomon was in the process of recording all the Beethoven sonatas for EMI but, in 1956, he had a severe stroke and could not play again. He died on 2 February 1988 aged 85.

Sedivka knew Karel Horic from their days in the Prague Conservatory and his attendance at the German-Jewish school at the German Academy in Prague. Horic spoke German but his Czech was not very good. His extended family died in the holocaust. His brother left Prague and joined the RAF as a pilot and no one knows what happened to him. When Karel came to England his original surname caused a problem as it was Horschitz which sounded like horse shit and so he changed it to Horitz.

And so the Czech Trio was now the London Czech Trio and the violinist was Jan Sedivka, the cellist was Karel Horic and the pianist was Margaret Elisabeth Rousten but she changed her name to Lisa Marketta so as to give the members of the trio all Czech names.

Their first London concert was at the Wigmore Hall on Sunday 19 December 1943 under the patronage of Jan Masaryk. They played works by Smetana, Suk and Dvorak. They toured Britain performing in Birmingham, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Bristol and broadcast on the BBC.

Horic now became besotted with Marketta and made her his wife. They were married in Kensington on 20 December 1946. Margaret came from Linton in Kent and her parents had served in Calcutta.

Horic became principal cellist in the Covent Garden Orchestra and played in the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. But he was uneasy and homesick and, with his wife, he returned to Prague. Sadly, she died prematurely of cancer and Horic was never the same thereafter. He committed suicide in the 1970s.

I am fortunate to have a LP of this Trio playing Beethoven and Brahms and choice performances they are.

Copyright David C F Wright 1985, revised 2009. This article or any part of it, however small, must not be copied, reproduced in any way, downloaded, stored in any mechanical, retrieval or other system, altered or reproduced in any altered way. Failure to comply is illegal being theft and is in violation of International Copyright Law and will render any offender liable to action at law. However, upon prior written application, the author may grant permission for this article to be used.