

The Dvořák Society

For Czech and Slovak Music

Founded 1974

Newsletter No. 153, February 2026



BBC Concert Orchestra with the Prague Castle Guard and the Czech Police Band (back row, standing), conducted by Anna-Maria Helsing, performing Janáček's *Sinfonietta*, in Brno. This was part of the celebration of Charles Mackerras's 100th birthday. A review is on page 6. Photo: Moravian Autumn Festival.

PRESIDENT: Jakub Hruša

VICE-PRESIDENTS: David Beveridge, Sylvie Bodorová, Petr Dvořák, Markéta Hallová, Steven Isserlis, Miloš Jurkovič, Radoslav Kvapil, Alena Němcová, Jan Smaczny .

PATRON: Richard Phillips

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The **Dvořák Society Newsletter** is issued quarterly. The Editor welcomes articles, letters, and photographs on all aspects of Czech and Slovak music, but reserves the usual editorial prerogatives. Views expressed in individual articles do not necessarily reflect the views of the Society. Authors are encouraged to submit material to the editor electronically, but articles may also be submitted as a manuscript.

The newsletter is published in February, May, August and November. The deadlines are 1 January, April, July and October, respectively.

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Between The Deadlines

Notes from your Chairman

Firstly, I would like to wish all members “Šťastný nový rok”! I trust that some of you treated yourselves to a traditional performance of Jakub Jan Ryba’s *Christmas Mass* or even listened to *Christmas Music of Baroque Bohemia* so splendidly recorded by Musica Antiqua Praha under their director, Pavel Klikar, in 1993, but still sounding as fresh as ever. Maybe even some carp on Christmas Eve?

This first Newsletter of 2026 brings both good tidings as well as sad tidings. Since the last Newsletter, we have lost three prominent members of the Society. **Don Preddy**, who, for a short period in the early 2000s, was my predecessor as Honorary Secretary. **Peter Collier**, who members will recall joined us, together with his wife Pam, on a number of Society trips to Brno and also hosted Committee Meetings at their house in Monton, Greater Manchester and then treated us to concerts of baroque music in the hall of the local Unitarian Church. And finally, **Lewis Stevens**, who passed away in a hospital shortly before Christmas. Lewis will be remembered as the longtime editor of our Newsletter; he was eventually succeeded by the current editor, Tomy Duby. On behalf of the Society, I would like to extend our condolences to their respective families. Separate tributes will appear in due course.

A series of congratulations is in order – our President **Jakub Hrůša**, for being awarded the Conductor of the Year 2026 by [Musical America](#). Birthday wishes are due to the composer **Zdeněk Šesták** on reaching 100 on 10th December and, more recently, the bass singer **Richard Novák** on being 94 and still vocally active.

The long-awaited Occasional Publication *Dvořák and England* by **David Beveridge** is nearing its final editing and proofing stage, and hopefully should be with members before Easter. A **special notice** to members with regard to this publication is on page 24.

Members have already been notified of the sale of CDs featuring Czech and Slovak music, which are listed in the members’ area of the Society website. Many thanks are due to Committee member John Beale, who has kindly produced the catalogue.

Congratulations are due to member Tomáš Víšek on his latest recording of three Czech Piano Concertos – Kaprálová, Novák and Nečasová Nardelli, the latter name being completely unfamiliar to me. See page 17 for more details.

For those members eager to take advantage of live performances in the Czech Republic, advance notice of various music festivals has been announced, including those of Litomyšl (13 June – 4 July) and Brno (10th International Janáček Festival, 13 October – 17 November). In early 2026, Plzeň Opera is putting on the modern premiere of the opera *Tamerlane* by Mysliviček as well as two less familiar operas by Smetana – *The Kiss* and *The Devils’ Wall*. These are all listed on page 23 in the Diary.

A reminder that a new book entitled *Antonín Dvořák’s Summer Retreat* has been written by Ondřej Supka, and an abridged English version is for sale via the [e-shop](#), see page 18.

The Czech Centre’s 29th *Made in Prague Festival* events took place in November. Unfortunately, living in the West Midlands, I was unable to attend any of the events which celebrated the very best of Czech culture in film, theatre, music and visual arts. It included an exhibition devoted to **Leoš Janáček** – timed to coincide with the **Royal Opera House’s** first-ever staging of *The Makropulos Case* under Jakub Hrůša – and the final concert with **Pavel Šporcl** and members of the English Chamber Orchestra, a review is on page 10. There were also UK premieres of acclaimed Czech films. However, despite being out of London, I was able to watch three innovative classic Czech films shown in partnership with the British Film Institute (BFI) which were free to view via the BFI website. *The White Disease* (1937), based on Čapek’s play of the

same name, *The Riders of the Sky* (1968), a black and white film portraying wartime airmen, and a new wave “kitchen-sink” drama titled *Ecce Homo Homolka* (1969). Grateful as I am to the Czech Centre, it is frustrating that so little is done outside of London.

In co-operation with Boydell and Brewer, we are supporting the publication of a book on *Janáček's Sinfonietta* to be published early in 2026. Negotiations are ongoing with the publisher to be able to offer DS members a discount on the listed price. The book will be available for purchase as an e-book downloadable from the publisher's website. For details, see page 19.

Finally, we are seeking a new treasurer. Martin Israel, our current Treasurer, will be standing down at the next AGM. Please see the notice in the box on page 18 and our website for further details

M. David Roberts

This is your editor writing

This is my fifteenth Newsletter.

You will read elsewhere in this Newsletter that Lewis Stevens, the Society member who preceded me as the editor, died last December. As it happened, I had little interaction with him. He emailed me clear and detailed instructions on the Newsletter format, and his last one (#138, April 2022) to use as a template. I did so, and, surprise-surprise, I had no questions; everything was self-explanatory and made sense.

I plan to prepare a brief article appreciating Lewis for the next Newsletter. I do not think that I will be able to break his record of editing 57 Newsletters. To break it, I will be approaching 90, and who would want to read my grumblings and laugh at my old and constantly repeating jokes...

The next Newsletter's submission deadline is 1 April 2026. Please send me your reviews, contributions and comments. Without them, the Newsletter would be shorter and duller. My details are at the top of page 2...

Tomy Duby

Membership News

Membership

First, I must apologise to John Turner, whose renewal of membership was wrongly recorded in the previous Newsletter, where I named him as John Taylor – a regrettable senior moment on my part.

With sorrow, we record the deaths of four stalwart members. **Don Preddy**, who was the Society's Secretary from 2005 to 2008, died in March 2025. **Peter Collier** and **Euan Allen** died in November. Peter was known to many in the Manchester area for his skill as an organist and keyboard player and his enthusiasm for early music. He also participated in many Society activities and wrote reviews for the Newsletter. His wife Pamela remains a member. Euan supported the Society for over fifty years, right from its start: his membership number was 2. Recently, we have also lost **Lewis Stevens**, who died on 16 December. Lewis contributed enormously by editing 57 DS Newsletters from 2008 to 2022.

Subscriptions

By the time you receive this Newsletter, many of you will have paid for 2025. Thank you for this and for your continuing support. For those who have not yet got around to paying, please act on this reminder that **annual subscriptions were due on 1 January**. Details of subscription rates are in the previous Newsletter #152, and are available on our website www.dvorak-society.org.

A banker's order for the correct amount is certainly the easiest way for you to pay and for us to process. If you want to set one up, you can print the form from the Members' Section of our website or ask me to send you one. If you want to change the amount on a banker's order, please contact your bank. Many members now pay by electronic bank transfer, and this is a welcome trend. But sometimes the reference telling us the source of the transfer only allows for a limited number of characters, so if your account name has lengthy forenames, your surname, which is the crucial part, may not appear or may be truncated. Then we cannot tell who has paid, and such rare cases can take a long time to sort out. So if you pay by bank transfer, please also **notify me by email**.

Newsletters

Finally, a reminder that all our current and recent Newsletters can be read online at www.dvorak-society.org. If you have forgotten the password for access to the Members' Section, please ask me. Also, please let me know if you no longer want to receive printed copies of Newsletters; I will then let you know when a new issue is available on the website.

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25 years ago

Dvořák Society Newsletter No. 54 appeared in January 2001 and was the eighth issue under my editorship.

After wishing everyone a Happy New Year, Tony Pook, then Membership Secretary, outlined the benefits of the Gift Aid Scheme, which the Government had introduced in April 2000 to replace the old Deed of Covenant scheme. Members were urged to complete the new forms and submit them to Tony.

Sadly, the front page of the Newsletter included a short obituary for Ladislav Mokřý, who was known to many members who had visited Bratislava. He had guided us on our trip round Slovakia as recently as our Society trip of October 1999, and from him we had learnt a vast amount about all aspects of Slovak life.

Shawn Pullman, as Secretary of the Society, reported that the Annual Lunch at the Thistle Hotel in Victoria had been badly attended. In spite of this, it was hoped that a further Annual Lunch or Dinner would be announced in the next Newsletter.

Under the heading '*Coventry Remembers*', our Chairman, Graham Melville-Mason, reported on a concert held on Armistice Day, Sunday 11th November 2000, in the Drapers' Hall, one of the few buildings to survive the dreadful air raid, even more remarkable because the building stands beside the ruins of the old cathedral. British, Germans and Czechs came together to remember not only the raid on Coventry but also the devastation caused to Dresden. The Bishop of Coventry was joined by the Bishop of Dresden and other civic dignitaries for this special concert organised by Warwick Arts Society under the direction of our member Richard Phillips.

The programme was given by the Martinů Quartet with Nigel Cliffe opening with George Butterworth's beautiful setting of four poems by W E Henley from his cycle *Echoes*. Butterworth was killed at the Somme in 1916.

Vilém Tauský was present to hear his *Coventry: A Meditation for String Quartet*, written in the aftermath of the great raid on the city, when he and his Czech army colleagues (stationed in the near Leamington Spa) were sent to assist in the rescue of the injured and to clear up the initial debris. Nigel Cliffe then rejoined the Quartet to perform Sylvie Bodorová's *Terezín Ghetto Requiem*.

On 4 November 2000 three musical organisations joined forces to honour our Patron, Petr Eben. First Petr was presented with Honorary Membership of the Royal Academy of Music, then the Czech Ambassador, Dr Pavel Seifter, spoke in tribute. Our Chairman presented him with a volume *A Tribute to Petr Eben*, issued by the Society as an Occasional publication in time for his 70th birthday. He was then presented with an Honorary Fellowship of the Royal College of Organists.

A British-Czech Celebration Concert had taken place at the Wigmore Hall on 6 November 2000 with Peter Fisher (violin) and Alvin Moisey (piano). The first piece in the programme was Vilém Tauský's *Suite for Violin and Piano*. This was followed by Elgar's *Sonata for Violin and Piano in E minor*, Karel Janovický's *Terzina for Violin and Piano* (1988), James Macmillan's *Kiss on Wood*, Josef Suk's *Four pieces for Violin and Piano* and lastly Jaroslav Vaněček's *Spanish Rhapsody for unaccompanied violin*.

Before the concert, two fascinating interviews took place in the Bechstein Room in front of a full audience. We were there to celebrate the 70th, 80th and 90th birthdays of three exiled Czech composers: Karel Janovický, Jaroslav Vaněček, and Vilém Tauský. Graham Melville-Mason, sitting between Karel and Vilém, drew from each of them reminiscences about their early lives and their work as composers. The interviews were filmed by Marian Werner.

Richard Phillips gave notice of the programme for Leamington Czech Music Festival, which was to take place from 4 to 9 of May.

Lorna Dobson, in her Lorna Corner, welcomed Tomáš Hanus as a Society member. Tomáš studied conducting under Jiří Bělohlávek and was to make his debut with the Südwestdeutsche Philharmonie Konstanz on 16 January. (Many of us who visited Brno were well acquainted with our member Anna Hanusová, mother of Tomáš.)

Julian and Jennifer Clapham and Ray Latham reported on events in October and November at the Waggon and Horses in Douling Beacon, Shepton Mallet. On both occasions, Fibich was included in the programme and at the November event, Graham Melville-Mason had introduced those present to Fibich, his life and his music.

Richard Beith reviewed a production of *Kat'a Kabanová* at the Royal Opera House on 29 November. Amanda Roocroft had played Kat'a, and the conductor had been Simone Young.

Richard Beith also wrote of a performance by the Krommer Wind Ensemble in St Mary's Centre in Chester, which had taken place on 28 October. The first half of the concert featured Vranický, Mašek and Triebensee while the second half was devoted to a performance of Beethoven's *Septet*, Op.20 in Jiří Družecký's arrangement for nine wind players.

Philip Scowcroft reported on a programme featuring Družecký, which had taken place in Doncaster in November. On this occasion, the Hallgate Chamber Orchestra had played his Concerto in C for oboe, eight timpani and orchestra.

I (Annette) had been present in the Smetana Hall in Prague for the first performance in the Czech Republic of Antonín Tučapský's *Te Deum Laudamus*. The concert on 16 October 2000 was performed by the Prague Mixed Choir and the Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra,