

# JAROMÍR KLOBOUK: A LIFE DEVOTED TO CHORAL ART

Romana Feiferlíková and Daniela Mandysová

## Abstract

This study focuses on the life and professional contribution of Jaromír Klobouk (1915–1995). He was an important figure in Czech musical culture who became famous primarily for his work in choral conducting. Klobouk worked for more than forty years as a teacher at secondary schools and universities, where he taught music, led courses for choir conductors and teachers, and served as a judge in several music competitions. His career was closely linked to the founding and development of choral ensembles at all the schools where he worked. Klobouk achieved significant success with the University Women's Choir of the Faculty of Education in Pilsen, one of the leading vocal ensembles in Czechoslovakia, with which he gained international recognition. In addition to conducting, he was also an outstanding piano accompanist, arranger of compositions and devoted his entire life to promoting the work of Jaroslav Křička. These arrangements were used in concerts and radio recordings. In 1995, the Union of Czech Choirs, under Jiří Kolář, awarded him the Bedřich Smetana Prize.

## Keywords

Jaromír Klobouk (1915–1995) – choirmaster biography – choral music – Czech music education – Women's Academic Choir (Pilsen) – Faculty of Education – 20th-century Czech choral tradition

## Introduction

PhDr. Jaromír Klobouk (1915–1995) is a key but underappreciated figure in 20th-century Czech music education and choral art. This study aims to provide a detailed overview and critical assessment of his life and work.

The work is based on the thesis that Klobouk's activities, although rooted primarily in the Pilsen region, had a fundamental influence on the formation of the singing movement and the education of an entire generation of music teachers and choir conductors. We outline his professional career, analyse his work as a choirmaster and conductor, and evaluate his pedagogical legacy, evident in his direct teaching activities and extensive arranging work. The study thus attempts to place Klobouk's contribution in the broader context of the development of Czech musical culture from the First Republic to normalisation, with a special emphasis on the specifics of post-war music education. The study draws not only on primary sources such as chronicles, interviews with eyewitnesses, and texts in concert programs and reviews, but also on secondary sources in print and online form. The main objective was to show that Klobouk's choirmaster activities were characterized by a high artistic level, which led to repeated successes in domestic and international competitions. Although his legacy is well known in narrow professional circles, a comprehensive scientific evaluation is still lacking.

## An outline of the life and work

Jaromír Klobouk was born on 28 November 1915 in Kroměříž, at a time when life was deeply affected by the ongoing First World War. The town of Kroměříž has been known since time immemorial as the *Athens of Haná* thanks to its rich history, unique monuments, and rich cultural life. Among other things, singing and music societies were active here, such as Moravan, which was founded in 1863 and achieved the level of the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra at the beginning of the 20th century under the leadership of personalities such as Ferdinand Vach.<sup>1</sup> The inspiration and fundamental source of the musical tradition was church music, which had a strong background in the town with its many churches and the Piarist grammar school.

His mother was a housewife, and his father, Rudolf, was a military bandmaster, thanks to whom Jaromír encountered music at an early age.<sup>2</sup> He studied piano privately and later at a music school, regularly participating in school performances. He also often accompanied his fellow musicians on the piano at concerts.

In 1934, he successfully passed his final exams at the teacher training college in Kroměříž. In 1935, his father died, and his mother moved with her three sons to Prague, where Jaromír Klobouk studied musicology at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University.<sup>3</sup> In the 1930s, important teachers of musicology and aesthetics worked there, such as Zdeněk Nejedlý, whose influence was intense but controversial, as he shaped the view of Czech music history as a leading historian and musicologist.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Otakar Zich focused primarily on the aesthetics of music and dramatic art.<sup>5</sup> Klobouk simultaneously studied other musical disciplines privately, including composition with Jaroslav Řídký, a composer firmly rooted in the traditional foundations of musical composition and inspired by Czech masters such as Smetana and Dvořák. He passed on a thorough, classically oriented compositional education to his students, which served as a solid foundation for their further musical development.<sup>6</sup> He studied singing with Zdeněk Otava, whose pedagogical approach emphasised breathing, which he considered essential for proper vocal technique, and natural resonance, unifying the singing voice throughout its entire range without noticeable transitions between registers.<sup>7</sup> He also studied choral conducting with Metod Doležil,

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<sup>1</sup> Ferdinand Vach (1860–1939) was not only a conductor but also the director of a music school founded by an association in 1882, and was instrumental in promoting the works of Dvořák, Smetana, Janáček, Novák, and others.

<sup>2</sup> Rudolf Klobouk (1885–1935) was a renowned military bandmaster and composer. After returning from World War I, he was appointed conductor of the Kroměříž Garrison Band in 1918. In 1920, this band was assigned to the 3rd Infantry Regiment of Jan Žižka of Trocnov, where Klobouk served as bandmaster. During his concerts, he focused on performing works by Czech classical composers, especially Bedřich Smetana and Antonín Dvořák. He worked in Kroměříž until 1927, then moved to other military regiments in Bratislava and Hranice na Moravě. [https://slovník.ceskyhudebnislovník.cz/component/mdictionary/?task=record.record\\_detail&id=2815](https://slovník.ceskyhudebnislovník.cz/component/mdictionary/?task=record.record_detail&id=2815)

<sup>3</sup> His mother died in 1970 at the age of 82. His older brother died tragically at the age of 45 in a motorcycle accident. His younger brother died in 1989 at the age of 69.

<sup>4</sup> Zdeněk Nejedlý (1878–1963). He was a professor at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University from 1919 to 1938.

<sup>5</sup> Otakar Zich (1879–1934). He was a professor of aesthetics, but his work was also closely related to musicology. From 1924 until he died in 1934, he revived and led a seminar on aesthetics.

<sup>6</sup> Jaroslav Řídký (1897–1956). Composer (pupil of J. B. Förster), harpist with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, choirmaster of the Czech Philharmonic Choir, teacher of composition.

<sup>7</sup> Zdeněk Otava (1902–1980). Baritone and teacher, national artist; member of the opera ensemble of the National

known for his economical gestures, without ostentation. His primary interest was always the inner content of the composition performed by the choir.<sup>8</sup> These influences naturally shaped the young musician, which later manifested itself in his demands on the members of the choirs he conducted.

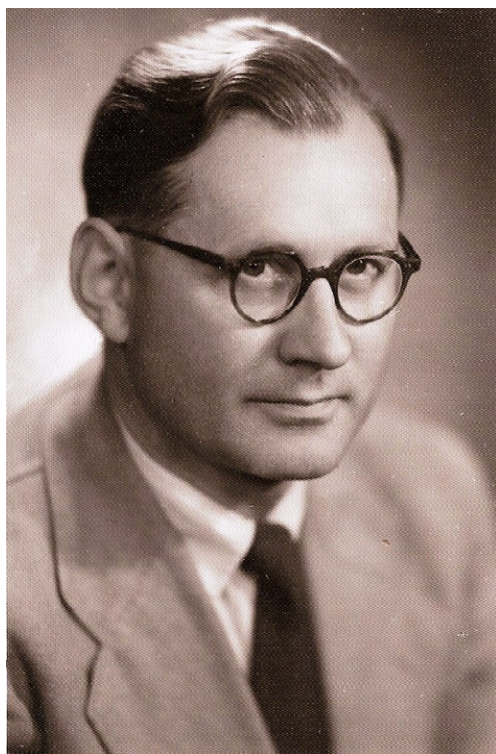


Figure 1. Jaromír Klobouk. Source: J. Klobouk Archive

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Theatre (1929–1972). He was an important representative of the so-called Czech singing school. His teaching method was based primarily on the legacy of his teacher Bohumil Benoni, which he further enriched with knowledge from the Italian and German schools. Thanks to his work at the Academy of Performing Arts and the Prague Conservatory, he influenced many other singers and teachers who continued his legacy.

<sup>8</sup> Metod Doležil (1885–1971). Conductor, choirmaster, and teacher; dean of the Music Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts (1946–1948). He is the author of the textbook *Intonation and Elementary Rhythm* (first published in 1921), which became the cornerstone of music education in Czechoslovakia. His method combined a tonal and interval approach with auxiliary melodies to help understand the relationship between tones in a key. He worked at the Prague Conservatory (where he trained conductors such as Rafael Kubelík) and at the newly founded Academy of Performing Arts (AMU), where he became the first dean of the music faculty. His influence spread not only through his textbook, but also through the generations of students he trained.

He passed his state exams during and after World War II due to the closure of universities. He successfully passed exams in violin, piano, organ, and choral singing, thus gaining full qualifications to teach music at primary schools and teacher training colleges.

After passing his first state exam in 1936, Klobouk began teaching at the State Czechoslovak Real Gymnasium in Roudnice nad Labem, where he founded a children's and mixed choir. In 1939, he joined the Real Gymnasium in Prague-Michle, where he worked for seven years, until 1946, and conducted a mixed choir and student orchestra.

In 1946, he moved to Pilsen and took a position as a music teacher at the then State Teacher Training College for Women. After its closure, he taught at secondary schools, mainly the Pedagogical Grammar School.<sup>9</sup>

In 1948, he joined the Institute for Teacher Training, which was characterized by constant name changes (as Klobouk noted: "it kept changing its name": Pedagogical Grammar School – Pedagogical School, Pedagogical Institute, and finally Pedagogical Faculty). In 1959, he joined the newly established school as an assistant professor, where he initially devoted himself to teaching violin. He published articles in professional anthologies and magazines and was co-author of *Metodika hudební výchovy* (Methodology of Music Education). He also worked on a monograph of the work of Václav Kálík. In 1974, he published a textbook for students of the Faculty of Education, entitled *Intonation and Aural Training*, as well as an article titled "Help for Conductors of Children's Choirs" and a textbook titled *Rhythmic Education for the Faculty of Education*. In 1964, he founded a choir at the Faculty of Education, and in 1965, he took it on a concert tour of Germany. This was followed by tours of Denmark, Germany, and England in the late 1960s. In the 1970s, the choir maintained its excellent standard despite difficulties with its repertoire caused by normalisation. It toured Hungary, East Germany, the USSR (Odessa), and other countries.

In Pilsen, he also conducted the **Mixed Choir of West Bohemian Teachers**, led a **children's radio choir** for six years, the **Škodoväcký sbor** (*Škoda Choir*), briefly the **VUS** (*University Artistic Ensemble*) in Prague, and an amateur chamber orchestra, with which he performed many concerts and tours.<sup>10</sup> In addition, he lectured at courses at the Socialist Academy for choir conductors and teachers, as a lecturer in various choirs, and as a judge in competitions. He was a member of the committee of the West Bohemian branch of the Union of Choirs. He also served as chairman of the West Bohemian branch of the Society for Music Education.

In 1968, he left the Communist Party, which, in his own words, closed the door to an academic career because he could not obtain a habilitation or publish (in 1969, he was still allowed to obtain the title of PhDr.). He could remain at the Faculty of Education thanks to his professional qualities and work achievements. He continued to work for two years after reaching retirement age. As a teacher at the Department of Music Education, he trained a number of talented and enthusiastic choir conductors, including **Hana Friedrichová** (head of the Pilsen Children's Choir since 1980, winner of numerous national and international awards, with numerous foreign tours in Europe and the USA and a number of recordings);

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<sup>9</sup> After passing the state examination, he was assigned to the State Pedagogical Institute in Pilsen on 22 January 1946 based on Decree No. A-62.764-III/2/46 of the Ministry of Education and Culture dated 31 August 1946. This is J. Klobouk's file, J. Klobouk Archive of the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen.

<sup>10</sup> The orchestra's program included: G. P. Telemann – *Schulmeister*, student operas by F. X. Brixi, *Czech Christmas Mass* by J. J. Ryba, and others.

**Marie Nováková** (choirmaster of the Chlumčany Children's Choir and the Mariella Children's Choir in Pilsen); **Alena Vimrová** (choirmaster of the Rokycany Children's Choir); **Zdeněk Vimr** (Czech Song, or New Czech Song, choirmaster of the J. K. Tyl Theatre Choir in Pilsen since 1994); **Josef Brabenec** (founder of the Tachov Children's Choir in 1973); **Marián Husák** (choirmaster at the 1st Primary School in Sokolov); **Jiřina Pokorná** (Stráž u Tachova); **Jaroslava Hesová** (Horní Slavkov); **Alžběta Pospíchalová** (Karlovy Vary); **Bohumila Krásná** (Starý Plzenec); **Josef Baierl** (founder of the Sušice Children's Choir in 1969, choirmaster of the Svatobor Mixed Choir since 1977); **Jana Veverková-Krajská** (choirmaster of the Prague girls' choir Canzona from 1981 to 1992, choirmaster of the Foerster Chamber Choir since 1993); **Karel Virgler** (director of the Prague children's choir Rolnička since 1978); and **Jarmila Procházková-Matoušková** (Pilsen children's choir Jiříčky).<sup>11</sup>

Jaromír Klobouk married in 1942 and divorced in 1975. He had two sons; his older son graduated from the conservatory and played in the J. K. Tyl Theatre orchestra in Pilsen. His younger son obtained a doctorate in education and then worked at the Department of Physical Education at the Faculty of Education of the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen.<sup>12</sup>

In 1977, he retired with some disappointment (according to his notes, no one from the faculty thanked him for his many years of work). He moved back to Prague, where he first lived in a rented flat before managing to buy a cooperative flat six years later. Even in retirement, he did not sit idle; he worked as a ballet accompanist at the Fidlovačka Theatre, a proofreader at DILIA, taught at a folk art school (now a primary art school), and gave private piano lessons.<sup>13</sup>

## Choirs led by Jaromír Klobouk

At all schools where Jaromír Klobouk worked as a teacher, he founded and successfully developed choirs, with which he subsequently performed in public. Conducting choirs was his life's mission. After the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) came to power in 1948, the education system underwent a fundamental ideological and organisational transformation that affected all levels of education. The aim was to create a unified, centralized "socialist school" inspired by the Soviet model, whose main task was to educate "conscious creators and defenders of communist society." Like other subjects, music education was used to promote socialist ideas. Folk songs and compositions by Czech and Slovak authors became an important part of the curriculum, but they had to serve to strengthen national pride and "socialist patriotism. Teaching also focused on songs with working-class, military, revolutionary, or Soviet themes. The music of Soviet composers (e.g., Shostakovich, Prokofiev) was strongly supported and promoted, and was played at concerts and in theatres. For

<sup>11</sup> Music Education at the Faculty of Education in Pilsen. (1985). In A. Špelda (Ed.), *Musical Pilsen: 1960–1982* (p. 49). National Committee of the City of Pilsen. Department of Music Culture. (1998). In *50 Years of the Faculty of Education in Pilsen: 14 November 1998* (1st ed., pp. 56–60). Faculty of Education, University of West Bohemia.

<sup>12</sup> His former wife died in 1979 at the age of 59.

<sup>13</sup> DILIA – Theatre, Literary and Audiovisual Agency, z. s. is an association founded in 1949. Its main activity is the collective protection of copyright. In practice, this means, for example, concluding collective agreements with television and radio stations or with copying service providers and subsequently distributing royalties and remuneration among authors. <https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/DILIA>.

a music teacher who was not a member of the Communist Party, it was practically impossible to attain higher positions, conduct prestigious choirs, or teach at universities, so he joined the Communist Party. However, his interest was more in conducting choirs than in politics. His educational background, his father's musical influence, his education, and his encounters with university teachers gave him clear ideas about the requirements for choirs and their activities. He strove above all to cultivate vocal expression and natural vocal culture.<sup>14</sup> He paid attention to pure intonation and technical quality of tone and, last but not least, to clear articulation and interpretation of compositions, not only when studying stage works such as Jaroslav Křička's *Ogaři*, the play *Praha matička*, and Alois Hába's *O Smolíčkovi*. He also focused on the interpretation of folk song arrangements, including his own. He also successfully performed popular opera choruses, such as *Proč bychom se netěšili* from Smetana's opera *Bartered Bride* (with the Real Gymnasium choir in Roudnice nad Labem and the Real Gymnasium choir in Prague XIV, Prague-Michle), *Three Female Choruses* and the cantata *Česká píseň* (Czech Song) by Smetana and compositions by A. Dvořák, J. B. Foerster, J. Suk, and O. Blecha.

### Pre-war period in Prague

In 1936, he joined the **Real Gymnasium in Roudnice nad Labem**, where he founded both the **Children's Choir** and the **Mixed Choir**. That same year, he performed two full-length concerts with these ensembles.

In 1937, he conducted Jaroslav Křička's<sup>15</sup> children's opera *Ogaři*<sup>16</sup> twice with the same choir. The author attended the performance and inspired Klobouk to support J. Křička's work throughout his life. After the performance, a review appeared in *Národní listy*: "It was a very moving moment when conductor Klobouk kissed his young artists with emotion and pointed to the smiling author in the audience... We believe that this evening was one of the most beautiful..."<sup>17</sup>

From 1938 to 1946, Klobouk collaborated with a children's and mixed choir and a student orchestra at the Real Gymnasium in Prague-Michle. The 80-member mixed choir and 40-member orchestra, partly reinforced by students from nearby Prague secondary schools, performed under Klobouk's baton at public concerts. The first performance of the Real Gymnasium children's choir in Prague XIV took place at the music academy's *Youth Choir Concert* in Unitaria, which was repeated at the Municipal Library in Prague. With

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<sup>14</sup> In the 1990s, during the golden age of the Girls' Choir, we often heard that the choir sang like Klobouk's choir, which was explained to us by members of Klobouk's choir. The quality of the choir was also recognised at choir competitions and festivals – author's note.

<sup>15</sup> Jaroslav Křička (1882–1969), Czech composer, conductor, choirmaster, teacher, and publicist.

<sup>16</sup> The opera *Ogaři* (*The Lads*) was composed in 1918 to a libretto by Ozeř Kalda. The composer's childhood inspired it, the Wallachian region, and his native region. It contains songs, dances, and linguistic folklore. The Czech word *ogár* (plural *ogaři*) comes from the Wallachian dialect and refers to a boy or young man, often implying rural origin, simplicity, and bravery.

<sup>17</sup> MS code, *Národní listy*, 1937. J. Klobouk Archive. On 4 March 1938, another concert titled "An Evening of National Songs" took place. The choir performed arrangements of folk songs and *Proč bychom se netěšili* (Why Shouldn't We Be Glad) from Smetana's opera *The Bartered Bride*.

growing concert experience, the children's choir was renamed the Prague Children's Choir. It achieved an excellent level and performed, for example, in themed programs for schools, which were recorded by Prague Radio as part of the program "Zpíváme k svátku matek" (We sing for Mother's Day).

Jaromír Klobouk was an excellent organizer who brought together singers from six Prague schools – approximately 400 in total – to perform on 23 November 1938 in a choral concert entitled "We Sing with Our Hearts – Hearts of the Homeland." The event was held to benefit students in need from the border regions. He invited prominent figures to several concerts. For example, on 25 January 1939, the Mixed Choir of Real Gymnasium in Prague XIV performed at the Municipal Library in Prague at the "Concert of National Songs and Poetry," where, with the consent of the National Theatre, opera singer Marta Krásová also performed, accompanied by Karel Boleslav Jiráček.<sup>18</sup> He also provided talented students with opportunities to perform at the concerts.

In 1939, he returned to the children's opera *Ogaři*, which he staged with a choir and student orchestra at the Real Gymnasium in Prague XIV.<sup>19</sup> A review of the performance appeared in *Národní listy*: "It was staged by a young, enthusiastic professor JK, to whom we owe this wonderful experience." Alternatively, in *Večerník Národních listů*:

"This time, we noticed both the actors and the audience. It was one big family, and the sparkle in the eyes of the children on stage lit up all the faces in the dark auditorium. It was very moving when the conductor, Professor Klobouk, kissed his young artists with emotion and pointed to the smiling author in the auditorium. The applause turned into a storm when the composer Jaroslav Křička appeared in the middle of the actors. We believe that this evening was one of the most beautiful. Everyone's dedicated work was crowned with success, and the moral gain is unique... The children, parents, and teachers in Michle proved that the cruel blows have not dulled our nation, that our nation lives and will live happily in its children."

The third production of J. Křička's children's opera *Ogaři* took place in 1944, with the premiere on 8 March 1944, followed by several repeat performances. The children's choir of the Gymnasium in Prague-Michle performed with soloists, conducted by Jaromír Klobouk and directed by Miroslav Fraunterka and choreographed by Anna Burianová. In 1945, Klobouk planned a tour of Moravia with the children's opera *Ogaři*, but it was cancelled due to the advancing war and frequent air raids.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Marta Krásová (1901-1970). Prominent Czech opera singer (mezzo-soprano, alto.)

<sup>19</sup> Performed on 10 May 1939 at the Sokolovna in Prague-Michle.

<sup>20</sup> "Ogaři" and the Audience. *Národní listy* (evening edition), May 27, 1939, 79(145): 2. (MS.)



**Figure 2.** Jaroslav Křička's children's opera *Ogaři*. Josef Zima (right).<sup>21</sup>  
Source: J. Klobouk Archive.

Another exceptional work that Klobouk staged was Bedřich Smetana's cantata *Česká píseň* (*Czech Song*) for mixed choir and orchestra. He performed it with the Real Gymnasium mixed choir in Prague-Michle on 10 April 1940 in the large hall of the Sokolovna in Prague<sup>22</sup> and on 16 May 1940 in the Smetana Hall in Prague.

"The rehearsals of these valuable works by Czech masters were led by Jaromír Klobouk, a dedicated and enthusiastic singing teacher at the local institute, to whom we owe a wonderful evening. We all witnessed how a talented young teacher can inspire love and warmth for music and singing in our young people. Under his [JK] fluid and precise gestures, a born conductor who knows how to adapt his temperament to the abilities of young people, everyone sings well. Good pronunciation, correct intonation, and delivery are pleasantly evident."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Josef Zima (1932–2025) was a renowned Czech singer and actor, honored as a National Artist. He became one of the most popular figures in Czech popular music and musical theatre, known for his distinctive voice, charm, and versatility. Zima performed in operettas, films, and television programs, and was also active as a presenter. His artistic career spanned over seven decades, making him a beloved and enduring figure in Czech culture.

<sup>22</sup> Klobouk's choir reinforced the choir of the secondary school on Smetanova Street under the direction of Dr. Josef Plavec. *Our News*, April 17, 1940. *Our news*. (17 April 1940).

<sup>23</sup> "Spring Concert by Czech Music Students," *Lidové noviny*, May 17, 1940, 48(245): 7.

At a musical gathering on 13 July 1943, at the end of the school year, Klobouk's Prague Children's Choir (originally the Gymnasium Children's Choir) sang with other Prague student ensembles in the Smetana Hall in Prague. A critic wrote: "...the Prague Children's Choir stood out in particular, conducted with flexibility and verve by Jaromír Klobouk, demonstrating its virtuosity," and "...the artistic trophy was awarded to the well-known PDS, which Jaromír Klobouk raised to the level of Kühn's children's choir."<sup>24</sup>

At the end of 1945, Klobouk left the school. The choir of the Real Gymnasium never again achieved such a high level.

## The Pilsen period

After moving to Pilsen in 1946–1948, he worked at the State Teacher Training College for Women and, in keeping with his tradition, founded a **Women's Choir**, which often participated in national competitions for secondary school choirs with extraordinary success. In 1946, the choir took first place alongside a Prague choir led by Krásnohorská, scoring 34.41 points. In Pilsen, the choir performed at concerts for students and pupils at the Elektra cinema and the Small Theatre.

In 1947, the opera *Ogaři* was staged for the fourth time with the Women's Choir. The opera was performed alongside a theatre program of folk songs and poetry in two performances for young people at the Elektra cinema and in five performances at the Chamber Theatre. One of the performances was presented by the author J. Kříčka, whose signature appears in the program. Karel Václ and Jindřich Duras accompanied the folk song cycle on the piano.<sup>25</sup> "The evening's sincere success was well deserved and rewarded the beautiful and joyful collective work initiated and led by J. Klobouk, an artist and experienced teacher who managed to rehearse the entire program so beautifully with his students."<sup>26</sup>

The teacher training college was transformed into a pedagogical grammar school, and Klobouk continued to lead the choir under the name **Pedagogical Grammar School Choir** with excellent results: "The Pedagogical Grammar School in Pilsen was technically the best; its strengths were its distinctive sopranos in both solos and in the choir."<sup>27</sup> In 1951, the Pedagogical Grammar School Choir gave 21 performances. Klobouk calculated the time the choir spent a total of 105 hours performing in Plzeň, Holýšov, Chotěšov, Rozvadov, Velké Dvorce, Tachov, Kozolupy, Mariánské Lázně, and other places.<sup>28</sup>

In 1952, the Pedagogical Grammar School was transformed into the Pedagogical School in Pilsen. Klobouk expanded the original women's choir to include men and created an 80-member ensemble called the **Pilsen Pedagogical School Choir**, which regularly participated in youth competitions and gave concerts in Pilsen and the surrounding area until 1953.

In 1948–1949, Klobouk briefly collaborated with the **Girls' Secondary School Choir in Pilsen**, with which he performed forty-three times. He noted that he spent a total of 210 hours rehearsing and performing with this ensemble. The choir participated in the Folk

<sup>24</sup> *Lidové noviny*, July 16, 1943. J. Klobouk Archive.

<sup>25</sup> Duras, J. (1925–[2016]), pianist, musician, teacher.

<sup>26</sup> Ed. (1947, 4 May). Artistic Achievement of the SŽÚU (Artistic Achievement of the SŽÚU). *Pravda*, 3(104), 6.

<sup>27</sup> J. Klobouk Archive. No date or number.

<sup>28</sup> J. Klobouk Archive. Undated and unnumbered.

Art Competition (LUT) and won first place in the school category in the national round held in Ostrava in 1948. The choir ceased to exist after the school was closed down.

In 1949–1950, Klobouk also briefly collaborated with the **Škodovákých učňů choir** (Škoda Apprentices' Choir), with which he took second place in the central round of the folk art competition.

In 1950, Klobouk took over the disintegrating **West Bohemian Teachers' Singing Union (PSZU)**, which he led until 1951.<sup>29</sup> He rejuvenated the ageing ensemble with students and consolidated it for a time. He also participated in the activities of the Palla singing circle. He conducted concerts such as the cantata *Česká píseň* (Czech Song) for the anniversary of Smetana in Klatovy, Mariánské Lázně, and Plzeň.

Critics wrote: "He conducted the singers with firm and purposeful gestures in a richly nuanced sound. He knows how to capture the idea, expression, and mood of the choirs he conducts..."<sup>30</sup>

In 1951, Klobouk founded the chamber choir **ZABRUČ** (*West Bohemian Teachers' Brigade*) from former members of the **PSZU**. Within three years, the choir had 16–24 members and had completed more than fifty concerts, presenting both serious and light concert programs.<sup>31</sup>

In 1962, Klobouk took over the **ZK ROH Škoda Works Singing and Dance Ensemble** for one season. He performed with them at annual performances and on tour. However, the choir did not develop according to Klobouk's ideas, so he left its leadership.

In 1963, Klobouk became choirmaster of the **Czechoslovak Radio Choir, Plzeň Station**, which performed regularly for radio recordings in both Pilsen and Prague. The choir mainly recorded songs with piano or orchestral accompaniment, as well as a cappella works. Listeners were particularly attracted to folk songs accompanied by the Plzeň Folklore Ensemble. Many of these were arranged by Klobouk. Over time, however, it became difficult to combine the activities of this choir with the developing **University Women's Choir**, so in 1967, he left the children's choir.

## Second period in Prague

In 1956–1957, Klobouk worked as conductor of the **Artistic Ensemble of the University in Prague (VUS)**, holder of a state award and bearer of the peace flag. He travelled to Hungary with this choir, where he sang at four concerts. He also participated in a concert at Lucerna in Prague and at the Smetana Theatre in Prague, which was organised for delegates of the Fourth World Student Congress. However, the choir (rehearsals, commuting, frequent performances) took up much of his time, so he left his position as choirmaster of VUS after a year.

<sup>29</sup> Founded in 1929 by J. Bartovský as a 35-member male choir, a female choir was founded in 1935, and in 1938, it was expanded to include the West Bohemian Teachers' Singing Association. Choir masters: J. Bartovský, J. Čech, K. Václ and J. Klobouk.

<sup>30</sup> *Deník Práce (Work Diary)*, March 26, 1949. J. Klobouk Archive. Undated and unnumbered.

<sup>31</sup> On March 12, a concert was held to celebrate the seventy-fifth birthday of Jindřich Jindřich. Klobouk commented: "We were the first in the region to sing Korean songs and songs from Soviet films, which we listened to during screenings and transcribed (for example, *Kuban Cossacks*, *Meeting on the Elbe*). We did not forget Pilsen songs either; we performed solo and choral excerpts from operas." Holec, P. "ZABRUČ under Klobouk." *Pravda*, September 14, 1966, 47(221): 3.

In parallel with his previous activities, Klobouk founded a **musical theatre ensemble** at the Regional House of Pioneers and Youth in Pilsen (**KDPM**) in 1957, where he devoted himself to rehearsals and, for the fifth time in his career, staged Kříčka's opera *Ogaři*. This time, he added another children's opera by J. Kříčka, *Pošťácká opera* (The Postman's Opera).<sup>32</sup> He conducted seven performances for young people and adults with the ensemble. "The performance of both operas was certainly not professionally perfect, but in this case, the immediacy, simplicity, joy, and enthusiasm of the young and older amateur actors were more appealing than the academic perfection of artistic routine."<sup>33</sup>

With this performance, the choir was invited to the national festival of children's theatre choirs Šrámkův Písek 1958, where it won first place in the children's musical theatre category and conductor Klobouk received a special award for his work with young people. "Dear friends from Pilsen... you gave us an experience that is difficult to put into words... Thank you for the wonderful day you brought to Šrámkův Písek. Your members of DA Písek."<sup>34</sup>

In 1959, he rehearsed Alois Hába's opera *O Smolíčkovi* with this choir. The performance, accompanied by songs by J. Kříčka, was seen by four thousand children in nine performances.... "Conductor JK did a great job: the performance was natural and joyful." However, Klobouk did not continue his collaboration with the Music and Drama Ensemble of the Regional House of Pioneers and Youth. "Due to a misunderstanding with KPDM, he gave up further work with this ensemble."<sup>35</sup>

## Vocal Ensemble of the Faculty of Education in Pilsen, 1964–1977

**The Women's Academic Choir of the Faculty of Education in Pilsen** (sometimes also referred to as the **Women's Chamber Choir of the Faculty of Education in Pilsen**) played an important role in the life of choirmaster Jaromír Klobouk. The following text provides a detailed overview of the choir's activities from its founding in 1964 until 1977, the period during which Klobouk, then a lecturer at the Department of Music Education, served as its conductor. He held this position until he left the Department of Music Education in 1977.<sup>36</sup>

The choir was founded on 8 October 1964 on the initiative of Dr Jaromír Klobouk. It continued the previous activities of the department's mixed choir and quickly became a key driving force behind the artistic activities of the Faculty of Education. The first rehearsal took place on 13 October. Rehearsals took place once a week for two hours. The choir was organized entirely by the choirmaster; the faculty provided a sufficiently large room with a piano for rehearsals and the necessary sheet music. Members usually covered the costs of clothing, and other travel expenses. The choir's repertoire was adapted to the needs of the school, the public, and its international touring program. At its beginning, the ensemble

<sup>32</sup> J. Kříčka lived in Sušice at the time (author's note).

<sup>33</sup> Duras, J. (1958, 19 April). Jaroslav Kříčka for children. *Pravda*, 39(46), 4.

<sup>34</sup> From an undated letter from members of DA Olomouc. J. Klobouk Archive.

<sup>35</sup> J. Klobouk Archive. Undated and unnumbered.

<sup>36</sup> Registration sheet for the university ensemble, written by Jaromír Klobouk and titled *Women's Choir of the Faculty of Education in Plzeň*, undated, State Regional Archive, card index 431 (1971–1975). The available sources – daily press, chronicles, posters, and programs – show inconsistency in the choir's name; based on their content, it can be concluded that the documents refer to the choir of the Faculty of Education.

consisted of twenty-three students – future music teachers – but later grew to about sixty members, although its composition changed frequently due to the high turnover typical of school-based choirs.

The members of the choir praised the choir: “We enjoyed rehearsing. Many of us had last sung in a choir at primary school, so it was clear that this was serious and demanding work, which, under professional guidance, could produce remarkable results.”<sup>37</sup>

The first performance took place on 30 November 1964 at a gathering to mark the 500th anniversary of the peace proposals of Jiří of Poděbrady,<sup>38</sup> where the choir sang compositions *Jaro* (Spring) and *Soumrak* (Twilight) by L. Marenzio from the cycle *The King of the World*.<sup>39</sup> From the beginning, it was clear that weekly 90-minute rehearsals would not be enough to rehearse full-length concert programs or competitions.



**Figure 3.** The Women's Academic Choir of the Faculty of Education in Pilsen, 1964.  
Source: Chronicle of the Women's Academic Choir.

<sup>37</sup> Pages are not numbered from the Chronicle of the Women's Academic Choir between 1964 and 1976.

<sup>38</sup> Jiří of Poděbrady (1420–1471) was a King of Bohemia known for promoting peace in Europe and religious tolerance.

<sup>39</sup> Luca Marenzio (1553 or 1554–1599) was an Italian composer of madrigals and singer of the late Renaissance.

Therefore, at the beginning of each semester in September and February, regular weekly training camps were organized, during which the concert repertoire was selected and perfected. The first retreat took place in February 1965 at the Donbas sanatorium in Mariánské Lázně. During the retreat, the choir performed at three concerts in Karlovy Vary. One of them featured the premiere of compositions by Zdeněk Lukáš in the presence of the composer, and a committee from ÚDLUT in Prague attended another.<sup>40</sup> The choir received excellent reviews, which secured it a recommendation for a foreign tour. "We were recommended because the choir gave an excellent performance and left with excellent prospects." According to the choir's chronicle, "the training camp was not in vain, and the performance was good despite minor fluctuations."<sup>41</sup>

The first foreign tour took place in April 1965 in Zwickau (GDR), where the choir reciprocated a visit by the mixed choir of the Pedagogical Institute in March 1965. At that time, Zwickau was home to a modern music education department with excellent conditions for students, such as lessons in two musical instruments and a course in reading music. The concert featured B. Martinů's cantata *Otvírání studánek* (The Opening of the Springs), which was rehearsed in German (solo parts and recitation) for this occasion, a selection from J. Suk's *Ten Songs for Female Voices*, and Brahms's *Lullaby*, specially prepared for the hosts. Pilsen composers Jiří Štěpánek and Zdeněk Lukáš also performed. The concert program was complemented by instrumental and vocal compositions by Czech authors performed by Božena Klobouková, Jiří Mácha, and Vladimír Koula. The Women's Academic Choir gave concerts in Halle, Warmbad, and Zwickau. Musicologist and professor at the University of Halle, Dr. S. Bimberg, praised the artistic expression and dramaturgy.

The choir probably functioned as a non-profit organisation whose members had certain rights, although the choirmaster was solely responsible for the artistic level and dramaturgy. After two years of activity, an annual meeting was held in 1966 to discuss the following organisational matters:

- Recruitment of new members – the choir was still voluntary, so motivating other students to join was necessary.
- Organising a weekly retreat before the start of the academic year.  
Attempt to introduce individual study of compositions – probably to speed up the rehearsal of new compositions at joint rehearsals (the result of the experiment is unknown).
- Introduction of divided rehearsals, mainly for new members, again aiming to speed up rehearsals and integrate new members.
- Inform about the choir's successes in student magazines – promote the results and make them known not only to the academic public.
- March 1967 – organise a full-length concert.
- Organise an exchange visit with the Faculty of Education in Nitra.
- Ensure the reception of the Berlin ensemble in Pilsen in February 1967.

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<sup>40</sup> ÚDLUT – *Ústřední dům lidové umělecké tvořivosti* (Central House of the Folk Art Creativity); later transformed into NIPOS – National Information and Consultation Centre for Culture.

<sup>41</sup> J. Klobouk Archive. Undated and unnumbered.

New compositions were included in the concert programs and in the next foreign tour to Berlin in 1966, such as selections from Dvořák's *Moravian Duets* and Křička's songs *Doma* (At Home) and *Jarní rondo* (Spring Rondo). The choir performed on 2 February 1966 in the Fritz-Reuter-Saal des Instituts für Musikerziehung at the conclusion of a conference on voice training.

At its first concert after returning home, held on 4 April 1966 at the Alfa Hall in Pilsen, ŽAS performed songs from its core repertoire. Critics praised the choirmaster as a distinctive artistic personality, and Pilsen was said to be especially grateful to him for enriching its musical life with a vocal ensemble of above-average artistic quality. Antonín Špelda<sup>42</sup> praised Klobouk's ability to maintain the choir at a high level despite the fluctuation of members:

“Although new voices join the choir every year and older, more experienced singers leave, Klobouk manages to maintain the choir at an excellent level thanks to his systematic discipline and diligence. Klobouk never exposes young voices to their full power, always keeping them in a gentle chamber tone.”<sup>43</sup>



**Figure 4.** Women's Academic Choir at the Faculty of Education, University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, during a tour in Berlin, 1966. Source: Chronicle of the Women's Academic Choir.

<sup>42</sup> Prof. RNDr. Antonín Špelda, DrSc. (1904–1989) was a Pilsen physicist, music critic, theorist, and teacher.

<sup>43</sup> J. Klobouk Archive. Undated and unnumbered.

Since the choir was founded, Jaromír Klobouk has also focused on participating in singing festivals and competitions. In March 1968, a training camp was held in Mariánské Lázně to prepare for an international competition. This was the 2nd IFAS International Competition in Pardubice in 1968, which was attended by 10 choirs from Czechoslovakia, Russia, Germany, and Sweden.<sup>44</sup> The competition program included new compositions such as the anonymous *Sanctus* from the *Třebovice Songbook*, *Orfeo* by C. Monteverdi, *Noci na horách* (Nights in the Mountains) by Z. Kodály, and *Jede sedlák do mlejna* (A Farmer Goes to the Mill) by Z. Lukáš. The choir came fifth but made a good impression.<sup>45</sup> The choir also performed its competition repertoire in autumn 1968 before leaving on a tour of Denmark. The tour took place from 22 to 28 September 1968. The route, which the choir travelled by train, boat, and bus, covered 2,968 km and took 58 hours. The choir spent the longest time in Silkeborg, giving two concerts, the second of which was recorded by Danish radio. The third concert took place in Aarhus.

This was an exchange tour, which meant that the Danish choir was supposed to visit Pilsen in April 1969, but we found no mention of the Danish visit in the choir's chronicle or other sources.

After returning home, the choir prepared for another tour to West Germany and England, which took place in 1969 at the invitation of local universities. The choir gave twelve performances, including five full-length concerts and two concerts for young people. In Germany, it performed in Giessen, Münster, and at Nordkirchen Castle, where it was recorded for radio, and one of the concerts was broadcast live on the radio. In England, the choir sang in Oxford, Malvern, and Hereford. The participants rated the tour as demanding, the critics praised the concerts highly, and the choir received further invitations to perform abroad, which could not be realised due to the political regime. Reviews mention:

“Shading in pianissimos, the sound of the 46-member choir, which rarely exceeded mezzo forte, remained full and round. The conductor made do with a minimum of precise gestures, to which the vocal ensemble responded with equal precision – a model example of conducting and monitoring in choral singing.”

Smetana's three female vocal ensembles, together with Antonín Dvořák's *Moravian Duets*, were one of the highlights of the evening. “The interpretation fully matched the high artistic value of the works, which were performed with great vocal perfection and dynamic temperament.”<sup>46</sup> On the domestic concert stage, the choir did not neglect so-called educational concerts for primary school pupils, at which it sang compositions from all periods,

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<sup>44</sup> IFAS (International Festival of Academic Choirs) is an international festival of choral ensembles held in Pardubice. It is an internationally recognised competition with a long tradition, one of the oldest choral events of its kind in the Czech Republic.

<sup>45</sup> First place went to the Brno Academic Choir with 151 points, second place went to the Moscow University Academic Choir and Ensemble 66 from Cologne (Germany) with 140 and 139 points, and third place went to two choirs: the University Art Choir of Charles University and the University Art Choir of Pardubice University with 138 and 133 points. Fourth place went to the Girls' Choir of the Faculty of Education in Brandýs nad Labem with 131 points, and fifth place to the Women's Academic Choir of the Faculty of Education in Pilsen with 117 points.

<sup>46</sup> J. Klobouk Archive. No date or number.

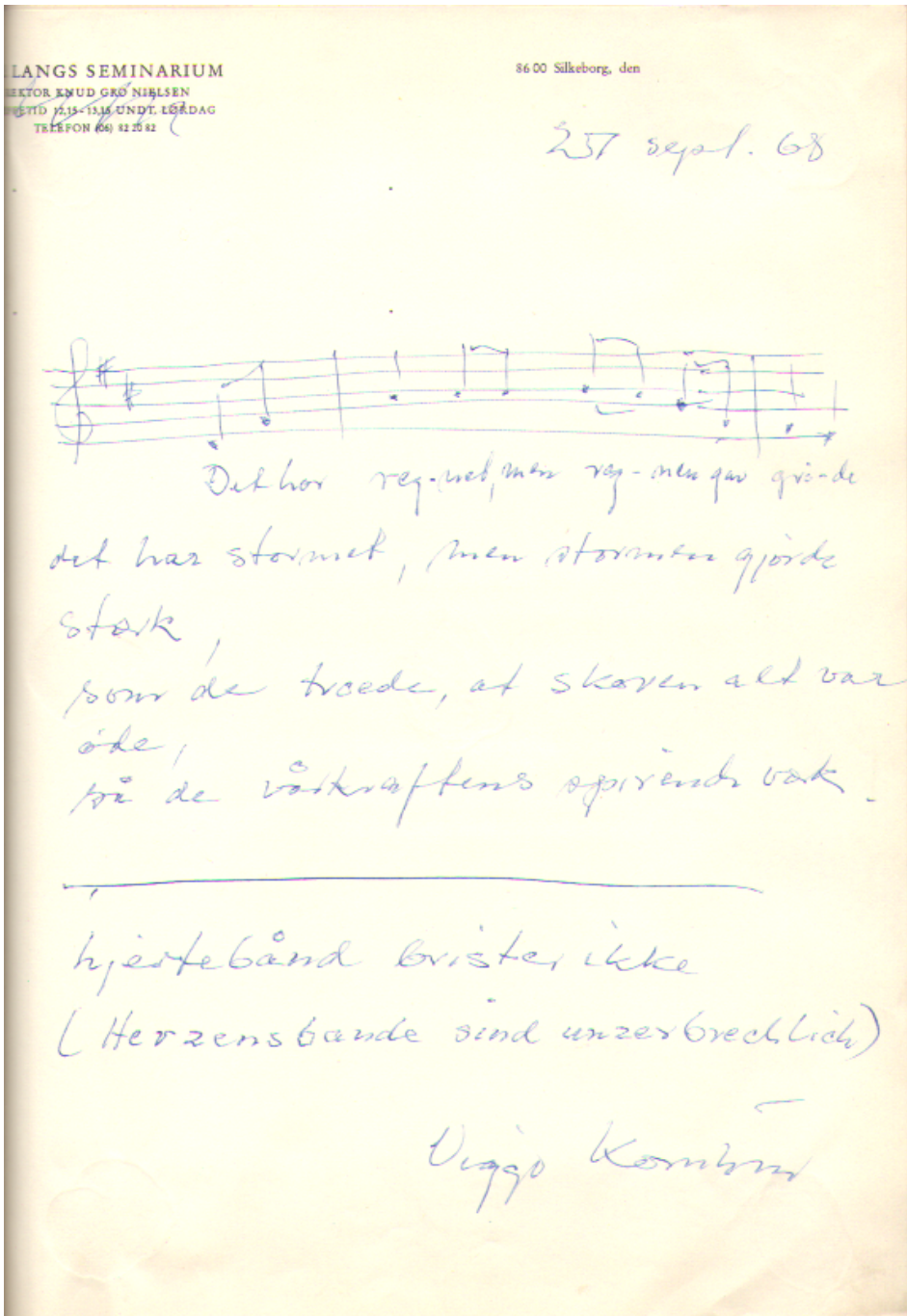


Figure 5. Women's Academic Choir at the Faculty of Education, University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, during a tour in Denmark, 1968. Source: Chronicle of the Women's Academic Choir.

including works from the 20th century.<sup>47</sup> Performances at the celebrations of the founding of the Faculty of Education and the 25th anniversary of the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Army were also a matter of course. It was the early 1970s, and it was clear that the political situation following the invasion of Czechoslovakia was increasingly influencing the personal and professional life of Klobouk, as well as the life of the choir and its concert program. Nevertheless 1973, the choir participated in a training camp before a tour to Pécs in Hungary and Zwickau in Germany. Reviews of a joint concert with a Hungarian choir mentioned for the first time the ban on mentioning the name of choirmaster Jaromír Klobouk, which had been imposed by the Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KV KSČ). The fact that Klobouk could continue performing with his choir resulted from a regional singing competition in Karlovy Vary, where the Women's Academic Choir was awarded one of the top prizes. In order to calm the situation, the renamed choir, now performing under the name Chamber Women's Choir of the Socialist Youth Union of the Faculty of Education, took part in the newly established singing competition Songs of Friendship 1975, where it became the overall winner of the first year. The competition program included politically motivated compositions and high-quality works, such as the female choir from Mussorgsky's Boris Godunov. In the second year of the *Písně přátelství* (Songs of Friendship) competition in 1976, the choir won first place in the regional round, but did not participate in the central round because it was on a concert tour of the Black Sea, visiting Odessa, Yalta, Sukhumi, and other places and performing a total of five concerts. The ban on mentioning the conductor's name remained in force in 1976.<sup>48</sup>

In 1977, at the third annual Songs of Friendship competition, the choir won first place in the regional round. Critics noted that the choir was "too well known" and that the choirmaster "tries to surprise not only with his performance, but also his progressive dramaturgy". The choir did not participate in the national round.

During Jaromír Klobouk's tenure, about 300 music students from various levels of education passed through the choir. The choir's concert activity was rich, with concerts held mainly thanks to the choirmaster's contacts. The repertoire consisted of classical vocal works with an emphasis on Czech compositions. It is difficult to determine the exact number of compositions performed by the choir, but the choir has maintained a "basic repertoire" throughout its existence. These included, in particular, *Three Women's Choirs* by B. Smetana, *Moravian Duets* by A. Dvořák, *Ten Women's Songs* by J. Suk, *Nocturnes* by J. Mysliveček, *The Opening of the Springs* by B. Martinů, *Two Songs*, op. 39 by Z. Lukáš, and folk songs arranged by P. Eben, Jaromír Klobouk, and Z. Lukáš.

Since 1964, the choir has performed approximately 50 full-length concerts, which approximately 15,000 spectators have attended. The choir has performed numerous concerts in Pilsen and western Bohemia and participated in youth festivals, competitions, and other

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<sup>47</sup> The repertoire was rehearsed regularly but refined during concert performances. J. Klobouk remarked, "Educational concerts were a unique opportunity for rehearsal." *Chronicle of the Women's Academic Choir, 1964–1976*, unnumbered pages.

<sup>48</sup> The *Songs of Friendship* was a choral competition organized in the Czech Republic by the Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship Association (SČSP). The competition aimed to promote folk songs and choral compositions by composers from the Soviet Union in the repertoire of singing ensembles. The competition was part of various cultural events to support and strengthen positive relations with the Soviet Union and its culture. Despite the political background, high-quality compositions often appeared in the repertoire.

events. It was organised within the Union of Choirs, which enabled it to participate in singing festivals in western Bohemia. The choir also fulfilled cultural and political duties and performed at socially significant events. In addition to domestic performances and concerts, the choir went on several concert tours abroad (six times to the German Democratic Republic, the Federal Republic of Germany, Denmark, England, the Hungarian People's Republic, and the Soviet Union) and recorded for radio and television at home and abroad.

Jaroslav Fiala<sup>49</sup> evaluated Jaromír Klobouk's work in *Západočeská vlastivěda* (West Bohemian Local History)<sup>50</sup> published in 1995:

“Among women's choirs in western Bohemia, the choir of the Faculty of Education in Pilsen, founded in 1964 by Jaromír Klobouk, achieved an exceptional level. The ensemble, composed mainly of female music students, soon became one of the most nationally recognised ensembles thanks to its perfect intonation, mature vocal culture, and overall musicality.”

## Conclusion

Klobouk's career was closely linked to the founding and development of choirs in every place he worked. From the 1930s to the 1970s, he founded and led several choirs at various schools and institutions, from grammar schools in Roudnice nad Labem and Prague to the Faculty of Education in Pilsen.

Klobouk worked as a teacher for forty years, teaching music, leading courses for choir conductors and teachers, and serving as a judge in many music competitions. He trained many talented and enthusiastic choir conductors who carried on his legacy.

Among his most significant achievements was his work with the Women's Choir of the Faculty of Education in Pilsen, one of Czechoslovakia's leading choirs. Although Klobouk's influence never reached the national level, his significance and long-lasting influence were primarily at the regional level.

This entire study confirms the thesis that Klobouk's work, although mainly regional in focus, had a fundamental influence on the development of the choral movement in western Bohemia.

Jaromír Klobouk stood alongside important choir conductors who represented various strands of the Czech choral movement. Miroslav Venhoda (1915–1987) brought a historically informed interpretation, Pavel Kühn (1938–2003) and Josef Veselka built professional ensembles with international renown, while Milan Uherek (1925–2012) represented children's choirs with an emphasis on education. Klobouk's contribution lies primarily in the field of pedagogy and regional activities, which ensured the continuity of the choir movement in western Bohemia. His work and pedagogical principles, based on quality and professionalism, helped to educate a new generation of choir conductors despite the ideological limitations of his time and influenced Czech musical culture. In 1995, Jaromír Klobouk

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<sup>49</sup> Jaroslav Fiala (1929–2024) was a Czech music historian, university lecturer, and music journalist. He taught at the Faculty of Education in Plzeň, where he focused primarily on the music of western Bohemia and composers from Plzeň.

<sup>50</sup> Fiala, Jaroslav. *Západočeská vlastivěda*, sv. 3. *Hudba*. Plzeň: Západočeská univerzita, 1995. 182 s.

received the Bedřich Smetana Award for lifetime achievement in choral singing, which is jointly awarded by the Union of Czech Choirs and the Association of Choral Conductors AHUV. He was one of the first recipients of this award.<sup>51</sup>

In conclusion, we would like to publish the memories of a former member of the Women's Academic Choir, Marie Slavíková:<sup>52</sup>

I met Dr. Jaromír Klobouk in the mid-1970s as a music education student at the Faculty of Education in Pilsen. He is best remembered as the choirmaster of the women's choir of the Department of Music Education.

He was a very distinctive personality. His love of music and his efforts to prepare the choir for each performance as well as possible, if not perfectly, were evident in all his work at the department. He was a bit of a pedant, but the results were worth it; the choir's artistic level was high, which was reflected in the winning of many prizes in choir competitions. Despite his demanding nature, he was also kind, gentle, and he had a sense of humor, so as students, we respected and loved him greatly.

He did not hesitate to involve us, new students, in preparing for the choir's trip abroad at the beginning of our first year. After a short training camp, where we had to master a fairly extensive repertoire and several regular rehearsals, we left for Hungary (Pécs) on an artistic student exchange trip. Our enthusiasm for singing, which Dr. Klobouk developed and encouraged, manifested in spontaneous singing at every possible opportunity: the entire train ride, every church or castle hall we visited, and town squares for passersby. I have unforgettable memories of the Harkány spa, where, at the instruction of our enthusiastic choirmaster, we sang *Rorando coeli* and *Andělské přátelství* (Angelic Friendship) while submerged up to our necks in sulphurous water. The satisfied choirmaster, dressed in swimming trunks, bowed radiantly to the thunderous applause of the spa guests.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> The Bedřich Smetana Prize has been awarded since 1995 by the Union of Czech Choirs in cooperation with the Association of Choir Conductors AHUV for lifetime contribution to choral music.

<sup>52</sup> Doc. PaedDr. Marie Slavíková, CSc. (\*1954), is an associate professors at the Department of Music Education and Culture at the Faculty of Education of the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Marie Slavíková, January 15, 2024.

## About the authors

**Romana Feiferlíková** graduated from the Pilsen Conservatory with a major in voice performance. She earned a degree in music and Czech language teaching from the Faculty of Education, University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, and another degree in music and solo singing pedagogy from the Faculty of Education at Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem. In 2007, she received her Ph.D. in music theory and pedagogy from the Faculty of Education at Palacký University in Olomouc. Since 1995, she has been teaching at the Department of Music Education and Culture, Faculty of Education, University of West Bohemia in Pilsen. Her professional focus includes vocal training, choral singing, intonation, and related subjects. In 2016, she was appointed head of the department.

✉ feiferlo@khk.zcu.cz

**Daniela Mandysová** studied music and Czech language teaching at the Faculty of Education, Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem, and later at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague. She subsequently pursued solo singing at the Faculty of Education, Jan Evangelista Purkyně University. After completing her studies in 1979, she joined the Secondary Pedagogical School in Ústí nad Labem, and in 1988 she moved to the Faculty of Education at the same university. Since 1992, she has been a member of the Department of Music Culture, Faculty of Education, University of West Bohemia in Pilsen. Following her habilitation in music theory and pedagogy in 2002, she has served as an associate professor, teaching vocal training, music education, instrumental performance, and, previously, choral singing.

✉ mandyska@khk.zcu.cz