**Bohuslav Martinů Philharmonic Orchestra**

Calls for the establishment of a professional symphony orchestra began to gather pace in Zlín as early as in the 1920s, with the main impetus coming from none other than the Bat'a company. Getting the ideas off the ground, however, was no easy matter, due perhaps in part to the fact that inter-wartime Zlín had very little to speak of in terms of musical tradition. So it was not until shortly after the Second War that the Bat'a Corporation management's endeavours landed on fertile ground when what was originally the company's brass band gradually took on the shape of a new symphony orchestra which subsequently acquired the name The Bat'a National Enterprise Symphony Orchestra.

A fundamental watershed in the orchestra's history took place in early April 1946, when the Brno-based conductor Rudolf Kvasnica was put in charge of the almost 50-strong company of musicians, and intensive daily practice made it possible to stage the first ever public concert in the Velké Kino cinema hall on the 30th April that same year, stamping that date in gold letters in the Orchestra's archives as its performance debut.

Initially based in the huge cinema hall boasting over 2,000 seats, the Orchestra was rarely able to attract a capacity audience. Nonetheless the facilities afforded by the building guaranteed the musicians a level of amenity that was exceptional for the time. Then, in November 1955, the former Tomáš Bat'a Memorial Building was repurposed for the Orchestra's needs and subsequently renamed the Dům Úmění or Arts Centre, giving the Orchestra a highly prestigious venue to call home for the second time in a short space of time - a venue that was further enhanced by the installation of a large concert organ. Since January 2011 the Bohuslav Martinů Philharmonic Orchestra has been based in the new-build Zlín Congress Centre, designed by the renowned Czech architect and designer Eva Jiřičná, herself a native of Zlín.

The passage of time has seen the Zlín orchestra parade under a variety of imposed name changes often according to the political expediency of the time. Audiences in Zlín (subsequently renamed Gottwaldov) knew it first as the Bat'a National Enterprise Symphony Orchestra which then, in autumn 1948, was renamed the Zlín Philharmonic. In December of that same year, the name was changed to The Workers' Philharmonic, and then in the 1950s, to the Gottwaldov Region State Symphony Orchestra. Since January 1989 the Orchestra has been proud to have Bohuslav Martinů, one of the most illustrious Czech composers, in its name.

Over more than three-quarters of a century, Zlín's orchestra has evolved into a prestigious Czech orchestra whose artistic profile has been honed by a series of outstanding chief conductor such as Rudolf Kvasnica, Richard Týnský, Eduard Fischer, Zdeněk Bílek, Rostislav Hališka, Peter Lűcker, Kirk Trevor, Tomáš Koutník, Jakub Hrůša, Stanislav Vavřínek, Vojtěch Spurný and Tomáš Brauner, not to mention the Principal Guest Conductors Vladimír Matěj, Jaroslav Opěla, Stanislav Macura, Petr Altrichter, Miloš Machek, Tomáš Hanus and Walter Attanasi. Since September 2021 the Chief Conductor has been Robert Kružík, and the current Principal Guest Conductors are Leoš Svárovský and Tomáš Brauner.

The Orchestra’s repertoire comprises not only major symphonic works, but also jazz, rock, chanson and pop music. Its core range of concerts is currently organised in five subscription series, but it stages many other concerts in Zlín and the region, and regularly tours this country’s major musical festivals such as the Prague Spring, the Smetana festival in Litomyšl, the Janáček May, the Brno Špilberk, the Prague Music Festival, the Český Krumlov, the České Doteky music festival and others. Its tours abroad have taken the orchestra to Italy, Denmark, Hungary, Croatia, Greece, Poland, Austria, Romania, Germany, France, Portugal, Spain, the Ukraine and the USA (Carnegie Hall). In 2016 the Orchestra performed in India - some 57 years after the last performance there by a Czech orchestra. Then in November 2017 it made a five-concert tour of South Korea, followed by another successful tour to India in early 2018.

Among the eminent soloists who have performed with the Orchestra are Mstislav Rostropovich, Daniel Schafran, Mischa Maisky, Vadim Repin, Jennifer Larmore, Eugen Indjić, Sergey Krylov, Eduard Haken, Josef Suk, Dagmar Pecková, Eva Urbanová, Gabriela Beňačková and Magdalena Kožená. In recent years the Orchestra has hosted guest stars such as Roland Villazón, Montserrat Caballé, Olga Peretyatko, Joseph Calleja, Angela Gheorghiu, Pretty Yende, Fazil Say, David Lomelí, Adam Plachetka, Piotr Beczała, Olga Scheps and others.

The Bohuslav Martinů Philharmonic stages two music festivals: the Harmonia Moraviae autumn festival which first took place in 1999, and since 1972 the Talentinum festival, a non-competitive showcase event for younger musicians, featuring up-and-coming performers and conductors up to the age of 26. The Orchestra also sets great store by its support for the output of young Czech composers and the musical education of young people.

Radio and TV performances and recording sessions are also a regular part of the Orchestra's work.