

Petr EBEN

The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart

(Jan Amos Komenský / Comenius)
for Organ and Speaker



*Milý Tomáši,
Vaše návrhka „Labyrintu“
mi udělala velkou
radost. Velice se mi líbí
tempa i registrace a hlavně
dramatické pojetí, na kterém
mi tolik záleží. Moc se z
toho raduji. Přeji Vám
vše dobré. Váš vděčný Petr Eben*



TOMÁŠ THON (*1962)

Studied the organ with Professor M. Šlechta at the Academy of Musical Arts in Prague and with Professors S. Landale and M. C. Alain at the Conservatoire National Rueil-Malmaison in Paris. He has focused his studies on the authentic interpretation of the Baroque repertoire and acquainting audiences with the lesser-known composers of the 17th and 18th centuries. In 1992, he founded ARTTHON, Opava, which publishes organ music of the middle European region from the 17th and 18th centuries. Tomas Thon is also interested in the 20th century organ music of French and Czech composers, including J. Alain, M. Duruflé, O. Messiaen, L. Janáček, P. Eben, as well as others. He has been a finalist in several international competitions such as the Grand Prix de Bordeaux and the Petr Eben Competition in Germany, and was awarded the Czech Music Fund prize for his interpretation of the works of Petr Eben. In addition to the Czech Republic, Tomáš Thon has also performed solo recitals in France, Slovakia, Russia, Poland, Roumania, Moldova, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Luxembourg, Algeria, USA, as well as a series of concerts with the renowned French trumpeter Maurice André. Recordings of his performances may be found on CDs (e.g. Supraphon Records, Prague, Studio Matouš, Prague, Radioservis, Prague) in addition to performances for Czech, French and Polish radio. In 1992 – 2000 he had taught in the conservatories in Kroměříž, Ostrava, Opava and Olomouc (CZ).

Mr. Eben's most recent organ cycle was a full-evening organ improvisation inspired by the famous book *Labyrint světa a ráj srdce* / **The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart**, written by the humanistic philosopher, writer, teacher, and theologian JAN AMOS KOMENSKY / COMENIUS (1592-1670), one of the greatest figures in Czech and worldwide culture. It consists of fourteen sections of improvisation alternating with recitation of selected passages from Komensky's book. In 2002 Mr. Eben gave these improvisations a definitive written form.

Mr. Eben describes his approach to this work as follows: *“The pilgrim passing through the labyrinth of the world finds nothing pleasing in it and turns to his God in his heart. However, what I find most moving about Komensky's attitude is his tireless work to improve this world. In this he can serve as an example even for our present society: to preserve one's own critical view of, and separation from, this world but to devote all one's powers to improving it.*

In the organ improvisations I quote chorales from Komensky's Amsterdam cantional. Sometimes I try to express dramatic passages in the text in a more modern way, for instance the deformation of human faces, the whishing of arrows, and the slipping off the Wheel of Fortune. The whole atmosphere of the text is not an idyllic stroll through the world but a bitter, satirical, bizarre, and sometimes almost apocalyptic view of the world – and such is the character of the music.”

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