

## About Karel Husa

- Czech (born in Prague) composer and conductor
- Played the violin and piano as a child
- Continued to pursue studies throughout the majority of his early career (for both conducting and composing):
  - Prague Conservatory (1941)
  - Graduate school at the Prague Academy (1945-1947)
  - Continued conducting studies at École Normale de Musique de Paris and the Conservatoire de Paris
- Wrote first published work in 1943 (a piano sonata), but gained national attention after premiere of his String Quartet No. 1
  - Began to develop personal style with influences by Novák, Janáček, Bartók, Schoenberg, and Stravinsky
- Immigrated to US in 1954, became a US citizen in 1959
- Professor at Cornell University from 1954-1992, lecturer at Ithaca College from 1967-1986. Also received honorary doctorates from Coe College, CIM, Ithaca College, and Baldwin Wallace College
- Won many international prizes for his compositions, most notably the 1969 Pulitzer Prize for his String Quartet No. 3
  - International acclaim for both composition and conducting

## Works for Band

Composed 12 works for band, most notably: *Music for Prague 1968*, *Smetana Fanfare*, *Les Couleurs*, *Concerto for Wind Ensemble*, *Apotheosis of the Earth*)

## Impact of *Music for Prague 1968*

### Remembrance and Memoriam

“We have not learned anything,  
we don’t know anything,  
We don’t have anything,  
we don’t understand anything,  
We don’t sell anything,  
we don’t help, we don’t betray,  
and  
We will not forget.”

—Czech Freedom Poster

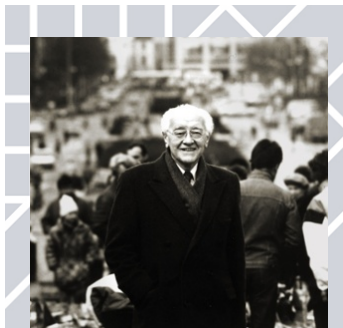
### Importance of Responding to Violence

“Each time I conduct *Music for Prague 1968*, the challenge is not just to prepare a piece of music, it is to prepare people—the ensemble and the audience—to understand that there are ways to react to horrible events beyond using violence.”

— Mark Davis Scatterday

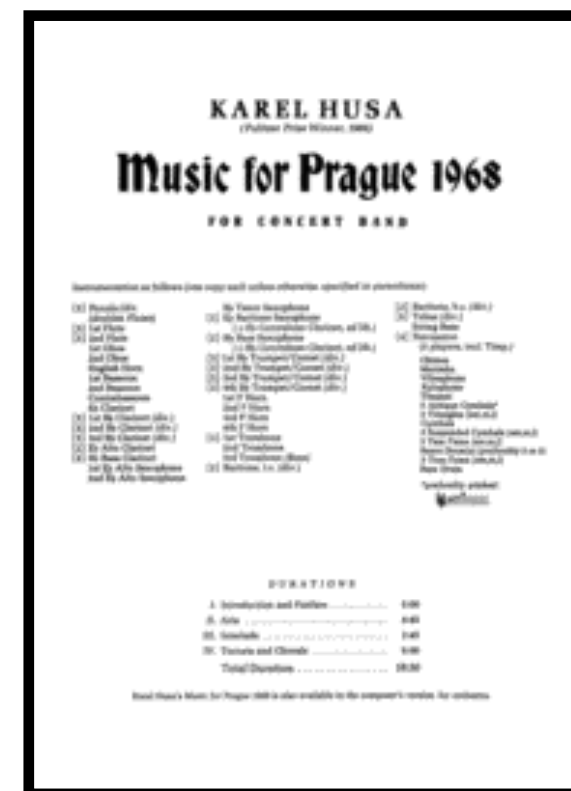
### Exposure to Artistry

As an audience member and performer, experiencing *Music for Prague 1968* for the first time is incredibly demanding. But the need for exposure to true artistry - the spiritual healing, introspection, awareness, and emotion that this piece is capable of evoking is what makes the demand and the rigor so worthwhile.



## Music for Prague 1968

Karel Husa (1921-2016)



## Instrumentation

2 piccolos, 6 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, E-flat clarinet, 9 B-flat clarinets, alto clarinet, bass clarinet, contrabass clarinet, 2 alto saxophones, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone, bass saxophone, 8 trumpets, 4 horns, 3 trombones, 2 baritones, 2 tubas, chimes, marimba, vibraphone, xylophone, timpani, 3 antique cymbals, 3 triangles, 3 suspended cymbals, 3 tam-tams, 2-3 snare drums, 3 tomtoms, bass drum.



## Notes from Karel Husa

### Three main ideas bind the composition together:

1. 15th century Hussite war song from the 15th century, “Ye Warriors of God and His Law,” a symbol of resistance and hope for hundreds of years. ... The beginning of this religious song is announced very softly in the first movement by the timpani and concludes in a strong unison (Chorale). The song is never heard in its entirety.
2. The sound of bells throughout; Prague, named also The City of “Hundreds of Towers,” has used its magnificently sounding church bells as calls of distress as well as of victory.
3. A motif of three chords first appearing very softly under the piccolo solo at the beginning of the piece, in flutes, clarinets, and horns. Later it reappears at extremely strong dynamic levels, for example, in the middle of the Aria.

## Movements

### I. Introduction and Fanfare

- Opens with solo timpani performing Hussite anthem, then bird-like call in piccolo to represent fleeing and rare freedom in Prague
- Rapid percussion effects & brass glissandos in fanfare signify the sounds of war
- Oboes mimic morse code distress calls
- Main compositional techniques present: bells to represent the city of Prague, a three chord motif reappearing in various instruments, and the Hussite anthem to represent resistance and hope

### II. Aria

- Contrasts terror of invasion of Soviet troops with lyrical melodic writing - still with dark, eerie sound
- Features: Low woodwind melody, off-beat mallet percussion, alarm-like tones in upper woodwinds and horns, chaos in upper woodwinds
- Overall feeling of suspense
- Continued use of three main compositional techniques from previous movement

### III. Interlude

- Written exclusively for percussion
- Depicts anxiety leading up to rebellion
- Ends with snare solo signifying shots from invading troops leading directly into the chaos of the fourth movement

### IV. Toccata and Chorale

- Begins with wild, angular clarinet melody that is continually developed throughout movement
- Brass fanfare from first movement reappears in 6/8 time
- Sense of despair and chaos (improvised section) transforms into sense of nationalism with the Hussite song performed in unison



## About *Music for Prague 1968*

- Four movement work, premiered by the Ithaca College Concert Band in January 1969
- A response to the Prague Spring movement and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968
  - Prague Spring: period of political liberalization in Czechoslovakia
    - Reformist Alexander Dubček aimed to grant additional rights to Czech citizens, and divided nation into Czech Republic and Slovak Republic
    - Reforms not well received by Soviets - sent in hundreds of thousands of troops to occupy the country
    - Details of casualties/were kept secret:
      - Led to 82 Czechoslovakian deaths, 300 serious injuries, and 500 otherwise injured. Most victims shot.
- Compositional techniques: Hussite anthem (symbolic of resistance and hope), eerie/unsettling microtonal passages, and instrumental effects (church bells (representing “The City of Hundreds of Towers”, sirens, bird calls, morse code, and gunfire) to depict the Prague Spring
- Husa believed it wasn’t just a political message for one country, but was instead universal