

MUSIC AS AN ELEMENT OF LEGITIMISATION
FOR CZECH NATIONAL CULTURE
IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD

Rüdiger Ritter

In the Czechoslovak Republic, music of the more sophisticated variety was an important means of legitimating, culturally as well as politically, a state that had been founded only relatively recently. A key role was ascribed to German critics, since they belonged to one of the "leading musical nations," and this placed an additional burden on the already fraught relationship with the nation's "own," in-country, Germans. The aim of the educated was to support a certain notion of the own people as a culturally advanced nation, a notion which went contrary to the widespread stereotype of rural backwardness. As a composer, Antonín Dvořák was belittled at home, just because abroad he was ranked as "naïve" on the basis of widespread stereotypes about Slavs, despite his international success. Modernism in the Czechoslovak music scene, on the other hand, though highly appreciated by the knowledgeable, did not gain any mass relevance and was not in a position to function as a vehicle of political legitimization.