



Bohemian Violinists in Ljubljana: Jan Šlais's Contribution to Ljubljana's Violin School*

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Jan Šlais (Jan/Ivan Šlais; 1893–1975) was one of the last Prague violinists active in Slovenia during the twentieth century. Today he is considered a founder of the Ljubljana violin school. He trained an important generation of Slovenian violinists and was the coda to a long tradition of violinists from Bohemia that contributed to the development of violin playing in this region for over one hundred fifty years.

Slovenia was only one of many parts of Europe to which Bohemian violinists immigrated. The phenomenon of Bohemian musicians' extensive migrations across Europe began taking place as early as the end of the seventeenth century. Second in number only to Italians, Bohemian musicians formed the largest group of foreign musicians at the courts of Germany and other European countries in the seventeenth century. Later, between 1740 and 1810, almost half of the professional violinists originating from Bohemia were active abroad; for this reason, Bohemia was called the "Conservatory of Europe." Until the end of the eighteenth century, violinists originating from Bohemia were mostly active at various court music chapels in Mannheim, Berlin, Dresden, and elsewhere. In addition to the German lands, many violinists made a name for themselves in other European cities, such as Venice, Milan, Padua, London, Vienna, Budapest, Dublin, St. Petersburg, Warsaw, and Paris. Many of them are celebrated in music history as famous virtuosos and composers, important teachers, and even as

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founders of national violin schools. Bohemian musicians not only made their way into significant positions in large centers: they were also active as music teachers or music promoters in smaller European villages and towns and markedly influenced musical life there as well.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, due to the extensive emigration of the best local musicians, the closure of many monasteries, and the weakening of the economic and social position of the nobility in the Czech lands, there was a lack of high-quality orchestral performers. These musicians were especially needed in the theater orchestras. With the establishment of the Prague Conservatory in 1811, the local music market once more became too small compared to the “overproduction” of excellent and well-trained violinists and other musicians: they had difficulty finding suitable and well-paid jobs in their homeland. Thus, attracted by prospects abroad, most of the talented and promising Prague violinists emigrated throughout Europe. From the beginning of the nineteenth century up to the 1920s, the “Prague violinists” (alumni of the Prague Conservatory) were the most important group of Bohemian violinists that trained new generations of violinists throughout Europe for over one hundred years, contributing to the spread of this strand of violin pedagogy, which was then further developed by local descendants and successors.¹

The earliest musicians from Bohemia appeared in Ljubljana in the 1720s. One of the first violinists from Bohemia to work in Ljubljana was Franz Dussek (František Benedikt Dusík; 1765–1817),² who was active as a violinist and organist in the Bishop’s Chapel in the 1790s. When the first music schools were founded in Ljubljana at the beginning of the nineteenth century they needed various musicians as teachers, and most of these schools’ teachers came from Bohemia. They taught various musical

1 Maruša Zupančič, “At the Crossroads of European Violin Heritage: The Migration of Prague Violinists throughout Europe from the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century up to the 1880s,” *Hudební věda* 55, no. 1 (2018): 5–7.

2 Franz (František) Benedikt (Josef) Dussek (Dusík, Dussik, Dusseg, Dusech, Duseck, Dussig, Duschek, Dusek, etc.) was born on March 22nd, 1765 in Časlav. He was taught music by his father, at the Cistercian monastery in Žďár nad Sázavou and the Emauzy Benedictine monastery in Prague. Later he went to Italy, where he performed as violinist, cellist, and pianist in theatres in Mortara, Venice, and Milan. In 1790, he joined the Bishop’s Chapel in Ljubljana, where he spent the next ten years as violinist, organist, and music director. Shortly after the foundation of the Ljubljana Philharmonic Society [*Philharmonische Gesellschaft*] in 1794 he became a member and one of its leading musical figures. He wrote numerous compositions, including violin sonatas that have been preserved in musical archives throughout Europe. See Matjaž Barbo, *František Josef Benedikt Dusík* (Ljubljana: Filozofska fakulteta, 2009), 119.

instruments (including violin), and music theory. These teachers included Franz Sokol (Franciscus/Franc Sokoll; 1779–1822),³ Gašpar Mašek (Caspar/Kaspar Maschek; 1794–1873),⁴ and Joseph Miksch (Josip Mikš; 1778–1866).⁵ One violinist that rose above the violin dilettantism of the time in Ljubljana was the violin virtuoso and composer Joseph Benesch (Giovanni/Josef/Jožef Benesch/Beneš; 1795–1873),⁶ who later became a member of the pres-

- 3 Franz Sokol was born on November 27th, 1779 in Sadská to Ferdinand and Anna Sokol. He came to Ljubljana from Klagenfurt, where he was a music teacher, composer, and military music director. In 1816, he moved to Ljubljana to become the first teacher at the Public Music School in Ljubljana, where he taught various instruments, including violin. At the same time, he was an active soloist and a composer, and performed at a few Philharmonic Society concerts. See SOA Praha, Sadská 06, B: 1767–1784, fol. 297; Viktor Steska, "Javna glasbena šola v Ljubljani od leta 1816–1875," *Cerkveni glasbenik* 52, no. 3/4 (1929): 53; Dragotin Cvetko, *Zgodovina glasbene umetnosti na Slovenskem*, vol. 2 (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1959), 125.
- 4 Gašpar Mašek was born on January 6th, 1794 in Prague. He was taught music by his father Vincent Mašek, who was a piano virtuoso and a pedagogue. Mašek studied violoncello at the Prague Conservatory between 1811 and 1815. From 1812 until 1815, he was a military music director and his father's assistant at the Church of St. Nicolas in Prague. In 1819, he was the music director of the Estates Theater in Graz, and one year later he moved to Ljubljana, where he became the music director of the Estates Theater there. As a music teacher, he was active in the Public Music School and the Philharmonic Society Music School in Ljubljana. He wrote numerous compositions (also for violin) that are preserved in the National and University Library in Ljubljana. He died on May 13th, 1873 in Ljubljana. See Haupt [...] der Schüler des Conservatorium in Prag von 1811 bis 1880, fol. 3; Josip Mantuani, "Mašek, Gašpar," *Slovenska biografija* (Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, Znanstvenoraziskovalni center SAZU, 2013), <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi352611/>.
- 5 Miksch was born on November 14th, 1778 in Nové Město. He served as the private teacher of Baron Hallerstein, and then four years an assistant in Langenau. Between 1806 and 1814, he was an organist in Kranj, in 1814 a music teacher in Ljubljana, and from 1817 school principal in Koper. He spent his retirement in Ljubljana. He was a skilled pianist and organist, and he also played violin, clarinet, and bassoon. He wrote several compositions, some of which were performed on the concert stage of the Philharmonic Society. See Stanko Premrl, "Mikš, Josip," *Slovenska biografija* (Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, Znanstvenoraziskovalni center SAZU, 2013), <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi367927/>.
- 6 Ferdinand Luib, "Biographische Skizzen hier lebender Compositeure, Virtuosen und Musikalischer Schriftsteller Joseph Benesch," *Wiener allgemeine Musik-Zeitung* 8, no. 58 (1848): 229–230; Bohumír Štědroň, "Beneš, Josef," in *Česko slovenský hudební slovník osob a institucí*, vol. 1, ed. Gracián Černušák, Bohumír Štědroň, and Zdenko Nováček (Prague: Státní hudební vydavatelství, 1963): 81–82; Vladimír Helfert, "Beneš, Josef," in *Pazdírkův hudební slovník naučný*, vol. 2, ed. Gracián Černušák (Brno: Nakladatelství Ol. Pazdírek, 1937): 65; Eman Meliš, "Beneš, Josef," in *Slovník naučný*, vol. 1 (Prague: Nakladatelství Kober a Markgraf, 1860): 613; Anon., "Slovník pověstných jmen [Josef Beneš]," *Květy. Národní zábavník pro Čechy, Morawany a Slowáky*, September 24th, 1835, 387.

tigious Vienna Imperial Music Chapel (*Wiener Hofmusikkapelle*) and assistant orchestra director of the Hofburg Theater. He first visited Ljubljana during a tour in 1820. From September 1822, he taught violin privately and played violin in the Philharmonic Society Orchestra in Ljubljana. Between 1823 and 1828, he was the director of the same orchestra, and for a short period also of the Estates Theater Orchestra. From 1826, he was a violin teacher at the Philharmonic Society Music School in Ljubljana, where he wrote a few virtuoso violin compositions. The next group of Bohemian violinists reappeared in Ljubljana only thirty years later. However, Anton Nedved (Antonín Nedvěď; 1828–1896),⁷ who moved to Ljubljana in 1856, was a well-trained violinist, and he contributed to Ljubljana musical life mainly as a choral music promoter. Another Bohemian musician and violin teacher that remained in Ljubljana for more than forty years was Gustav Silvestr Moravec (1837–1916).⁸

The most important group of Bohemian violinists in Ljubljana were the Prague Violinists (violin alumni of the Prague Conservatory), who appeared in Ljubljana in the 1870s. The most important of these during the late nineteenth century was undoubtedly Hans Gerstner (1851–1939). His arrival in Ljubljana in 1871 was a key turning point in the development of violin playing in the city.⁹ He was the orchestra director of the Provincial Theater and spent almost fifty years serving as a violin teacher at the Philharmonic Society. In his long career as a violin pedagogue at the Philharmonic Society, he taught numerous brilliant violinists that later worked in Slovenia and abroad. These included Leo Funtek (Leon Funtek; 1885–

7 Nedved was born on August 19th, 1828 in Hořovice. He was a violin pupil of Antonín Slavík (1782–1853), father of a famous Czech violinist Josef Slavík (1806–1833), and later a private pupil of Moritz Mildner, a violin professor at the Prague Conservatory. For a short period, Nedved was active in the Opera Orchestra in Brno. In 1856, he moved to Ljubljana, where he was active as a music teacher and composer, but he mostly focused on vocal music. He died on June 16th, 1896 in Ljubljana. See SOA Praha, Hořovice 06, B: 1814–1850, Fol. 96; Pavel Kozina, “Nedved, Anton,” *Slovenska biografija* (Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, Znanstvenoraziskovalni center SAZU, 2013), <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi386526/>.

8 Moravec was born on December 31st, 1837 in Hlinsko (CZ). He came to Ljubljana in 1866, where he stayed active until 1914. He taught violin, piano, and singing, and performed at numerous Philharmonic Society concerts as a violinist and violist in chamber ensembles. He died in 1916 in Vienna. See SOA ZAMRSK, Chrudím 223, B: 1836–1852, fol. 21; Cvetko Budkovič: *Razvoj glasbenega šolstva na Slovenskem*, vol. 1 (Ljubljana: Znanstveni inštitut Filozofske fakultete, 1992), 67–68, 71.

9 More about Gerstner in his diary. See Jernej Weiss, *Hans Gerstner: Življenje za glasbo* (Ljubljana: Litera, 2010).

1965), who would later become well-known as a concertmaster in Helsinki and Stockholm. Gerstner was also very active as a performer in numerous chamber ensembles and as a soloist. He played an important role in the promotion of chamber music, which was still very neglected before his arrival in Ljubljana. Furthermore, Gerstner and his most prominent students premièred numerous violin compositions and brought violin performance to a completely new level.¹⁰

With the establishment of the Music Society (*Glasbena Matica*) in 1872, Slovenians began their efforts to develop local violin playing. The Music Society, with its numerous branch organizations mostly influenced by Prague violinists, essentially characterized Slovenian violin tradition, later training an important generation of Slovenian violinists. But soon after the establishment of the music school in the 1880s, the Music Society in Ljubljana had some difficulties with its violin teachers from Bohemia, who ended up changing nearly every year. These included Georg Stiaral (Jurij Štaral; 1824–1898),¹¹ Josef Wiedemann, Johann (Ivan) Drobeček (1858–1885),¹² Anton Sochor, Anton Kučera, and Ernst Eberhart (Árnošt Eberhart; 1866–?).¹³ A breakthrough was achieved with the arrival of another Czech violinist in Ljubljana in 1888, Viktor Roman Moser (1864–1939), a successful violin teacher and performer in Ljubljana, where he founded a string quartet in 1889 and remained until 1891. He was succeeded by Prague violinist Johann

10 Zupančič, "At the Crossroads of European Violin Heritage," 22.

11 Stiaral was born on November 4th, 1824 in Zadní Třeboň (CZ). He was the military music director of the 2nd Tyrolean Rifle Regiment. From the 1880s, he was a teacher of violin, viola, wind instruments, and other instruments at the Philharmonic and Music Society in Ljubljana. He died on January 21st, 1898 in Ljubljana. See Eugen Brixel, Gunther Martin, Gottfried Pils, *Das ist Österreichs Militärmusik* (Graz, Vienna, Köln: Edition Kaleidoskop, 1982) 348; Elisabeth Anzenberger Ramminger, "České země a Penzijní spolek vojenských kapelníků," in *Vojenská hudba v kultuře a historii českých zemí*, ed. Jitka Bajgarová (Prague: Etnologický ústav Akademie věd České republiky, 2007), 260; Budkovič, *Razvoj glasbenega šolstva na Slovenskem*, 84, 89, 224.

12 Johann (Ivan) Drobeček was born on October 27th, 1858 in Heřmanův Městec (CZ). He studied violin at the Prague Conservatory with Antonín Bennewitz from 1873 to 1879. In 1884, he was a violin and piano teacher at the Ljubljana Music Society. He died on January 31st, 1885 in Heřmanův Městec. See Haupt [...] der Schüler des Conservatorium in Prag, fol. 147; Budkovič, *Razvoj glasbenega šolstva na Slovenskem*, 205, 212.

13 Eberhart was born on October 7th, 1886 in Karlové Vary (CZ). He studied violin with Bennewitz at the Prague Conservatory between 1879 and 1885. He was a violin teacher at the Music Society in Ljubljana between 1885 and 1887. See Matrik 1879, fol. 1, 212–213, SOA Praha.

Baudis (Jan/Hanuš Baudis; 1860–1908),¹⁴ who did not meet the expectations of the Society's management, regardless of the fact that he was a very competent musician. The situation changed in 1895, when another Prague violinist, Josef Vedral (Josip Vedral; 1872–1929), became a teacher at the Music Society, later the Ljubljana Conservatory, where he remained active for over thirty years and trained several Slovenian violinists. In addition to Vedral, two other Czech violinists were active during the First World War at the Music Society in Ljubljana, namely Stanislava Hajek (Stanislava Hajková; 1895–?)¹⁵ and Václav Tulach (1872–?).¹⁶ At the end of World War I, another Prague violinist, Richard Zika (1897–1947),¹⁷ was appointed concertmas-

- 14 Baudis was born on June 25th, 1860 in Kutna Hora (CZ). He studied violin with Bennewitz at the Prague Conservatory between 1870 and 1876. After his studies, he was the orchestra director of the Royal Provincial German Theater in Prague for six years. After that, he spent three years as a violin teacher and concertmaster at the Music Society (*Musikverein*) in Linz, and another three years as concertmaster and conductor at the General Music Society (*Allgemeine Musikgesellschaft*) in Basel. In 1892, he became a violin teacher at the Music Society in Ljubljana. After that, he was the military music director of the 18th Infantry Regiment between 1893 and 1906. See SOA Praha, Kutná hora 15, B: 1860–1865, fol. 30; Haupt [...] der Schüler des Conservatorium in Prag, fol. 143; Letter of J. Baudis to the directorship of the Music Society in Ljubljana, October 14th, 1891 (Personal file [H. Baudis] of Music Society, SI-Lng); Brixel, Martin, Pils, *Das ist Österreichs Militärmusik*, 329.
- 15 Hajek was born on August 19th, 1895 in Linz to Czech parents. She studied violin with Jindřich Feld at the Prague Conservatory between 1909 and 1915. In 1916 she moved to Ljubljana, where she was a violin and piano teacher at the Music Society until 1918. See Matrik 1879, fol. 75, SOA Praha; Letter of Stanislava Hajek to the directorship of the Music Society, September 20th, 1919 (Personal file [S. Hajek] of Music Society, SI-Lng).
- 16 Tulach was born on September 21st, 1872 in Řepín near Mělník (CZ). He studied violin and clarinet at the Military Music School of Hanuš Pavlis between 1887 and 1889. He spent more than nine years as a clarinetist and violinist in the military band, five years as a clarinetist in Opatija, three years in the Music Society band in Ljubljana, two years in the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra in Prague, and one year in the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra in Ljubljana. He was a teacher of clarinet and violin at the Music Society in Ljubljana between 1917 and 1919. See Personal file [Václav Tulach] of the Music Society in Ljubljana (SI-Lng).
- 17 Zika was born on January 9th, 1897 in Vsetín. He studied violin with Štěpán Suchý at the Prague Conservatory between 1913 and 1916. In 1918, he moved to Ljubljana, where he was concertmaster of the Slovenian National Theater Orchestra until 1921 and a violin teacher at the Music Society in Ljubljana. In 1946, he became a violin professor at the Academy of Music in Prague and was also active as composer. He died on November 10th, 1947 in Prague. See Zakladní kniha, Grundbuch 1911–1934, fol. 28, SOA Praha; František Židek, *Čeští houslisté tří století* (Prague: Panton, 1979), 167–168; Gracián Černušák, "Zika, Richard," in *Česko slovenský hudební slovník osob a institucí*, vol. 2, ed. Gracián Černušák, Bohumír Štědroň, and Zdenko Nováček (Prague: Státní hudební vydavatelství, 1965), 993.

ter of the National Theater Orchestra and violin teacher at the Music Society. Zika founded the Yugoslav Quartet in 1919 in Ljubljana, along with his brother Ladislav Zika and Vedral's pupils Mirko Dežela and Ivo Trost. The same year another Prague violinist, Ladislav Černý (1891–1975), moved to Ljubljana to become a solo violist at the Slovenian National Theater, when he also joined the Yugoslav Quartet. It later went on to achieve significant acclaim under several names: the Zika Quartet, the Czechoslovak Quartet (*Československé kvarteto*), the Prague Quartet, and the Černý Quartet. But the most important Prague violinist in Ljubljana after Gerstner was undoubtedly Jan Šlais (1893–1975), who moved to Maribor in 1919. Two years later he moved to Ljubljana, where he remained until 1946, a topic covered below.

In addition to developing music education, giving solo performances, and composing, the Prague violinists and other musicians originating from Bohemia were also a key factor in orchestral development in Ljubljana, where they served as directors of military bands and members and conductors of symphonic orchestras. When the first Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra was established in 1908, the young Prague violinist Václav Talich (Wenzel Talich; 1883–1961)¹⁸ became the conductor, and most of the orchestra members were also Czechs, including Jaroslav Markuzzi, Jan Rezek, Karel Tarter, Karel Kučera, Václav Doršner, Anton Klier, and others.¹⁹ This resulted in the orchestra being given the nickname “The Second Czech Philharmonic Orchestra.” The situation was similar in Odessa and Zagreb, where ninety percent of orchestra members were Czechs.

In 1909, Václav Talich founded a string quartet in Ljubljana. All the other members were also alumni of the Prague Conservatory, namely Jan

18 Talich was born on May 28th, 1883 in Kroměříž (CZ). He studied violin with Ševčík at the Prague Conservatory between 1897 and 1903. After his studies, he spent one season as concertmaster of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. He decided to become a conductor and went to study in Leipzig with Arthur Nikisch. He was active in Ljubljana between 1908 and 1912. After that, he moved to Plzeň, where he conducted opera until 1915. Between 1915 and 1918, he was the violist of the Bohemian Quartet (later called the Czech Quartet). After the First World War, he was the chief conductor of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra until 1941, and later founded the Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra in Bratislava. He died on March 16th, 1961 in Beroun. See Matrik 1879, fol. 47, SOA Praha; Bohumír Štědroň, “Talich, Václav,” in *Česko slovenský hudební slovník osob a institucí*, vol. 2, ed. Gracián Černušák, Bohumír Štědroň, and Zdenko Nováček (Prague: Státní hudební vydavatelství, 1965), 751–753.

19 The other violinists with Czech surnames were Korál, Kazimour, Nechleba, and Kratochvil.

Rezek (1884–?),²⁰ Karel Kučera (1888–?),²¹ and Edvard Bílek. When Václav Talich left Ljubljana in 1912, the orchestra was taken over by the Prague violinist and military music director Petr Teplý (1871–1964)²² and another Czech, the opera conductor Cyril Metoděj Hrazdira. The members and concertmasters of the orchestras continued to be mainly pupils of Czech violin teachers for quite some time.

For over one hundred years, Bohemian violinists in Ljubljana trained several generations of violinists and other musicians, performed the contemporary music repertoire, took a leading role in the development of chamber music, and were a key factor in orchestral development. They markedly shaped the development of violin playing in Ljubljana, where Jan Šlais trained the first generation of Slovenian violinists, who went on to continue his violin tradition in ways that are still felt today.²³

Jan Šlais – life and studies

Jan Šlais was born on January 23rd, 1893 in Radlice, a district of Prague, to Jan Šlais and Anna Havlová. His father was a brickmaker, later an innkeeper, who took over profession of brickmaker from his father, also named

20 Rezek was born on February 2nd, 1884 in Prague. He studied violin with Štěpán Suchý at the Prague Conservatory between 1898 and 1904. In 1908, he moved to Ljubljana, where he became a violin teacher at the Music Society. In 1909, he performed Paganini's Violin Concerto in Ljubljana. See Matrik 1879, fol. 49, SOA Praha; Stanko Premrl, "Koncerti Glasbene Matice," *Dom in svet* 22, no. 1 (1909): 47, <http://www.dlib.si/?URN=URN:NBN:SI:DOC:JEU6YoIO>; Budkovič, *Razvoj glasbenega šolstva na Slovenskem*, 277, 315.

21 Kučera was born on March 1st, 1888 in Čelakovice (CZ). He studied violin with Jan Mařák at the Prague Conservatory between 1902 and 1906. See Matrik 1879, fol. 56, SOA Praha.

22 Petr Teplý was born on February 19th, 1871 in Prague. He studied violin with Bennewitz at the Prague Conservatory between 1882 and 1888. After his studies, he was a music teacher and military music director in different cities. Between 1896 and 1899, he was a violinist of the German Theater in Prague. Between 1913 and 1914, he was a teacher at the Slovenian Music Society in Trieste, and a conductor of the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra between 1914 and 1915. After he returned to Prague, he was a military music director and violinist in the German Theater Orchestra until the end of the First World War. Later, he was the director of the Military Music School in Prague. He died on May 25th, 1964 in Prague. See Matrik 1879, fol. 13, SOA Praha; Robert Šálek, "Teplý, Petr," in *Česko slovenský hudební slovník osob a institucí*, vol. 2, ed. Gracián Černušák, Bohumír Štědroň, and Zdenko Nováček (Prague: Státní hudební vydavatelství, 1965), 763.

23 Summarized from: Maruša Zupančič, "Influx of Bohemian violinists to Slovenia and Croatia up to the 1920s," *Arti musices* 50, no. 1–2 (2019), forthcoming.

Jan Šlais. Šlais's mother, Anna Havlová, came from a Lutheran family in Podbaba (Prague), where her father, Josef Havla, was a laborer.²⁴ We know Šlais attended secondary school (*Bürgerschule/Mešťanská škola*) in Smichov (Prague), but are no known records of his early musical education.

In 1907, at the age of fourteen, he entered the Prague Conservatory to study with Ševčík's pupil Štěpán Suchý (1872–1920), who taught several successful violinists. On July 4th, 1913, Šlais finished his violin studies with the highest degree, performing the Violin Concerto in C minor by Tor Aulin (1866–1914).²⁵

Immediately after completing his studies, Šlais was appointed assistant concertmaster at a theater (*Svobodnyj teatr*) in Moscow and one year later at the private Zimin Opera. From 1917, he was the assistant concertmaster of the Moscow Musicians' Union Symphony Orchestra. At the beginning of 1919, he returned to his homeland to become a member of the National Theater Orchestra in Prague, with which he went on a promotional concert tour to Paris, London, Geneva, Bern, and Zürich. In autumn of the same year, he accepted a position at the newly-founded Music School in Maribor, where the principal of the school was another Prague violinist: František Topič (Fran Topič; 1881–?).²⁶

In 1920, Šlais returned to Prague to continue with his violin studies in Ševčík's well-known violin master class, where he remained until June 1921. During that time, he gave concerts in Prague and in the region. On September 15th, 1921, Šlais accepted a position as violin teacher at the Ljubljana Conservatory and at the end of the year, on December 29th, 1921, in Prague, he married the pianist Růžena Deylová (1888–1969) with whom he had become acquainted in Maribor.²⁷ In 1939, he became a teacher and head of the violin and violoncello department at the Academy of Music in Ljubljana. Seven years later, he returned to his homeland to become a teacher at the Prague Conservatory, a position he held until 1952, and from then on at the Janáček Music Academy in Brno. During his long residen-

24 AHMP, Radlice SM N 29, B: 1879–1895, fol. 131.

25 Matrik 1879, fol. 71, SOA Praha.

26 Topič was born on September 4th, 1881 in Lipá. He studied violin with Antonín Bennewitz at the Prague Conservatory between 1899 and 1904. After World War I, he was a violin teacher in Trieste and in 1919 became the first director of the newly established Music Society in Maribor, where he remained until 1926. See Matrik 1879, fol. 51, SOA Praha; "Franc Topič," *Jutro*, February 5th, 1925, 3; Ivan Grbec, "Vsem, ki ste željni lepote," *Edinost*, April 4th, 1919, 1; "Koncert orkestra Glasbene matice v Mariboru," *Ptujski list*, March 14th, 1920, 6.

27 AHMP, Týn O14, M: 1920–1924, fol. 146.



Figure 1: Photograph of Jan Šlais (reconstruction of the photograph that was published in *Světozor* on November 24th, 1920)

cy of more than twenty years, he significantly contributed to the development of violin playing in Slovenia. He founded the Ljubljana String Quartet and trained the most important generation of Slovenian violinists, including Karlo Rupel (1907–1968), Leon Pfeifer (1907–1986), Albert (Ali) Dermelj (1912–1986), Vida Jeraj-Hribar (1902–2002), Uroš Prevoršek (1915–1998), Kajetan Burger, Fran Stanič (1893–1979), Jelka Stanič (1928–2011), Vinko Šušteršič, and Francka Ornik Rojc.²⁸ For this reason, today he is considered the founder of the Ljubljana violin school. At the Ljubljana Conservatory and later at the Academy of Music he taught violin based on Ševčík's violin

28 Gracián Černušák, "Šlais, Jan," in *Česko slovenský hudební slovník osob a institucí*, vol. 2, ed. Gracián Černušák, Bohumír Štědroň, and Zdenko Nováček (Prague: Státní hudební vydavatelství, 1965), 704; Židek, *Čeští houslisté tři století*, 133–134; Matija Bravničar, "Ob dvojnem jubileju prof. Jana Šlaisa," *Jutro*, January 8th, 1943, 3; Stanko Premrl, "Ob dvojnem jubileju profesorja Jana Šlaisa," *Slovenec* 71, no. 5a (January 8th, 1943): 2, <http://www.dlib.si/?URN=URN:NBN:SI:DOC-1B7NF11Q>; Karol Pahor, "Jan Šlais: 80-letnik," *Delo*, April 17th, 1973, 8; Dragotin Cvetko, "Ob 75-letnici Jana Šlaisa," *Delo*, January 23rd, 1968, 5; Karlo Rupel, "Jubilej zaslužnega glasbenega pedagoga," *Delo*, January 26th, 1963, 5.

system. He also initiated a master class for violin and chamber music and established curricula for violin teaching.

He was also very active as a performer. From 1920 until the 1940s, he was regularly playing concerts in Slovenia, mostly accompanied on the piano variously by Ruža Deylová, Janko Ravnik, and Anton Trost (as the Ljubljana Duo). As a performer, he “*virtuosically mastered violin*” and had an “*excellent violin technique*.” A review of one of his concerts stated that he impressed the audience with

such pure intonation, such ideal flageolets, virtuosic precision and at the same time interpretative perfection, which we have not heard for a long time.

His performance was “*energetic and fiery*.”²⁹ He died on June 14th, 1975 in Brno.

Jan Šlais and Ševčík's violin method

In the early twentieth century, Jan Šlais was one of many Prague violinists that greatly influenced violin playing in Europe. They taught successful violinists that became soloists, concertmasters, and teachers at conservatories and other institutions in Europe and the United States. Some of the Prague violinists became founders of national violin schools, such as Ševčík's pupils Franz Stupka in Odessa, Václav Huml in Zagreb, and Jan Šlais in Ljubljana. All followed Ševčík's system of teaching violin.

When Otokar Ševčík was residing in Kiev, he developed an eye disease and decided to devote himself more to violin teaching. Thus it was there that he started to develop his famous violin teaching method and where he also wrote his two fundamental method books: *School of Violin Techniques*, Op. 1 and *School of Bowing Techniques*, Op. 2. After returning to Prague in 1892, despite meeting with skepticism throughout the conservatory, he started to teach his first class of violin pupils using his new violin method. The first generations of Ševčík's students included the above-mentioned Václav Huml, Franz Stupka, Václav Talich, and Šlais's teacher at the conservatory, Štěpán Suchy. The students made such great progress in such a short

29 Orig. “Šlais razpolaga z izborno tehniko. Tako čiste intonacije, tako idealnih flageoletov, virtuosne natančnosti ter obenem interpretacijske dovršenosti že dolgo nismo čuli” and “Šlais virtuosno obvladuje gosli. Njegova igra je energična, ognjevita ...” See Anon., “Koncert Šlais-Deylova-Röthlova,” *Jutro*, January 5th, 1922, 2; N. N., “Koncertna poročila,” *Cerkveni glasbenik* 45, no. 1/2 (1922): 16, <http://www.dlib.si/?URN=URN:NBN:SI:doc-T1oR9VVA>.

time that Ševčík's violin method became the official method of the Prague Conservatory. Numerous foreign violinists came to study at Ševčík's violin master class in Prague, and also at Ševčík's private schools in Prachatice and Písek. Because of their logical and systematic approach, his method books became very popular in Europe and the United States, and Slovenia was no exception. At the beginning of the twentieth century, most music schools in Slovenian territory had begun using Ševčík's violin teaching method books. In a few places this had already begun at the end of the nineteenth century.³⁰ One of the early adopters was Hans Gerstner, who was Ševčík's schoolmate at the conservatory and a longtime friend.³¹ When it was time for Gerstner to send off his best pupil Leo Funtek to a higher level of violin education, he wanted Ševčík to be Funtek's next violin professor.³² His violin method remained so popular that the Slovenian violin methods that first appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century kept Ševčík's *Violinschule für Anfänger*, op. 6, written in the "semitone" system, as their main foundation well into the 1960s.³³

Already during his studies with Štěpán Suchý and later with Ševčík himself, Šlais was trained in Ševčík's violin teaching system right from the start, and he would later pass this on to his Slovenian students. Suchý was a great pedagogue, and he trained numerous violinists, including Jan Rezek and Richard Zika. Both of them were briefly active in Ljubljana. Working side-by-side at the conservatory with his previous teacher Ševčík, Suchý expected that his students would acquire skills by practicing laborious exer-

30 Maruša Zupančič, *Razvoj violinske pedagogike in šolstva na Slovenskem od začetka 19. stoletja do začetka druge svetovne vojne* (Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete, 2013), 66–68.

31 Haupt [...] der Schüler des Conservatorium in Prag, fol. 135–138.

32 Although Gerstner had already made arrangements with Ševčík to take Funtek in his violin class in Prague, Funtek went to study to Leipzig because of better financial conditions for his parents. Funtek then studied in Leipzig with another of Gerstner's classmates, Hans Sitt. See Weiss, *Hans Gerstner: Življenje za glasbo*, 149.

33 Slovenian violin systems that were inspired by Ševčík's work typically simplified it. Moreover, Czech national material was replaced with Slovenian materials and the music was made more practical by adding short melodies that included Ševčík's semitone system. The first Slovenian violin method, titled *Vijolinska šola ali pouk v igranju na gosli* [Violin School or Lessons in Playing the Fiddle], was written in Celje in 1910 by Fran Korun Koželjski (1868–1935). By the 1960s more Slovenian violin schools had followed. Among all the Slovenian authors, only Fran Stanič took his own path. He did not imitate, but rather criticized, the violin method giants from the time of Carl Flesch (1873–1944) and Otakar Ševčík (1852–1934). See Zupančič, *Razvoj violinske pedagogike in šolstva na Slovenskem od začetka 19. stoletja do začetka druge svetovne vojne*, 64, 66–73.

cises, and he would never tolerate anything less than absolute perfection when they performed.³⁴ His best students had “*great technical skill, pure intonation, and noble performance.*”³⁵ Suchý successfully transferred all of these qualities and aspirations to Šlais, who was a diligent student and had the highest scores for violin throughout all six years of study at the conservatory.³⁶

Soon after Šlais completed his studies and began his teaching career in Maribor, there are records of his successful pedagogical approach:

*Šlais had his pupils play pieces that were perfectly in line with their abilities. This is proof of a wise and selfless pedagogical view. Therefore, the impression of his students' playing was perfectly appropriate. Correct performance, precise intonation, clear and strong finger touch and precise bowings that are difficult for a beginner, and rhythmic play have a very pleasant effect on all the students. I consider the performances of both of the Mazas duets the best pedagogical success.*³⁷

After a brief period of teaching in Maribor, Šlais continued with his violin studies in Otakar Ševčík's master class in Prague, where he learned about Ševčík's violin teaching system from the master personally. Ševčík's violin lessons were divided into four parts and daily exercises were a very important part. These consisted of several technical elements, including trills, scales, double stops, bowing exercises, position changes, and so on. Ševčík explained the entire process of practicing very thoroughly to each student, and then continued with teaching etudes, pieces, and concerts.³⁸

With the establishment of the Ljubljana Conservatory in 1919, a new era began: violinists and other musicians no longer had to go to abroad for advanced study. At a crucial time for the development of violin playing in

34 F. James Rybka, *Bohuslav Martinů* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2011), 13.

35 Židek, *Čeští houslisté tři století*, 164–165.

36 Katalogové listy (1909–1920), no. 146, Jan Šlais, 1912/1913, AHMP.

37 Orig. “Šlais je svojim gojencem predložil točke, ki so bile strogo umerjene njihovim zmožnostim. To je dokaz modrega in nesebičnega pedagoškega stališča. Temu popolnoma primeren je bil utisek igre njegovih učencev. Korektna izvajanja, čista intonacija, jasni krepki udarci prstov in natančno začetniku težavno menjanje loka in ritmična igra pri vseh učencih zelo prijetno učinkuje. Izvajanje obeh Mazasovih duov prištevam k najboljšim pedagoškim uspehom.” See Anon., “Glasbena šola,” *Mari-borski delavec*, July 2nd, 1920, 1.

38 See Židek, *Čeští houslisté tři století*, 131; Vladimír Šefl, *Otakar Ševčík: Sborník statí a vzpomínek* (Prague: Státní nakladatelství krásné literatury, hudby a umění, 1953), 76–77.

Slovenia, the enthusiasm and energy of the young Jan Šlais was a true blessing. Very soon, he became

*an invaluable violin teacher, meticulous and precise, yet broad-minded, and his students could not praise his lessons and his method enough.*³⁹

Only six years after Šlais became a teacher at the conservatory, Slavko Osterc wrote that Šlais “drilled” Karlo Rupel to “*a respectful level of violin performance,*” and that he “*envied the success*” of his pupils with their string quartet.⁴⁰

Šlais taught the first generation of Slovenian violinists, who moved on to become teachers at the Ljubljana Conservatory and the Academy of Music in Ljubljana and concertmasters of the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra, the RTV Slovenia Symphony Orchestra (previously the Ljubljana Radio and Television Symphony Orchestra), and the Slovenian National Theatre Opera and Ballet Orchestra. They were also members of the most prominent chamber ensembles, regularly performed as virtuosos with the symphonic orchestras, and were among the first violinists to make radio recordings of Slovenian compositions for the violin.

Jan Šlais and his pupils founded the Ljubljana Quartet (Ljubljanski kvartet), which would remain active with various line-ups for the next fifty years. After the first concert performance by the newly founded quartet,⁴¹ the eminent Czech composer, Alois Hába (1893–1973), foretold a promising career for the ensemble:

*The young musicians amazed with their smooth playing and virtuoso performance, which was musically and expressively deep and dynamically finely differentiated. If they continue working together, they can become a world-class chamber ensemble [...]*⁴²

39 Orig. “G. Jan Šlais je istotako neprecenljiv vijolinski pedagog, vesten in natančen, a vendar širokopotezen in njegovi učenci njegovega pouka njegove metode ne morejo prehvaliti. Dasi temeljite šole, so zelo lepi nastopi njegovih učencev.” See Anon., “Glasbeni vestnik. III. Javna produkcija gojencev konservatorija GM,” *Slovenski narod*, June 28th, 1924, 3.

40 Slavko Osterc, “IV. Konservatorijska produkcija,” *Jutro*, June 27th, 1928, 3; Slavko Osterc, “II. Javna produkcija konzervatoristov,” *Jutro*, April 21st, 1928, 3.

41 The first members of the String Quartet were Leon Pfeifer, Fran Stanič, Vinko Šušteršič, and Oton Bajde.

42 Orig. “Mladi glasbeniki so presenetili s svojo izgajeno soigro in virtuoznim izvajanjem, ki je bilo muzikalno ter izrazno poglobljeno, dinamično pa fino diferencirano. Če

Until the 1940s, Šlais was undoubtedly the most influential violin teacher in Slovenia after Gerstner. Whereas Josef Vedral trained very skilled Slovenian violin amateurs, and Karel Jeraj taught competent violin teachers and café musicians, Šlais put violin playing on a different level, training the high-level orchestral musicians and soloists that in turn markedly influenced the development of symphonic orchestras in Ljubljana, the result of which is still evident today.⁴³

Šlais's violin lessons were carefully crafted and were based on Ševčík's violin lesson model. They were divided into four parts and began with Ševčík's exercises, followed by exercises for finger stretching and mobility written by Ondříček and Mittelmann. The second part was devoted to the technique of the right and left hands, mainly with works by Ševčík and Ondříček. The third part included etudes by Kayser, Mazas, Kreutzer, and Rode. Finally, the last part of the lesson was devoted to violin concertos, sonatas, and various other pieces. Even though Šlais taught very calmly, he nevertheless commanded his students' awe and admiration.⁴⁴

For further violin studies, Šlais directed his best pupils to other Prague violinists. Immediately following his violin studies at the Ljubljana Conservatory, Šlais's first great pupil Karlo Rupel continued with Ševčík at his private master class in Písek between 1928 and 1929. Ševčík described him as a "*very talented and diligent, and could become a first-class violinist.*"⁴⁵ After studying in Písek, Rupel continued with Jacques Thibaud (1880–1953) in Paris, where he studied until 1932. There is no doubt that the Prague violin school gave him good violin technique. Immediately after arriving in Paris, he became concertmaster of the orchestra at the École Normale de Musique de Paris,⁴⁶ and played viola in a string quartet that performed Maurice Ravel's (1875–1937) String Quartet for the composer personally.

bodo še naprej sodelovali, lahko postanejo komorno združenje svetovnega razreda."
See Bravničar, "Ob dvojnem jubileju prof. Jana Šlaisa," 3.

43 Letter of Karlo Rupel to Music Society Ljubljana, Paris, February 8th, 1932, fol. 2, Si-Lng.

44 Personal communication with one of Šlais's last pupils, Marko Sever (1920), on June 10th, 2007 in Ljubljana. He is the grandfather of Slovenian pianist Jan Sever and violinist Matjaž Porovne (1983), and lives in Ljubljana.

45 Otakar Ševčík's recommendation letter for Karlo Rupel, Písek, May 24th, 1929. Personal folder of Karlo Rupel, Music Society Ljubljana, Si-Lng.

46 The source of this information was my violin teacher, Rupel's pupil Mirko Petrač. Personal communication with Mirko Petrač was in Celje in 2005.

One of the laureates of the first Henryk Wieniawski Violin competition, Ljerko Spiller (1908–2008), who played with Rupel in the quartet, said that he “*played viola beautifully*.”⁴⁷

In 1933, Leon Pfeifer was another of Šlais’s pupils that traveled to Písek to learn from the great master. Sadly, Pfeifer very soon realized that the Ševčík’s best days were already behind him. Ševčík was weak and in poor health, and Pfeifer was almost the only pupil there. After ten days of studying with Ševčík, Pfeifer traveled to Prague to study with one of Ševčík’s best pupils and his successor at the conservatory: Jaroslav Kocian (1883–1950). He was a very popular violinist at the time, therefore there was no place for Pfeifer in his master class at the conservatory. Pfeifer began to study with Kocian privately, and later continued at the conservatory, where he completed his studies with the highest score on June 22nd, in 1935. Pfeifer’s violin playing was described at the Prague Conservatory as a “*great deal of musicality, rhythmic energy, melodious and with a passionate tone, full of color and with perfect technique*.”⁴⁸

Jelka Stanič was one of the last of Šlais’s successful Slovenian pupils, and she studied with him for ten years. After violin beginnings with her father, Šlais’s pupil Fran Stanič, and then with Šlais, she furthered her studies with Váša Příhoda in Salzburg, and privately with another Prague violinist, Václav Huml, in Zagreb. In the 1950s, she attended violin courses with another of Ševčík’s pupils, Ernst Morawec (1874–1981), and later with Henryk Szeryng in Paris, and in Nizza. It must be noted that Szeryng’s teacher Carl Flesch (1873–1944) was a great admirer of Ševčík’s method, and signed himself in their correspondence as “*your unofficial pupil*.”⁴⁹ He made Szeryng study of all Ševčík’s method books.

Šlais’s success as a violin teacher is also attested to by another pupil: Vida Jeraj (later Vida Jeraj-Hribar; 1902–2002). As a daughter of the successful Viennese violinist of Slovenian descent, Karel Jeraj (1874–1951), and the well-known Slovenian poet Vida Jeraj (Franica Vovk; 1875–1932), she received a quality music education in Vienna, where she studied violin at the conservatory with Julius Egghard, Jr. (1858–1935). After her fam-

47 The source of this information was Rok Klopčič, who spoke with Ljerko Spiller personally at the Václav Huml competition in Zagreb. The personal communication with Rok Klopčič was in Ljubljana in 2006.

48 Jaroslav Kocian, “Posudek o zvláštní způsobilosti posluchačově (Leon Pfeifer),” AHMP.

49 Šefl, *Otakar Ševčík: Sborník statí a vzpomínek*, 47.

ily moved to Ljubljana in 1919, she briefly continued with her violin studies in Richard Zika's class, then with the "excellent pedagogue" Jan Šlais, who offered her "real violin study"⁵⁰ and who was a witness at her wedding ten years later.⁵¹ She completed her studies at the Ljubljana Conservatory in 1925, performing Tor Aulin's Violin Concerto, which had also been Jan Šlais's final performance concerto at the Prague Conservatory. Unlike most of Šlais's pupils, Vida Jeraj decided to continue her violin studies in Paris, where she caught the attention of the famous violinist and friend of her father, George Enescu (1881–1955), to whom she played the Aulin Violin Concerto that she had studied with Šlais. Enescu wrote her a recommendation letter for two of the greatest violinists of the twentieth century: Eugène Ysaÿe (1858–1931), and Lucien Capet (1873–1928). Because she received a French scholarship, she chose the latter, with whom she studied until 1927.

We now turn to Zagreb, where several of Šlais's pupils continued their violin studies with Václav Huml (1880–1953). He was another of Ševčík's pupils and is today considered the founder of the Zagreb violin school. He would become the most influential Prague violin pedagogue in Yugoslavia at the beginning of the twentieth century. Among Šlais's Slovenian violin students that continued privately with Huml in Zagreb were: Karlo Rupel, Jelka Stanič, Ali Dermelj, and Francka Ornik. Many of Huml's pupils made successful international careers in the United States, London, Prague, Paris, Buenos Aires, Budapest, Johannesburg, Vienna, Geneva, Montevideo, Sidney, Munich, Hamburg, and Saarbrücken. These included, for example, three concertmasters in Vienna and teachers at eminent music institutions such as the Guildhall School of Music in London, the College of Music in Southampton, and the École Normale de Musique in Paris. Huml's pupils taught at the music academies in Zagreb, Belgrade, Ljubljana, and Sarajevo. Also, most of the concertmasters of the orchestras in the region were Huml's pupils. His success as a violin teacher is testified to by the words of the famous violin pedagogue Carl Flesch, who said to Huml's pupil Ljerko Spiller (1908–2008)⁵² after his concert in Berlin:

50 Vida Jeraj Hribar, *Večerna sonata* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1992), 59.

51 Anon., "Dnevne vesti," *Slovenski narod*, January 4th, 1930, 4.

52 Ljerko Spiller was born on July 22nd, 1908 in Crikvenica to a Croatian Jewish family. After the First World War, Spiller moved to Zagreb and became a pupil of Václav Huml. With the outbreak of the Second World War, he left Europe and escaped to Buenos Aires, where he made a successful career in music.

*I do not know your teacher, but I can assure you that you can count violin professors from around the world that teach like your master on the fingers of one hand.*⁵³

Huml followed the Ševčík violin teaching system and sent some of his best students to the master as well. In addition to Ljubljana and Zagreb, Ševčík's violin teaching system also reached Belgrade, where resided another promoter of Ševčík's violin method and alumnus of the Prague Conservatory: Karel Holub (1893–1974). He was active in Belgrade between 1919 and 1937 as the concertmaster of the Opera Orchestra and co-founder of both the Philharmonic Orchestra and the Czech Trio. From 1923, he was a professor at the Ljubljana Conservatory, where he trained many successful violinists.⁵⁴ Thus it can be seen that three Czechs, all of whom promoted Ševčík (Šlais, Huml, and Holub) characterized the development of violin playing in three regional capitals: Ljubljana, Zagreb, and Belgrade. They trained new generations of violinists that later continued with their violin tradition.

Šlais's violin legacy in Slovenia

The majority of Slovenian violinists today are "violin descendants" of Jan Šlais, who crucially influenced the development of violin playing in Slovenia over the past hundred years. Šlais's first significant pupil was Karlo Rupel, who became the most recognized Slovenian soloist of his time and gave concerts around the world. He was also a member of the Rupel–Leskovic–Lipovšek Piano Trio and founded several chamber ensembles, including the Slovenian Soloists (*Slovenski solisti*). From 1933 he taught at the Ljubljana Conservatory, and from 1939 at the Academy of Music in Ljubljana.⁵⁵

53 Ljerko Spiller, "Sjećanja na mog nezaboravnog učitelja profesora Václava Humla," in *Memorial Václava Humla*, ed. Zlatko Stahuljak (Zagreb: Hrvatski glazbeni zavod, 1973).

54 Bohumír Štědroň, "Holub, Karel," in *Česko slovenský hudební slovník osob a institucí*, vol. 1, ed. Gracián Černušák, Bohumír Štědroň, and Zdenko Nováček (Prague: Státní hudební vydavatelství, 1963), 460.

55 Rafael Ajlec, "Rupel, Karlo," in *Slovenski biografski leksikon*, vol. 3, ed. Alfonz Gspan (Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umernosti, 1960–1971), 165–166; Dragotin Cvetko, "Rupel, Karlo," in *Muzička enciklopedija*, vol. 3, ed. Krešimir Kovačević (Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod, 1977), 246; Pavel Šivic, "Umrli Karlo Rupel," *Delo*, September 18th, 1968, 5; Rafael Ajlec, "Ob smrti violinist Karla Rupla," Radio Show (Radio Slovenia, Program 1); Personal folder of Karlo Rupel (SI–Lng); Rok Klopčič, "Karlo Rupel," *Koncertni listi Slovenske filharmonije* 1 (1970–1971), 8–10.

His most recognized pupils were Ciril Veronek (1923–2000),⁵⁶ Mirko Petrač (1935–2016),⁵⁷ and Dejan Bravničar (1937–2018). They passed his knowledge on to younger generations, and later significantly contributed to different levels of violin education. Soon after completing his studies with Rupel, Veronek became concertmaster of the Radio Orchestra in Ljubljana (today the RTV Slovenia Symphony Orchestra), and later on he was also a successful violin pedagogue at the Ljubljana Conservatory. His pupils include some of the best Slovenian violinists, namely Primož Novšak (1945), Mile Kosi (1944–2014), Črtomir Šiškovič (1956), Monika Skalar (1958), Miran Kolbl (1958), and Miha Pogačnik (1949).

Another of Rupel's pupils, Mirko Petrač, trained several generations of successful violinists in Maribor.⁵⁸ After completing his studies, he began his career as a member of the Radio Orchestra in Ljubljana, and later held a long tenure as concertmaster of the Slovenian National Theater Orchestra in Maribor. At the Maribor Conservatory, and later in Celje, he trained numerous successful violinists.

The most successful of Rupel's pupils was Dejan Bravničar (1937–1918). His first teacher was Fran Stanič, who was also a pupil of Jan Šlais. He then moved on to study at the Academy of Music in Ljubljana under Karlo Rupel, from 1952 to 1957. On top of his own talent and discipline, he surely must have obtained sufficient violin skills and knowledge from both of Šlais's pupils to later be accepted to the violin class of the famous violin-

56 Ciril Veronek was born on July 5th, 1923 in Maribor. His violin teacher there was Taras Poljanec, then he continued with Karlo Rupel at the Academy of Music in Ljubljana, where he completed his studies in 1954. He was concertmaster of the Radio Symphony Orchestra in Ljubljana, and a member the Slovenian Soloists. From 1960 he taught at the Ljubljana Conservatory. He died on November 2nd, 2000 in Ljubljana. See Tomaž Buh, "Ciril Veronek 1923–2000," *Delo*, November 14th, 2000; Katarina Bedina, "Veronek, Ciril," *Slovenska biografija* (Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, Znanstvenoraziskovalni center SAZU, 2013), <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi776079/>.

57 Mirko Petrač was born on May 8th, 1935 in Ravne na Koroškem. He studied violin at the Ljubljana Conservatory with Francka Ornik, later with Karlo Rupel at the Academy of Music in Ljubljana. He died on December 10th, 2016 in Ljubljana. Personal communication with him in Celje in 2005; Personal correspondence with his son, the pianist Tomaž Petrač, September 17th, 2019.

58 His most important pupils were: Bojan Cvetrežnik (1971), Brina Nataša Zupančič (1977), Božena Angelova (1981), Danica Koren, Zmago Barin Turica, Rado Štehar, Zorica Todorovič, Andrej Božič, Vesna Čobal, Jelka Glavnik, Božo Petrač, Vlado Repše, Matjaž Žižek, and many others.

ist David Oistrakh (1908–1974)⁵⁹ at the Tchaikovsky Music Conservatory in Moscow, where he studied between 1957 and 1960. From 1967, he trained more than one hundred violinists, some of whom are still today members of the Slovenian symphonic orchestras and violin teachers at several music institutions.

Whereas Rupel was mostly active as a soloist and a chamber musician, another Šlais pupil, Leon Pfeifer, devoted his musical career mostly to teaching.⁶⁰ For fifteen long years, his pupil was Igor Ozim (1931), who began with his violin lessons at the age of five, and later became a world-renowned violin pedagogue. In 1951, he won the Carl Flesch Competition, and in 1953 the ARD competition. He has performed with important international orchestras, made many recordings, and been a jury member at many important violin competitions, such as the Henryk Wieniawski contest in Poznań. As one of the most sought-after violin teachers in the world, he has taught many recognized violinists, including the Slovenian violinist Vladimir Škerlak, who was briefly concertmaster of the RTV Slovenia Symphony Orchestra. Four of Ozim's Slovenian pupils are professors at the Academy of Music in Ljubljana today, namely Primož Novšak, Volodja Balžalorsky, Monika Skalar, and Gorjan Košuta. Another of his Slovenian pupils was Miran Kolbl, the current concertmaster of the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra. Ozim remembered his longtime teacher Leon Pfeifer with following words:

*At the beginning I practiced the exercises that he wrote into my music notebook, and probably for that reason I made fast progress. His lessons through all those years were very meticulous and precise. He taught left-hand technique very well, and paid attention to the rhythm and intonation as well. The interpretations were in the style of the time, very free and romantic, and were mostly based on the Prague tradition. . . . I have the nicest memories of him and I think about him with gratitude.*⁶¹

59 During the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Prague violin school also reached the Russian empire. Among the pupils of Prague violinist Josef Karbulka was also Oistrakh's violin teacher Pyotr Stolyarsky.

60 Miran Satter, "Znanec iz sosednje ulice: Leon Pfeifer," *Ljubljanski dnevnik*, November 12th, 1967, 3.

61 Personal correspondence with Igor Ozim on May 5th, 2007.

Apart from Ozim, Pfeifer trained several other important Slovenian violinists, namely Ivan Pal (Ivan Pall; 1923–2014), Slavko Zimšek (1928–2014), Rok Klopčič (1933–2010), Sabina Skalar (1934), Vladimir Škerlak (1940–2000), Karel Žužek (1943), Olga Skalar Littmann (1942), Tomaž Lorenz (1944–2016), and Vera Belič (Verica Belič; 1954). Three of these later became concertmasters of the RTV Slovenia Symphony Orchestra and professors at the Academy of Music in Ljubljana, including Rok Klopčič, who was also active as a soloist and an editor of violin pieces in Slovenia and abroad. Pfeifer's pupil Vera Belič has been the assistant concertmaster of the Ljubljana Philharmonic Orchestra since 1982.

Whereas Rupel's pupil Bravničar studied with David Oistrakh, Pfeifer's pupil, Vladimir Škerlak, perfected his studies in Moscow with another violin giant of the time, Leonid Kogan (1924–1982). In 1966, Škerlak won the violin competition in Sienna. Later, he decided to devote his life primarily to medicine and worked as a medical doctor in Basel, but he still gave regular concerts. Another pair of Pfeifer's pupils that achieved international success were the sisters Sabina Skalar and Olga Skalar Littmann. Tomaž Lorenz achieved success as a soloist and chamber musician, but even more so as a member of the renowned Lorenz Trio. In various ensembles, he gave more than one hundred first performances of Slovenian compositions. Apart from performing, he was a teacher at the Ljubljana Conservatory, and later at the Academy of Music in Ljubljana, where he shared his enthusiasm for chamber music with numerous generations of young musicians.⁶² Pfeifer's pupils contributed to many levels of violin education overall, not just at the most senior levels. For example, Ivan Pal made important contributions to mid-level education. After completing his studies in 1954 he taught violin for thirty-four years at the Maribor Conservatory, where he also taught viola. During his studies, he was a member of the Opera Orchestra in Maribor and of the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra. He also played in a piano trio with Roman Klasinc and Oton Bajde.⁶³ During his

62 Personal communication with Tomaž Lorenz in Ljubljana in 2005; Jerko Novak, "In Memoriam: Tomaž Lorenz (1944–2016)," *Dnevnik*, February 16th, 2016; Volodja Balžalorsky, "Tomaž Lorenz (1944–2016). Nekrolog," *Delo*, February 19th, 2016.

63 Ivan Pal was born on April 21st, 1923 in Oplotnica. He studied violin in Maribor with Taras Poljanec, then with Leon Pfeifer at the Academy of Music until 1954. He was a member of several Slovenian Symphony Orchestras. At the Maribor Conservatory he taught violin and viola, and led the school's symphony and string orchestras until his retirement in 1988. He died on July 23rd, 2014 in Maribor. See Personal communication with Ivan Pal on September 25th, 2010 in Maribor; Majda Jecelj, "Ivan Pal (21.4.1923–23.7.2014)," *Večer*, August 5th, 2014.

long career as a violin teacher he trained numerous successful violinists, among them four future concertmasters of Slovenian orchestras.⁶⁴

Another of Šlais's pupils was a violinist described as having "*the best tone of all Slovenian violinists*," Albert Dermelj.⁶⁵ He finished his violin studies with Jan Šlais in 1936 and continued at the Academy of Music in Zagreb with Václav Huml. After his studies, he became concertmaster of the Operetta Orchestra of the National Theater in Zagreb, and then for thirty years served as the concertmaster of the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra in Ljubljana. He performed in over 210 solo concerts and over 215 chamber concerts. He later admitted that he was able to stay active for so long thanks to Huml, who had given him much encouragement. Still, he did not want to teach with as firm a hand as Huml. His pupils became orchestra members all over Yugoslavia, concertmasters, chamber musicians, and pedagogues. They included Alenka Maier Popov, longtime assistant concertmaster of the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra. Dermelj also wrote curricula for viola, and trained two of the best Slovenian violists, Mile Kosi and Frenk Avsenek (1946). From 1965, Kosi was a soloist and the principal violist of the RTV Slovenia Symphony Orchestra. He was succeeded by Avsenek in 1980.⁶⁶

In contrast to pupils that had ambitions of becoming virtuosos, Šlais also had students with other ambitions, and one of whom was Uroš Prevoršek. Apart from violin, he also studied composition (Slavko Osterc) and conducting (Lucijan Marija Škerjanc) at the Ljubljana Conservatory, and furthered his violin studies with Alberto Poltronieri (1892–1983). Between 1941 and 1945 he was the concertmaster of the Radio Orchestra in Belgrade, thereafter returning to his homeland. Until 1981 he taught music theory and chamber music and led the orchestra of the Academy of Music in Ljubljana. He was also the first chief conductor of the RTV Slovenia Symphony Orchestra between 1955 and 1965, published extensive music criticism, and composed several violin pieces.

An early member of the Ljubljana Quartet was Fran Stanič, another of Šlais's pupils. Later he would make important contributions to the entry levels of musical education. For many years he was a violin teacher at the

64 Among his pupils were: Miran Kolbl, Vita Gregorc, Petra Arlati, Karel Žužek, Emil Kopše, Marina Kopše, and many others.

65 Personal communication with Rok Klopčič in Ljubljana in 2006.

66 Miran Satter, "Znanec iz sosednje ulice: Ali Dermelj," *Dnevnik*, December 8th, 1986, 5; Janko Grilc, "Albert Dermelj," in *Muzička enciklopedija*, vol. 1, ed. Krešimir Kovačević (Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod, 1971), 435.

Music Society in Ljubljana, and later at the Ljubljana Conservatory. He was a member of the Slovenian National Theater Orchestra and the Ljubljana Quartet. He wrote several violin method books, and believed that the ideal time to start learning an instrument is the preschool period. His influence meant that the average age of pupils in music schools was gradually lowered, which improved their success. He taught two of the best Slovenian violinists of the time during their childhood years: Dejan Bravničar and his own daughter, Jelka Stanič.⁶⁷ She became a successful concert violinist and gave concerts around the world. She was concertmaster of the Opera Orchestra in Ljubljana, from 1957 a member of the Zagreb Soloists (*Zagrebački solisti*), and later an orchestra member of the Radio-Saarland Orchestra in Saarbrücken, where she died in 2011.⁶⁸

Even though Šlais was the most important violin pedagogue during his time in Slovenia, he was not the only one. At the establishment of the Ljubljana Conservatory in 1919, one of its first violin teachers there was Karel Jeraj. He was already a renowned violinist and previous concertmaster of the Court Opera Orchestra in Vienna, where he was born to a Slovenian father from Smlednik and a Czech mother. With enthusiasm and idealism, he left Vienna and moved to his fatherland to help with building a new Slovenian musical milieu. One of his first violin pupils at the Ljubljana Conservatory was Taras Anton Poljanec (1908–1964), who studied with Jeraj between 1919 and 1926. After completing his studies at the Prague Conservatory with Rudolf Reissig (1874–1939), he taught violin, viola, chamber music, and orchestral music at the Music Society in Maribor. After 1945 he taught at the Maribor Conservatory and was the violinist of the Maribor Trio (*Mariborski trio*; Poljanec–Klasinc–Bajde). His best pupils were the above-mentioned Ciril Veronek and Ivan Pal.⁶⁹

During the same period the violinist Fanika Brandl had a private music school in Maribor. She began her violin studies with Alfred Kletmann (1884–1931), who was a pupil of Otakar Ševčík, and Joseph Joachim

67 Martin Jevnikar, "Stanič, Fran," in *Primorski slovenski biografski leksikon*, vol. 14, ed. Martin Jevnikar (Gorizia: Goriška Mohorjeva družba, 1988), 442.

68 Rafael Ajlec, "Stanič, Jelka," in *Slovenski biografski leksikon*, vol. 3, ed. Alfonz Gspan (Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, 1960–1971), 438; Personal communication with Tomaž Faganel in Ljubljana in 2011. He told me the year of Jelka Stanič's death.

69 Personal communication with his son Taras Poljanec, Jr. on August 6th, 2011 in Maribor; Death certificate (Maribor Administrative Unit/Upravna enota Maribor); Drago Hrovatin, "Taras Poljanec," in *Slovenski biografski leksikon*, vol. 2, ed. France Kidrič (Ljubljana: Zadružna gospodarska banka, 1933–1952), 437.

(1831–1907). Then she furthered her studies with Václav Huml in Zagreb and with Arnold Rosé (1863–1946) in Vienna. Later, she made her name mostly as a chamber musician with the Brandl Trio and the Maribor Trio (Brandl–Klasinc–Bajde).⁷⁰

Another of Huml's private pupils and a violin teacher during the same period was Ivan Karlo Sancin (1893–1974). From 1919, he was a violinist of the Opera Orchestra, and a violin teacher at the Ljubljana Conservatory (Music School) until 1922. One year later, he moved to Celje, where he was a violin teacher and a headmaster of the Music Society School until 1941. Between 1941 and 1945, he moved to Ljubljana to become a member of the Opera Orchestra and a teacher at the Music Society School. After the war he returned to Trieste and was active in various positions.⁷¹ Apart from Karlo Rupel and Rok Klopčič, he was also a teacher of the child prodigy Miran Viher (1919–2002) in Celje. Viher later furthered his studies with three Prague violinists: Otakar Ševčík, Václav Huml, and Váša Příhoda, and he studied composition with Franjo Dugan. Due to political reasons, he left his homeland and became acclaimed as concertmaster of the Bavarian Philharmonic Orchestra in Munich in the early 1950s. In 1956, he emigrated to the United States, where he was a member of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, then the Princeton Chamber Orchestra, and finally the Opera Theater of Saint Louis. He also taught at Webster University and privately.⁷²

It is worth mentioning another Trieste-based violinist, Fran Gulič (Franco Gulli, Sr.; 1901–1973), whose father was a police inspector from

70 Anon., "Mlada skladateljica," *Slovenski ilustrirani tednik*, May 5th, 1911, 3–4; Anon., "99 let Nade Jevdjenjevič Vorkapič," *Večer*, July 18th, 1998, 14; Anon., "Violinska virtuoziinja Fanika Brandl," *Slovenec* 54, no. 273 (November 28th, 1926), 3, <http://www.dlib.si/?URN=URN:NBN:SI:doc-WRCRJR9F>; Anon., "Sto let ugledne violinistke," *Dnevnik*, July 17th, 1999, 111; Manica Špendal, "Sto let violinistke Nade Jevdjenjevič Brandl," *Večer*, July 17th, 1999, 18; Mira Mracsek, "Nada Jevdjenjevič-Brandlova – petinosemdesetletnica," *Večer*, July 20th, 1984, 6.

71 Martin Jevnikar, "Sancin, Karlo Ivan," in *Primorski slovenski biografski leksikon*, vol. 13, ed. Martin Jevnikar (Gorizia: Goriška Mohorjeva družba, 1987), 186–187; Jože Koren, "Glasbenik prof. Karlo Sancin – osemdesetletnik," *Primorski dnevnik*, November 4th, 1973, 5; Jože Koren, "Umrli je glasbenik prof. Karlo Sancin," *Primorski dnevnik*, January 5th, 1975, 2.

72 Patricia Rice, "Personal Notes by Composers on Their Works," *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, January 17th, 1984, 30; James Wierzbicki, "In Viher's 'Fantasy,' the whole is less than the sum of the parts," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 1984; Newspapers articles from the legacy of Marjan Lipovšek (SI–Lng) without complete data (John Philips, "Local Composers, Foghorns at Powell Hall"; Richard Freed, "Miran Viher: Concerto for Violin and Orchestra"; Gayle R. McIntoch, "Miran Viher," *Orchestra News and Notes* 51).

Koper. After his first violin studies with Arturo Vram, who had brought Ševčík's violin method to Trieste, Gulič furthered his studies at the Prague Conservatory with Jan Mařák, and later with Otakar Ševčík himself. During his long career, he first taught violin at the Slovenian Music Society in Trieste, where he may have taught the young Karlo Rupel. In 1924, Gulič founded the private music school *L'Autorizzata Scuola di Musica*, which was later renamed *Accademia musicale triestina*. His best pupil by far was his own son Franco Gulli (1926–2001), who became a world-famous violinist that also taught Slovenian violinists such as Volodja Balžalorsky and Črtomir Šiškovič. Gulli studied with his father for sixteen years (1931–1947), and once said that all his further violin pedagogues were good, but he never again found a teacher like his father.⁷³

Conclusion

Jan Šlais (1893–1975) was one of the last in a long line of Prague violinists that were active in Slovenia over the course of the twentieth century. He trained the first generation of schooled Slovenian violinists and in this way can be seen as the culmination of an influx of violinists from Bohemia that contributed to the development of violin playing in this region for over one hundred fifty years. The earliest musicians from Bohemia appeared in Ljubljana in the 1720s and the first Bohemian violinists in the 1790s. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Bohemian musicians responded to competitions in newspapers across Austria-Hungary and won appointments as music teachers in cultural centers such as Ljubljana, initially at the Public Music School. They were broadly educated musicians, able to teach theory, singing, and various instruments, and as such they had not narrowly specialized in violin virtuosity.

After the establishment of the Prague Conservatory in 1811, the most important violinists from Bohemia came out of that institute: they were the Prague violinists that appeared in Ljubljana only in the 1870s. One of these was Hans Gerstner, who trained the internationally recognized violinist Leo Funtek. Gerstner was a brilliant and successful violin teacher, and taught his pupils a very challenging violin repertoire, for example the Beethoven Violin Concerto. But the conditions were not yet right for him

73 Personal communication with Gulli's daughter, Giulliana Gulli, on July 19th, 2008 in Trieste; Giuseppe Radole, *Le scuole musicali a Trieste e il conservatorio 'Giuseppe Tartini'* (Trieste: Edizione Italo Svevo, 1992), 84.

to train them as professional violinists and his students still had to perfect their violin studies abroad.

Fifty years later, young Jan Šlais was more fortunate in this sense when he was appointed as a violin teacher at the newly-founded Ljubljana Conservatory. During his twenty-five years of teaching in Ljubljana, he profoundly influenced the development of violin playing for the next hundred years, and the majority of today's Slovenian violinists can be considered his "violin descendants." He was also one of the most important promoters of Ševčik's violin system in Ljubljana. It would remain a leading teaching system in schools throughout the twentieth century and it is still today part of violin curricula. Šlais influenced not only violin playing but also viola playing, not only in Ljubljana but all over Slovenia. His pupils would go on to train the next generation of successful violinists and violists, skilled musicians that would take on leading positions in Slovenian symphony orchestras, music schools, conservatories, and academies, and were active as soloists and chamber musicians. His contributions were widespread, and they influenced the development of the Slovenian symphony orchestras that are active today.

When another Prague violinist, Václav Talich, founded the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra in 1908, most of its musicians were Czechs: they were the best orchestra players available at that time, for lack of local competence. However, by the time of the establishment of the Ljubljana Philharmonic Orchestra in 1934, and its re-establishment in 1947 (as the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra), the members were already Šlais's local pupils, and also their pupils. The same was true of the chamber ensembles, whose members were Šlais's pupils as well.

Even though Ševčik's violin system gradually declined in popularity, and individual teachings styles began to blend, Šlais was in Ljubljana at a crucial time and laid quality foundations of violin training for the next generations of violinists in Slovenia. In the last hundred years, thousands of Slovenian violinists have been trained on those foundations. Some of them have become world-famous and sought-after violin teachers that are now sharing their knowledge, and thus Šlais's legacy, at home and abroad.

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