

## **Pub in the Glade**

*Before viewing Cimrman's operatic chef-d'oeuvre performed*

*by the Jára Cimrman Theater*

*the viewer will be introduced to the problematics of the work with the following lectures*

On the Operatic works of Jára Cimrman

Artistic Larceny

Cimrman's Method of Musical Notation

### ON THE OPERATIC WORKS OF JARA CIMRMAN

*Professor Pavel Vondruška:*

Dear friends, good evening.

The content of today's seminar may be expressed by the words, "On the operatic works of Jára Cimrman." We consider it necessary to introduce you to the problematics of this genre of Cimrman's before presenting the work itself, *Pub in the Glade*. Years ago when I acquainted myself with the content of the trunk in which the legacy of Jára Cimrman had been stored, and when a circle of enthusiasts and I decided to devote our lives to the Master's genius, neither I nor my colleagues suspected that within the framework of our scholarly profession, it would be necessary to sing publicly. However, I undertook this task gladly despite the protests of my family. I said to myself, after all, it's not a matter of the singing, but rather a matter of creating a genuine picture of Cimrman's work, a substantial portion of which is operatic. And so, my friends, whenever you hear one of us singing this evening, keep in mind: it's not a matter of the singing.

Cimrman's road to the genre of the operetta was not an easy one. As with everything else he did, here too he sought absolute perfection. For instance, the problem of rhyme bothered Cimrman the librettist most of all. Rhymes such as "beauty-duty," "carry-fairy," "luck-duck," which seem perfect to us, Cimrman considered mere half rhymes. In his opinion, the listener was entitled to absolute consonance. This theoretical consideration led Cimrman to propose his theory of absolute rhyme, the basis of which is the theory that perfect rhyme can be created only by the repetition of one and the same word. Let us look at an example from his operetta, *The Coal Burner of Janovice*, specifically, the aria by the coal burner Jan:

I once loved a maiden so fair,  
Her eyes were extremely fair.  
Her hair was as yellow as flax,  
In the field she sat spinning flax.

Our lovely old clock  
Strikes four o'clock.

Scarce had I begun to speak  
When she bade me speak  
And ask her parents for her hand,  
As I sat holding her hand.

Our lovely old clock  
Strikes four o'clock.

And thus we decided to wed  
And soon we wed.  
Now we live on a farm,

And her parents live on a farm.

And of course the refrain:

Our lovely old clock  
Strikes four o'clock.

As you can tell, the verses sound quite melodious. But the discriminating listener cannot help but sense that this absolute rhyme was achieved at the expense of the verse's content. Cimrman, therefore, sought a way to preserve the absolute rhyme without limiting the ideational construct of the verse. He achieved this by introducing the so-called acoustic constant. The principle consisted in concluding each line of verse with an identical and extremely melodious group of syllables, which, however, made no semantic sense in the given language. Cimrman's absolute constants were warmly received in his day, which is born out by the fact that Cimrman's ballad of the procuress from Frýdland is still popular in northern Bohemia. The procuress traveled throughout the surrounding villages purchasing poor, young girls for her disreputable enterprise. I'm sure you all know this ballad, so I'll recite only part of it:

Here comes the madam from Frýdland, deeya, deeja, da  
What does the madam from Frýdland wish, deeya, deeja, da?  
It is a daughter that I wish, deeya, deeja, da  
Which one shall it be, deeya, deeja, da  
It shall be Růžena, deeya, deeja, da  
But we will not give her to you, deeya, deeja, da  
Then we'll take her from you, deeya, deeja, da

Of the other constants, we will mention only the most successful. For example, of the domestic absolute constants we have: "bach bach jukharay," which is still popular in

Klatovsko, and from the area of Říp we have “kaabrt.” From abroad we must mention at least “yoy,” from Košice, the alpine “hoy-dala-ridy,” and the constant that has penetrated all the way across the ocean, “ya, ya, yupy yupy ya.” Finally, in far away Iraq, we find an acoustic constant that has become the rallying cry for children abandoned by their fathers, who are searching for their deadbeat dads: “Bag-dad, Bag-dad.”

## ARTISTIC LARCENY

*Dr. Jan Hraběta:*

Ladies and gentlemen,

Cimrman’s operetta *Millet* arose from an extraordinarily powerful experience. One September day in 1895, Jára Cimrman was invited by his friend Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin to join him for a sightseeing flight in his new interceptor dirigible, Karel. The two aeronauts started out from Stuttgart bound for Brussels. Due to a strong headwind, however, they soon left Stuttgart far ahead of them, and after a seven-hour flight landed near Warsaw.

In a skilful landing maneuver, Count von Zeppelin avoided a forest and set the airship down on a freshly mown field, which perforated the casing of the dirigible in several places. Fortunately for us—I stress the word *fortunately*—Cimrman sprained his ankle while disembarking and therefore could not assist his friend in repairing the airship, which upon deflation covered the entire area of a two-hectare square thistle patch. Cimrman took advantage of this unavoidable respite to compose his seven-hour operatic monument, *Millet*.

When Count von Zeppelin had completed repairs to the airship, he filled it with gas, and the two aeronauts sailed back upon a favorable tailwind. They touched down in Vienna where Cimrman entered his new work in an international competition to honor the inauguration of the giant Ferris wheel in Prater. Soon thereafter, he set out for a

philosophical congress in Basel. Cimrman forgot about the whole thing and never laid another hand upon his pivotal work. Others, however, did.

The following gentlemen sat on the jury of the Vienna opera competition: Frantisek Lehár, Johann Strauss, Oskar Nedbal, Adolf Piskáček—the older brother of the celebrated Rudolf Piskáček—and the Hungarian estate owner and music philanthropist Béla Kálmán, father of the composer Imre Kálmán. These gentlemen undoubtedly assumed the competition would be a cakewalk for them in which they would all praise each other's works and divide the prizes among themselves, as usually happens in such cases.

The package that appeared on the table in front of them one rainy morning had the effect of a stick of dynamite. An eyewitness, the singing coach Josef Tesárek from České Velenice, described the scene:

Johann Strauss, then seventy-one years of age, paced nervously about the room. The farmer Kálmán was chewing on his nails and every few moments repeated darkly in Hungarian, “*Erömi.*”

We looked in a dictionary and found that the word means “power station.” It is unclear why he said precisely that.

All of a sudden Mr. Lehár opened the window and cried out quickly twice in succession: “*That devil! That devil!*” Nedbal wanted to tear up the unfinished overture to his own opera *The Grape Harvest*, but his hands were shaking so badly he couldn't do it. The Czech Adolf Piskáček suddenly jumped from his chair, picked up the paper the parcel had been wrapped in, carefully inspected both sides, and then victoriously tossed it onto the table. A moment of uncomprehending silence. Only then did everyone breathe a sigh of relief: the parcel had not been sent by certified mail!”

Thus ends the account of singing coach Josef Tesárek from České Velenice.

Before I acquaint you with the fateful consequences of this seeming triviality, allow me to digress for a moment and discuss a certain character flaw of Jára Cimrman's, which pertains to this matter. The shortcomings of important figures are generally concealed from us by historians. I don't know about you, but I, for example, never learned in school—among other things—that the historian František Palacký, an otherwise valiant man, was afraid of dentists. Or that all Alois Jirásek's work written while he was a teacher in Litomyšl were written using office—and thus stolen—ink. And what a lot of ink it was!

We Cimrmanologists do not wish to conceal anything. For example, not long ago we revealed that Jára Cimrman had a rather weak memory. His memory quotient amounted to 0.03. Which isn't very much! That's just one hundredth of a percent higher than that of a dolphin!

Likewise we do not wish to conceal—and now I return to our subject—that Cimrman possessed one small character flaw. He was an extreme tightwad. Unbelievably so! On the one hand, he would spend 120 zlotys plus 17 of his own railroad ties on the construction of a railroad from Wrocław to Poznań. On the other hand, when he had to send a letter to his mother from abroad, he stayed up entire nights inventing ways to deceive the postal service. He went so far as to fill his envelopes with hydrogen so he wouldn't have to pay the full weight. He ceased this activity when he discovered his mother wasn't receiving his letters. Probably because they went up in flames when they were vigorously stamped at the post office.

Well, anyone familiar with this characteristic of Cimrman's will not be surprised to learn that he was capable of mailing a parcel as important as his operetta *Millet* unregistered. We experts are amazed the parcel was stamped at all.

So when the gentlemen on the jury discovered they could deny ever having received the package, they lost their last remnants of shame. The room erupted in chaos. "Who is the oldest here? Who is the oldest here?" shouted the seventy-one-year-old Strauss, as he thumped his passport on the table. The singing coach Josef Tesárek from

České Velenice understood at once that he had become witness to a historical event and, hidden behind the wing of a grand piano, recorded the entire scene word for word. Here is a brief passage from his transcript:

Nedbal: “Gentlemen, let’s be reasonable! There’s enough here for everybody. “Give me *Gentle Blondes, I Know You’re a Cavalier, and My Sweet Lass*. Do what you like with the rest.”

Lehár: “I can’t imagine what use that farmer Kálmán and his cows would have for *Princess of the Czardasz*. “Give it to me!”

Kálmán: “You animal!” Meaning Lehár. “I have a son Imrich. His health is poor. The land won’t sustain him. And what’s more, *Erömi!*”

Here we leave the transcript of Josef Tesárek.

I don’t think you will find a better example of artistic larceny in history.

## A FRUSTRATING COMPOSITIONAL METHOD

Dr. Jan Hraběta

Finally friends, a few words about the musical aspect of Cimrman’s operatic works.

Until today, the significance of Cimrman’s method of overture composition has been unappreciated. Unlike other composers of his time, Cimrman, as a rule, worked with neither secondary nor, especially, primary melodic motifs. In the prelude you are about to hear, for example, you will not find a single musical idea. Here, Cimrman is working only with musical transitions, bridges, and passagework. Thus he creates an atmosphere full of tension, which is intensified by the constant alternation of two elements: the element of expectation and the element of disappointment. This is an

example of his famous frustrating compositional method. According to Cimmrman, the unsatisfied viewer will welcome all the more eagerly the completely elaborated singing numbers of the operetta.

As for the reconstruction of the Singspiel itself, we have decided upon an expressly reverential version. We have practically not tampered at all with the musical score itself. Wherever the work calls for only a piano, you will hear only a piano. Wherever we have an orchestral score, you will hear an orchestra. It is true that in a few places, precisely in those seams between the piano and the orchestra, there are certain tonal leaps that will irritate specialists, but you won't even notice them.

Now, friends, allow me to interrupt my lecture. As perhaps you know from the daily press, an evening school of Cimmrmanology has finally been opened here at the Prague Conservatory. An enormous number of extremely talented students have registered for classes. One of them is first-year student Petr Brukner from Brandýs nad Labem who has prepared his first scholarly lecture for you. Mr. Brukner, welcome.

*(Brukner gets entangled behind the curtain in the center of the stage. From the movement of the curtain, it is apparent that the fumbling student is moving from the center to the wings. Hraběta finally decides to give Brukner some help. He goes off to the side, fumbles with the curtain, and leads Brukner to the opening of the curtain in the center.)*

*Hraběta:* So, what have you prepared for us, Mr. Brukner?

*Bruner (softly):* I was supposed to prepare . . .

*Hraběta:* Not me, don't tell it to me. It's those in the audience who are interested. And nice and loud, so everyone can hear you.

*Brukner:* My lecture is on the graphic aspect of Cimmrman's musical notation. *(Looks at Hraběta.)*

*Hraběta:* Please don't pay any attention to me. You have the floor now. I'm here only to observe.

*Bruckner:* Outline: a) musical staff, b) musical stems, c) conclusion (*looks at Hraběta, and when he doesn't say anything continues with his report*). A. Musical Staff. I have discovered that unlike other composers, Cimmrman did not write his music on musical notation paper. He wrote his music on blank tracing paper without lines. He had the lines on an underlay, upon which he placed the tracing paper.

*Hraběta:* And do you know why he did that?

*Bruckner:* Notation paper was expensive.

*Hraběta:* Well, yes. What wasn't expensive in those days? But that isn't the reason.

*Bruckner:* Cimmrman did not have a lot of money.

*Hraběta:* But you've just said the same thing using different words. He had another reason. Don't you have it there somewhere further on?

*Bruckner:* Further, I have only Musical Stems and Conclusion.

*Hraběta:* It was because of transposition. Cimmrman could then transpose the composition higher or lower merely by sliding the underlay up or down. That was very clever, don't you think? And it made his work easier. Of course, it makes our work difficult when we try to read his compositions. We often don't know how to place the musical notation onto the underlay. And for this reason, some of his compositions are completely incomprehensible. Especially because Cimmrman consistently wrote all his musical stems facing downward, whereas we write them how?

*Bruckner:* From B upwards, stems facing downwards, and from B down, stems upwards.

No, down. No, up.

*Hraběta:* So, which way is it?

*Bruckner:* Up.

*Hraběta:* There, you see. Cimmrman often used to say: No one's going to make me write my notes upside-down. Sorry, I interrupted you. What else do you have?

*Bruckner:* Musical stems.

*Hraběta:* Good. Continue.

*Bruckner:* But you've already said it . . .

*Hraběta:* Said what?

*Brukner:* That Cimirman wrote all his stems downwards.

*Hraběta:* Oh. Don't you elaborate on it at all?

*Brukner:* Elaborate? No.

*Hraběta:* Okay, skip to the next point.

*Brukner:* C. Conclusion. Cimirman's method of musical notation was unusual for his time and differed from the notational method of such eminent composers as:

Bach...

*Hraběta:* Go on, everything!

*Brukner:* Offenbach, Maria Weber, Glinka, Mussorgsky, Rimsky and Korsakov.

*Hraběta:* Well, that's enough. Thank you very much, Mr. Brukner. It wasn't bad for the first time.

CIMRMAN  
SMOLJAK / SVĚRÁK

PUB IN THE GLADE  
/ AN OPERETTA /

Cast:

Innkeeper

Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin

Kulhánek (escaped prisoner)

Trachta (private investigator)

*(Operetta prelude: portions from Strauss's Die Fledermaus and Nedbal's The Grape Harvest.*

*The curtain opens. A pub in a forest, a table and chair in front of the pub. At the table sits a figurine named Ludvík and the innkeeper.)*

*Innkeeper:* Would you care to know, dear Ludvík—my old, and you might even say, yes, in fact my only good friend—how I came to find myself in this isolated wilderness in the middle of a deep forest, where nobody lives for miles around and where not a single path leads, where you don't see a single person all day long except for those damned dirigibles? For fifteen years now, I've been telling you the story of my life, day after day, and, indeed, I have nary a reason not to tell it to you again. *(He looks up in the sky whence comes music from Die Fledermaus.)* There goes the Vienneser, Ludvík, right on time. Ech, those moneybags. This year on Saint Anne's Day, it will be thirty years since I, a poor journeyman with a bun in my satchel, set out from my beloved home. I had nothing, dear Ludvík—my old, and you might even say, yes, in fact my only good friend—but my own two hands. So where was I to turn? Of course, at first I

wanted to make it on my own as a basket-weaver. But I'd never woven a basket before and didn't even know how it was done. And then, at my most desperate hour, a letter came bearing joyous news: "Your grandfather has died. You are now the owner of the pub *In the Glade*." So I headed straight to my lawyer. The lawyer grabbed an axe, food for three days, and we set out. And when, dear Ludvík—my old, and you might even say, yes, in fact my only good friend—we'd hacked our way through to this place, only then did I realize that my grandfather was, God rest his soul, an idiot.

The lawyer explained that my grandfather had been a notorious loner. He steered clear of everyone and couldn't stand being near people. But as far back as anyone could remember he'd always longed to have his own pub. At first he opened a pub by the road to Písek. But people showed up. Then he rented a place on the square in Opočna, but they showed up there, too. And so he built this place. I don't know about when Granddad was here, Ludvík, but during the fifteen years I've been here, you have been, to be sure, a constant, but, in fact, the only customer. And such a customer—I hope you won't be offended, Ludvík, there's really no other way to say it: such a customer isn't much of a customer. And without customers, you can't support a pub. And even if you do, you won't have any fun. And even if you do, you'll only make yourself cry.

*(Sings the tramp's aria from R. Piskáček's operetta The Tramp)*

Just like that bird flying across the sky,  
I wander here and there, I don't know why.  
I cross mountains, valleys, dells and trees.  
But where my path might lead me,  
I hardly know.  
Thus I've wandered for quite some time.  
Today I'm poor, and tomorrow the same.  
It's true my pockets are so bare

that soon there won't even be enough for a noose.  
But sometimes it seems to me  
that I'm the richest man in the world.  
When the first redolent flower of spring  
begins to blossom outside,  
everyone's face begins to shine  
with happiness.  
And the scent of the lilacs  
can even entice a poor wanderer.  
As if this May flower were blossoming for him as well.

Are you crying, Ludvík? You're crying. Look at me. Look at me, Ludvík! (*Goes to Ludvík and follows the direction of his eyes into the sky whence comes the aria "Women I've loved to Kiss you" from an operetta by František Léhar Paganini.*)  
Ah! You're looking at a Zeppelin. A single-seater, but a fast one. It's flying to Poland. How many times have I said to myself (*picks up a rifle*): I'll get a gun, you bastard, (*aims*) and BOOM! Down you'll fall. You'll come here, sit down, and have a drink! But you'd never shoot at a zeppelin. And if you did, you'd never reach it. And if you did reach it, you'd never hit it. (*He resignedly places the butt of his gun on the ground. A shot rings out along with the sound of escaping gas.*) Ludvík!! Customers!! (*Hastens off into the pub with his half-liter.*)

Count (*dashes in wearing a leather helmet, long gloves with buttons, and a white scarf around his neck*): Gadzooks!! Such misfortune!! It's a wonder I escaped in one piece. Excuse me, am I still in Bohemia or in Poland already? (*No response from Ludvík.*) *Prosze pana, mluvi pan po polsku?* Or perhaps, *Sprechen Sie Deutsch, mein lieber Freund?* Or perhaps, *Hvong pink chi pink ung hongong pink tse?* Oh, excuse me. I have not yet introduced myself. I am Baron Ferdinand von Zeppelin. (*Sits down at the table*) I understand your position. I myself am no

friend of these superficial pub acquaintances. Do you mind if I get the blood out of my legs? (*Places his feet on the table, and it's obvious he's been flying in his house slippers.*) Of course, you must understand my situation. Out of nowhere, my airship sprung a leak. There, there, don't worry your head about it too much. You've got your own worries. Hey, hello, innkeeper!

*Innkeeper (he's been standing at the pub door for a while unseen and peering at the count).* Okay, okay calm down! I've only got two hands, and you're not the only one here. (*Brings in a half-liter of beer.*) Are you from around these parts, sir?

*Count:* Not a whit! We aeronauts are not from anywhere. My name is Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin!

*Innkeeper:* And what brings you here, your Eminence?

*Count:* An accident. My airship sprung a leak.

*Innkeeper:* That's too bad. You'll have to sit here for a couple of weeks. But don't worry. You won't lack for anything. There's plenty of beer. And you can pay, yes?

*Count:* That is out of the question. I must continue on my way immediately.

*Innkeeper:* You'll be fine here, your Eminence. On Saturday, I always scrub the table, clean the cobwebs off Ludvík, and we have a roaring good time!

*Count:* I have nothing against a good time, but of course, in a place without women, I've remained not more than a day...

*(The count sings the aria "Women I've Loved to Kiss you" from an operetta by František Léhár Paganini.)*

Women, I've loved to kiss you.

I see no reason to lie.

Who would want to give you up?

I only know

That I may kiss you,

Oh, women of mine,

And therefore I love you.

*Innkeeper:* With good beer and fresh air, you'll soon come around to other thoughts, your Eminence.

*Count:* Count Polovecký once used the following words with regard to my person: Sexual outlaw, spermon, and erectic. I think that captures my fundamental character traits rather well.

*Innkeeper:* Do my own ears deceive me? I've always imagined Count von Zeppelin working day and night on blueprints for balloons and dirigibles.

*Count:* These are only the initial, unsophisticated steps of my primary research activities. My way of life has compelled me to devote myself primarily to the problem of a preventative method against alimony payments. I've been working on material for hardened rubber. But thus far the products issuing from my workshop have been, unfortunately, too large and good for nothing but flying. Well, bring me some wieners, and I'll go out to go look for a bog with some swamp gas so I can refill my balloon and be on my way.

*Innkeeper:* Růženka!!

*Count (to Ludvík):* Fare thee well, my friend...

*Innkeeper:* Rů-žen-ka!!

*Count:* And, should my ship ever spring another leak, God forbid, until we meet again.

*Innkeeper:* Rů-žen-ka!!

*Count:* What?!

*Innkeeper:* Rů-žen-ka!!

*Count:* Gadzooks! Don't tell me that in this hinterland there resides the fairer sex!

*Innkeeper:* And not just the sex, Count von Zeppelin. Besides Ludvík, my entire granddaughter lives here with me.

*Count:* Good Lord, a granddaughter! And I've been speaking so indecently about women!! So, your young granddaughter! Where is she? Why doesn't she greet the guest?

*Innkeeper:* A week ago she set out to town, my dutiful little girl, for saffron and a bit of ginger.

*Count:* Hmmm... For saffron? Tell me something about her.

*Innkeeper:* A week ago she set out ... to town. For saffron and a bit of ginger.

*Count:* Go on, go on!

*Innkeeper:* My dutiful little girl.

*Count:* Hmm! I like the way you describe her... She set out a week ago, you say. That must be some woman! And then what did you say?

*Innkeeper:* To town?

*Count:* No.

*Innkeeper:* Dutiful?

*Count:* No.

*Innkeeper:* For saffron?

*Count:* That's it!!! So she's blonde! Blue lips... Red eyes... And now, tell me she's gentle.

*Innkeeper:* She's gentle.

*Count (sings the aria "Gentle Blondes" from the operetta Polish Blood by Oskar Nedbal; during the song, both the count and the innkeeper change into dancing shoes so they can dance during the intermezzo):*

Gentle blondes, I love them so,  
They make me burn from head to toe.  
My heartbeat races, I know not why,  
But suddenly I feel I could even fly.  
If her eyes are as blue as the deep blue sea,  
And her body as shapely as the number three,  
Then all it takes is a single glance,  
And the devil places me in a trance.

*Count:* Show me the window to her bedroom.

*Innkeeper:* This one right here.

*Count:* She sleeps here?

*Innkeeper:* No, she doesn't. A week ago she set out to town...

*Count:* Make up my bed in the next room. I'm going to get some sleep and restore my energy. But if she comes, pay no mind to my noble origin and wake me even if you have to knock me around a bit. (*Innkeeper departs.*) For saffron... The little vixen!

*(The curtain falls as the intermezzo to Nedbal's The Grape Harvest plays. The music ends, and the curtain opens. The count walks on stage brushing his teeth, and the innkeeper quickly hides a glove that he's been sewing and kills a fly on the table. The curtain closes once again. The intermezzo continues. The music ends, the curtain opens, and the scene is repeated. The curtain closes, and music from Strauss's Die Fledermaus begins. From the curtain, the innkeeper sticks out a placard with the words "The count and the innkeeper spent 28 days this way." The curtain opens once more, and the innkeeper finishes sewing his glove, and the count finishes brushing his teeth.)*

*Count:* Well, a month's gone by, and your granddaughter is nowhere to be found. So, fix me some wieners, and I'm going to go look for a bog with some swamp gas so I can refill my balloon and be on my way.

*Innkeeper:* Růženka!

*Count (to Ludvík):* Fare thee well, my friend!

*Innkeeper:* Rů-žen-ka!

*Count:* And should I ever spring another leak, God forbid, until we meet again.

*Innkeeper:* Rů-žen-ka!!

*Count:* What?!

*Innkeeper:* My granddaughter has returned. She was in town buying saffron and a bit of ginger. My dutiful little girl.

*Count:* You're telling me this only now?

*Innkeeper:* Didn't I tell you?

*Count:* Of course, you didn't tell me. I know nothing about it.

*Innkeeper:* Aha! Then let me tell you. A month ago she set out, my dutiful little girl...

*Count:* Yes, you said that! But you didn't say she'd returned!

*Innkeeper:* She came back early this morning. I didn't want to wake you. You were sleeping, your Eminence, if you'll excuse me... like a pig.

*Count (excited):* I'm going to get ready! Tell her I would very much like to ... No wait... We've got to say it, somehow... Tell her that I wish her, yes, that I wish her good health, all the best, that she long dwell among us and just as fresh, and that with all my heart I hope that her terrible loss... Tell her I'll be right back!!

*(Exits.)*

*Innkeeper (takes from his pocket a woman's glove, slips it on, and examines the effect of the disguise in the window):* Now the count can come.

*(Kulhánek, the prisoner, crawls in from the wings on all fours. The count returns, sees Trachta and blocks his way. Trachta dashes back on all fours the way he came, but is blocked by the innkeeper.)*

*Count:* Where are you going, friend? Calm down! And now kindly tell us who you are and where you are from.

*(Kulhánek tries once again to escape.)*

*Count:* You are among friends! My name is Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin. Come and have a seat *(offers him a chair)*. Innkeeper, bring us some beer and food. I'm paying.

*Innkeeper:* Hold on, hold on. Not so fast with the hospitality. We're not set up for such a rush. Fifteen years, nothing, and then a whole tour group. *(Counts the guests and leaves.)*

*Count:* You know, we're in a pretty remote place—nobody for miles around. The innkeeper is a bit of a crank, but just between you and me, his granddaughter lives here with him. A real beauty. A month ago she set off to town for some saffron and a bit of ginger. Early this morning she returned and took a little nap. Now she must be getting dressed. You know—all those dainty unmentionables. You know how it is. Now, eat and drink up. I'm paying. Don't be shy.

*(The innkeeper brings beer, bread, and sausages.)*

*Kulhánek (bites into a piece of bread):* My God, this is wonderful. Gentlemen, I haven't eaten anything like this in twenty years. We had only water and a slice of bread made from sawdust. And on Christmas they would give us an apple. But then on St. Steven's day, according to prison regulations, we had to give it back.

*(Finishes he piece of bread and grabs a sausage.)* And I haven't seen one of these for as long as I can remember. Hmm, it smells so good! *(Bites off the end and spits it out, puts the sausage into his mouth like a cigar and tries to light it.)*

*Innkeeper:* But friend, it's a wiener!

*Kulhánek:* Really?

*Innkeeper:* Yes, you bite into it. Try again.

*(Kulhánek bites off another piece and spits it out.)*

*Count:* Good, but don't spit. Leave it.

*(Kulhánek puts it into his mouth and looks around for matches.)*

*Count and the innkeeper:* And don't light it!

*(Kulhánek finally understands and bites into the sausage with exclamations of gustatory pleasure.)*

*Count:* And now kindly tell us who you are and where you come from.

*(Kulhánek's exclamations turn into sobbing.)*

*Innkeeper:* Don't cry, good man. Take me for instance. Once something happened to me... this thing. And boy did I cry! My God, did I cry. But then another time something else happened, and I didn't cry!

*Count:* There, you see!!

*Kulhánek (dries his eyes):* Thank you, gentlemen. My name is Kulhánek, number 21.

I've been digging this secret passageway night after night for fifteen years. From my cell window, I chose the direction of the deepest forest. And then I find a restaurant here!

*Innkeeper:* Fear not, Mr. Kulhánek. This is indeed the deepest forest. Only the four of us for miles around.

*Count:* Only the *five* of us for miles around.

*Innkeeper:* Four!

*Count:* Five!

*Innkeeper:* Four!

*Count:* Five!

*Innkeeper:* Oh yes, she's back! Five! My granddaughter has returned! A month ago she set out for some saffron and a bit of ginger.

*Count:* But innkeeper, if someone hasn't seen a woman for 20 years, you've got to go slowly. You can't just unload on him with "ginger" and "saffron!" My friend, I don't want to make you cry again, but may I ask how you feel about women?

*Kulhánek (speaks into the beginning of the prelude to Nedbal's The Wine Harvest.):* For me there exists only one woman in the whole wide world.

*Count (under his breath):* The sap.

*Kulhánek:* We met for but a brief moment, as they were leading me away in chains. I can still see her standing before me, how she pushed aside the guard, looked into my eyes, and said: "I'll think of you ... with the crowing of the ... Cock!"

*Count:* She said that?

*Kulhánek:* Yes.

*Count:* Gadzooks! That must be some woman. Gadzooks! (*Sings the aria "Friends, My Heart's on Fire" from Nedbal's operetta Polish Blood.*)

Oh, my friends, my heart's on fire.

It is seized with a nameless longing.

*/Oh, my friends, his heart's on fire,  
/It is seized with a nameless longing./*

If we have such women,  
*/If we have such women,/*  
Our beloved homeland,  
*/Our beloved homeland,/*  
Our homeland is saved.  
If we have such women,  
*If we have such women,*  
Our beloved homeland,  
*Our beloved homeland,*  
Our homeland is saved.

*Innkeeper:* Mr. Kulhánek, if I may be so bold, what were you in prison for?

*Kulhánek:* Please don't be angry, gentlemen, but I cannot talk about it. The accusation was too horrible. But you may rest assured that I was sentenced as an innocent man.

*Count:* That's exactly what I thought! You can tell an innocent man right off. Oh yes. As soon as you stuck your head out of that shrub, I said to myself: A miscarriage of justice!!

*Innkeeper:* And if I may be so bold, Mr. Kulhánek, how long did they sentence you for?

*Kulhánek:* 20 years.

*Innkeeper:* And if I may be so bold, Mr. Kulhánek, how long did you serve?

*Kulhánek:* Well, tomorrow it will be 20 years.

*Innkeeper:* Hmm... I don't know, I mean, I'm just a simple man. I'm not very well educated, but perhaps it wasn't worth escaping, after all.

*Kulhánek:* You know, that idea also crossed my mind. Yesterday, in fact. But since I'd already dug this tunnel... Well, now that I'm out, the main thing is that they don't catch me.

*Count:* You're right. You must disappear immediately. I have a tourist outfit in my knapsack. Do you want it? (*Leaves.*)

*Kulhánek:* Sure, I'll eat anything.

*Innkeeper:* You want to leave?

*Kulhánek:* I have to.

*Innkeeper:* Don't leave, Mr. Kulhánek. A pub without guests isn't a pub.

*Kulhánek:* But I'm an outlaw. And besides, I don't have any money.

*Innkeeper:* Stay here. I'll pay you well.

*Kulhánek:* You certainly are a nice person. Me, a prisoner, and you want to give me money, just like that.

*Innkeeper:* I believe you, Mr. Kulhánek. And after all, you'll spend some of it here, right?

*Kulhánek:* You know, I really did end up in prison an innocent man. This is how it happened. One day I was walking through a meadow. And suddenly, a bell falls from the sky, an ordinary bicycle bell. I pick it up, ring it, and out of the blue, two constables appear and whisk me away to prison. Of course an embarrassing situation developed during the court proceedings. "So how did you get your hands on this bell," they asked. "Try to remember." You're not going to tell us it just fell from the sky, are you?" What was I supposed to say? So I kept silent. They accused me of being the smuggler Göch...

*Innkeeper:* The smuggler Göch?! Wait a minute. What did they used to call him? I can't remember. Go on.

*Kulhánek:* They accused me of being the smuggler Göch...

*Innkeeper:* Alias! That's it! The smuggler Göch, also known as Alias... No, Alias was his first name. It doesn't matter. Go on.

*Kulhánek:* Well, in short, they accused me of being the smuggler Göch, and gave me 20 years.

*Innnkeeper:* A damn shame.

*Kulhánek:* Yes, well. I'd better be going.

*Innkeeper:* Don't go anywhere, Mr. Kulhánek. I said you don't have to worry about money!

*Kulhánek:* You're very kind, but besides a lack of money, two things are chasing me from here. The first is that any minute now the guard Hurych could emerge from that hole over there. The second is that any minute now the guard Krhavec could emerge from that hole over there. I don't know who's on duty today.

*Innkeeper:* Listen, what were you saying about that girl, the one who pushed the guard aside, and then said that ... word. Wasn't she wearing one of those... (*makes unclear gestures*)

*Kulhánek:* A red skirt?

*Innkeeper:* That's what I thought. And didn't she have on her head... (*makes unclear gestures*)

*Kulhánek:* Golden hair?

*Innkeeper:* That's what I was afraid of! And when she looked at you, didn't she have... (*makes completely ridiculous gestures*)

*Kulhánek:* She was carrying a basket?

*Innkeeper:* That's her!

*Kulhánek:* That's who?

*Innkeeper:* That's my granddaughter.

*Kulhánek:* You can't be serious!

*Innkeeper:* She often told me about you.

*Kulhánek:* Really? What did she say? Tell me!

*Innkeeper:* Well, she told me how you were walking...

*Kulhánek:* Yes, that's it exactly!

*Innkeeper:* And then how she pushed aside the guard...

*Kulhánek:* Yes!

*Innkeeper:* And then how she said that word. Don't be angry with her. It just slipped out and bothered her for quite a while... She couldn't think about anything else for a long time.

*Kulhánek:* Where is she?

*Innkeeper:* Right here. She has a little room in there. A month ago she set out for town, my dutiful little girl, to buy saffron and a bit of ginger.

*Count (enters carrying a bundle of clothing):* Here it is. Change your clothes and get out of here!

*Kulhánek:* I'm not going anywhere. I'm staying here in the clothing in which we first saw each other. You were wrong about me, Count. I may be only a simple farmhand, but even a farmhand knows what honor is. And I will never sell mine!

*(Curtain falls. When it opens, the count is whispering something to Kulhánek.)*

*Kulhánek:* No, she doesn't!! She doesn't have anything like that!!

*Count:* Oh come on, she's a woman, after all!

*Kulhánek:* She's an angelic being!

*Count:* Let me tell you something...

*Kulhánek:* I don't want to hear anything from you! *(Both fall silent.)*

*Innkeeper (enters):* That's what I like. A pub's got to be lively! What are you talking about, gentlemen?

*(The count whispers something in the innkeeper's ear.)*

*Innkeeper:* The count is certainly right, Mr. Kulhánek. My granddaughter has everything a girl should.

*Kulhánek:* She doesn't! She doesn't have anything like that!!

*Innkeeper:* Look, take me for example. Once, I was sitting in a pub with a friend, and he tells me something. I told him, no. And then another time he came in again and told me something else, and I said to him: "Well, yes." See? No one's going to get the better of me. *(Exits.)*

*Count:* Listen, friend, let me tell you something. This is not a woman for you. This is a woman who needs a real man, you understand? A man like ... Like me, for

instance. And besides, I didn't want to tell you, in case you thought I was bragging, but she wrote me a letter.

*Kulhánek:* What?

*Count:* Yes, everything is clear. It is me she loves.

*Kulhánek (sings "That is Funny" from Strauss's Die Fledermaus):*

That is funny, ha-ha-ha  
Very funny, ha-ha-ha  
Please forgive me, ha-ha-ha  
That I laugh at you.  
That is funny, ha-ha-ha  
Very funny, ha-ha-ha  
Please forgive me, ha-ha-ha  
That I laugh at you.

*Count:* Ah, but your laughter will pass. Listen to this (*pulls a letter from his pocket and reads*) "My beloved count!" When I returned from town, where I was buying saffron and a bit ginger,"—the little vixen! "I, my dutiful little daughter, saw you. How happy I was that you had sprung a leak. Grandfather is kind. Soon we will find some shrubbery to meet beneath. Order lots of beer. I also have some good pickled herring, cheese, and cucumbers. The wieners are already running out. Your yearning Růženka."

*Kulhánek:* I don't believe it!! She would never write such a letter.

*Kulhánek:* What don't you believe? She tossed it to me herself from the window.

*Kulhánek:* Somebody is taking you for a ride, Count. Listen to the secret message Růženka sent *me...* (*reads*) "My beloved Kulhánek! When I returned from town where I was buying saffron and a little ginger,"—the little vixen! "I, my dutiful little girl, saw not only the debauched count, but also you, my striped happiness." And now listen to how noble she is: "It doesn't matter that you have no money.

You can borrow from the count. That skirt-chaser certainly has enough. But you're different. You don't think about nasty things. Your devoted, Růženka."

What do you say to that?

*Count:* That I won't lend you any.

*Kulhánek:* I'm not asking you to. It was you who said: "Eat, drink, I'm paying. Don't be shy."

*Count:* I said that?

*Kulhánek:* Yes, you did.

*Count (sings "That is funny as Kulhánek did previously):*

That is funny, ha-ha-ha

Very funny, ha-ha-ha

Please forgive me, ha-ha-ha

That I laugh at you.

That is funny, ha-ha-ha

Very funny, ha-ha-ha

Please forgive me, ha-ha-ha

That I laugh at you.

*Count:* I said that?

*Kulhánek:* Yes, that's what you said.

*Count:* I did???

*Kulhánek:* Yes.

*Count:* Well, that's possible

*Kulhánek:* So, you see!!

*Count:* But I didn't say it to *you*.

*Kulhánek:* Who did you say it to, then?

*Count:* To that gentleman over there. (*Points at Ludvík.*) Just ask him.

*Kulhánek:* I don't need to ask him anything. It's all perfectly clear.

*Count:* What's clear?

*Kulhánek:* To whom you said: "Eat, drink, I'm paying. Don't be shy."

*Count:* So who did I say it to?

*Kulhánek:* That gentleman over there.

*Count:* That gentleman?

*Kulhánek:* Yes, that gentleman.

*Count:* I said that? ... Well, yes, that's true!!!

*Kulhánek:* There, you see?

*Count:* But I'm the one who's claiming that, you can't claim it!

*Kulhánek:* I'm the one claiming it.

*Count:* You're claiming that? But you're claiming that I said, "Now, eat and drink up.

I'm paying. Don't be shy," to you. Whereas I'm claiming I said, "Now, eat and drink up. I'm paying. Don't be shy," to that gentleman over there. *(The innkeeper enters with a half liter of beer and some food.)*

*Count:* And there's a helluva difference between saying, "Now, eat and drink up. I'm paying. Don't be shy," to someone who doesn't eat or drink, and saying, "Now, eat and drink up. I'm paying. Don't be shy," to you, who for 20 years hasn't had anything to eat or drink and who borrowed an apple on Christmas.

*Innkeeper (sits down):* Gentlemen, gentlemen, take me for instance. Once I came to the pub, and one of the customers said, "I'm paying." And he paid. And then another time I came to the pub and when the same customer saw me, he called from a distance: "Not today!" And see...

*Count:* He didn't pay, did he?

*Innkeeper:* Come on! Don't take offense, Count, but that's simply not done. You weren't there, so how could you know what he said? It's not polite when someone is telling an interesting story and the poor guy leaves the most interesting part for last, and then someone else let's it out before he does.

*Kulhánek:* So how did it turn out?

*Innkeeper:* How did it turn out? Well he... but now it won't be interesting since he's already hinted at it.

*Kulhánek:* Just tell us.

*Innkeeper:* Well, he... the constable wrapped it up and cut it off.

*Count:* Who? Cut what off?

*Innkeeper:* See, if you'd been paying attention and not interrupting, you'd know what I'm talking about. *(With a victorious air gets up and exits.)*

*Count:* Well, I've had just about enough of this. Who's the idiot around here, anyway? *(Kulhánek is whispering something to Ludvík.)* Hey, what are you whispering about there?

*Kulhánek:* Well, this gentleman here was telling me... and I told him it would be better not to get involved.

*Count:* And what did he say?

*Kulhánek:* Oh, I don't know. I don't bother my head with such things.

*Count:* Wait a minute, hold on! I'm interested in what he said!

*Kulhánek:* On the whole, nothing.

*Count:* Nothing! Nothing! I know his kind. He hangs around, listening and watching, and plays the innocent. And all the while he's inciting something, the kibitzing snoop. But we won't make it worth his while. Someone could shove his hat down on his head like that, and knock his tie to the side like that. *(Shoves Ludvík's hat down on his head and knocks his tie askew.)* What do you have to say to that? And now, just to make sure everything's clear between us. It's me she loves. And I want her. And if I see you hovering around her, or making advances, or if you ever dared to ...

*Kulhánek:* She doesn't! She doesn't have anything like that!

*Count:* She doesn't, she doesn't! You haven't seen her yet!

*Kulhánek:* I did see her! You're the one who hasn't seen her. She's a *(with emotion)*... She's a gentle breeze amid the treetops. She's a mountain brook, a delicate dewdrop upon a slender stalk of grass. She's...

Count: Bullshit. Just wait till I slap that dewdrop on the ass. Then you'll see her jump.

*(Kulhánek says something in a sobbing voice.)*

Count: What?

*(Kulhánek once again sobs incomprehensibly.)*

Count: Stop stomping your feet, I can't hear you!

*(Kulhánek sobs inarticulately again.)*

Count: You're having problems with your stool??

*(This time Kulhánek does actually say something in a sobbing voice.)*

Count: Oh, you're challenging me to a *duel*! You should have said that to begin with.

And what is your weapon of choice, Mr. Kulhánek?

*(Kulhánek inarticulately moans.)*

Count: Sabers?

*(Kulhánek sobs.)*

Count: Pistols! I've brought some. Just a minute, I'll get them. Don't cry. In the morning we'll wake up, get ourselves cleaned up, and get started. But make sure you don't go nibbling on anything. Because I'm going to shoot you in the belly, and you have to do that on an empty stomach. Otherwise it would really hurt. Poof! *(pokes him in the belly)* And now, goodnight. Sleep well. *(Exits.)*

*(The curtain falls and "Twenty-One" from Nedbal's opera Polish Blood begins to play. During the interval, Ludvik's place is taken by an identically dressed actor. His face is covered by the hat the count shoved down on his head. When the curtain opens, the others are drunkenly singing along with the recording.)*

Count: Quiet! I've come to tell you something. Last night I thought over our duel.

Innkeeper: Wonderful! The count has thought it over!

Count: Wait, that's not all. Last night I thought over our duel and decided that Mr. Kulhánek here can go ahead and eat.

Innkeeper: Wonderful!

*Count:* Originally, I wanted to shoot him in the belly, but I'm not going to shoot him.

*Kulhánek:* Wonderful! *(calls into the window)* Růženka! *(after each time he calls, the innkeeper gets up, goes over, and shows the woman's glove in the window. After a while he doesn't even take it off.)* Růženka! He's not going to shoot me.

*Count:* In the belly.

*Kulhánek:* Wonderful. Růženka! He's not going to shoot me in the belly.

*Count:* I'm going to shoot him in the head.

*Kulhánek:* Wonderful! Růženka! He's going to shoot me in the head.

*Innkeeper (this time he doesn't stick his arm out of the window):* Hold on. I wouldn't be so happy, if I were you. He'll promise you the moon and then shoot you in the belly, anyway.

*Count:* When Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin gives his word, it's as good as gold. I'll shoot him in the head. Růženka! I promise you I'll shoot him in the head. And why am I going to shoot him in the head? Because he's a good man. Mr. Kulhánek, come here. Let's drink to our friendship. *(The innkeeper, wearing the glove, takes Kulhánek's beer and drinks instead of him.)* From now on I will call you "jailbird."

*Kulhánek:* Růženka! *(The innkeeper by mistake sticks the hand holding the beer through the window and then quickly replaces it with the other hand so Kulhánek can kiss it.)*

*Count:* Are we friends? We are. Do we like each other?

*Kulhánek:* We are!

*Innkeeper:* Gentlemen! Take me, for instance. Once... I was walking along... I kept walking. And then another time, for example today—I'm barely standing. *(Sits down heavily on the bench.)*

*Kulhánek:* Růženka!

*Innkeeper (tries to get up, but can't):* Leave the girl alone, already.

*Kulhánek:* But I have to tell her!

*Innkeeper:* Růženka has had enough for today!

*Count:* So, we've enjoyed ourselves a bit. And now, to work. Innkeeper, bring me my pistols. They're in my knapsack.

*Innkeeper (drunkenly):* Your Eminence, don't you want to ... don't you want to ... don't you want to change your mind? Look, you're going to fly away like that bird up there, and if you shoot Mr. Kulhánek in the belly...

*Count:* ... the head.

*Innkeeper:* ...the head, who will I be left with?

*Count:* That is none of my concern. We've already agreed... Jailbird! Have we agreed?

*Kulhánek:* Yes.

*Count:* So, let us begin.

*Innkeeper:* Okay, fine. But first you have to pay.

*Count:* In cash?

*Innkeeper:* Yes, in cash.

*Count:* Unfortunately, I don't seem to have the requisite amount on me. Could I perhaps pay in kind? *(Exits.)*

*Innkeeper (to Kulhánek):* Doesn't it seem strange to you ... *(Kulhánek is asleep, so he turns to Ludvík)* Doesn't it seem strange to you ... *(waves his hand, not expecting a reply.)* Doesn't it seem strange to me? A count, and he wants to pay in kind like some shopkeeper?

*Kulhánek (raises his head):* Růženka!

*Innkeeper:* Oh, hush!

*Count (enters carrying a sack):* These are extremely rare goods. In Poland they pay zlotys for them. *(He takes out a bicycle bell.)* Here's a sample. Try it out.

*(The innkeeper rings it.)*

*Kulhánek jumps up:* Kulhánek number 21!

*Innkeeper:* And what am I supposed to do with it?

*Count:* These bells will go far in the world.

*Innkeeper:* I'm not saying they won't go far in the world. But nobody comes out here. What am I going to do with a bag of bells in the woods?

*Kulhánek (takes a bell and start ringing it with interest):* You transport these?

*Count:* Yes.

*Kulhánek:* In your airship?

*Count:* Yes.

*Kulhánek:* To Poland?

*Count:* Yes.

*Kulhánek:* Göch! Miklosh Göch!

*Innkeeper:* The smuggler Göch? Also known as The Earthworm?

*Kulhánek:* Because of you I suffered 20 years in prison!

*Count (grabs a chair in defense):* Zounds!! I've been discovered.

*(Ludvík slowly rises from his chair, and his joints crack and squeak)*

*Innkeeper:* Ludvík, quit fooling around!

*Ludvík:* Halt, Earthworm! I am Police Inspector Trachta. I've been waiting here 20

years for you, and I finally have you. Let's go! *(Music from Nedbal's Polish*

*Blood begins to play. Ludvík grabs the false count by the shoulder and marches him offstage.)*

*Innkeeper:* So you see, Mr. Kulhánek. Take... yourself, for instance. Have you always

been an honest person? Yes, you have. Did you serve 20 years honestly? Yes,

you did. So you see, in the end it pays to be honest.

*Kulhánek:* Do you think Růženka saw it?

*Innkeeper:* Oh, yes, Růženka. That's what I wanted to tell you. A moment ago she set

out, my dutiful little girl, to town to buy saffron and a bit of ginger.

*Kulhánek:* That's okay! I'll wait here for her.

*(The innkeeper leads him over to Ludvík's vacated chair and places him in the same position.)*

*Innkeeper:* I'm not surprised. You know what our Czech girls are like.

*(Ludvík and the count enter and begin singing with the innkeeper "Oh, Those Czech Maidens" from the operetta The Pearls of the Maiden Ferafinka by Rulolf Piskáček.)*

Oh, those Czech maidens,  
Who does not love them so?  
You'll not find better patriots  
Throughout the whole wide world.  
Their cheeks are ruby red and pure as snow,  
They'll really make your heartbeat go.  
Whoever looks upon them once,  
Must to them his heart renounce.  
Their cheeks are ruby red and pure as snow,  
They'll really make your heartbeat go.  
Whoever looks upon them once,  
Must to them his heart renounce.