

Some interesting walks through Prague for music lovers



I have been for many years MENSA member and in the last 15 years I have been working for many travel agencies as official guide through Prague. The Czech Mensa committee asked me to prepare an interesting itinerary for members of the **EMAG** in Prague (28. 7. – 1. 8. 2010).

I wanted to prepare something unusual, so I decided to recommend a few walks through Prague to visit some places connected with music. On the way to those places I did not restrict myself to describe only the way (by foot or public transport), but I have described other interesting places to which you could draw your attention on the way to the main musical place of interest.

Close to the EMAG main meeting point Novotného lávka there is a tram station Karlovy Lázně, as you surely noticed. Originally I thought

to use just this tram stop as starting point to the walks, which you need to get to yourself by public transport. I checked with the Prague transport organisation and I have been unfortunately informed, that at the time of EMAG there will be many places reconstruction of the tram rails, many tram lines will be abolished or redirected in other directions. There will be introduced bus routes, but finding the routes would be a huge problem even for an inhabitant of Prague, I cannot imagine how people coming from other places, especially from abroad, would discover them! So I decided to use as starting point for public transport the Metro stop Staroměstská on the green line A. You come there from Novotného lávka by turning on the corner of the street with tramlines (Smetanovo nábřeží) to the left into the „inner corridor“ of Karlovy lázně, then passing the entrance to the Charles bridge continue along the tram rails through Křížovnická ulice (street), coming to a large square (Palachovo náměstí). In its corner with the street Kaprova ulice there is the staircase to the mentioned Metro station.

1) Visit to the Czech museum of music (only walking)

From the entrance in Novotného lávka 5 turn left and enter the „inner corridor“ of Karlovy lázně full of funny souvenir shops. You come out on a little square (Křížovnické náměstí), which is dominated by a large statue of Charles the IV (slightly towards the river). On the right hand side you can see into the san Salvator Church. If you follow the wall you will find a large open doorway through which you could enter to the yards of Clementinum.

This building was built as college by Jesuits invited by the Austrian Emperor Ferdinand in 1556. It served for many years as philosophical and theological faculty of the Prague Karlo-Ferdinand University. In this building is still in use today as the National and University Library (the biggest library in the Czech Republic). If you enter the second yard you could admire the astronomical tower, where since the 18 century astronomical and meteorological measurements have been measured (so there is a record of daily temperatures for over 300 years!).

In front of you is the church of St. Francis from Assisi and the monastery of the Chivalric Order of the Knights with the red Star. Slightly towards the river go down a staircase to the

Museum of Charles bridge. It shows all interesting details about the building of Charles Bridge as well of the history of the previous Queen Judith Bridge. The entrance fee is 150,- Kč (students 70,- Kč). You can arrange a short boat trip (entrance to the boarding place by a staircase on the left). The trip lasts about 40 minutes and the boat enters the lower part of Čertovka, the Vltava side stream to the so called Prague' Venetia. The fare is 290,- Kč (reduction to 145,- Kč only for children under 140 cm height). There are boat services every 15 minutes, and on the boat there is served beer or any other drink, a pancake or ice-cream and a cup of coffee free of charge. The museum and the boat trips are operated from 10 A.M. to 10 P.M. Both entertainments (First General Boating Company) are owned by Mr. Zdeněk Bergmann a direct descendant of an old simple Vltava ferryman family. For visitors that pay the boat trip the entrance to the museum is free of charge. We are negotiating some reduction coupons for 10% for EMAG participants, which would be available at the reception desk at Novotného lávka.

If you don't mind climbing the staircase you enter the old town Charles Bridge Tower from where is a wonderful view. To this visit you would be invited by a cavalier in a medieval historical dress. The entrance fee for adults is 70,- Kč, for students 50,- Kč. Similarly as the Old Town bridge tower you can under similar conditions enter the Lesser Town bridge tower. The smaller tower is the relic of the predecessor of Charles Bridge the Judith-bridge.

Walking through the Charles Bridge (unfortunately at the moment partially scaffold) you can admire about 30 statues of saints, which started in the 16 until the 19 century to decorate the bridge (itself built in the 14 century). Most of them are very beautiful, and usually made from sandstone. The only statue of Johann from Nepomuk is made from brass; it is the 8th statue on the right hand side. The statue has brass pictures on both sides. On the left side is the confessional booth with the queen and on the right side is given the act of throwing the saint into the river. Both pictures are highly shining as the brass is highly polished by thousands of hands of the visitors who want „for luck“ to touch the pictures. The actual place, where Johann Nepomuk was thrown into the Vltava River is shown by a brass double cross on the stone balustrade of the bridge. Recently there has been put towards the river an ornamental baroque style grid with the picture of poor Johan floating in the river. This place is between the 6th statue (St. Johan Baptist) and 7th statue (St. Norbert, Wenceslaus and Sigmund). You will be on the bridge approached by many sellers of art crafts, paintings, artisanal photos, musical exhibitions.

After having passed the bridge, you enter a relatively short street called Mostecká and come to the Lesser Town Square (Malostranské náměstí). Here you can admire many brilliant palaces (to be admired from outside, because they are mostly not accessible for the public). Let us mention the palace of Smiřický with a beautiful green facade (where the noble men had their meeting of conspiracy preparing the Prague defenestration on 23.May 1618, that started the rebellion of the Czech nobility against Habsburgs and also the 30 years all-european war). Another interesting palace is the Kaiserstein palace, which is famous by the fact that there was for many years living the world famous singer Emma Destin, who has on the building a commemorative head-statue and table. The large grey building is the recently reconstructed „municipality house of the Lesser Town“ – Malostranská beseda, with many restaurants, cafes, concert hall and gallery. If you would go to the upper part of the Malostranské náměstí you could enter the masterpiece of baroque architecture the St. Nicolaus church built by father and son Dientzenhofer (Christopher and Kilian Ignac).

From the Lesser Town Square (when coming from the Mostecká street) you turn left to the Karmelitská street and follow the tramlines (in direction against the river Vltava stream). After about 300m you come on the right hand side to the tram station „Hellichova“. It is just below a staircase leading to a church dedicated to Maria Victorious (Karmelitská 11). Here is placed the famous Statue of Jesus Christ Child, very popular especially in Latin American

countries and the Philipines (called there as Cariñoso Nino Jesús de Praga). It has his origin from Spain inspired from a saint vision in the 12 century of a monk from a monastery between Cordoba and Sevilla who modelled the Jesus child from wax. In the following centuries it became very popular in Spain. Through a noblewomen Maria Maxmiliana Manriques de Lara, who married the Czech nobleman Vratislav from Pernstejn the statuette came to Prague. She donated it in 1587 to her daughter Polyxena Pernstejn married Lobkowic. Polyxena donated the Jesus statuette a few years later to the monastery of the discalceated karmelitans, where it has remained till our days. It is highly adored and time to time friars change its costume, of which there are about 50. The costumes are all very pretty and usually very precious. They are donations from very famous people. So e.g. the Austrian empress Maria Terezia Habsburg has personally sewn one costume. Among the recent donations to the glorious Jesus Child should be mentioned that one given by the present pope Benedikt XVI (Joseph Ratzinger) during his visit to Prague on the 26. September 2009.

When you cross by a pedestrian passage with traffic lights the street to the other side you just come to a huge building inscribed as České Museum Hudby. (Karmeltská str.2). It is a previous church of Maria Magdalena built by the architect Francesco Carrati in the 17 century. After being liquidated as church by Emperor Joseph II at the end of the 18 century, the building served for various purposes (storage room, post office, barracks of gendarmerie etc.) In 2003 it has been reconstructed (after the great Vltava inundation in 2002, when the original smaller building of the museum – Velkopřevorský palace – closer to the Vltava River, became devastated). The museum has in its first floor in about 15 rooms a plentiful collection of various musical instruments, starting with pianos, seraphines, spinets, accordions, string instruments, wind instruments, percussion, harps, harmonicas, plunk instruments, traditional folks instruments, mechanical music instruments, etc. In every room there is a tape recorder, where you can choose and with pleasure enjoy a short musical performance played by the selected exhibited instrument. It is a very pleasant novelty of the exhibition.

On the ground floor there is a large vestibule, where concerts take place. There is also a smaller concert hall and many smaller rooms suitable for occasional exhibitions. At the moment there is installed a very attractive exhibition called Beatlemanie. There are documents of the world famous Liverpool original modern inventive rock band the Beatles. There is reminded their start in 1957 when John Lennon, pupil of a secondary school in Liverpool, organised a musical group. He was step by step followed by further members of the famous band: Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr as last in 1962. You can follow facsimile of papers demonstrating the development of the band and rocket style rise of their popularity. (Reminding the super successful tour to USA and Hamburg). The costumes being worn by them are also exhibited as well as tiny personal items from their life. You can listen from a tape recorder their famous songs, e.g. Let it be, Hard day's night, Yesterday, Please, please me, Yellow submarine, etc.. You can follow also a film performance about The Beatles history. At the same time there is demonstrated the influence of The Beatles on the youth in Czechoslovakia, how it was difficult to come by any information because of the suppression by the communist regime which was suspicious of any information coming from western countries behind the iron curtain. You can see the equipment of flats and vestments of young people of that time. It has been complicated to get the music and further information about The Beatles. They had been denominated only in the Czech translation „Brouci“. The information has mostly come with a delay of some years. There has been slight improvement s due to the Prague spring in 1968 and some peace declarations of the Beatles. In the exhibition there are also wax statues of The Beatles lent out to Prague by the Liverpool Beatles History Museum. You can also follow the history of the marriage of John Lennon with Yoko Ono, who is supposed to contribute to the final disintegration of the famous band

in the late sixties beginning seventies. You can find documents of Lennon's' struggle for peace and finally his tragic assassination by a mentally ill fan on 8. December 1980. In the vestibule of the museum is a large model of the yellow submarine and the reproduction of the famous John Lennon wall, where young people shortly after Lennon's' death in 1981 started to make commemorative pictures and sentences to that sad event as well as sentences expressing rebellion towards the ruling communist regime, mostly with paint spray cans. There have been also put candles below the wall. The communist police wanted to suppress these activities, among others they have by a white colour over painted nearly every day the pictures and sentences on the wall. They tried also to catch and imprison the participants of those activities. However it has been complicated for them as the wall is situated just opposite the French embassy, which followed all activities.

The entrance fee for complex entrance to the actual exhibition Beatle mania together with the permanent musical instruments exposition in the 1st floor is 120,- Kč, without Beatle mania only to the 1st floor 60,- Kč. Students and seniors have 50% discount on both prices. The museum is open daily from 10 AM to 6 PM, with exception of Tuesday, when they have a day off.

If you have still time you could the Lennon's wall admire in reality making a small walk from the Museum. After leaving the Museum exit you should turn right to a short street called Harantova. On the corner with the street Nebovidská is a luxurious garden cafeteria Mandarin Oriental Essencia. At this point you turn left and you come to the square Maltézké náměstí. On the left hand side you will pass the embassies of Japan and Denmark. If you come to the middle of the square turn right towards the church Virgin Maria Below the Chain of the Maltesian order monastery. Here you turn right and you come to the beginning of the square Velkopřevorské náměstí. In front of you will be the French Embassy and opposite it is itself the Lennon wall full of various pictures and sentences mostly performed by the spraying technique. If you would continue walking you come to a small bridge over the Vltava side stream Čertovka. Over the bridge here you would see on the bridge parapet continued by a grid thousands of locked pad-locks. This habit has been reportedly copied after such habit in Rome. For it are given two explanations. Firstly the actors will lock their hidden wishes; secondly they want to lock their desire to come back one day and to unlock their pad-lock. Behind the grid over the balustrade you can admire the large water wheel of the Velkopřevorský mill in the „Prague Venetia“. If after crossing the little bridge and continue through a narrow and short street Jiřího Červeného you come to the square Na Kampě with many attractive restaurants and cafeterias. The square is neighbouring the Charles Bridge, which you can enter by a staircase and then you can continue through this bridge returning to the main EMAG conference area at Novotného lávka.

2) Visit to Mozart memorial villa Bertramka (start by public transport necessary)

You should enter the Staroměstská Metro station on green line A as described in the introductory text. You go in direction Depo Hostivař one station to Můstek, where you change for yellow line B in direction Zličín. The 3rd station Anděl you should disembark. The platform Anděl has two exits, both operated by a moving escalator, the northern and the southern. Unfortunately they are not so described. The southern (at the beginning of the train by which you came) is notified by a information table: “Výstup: Bus. Na Knížecí. Ženské domovy. Stroupežnického ulice“. This escalator you should avoid!!! It would bring you to places where you would get lost!!!! The proper is the northern escalator (at the end of the train by which you came) with the following descriptive table: „**Směr Bus X-9. Motol. Řepy. Radlice. Smíchov. Barrandov. Centrum. Dejvice**“. On the top of the escalator you walk about 30 m along Nádražní street and come to the road crossing of the roads Štefanikova,

Lidická, Nádražní and Plzeňská. Here you turn left and walk about 800 meters along the tramlines on Plzeňská street. You will come below the high way crossing bridge at the level of the Mowenpick hotel on your left side. At this point you turn left to Mozart Street and climb a slight hill up and you come on the address Mozartova 2 to a spacious country style villa build in the classical architectural style in a very nice large garden. It was originally a vineyard manor, owned by Francis Bertram (accordingly the name Bertramka) from Clam. It has been bought in 1784 by a composer František Xaver Dušek and his wife Josefine, a famous vocalist. They invited Mozart for a visit lasting few months in autumn 1787. Here he finished the composition of his famous opera Don Giovanni, which had its premier in Nostic Theatre on 29.October 1787. Mozart's second visit was in summer 1791 at the occasion of the performance of his glorifying opera Clemensa da Tito composed for the coronation of the King Leopold II. After the death of the Dušek spouses the villa was owned by many people. In 1929 it became property of the society Mozart-community. It took care of the house and developed it to a Mozart and spouse Dušek's memorial. It served also for performing concerts. During the communist regime the villa has been confiscated and assigned to the Prague 5 municipality. There had been a quarrel of the ownership including law court treatments lasting many years. In December 2009 has finally the Mozart. Community received back the villa Bertramka, however in a desolate condition without the precious relics after Mozart and the spouse Dušek. The building was for some months closed for public. The admission of public started only in this June. They are installed only 3 rooms. In one are installed materials loaned from Czech National Theatre about the opera La Fuente Jardiniera, one of early Mozart's works. In the second room there are installed documents about John Adolf Hess, who was in the last years a great sponsor and friend of Mozart. In the 3rd, last room is an original stove and in few glass cupboards with some pictures from Mozart 's life. Bertramka is open daily from 10AM to 18PM without a day off. The entrance fee is 50,- Kč without any discount for students and seniors.

When you return from the villa Bertramka you could „jump in“ for a pleasant experience taking in hotel Mövenpick the funicular to its upper part on a hill, where you could enjoy a wonderful view on Prague in a terrace cafeteria

There are through EMAG organised excursions to the museums of Smetana (28/7 – 14.00) and Dvořák (29/7 – 16.00). For every excursion a fee of 3 € is requested. In the following there will be described how you could visit these museums individually any time you want together with saving some money.

3) Visit to Antonin Dvořak Museum (start by public transport necessary)

You should enter the Staroměstská Metro station on green line A as described in the introductory text. You should go in the direction Depo Hostivař two stations to station Museum. There you should change for the red line C in direction Háje and go only one station to I. P. Pavlova. There you use the in this station unique escalator bringing you to the station upper platform where there are 5(!) exits to various streets. You enter the first on the left hand side (without escalator) on the table described as **Směr: Náměstí I.P. Pavlova. Bus 291. Karlovo nám. museum A. Dvořáka.** You cross then by a pedestrian passage with traffic lights the main heavy loaded street Sokolská and turn left. After about 30 m you come to the street Na bojišti, which sharp-angle-wise joins the main Sokolovská street. On the opposite corner is the Hotel Da Vinci. In the middle of this short street at No 14 you will notice two signboards with a figure of a funny soldier U kalicha, Pivnice u Švejka, Toepfer + bratr. It is the famous pub-restaurant known from the antimilitaristic novel by Jaroslav Hašek „The Brave Soldier Švejk“. They have still there the ancient orchestrion which on a 5,- Kč coin plays the funny old songs. You continue till the end of this short street and come to the street

Ke Karlovu. You turn right and just the second house from the corner behind an ornamental fencing you find a pretty ancient villa in baroque style. It was constructed in the beginning of the 18th century by the famous architect Kilian Ignaz Dientzenhofer for the Count Jan Václav Michna as Summer House. The building in the following years had a diverse fate. For some time it served also as a popular pub called Amerika. In the year 1930 Dvořák foundation society bought this house and organised there a memorial of the great composer. There is his piano, working table, some festival costumes, photographs, pictures, also some tiny personal effects. In the first floor is a little concert hall, where in summer time are every Tuesday and Friday at 8 PM organised attractive concerts from Dvořák's works accompanied by theatre performance in traditional costumes. The seats can be reserved on telephone number 224 918 013. The price of the concert is 570,- Kč. I have been recommended a hint. If you come just a quarter an hour before the start of the concert and there still remained some free seats you could negotiate with the receptionist a price deduction down to 200,- Kč. The entrance fee for adults is 50,- Kč, for students and seniors 25,- Kč. They have open daily from 10 to 13.30 and from 14.00 to 17.30 with exception of Monday, when the staff has a day off. The museum is surrounded by a little well kept park with few sandstone figures and ornamental vases. Some benches are provided so that you can take a pleasant relaxation.

4) Visit to Bedřich Smetana museum (zero walk, just next house to EMAG conference building)

The visit to this museum cannot be even regarded as walk because you go only about 30 m from the EMAG main building in Novotného lávka 5 passing one house with a restaurant to Novotného lávka 1, where the seat of the museum is. It has been originally a waterworks-house for the Prague Old Town built at the end of the 19th century in the pseudo neo-renaissance style. In 1936 the society for building a Smetana memorial acquired the building and organised there a Smetana museum, based mainly on inheritance materials which they bought. The museum has been newly installed under modern aspects in 1998. The description of master's life is divided in 3 periods. The first his childhood in Litomyšl (born 1824) and adolescence years in Prague as well his functioning in Goteborg in Sweden for 5 years till about 1862. The second period (1862 – 1874) are the master's most active years for organising the common musical life in Prague. The last period (1875 – 1884) after becoming deaf he lived in privacy outside of Prague in Jabkenice in the house of the husband of his daughter Sophia a forest-warden Josef Schwarz. The museum has many personal effects of the composer, music sheets, correspondence, personal archive, presented is also his piano. In one room are shown musical description (partitures) of the most important master's works. By a laser operated baton the visitor can elect which work he wants to listen in sound performance. The museum is open daily from 10 to 12.00 and from 12.30 to 17.00, with exception of Tuesday when the staff has one day off. The entrance fee is 50,- Kč, 25,- Kč for students and seniors.

This itinerary for purpose of the participants of **EMAG – Prague** (28. 7 – 1. 8. 2010) has been compiled by Dr. Kristian Svoboda, maps were elaborated by Mr. Ladislav Frankl