

Jan Skácel

Milan Rúfus

Encounter

About this book

Milan Rúfus (1928–2009) and **Jan Skácel** (1922–1989) – this match is by far Berger than any rational consideration might admit... The Slovak and the Moravian poet have been coupled on this superb disc by Dada Klementová. This excellent pianist, composer and musician, in various connotations, has written countless songs and a number of musicals, while having succeeded as a teacher at the Janáček Academy, she took an important part in the education of musical singers — the best in Czechia and Slovakia. She has always helped the others, be it for success, performance, career, or break-through — and only too naturally she forgets about herself... Having heard her musicals, I cannot help wondering how such music in its modest and noise-free beauty can have stayed aside the clamorous fair of show-business and performing art with ever more sales of recycled goods. Actually, I also recycle by writing these lines for the second time, in a slightly weakened form, the bashful author having refused the first version. But I repeat: Dada Klementová writes genuine, beautiful and soulful music. Let her Skácel and Rúfus win their enthusiastic listeners and herself more welldeserved recognition!

Miloš Štědroň

Some time ago Jiří Bulis composed a song „Angels whom I meet“. It had no words, the title would do. I have always felt that there must be more of them around us than we hope. Just perceive... Some sing, some write poems, or simply do something for the others. Sonya Jány inspired me to the extent that I dared reaching for the poetry of Jan Skácel. And she helped me to learn poems by Milan Rúfus. I felt bewitched in much the same way as by the works of Skácel. And the idea was born of an imaginary encounter of both poets who may have never met during their lifetime, but had quite something in common...

Dada Klementová

Translating poetry is an exciting adventure. And I am thankful to Dada Klementová for having invited me to embark on such adventurous trip. Not in a dream would I dare translating Jan Skácel. His gorgeous Czech, his ellipses and compressions, the way he sees the world... Yes, all that should resound in musical inspiration or in subtle graphic art, but in another language system? Is it not crumpling a butterfly in your palm? However, a verbally inspired composition deserves being given at least a door gap to the world. I decided to take the challenge as a sort of service and, moreover, as an excursion to my Czechoslovak youth. Milan Rúfus, a congenial companion of Skácel on this CD, has not confused me with his Slovak, but with his numerous puns. Just take his Lunapark. “Luna” is the Moon, an important actor in the poem, but where do I find it in Funny Fair? Or “Vážka”. This counterpart of Dragonfly both in Czech and Slovak is derived from “weighing”, “balancing”, and Rúfus makes ample use of the options – but the translator to English gets lost. Anyway, it was most amusing and I will get into excellent company appearing in the booklet, without worrying about the publisher or publicity. Let both gentlemen, Skácel and Rúfus, kindly accept my apologies for having been that very daring, and Dada Klementová my cordial thanks for the invitation.

Pavla Váňová

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Translation of poetry Pavla Váňová



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What the Angel Left Behind

Mornings,
When ravens have not been lifted from the trees
And things have not been touched,
Between two poplars, see, an angel soars,
Finishing dreams in flight,

Sings during tiny cracks of sleep.

The first who's getting in the empty street
Feels stricken by the song,
Can only guess
Without a glimpse of eye.

A greenish world
Is all the angel may have left behind.

(Jan Skácel)

First Rain of Spring

When rooks the godly hints do trust,
To mountains they are rowing.
Spring!
Sky, pay your debts, and fast.

The clouds release the sound
Of smacking rain
Onto the roofs where on their toes
Snowflakes were treading much the same,
Softly as panther goes.

The rain moves loudly.
Its minute
And tiny steps
Carves fountains in ice
Whereon it gets.

(Milan Rúfus)

Suburban Movies

Small suburb cinema, a bliss
But small as human happiness
In front of it a dusty locust

The housemaids would go there to weep
And honest tears and feelings deep
In movies when the lights go out

Leave on the lips the taste of sea

And there was love and death and grief
Horse mane on silver screen
Hearth fire that is burning down

And passion in a blazing flame

All that is rather torn and worn
And happiness is much the same
(In a small cinema forlorn)

(Jan Skácel)

Your tear

Water that is single
That's a drop of dew.
Asking Sun for leave
It must join a queue.

Water in its household,
That's the Sea, its town.
It doesn't feel like leaving.
Neither up nor down.

Droplet from the sea mass,
Rain is coming, dear.
The Sea enclosed in droplet,
Oh, it is your tear.

(Milan Rúfus)

Whose Are You, Poem...?

Simpler it really can't be told.
And yet it is too intricate.
Whose are you, poem...?
Your triumph and your misery.
Whose blueish notepad carries you?

A prophecy or pledge?
Or Joker speaking human words?
Or humid sand to fill the moulds?
Where come you from?
What is your inmost Why?
The world's cross you bear?
Are you a craving child?

Are you some pain or play?
Or playful agony are you?
A dancing Salome of self-deceit?
What are you after?
What's sought here — is it trick?
Beguiling words that each itself deceives?

And time will bang its heavy door
Behind all timely issues of the day.
Beyond eternal shores of modesty
Where geese are tended by a child —
The only sacrament that's worth the name

And you?
Do you still know the shyness of a deer?
You cannot hold the candle to the wonder
The less you have, the costlier you wear,
Eager to grab
Things out of reach for you?

Has something aged in us?
Or has it flown south?
Is all consumed, all earthly goods are spent?

Then, poem, I can't smell
Your sweet and divine body,
I only recollect the perfume scent.

(Milan Rúfus)