

We are starting this series of performances, and I thought I'll take you on a little walk from the river to the studio to the auditorium where I'll be performing something that I was still working on yesterday evening, a new composition. A composition for me is a process – a never-ending process actually. The process ends when I have no idea how to make it better. The question is always, could I improve it, or did I get used to it? Did I get used to the way it is? When you get used to something, it's ok.

Here we are again, in the auditorium, the Willow Place Auditorium. And this is the first segment of the Ostrava Center for New Music series, which is called "The World: Ostravska banda Solos." "The World" because the contributions will come from all over. I'm going to start this series, and I'm going to perform a new piece, a piece of music which I actually started to compose right before this whole mayhem with the virus happened. So when I think of it, what I do, how I work – and I rarely talk about it because I'm not actually sure if anybody is even interested in that, and I'm not sure what help it would be to anyone – but when I think of it, I actually put my pieces together as a collage. A collage of independently composed segments. They sometimes come one after one another, and sometimes together. So, very often I start to write something, I compose something, and it doesn't get anywhere. And I compose something and then I'm starting to do a particular piece – and that's another thing, one has a task to do, like a piece for violin and chamber orchestra, and that's already not something in the air, it's something you have to think about differently. So, I remember this part, this thing, and I start to combine it and make changes. I started to do the piece, and then the idea emerged to do the series. I first thought, okay, I will perform something, what should I do? Well I'll find something I can still play. I used to be a flutist, now I am playing the flute but it's a shadow of what it used to be when I practiced every day. That's the problem, you can't really compose and maintain really good efficiency in performing on an instrument, because that means performing or practicing and playing a lot of different music. Now, I did that in the past and so I have this kind of a savings account of technique, which I developed and is still somewhat with me. But to continue doing this is a problem because it interferes – not playing the flute, but playing particular music – interferes with one's own work. So, anyway, I was thinking, what can I contribute? And then I thought, oh, I started this piece, which initially was thought to be for strings, a string section in unison. So, the range went down to G below middle C, because that's the lowest pitch the violins can play, and the violas can still play and the cellos and all this. So, I started to do this, and then I thought, well maybe I can continue working on this composition I started, and play it on flute instead. But flute would be one fourth above. And then I thought, no, I can take the alto flute that goes down to G. So, one thing led to another, and I was really working very hard on this piece. It's something different than I have ever done, very different. Maybe the situation which we are in, me being alone day after day in the studio, nobody around in the whole building, enabled me to really concentrate on thinking about the piece. It's very interesting to do something which goes from one note to another note to another note, and then you have to decide, should it be this note or that note, and you don't really know why. But somehow it settles on this note, and then the next note and each note has some duration, and there are pauses. And it's so interesting, when you have it all done, then you go over it and you change everything. And you go over it and you change everything. And you go over it and you change everything. And when you make changes, it's so interesting, when you make one

note different, you have to change other notes which come after that. So, this is what I'm going to do. And the title, I was searching for a title and then one of our friends passed away, and Renata suggested, why don't you call it "Milena," so maybe I will call it "Milena" if it stays for flute. And I was thinking it could be performed on an English horn, basset horn, maybe even bassoon, definitely a wind instrument or the string instruments in unison. Playing it on the flute, I thought I would dedicate it to the memory of František Čech, my flute teacher, without whom I would not be here today playing this instrument.

Petr Kotík, April 25, 2020, Brooklyn, New York