

IN SEARCH OF THE WARM EARTH

by Virgil Thompson



Father loved many things but nothing more than the wounds, large and small, inflicted by an existence of obligation. I did not suppose he suffered in the end a crisis of conscience. His last days and nights at Marsinek were darkened by rage that freed his tongue and exploded like a grenade. In 2001 he would not have found an audience with which to argue the sins of the faithless and unlearned. It no longer mattered that he rejected in every sense the proclamation of the Federal Justiciary that wanted his death.

My own journey to Marsinek was not so different. Marsinek was an army station in the northern province of Stanovia. The base had been a summer palace for Pruzan royals since 1887 when Alexander Borodin, my ancestor, commissioned it following the Pruzan Rebellion. Father was at first held inside the officers' quarters. At Marsinek the officers' barracks was a block of white stone as forlorn as the limestone cliffs that chased Stanovia's northern sky. The barracks held an eastward corner of parade ground over which soldiers on horseback with raised swords and the colors of the provinces of Pruzany-Cerjenevo drilled in the afternoons of my boyhood.