

# **Preserving Sound Cultural Heritage Links between the USA and the Czech Republic**

by the National Museum of the Czech Republic

## **Title: Mapping Early Sound Recordings of Czech Settlers in the USA**

The National Museum of the Czech Republic has commenced a large-scale research project into transfer procedures for historical audio recordings (phonograph cylinders and 78 rpm phonograph records). The goal of this project is to preserve sound cultural heritage through recordings held in the collections of the National Museum, of which a large proportion correlates with movements of emigrants who traveled from Czech lands to the United States during the late 19th and early 20th century. The rationale for this project is that historic sound recordings play a pivotal role in cultural preservation efforts and serve as a bond between individuals and their descendants. Despite the contributions of Czech immigrants to the US, the audio heritage of this diverse immigrant group is forgotten, preventing future generations from understanding a key part of their cultural heritage.

A major part of the project is the preservation of the original sound carriers (many of which were imported to the US by distributors such as Joseph Jiran and recording artists such as Edward Jedlička) and digitization of the audio content. We would like to request financial support from the Mellon Foundation financial support to create an ethnomusicological history of Czechs in the US, as well as to uncover Czech recordings held in recorded sound archives in the US. Having already made contact with many US institutions, we would like to offer a historical outlook that unites the cultural heritage of citizens of both the Czech Republic and the US. The breadth of our research will capture the journeys of US immigrants—tracking movements and stories of people through recordings, music sellers, and oral histories—presenting them as individual stories threaded across the states.

Outcomes of our research include: a website showcasing individual histories of Czech immigrants through audiovisual methods; published research into sheet music and its connection to the movement of Czech immigrants; a directory of Czech music distributors of the 19th and 20th centuries; a virtual library of sound recordings which traces the rich history, contributions, and integration of Czech people into American life.



# MAPPING

EARLY SOUND RECORDINGS  
OF CZECH SETTLERS IN THE USA



Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
of the Czech Republic



NATIONAL  
MUSEUM