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**Theatre and Music Performances at the castles of Telč and Náměšť nad Oslavou. A contribution to the 19<sup>th</sup> century history of opera at aristocratic courts in Moravia and Austrian Silesia**

The latest extending research continuously enlarges the list of aristocratic residences in Moravia and Austrian Silesia where music ensembles existed in the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century. Their number draws near to thirty cases now.<sup>1</sup> Answering the question how many residences had operatic performances, we can get the following list: beside the court of the Olomouc bishops, it was Holešov (Holeschau), Hradec nad Moravicí (Grätz bei Troppau), Jánský Vrch (Johannisberg bei Jauernig), Jaroměřice nad Rokytnou (Jaromeritz), Brno (Brünn), Slezské Rudoltice (Roßwald) and, perhaps, Velké Losiny (Groß Ullersdorf). But the only castles with regular opera performances were probably only two: Jaromeritz (with František Václav Míča as the Kapellmeister) and Johannisberg (where Dittersdorf was active). Nevertheless, both these centres had finished their activities before the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Were there any aristocratic residences in Moravia, where operas were performed even after the year 1800? Surprisingly, the answer is yes.

There were two such places in the music history of that country. The first residence was the castle at Náměšť nad Oslavou, a smaller town about forty kilometres west of Brno. The second one was the castle in the town of Telč, situated another fifty kilometres west of Brno.

Let us have a closer look at these two cases. The music history of the Náměšť chateau has already been described in several articles<sup>2</sup>. We can sum up the most important facts now.

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<sup>1</sup> Jiří Sehnal, Die adeligen Musikkapellen im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert in Mähren, in: Studies in Music History presented to H. C. Robbins Landon on his seventieth birthday, London (Thames and Hudson) 1996, p. 195-217.- See also: Jiří Sehnal, Vztah české barokní šlechty k hudbě a hudebníkům [The relation of Czech Baroque aristocracy to music and musicians], in: Opera historica 5, České Budějovice 1996, p. 535-547.

<sup>2</sup> Karel Vetterl, Bohumír Rieger a jeho doba [B. Rieger and his time], Časopis Matice moravské [Journal of the Moravian association] 30, 1929, pp. 45-86, 435-500.- Jan Racek, Oratorien und Kantaten von Georg Friedrich Händel auf dem mährischen Schlosse von Náměšť, Sborník prací filosofické fakulty brněnské

The beginning of the music culture at the Náměšť' castle is connected with the name of count Johann Philipp Werdenberg in the first decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Also his successor, count Wenzel Adrian Enckevoirt, had his music ensemble<sup>3</sup>. But the man we are mostly interested in was count Heinrich Wilhelm Haugwitz (1770-1842).

He came to Náměšť' in 1794, when he married the countess Sophie von Fries. They both were musically educated; the count, as a pupil of the Viennese violinist Franz Kriebich, liked to play string quartets. The countess played the harp; she was also a keen music lover and listener, having her own music ensemble of about 50 musicians at her own chateau in Světlov (south-eastern Moravia). Karel Vetterl supposes her to be the person who persuaded count Haugwitz to found a music ensemble and a choir with regular and frequent orchestral, operatic and oratorio performances at Náměšť' chateau. This plan came into existence in about 1800. The count needed a good Kapellmeister and therefore he used to contact and invite several musicians. Among them there was also Gottfried Rieger, the theatre conductor in Brno, who became the Kapellmeister of Haugwitz's ensemble in 1804. It was probably him who launched a magnificent series of music performances. Under the direction of him and his successors (Josef Ondřej Novotný 1809-1820 and Jan Šandera 1820-1842) there were numerable performances of various operas and instrumental music at the beginning; from 1808 the works of Gluck started to prevail. Typical for the last period is an orientation of repertoire almost exclusively to Händel (all his operas and oratorios were translated by the count himself). This extraordinary development ends with the count's death in 1842.<sup>4</sup>

The other above mentioned place was the town of Telč with the famous Renaissance castle. Its music history goes far back to the past<sup>5</sup>,

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university [Collection of works of the philosophical faculty at Brno university] VIII, Brno 1959, F 3, p. 46.- Jan Racek, Skladby Georga Friedricha Händla na zámku v Náměšti nad Oslavou [Compositions by G.F. Händel at the castle in Náměšť' nad Oslavou], Časopis Moravského muzea [Journal of the Moravian museum] LVIII, 1973, pp. 141-162.

<sup>3</sup> See footnote No. 1.

<sup>4</sup> See footnote No. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Petr Koukal, Dvě poznámky k hudebnímu dění na zámku v Telči [Two remarks to the music history of Telč castle], in: Studie Muzea Kroměřížska 1991, pp. 46-47.

but the activities we are interested in are connected with the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Then the Telč domain was owned by count Leopold I Podstatzky-Lichtenstein (1763-1813). He is said to be the founder of the music ensemble already in 1804<sup>6</sup>. He was also a keen theatre lover; it seems that the dramatic traditions at Telč castle under his patronage are older than the musical ones. Unfortunately, the archival sources are mostly missing, being destroyed by the fire in 1964 and by the insensitive castle administrators in the time of the Communist regime. In spite of it, there is some evidence showing that the first period of music activities at the castle consisted of irregular, occasional performances, as e.g. the performance of the Cantata on the arrival celebrations of the count Leopold in 1806<sup>7</sup>. Such events went on until 1813 when Leopold I died, leaving four underage children. The widow, Maria Theresia, married the count Karl Hardegg<sup>8</sup> soon after (1815).

From our point of view, one important thing happened a year later - in 1816, when a new tutor for the Podstatzky-Lichtenstein's children was engaged. His name was Josef Tobiášek and he became an influential personage for the music life at this noble family in her Viennese palace and Telč castle too.

Tobiášek (1792-1846) was a well-educated musician<sup>9</sup>. He could play various music instruments from his childhood. He was also interested in sacred music very early; as a child he often copied various compositions. He also used to travel far away to hear an outstanding performance. During his studia humaniora in Litomyšl he organized a student symphonic orchestra and a choir (playing symphonies of Haydn,

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<sup>6</sup> There are many short notices on the music ensemble of the Podstatzky-Lichtensteins in Telč, but no substantial study has been written yet. The paper of Ladislav Fučík, read on the conference Musicological Dialogues 1980 in Jaroměřice n.R., has not been published. The only larger (but only newspaper) article on this topic is: Ladislav Fučík, Hudební putování krajem pod Javořicí [Musical travels around the surroundings of Javořice], Jiskra (weekly), Jihlava 1983-1984, pp. 33-38.

<sup>7</sup> Moravský zemský archiv Brno [Moravian State Archives], fond (holding) Family archives of the Podstatzky-Lichtensteins, Nr. 431.

<sup>8</sup> Gregor Wolny, Die Markgrafschaft Mähren, Bd. VI, Brünn 1842, S. 481.

<sup>9</sup> Constant von Wurzbach, Biographisches Lexikon des Kaiserthums Oesterreich, 45. Teil, Wien 1882, S. 217-219.

Mozart and Beethoven, classical masses, etc.). When Tobiášek attended the priest seminary at Hradec Králové, he was also a pupil of the cathedral regens chori Franz Volkert, who taught him orchestration.

At the age of 21, Tobiášek came to Vienna to study law. He devoted his spare time fully to improving his music abilities while studying composition with Antonio Salieri and listening to lectures of Raphael Georg Kiesewetter. When the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde was founded (1813), Tobiášek became immediately one of its performing members. Shortly after he definitely decided to give up the career of a Catholic priest. After finishing law studies he started his work as a tutor at the Podstatzky-Lichtenstein family in 1816.

During that time the music activities at Telč castle (and probably at the Viennese palace too) went on. It was Tobiášek who provided the music events. On the preserved part<sup>10</sup> of the opera *Der Dorfbarbier* by Johann Baptist Schenk there is the following inscription: "Tobiaschek, 2<sup>ten</sup> Juli 1817". It was in the period when count Leopold I was dead and the heir of the domain, Leopold II, was only 16, being under the wardship of his mother and stepfather.

It would be quite interesting to know who insisted then on continuing the theatre and music activities in Telč; unfortunately we do not know if it was the countess with her new husband or young Leopold II. We can even think of a certain influence of Tobiášek, whose strong music enthusiasm may have played an important role. He kept the position of the Schloßtheaterkapellmeister from 1820 at least<sup>11</sup> being also active as a composer.

The most important period of the Telč castle theatre started in 1825 - then count Leopold II took over the hereditary domains. At this point the educational results of the Tobiášek's tutorial and music educational work must be stressed: perhaps all the children of that noble family became keen on music. Two brothers, Leopold I and Adolph, later reached the honorary title of "k. k. Hofmusikgraf", as the last ones in the history of the Austrian Empire<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Státní zámek Telč, zámecká knihovna [State castle, Telč, castle library].

<sup>11</sup> Ladislav Fučík, *Hudební putování*, p. 36.

<sup>12</sup> Christian d'Elvert, *Die Grafen, Freiherren und Ritter Podstatzky von Prusinovic. Notizenblatt, Brünn 1878, Heft 9, S. 68.*

Leopold II supported various activities. From the thirties, there were many genres performed at Telč castle: dramas, plays with music, vaudevills, concerts, singspiels and operas (as *Der Freischütz*, *Zampa*, *Puritaner* etc.). But a detailed list of them would be beyond the scope of this paper. We can only note that the last operatic performance was in 1844. The unexpected, early death of the count in 1848 closed that golden age of the Telč castle theatre. Its activities ended definitively in 1864.

Thinking of these two aristocratic residences and their operatic performances, we must ask ourselves the following question: what were the grounds for such a late occurrence of this phenomenon, more typical for the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century?

Let us notice first the general situation in the historical Czech lands of that time. The great number of castles with musical performances decreased after 1750. Only Austrian Silesia was the place where (in the relatively peaceful time after the Silesian Wars) new aristocrats' music ensembles were formed. The best known example is Jánský Vrch (Johannisberg) at Javorník (Jauernig) with Dittersdorf as Kapellmeister. Austrian Silesia was also the place where one important cultural and social phenomenon is documented. The originally aristocratic music theatre of the bishop Schaffgotsch was changed to a civic institution run by the Armenfond (a fund for the poor) in the town of Javorník (Jauernig) in 1785<sup>13</sup>.

Such a development was typical for the turn from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. While aristocratic music centres were coming to an end, civic music institutions began to appear. One of the reasons for such a trend was connected to the change of the social situation. In 1781, the Serfdom Abolishment Edict was confirmed by the Emperor Joseph II. In one aspect it affected aristocratic music ensembles too. Before this Edict, it could have been a big advantage for a serf to be musically talented and to become a member of a castle ensemble as a servant. But after the serfdom abolition this motivation disappeared; and besides that talented musicians wanted to have their freedom, they did not want to

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<sup>13</sup> Rudolf Zuber, Karel Ditters z Dittersdorfu, Šumperk 1970, p. 7.- See also Werner Bein, Jauernig und Freiwaldau: Dittersdorf im österreichischen Schlesien, in: Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf. Sein Wirken in Österreichisch-Schlesien und seine letzten Jahre in Böhmen, Ausstellungskatalog, 3. Bd., Würzburg 1993, S. 17.

be servants any longer. For aristocrats, the Edict cut off an easily available and cheap source of musicians and singers<sup>14</sup>.

The shift of musical life from an autocratic noble environment to a liberal civic one was the most significant factor in the structural change of musical life at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. How come then that there were operatic performances at the aristocratic residences of Náměšť' and Telč so late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century? Let us have a closer look at them from this point of view.

It will be useful to define the most important features of both aristocratic and civic music cultures first; then we can compare them with the real situation at Telč and Náměšť'.

- 1) Economical conditions were always the ground for any activity on the field of fine arts. Only rich noblemen could afford music (and especially operatic) performances at their residences. Both Telč and Náměšť' were owned by rich noble families. The father of count Heinrich Wilhelm Haugwitz belonged to the fifteen richest men among hundreds of Moravian aristocrats in 1785. The father of Leopold I Podstatzky-Lichtenstein was a medium-rich nobleman, but his property was quickly growing towards the end of the century<sup>15</sup>. Civic cultural institutions as town theatres and concert houses depended on the number of rich citizens attending their performances. In fact, they could survive only in larger towns as Prague, Brno, Olomouc and Opava. Telč with its 4 289 inhabitants and especially Náměšť' with its 1 806 inhabitants in 1850<sup>16</sup> were, from this point of view, small towns.
- 2) The access of the audience was usually restricted at noble residences where performances were given for the owner and his guests only. On the other hand, civic institutions depended exclusively on the open access for all people; therefore, they had to promote their

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<sup>14</sup> Zdeňka Pilková, *Doba osvícenského absolutismu* [The time of enlightened Absolutism] (1740-1810), in: *Hudba v českých dějinách* [Music in Czech history], Praha 1983, p. 234ff.

<sup>15</sup> Jiří Kroupa, *Alchymie štěstí* [The Alchemy of Happiness], Brno 1986, pp. 19-20.

<sup>16</sup> *Retrospektivní lexikon obcí ČSSR* [Retrospective Dictionary of Municipalities in Czechoslovakia], Praha 1978, pp. 730 and 758.

events widely - with posters, newspaper announcements, invitation cards, etc.

In Náměšť, the access was open for all people from the town and its surroundings. The Telč performances were also open for the public. And they were even given a special promotion with printed posters; this is a very unique way for such an aristocratic enterprise.

- 3) Entrance fee was always asked at civic cultural institutions. At residences, the noble guests certainly had a free entrance.

In Náměšť the count ordered an entrance free for all the visitors without any difference. The listeners were even given a libretto with program notes. In Telč sometimes certain money contributions were asked; but the collected sum was most often given to charitable purposes.

- 4) Also the social position of musicians and singers differed. At residences, they were servants first of all. They were paid for other duties than musical ones. At the civic establishments, musicians were engaged and paid their salaries for playing music or singing - they became professionals.

Although count Haugwitz's musicians were invited and paid for each performance separately in the first period, later, about 1800, the count decided to found his own music ensemble with its members as his servants. Nevertheless, singers and especially soloists were always invited and paid for each performance. When some larger music production was given also other musicians from the Náměšť surroundings or from Brno and Vienna were engaged; they were paid for their professional performances.

Such a "mixed" way of engagement of musicians is also supposed in Telč, but here the evidence is still missing. It seems that both places had some problems with the Kapellmeisters who probably preferred an independent position of a free citizen to being a servant. It concerns Rieger in Náměšť, who left his position of the count's Kapellmeister and became a music director and teacher in Brno again. Also Tobiášek gave up the tutor's post after the count's coming of age. He became a music teacher and schoolmaster in Telč.

- 5) Frequency of performances is the last important differentiating feature. Performances at castles were mostly occasional. A typical case

was the above mentioned Johannisberg, where Dittersdorf's new operas were performed e.g. on the occasion of the bishop's birthday. An analogy is known at the castle in Slezské Rudoltice (Roßwald) too<sup>17</sup>. On the other hand, performances in town theatres or concert halls had to be regular and frequent as much as possible, using the advantages of subscription.

Having a look at Náměšť' performances in their topmost period, we can see their unbelievable frequency: in 1837, there was one performance every week (on Sundays): masses, oratorios, cantatas, anthems, requiem, etc. When we consider the Telč castle theatre with its dramatic plays, we can also speak about regular performances, although they were not so frequent there as in Náměšť'. It was a real Schloßtheater where the music ensemble was only a part of it.

Summing up - in Náměšť' and in Telč especially, there were some features rather similar to the civic culture than to the aristocratic one. We can observe an interesting development: because of a lack of conditions for any civic institutions, these two aristocratic residences began to accept the function as the towns cultural centres, serving for the citizens too. That can be stressed by the following fact: the castles provided not only theatrical but also concert performances for wide audiences. Two examples: the famous Viennese cellist Anton Kraft was often invited to give concerts in Náměšť'; the popular violinist Leopold Jansa played in Telč.

Count Haugwitz's musical activities continued to be more conservative, i.e. aristocratic which is reflected by the above mentioned repertoire. Also personal reasons may have played a role: he divorced his wife and lived from then on with his children only. He may have needed to create a certain refuge and he probably found it in the music of Gluck and Händel.

Count Leopold II Podstatzky-Lichtenstein was much younger (born 31 years later) and therefore had grown up under different cultural conditions and environment. He must have been strongly influenced by his

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<sup>17</sup> Petr Koukal, The first known opera performance at the count Hodic's castle in Slezské Rudoltice, in: *Die Musik der Deutschen im Osten und ihre Wechselwirkung mit den Nachbarn*, Kongreßbericht, Bonn 1994, S. 399.



tutor and music teacher Josef Tobiášek, a representative of the new class of the 19<sup>th</sup> century musicians (remember his membership in the Viennese Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde). Leopold himself had very good contacts to the music society in the near town of Jihlava - Iglauer Musikverein (founded already in 1819) as one of its patrons<sup>18</sup>. The cooperation of that civic society and the Telč castle theatre was quite close and helpful. The count also knew the music life of Vienna, where he stayed quite often; some of his contacts with Viennese musicians are documented. All that probably influenced the music repertoire at the Telč castle; in the preserved materials there are - besides symphonies, overtures, singspiels and operas - also pieces such as Polonaises, Walzer, Galoppen and Tänze. This is an unmistakable sign - the residence music of the Telč castle began to change to salon music.

Summing up, we can see that the castles of Náměšť and Telč bore the functions of both residential and town music centres. They appear as an interesting example of a certain transitional model of the music life of small Czech towns in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>18</sup> Theodor Fischer, Das Musikleben Iglau im 19. Jahrhundert, in: Deutscher Theaterverein Iglau, Festschrift, Iglau 1929, S. 110.