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The Cecilian Music Society in Ústí nad Orlicí, East Bohemia

In the year 1903, the oldest existing Bohemian music society, the Tonkünstler-Wittwen-und-Waisen-Societät, founded in Prague in March 1803, finally ceased all its music activities; it continued its work just as a pension fund up to its final closing in 1930¹. The Cecilská hudební jednota (Cecilian Music Society), founded in November 1803 in Ústí nad Orlicí (Wildenschwert), East Bohemia, was at that time, still thriving. The ways in which the period social, political and cultural circumstances reflected in its work, are of special interest for anybody researching Bohemian music history².

¹For the history of Prague's Society of Musicians cf. Satzungen der zu ihrer eigenen, dann ihrer Wittwen und Waisen Versorgung vereinigten prager Tonkünstler-Gesellschaft, welche mit höchsten Hofdekrete vom 1sten März 1803 gnädigst bestätigt worden sind, Prag 1810; Emanuel Antonín Meliš, O působení jednoty hudebních umělců Pražských k podporování vdov a sirotek [On the activities of Prague's Society of Musicians], in: Dali-bor. Časopis pro hudbu, divadlo a umění vůbec 6, 1853, no. 11, pp. 81–82; Josef Proksch, biographisches Denkmal aus dessen Nachlaßpapieren, Reichenberg-Prag 1874; Jan Branberger, Das Konservatorium in Prag (1811–1911), Prag 1911; Milan Poštolka, Libreta strahovské hudební sbírky [Librettos in the Strahov Music Collection], in: Miscellanea Musicologica XXV–XXVI, Praha 1975; Jitka Ludvová, Německý hudební život v Praze 1880–1939 [German Music Life in Prague 1880–1939], in: Uměnovědné studie IV, Praha 1983, pp. 51–183; Z hudebního života v Praze ve 2. polovině 19. století [From Prague's late 19th Century Music Life], 1. vol. 1842–1865, in: Edice dokumentů z fondu Státního ústředního archivu v Praze 13, Praha 1984; Michaela Freemanová-Kopecká, Zur Händel-Rezeption in der Böhmischen Ländern in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart, in: Händel-Jahrbuch 35, Halle a.d.S. 1989, pp. 119–133; eadem, Prague's Society of Musicians (1803–1903/1930) and its role in the music and social life of the city, in: Hudební věda XL/1, 2003, pp. 3–28.

²For the history of the Cecilská hudební jednota v Ústí nad Orlicí cf. especially: Josef Zábrodský, Paměti Cecilské hudební jednoty v Ústí nad Orlicí, vydané na památku stoletého jejího trvání [Memoir of the Cecilian Music Society in Ústí nad Orlicí, published to commemorate one hundred years of its existence], Ústí nad Orlicí 1905, and Věra Seko-

The development of music making in Ústí nad Orlicí followed the same pattern as in many other towns under the Bohemian Crown. In the 16th, or possibly already in the late 15th, century a “literary brotherhood” (“societas litteratorum”) was founded there, to care for the promotion of sacred music. Its members performed in the town church, at that time Protestant, together with the pupils and teachers of the local Latin school.

After the Thirty Years War, the church was forced into Catholicism. In 1747 the “litterati” became a “pious brotherhood”. Most of such organisations closed down between 1783 and 1786, during the Church Reform of Joseph II, which brought the dissolution of monasteries and restrictions on music making during the church services. Surprisingly, the property of the Ústí nad Orlicí “litterati” was not confiscated. Between 1786 and 1795, they were hiding among the congregation, sitting on special seats allocated to them. Their 1588 hymnbook was still in use in the early 19th century (the last date registered there is 1822).

By the year 1800, sacred music in the Ústí nad Orlicí town church started flourishing again. To support its development, the local citizens decided to set up a Cecilian Music Society. From its beginnings, the Cecilian Music Society was able to perform not only vocal, but also instrumental music (partially banned from the churches by the Viennese Court Decree of April 6th, 1784, which allowed the use of music instruments only on Sundays; on

tová/Jarmila Süsserová/Tomislav Volek/Josef Šebesta/Michaela Freemanová/Marie Borkovcová/Václav Uhlíč: 200 let trvání Cecilské hudební jednoty v Ústí nad Orlicí, sborník příspěvků z konference “Měšťanská kultura a hudební tradice v Ústí nad Orlicí” [Two Hundred Years of the Cecilská Hudební jednota v Ústí nad Orlicí, Proceedings of the Conference “Town Culture and Music Traditions in Ústí nad Orlicí”], Ústí nad Orlicí 2004. For the Society’s further development cf. Zdeněk Hybner, Hudební tradice Ústí nad Orlicí a Cecilská hudební Jednota [Music Traditions of Ústí nad Orlicí and the Cecilian Music Society], seminar work, Faculty of Letters, Charles University, Prague 1996; Jana Žáková, Duchovní hudba na Ústeckoorlicku [Sacred Music in the Ústí nad Orlicí Region], diploma work, Pedagogical Faculty of the Masaryk University, Brno 2000; Kateřina Kalousková, Cecilská hudební jednota v Ústí nad Orlicí [The Cecilian Music Society in Ústí nad Orlicí], diploma work, Pedagogical Faculty, Hradec Králové 2006.

work days, only the organ was allowed). The first town band was founded in Ústí nad Orlicí in 1507; regular instrumental playing during church services is recorded in the 17th and 18th centuries; from the 1780s to the 1790s, local instrumentalists gathered in an independent *Múzická společnost* (Music Society). The foundation of the Cecilian Music Society increased this development, including the foundation of a separate “Turkish” band, using the instruments discarded by the Austrian army and presented to the Society by one of its members. Ústí citizens considered Society membership an honour; those who were unable to master an instrument, or sing in the choir, became supporting members. Apart from performing music in the church, there were other occasions when music skills could be demonstrated: moving the money chest to a new elder’s house in a cortege accompanied by music, as well as town festivities (such as the installation of the mayor), or serenades played as a tribute to people of merit. Furthermore, there were concerts as well as music visits to other towns and, starting in the 20th century, also visits to other countries. Last, but not least, the annual Cecilian gathering presented another occasion for performances.

Around the mid-19th century, on the eve of St Cecilia’s day, schoolboys performed concerts of chamber music in citizens’ houses. In later decades, the festivities of St Cecilia’s day were preceded on its eve by a banquet, during which new members presented their admittance music performance. Accounts were submitted, and the evening concluded with a concert of chamber or orchestral and choral music (sometimes also by a humorous theatre performance, or poetry recitation). On the day itself, music was performed during a festive Mass in the morning, and at the following dinner. In the evening, entertainment and dance, to which the wives of the members were invited, concluded the day. The final annual accounting on the next day was followed by another entertainment.

For the first five decades of the existence of the Society, there are no records of its work. Up to 1849 the pages of its Memorial Book, procured in 1803, are left blank. The repertoire performed is known from the Society music collection, today comprising of more than two thousand works, such as Mass Ordinaries and Propers, Christmas and Easter compositions, funeral music, Vespers, Salve

Reginas, Regina coelis, Alma redemptoris, Te Deums, Litanies, and other sacred works, accompanied by a small group of secular compositions including several pieces of salon and entertainment music and operatic choruses and arias, arranged for church use (Peter Cornelius, Bedřich Smetana, Giuseppe Verdi and Richard Wagner). From the three operas, performed in the 1840s by members of the Cecilian Society as part of activities of the local drama society, performed in 1842, only one score, namely *Dráteník* by František Škroup (author of the Czech national anthem), survived. The other two works, written by Etienne Nicolas Méhul (*Joseph*, staged in 1841), and Carl Maria Weber (*Der Freischütz*, 1844), were both performed in Czech translation³.

Up to today, most of the collection is in the possession of the Cecilian Music Society. Its fragmentary documents, stored in the District Archive in Ústí nad Orlicí, suggest that, in the early 20th century, parts of the collection were transferred to the Town Museum on a long time loan basis (other music was transferred there earlier, due to the late 19th century Cecilian Music Reform (see later). In the 1960s, the Museum closed down. Its collections were partly divided amongst other museums, partly saved by the locals. This might have been the origin of today's, not yet researched, collection of music and relevant documents, possessed by the District Archive. In 1997, several compositions written by the local composer and active member of the Cecilian Society, Alois Hnilička, as well as other pieces of music, were given by a private donor to the reopened Town Museum which had regained its activity⁴.

³For the history of the Ústí nad Orlicí drama society cf. Paměti ochotnického divadla města Ústí nad Orlicí od prvních počátků až po založení spolku Vicena, District Archives in Ústí nad Orlicí, Cecilian Society papers, box 1. Dle zachovaných památek a získaných zpráv od pamětníků divadla sestavil Jan Mazánek [Memoir of the Amateur Drama Society of the Town Ústí nad orlicí, from its beginnings up to the Foundation of the Vicena Drama Society. Based on Surviving Memorabilia and Memoirs, Assembled by Jan Mazánek] (Ms., c. 1920–1930). The score of František Škroup's *Dráteník* is today to be found in the District Archives in Ústí nad Orlicí, Cecilian Society papers, box 1).

⁴Cf. District Archives in Ústí nad Orlicí, Cecilian Society papers, box 1; Town Museum in Ústí nad Orlicí, compositions by Alois Hnilička (Mss.,

The Ústí scores cover the time span of the late 18th to the late 20th centuries. The early repertoire is typical for the smaller places in the Bohemian Lands at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries: Bohemian and Austrian music, mainly by composers from Prague (such as Franz Xaver Brixi, Jan Lohelius Oelschlägel, Augustin Schenkirz, Jan Evangelista Antonín Koželuh and Kaje-tan Vogl), as well as other places in Bohemia (the Lobkowitz and Liechtenstein Kapellmeisters Antonio Casimir Cartellieri and Jan Prachensky), Vienna (Johann Georg Albrechtsberger, Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf, Johann Joseph Fux, Joseph Leopold Eybler, Leopold Hofmann, Johann Georg Lickl, Ferdinando Paer, Wenzel Pichl, Franz Xaver Pokorny, Georg Joseph Reuter, Vincenzo Righini, Franz Tuma, and Johann Baptist Vaňhal), and other Austrian towns (Franz Joseph Aumann and Ambros Rieder). A number of works were written by Joseph and Michael Haydn (Joseph Haydn's oratorio *Die vier Jahreszeiten*, translated into Czech, enjoyed great popularity in Ústí since its first performance there in 1823; in 1824 the Society acquired its arrangement into *Missa de Oratorio*). Other popular works in Ústí were *Die sieben letzten Worte* and *Die Schöpfung*. Interestingly, relatively few works by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Ludwig van Beethoven (his *Christus am Oelberge*, copied in 1829, with underlaid Czech words, was, however, given each Easter, from 1851) are listed. Music by composers living in Germany (Georg Joseph Vogler and Carl Maria von Weber) and Italian music (Luigi Cherubini and Giovanni Paisiello) were a rarity.

For most of the 19th century, this pattern did not change; newly acquired music was again mainly written by composers from Prague (Robert Führer, Zikmund Josef Kolečovský, Albín Maschek, Ignaz Nitsch, Johann Nepomuk Škroup, Wenzel Johann Tomaschek, Wenzel Heinrich Veit and Johann August Vitásek) and Vienna (Franz Bühler, Carl Czerny, Anton Diabelli, Joseph Drechsler, Johann Nepomuk Hummel, Joseph Preindl, Ignaz von Seyfried, Johann Baptist Schiedermayr, Franz Schubert, Friedrich Starke, Johann Wenzel Hugo Vorzischek and Ignaz von

shelf-marks H 2182, 2183, 2184, 2185, 2186, 2188, 2189, 2191 and 2193), and Emil Waldteufel (prints, issued by Litolff, shelf-marks H 2592 and 2596).

Seyfried). The main sources of music were bequests and donations – by active and honorary members, as well as Society supporters. The collection was extended by Charles Gounod's *Ave Maria*, presented to the Society in 1896 by its honorary member, Prague opera singer Jan Ludvík Lukes, and sacred music by Ferenc or Endre (II.) Zsasskovsky, sent to Ústí by the local native Franz H. Stehno, who worked in Jäger (Erlau). The Society remained in close contact with Prague, Brno (Brünn – especially the Augustinian Monastery, where the students from Ústí went to continue their education) and Vienna (where several musicians, born in Ústí, lived – see later). Music came from these three towns to Ústí as gifts, or to be copied. This can be shown by the types of paper found in the collection: most of the scores are written on local paper, procured from paper mills in North East Bohemia; a minority on paper had been produced in other parts of Bohemia (possibly also in Prague, which cannot as yet be proved), and on Italian paper, used for music copying in Vienna. A number of these scores were in permanent use for more than one hundred years; they testify to the changes in music and sound taste. The early 19th century parts written for trombones were re-written for “Maschintrompetten” and “Flügelhorns” in the late 19th century (probably not only because there were no trombone players available, or because visiting members of an army band took part in the performance, but also because the valve instruments were preferred from the 1820s to the 1900s all over Central Europe)⁵.

One of the well-known Prague sources of music was Fortunatus Khunt (1827–1886). He was a native of Ústí nad Orlicí, and known as a good violinist, cellist and singer. Being the abbot of the Prague Břevnov Benedictine monastery, Khunt provided the Ústí church musicians with music and also lent them music to copy from his monastery. This also holds for its affiliate, the Broumov (Braunau,

⁵For the types of paper used by the Cecilian Music Society and the late 19th century changes of the character of the collection cf. Michaela Freemanová, *Dílo Josepha a Michaela Haydna v hudebním archivu Cecilské jednoty* [Works by Joseph and Michael Haydn in the Music Archive of the Cecilian Music Society], in: *200 let trvání Cecilské hudební jednoty v Ústí nad Orlicí, sborník příspěvků z konference “Měšťanská kultura a hudební tradice v Ústí nad Orlicí”*, Ústí nad Orlicí 2004, pp. 41–50.

North Bohemia) Benedictine monastery. He cared for appointing the musically talented boys from Ústí to Břevnov monastery as choristers. Fortunatus Khunt was one of the Honorary Members of the Society; another was the Viennese violinist and composer Franz Xaver Pechatschek (1820–after 1847), son of Viennese music teacher and composer Franz Martin Pechatschek (1763–1816), a native of Ústí nad Orlicí. Franz Xaver Pechatschek also supplied the Society with music; the same applied to the violinist Leopold Jansa, another Viennese musician coming from Ústí. On the other hand, a collection of sacred and secular music, originating in Ústí nad Orlicí and taken to Austria by the tradesman Johann Khunt, who settled in Graz, was finally sold to the Musicological Department of Karl-Franzens-Universität in Graz in 1944⁶.

The influence of the Cecilian Music Society in the music life of Ústí nad Orlicí was strong – the second half of the 19th century witnessed the foundation of several new choirs and chamber music ensembles, as well as a growth in the number of concerts and other social events in which music played a major part. Important changes in the history of this steadily progressing music making, centered around the town church, were marked by the onset of the Cecilian movement, and the development of the independent Czech cultural life starting in 1860, when the issue of the so called “Emperor’s October Diploma Decree” brought relief from political and social oppressions. This led to a growth of the strength of the Czech intelligentsia, as well as to the formation of new Czech organisations and societies and the creation of a new Czech culture. In the late 19th century, in the Ústí nad Orlicí church performances and concerts, organised by the Cecilian Music Society, the Czech repertoire was dominant; a number of new works were procured from local musicians.

The Cecilian movement, which reached Bohemia in 1874, was reluctantly accepted at first, if not with hostility: instrumental music, which the purists wished to ban from churches, constituted

⁶For the Khunt music collection in Graz cf. Ingrid Schubert, *Eine Musikalien-sammlung aus dem Besitz der Familie Khunt aus Ústí nad Orlicí (Wildenschwert)* (to be published as a supplement to the miscellany: 200 let trvání Cecilské hudební jednoty v Ústí nad Orlicí, sborník příspěvků z konference “Měšťanská kultura a hudební tradice v Ústí nad Orlicí”).

one of the most important parts of the Cecilian Society's sacred music performances; in the process of establishing the Cecilian movement performance rules, the Society almost closed down. In 1879, however, Ústí nad Orlicí became the first Bohemian town to organise the so-called Cyrillic festivity (Cyril being the Bohemian sacred music magazine, strongly supporting the Cecilian movement). Finally, the members of the Society decided to perform Gregorian chant and sacred music by Claudio Casciolini, Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, and Franz Xaver Witt, as well as by some of the important Bohemian Cecilianists – Josef Förster, František Zdeněk Skuherský (who was elected Honorary Member of the Society), and Josef Cyril Sychra (a native of Ústí nad Orlicí). It seems, nevertheless, that the Society's interest in this type of music was rather short lived: some of the older scores, considered too profane for church use, were deposited in the town museum – but the music, performed on St Cecilia Days, remained for decades, just as before the reform: Ludwig van Beethoven, Anton Diabelli, Luigi Cherubini and Joseph Eybler; and from Bohemian composers, Wenzel Johann Tomaschek, Pavel Křížkovský, Antonín Dvořák, Zdeněk Fibich, Josef Bohuslav Foerster and the locals – Alois Hnilička, Jaroslav Kocian, Petr Kocian, and Josef Cyril Sychra.

In Ústí nad Orlicí, like anywhere else in Bohemia, the late 19th century was marked by the onset of the new school law. Issued in 1868, it made organ playing a non-compulsory subject of the future teachers' education syllabus, and, more importantly, cancelling the concordat between the Catholic Church and schools. Those school teachers who joined the radically progressive political parties, lost interest in performing sacred music; and the town, formerly rich from woollen cloth making, faced the factory production competition and changes of its own economic situation. Consequently, the flow of money, necessary for running the Cecilian Music Society, decreased. The end of World War I, and the foundation of the Czech Republic, showed another danger for continuing the existence of the Cecilian Music Society: the Roman Catholic Church was regarded as the supporter of the Habsburg rule, and a new Czechoslovak Hussite Church was created, as an opposition denomination; its rite was derived from the Catholic – but its music was modelled on the simplicity of medieval Hussite and contemporary folkloric

songs. The interest in performing Catholic sacred music further diminished; music was regarded as a means of “luring” the people into the church. Since World War I, instrumental music was heard in the Ústí church only on important dates; some of the musicians had even to be hired. The Sunday services were accompanied only by the organ; the annual Cecilian festivities were restricted to the eve of St Cecilia Day and the Mass on the day itself. The Cecilian Music Society became active again in the 1930s and 1940s (when its music collection was extended by numerous sacred works by local composers), especially during World War II. The same trend holds for the time of the Communist rule, when church and sacred music became weapons of resistance. Political pressures sometimes forced the Cecilian Music Society members to give up their posts of church organists or choirmasters. The period’s atheism is reflected in the younger people’s loss of interest in the Church in general, and, consequently, in the Cecilian Society – which they might have anyhow considered old fashioned: especially because up to the late 20th century, it retained its early, old-fashioned, features – women, for example, were allowed to become Society members only from 1973. The Society’s repertoire also became outdated, especially during the 1980s and 1990s, which brought the renewed trend of “a capella” church singing, or just with the organ, and interest in either early (Jacob Arcadelt, Johann Sebastian Bach, Hans Leo Hassler, Jacobus Handl Gallus, Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina and Melchior Vulpus), or contemporary music (including works by Licinio Refice and Petr Eben, and also the so-called “rhythmical songs”)⁷.

Today, the Cecilian Music Society is split into two factions. The branch in power now, returned to the same stage of sacred music performance, which had been disliked, and, finally avoided by their late 19th century and early 20th century ancestors. What this development means for the future of the Society, remains to be seen. Its music collection is currently inaccessible, due to the Society’s present aim of making a proper catalogue. Although

⁷For the post World War I and II development of the Cecilian Music Society cf. Jana Žáková, *Duchovní hudba na Ústeckoorlicku* [Sacred Music in the Ústí nad Orlicí Region], diploma work, Pedagogical Faculty of the Masaryk University, Brno 2000.

more than two hundred years old, the Cecilian Music Society remains a living organism, the development of which would be worth further investigation.