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DAS INSTRUMENTALREPERTOIRE DER DRESDNER HOFKAPELLE IN DEN ERSTEN BEIDEN DRITTELN DES 18. JAHRHUNDERTS: ÜBERLIEFERUNG UND NOTISTEN

SÄCHSISCHE LANDESBIBLIOTHEK – STAATS- UND UNIVERSITÄTSBIBLIOTHEK, DRESDEN, 23–25 JUNE 2010

During the first half of the eighteenth century the Dresden electoral court maintained a Kapelle that was the envy of rulers across German-speaking lands. Employed by or closely associated with the court were such important musicians as Johann Sebastian Bach, Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, Johann Friedrich Fasch, Johann Adolf Hasse, Johann David Heinichen, Johann Georg Pisendel, Johann Joachim Quantz, Georg Philipp Telemann, Sylvius Leopold Weiss and Jan Dismas Zelenka. Although much of the royal musical collection went up in flames as a consequence of the Prussian artillery attack on Dresden in 1760, roughly 1,750 manuscripts of instrumental works from the first half of the century survived. At the time considered obsolete, they were locked away – and, for many decades, completely forgotten – in ‘Schrank No: II’ in the basement of the Catholic court church. This priceless corpus has since received attention from several generations of scholars working on subrepertories, but there have been few attempts to coordinate their efforts or to consider the collection as a whole.

The idea of an international conference focusing on the Dresden instrumental manuscripts, with an emphasis on transmission and copyists’ hands, grew out of a research project funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft during the period 2008–2010. Entitled ‘Die Instrumentalmusik der Dresdner Hofkapelle zur Zeit der sächsisch-polnischen Union. Erschließung, Digitalisierung und Internetpräsentation’ (The Instrumental Music of the Dresden Hofkapelle during the Saxon-Polish Union: Indexing, Digitization and Internet Presentation), the project resulted in the voluminous contents of ‘Schrank No: II’ being digitized, with databases of copyists and watermarks currently under construction. The digitized manuscripts themselves may be consulted at <<http://digital.slub-dresden.de/sammlungen/kollektionen/musik>>. Organized by Karl Wilhelm Geck (Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Dresden), Gerhard Poppe (Universität Koblenz and Katholische Akademie des Bistums Dresden-Meißen) and Peter Wollny (Bach-Archiv, Leipzig), the conference provided a first glimpse of how the digitization project might deepen our understanding of the Dresden Hofkapelle’s repertory.

As someone who has worked with this repertory for many years, I am filled with admiration for the digitization project, which has already led to the attribution of many anonymously transmitted works and will doubtless lead to further pleasant surprises. At the same time, the conference’s unwavering focus on source-critical issues left me with the odd sensation of having travelled several decades backward in time, to an era when establishing a reliable chronology and the provenance of manuscript sources was regarded as practically an end in itself – in other words, when positivistic concerns left little room for those that have since become prominent in the discipline, such as the music’s cultural meanings. But if the digitization project reveals anything, it is that there is still important spadework to be done as a preliminary to asking additional questions about this repertory.

Fittingly, speakers were placed in front of a large curtain printed with a facsimile of a Vivaldi autograph score belonging to the Dresden collection. The first two paper sessions were mainly devoted to the possibilities and pitfalls inherent in constructing digital databases of manuscripts and copying hands, but it was appropriate that the first words were those of Karl Heller (formerly Universität Rostock), whose foundational work on the copyists and paper types in the Dresden Vivaldi manuscripts during the 1960s inspired similar studies by other scholars on figures such as Hasse, Telemann and Zelenka. Heller recounted his efforts at identifying copying hands in particular, a story of both enlightening progress and blind alleys familiar to anyone who has engaged in such work. Next a summary by Karl Wilhelm Geck and Sylvie Reinelt (Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Dresden) of the Dresden digitization project led to papers by Joachim Veit (Detmold Hochschule für Musik and Universität Paderborn), Uwe



Wolf (Bach-Archiv, Leipzig), Ekkehard Krüger and Tobias Schwinger (both Ortus Verlag, Berlin), and Matthias Röder (Harvard University) that variously explored how taxonomic systems for distinguishing between one scribe and another might be developed in conjunction with databases of digitized scores. Röder outlined his SCRIBE project, open to researchers worldwide with an interest in developing a database and software that would allow users to search for manuscripts exhibiting similar handwriting characteristics. His conception is not unlike that of the eNoteHistory archive of manuscript sources developed at the University of Rostock in 2003–2005, an undertaking that resulted in a prototype database and software for identifying copying hands. Krüger and Schwinger, two of the principal researchers involved with eNoteHistory, demonstrated for their Dresden audience how certain handwritten symbols (mainly clefs, time signatures and rests) can be used to differentiate one scribe from another; similar insights were provided by Veit and Wolf. Among the problems associated with relying on such symbols, however, is that they may be highly variable within a single manuscript, let alone across multiple manuscripts copied by the same scribe over a period of time, and that their forms are often highly standardized within a ‘school’ of scribes. Moreover, focusing on the form of clefs and rests to the exclusion of, say, the way in which stems are drawn from noteheads can easily lead one down the wrong path. In a turn from the theoretical to the practical, the conference’s first day concluded with a concert of anonymous chamber music from the Dresden collection performed by Les Amis de Philippe under the direction of Ludger Rémy.

Gerhard Poppe opened the second day with an expansive historical overview of the Dresden Hofkapelle’s organization and repertory. He was followed by Ortrun Landmann (formerly of the Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Dresden), who has perhaps worked more closely with the Dresden sources than anyone else over the past four decades. She presented some of her recent findings relating to individual Dresden copyists, a follow-up to her 2009 monograph *Über das Musikerbe der Sächsischen Staatskapelle: Drei Studien zur Geschichte der Dresdner Hofkapelle und Hofoper anhand ihrer Quellenüberlieferung in der SLUB Dresden* (<http://www.qucosa.de/recherche/frontdoor/cache.off?tx_slubopus4frontend%5Bid%5D=2555>). Her work on two Dresden copyists, known to specialists as ‘Schreiber D’ and ‘Schreiber P’, was directly challenged later in the day by Manfred Fechner (Jena), who reiterated stances he took in several publications from the 1980s and 1990s. Some of the same ground was trod by Wolfgang Eckhardt (Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Dresden), who re-examined the Dresden paper types in connection with the digitization project. He shed new light on the non-Dresden provenance of several manuscripts and demonstrated that ‘Schreiber D’ appears to have begun his copying activities three to five years later than previously thought, a finding with potentially significant implications for the chronology of certain works copied by this scribe. In his paper on the Hasse opera sources, Roland Dieter Schmidt-Hensel (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin) also refined our view of several copyists’ activities.

One open question about the Dresden repertory is the extent to which it is identical with Konzertmeister Johann Georg Pisendel’s private library, which was unified with the remnants of the royal library around 1765, a decade after the violinist’s death. In attempting an answer, Steffen Voss (Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Dresden) made a convincing case that some of the earliest manuscripts in the repertory were brought by Pisendel to Dresden from Ansbach in 1712. Extending previous work by other scholars, Katrin Bemmann (Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Dresden) identified the surviving repertory of ‘Kirchensinfonien’, single or paired instrumental movements heard during services in the Catholic court church between 1725 and the 1760s. These movements, drawn from sonatas, concertos and suites by composers such as Fasch, Handel, Leo, Porpora and Telemann, were performed orchestrally and often featured wind parts added by Pisendel or other Dresden musicians. Finally, Peter Wollny offered a cautionary tale of how certain scribes in the Bach family circle altered their handwriting drastically over time, posing special challenges to scholars working with these manuscripts.

The concluding day of the conference was largely given over to studies relating to individual composers, and was dominated by non-German scholars. For a start, Nicola Schneider (Universität Zürich) announced his rediscovery of an Albinoni violin concerto, the only source for which – a ‘travel score’ brought from



Venice by Pisendel – had been missing since World War II. Schneider located a pre-war microfilm copy of the concerto that belonged to the Italian musicologist Remo Giazotto, as he has also reported in these pages (*Eighteenth-Century Music* 7/2 (2010), 317–318). Next Stephan Blaut (Händel-Haus, Halle) provided a status report on his ongoing investigation of copyists and paper types in the Dresden Fasch manuscripts; Václav Kapsa (Národní knihovna České republiky (Czech National Library), Prague) surveyed works by Bohemian composers in ‘Schranck No: II’, including the little known Johann Anton Reichenauer, represented by eighteen manuscripts of concertos for oboe, bassoon, violin and cello, overture-suites and trio sonatas; and Janice B. Stockigt (University of Melbourne) gave an overview of the modest number of instrumental works composed by Zelenka in Vienna, Prague and Dresden. The following paper by Kai Köpp (Hochschule der Künste, Bern), on methodological approaches to evaluating works of doubtful authenticity in the Dresden instrumental repertory, ended the morning session on a more abstract note.

In the afternoon Mary Oleskiewicz (University of Massachusetts, Boston) brought much needed clarity to Johann Joachim Quantz’s activities as a copyist of other composers’ works during his years at the Dresden court. She showed that of the forty-one manuscripts credited by modern scholars in whole or in part to Quantz as a scribe, only nine are actually in his hand. My own paper (Steven Zohn, Temple University) took a holistic view of the approximately 170 Dresden Telemann manuscripts, collating and updating the results of previous source studies in an attempt to chart the evolving nature of this corpus over half a century. Along the way I evaluated the significance of several new sources identified during the digitization project. In an entertaining presentation, Szymon Paczkowski (Uniwersytet Warszawski) reported on a newly discovered list of musical works owned by Count Jakob Heinrich Flemming, who, largely thanks to Paczkowski’s research, has begun to emerge as one of Dresden’s most significant musical patrons. Finally, Olivier Fourés (Venice) demonstrated that even in a repertory as well mined as the Dresden Vivaldi collection, it is still possible to make new discoveries and adopt fresh perspectives.

The same may be said about the ‘Schranck No: II’ repertory as a whole, and it is to be hoped that the forthcoming online publication of the conference’s papers, along with the new database of digitized sources, will bring renewed attention to this rich trove of music.

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FOURTEENTH BIENNIAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BAROQUE MUSIC
SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND SONIC ARTS, QUEEN’S UNIVERSITY BELFAST, 30 JUNE–4 JULY 2010

The Baroque Conference seems to have lodged itself in the United Kingdom for the time being, having been through a period of alternating British and other European Union venues. That the conference chairman Yo Tomita has established what is effectively a Bach research unit at Queen’s, with close ties to the Bach-Archiv Leipzig – not to mention the gematrial significance of the number fourteen – inevitably meant that J. S. Bach would be in the forefront this time. 2010 is also the tercentenary of the birth of Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, a neglected composer compared with his brother Emanuel. The keynote address by Peter Wollny (Bach-Archiv Leipzig), dedicated to Friedemann’s church cantatas, alerted us to a little-known aspect of one of the most interesting, if problematical, musical minds of the eighteenth century. In a subsequent paper David Schulenberg (Wagner College) gave us a preview of his forthcoming monograph on Friedemann, amazingly the first since Martin Falck’s of 1913.

The Bach-Archiv provided a special session with a progress report on their current work on Bach in the 1730s and 1740s: Bach’s use of cantatas by other composers after finishing his own three cycles and his collaboration on the shadowy Picander series with his sons (Peter Wollny); a newly discovered copy of