

## Music and musical culture in the Czech lands during the reign of Emperor RUDOLF II

Last year's second issue of *Czech Music Quarterly* provided information about the establishment and work of *Musica Rudolphina*, a musicological centre associating a number of distinguished Czech and foreign scholars, who from various angles have researched into, edited and performed the music that came into being in the Czech lands during the rule of the remarkable monarch Rudolf II of the House of Habsburg (*Musica Rudolphina*. A project of international co-operation in musicological research, *Czech Music Quarterly*, 2014/2, pp. 23-29). The centre has pursued publication, exploratory and pedagogical activities, which have met with a positive response among musicologists, musicians and all those interested in matters historical. In collaboration with *Czech Music Quarterly*, it has thus prepared a series of specialist articles which aim to familiarise the readers with various intriguing aspects and specificities of the musical culture during the Rudolfine era. The introductory study in this issue provides an account of the position occupied by musicians within the imperial court's structure, the next article focuses on the musical culture of the Emperor's residence city of Prague, while the other studies shed light on the music score printing that served as a crucial means for the notation and propagation of music. (*Petr Daněk*)

### At the court of Emperor Rudolf II

*Michaela Žáčková Rossi*

Rudolfine art, culture and scholarship have been paid attention to both by Czech and foreign historians over the past few decades. Numerous extensive and exquisite monographs about art at Rudolf II's court have been published, as have been volumes devoted to individual aspects and personages of the Rudolfine epoch. Since the late 1980s, the Bohemian late-Renaissance music too has been explored ever more systematically and on a greater international scale. And rightly so, since in the late-16th and early-17th centuries Prague and the Czech lands enjoyed a marked bloom in the arts and beyond. Rudolfine Prague was linked with the lives of Johannes Kepler and Tycho Brahe; it was regularly visited by foreign delegations; it was the residence of Spanish, Jesuit and other envoys; and the city also experienced an architectural flowering. The moving of the Habsburg court's permanent seat from Vienna to Prague was preceded by vital circumstances that paved the way for the Emperor's relocation. Rudolf II's uncle, Ferdinand of Tirolia, who served as vice-regent in Bohemia for a full 20 years, up until 1567, built a sumptuous residence in Prague (one of the buildings he has bequeathed is the Hvězda villa), and during this time Bohemia experienced a boom of humanism and Renaissance culture. The other preparatory factor was the long-term stay of Rudolf himself in Prague, from 1578 to 1581, which must have affirmed his idea of definitively transferring the imperial court from Vienna, both by reason of a more healthy climate and because Prague was more distant from the Turks, who represented a permanent threat on the eastern border of the Habsburg Empire.



*Lucas van Valckenborch, Emperor Rudolf II in his 30s or 40s right: Franz Hoogenbergh, after Joris Hoefnagel, Prague Castle and view of Prague, Civitates orbis terrarum, Volume V*



### The structure of Rudolf II's court

The imperial court itself was a sophisticated formation of a rather complex structure. The preserved account ledgers, currently conserved at the Austrian State Archives in Vienna, reveal a great deal of information pertaining to its administrative division and, naturally, also contain essential records of Rudolf's music expenses: the servants' fixed wages and contributions to their clothing, travel costs, fees for the dedications of madrigals, motets or other compositions, as well as allowances for court musicians' weddings, christenings of their children and short-term payments for their widows. All these data are recorded in giant annual account books, originally bound in white leather and diligently arrayed by Habsburg scribes into service sections, called *Parthey*. The musicians at Rudolf's court were classified as working either at the court chapel (*Capellnparthey*) or stables (*Stallparthey*). The chapel section encompassed all those who attended to the liturgical services, that is, including musical liturgy: chaplains, singers, organists, copyists, tuners, and, later on, chamber musicians too. Trumpeters and drummers were assigned to the stables. Therefore many imperial trumpeters died in the battles against the Turks, which lasted from 1593 to 1606, as is documented in the requests for being accorded coats-of-arms (nobility), with the applicants thoroughly describing how they and their relatives had loyally served the House of Habsburg as trumpeters in the Hungarian field. In fact, in the respective years there is a palpable rise in the number of trumpeters and trumpeter apprentices. Even though at first

glance these servants' inclusion in the stables section does not predicate of their quality and versatility, we know that plenty of the buglers and cornett (zink) players were universal musicians and excellent composers, who not only procured instruments, sheet music and new musicians for their ruler but were also in contact with other Bohemian and Moravian aristocrats, and their services often surpassed the solely musical framework.

### National provenance

The imperial court in Prague was variegated, a place absorbing the boldest artistic trends of late-Renaissance Europe, which were in turn reflected in the entire Rudolfiner artistic production. Today, we can compare compositions that were created in the Prague milieu with the music of other major centres in the Europe of the time – the courts in Italy, Munich, Innsbruck, Dresden, Copenhagen, Madrid, etc. Over their lifetime, some of the composers passed through several Habsburg and other courts, served in numerous places in Europe, and brought the experience they had gained to bear in Prague. The most significant Rudolfiner Prague figure was the long-time Kapellmeister Philippe de Monte. In 1568, the noted Flemish composer was called to Vienna by Rudolf's father, Maximilian II, and he would remain in the imperial services up until his death in 1603. He bequeathed us copious printed collections of sacred and secular music (masses, motets, madrigals, etc.). The leading composers of the time who worked in Prague during Rudolf II's era included Jacob Regnart, Carl Luython, Franz Sale,



*Jacobus Regnart, Sacrae aliquot cantiones, quas moteta vulgo appellant, Munich, Adam Berg, 1575  
right: Aegidius Sadeler, Jacobus Chimarraeus, ca 1605*

Alessandro Orologio, Gregorio Turini and Philipp Schoendorff, while others – Hans Leo Hassler, Nicolaus Zangius – were registered as imperial servants, though they often lived outside the court. Whole families even were employed at Rudolf II’s court, evidently for practical reasons too. Its national structure also reveals a few more general tendencies: the trumpeters had right from the beginning of Rudolf II’s reign been traditionally Italians, predominantly hailing from the north – the regions around Venice and Udine (members of the Mosto family), Verona (the Rizzo family) and Brescia (father and son Turinis); the violinists were from Cremona (the Ardesi family); the sopranos (descantists) mostly hailed from Spain; whereas the vast majority of other singers – altos, tenors and basses – were from the Netherlands (the extended de Sayve and Cupers families); the drummers, more precisely, timpanists, were recruited from the ranks of German musicians (the Wolf family). Circa 1600, however, the national provenance of the court musicians began to change, with the old servants being replaced by local – German and, occasionally, Czech – musicians. And if a few Italians or Dutch remained, most of them were Prague-born, members of the second or third generations.

### From Imperial servants to permanent residents

These people lived in the Castle district itself or nearby, with many of the musicians dwelling in the Lesser Town (in the vicinity of Jánký vršek, near the Church of Saint Thomas, Lázeňská street and environs). Some of them had even the opportunity to

buy houses, to become citizens of some of the Prague boroughs, and duly settled in the city for good, even remaining there after 1612, when Rudolf’s brother and successor, Matthias, moved the imperial residence back to Vienna. A fascinating insight into the lives of these people is provided by numerous archival sources: citizenship books, registries and testaments, religious orders’ documents and other papers contain fragments of information illuminating the non-musical activities of Rudolf II’s servants, their lodgings and way of life, their later means of subsistence. An interesting example is the fate of the Zigotta family, which had been settled in Bohemia since at least the beginning of the 16th century. They were active members of a Jesuit sodality in Prague and after leaving the imperial services they bought a lime kiln, became aldermen (Georg Zigotta was even elected to the post of primate), their children studied at the university in Prague as well as in Germany, and in the 1630s they entered the services of the Knights of the Cross and the Archbishop of Prague, Ernst Adalbert von Harrach. All this paints a vivid picture of how musicians lived in Rudolfine Prague. Some of them dedicated their compositions to the Emperor and other aristocrats as the fruits of their endeavours, as well as proof of their being loyal and “humble” servants, others did so with the aim to be accepted by the imperial court. A large portion of this music has been lost and today is merely documented in the account books and inventory collections. Nevertheless, musicologists have continued to find valuable, previously unknown sources and music prints which

serve to complete the mosaic of Rudolfin Prague and Bohemia.

## Music in Rudolfin Prague

Jan Bata

The Imperial Court was definitively relocated to Prague in 1583. This brought about a significant change for the Prague boroughs, as within a short time they had to house behind their ramparts a large number of courtiers who needed permanent dwelling. The better-off among them could afford to buy their own houses, whereas the majority – including the musicians – had to lease rooms in one of the burghesses' buildings. The ranks of such sub-tenants, or “roomers”, as they were dubbed at the time, did not only comprise members of the Imperial Court. The “courtly” roomers mainly lived in the Castle district itself, in the Lesser Town and Old Town, from where they had to commute to the Castle every day. In 1608, the Imperial Court had a list of accommodation capacities in the respective localities drawn up, with the aim to ascertain how many vacancies it could count with should the need arise. And arise it did relatively often, when Prague was visited by foreign legations, which mostly included large entourages. Owing to this unique document, we know, at least as regards the year 1608, where the Rudolfin

musicians resided. Were it not for the list, we would have to dredge up the relevant data from other period sources, which, however, largely only mention the roomers in cases when public order was breached or disputes between neighbours occurred.

### Rudolfin musicians in the streets of Prague

The relationship between the Imperial Court and the city thus also had this practical aspect. And no wonder – the courtiers too were people of flesh and blood, with their common everyday needs. Yet it would be inappropriate to reduce this co-existence to the purely practical facets of life. The city provided the musicians with a spiritual background in Catholic parishes, which attended to their families' needs from the cradle to the grave. One of the places at which these people gathered was the Church of Saint Thomas in the Lesser Town. Those who were not content with the positions of rank-and-file parishioner could join the brotherhoods, which made the religious life of their members more profound and enhanced their spirituality in specific directions. The aforementioned Church of Saint Thomas hosted the Brotherhood of Corpus Christi, whose activities centred on revering the Eucharist; the Church of the Holy Saviour within the Jesuit College at the Klementinum in the Old Town housed the Brotherhood of Our Blessed Lady, devoted to the Virgin Mary. The members of the latter included Rudolf's Vice-Kapellmeisters Jacob Regnart (1540/45–1599) and Mathias de Sayve (1540/50–1619), the organist Paul de Winde (†1596), the chaplain Jan Sixt of Lerchenfels (†1629), and many others.

### Pious motets in the town-hall towers

Just as Prague provided a material and spiritual background to the Imperial Court, so could the city pride itself in an advanced musical culture. But what did this musical culture look like? If we begin with Prague Castle, it must be pointed out that the arrival of the court orchestra meant an essential turning point and enrichment for Saint Vitus Cathedral. Until that time, merely two music ensembles had operated at the Castle – 12 choristers, who attended to liturgical (exclusively monophonic) music, and a group of trumpeters playing in the cathedral's tower. The music performed in the other parts of Prague was far more lively and variegated. When we bear in mind just how complex an organism a city is, we can imagine various milieus in which music could be played. A clearer image can be gleaned from the well-known 1606 graphical view of Prague, created by the court embroiderer Philippe van den Bossche (active c. 1604–1615) and the Nuremberg-born engraver Johannes Wechter



Stefano Felis Barensi, *Missarum sex vocum*, Prague, Jiří Nigrin, 1588



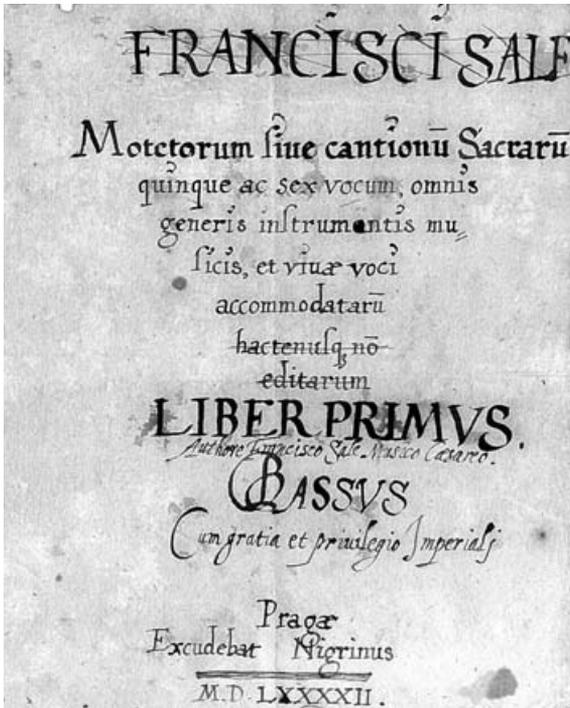
*Nicolas de L'Armessin, Philip de Monte, 1682*

(active c. 1550–1606), yet named after its publisher, the Rudolfiner copper engraver Jiljí Sadeler (c. 1570–1629). The veduta shows the city in its full splendour. Numerous towers and spires overhang the burgesses' houses and Renaissance palaces. Some of them, however, are not parts of churches but town halls. And in these towers played city trumpeters, who were employed by the councils (the Old Town Council, for instance, kept trumpeters from 1440). Besides serving as guards and announcing the hours, these men were also assigned with the task of representing, welcoming guests at the city gates. The design of the instruments at the time afforded the musicians limited possibilities, hence their performances were merely made up of simple signal music or fanfares. From 1551, the Old Town Council employed a group of instrumentalists capable of delivering more sophisticated music. The duties of the players – referred to as “trombonists” at the time – were stipulated in a set of instructions dating from 1585. This manual reveals that in the spring and summer the ensemble performed from Sunday to Thursday and on feast days twice a day – in the morning, starting at about half past seven, and in the afternoon, at approximately half past three. In the autumn and in winter, the trombonists played music just once a day – at noon, and only on Sundays and feast days. According to the instructions, they no longer executed simple fanfares, but “pious motets”, which indicates that it must have concerned a group of four to five skilled musicians, capable of performing the more exacting polyphony. In all likelihood, it concerned not only motets, but also madrigals and

other pieces, which at the determined time resounded through the neighbouring urban space.

### Singing in churches

Nevertheless, most of the towers in Sadeler's picture belong to the Prague churches. Their network was already rather dense back during the reign of Charles IV, and not all of them had parish priests in the Rudolfiner era. Larger parishes – for instance, those within the Church of Our Lady Before Týn in the Old Town, Saint Nicholas' in the Lesser Town and Saint Stephen's in the New Town – held regular daily liturgies, whereas in smaller churches (the majority of which are today merely attested to by the names of streets, for instance, Linhartská, Valentinská, Benediktská, etc.) divine services only took place occasionally. The music in the regular liturgies was mainly provided by pupils of the adjacent parish schools, who were assigned with the greatest burden of duties – singing at matins and vespers. The religious services were most frequently accompanied by plainchant, yet even the youngest boys were taught how to sing polyphony. On Sundays and feast days, the pupils were joined by members of literary brotherhoods: societies of music-loving town folk whose mission was to sing at divine services. Human voices were supported by the sound of organs, which emanated from many a church in Prague. During the major feast days, the trombonists came in too, so as to add the appropriate glamour to the church festivities. Highly popular in Prague during the reign of Rudolf II was Italian multi-choir music, which influenced the style of both the court and local Czech composers (Pavel Spongopacus of Jistebnice, for instance), as well as the musicians settled in Bohemia (Jacob Handl Gallus). This fashion also spread and engrossed other towns in the Kingdom of Bohemia and the wider Central European region. Besides the parish churches of the Utraquists, there were in Prague Catholic churches with adjacent monasteries, belonging to various religious orders. The most active of these in musical terms were the Jesuits, who since their arrival in the city in 1556 had deemed music to be one of the most effective tools in their Counter-Reformation endeavours. They found a powerful ally in the Rudolfiner musicians, some of whom – as mentioned above – were members of the Jesuit sodality and, together with other court musicians, were frequent guests of the Church of the Holy Saviour, where too, in addition to Rudolfiner composers' pieces, contemporary Italian music was performed. Towards the end of Rudolf II's rule, the Lutherans began building their churches in Prague as well. Within a short period of time, they had opened on



*Franz Sale, Motetorum sive cantionum sacrarum, Prague, Jiří Nigrin, 1592, draft design of the print's front page*

both banks of the river Vltava two Protestant shrines, designed in the Italian architectonic style. As was the case of other churches, they pursued multi-choir music of the Venetian type, either pieces by Italian composers or the transalpine creators influenced by them. Accordingly, when it comes to the performed polyphonic repertoire, universally sung in Latin, all the Christian denominations were very close to each other, with the music smoothly transcending the religious boundaries.

### Music-making in citizens' homes

The inhabitants of Prague did not only come into contact with music in public spaces, as it was an integral part of their private lives. Whereas the aristocrats and burghers possessing coats-of-arms settled in the city could afford to keep musicians (or rather one musician, for instance, a lutenist or organist), others had to make do with their own abilities. Said "others" constituted a large number. During the Rudolfine era, plenty of Prague burghers possessed either instruments or sheet music, or both even. Although in some cases these were mere collectors' items, we can assume that a fair proportion of the household music equipment was actually used for making music.

The preserved personal inventory books reveal that the most frequently owned instrument was a lute or

a keyboard (clavichord, virginal, regal), that is, an instrument allowing the performance of polyphonic music. As regards sheet music, the most common were hymn-books, but also to be found in the possession of Prague citizens were collections of polyphonic pieces, referred to as "partes", primarily sacred music. Furthermore, the burghers liked to play and sing madrigals together, as documented by the statutes of the society called *collegium musicum*, which date from a later time, 1616, yet we can presume that similar citizens' associations existed much earlier, even though we lack written records about them.

### The music business

The demand for sheet music and musical instruments was duly responded to by merchants, music printers, booksellers and makers of musical instruments. The needs of the Prague market were satisfied in two manners. The first was the import of music goods (most frequently from Nuremberg), involved in which was, among others, the composer Jacob Handl Gallus. Yet the demand was also met in Prague by skilful local instrument-builders. When it comes to the typographers, the best-known among them was Jiří Černý of Černý Most, alias Jiří Nigrin or Georgius Nigrinus of Nigropont (†1606), who printed numerous vocal polyphonic works written by Rudolfine composers.

## Music printing in the Rudolfine era

*Petr Daněk*

Similarly to the majority of European cities, Rudolfine Prague gradually created the scope and the conditions for the development of all the contemporary trades and crafts. These included printing and everything related to it. The printing craft had been cultivated in Prague and Bohemia at large for decades preceding the relocation of the Imperial Court from Vienna, yet only in the Rudolfine era did typography develop and attain the European standard. A specific category was music printing.

### The Petrucci revolution

Music printing had first appeared in Europe back in the second half of the 15th century. It gradually superseded the costly, yet peerless, medieval manuscript, which only resulted in single copies. An inter-phase in the development of music printing involved the combination of prints of texts and manually inscribed staves and notes, which was applied in various regions of Europe. The next phase entailed the printing of separate staves, into which the music was written by hand. In the late 15th

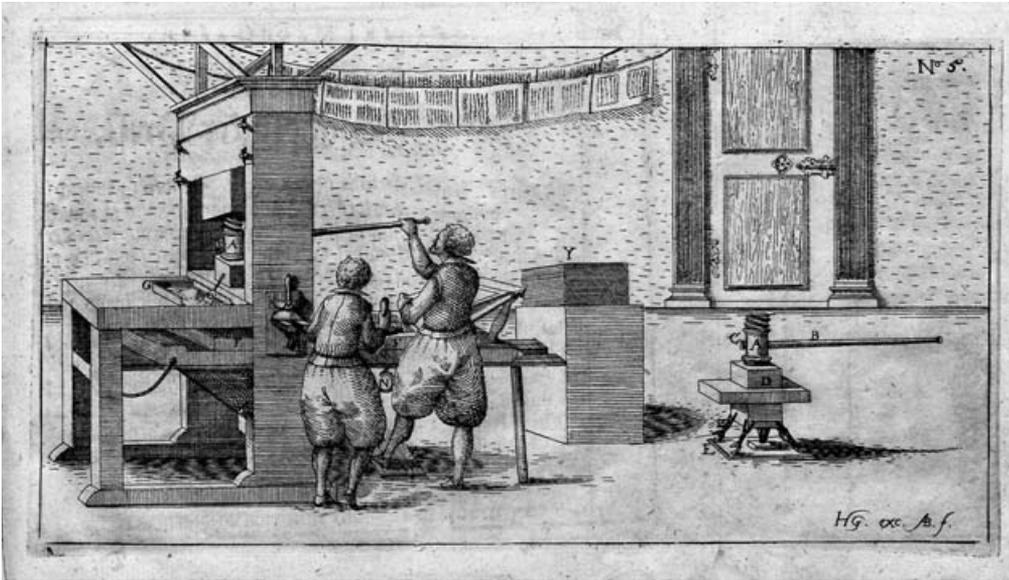
century, this process, enabling more rapid dissemination of works, was further enhanced by the invention of full-page wood blocks and double-impression printing (first the stave and then the notes). A watershed was the anthology of polyphonic secular music (containing 96 popular songs, mostly French chansons) *Harmonice musices Odhecaton A*, published in 1501 in Venice by Ottaviano Petrucci. By applying the triple-impression technique (first printing the stave, then the text, and then the notes), allowing for relatively fast and, most significantly, high-quality printing of polyphonic music, he launched a revolution in the distribution of music throughout Europe. Petrucci's method was soon improved upon by Parisian printers (Pierre Attaignant, Pierre Haultin), who invented the double-impression technique (first printing the text and red staves, then printing the black text and black notes), which made the printing of polyphonic music even faster, simpler and more accurate. Consequently, music printing began to take hold throughout Europe, revolutionising the dissemination of music and making compositions more widely available than in the previous centuries. During the course of the 16th century, music was printed by a number of typographers, some of them being famed for the high quality of their craft (Valerio Dorico, Pietro Phalesio, Adam Berg, Katharina Gerlach, Antonio Gardano, etc.), and in all major cities (Venice, Paris, Antwerp, Nuremburg, Frankfurt). In the Rudolfine era, their ranks were joined by Prague.

**Sacrae cantiones, liber missarum, madrigali italiani, canzoni francese, canzonette, cantio, graduale, sonetti, strambotti, frottole, etc.**

What type of music was printed in the 16th century? In actual fact, all the contemporary varieties and genres, as the title of this section indicates. The largest proportion of preserved prints is formed by hymns-books and collections of monophonic sacred songs. In addition, mainly polyphonic sacred vocal pieces were printed: particularly motets (sacrae cantiones, motetae), but also masses and other liturgical works (liber missarum, Magnificat, litanies, passions settings). Extremely popular too were prints of secular music, primarily Italian madrigals, French chansons and German polyphonic songs intended as entertainment, often possessing lyrics with double-entendre (teutsche Lieder). Gradually, instrumental music, including, naturally, dance music, was printed as well, as were compositions for keyboard and other solo instruments. Also published were monophonic chants, which required special supervision and editing, so as to be suitable for specific liturgies. In considerable demand too were publications of musicological works (Musica) and practical manuals for students of composition and quadrivium. The majority of prints were in the form of volumes, which only provided the respective vocal parts (bass, tenor, cantus, etc.), or independent large-format, folio-sized books (Chorbuch), designed to be placed on the musicians' shared stand. The individual parts were printed on an

*Jacobus Handl Gallus, Tertius tomus musici operis, Prague, Jiří Nigrin, 1587, title page printed from typeset Franz Sale, Motetorum sive cantionum sacrarum, Prague, Jiří Nigrin, 1592, draft design of the print's front page*





Abraham Bartolus, *Musica mathematica*, Leipzig, Hennig Gross, 1614, a picture of a printing shop

open two-page sheet, so the singers could see their parts from their position, but placed on the sheet separately, as Renaissance music did not have scores. The first-ever music scores only appeared in 1613, in Carlo Gesualdo's book of madrigals.

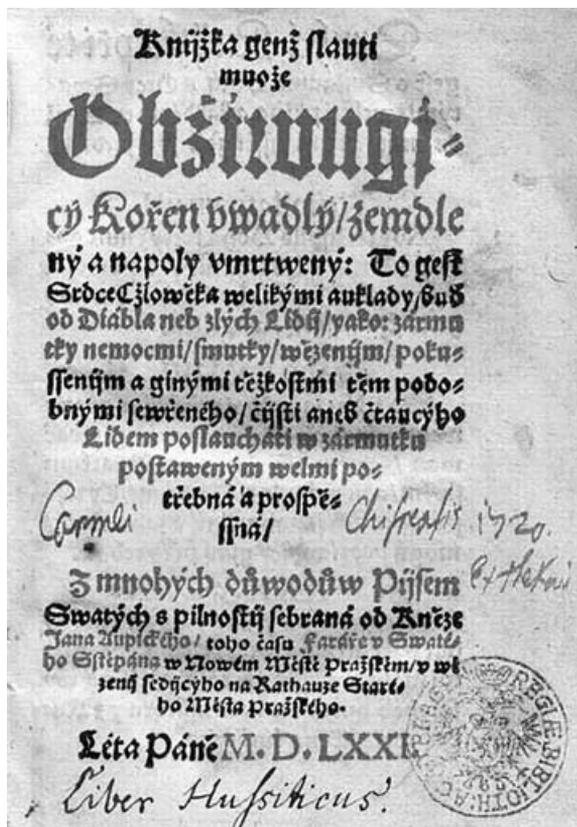
#### Partes bought for the "musica"

Music prints were distributed in the same manner as ordinary books. They were sold, often without being furnished with a binding, by the printers themselves, as well as by composers, who frequently financed and co-created the final appearance of the prints. Moreover, music prints were on sale at marketplaces and fairs. At the time, the first book fairs occurred, some of which have been functioning to the present day (for example, those in Frankfurt and Leipzig). The preserved period lists reveal that music prints formed a substantial part of the items on offer. Music prints were also distributed around Bohemia by bookbinders, professional librarians and booksellers. The Rožmberk (Rosenberg) aristocratic family accounts dating from the end of the 16th century include the information that the court office had paid for the "partes bought for the musica" (consort / the instrumental ensemble) to the Prague bookbinder Dobiáš more than eight "kopa" (approximately 480 Groschen). In 1608, Petr Vok of Rožmberk purchased for his library 14 volumes of modern Italian music prints, which he chose from the list sent by the "court bookseller and librarian", Claudio Marnio. The purchasers and users usually had the procured music prints bound together into more extensive convolutes. Yet

not all music prints served for actual performances. At the time, music was deemed a discipline that every contemporary intellectual was expected to know, at least superficially. Consequently, numerous music prints ended up in the libraries of book collectors next to publications dedicated to other disciplines (astronomy, theology, mathematics, occult sciences, geography).

#### Datum Pragae ipso nostrae sanctissimae patronae D. Ceciliae die. Anno 1580

Music printing took hold in Bohemia gradually. Liturgical music books, intended for individual Bohemian and Moravian dioceses, were printed abroad until at least the middle of the 16th century. Polyphonic sacred and secular music was first printed by a Czech typographer in the 1570s, while instrumental pieces were not published in Bohemia until the 1640s. On the other hand, hymn-book printing had already experienced an extraordinary boom – characterised by quantitative and qualitative increase – back in the first half of the 16th century. The development and form of music printing in the Czech lands was impacted by the nature of the domestic market. Over the major part of the century, the prevalingly Utraquist society above all required prints of music that could be sung by the "common people", that is, monophonic songs, whereas the more difficult-to-perform polyphony, supposed to be delivered by skilful singers, for a long time to come continued to be copied or, exceptionally, bought abroad (selected pieces by Europe-renowned composers). Only the relocation



Jan Okurka Oupický, *Knížka, jenž může slauti obzruující kořen uwadly, Prague, Jiří Nigrin, 1571, print of songs*

of Rudolf II's court to Prague served to begin changing the domestic market and give rise to demand for printing and distribution of polyphonic music, written by professionals.

### Ex Officina Typographica...

Throughout the period preceding the relocation of Rudolf II's court to Prague, music prints were produced in a number of "officinas". The majority of them were in Prague, yet many significant printing shops were established in other towns too. The first edition of the musicological work *Musica*, penned by Jan Blahoslav, was published in 1558 in Olomouc and subsequently, 10 years later, in Ivančice. The capital of the Kingdom of Bohemia, Prague was the residence of typographer families. One such, the Severýns, who ran the most prominent and busiest printing workshop up until the middle of the 16th century, published in 1541 probably the most extensive hymnbook in Europe at the time, Roh's *Pisně chval božských* (*Songs of Divine Praise*). Around the middle of the century, the typographer Jiří Melantrich moved his printing business from Prostějov to Prague, linking up to the work

of Bartoloměj Netolický and gradually forming a successful and versatile European-style printing office, yet he only occasionally made music prints, and on a small scale. Another independent printer in Prague was Jiří Nigrin, who launched his trade in 1571 and, owing to the high-quality of his craft, soon attained a prominent position among his competitors and printed a large amount of music.

### ... Georgii Nigrini

With brief intervals, in addition to numerous other prints, Nigrin published polyphonic pieces throughout the time of his activity, spanning more than 30 years. He issued about four dozen prints of vocal polyphony, as well as numerous hymn-books and single sheets with musical notation. Besides typographically simpler and altogether slender prints, Nigrin also published extensive collections; for instance, Jacob Handl Gallus's motets for the whole ecclesiastical year. In the music printing domain, he became an imperial typographer in Prague, as the bulk of the works he published were written by Rudolf II's musicians and composers, including those who only stayed at the court temporarily. One of the first publications of vocal polyphony that Nigrin issued was Mateo Flecha the Younger's *Las Ensaladas* (1581), comprising a collection of various secular pieces by Spanish composers. Furthermore, Nigrin published virtually the entire vocal oeuvre of the imperial organist Charles Luython, who spent all his productive life in Prague. Other Rudolfine composers too commissioned Nigrin to print their works, as did some of the Silesian musicians.

### Altera pars selectissimarum cantionum... and the others?

Besides Nigrin, several other typographers published music in Rudolfine Prague, yet for the most part it concerned individual opuses. An exception among them was Mikuláš Strauss (Pštros), who issued (in two editions, in 1609 and 1611) a vast collection of masses by the imperial organist and composer Charles Luython, *Liber I. Missarum*, in the large folio format, dedicated to Rudolf II himself. In 1609, Strauss published in Prague Nicolaus Zangio's *Magnificat* in the same format. In 1585, Michael Peterle, a former associate of Nigrin's, printed an intriguing book of chants, *Obsequiale sive Benedictionale*, and in 1586, on the occasion of Jan Václav Popel of Lobkovice's wedding, he issued a music publication containing a five-part vocal piece by Jiří Molitor. During Nigrin's lifetime, in 1595 the printer Jan Othmar published *Liber primus motectorum*, a collection of works by the imperial musician Mathias de Sayve.

## Jiří Nigrin of Nigropont - a master of Rudolfine music printing

Petra Jakoubková

### It all begins with a marriage

The beginning of Nigrin's "career" did not differ in any way from the standard model of printers at the time. When reading the profiles of many a 16th-century typographer, they often begin with the words: "He acquired the printing office upon marrying the widow of the printer..." The downsides of this profession included the sheer dirtiness of the everyday work with printing ink and lead, which had a negative impact on the typographers' health. Consequently, after the death of their husbands, the typographers' widows faced the problem of ensuring the continued operation of the printing offices, which they wanted to retain as a family business for children who had yet to reach adulthood. Hence, the easiest solution was to remarry: either the factor of their own workshop or another typographer, who would take over the operation of the plant. In 1572, following the death of one Jan Jičínský, Nigrin married his widow, Magdalena, thus gaining possession of the deceased's printing office, including the very expensive equipment. Yet Nigrin differed from most of his colleagues in many respects. Most notably, unlike other printers, he did not die prematurely: although we do not know the age he lived to (there are no preserved records of his date of birth), we do know that he ran his independent printing shop for some 35 years. During his unusually long career, Nigrin produced about 600 prints.

### Printing works by imperial musicians

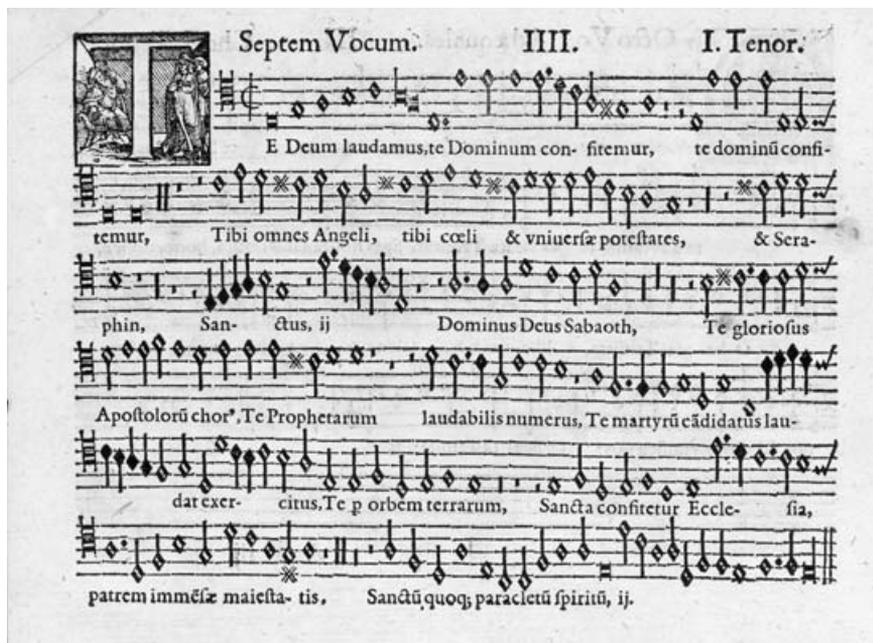
Another aspect in which Nigrin's life and professional work differed from that of his competitors is of major significance to us. Nigrin possessed great dexterity and business acumen, whereby he was promptly able to fill the gap in the plethora of trades in Prague which lacked a typographer printing polyphonic music. Nigrin devoted to printing music right at the very beginning of his career, with his first publications of polyphony collections dating from the 1570s. Upon the relocation of the Imperial Court to Prague, the city saw the arrival of numerous musicians and composers to serve in Rudolf II's orchestra, who in their new domicile soon sought someone who could print their works. And they found him in Jiří Nigrin, who would virtually become the exclusive printer of vocal polyphony in Rudolfine Prague. The composers who had their pieces printed by



*Jacob Tŷpotius, Anselm Boetius de Boodt, Symbola Divina & Humana, Prague, Jiří Nigrin, 1601, print, title sheet, printed by means of the copperplate-engraving technique*

### De musica practica liber primus

During the Rudolfine era, Prague and other Bohemian cities and cultural centres did not, however, make use for performance of music published by domestic printers alone. Prague was linked up to European trade networks of all kinds. Accordingly, it was not difficult to procure music published in Frankfurt, Venice or Antwerp. Bearing witness to this is the large quantity of music prints, various in content and provenance, which have been preserved in Bohemian and Moravian book collections. Rudolfine composers also often had their works printed beyond Prague and, depending on their contacts, interests, preferences, origin and language, turned to typographers in other European countries. Those whose music was never printed in Bohemia included the imperial Kapellmeister, Philippe de Monte, and his deputy, Jacob Regnart. They gave preference to more renowned Italian and Dutch printing offices, which were most probably better connected to the European distribution network than their Czech counterparts. None the less, and largely owing to Jiří Nigrin, the music printing industry in Bohemia attained an excellent standard during the Rudolfine era, representing a remarkable stage in the discipline's development.



*Example of music typesetting in Jiří Nigrin's polyphonic music prints (Jacob Handl Gallus, Musici operis, 1587)*

Nigrin included Jacob Handl Gallus, Charles Luython, Franz Sale, Tiburtio Massaino, Jacobus de Kerle, Giovanni Battista Pinello and others. The quality of the music prints from his office was superb, and in this respect Nigrin was actually unrivalled in Prague. Yet he was not the only typographer in the city possessing equipment for music printing. At the time, there were others in Prague capable of supplying music prints using simple typesetting (Jiří Melantrich of Aventino, Burian Valda, Jiří Jakubův Dačický and Jiří Othmar Dačický, Michael Peterle, Anna Schumannová etc.), yet none of them devoted to music printing as systematically and to such an extent as Nigrin did. If some of Nigrin's contemporaries did embark upon music printing, they mainly produced prints with dominant text typesetting supplemented with shorter music notation typesetting of a monophonic song, whereas Nigrin mastered the production of extensive vocal polyphony prints, which required greater professional skills, as well as a larger stock of music notation types. The few polyphonic music prints that were made outside Nigrin's office may be deemed exceptions. When we compare the 73 preserved music prints produced by Nigrin – including prints of polyphonic works, songs and single sheets – with those made in all the other Prague workshops (which taken together totalled approximately half of those published by Nigrin alone), there is no doubt that Nigrin absolutely dominated the music printing business in Rudolfine Prague.

### Foreign contacts

Yet by no means can Nigrin be considered just a local printer who surpassed those around him owing solely to a lack of serious competitors. The quality of his music prints was very high even when compared to those produced abroad, where the music printing was far more advanced. Nigrin closely observed the development in other countries and knew very well what types of prints were made there. The preserved catalogues of the Frankfurt book fairs reveal that Nigrin was often in attendance. At this juncture, however, it should be pointed out that he was not the only Prague printer who appeared at the trade fair – as documented, it was also visited on several occasions by Michael Peterle, Jiří Melantrich of Aventino, Daniel Adam of Veleslavin and Jan Othmar Dačický. Although the catalogues do not contain any mention of Nigrin offering any of his polyphonic music prints, it is evident that they were demanded by and sold to foreign customers, as illustrated by the numerous prints produced at Nigrin's workshop which have been preserved in Polish and German archives. Accordingly, there is no doubt that Nigrin was well familiar with the book-printing craft beyond the Czech lands, as were his Prague-based colleagues. And not surprisingly, as in the 16th century a printer could not afford to live in isolation from his foreign counterparts. Owing to the fact that no professional type foundry existed in Bohemia until the 17th century, the local printers had to import equipment for the printing of not only music

notation, but also of texts and book ornamentation. Most frequently, they purchased it in neighbouring Germany, particularly Nuremberg. Admittedly, Nigrin had inherited his workshop equipment, including the music notation types, from his predecessor, Jan Jičínský, yet he too continued to extend the inventory of the printing office. We know for certain that, in 1586 at least, he enlarged his stock of music notation types. Today, we can only conjecture as to the reason why Nigrin bought new equipment: the original notation types may have been damaged or otherwise unsatisfactory, or, more likely, he needed a greater number of them for his thriving business so as to be able to set more extensive musical works (in that very year, 1586, he started to print Jacob Handl Gallus's collection, for which he needed a large supply of notation types). Nigrin purchased the new equipment in Nuremberg, as can be deduced when comparing his prints with those produced in some of the Nuremberg-based printing offices.

### What did Nigrin's music prints look like?

In line with the European standard, the vocal polyphonic books from Nigrin's workshop have the customary cross quarto format. One music page contained 5-6 staves, and the prints were usually furnished with an introduction and list of compositions. With a few exceptions, the front pages of polyphonic music prints looked identical throughout Nigrin's career: the visibly distinguished title of the collection, with the name of the creator written below and the entire page being markedly dominated by the name of the part pressed into a woodcut decorative frame, placed in the bottom half of the page, which ended with the printer's imprint and the year of printing. On the other hand, the front sheets of prints comprising monophonic songs were far less uniform. Naturally, they too featured the title of the book and its creator (unless his name had to be kept secret, so as to sidetrack censorship and publish a work by a banned artist), yet at first glance they come across as far more variegated. Nigrin would often highlight the type by using red ink, alternating black and red lines. Within a single page, the height of lines varied too, depending on the particular information that it was necessary to highlight. Some of the title pages already contained illustrations or tiny typographical ornaments, or the entire page was framed with decorative woodcut band. The printer's imprint did not appear on all the title pages; in some cases it was placed at the very end of the book. Generally, the title pages were at the time most frequently printed from typesetting, meaning that both the individual letters and the ornamentation were put together from tiny segments. Even though the title pages were originally included in the books rather with the aim

of protecting the printed text itself (as the front page was the most susceptible to being damaged or torn off), over time they gradually began to be understood as that which identified the print, mediating the reader's first contact with the book. As a consequence, the title pages were paid ever-increasing attention. Copperplate title pages, whose lines were more delicate and drawings more detailed, started to occur as well. In the case of this printing technique, in addition to an illustration, the entire text was engraved in the copperplate. It would very much appear that the first Bohemian printer to have included a copperplate title page in his print was Nigrin himself, who first applied it in *Empresas morales* (1581) and later on in Jacobus Typotius's books *Symbola divina* (1601) and *Symbola varia* (1602), as well as in the music collection *Odae suavissimae*.

Unlike prints of monophonic songs featuring more complex illustrations, the one and only decorative element of polyphonic music prints, besides tiny trimmings (serving to fill in the void space under the staff), was initial letters. Nigrin had available 21 initial letter alphabets, ranging from those amply adorned with floral or figurative motifs to totally plain letters. We should not imagine that every set of initial letters was a unique original copy owned by a single printer alone. The very opposite was the case. At the time, initial letters, typefaces and ornamentations were already produced in series, and thus several printing offices had identical typesetting elements. When we compare the prints from several Prague workshops, we can see that some of the initial letters were identical. Yet when it comes to music notation, the situation was rather different, as they were a much more specific element of the typography. At first glance, the notation types from individual Prague printers generally differ, and they can even serve to determine the office that produced typographically anonymous works.

Nigrin's illustrious career ended under circumstances similar to those under which it started. He died in 1606, and his widow, Alžběta, remarried – who else but a printer: Jonata Bohutský of Hranice. Yet although Nigrin's shop continued to operate under the name of another typographer, after his death its printing of music began to wane (after 1606, it only published two prints of songs, and no prints of polyphonic music). Bohutský did not make use of the ample stock of Nigrin's music notation types, and in the wake of the Battle of the White Mountain (1620) he sold the whole printing office. The question remains of where Nigrin's extensive equipment – thanks to which so many remarkable music prints came into the world – may have ended up. Could it be that it became the property of the Prague Jesuits?