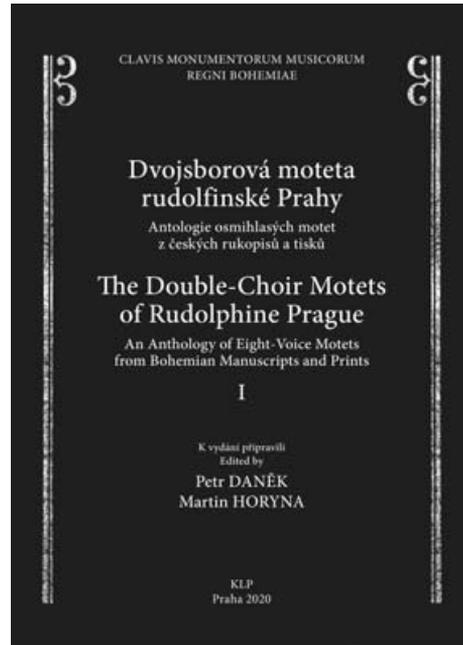


Two-choir Motets in Rudolfinian Prague

Petr DANĚK - Martin HORYNA (eds.)

Dvojsborová moteta rudolfinické Prahy. Antologie osmihlasých motet z českých rukopisů a tisků (Two-choir Motets in Rudolfinian Prague. An Anthology of Eight-voice Motets from Czech Manuscripts and Prints)

(Clavis Monumentorum Musicorum Regni Bohemiae Series A VI), KLP Prague 2020, XVI + 142 pp. ISBN 978-80-87773-73-4



The borders of the purview of cultural history are fluid. At least once in a while, it is good to remind ourselves that this framework also includes musical culture, which, of course, also has its own rich foundation of publications, often narrowly limited to experts. This is perhaps part of the reason why it goes unnoticed by “real” historians. But how else are we to address, in a full and complex manner, figures such as Jiří Karolides of Karlšperk (1569–1612), humanist, man of letters, and composer? It is from his library that a convolute (Se 1337) survives in the National Library of the Czech Republic in Prague. It contains four partbooks: two volumes of *Sacrae cantiones*, an anthology of motets by Italian composers that was hugely popular in its time (Nuremberg, 1585), the *Continuatio Cantionum sacrarum* (Nuremberg, 1588), and, most importantly, a manuscript created gradually in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. This includes eighteen predominantly eight-voice, two-choir motets. “Carolides’s convolute thus represents one of the most complete surviving manuscript sources pertaining to the history of musical culture in the period before the Battle of White Mountain.” (p. VII) This relic belongs to the context of a fashionable wave of music of the late 16th century, when many works of vocal polyphony intended for multiple choirs made its way from Italy to Bohemia, in the form of musical prints or in the repertoire of migratory musicians. It attests to the speedy and musically apt reception of this style. The editors most appreciate Carolides’s own compositions (*Confitebor domino nimis in ore meo*, *Augustine sacros thalami intrature penates*) and

the oldest surviving transcription of *Dies est laetitiae*, a Christmas motet by Rudolf’s court organist, Charles Luython, which was popular across all of Europe. Carolides’s manuscript only contains the music for part of the voices, but it captures the pieces in a form that allows them to be completed using other sources, or even compositionally, thus allowing for the performance of these pieces. This edition, put together by what are probably the two most experienced experts on this period, captures nine out of a total eighteen composition setting spiritual and moralist texts. Latin prevails, but the convolute also contains a significant portion of songs in Czech (half of the songs in the edition), particularly texts written in memory of Jan Hus and Jeroným Pražský. Joining these in the edition is the eight-voice *Dialogismus octo vocum de amore Chrsiti sponsi* by Francisco Sale, singer in the court band, published by Jiří Nigrin in Prague in 1598.

The aim of the bilingual (Czech and English) edition is not only the academic treatment of a remarkable piece of history but also the performance of these newly available pieces. This is why for the editorial part, Martin Horyna also reconstructed the voices that did not survive. There are also performance instructions: the pieces were not intended to be sung by masses of singers, and will therefore sound best in a chamber context. More than the effects of stereo polyphony, these composers emphasised musical dialogue highlighting the crucial sections of the texts.