

The Luython Year Conference (Prague, July 30 – August 13 2020)

August 2020 was the bicentenary of the death of Carl Luython (1557/8–1620), composer and organist at the court of Emperor Rudolf II in Prague. For musical historians and others, this significant anniversary was a remarkable and unique occasion to commemorate the legacy of this remarkable yet often overlooked artist, whose activities were most closely linked to the Prague Castle and the Cathedral of Saints Vitus, Wenceslaus, and Adalbert.

Several institutions joined forces in organising the three-day international symposium initiated by the Musica Rudolphina research centre: the Foundation for Cultural History in Central Europe, the Institute of Musicology of the Faculty of Arts at Charles University, the Archdiocese of Prague, and the Metropolitan Chapter of St Vitus. Even though the organisers were forced to cancel much of the originally grand plans for this academic and cultural event, the conference programme itself was only lightly affected by the coronavirus pandemic, and those who could not participate in person were at least present through video calls (this was true for most participants west of the Rhine and overseas). Cardinal Beran Hall, at the Archbishop's Palace, hosted eighteen papers mapping not only Luython's life and work, but also the historical and musical contexts

in which the music of the Flemish master found such resonance.

The first day of the conference (July 30th) began with a keynote by Václav Bůžek (University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice): *Rudolf II. – Persönlichkeit, Regierung, Hof und kulturelle Repräsentation in den adeligen Sitzen (Rudolf II: Personality, Government, the Court, and Cultural Representation in the Aristocratic Seats)*, which established an important contextual framework for the entire conference. In her contribution, titled *The Ennoblements Acts of the Rudolfine Musicians as an Important Biographical Source*, Michaela Žáčková Rossi (Foundation for Cultural History in Central Europe) made good use of her long-standing research into the personnel of the court orchestra based on the imperial court's bookkeeping. Also heuristically valuable was a paper presented by Ferran Escrivà Llorca (Valencia International University) titled *Sacred works by the Rudolf II Imperial Chapel Composers in the Iberian World: Circulation, Reception and Context*.

The extremely broad contexts of musical works surviving on Czech territory (and not only in relation to Luython) was explored by the following section, introduced by a paper by Alanna Ropchock Tierno (Shenandoah University), *Hymns, Martyrs, and Prophets: Czech Reformation Identity in Polytextual Mass Ordinaries from the Brno Choirbooks*, which focused on the repertoire of remarkable polyphonic choir-books recently discovered in the St Jacob parish library in Brno. In his paper *Lamentations in the Liturgy in Central Europe and Especially in Moravia around 1600*, Vladimír Maňas (Masaryk University, Brno) explored the part which the polyphonic lamentation (of which we also find examples in Luython's compositional oeuvre) played



in the liturgy of the Paschal Triduum in Moravian churches around the year 1600. Martin Horyna's paper (University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice), *Ein Schatz-Kasten voller Clainodien, Hradec Králové (Königgrätz) 1618, ein wenig bekannter Musikdruck (A Treasure Chest full of Gems; Hradec Králové in 1618; A Little-Known Music Print)* brought attention to a previously unknown polyphonic print of secular songs furnished with religious texts by composers from the circle of the Rudolphian court, apparently quite popular at the time.

The second day of the conference (Friday the 31st of July) opened with a block focusing on Luython's masses. Petr Daněk's paper (Institute of Art History of the Czech Academy of Sciences) *Liber I. missarum von Charles Luython. Der Schwanengesang der rudolphinischen Polyphonie (Charles Luython's First Book of Masses. The Swan Song of Rudolphinian Polyphony)* thoroughly introduced the composer's collection of masses printed in Prague in 1609 by Mikuláš Štraus, and also proposed a stimulating

hypothesis: that this might be the first volume of an intended but unrealised complete edition of Luython's works. Bernhold Schmid (Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften) focused on one of the Luython masses that survives in manuscript form in his paper *Carl Luythons Missa à 5 super Tityre tu patulae und seine Vorlage (Carl Luythons Missa à 5 super Tityre tu patulae and its Predecessors)*, refuting the often repeated theory on Orlande de Lassus' motet *Tityre tu patulae* serving as a model for the composer. Jan Baťa (Institute of Musicology of the Faculty of Arts of Charles University) then explored a particular group of Luython masses, which the composer subtitled *Quodlibetica*.

The composer's secular vocal works were the focus of a section introduced by Christian Thomas Leitmeir (Magdalen College, University of Oxford) and his paper *'Madrigals in Italian as well as Latin': Towards a Radical Re-definition of the Madrigal in the Late 16th Century*. He drew attention to an important phenomenon connected most intimately to central

European musical culture, for which the profane madrigal was not as closely tied to the Italian text (as was the case elsewhere in Europe) as it was to the Latin text, as attested to by many examples from the Rudolphinian court. Kateřina Mařrová (Prague) presented her long-term research of the Rokycany collection of music, focusing on Luython's compositions (*The Contemporary State of Research on the Rokycany Music Collection and Charles Luython's Sacral Compositions, preserved in these Music Sources*). The block was rounded off by Scott L. Edwards (Universität Wien) and his paper *From Convivial Dispute to Social Ferment: Luython's Vinum bonum et suave*, in which he analysed the literary and social context of the composer's drinkers' parody of the Medieval Marian sequence *Verbum bonum et suave*.

The last block of the second day focused entirely on Luython's motet work. Marc Desmet's paper (Université de Lyon-Université de Saint-Etienne) *On the Relation Between Structure and Detail in Luython and Handl-Gallus* was read in absentia. It compared the motet works of both composers on the example of two motets setting a single text (*Filiae Hierusalem a Gloria, laus et honor*), particularly comparing compositional approaches to setting the word "draco". Jan Bilwachs (Institute of Musicology of the Faculty of Arts at Charles University), in his paper *Karl Luythons Sacrae cantiones vom Gesichtspunkt der Textvorlagen*, explored in detail the various textual sources of Luython's motets. These have their foundations not only in liturgy, but also in the humanist environment. Erika Supria Honisch (Stony Brook University New York) then focused on the composer's motets as they were disseminated in the then-popular anthology *Promptuarium musicum* and the troubled context of the collection's creation: *Confessions, Anthologized: Heartbreak, Vandalism, and the Promptuarii musici (Strasbourg, 1611-13 and 1617)*.

Saturday morning (August 1st) accented Luython's works for organ. Markus Grassl (Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Wien), in his paper *Luythons Instrumentalmusik im Kontext*, critically assessed the state of our knowledge of the composer's instrumental music and drew attention to the need for revising the list of works in this section of the composer's oeuvre, which is replete with questionable attributions. Luc Ponet's paper (Leuven University) *In organo et*

in discantu. The basics of a multi-cultural European organ in the early 17th century presented the period's sonic-aesthetic ideal of an organ. Martin Kirnbauer (Schola Cantorum Basiliensis / Fachhochschule Nordwestschweiz) discussed the composer's chromatic harpsichord, mentioned copiously in the literature, which he rid of its exceptionalist and esoteric labels, as more instruments like this one existed in Luython's time and were used for the purposes of practical music-making (*Carl Luython and the "Clavicymbalum Vniuersale, seu perfectum" - Finding a Historical and Musical Context*). The concluding video-presentation of a modern reconstruction of Luython's clavicembalo, presented by Winfried Dahlke (Organeum Weener), created especially for the occasion, was a striking confirmation of what had been uttered previously, practically introducing the disparate chromatic possibilities of the instrument.

Conference proceedings were framed by an accompanying programme, which included a concert by the Dyškanti vocal ensemble, led by their musical director Martin Horyna (July 30th) and a recital by the St Vitus dome organist Josef Kšica (August 1st). The entire event was then symbolically concluded with Sunday Mass in the Cathedral of St Vitus, accompanied by Luython's liturgical music, once again presented by the Dyškanti ensemble.

The Luython symposium brought to the surface many new and valuable observations about the composer's work. Unexplored areas of knowledge were identified, and, most importantly, the need was emphasised to reexamine attributions of authorship partially based on unfounded claims in older literature. All the papers presented will be published in the *Clavibus unitis* journal. However, it is also apparent that the time has come to create a more extensive monograph on this overlooked and underappreciated composer. This monograph is sure to become one of the great challenges of the Musica Rudolphina research centre.