

THE POLYPHONIC HYMNS OF VALENTIN TRILLER'S *EIN SCHLESISCH SINGEBÜCHLEIN* (WROCLAW 1555), ED. ANTONIO CHEMOTTI
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This is an intriguing item indeed among critical editions of sixteenth-century music. Not only does it focus on a songbook for pious believers in Lutheran Silesia, a type of source rarely found in modern edition, but it also considers the original source only partially, being devoted to the polyphonic items it contains (51 hymns out of 145, 136 with music, the other 85 being monodic). Printed in Wrocław in 1555, the songbook *Ein Schlesisch singebüchlein*, edited by Valentin Triller, is known only through seven existing copies. Although its polyphonic contents appear limited in their scope and nature, consisting mostly of simple counterpoint compositions for two or three parts, they display a wide variety

of style and provenance. Hence a detailed, thirty-five-page introduction is not too much for a thorough presentation of the intricacies at play within these fifty or so apparently simple compositions.

The author of the present critical edition, Antonio Chemotti, is a postdoctoral researcher based at the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences. Having previously worked on such subjects as the Trent codices and music composed for the Liturgy of the Dead, he is now member of the team devoted to the HERA project 'Sound Memories: The Musical Past in Late-Medieval and Early Modern Europe'. His edition of the polyphonic hymns contained in Valentin Triller's *Singebüchlein* is clearly

and properly organised, with a detailed introduction covering context (pp. 1–4), the layout in the original source (pp. 5–8), the hymns published as monodies in Triller for which a polyphonic version is to be found elsewhere (pp. 8–10), the significant variants and revisions found in a manuscript copy of the songbook, PL-Wu SDM 93 (pp. 10–11), notation (pp. 11–20), with detailed accounts of the mensural signs and signs of proportions, and editorial decisions (pp. 20–35), which focus in particular on text underlay and editorial accidentals. The edition is elegantly printed in a quasi-square format, on beautiful thick white paper, with a very light and readable typography. It is complemented, at the end, by two appendices concerning the alternative versions found in PL-Wu SDM 93 (Appendix A) and contemporary polyphonic versions of hymns appearing in monodic form in Triller's songbook (Appendix B). It concludes with a detailed 'Critical Apparatus' (pp. 123–150), which lists for each piece the reference and text edition provided by *Das deutsche Kirchenlied* (in the framework of which all the monodic pieces of this source have already been edited), as well as the information found in the rubrics and the notation system found in the original printed source of 1555. An index of text incipits, a bibliography and a summary in Polish are to be found at the end of the volume.

As is clearly stated on page 3 of the Introduction, the purpose of this edition is to facilitate both research and performance. That this publication will be of great interest to researchers is more than confirmed by the nature of the source itself. A detailed representation of the original layout (pp. 5–8) makes it clear that the polyphony is not accessible directly in the 1555 publication, since the different parts are printed one after the other, and not next to one another as in choirbooks and chansonniers. This immediately justifies the edition and makes the music ready for sight reading. Another

notable achievement of this edition is the clear analysis of the part settings and of the significant differences in style between the pieces. It offers the reader a fascinating repertoire, where old-style two-part *cantio* rubs shoulders with polyphonic song counterpoint typical of German polyphony c.1500, with many subtle examples of simple polyphony in transition between those two stylistic boundaries. Some of the pieces display a markedly archaic conception, even when they are conceived for three parts (such as no. 20). In turn, the pieces conceived for two parts (such as no. 21) are at times reminiscent of the medieval *cantio* of the Czech Lands, to which Silesia also belonged during the sixteenth century. One even finds a unique case of two-part polyphony using plainsong notation (no. 40), providing an interesting example of the ancient style of two-part *discantus*. Many hymns, on the other hand, adopt typical mid-fifteenth-century counterpoint, with characteristic octave leaps at contratenor cadences (e.g. nos. 18, 19, 32). Other pieces, in turn, appear modern for their time (nos. 22, 37, 48–53), with sometimes surprising sonorities (such as no. 44, where B and E flats unexpectedly appear at the end!) or even imitation points (no. 50). In most cases, however, the music seems to display both archaic and modern details, as in no. 23, where a unison opening gives way to typical fifteenth-century counterpoint. Renaissance music specialists and amateurs alike will make many discoveries in this counterpoint, which, although simple, is nevertheless full of spirit (no. 29) and tasty archaisms (no. 51).

As far as performance matters are concerned, musicians will appreciate the particular care that has been taken over the text layout under the music. The various origins of the pieces (monodic or polyphonic hymns, contrafacta of so-called *Tenorlieder*) account for the different issues at stake with regard to text underlay. The editor rightly

states on p. 26 that in some difficult cases (mostly polyphonic contrafacta) it became necessary to discard some conventions regarding the placing of syllables, notably in ligatures or with repeated notes. The advantage of such a voluntarist approach is that it provides musicians with a 'ready-to-sing' version, with all three parts associated with a text. The description of the notation system used in the hymnbook is extremely detailed. It is surprising at first to find the table of mensural signs situated on pp. 13–15 of the introduction, rather than in a separate section, and the purpose of this table is not immediately clear, since it refers to only three possibilities (cut C, 3, and a mixture of these two signs). But the next two pages fully explain this seemingly awkward disposition in relation to the diverse provenance of the pieces, above all from a chronological point of view.

Editorial accidentals are kept to a minimum, and for good reason, since the compositions display such a wide stylistic diversity. However, although few in number, these interventions do not always appear consistent. Passages of similar melodic design are sometimes provided with an accidental, sometimes not (compare, for example, the Bassus parts of no. 6, p. 49, bar 4 (*b* in the source) with no. 5, p. 48, bar 31 (*b* not in the source, but not added either, since it leads to an upper note), or no. 19, p. 63, bar 26 with no. 4, p. 45 and 46, bars 9, 26 and 48). In some rare cases, editorial accidentals may appear superfluous, such as the sharp placed in bar 29 (penultimate) in no. 19, which relies on a harmonic reading that may not have been completely relevant for vocalists singing with separate parts (the sharpened note, in this case, not leading upwards to the *finalis*). Yet these minor details are very rare, and they often remind us how difficult it is to make decisions concerning accidentals in mid-sixteenth-century music, especially in such a varied repertory originating from many sources.

All critical editions involve choices to be made in terms of both presentation and editorial options. In this particular instance, it was not always easy to reconcile aspects important to musicians, on one hand, and to researchers, on the other. As far as presentation is concerned, it is a matter of regret that the sources of the songbook are not listed in a distinct and clearly accessible section of the 'Sources and Sigla' list at the beginning (p. vii). Indeed, one has to find them in footnote 11 (p. 1) to be sure not to miss anything. Such is also the case with digitalisations of the source, with the two copies accessible online only mentioned in footnote 87 (p. 25); it would have been useful to see them clearly mentioned in the source list. This fact would not be important in itself if the 'Sources and Sigla' list did not include references which have hardly anything to do with the edition, being mentioned only once for a purely chronological reason. The first books of madrigals by Lasso and Palestrina and the *Sacrae cantiones* by Guerrero were all published in the same year as Triller's songbook, yet they are not 'sources' of this edition in the proper sense of the word. Comparing Triller with the grand publications in Italy or Spain of Guerrero, Lasso and even Palestrina provides an opportunity for easy contrast, yet the 'other side' of Europe in which the editor situates Triller's Breslau was also that of Formschneider's monumental printed books for Heinrich Isaac's *Choralis constantinus* (1550–55), as well as the many music printers who were beginning to make the German market famous among music amateurs and professionals for the quality of their anthologies of motets (Petreius, Rhau, then Berg & Neuber, to cite only the most important).

Also rather equivocal is the way in which these printed collections are referenced in the same list. Names of cities are sometimes quoted in English (Nuremberg, Seville), sometimes in the language of the country

of the publication (Venezia, Roma), sometimes in the present-day toponym and not the historical one (Wrocław instead of Breslau), sometimes the other way around (Jungbunzlau instead of Mladá Boleslav). Given the high number of variants in toponymy for Central European historical publications, a stricter choice should have been made either in favour of a diplomatic rendition (Nuernberg, Venetiis, Breslaw), or of a standard present-day use, either in English (Nuremberg, Venice, Wrocław) or in the present-day vernacular of the country considered (Nürnberg, Venezia, Wrocław).

A drawback of perhaps more consequence is to be found at the other end of the publication, namely in its critical apparatus. While providing, among others, a category entitled 'Model', the critical apparatus fails to be critical in that area, simply reproducing mentions found in rubrics without giving any notice of the origin of the melodies. Hence one could reasonably question the purpose of this category. Moreover, it was the editor's choice to reject all paratext in this critical apparatus. This decision seems understandable when applied to mentions which make sense only in the 1555 disposition of the musical parts in succession, such as 'For whom it would please, may the 3rd voice be sung as follows', found at the start of the Counter-tenor part in no. 3. But it is far less clear why a similar rejection of paratext from the

musical score should have been applied to all rubrics found at the top of each piece (playing the role of a complementary title). That deprives the reader/musician of an immediate introduction to the piece, which is often informative. For example, in the same piece (no. 3), the rubric reads: 'A song on an old melody / Martyr felix insignita / to be sung in Advent or else all year long, in parts', and such rubrics are to be found for every piece. Since the songbook is known only through one print, and no other 'competing' presentation is to be found for each piece, one could reasonably think that, far from belonging to a 'critical' apparatus, these mentions deserved to be kept where they appear in the source, that is, at the top of each piece.

Antonio Chemotti announces in the introduction (p. 2) a forthcoming publication situating Valentin Triller's hymnbook within the context of musical practice in multi-confessional Silesia. For the time being, performers and researchers will find in the present edition a remarkable and well-prepared access to the musical contents of this hymnbook and be rewarded with fruitful musical perspectives by using this edition in association with the original source, which is easily accessible online.

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