

Introduction

The project of the *Monumenta artis musicae Sloveniae* series envisages among other things also the publication of Jacob Handl Gallus' (1550-1591) oeuvre in a revised modern transcription. Up to the present the complete sacred works by the above mentioned composer came out in the series - in the volumes v-xvii the four books of the motet collection *Opus musicum*, and in the following volumes xviii-xxi masses from the collection *Selectiores quaedam missae*. The present volume is the first one consecrated to Gallus' secular compositions. He created them in the last years of his life in Prague, where he worked as director of music at the church of St. Jan na Brzehu and was active within the circle of local humanists. By their number these works present the second major group of Gallus' compositions; there are hundred all together. This well-rounded number was not intentional as it is known that Gallus had more texts ready to set to music when he untimely died. The first fifty-three compositions were edited in Prague by the composer himself. They are gathered in the three books of the collection *Harmoniae morales* (1589 and 1590). The remaining forty-seven pieces were published posthumously in Nuremberg in 1596 by his brother and heir Georg Handl.

The years spent in monasteries and in different church employments have greatly stimulated Gallus to compose exclusively liturgical music. From his preface to the first book of masses it is clear that he was even convinced that music, "this almost divine creation must not be desecrated with secular verses." In his last years he nevertheless decided to tackle also secular compositions. He explained this in the introduction to the collection *Harmoniae morales*, pointing out that his friends persuaded him to leave aside now and then the demanding sacred music, to drop his cares and enjoy life; they summoned him from the choir-loft to the market-place, from his solemn and serious affairs to mirthful frolics and hearthside suppers.

Indeed, Gallus dedicated the above mentioned collection to these friends, "so that they may have a source of enjoyment and himself a means of self-defense, for there are some who mutter hoarsely when the Rooster sings." In spite of these words it is hard to believe that his decision was merely a fruit of his friends' advice and a wish to defend him against his enemies. He undoubtedly felt a need within himself to confirm his reputation as composer in the animated artistic milieu of the Czech capital also by writing yet untackled secular music. He chose for that an entirely original path.

Gallus' secular compositions are often called madrigals. Yet this term does not completely correspond to these pieces. Indeed, the composer himself did not term them as such: "This rather gay kind of song, a substitute for *Madrigalia*, I entitle *Moralia*, and it is my wish that they may henceforth be so called, as the choicest manners in them are not in the least wanton, but they shun even the shadow of indecency." The title apparently alludes to the moral seriousness and ethical tone of these compositions. A good deal of their texts are didactic and moralizing sentences of human virtues and defects; often bitter truths of life and world, accompanied by the worldly advices. Some of the texts are odes to music, freedom, garden, Latin language; two of them praise the composer's patrons. Nevertheless, there are among *moralia* also more cheerful and less serious. A number of them are lightly humorist animal portraits spiced with worldly truths. There is also an example of the so called *battaglia* evoking military combats and a composition recalling the sounding of bells. The latter shows - according to the ethnomusicologist Julijan Strajnar - in its disposition of parts and their rhythmical structure some similarities with the Slovenian chiming, that is a particular way of sounding bells, known exclusively in Slovenia - perhaps a composer's reminiscence

from his childhood. Another group present *moralia* that are treating the subject of love and woman. They clearly reveal that love did not present a happy feeling to Gallus. With regard to women he was apparently reserved, at times even grotesquely repulsive - we ignore whether this was the consequence of his education and life behind the monastery walls, or perhaps he had had a bad personal experience. Some of the texts openly refer to the composer himself, speaking either of a self-confidence of an artist and a value of his work, or bringing an uncompromising answer to his opponent, and sometimes expressing even a premonition of his approaching death.

A peculiar feature of Gallus' *moralia* is also the fact that they are not set to texts in one of the living languages, otherwise a common practice in the contemporary madrigal literature; his choice was a supra-national Latin, which he considered the best known, the most widespread and everywhere familiar language, the "queen of languages." He also observed that it was fairly neglected in this kind of compositions. The texts of the *moralia* are taken from different sources, the most important of which is a contemporary anthology of classical and medieval sayings and aphorisms *Carmina proverbialia* (Basle, 1576) and - in a much lesser degree - a similar collection *Proverbia dictoria* (Frankfurt, 1575). Some of the texts can be found in the three hundred years younger *Anthologia latina* (Leipzig, 1894). A good third of all texts - literary most valuable ones - are fragments from the works of the classical Latin poets. For most of these texts Gallus is indebted to Ovidius, and in a lesser degree to Vergilius, Horatius, Maximianus, Martialis, Catullus and others. Unidentified remain twenty, or about one fifth of all the texts. Their authors were most probably at least partly the composer's Czech humanist friends, but some of them could be quite safely attributed to Gallus himself.

As far as the music itself is concerned Gallus' *moralia* are compositions *sui generis* with features of motets, madrigals as well as chansons. The tendency to monumental style as present in his ten-, twelve-, sixteen- and twenty-four-part motets is foreign to these compositions set to four, five and six voices, a number of voices characteristic for the classical era of the renaissance madrigal. Ten of Gallus' *moralia* are nevertheless composed for a choir of eight voices, a setting that was rare, but not totally unknown in the madrigal literature of the sixteenth century. *Moralia* are in some respects even a better example of a *buona maniera di comporre* - a definition of the Italian composer and music theorist Nicola Vicentino - than Gallus' motets. It means an apprehension of music as an expressive art, its subjection to the text, a characteristic intention of the whole renaissance period to translate words to music as genuinely as possible and to give them a lively spirit (*dare spirito vivo alle parole*). Gallus takes profit of nearly every opportunity offered by the text to paint with tones, procedure that gives his secular compositions a particular charm. To achieve this Gallus used various compositional means, that the latter doctrine of musical rhetoric termed musical figures and arranged them in a precisely conceived system.

With his *moralia* Gallus broadened the motivic sphere of his art, he enriched his musical language and carried into effect his wide-ranging talent for composing music. From the preface to the collection *Moralia* by the composer's brother Georg we learn that the collection *Harmoniae morales* was well received in public. Even more, the compositions apparently softened Gallus' opponents, as he himself - six months before his death - closed his last published text, the preface to the fourth book of the motet collection *Opus musicum*, with the following words: "My hoarse Zoilos I leave in peace, for I can see how my *moralia* make stiff and almost blunt their teeth."

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(Translated by Metoda Kokole)