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Abstract

The religious and political turmoil of the Thirty Years' War significantly impacted the performance and preservation of sacred Baroque music in the German lands. Conflict between the Catholics and Protestants created an unstable social environment, which resulted in a myriad of responses from composers and performers. Leading composers including Heinrich Schütz, Michael Praetorius, Thomas Selle, and Heinrich Scheidemann, expressed their values either overtly or implicitly depending upon their occupational, geographical, political, and religious positions. Research indicates that the influences of the Thirty Years' War created an ideal environment for the flourishing of the following German music in the late Baroque Era.

Keywords

Sacred German Music, German Music during the Thirty Years' War, Sacred German Music in the 1600s, Early Baroque music in Germany, Music and the Thirty Years' War

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Sacred German Music in the Thirty Years' War

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The tapestry of early German Baroque music contains tightly woven threads of the political and religious conditions of the sixteenth century. In fact, when examining the occurrences preceding the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), it is difficult to tell where the string of politics ends and where that of religion begins. In 1555, German lands attempted to forge a peace between the Catholics and the Lutheran moderates. However, this *Peace of Augsburg* knitted merely a row of slipknots. It failed to acknowledge the rising Calvinists in the German lands and set religious groups in competition with one another. By the end of the century, the German lands unraveled in political, economic, and religious turmoil. The Counter-Reformation Catholics, the Lutheran moderates, and the Calvinists battled for political control. The climax occurred in 1618 when the Calvinists attacked the Catholics in what became known as the Defenestration of Prague, which led to the beginning of the Thirty Years' War. During this time, the three religious groups were "used by the [political leaders] as a means of enforcing [their] authority" (Gardiner, 15). Whether religion was enslaved to political agenda or politics served as the vehicle for religion, both were undeniably intertwined in seventeenth-century Europe. Their effects, however, were not felt equally in all cities. The predominantly Protestant southern German lands faced heated pressure to beware of surrounding Catholic opposition, due to their geographical location. Thus, they were more eager to reject Calvinist Protestantism to appease the Catholics in Italy and Bavaria. Most northern German lands held staunchly to traditional Lutheranism. The political, religious, and economical divisions among the German lands are clearly seen in the diverse effects on the performance, preservation, and composition of their sacred music during this era. Although the turmoil of the Thirty Years' War diminished some of the performance and preservation of early German Baroque music, the social effects of the war enhanced sacred music composition. The war also instilled a hunger in Europe for the elaborate music produced by German composers of the late Baroque Era.

The employment of musicians varied significantly between cities. In nearly every German city during the seventeenth century, musicians had two career options. They could choose to serve either in "a court, as an employee of the ruling nobleman, or a town or city, as an employee of the town council or the church" (Sadie, 150). At the onset of war, German cities and courts attempted to financially support the production of music as they and other European countries had done previously in the sixteenth century. However, as the devastation of the

war enlarged, the difficulty to maintain such support steadily increased, particularly in the south.

One such city that encountered severe devastation was the Catholic southeastern city of Dresden. In one of his letters written in 1642, the musician Heinrich Schütz wrote of the living conditions in Dresden as a result of the war: “that so far as I am concerned [...] God knows that I would prefer with all my heart to be a cantor or an organist in a small town to remaining longer amid conditions in which my dear profession disgusts me and I am deprived of sustenance and of courage” (Price, 166). In fact, members of his church ensemble dropped one by one. From 1632 until 1639 the number of members diminished by twenty-nine people. Price reports, “In a petition to Johann Georg I dated June 1625, the entire ensemble, including Kapellmeister Schütz, complained that they had not been paid for nearly two years” (Price, 165). In spite of these economical conditions, however, music remained foundational to its Lutheran court and continued to be written by musicians such as Michael Praetorius and Kapellmeister Heinrich Schütz. This occurrence then begs the question: if not for pay, why did Praetorius, Schütz, and other musicians continue in their profession? Perhaps a close examination of the composers’ lives, cities, music, and text could provide an answer.

Heinrich Schütz, the main Lutheran composer and musician for the Dresden court, studied under Giovanni Gabrieli until 1613. In fact, Schütz wrote Italian madrigals and Italian influence is intentionally used in some of his sacred compositions. The German court at Dresden received the majority of his musical contributions. In 1618 Schütz composed a wedding concerto scored for three trumpets, a basso continuo, and two choruses. The text of the concerto is biblical and significant to the wedding party, who were members of the Lutheran consistory. He composed his largest work in Dresden a year later. It is a polychoral work entitled *Psalms of David* scored for four vocal soloists and a large accompaniment group, referred to as the “*Capellen*” (Spagnoli, 29). The *Capellen* could be performed by instruments and vocalists together or simply by instruments alone. However, in his later works such as, *Musikalische Exequien* (1636), Schütz uses a much thinner texture with no required instrumental accompaniment. Though written for a funeral, the text of *Musikalische Exequien* presents perhaps a double meaning: a reflection on the life of the deceased as well as the reminder of hope in the midst of the conflict in Dresden. The text describes the desperate situation of the biblical character of Job, who would not curse God in his pain but chose to find hope in Him instead (Spagnoli, 32). An English translation of the original German text can be seen below:

Naked I came out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord (Job 1:21). Lord God, Father in heaven, have mercy on us! For to me to live is Christ, and to die is my

reward (Philippians 1:21). Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world (John 1:29). Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us! For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's (Romans 14:8). Lord God, Holy Spirit, have mercy on us! (Kampani, *Musikalische Exequien*).

As the desolation in Dresden increased, music compositions were scored for fewer instruments and for more voices. This seems to have occurred as a result of the waning of instrumentalist performers during this time. Schütz's *Kleine geistliche Konzerte*, a collection of simple sacred concertos, was composed around 1636 (Heller and Kroll, *Novel Guide*). The text clearly emphasizes the tenets of the Lutheran church, which were vehemently opposed by the Catholic Church from the time of Martin Luther. The text quotes Jesus, "I am the resurrection and the life, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me will never die" (John 11:25). Other areas of the music (written in Latin) extol the mercy of Jesus and his authority. This contradicted the beliefs of the Catholic Church, which held that belief in Jesus coupled with good works were necessary for salvation. The Catholic Church also believed the ultimate authority to be the papacy. While at first glance this text may seem banal among the Lutheran court, its bold statement reinforces the political turmoil in Dresden.

Compared to Dresden, the northern cities of Hamburg and Lübeck, members of the Hanseatic League, remained rather unaffected by the hardships of war. Lying on the outskirts of the Protestant German lands, Hamburg served as a musical metropolis. In fact, it flourished in its instrumental accompaniments, especially in regard to organ music. Hamburg also offered a particular position referred to as the "Kantor, who was employed by the city [and] had the responsibility of organizing and directing the music in the services of the four parish churches" (Price, 186). The Kantor also taught school choirs which were required to perform at least four times a year in the church. Performances of polyphonic music accompanied by instrumentalists also increased rapidly. Until about 1630, the construction of new buildings such as the church of St. Michael was necessary to fit the large performing groups comfortably (Price, 190).

Trumpet music also played a notable role in Hamburg. According to musicologist, Julie Anne Sadie, it was heard from multiple church towers in the city at certain hours of the day. The court employed trumpeters for several reasons. First, they were to perform in the church when needed. Second, they performed for weddings and on occasion to alert the community in the case of a fire or other public emergency. Though not a particularly common position, the trumpeters contributed to the social prominence of music in society (Sadie, 163).

Just a little northeast of Hamburg, lay the city of Lübeck, which was lined with Protestant churches and cathedrals. The most influential church during this time was Marienkirche because it was the official church of the town council. In this church, the organist was the central musician, as organ was used primarily as a solo instrument during this time (Hopkins and Rimbault, 84). The largest school in Lübeck, St. Catharinen, required its students to sing in their local church's choir every week. The organist at Marienkirche during the war, Franz Tunder (1614-67), composed many vocal works comparable to vocal concertos and variations on chorales. He has several Latin vocal works that also remain ambiguous and could have easily been sung in either a Catholic Cathedral or a Protestant church (Guo, *International Music Score Library Project*). The only distinctive quality is that he scored the pieces for an organ accompaniment, which would have been more characteristic of most Lutheran churches than of the Catholic tradition. He was renowned equally for his frequent recitals and concerts. He was said to have begun "the custom of giving concerts on Thursdays for the town's citizens to pass the time until they went on to the stock-market" (Price, 202). This personal interaction and role of music provided much attraction and brought wealth to the city. He prepared the way for future organists at Marienkirche, including Buxtehude and Bach (Hopkins and Rimbault, 83).

Among the four main churches in Hamburg, Thomas Selle served as the Kantor from 1641 until his death in 1663. During this time, he composed many sacred vocal works. Among the most popular of his 193 compositions for German text stood his *St. Johannes Passion* (1643). It was the first Passion written to use instrumental interludes between the sections. The instrumentation for the three interludes is also very elaborate; it is scored for a five-part chorus, three solo voices, an orchestra, a solo violin, and a basso continuo. Its elaborate polyphony is intended for a large ensemble. Such fancy part writing and performing forces typified Thomas Selle's compositions, as he attempted to enhance the music program in Hamburg, which seemed to be his overall goal during the time of his employment. In fact, he used his many academic and religious responsibilities to his advantage. Because of his gained popularity through assuming many positions throughout the church and community he is classified among the Hamburg school of composers. His prevalence in music spheres in society caused his sacred music and other works to be widely circulated throughout society. Selle seemed to have been very dedicated to his position as he even "persuaded the Hamburg City council to increase the number of performing groups responsible to him" (Price, 192).

Regardless of the substantial financial and occupational support necessary from Hamburg churches, the city council enthusiastically aided Selle in his endeavor to grow the music program. One main factor that contributed to this substantial support was the ideal geographical location of the city. Hamburg, lying along the Elbe River in the northern German lands, served as a prime location for European trading routes (Price, 187). Thus, an influx in foreign population aided in the musical advancement of the society. Musicians emigrated from the politically

tumultuous countries of Spain, the Netherlands, and Portugal. A second reason, and probably the most important factor related to Hamburg's growth in population during the Thirty Years' War, was its overtly neutral religious affiliation. Hamburg had refused to side with either the Calvinists or the Lutherans, and therefore provided a haven for many who sought to escape the deprivations of the war (Price, 186).

With this influx of population coupled with the support of the courts and city council, Thomas Selle successfully grew the music program in Hamburg. According to Price, "At the beginning of the century, [...] only 24 performances of polyphonic music were heard during the year in the four parish churches" (192). However, by 1643 this music along with the Passions was presented at least three times a week in the congregations. The city also paid salaries to many other instrumentalists. Music was so integrated in society that it was expected to have a large amount of music at special events such as a wedding reception or banquet. If a couple did not wish to have music, they were required to pay an indemnity fee (Sadie, 168). This process manifests the official endorsement of music in society. In addition to the numerous music performances in Hamburg came an increase in music composition. The sacred vocal works reflected the ethnic diversity and religious neutrality of the city.

Heinrich Scheidemann (1595-1663) was one composer that contributed significantly to sacred Baroque composition. Known primarily for his organ music, Scheidemann also aided in the spread of chorale music throughout the German lands. He supplemented many chorale compositions with elaborate organ accompaniments which "[required] two manuals plus pedals" (Sadie, 201). He also used other instruments, including bassoons, viola da gambas, violins, lutes, and recorders. The use of trombones and cornetts grew popular in Hamburg's performances as well. Sadie comments, "Scheidemann was inspired by Scheidt's chorale ricercares (1624), and his own chorale compositions include transcriptions for organ of vocal monodies and virtuoso chorale fantasias" (207). His organ work, the *Praeambulum*, was a notable improvisation and is still referenced today as the precursor to the prelude and fugue. In 1629, he served as the organist of the Catharinenkirche in Hamburg. Among his vocal works, Scheidemann's *Magnificat* employs contrapuntal imitation and elaborate instrumental ornamentation. Its text displays a blend of Catholic traditions and Lutheran doctrines, as both Catholics and Lutherans would approve the text. In fact, all of Scheidemann's sacred chorales use either vernacular or biblical translations that avoided contradiction with either religion, perhaps in hope to maintain religious (and therefore political) neutrality.

However, not all musicians in Hamburg followed Scheidemann's apparent religious indifference. Johann Rist was an obscure poet in Hamburg and worked as a dedicated Lutheran pastor in Wedel (Sadie, 196). His writings typically consisted of straightforward, strophic poems that expounded on the sacred themes of Martin Opitz. Because of his apparent commitment to his faith, he wrote hymn

texts that contained overtly Lutheran doctrines. In *Jesu, der du meine Seele*, Rist prays to Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sin; in his *Gott sei gelobet, der allein*, he states that God alone is worthy of praise. Northern composers such as Heinrich Schütz, Andreas Hammerschmidt, Heinrich Pape, the elder Johann Schop, and Thomas Selle used these texts and others for their compositions (Guo, *International Music Score Library Project*). Catholic leaders staunchly contradicted these beliefs. They held firmly that one must offer penance and confession to a priest for sin, rather than a prayer to Jesus. They also believed that Mary deserved praise as the “Mother of God” (Dickinson, 227-231). Rist, as well as those who arranged his hymn texts, thereby promulgated their firm alliance with Lutheran doctrine and their opposition to Catholic tradition.

Resounding in unison with the strong liturgical tradition of the strict Lutheran doctrine echoed the deep bellows of organ music. In the early seventeenth century, many composers studied under the tutelage of the Dutchman Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck in what came to be known as the North German organ school (Phelps, *Lawrence Phelps & Associates*). Organ construction and composition became very popular in northern cities because they did not face as much preoccupation with the war as their southern counterparts. Materials, builders, and composers came from many other countries, particularly the Netherlands, which contributed to the occupation of organ construction. The use of the organ originated in sacred music and it permeated the society perhaps because of its novelty, its strength, or its versatility. Organ music flourished in the north throughout time of the war and well into the eighteenth century. Though it had a place in Catholic churches, its primary use in the northern German lands is seen in the traditional Lutheran liturgy. This can likely be attributed to the predominance of the Lutheran churches in this regional area.

Organ music compositions were not quite as prevalent in the southern German lands. Because organ construction had originated in Italy during the fifteenth century, the southern German lands became the first German region to experiment with organ music. The majority of the early organ works composed here reflected the secular styles of keyboard music specific to Italy (Hopkins, 80). In regard to music composition, one man stands out among the rest: Johann Jacob Froberger. Residing primarily in Dresden, He studied under the instruction of Frescobaldi in Rome from 1637-1640. He returned with an intentional Italian flavor in many of his compositions. His most common works included toccatas, capriccios, ricercares, fantasias, and suites. Though baptized into the Lutheran church and raised in the Württemberg court, Froberger's sacred compositions primarily supported the Catholic Church. His compositions include many organ pieces for choral services, Benedictine Abbeys, and proper masses (Guo, *International Music Score Library Project*). To compose for the Catholic Church was very common among many south German composers mainly because of the geographical proximity to the traditional Catholic Church at Rome, which offered them a somewhat steady pension. The texture of Froberger's works usually was arranged for solo organ, evidencing its importance in Catholic liturgy as well as

the lack of variety of instruments in the south during the war (Phelps, *Lawrence Phelps and Associates*).

One may wonder how all of this composed sacred music was preserved during and after the end of the war. The main location responsible for many of the works that exist today from this time period is the central city of Leipzig. During the war it was the primary city of trade and learning. Leipzig's central geographical location provided a "trading gateway to the expanding markets of Bohemia, Pomerania, Prussia, and Silesia" (Rose, *Music Printing*, 324). Trade fairs were an extremely common event in this city. Because books became a main component in the trading industry, the printing and distribution of literature, including music compositions, became a main occupation of its residents. Various individuals and companies in Leipzig printed the majority of German music compositions written in the seventeenth century. According to Rose, printed music in Leipzig was produced in four different formats including "partbook collections, hymnals, treatises, and occasional pamphlets" (Rose, *Music Printing*, 325). With further improvements to the Gutenberg printing press from the fifteenth century, printed music originated from the professional and amateur musician alike. Compilations of music were often printed in book form; individual works by composers were most often self-published, as in some works by Michael Praetorius, Johann Hermann Schein, and Heinrich Schütz (Rose, *Mechanisms*, 32). Therefore, many German works were lost during the war, simply because of the inability of composers to afford to print their own works (Schulenberg, 218). Though written copies of music were rare, sacred music remained the scarcest. Perhaps this was a direct result of the "Saxon authorities [who] forbade congregations from singing anything other than thirty-two chorales dating from the sixteenth century" (Rose, *Music Printing*, 327). This continued well into the 1630s. Not until 1661 was an edition of new hymns published and used in churches. Although Leipzig failed to contribute significantly to the composition and preservation of German sacred works, it contributed significantly to the trade and publication of music throughout the German lands. Education in Leipzig as well as other parts of the German lands was not particularly ideal during the war. Thus, hymnals were written in different levels to accommodate all consumers and participants of music, regardless of their level of musical literacy. Prominent composers that contributed to sacred vocal music in Leipzig include Johann Hermann Schein, Sethus Calvisius, and Erhard Bodenschütz.

Along with Leipzig, the composer Matthias Weckmann (1619-1674) served as an important bridge between music in the German lands. Much of his life was spent traveling between German cities such as Hamburg and Dresden. He alternated between receiving training as a chorister from Heinrich Schütz in Dresden and from Jacob Praetorius (of no relation to the well known Michael Praetorius) in Hamburg (Higginbottom, 222-226). He was a widely renowned organist as well as a composer of choral and vocal chamber music for concertante instruments. Today he is also noted for his instrumental music such as trio sonatas, toccatas, organ preludes, and fugues. He also served as a significant tie between the music

of Heinrich Schütz and J.S. Bach because of his deep involvement in music for organ performance and accompaniment.

In summary, the Thirty Years' War contributed significantly to the integration of foreign influence on German music composition and performances. It provided a diverse culture for musicians to draw from. In the wealthier northern regions, sacred music penetrated society through the employment of the organ and the rich ornamentations of their music compositions. The south contributed mainly to the enculturation of diverse cultural flavors, preparing the German lands for their opportunity rise to their height of European Baroque composition. The central German lands served as a middle ground between the rising Lutheran and staunchly Catholic traditions. Their most significant contribution remained in the area of music publication and distribution. Most of the works that remain today come from the publishers and printers in the central German lands. Just as the strong Lutheran tradition continued throughout the time of the Thirty Years' War, so music composition seemed to follow. The social effects of the war may have limited the growth of music performances and preservation. However, they cultivated an atmosphere conducive to the following elaborate music of composers in the late Baroque era. The Peace of Westphalia, forged in 1648, concluded the Thirty Years' War by assuaging the hostility between religious and political groups. The Holy Roman Empire's strands of power dissolved among various territories. Contrary to the religious conditions of 1618, it acknowledged the Calvinists and granted cities the option to claim Calvinism as their official religion. Most territories up to this time were allocated to the Lutheran Germans and the Catholic Habsburgs (in Austria) (Fullbrook, 68). As the hostility subsided, the social environment grew conducive to the music production of the late Baroque period with talented composers such as Bach who would compose mainly within the local territory of his employment. The resulting social effects of the Thirty Years' War enhanced sacred music composition and adequately prepared the social environment of Europe to continue weaving the tapestry of music through the famous German composers of the late Baroque Era.

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