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Importation or Participation? Remarks on the Reception and Adaptation of the Genre *musica more antiquo mensurata* in Sixteenth-Century Poland §

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One of the thematic requirements of this year's conference was to "... present the phenomena under discussion from their external perspective, i.e., their importation into the area of Poland. [...] The subject of the conference presupposes presentation of research into Poland's place on the historical map of musical culture in Europe". This paper attempts to develop the theme defined by this framework through a discussion of selected specific material, but also to take up a position in relation to the main subject of the conference. The title of the conference employs concepts which are, to an extent, consensual (it would be difficult to provide unambiguous definitions of "national boundaries" or "religious boundaries"), and largely determined historically. Both the expression "European musical repertory" and its context¹ also in my opinion require a brief commentary, since we are dealing here with a relationship of a part to a whole: the musical repertory of Europe (or, more generally, the musical culture of Europe) represents the whole, while its part is that section of the repertory which was known in Poland, including native, non-imported, compositions (after all, the music composed in Poland is also unquestionably a part of the European repertory!). The expression "the presence of the repertory" also seems rather general (or even 'static'), and when used in relation

§ This paper was presented at the XXXII Polish Musicological Conference *Beyond Borders of Nations and Religion. Presence of the European Musical Repertoire on the Territory of Poland and its Border Lines* in April 2003.

to the subject of my paper may be supplemented by the concepts of reception and adaptation.

The issues raised at this conference refer largely back to themes discussed on earlier occasions, such as the Warsaw symposium *Staropolszczyzna muzyczna* in 1996, which included an important discussion attempting to define the essence of our cultural heritage also in the wider, European context². The same issues were taken up at a closed session *Musique en Pologne et la culture européenne* at Radziejowice in 1990³, and even at a conference which took place over 30 years ago — the fourth Polish Musicological Conference of the Musicology Section of the Polish Composers' Union in 1970 in Poznań. The latter was devoted to 'Zakres przedmiotowy historii muzyki polskiej' ['The Subject Area of the History of Polish Music']⁴, and I mention it mainly in order to quote a few selected theses, formulated then by Mirosław Perz during the discussion. These had a significant influence on the research and interpretation of sources of history of musical culture in Poland, and, indirectly, perhaps also on the issues being discussed at the present session. The theses in question are: *it is not possible to distinguish Polish music as a separate category in European music as a whole; it is, however, possible to define the part shaped with the participation of Poland; * that participation was not a particular and exceptional feature of Poland's musical situation, but a permanent and organic one, resulting from Poland's presence in the European formation; *the feature of this participation, not just by Poland but by every other national and state group within this formation, was a full entitlement to draw on the generally accepted standards (which are not identical with particular influences)⁵. I have repeatedly underlined the word "participation" and used it in the title of my paper in order to emphasise its role as an alternative to the concept of "importation", chosen by the conference organisers; "participation" is a wider concept, which allows one to interpret phenomena belonging to the period under discussion in the context of European *universitas* and its fundamental factors: *latinitas* and *christianitas*.

Within *latinitas* we have the genre of *musica more antiquo mensurata* (I follow Professor Giuseppe Vecchi⁶ in using this name). It is a concept relating above all to the phenomenon described in musicological literature as

the so-called 'humanistic ode' or 'metric ode' (*Odenkomposition* in German), but its range is wider. The humanistic ode is a vocal genre (which might be supported by instruments) for classical Latin (above all Horace) or later (Medieval and Renaissance) texts; the rhythm in those works had to be totally subordinated to the length of the poetic feet in the given genre of strophe. Thus, in order to reflect the poetic meter in melody, it was sufficient to use two rhythmic values as equivalents of the long and short syllables. The ones usually selected were breve and semibreve or semibreve and minim (the set: longa — brevis is encountered less frequently). The rhythmic values often arrange themselves here into configurations which, from the point of view of the principles of mensural theory, are illogical and lack cohesion. Although compositions in this genre constitute an important aspect of the question about the influence of the ideas of Renaissance humanism on music, there is no uniform judgment regarding its position. For instance, Ludwig Finscher describes the polyphonic ode using the epithet "Halbmusik"⁷. He bases this description on the argument that the composer has no voice in the rhythmic shaping of the work; he has been deprived of half the devices employed in composition (the humanistic ode is usually for four voices and the genre demands that all the voices have the same rhythmic course, kept within the *nota contra notam* counterpoint). On the other hand, Giuseppe Vecchi has this to say: "*Musica more antiquo mensurata* (first tried in the German gymnasia, then transported to France and Italy) gave the composer an opportunity of creating new, more segmented rhythmic organisations, breaking the bounds of perfectio-imperfectio and following the suggestions of classical metres."⁸

Among those who composed in this genre were both musicians whose significance was merely local, whose skills barely enabled them to try their hand at composition, and prominent composers such as Hofhaimer, Senfl, Judenkunig or even the great Orlando. The initiation of the genre of metric ode is usually ascribed to Konrad Celtis (vel Celtis, 1459–1508). Without deprecating the achievements of the famous humanist one should mention that the genre had its antecedents not only in choral episodes in the slightly earlier humanist dramas (comedies), but also in the well-known practice of singing (monodic) hymns rhythmicised in accordance with the kind of strophe employed⁹. How-

ever, in the case of Celtes we are dealing with a clear programme — *poeta laureatus* assigned to this genre a particular, humanistic commentary, based on the idea of antique *latinitas*: the ode form was to make the learning of classical Latin poetry more pleasant, and to bring students closer to an understanding of the essence and beauty of the antique culture; the didactic aim (“ad iuventutem exercendam”) was combined here with popularising the humanistic attitude of being open to art and to passing time in a worthwhile manner. This is emphasised by the sophisticated graphic presentation of the first publication of this genre: Horatian odes “musicalised” by Peter Tritonius with the cooperation of Celtes, published for the first time in 1507 by the Augsburg printer Erhard Oeglin¹⁰ (engravings showing antique gods, among them Apollo with his lyre on the Parnassus with the Muses, the text of the title page arranged in the shape of a goblet — *crater Bachi* — with the centre of the composition taken up by a Sapphic strophe¹¹).

Polyphonic metric odes were composed throughout the sixteenth century in the countries of Central Europe; we have printed collections of such compositions from Germany, Bohemia and Hungary. Of course, the genre was also known in Poland; there are extant — admittedly not numerous — sources which confirm its familiarity in educational circles (an excellent text on this subject was published in 1984 by Ryszard Wieczorek¹²). It is generally assumed that this was an import, but this assumption is no longer obvious when one examines it in the context of the life story of Celtes. The highly colourful Kraków episode in his biography (years 1487–1489) includes not only the famous affair with Hasilina, the mathematical and astronomical studies at the University [sic!] or his own lectures on poetics; it also covers the founding of *Sodalitas Litteraria Vistulana* — The Vistula Literary Society — where the poet encountered, among others, Wawrzyniec Korwin and Filip Buonacorsi, i.e. the famous Kallimach¹³. This allows us to pose the question about the extent to which the idea of “musicalizing” classical poetry, formulated by Celtes a few years later in his Ingolstadt lectures (1494) and disseminated in other literary societies, represented a new departure, as opposed to maturing during his earlier peregrinations (among other places, to Kraków). Thus

the question “importation or participation?” seems justified in this context, although the answer will not necessarily be clearcut.

Among the sources of music composed to the metre of Latin texts one can distinguish a number of groups. One could regard as “imports” the printed polyphonic odes preserved to this day in Polish libraries¹⁴ (for example, the *Melopoiae* by Celtes — Tritonius¹⁵ referred to earlier, or Grefinger’s *Cathermerinon* to the texts of Prudentius, published by Wietor in Vienna in 1515¹⁶), as well as texts about literature with examples of single melodies (monodies) rhythmicised appropriately to the presented poetry (for example, Korwin’s *Dialogus carmine et soluta oratione conflatus*, Leipzig 1516¹⁷). A separate group of sources are non-musical prints containing manuscript musical glosses. In this case we are most probably dealing not only with “reception of an idea”, but also local creative activity in this field. One can mention as examples the copies of incunabula *De consolatione philosophiae* by Boethius (Nuremberg 1495) — one held at the Cathedral Library in Gniezno (polyphonic glosses), the others at Warsaw University Library (monodic glosses), and other items held at Gniezno Cathedral Library, where single polyphonic compositions have been written in — the incunabulae with Ovid’s poetry (Leipzig 1492), or the print of Korwin’s *Latinum ydeoma* (Rotenburg 1503)¹⁸.

It is worth emphasising that, apart from texts of classical antiquity, religious texts also come to serve as the basis of metricalised musical settings (Prudentius, Boethius); the genre we are discussing is thus an example of humanistic combination of antique and Christian *latinitas*. An important (and perhaps the most frequently quoted) example of this phenomenon is the contrafactum of the Sapphic verse from Tritonius’s *Metopoiae* collection, written into manuscript 2616 in the Jagellonian Library collection. The Horatian ode *Iam satis terris* has been replaced here by the Marian text *O parens salve superi tonantis* (the authorship of this text has been ascribed to Paweł of Krosno¹⁹). It is also a known fact that Jerzy Liban was interested in the genre, and in his treatise *De accentum ecclesiasticorum* he confessed that, with the teaching of Latin in mind, and in particular the length of syllables, he “ornamented with the four-voice” 26 verses of Boethius and Horace²⁰. Ryszard Wieczorek hypothesises that the musical glosses in the Gniezno copy of Boethius’s *De*

consolatione philosophiae are copies of these compositions by Liban²¹. However, this interesting idea cannot be accepted without reservations in view of certain difficulties in creating satisfactory transcriptions of the preserved material. For the moment, what can be regarded as examples of local polyphonic compositions in this genre are still those referred to earlier, i.e. the voices preserved in the sources from Gniezno Cathedral Library, as well as musical choruses in Reuchlin's comedy *Henno*, preserved in manuscript in the Archdiocese Archive in Poznań²².

The problem of "the presence of European musical repertory in Poland" (*ceterum censeo*: in European Poland!) allows one to pose a question relating not only to the importation (participation), but also to the consequences of this presence. In the case of the genre under discussion here, its educational aspect was certainly of great importance²³. It was described very precisely by Jerzy Liban:

"Since for prosody, or accentus, it is essential to know the length of syllables, I regard it as a highly beneficial thing that everyday in all schools young people are being read the verses of some great poet, for instance Virgil or Horace, and have them sung to a melody. In this manner the pupils may become thoroughly familiar with grammar, learn Latin and also the length of syllables, which is clearly shown by the poets. Owing to systematic and frequent reading of this kind the pupils will get used to the proper and correct pronunciation through singing, — one might even say through play. We did this with the verses of Boethius and Horace: we have ornamented twenty six of the most elegant kinds of verses with the four-voice, that is melodies for four voices [...]"²⁴.

One could add that the musical sources referred to earlier originate undoubtedly from academic or school circles (areas of Kraków and Wielkopolska) and must have served there to realise the aims postulated by Liban.

Another important phenomenon was the adaptation of the principle of 'metricality' to non-Latin poetry, transferring it from the area of *latinitas* into that of modern languages (as I have mentioned already, the range of the term *musica more antiquo mensurata* is wider than that of 'musicalised' Horatian ode); it is a known fact that in the area of secular music the Italians did it in the early frottola, the French in the intricate *chanson mesurée*, while in Poland the most frequent example in this context is Krzysztof Klabon's

Pieśni Kalliopy Słowieńskiej. Of greater importance, however, seem to be the phenomena relating to religious works: to the songs of the Reformation communities, and in particular translations of psalms (the psalter), which were given forms patterned on the Horatian (pure or slightly modified) models²⁵. In the Polish song repertory, both polyphonic and monodic, one can point to examples of the conscious manipulation of metric feet or using particular kinds of verses (among the best known poly-voice works: the song *Ach mój niebieski Panie* or the psalm *Alleluia Chwalcie Pana* by Wacław of Szamotuły, the psalm *Zaniechaj towarzystwa* by Cyprian Bazylik; the anonymous song *Przestrach na złe sprawy ludzkiego żywota*). The question has not yet been investigated in depth; the attention of those researching song repertory has been directed to the problem of stress (and even that in the context of today's norms) and not length²⁶.

Finally, one other possible aspect of the issue under discussion should be mentioned. It results from the fact that some kinds of strophes and metric feet of the genre in question became more popular and remained for a longer period within the song repertory. This concerns above all the Sapphic verse and the ionic metre. The problem has been noted by, among others, Hungarian musicologists, in the context of the influence on folk music of the sixteenth-century repertory discussed here (for example, Laszlo Dobszay: *Der Weg einer sapphischen Melodie in der Volksmusik*; Bence Szabolcsi: *Über das Fortleben antiker Metren in der ungarischen Lied- und Tanzmusik*)²⁷. In Poland scholars have been paying attention to the metre *ionicus a minore* (which appears in, among others, the already mentioned *Przestrach na złe sprawy* by Rej, the song *Wesel się polska korona*, some carols from that period) which, however, is in general anachronically described through the concept of "Masur rhythms" and interpreted as evidence of the existence of these rhythms at that time. It seems that, when discussing the origin of this phenomenon, one cannot ignore the documented presence and role of metricalised music *more antiquo* in the culture of the sixteenth century. It is also worth adding that Konrad Celtis advised young people, when singing Horatian odes, to accompany the singing not only by the playing of a lyre or a lute, but by rhythmical body movements²⁸.

Notes

- 1 The organizers included in this context Italian, French, German and Bohemian music; they also proposed a discussion of “supranational regions”.
- 2 See *Staropolszczyzna muzyczna, Księga konferencji Warszawa 18–20 października 1996* [*Musical Old Polish. Conference Book. Warsaw 18–20th October 1996*], eds. J. Guzy-Pasiakowa, A. Leszczyńska, M. Perz, Warszawa: Neriton 1998.
- 3 Materials presented at that conference have not been published.
- 4 The papers and discussion were published in the quarterly *Muzyka* 1971 No.3.
- 5 M. Perz, ‘Uwagi o treści pojęcia <muzyka polska>’ [‘Notes on the Content of the <Polish Music> Concept’], *Muzyka* 1971 No. 3, pp. 23–27.
- 6 G. Vecchi, ‘<Docta schola> Asprilia Pacellego’, *Pagine* vol. 5, Kraków-Warszawa 1989, p. 187
- 7 L. Finscher, *Zum Verhältnis von Imitationstechnik und Textbehandlung in Zeitalters Josquin*, in: *Renaissance-Studien. Helmut Osthoff zum 80. Geburtstag*, Tutzing 1979, p. 66.
- 8 G. Vecchi, op.cit., p. 187.
- 9 See comments by G. Vecchi in his introduction to the edition: *Petri Tritonii <Melopoiae sive harmoniae tetracenticae> 1507*, AMIS, Bologna 1967, p. 5 (Corpus Mensurabilis More Antiquo Musicae, I). It is also worth adding that J. Černý does not exclude “experiments with metric patterns of antique prosody” in the compositions of Petrus de Grudencz (cf. *Petrus Wilhelmi de Grudencz Magister Cracoviensis opera musica*, ed. J. Černý, Kraków: PWM 1993, p. 9, footnote 29). Some analogies may also be looked for in other earlier output, for instance, in the anonymous works from *Śpiewnik glogowski* (dactylic *Alga iacet*, iambic *Surrexit*) or the manuscript *Kras* (trochaic *Cristicolis fecunditas*); cf. E. Zwolińska, *Musica mensuralis in Polish Musical Sources up to 1600*, in: *Notae Musicae Artis, Musical Notation in Polish Sources, 11th–16th Century*, ed. by E. Witkowska-Zaremba, Kraków: Musica Iagellonica 2001, pp. 461–463; *Sources of Polyphony up to c.1500. Transcriptions*, ed. by M. Perz, Warszawa-Graz 1976, pp. 280–181 (*Antiquitates Musicae in Polonia*, vol. XIV).
- 10 See P. Tritonius, *Melopoiae sive harmoniae tetracenticae . . .*, Augsburg 1507 (RISM A/I T 1249, TT1249).
- 11 *Crater Bachi* is a frequently used element of humanistic publications.
- 12 R. Wieczorek, *Boezio e l’ode umanistica in Polonia*, in: *Sodalium Voces*, AMIS, Bologna 1984, pp. 85–100 (*Miscellanea Saggi Convegna*, vol. XXIV).
- 13 M. Walicki repeats after H. Barycz that it was Kallimach who inspired Celtes with the idea of creating literary *sodalitates*, but this hypothesis seems doubtful (M. Walicki, *Polskimi śladami Kulmbacha. 1. Hans Kulmbach jako ilustrator krakowskich wspomnień Celtisa* [*On Polish traces of Kulmbach. Hans Kulmbach as illustrator of Cracovian memories of Celtis*], in, by the same author: *Złoty widnokrąg* [*Golden Horizon*], Warszawa: Wyd. AiF 1965, p. 119).
- 14 The fact that a source has been preserved in a library located in a particular region is of course only a supporting argument here.
- 15 The copy of this work held at the Iagellonian Library, referred to at one time by J. Reiss, unfortunately disappeared during or after the Second World War. The University Library of Wrocław holds a copy which can be made available (cf. RISM A/I:TT1249).

- 16 Copy held in the Ossolineum collection in Wrocław. See S. Łobaczewska, 'Przyczynki do dziejów humanizmu w muzyce. I. Wolfgang Grefinger' ['Contributions to the History of Humanism in Music'], *Kwartalnik Muzyczny* II (1913), issue 1, pp. 3–23.
- 17 My attention was drawn to this item by K. Jasińska, and I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to her. Copies of Korwin's *Dialogue* are preserved at, among others, the National Library and the University Library in Wrocław.
- 18 See R. Wieczorek, op.cit., passim; E. Zwolińska: op.cit., pp. 473–477.
- 19 See J. Reiss, *Najpiękniejsza ze wszystkich jest muzyka polska* [*The Most Beautiful Among All Music is the Polish Music*], Kraków 1984, p. 47; E. Witkowska-Zaremba, 'Czym była muzyka? W kręgu krakowskiej myśli o muzyce w XVI wieku' ['What Was Music? In the Circle of Cracovian Thought about Music in the 16th Century'], in: *Tradycje muzyczne katedry wawelskiej* [*Musical Traditions of The Wawel Cathedral*], Kraków: PWM 1985, pp. 45–7.
- 20 Jerzy Liban, *Pisma o muzyce* [*Writings about Music*], edition and translation E. Witkowska-Zaremba, Kraków: PWM 1984, p. 113 (*Monumenta Musicae in Polonia*, series C: *Tractatus de Musica*, I).
- 21 R. Wieczorek, op. cit., pp. 96–97.
- 22 See A. Nowakowska, 'Aspekt muzyczny komedii humanistycznej w Polsce' ['Musical Aspect of the Humanistic Comedy in Poland'], *Muzyka* 1992 No. 2, pp. 29–64.
- 23 This aspect in its relation to German schools is discussed mainly in the works of K.W. Niemöller (cf. his 'Die Musik im Bildungsideal der allgemeinen Pädagogik des 16. Jahrhunderts', *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* XVII (1960), pp. 243–257; also by the same author, 'Zum Einfluß des Humanismus auf Position und Konzeption von Musik im deutschen Bildungssystem der ersten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts', in: *Musik in Humanismus und Renaissance*, hrsg. von W. Rüegg, A. Schmitt, Weinheim 1983, pp. 77–97.
- 24 Jerzy Liban, op.cit., p. 113; the quotation is from the treatise *De accentum ecclesiasticorum exquisita ratione*. Translated from the Latin by Elżbieta Witkowska-Zaremba.
- 25 See J. Pelc, *Europejskość i polskość literatury naszego renesansu* [*The European and Polish Character of Literature of our Renaissance*], Warszawa: Czytelnik 1984, p. 194.
- 26 See P. Poźniak, *Repertuar polskiej muzyki wokalne w epoce Renesansu* [*Repertoire of Polish Vocal Music in the Period of Renaissance*], Kraków: Musica Iagellonica 1999, p. 167 and the following. Poźniak, to whom we are also indebted for valuable editions of polyphonic old Polish songs, assiduously changes the metre in the transcriptions in the course of a composition, in order to 'rein in mensurally' the characteristic chains of long and short notes. However, adopting the course based on length and giving up bar lines might perhaps result in a better musical text. In this context the question might also naturally arise of the 'metricity' of Gomółka's *Melodie na Psalterz Polski* [*Melodies to Polish Psalter*] — after all, Kochanowski used a variety of classical strophes in his inspired translation. However, in Gomółka's psalms we are dealing with a different shaping principle; although we find here examples of using particular metric feet (but mainly as an illustration — for example, the dance trochee in psalm XLVII), the pattern of the strophe is not reflected in a consistent manner by the rhythmic devices (sequential lines with identical poetic metre are given different

rhythmic settings, and at times even the strophe arrangement is disturbed — see how the model of the Sapphic verse is realised in psalm XXVIII, with the adonic verse being shortened).

- 27 L. Dobszay, 'Der Weg einer sapphischen Melodie in der Volksmusik', *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, XIII (1971), pp. 203–213; B. Szabolesi, 'Über das Fortleben antiker Metren in der ungarischen Lied- und Tanzmusik', in: *Festschrift Heinrich Besseler zum sechzigsten Geburtstag*, Leipzig 1961, pp. 15–19. The subject of 'insinging' of the melody of the sixteenth-century setting in the Phalaeceus metre of Martialis' hymn *Vitamque faciunt beatiorem* was discussed by I. Ferenczi ('"Adjunk hálát az úrnak, mert érdemli!" Egy metrikus dallam többszólamú, hangszeres és népi változatai', *Magyar Zene* XXVIII (1987, No. 1, pp. 17–20).)
- 28 "[...] Affectusque animi gestusque in corpore pulsant [...]" (*Chonradus Celtis ad Musiphilos*, in P. Tritonius, *Melopoiae*, op.cit.).