

5

On the Trail of Franciscus de Rivulo — New Clues and Hypotheses

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Franciscus de Rivulo, the first composer from Gdańsk to achieve European renown, cantor of the Marian church in that city, still remains a somewhat mysterious personage. The few known facts from his biography have so far been those associated only with the last four years of his life, which were spent in Gdańsk: 1560–1564. However, research into manuscripts containing his compositions could provide new information about this interesting musician.

Originally two spellings of his name were used: *Franciscus* and *Franziskus*. In recent years a third version, *Franziscus*, has become fashionable in musicological literature, and has also been used in encyclopaedic entries. However, the most appropriate spelling seems to be *Franciscus*, since this is the version which appears in prints and manuscripts containing the composer's works. Some entries signed with this name were probably his autographs, or were written by copyists who knew him well, and therefore can be regarded as the most trustworthy. The Germanised version *Franziskus* appeared only in the accounts of the city of Gdańsk, probably written by a German-speaking clerk who either did not know or did not recognise the Latin spelling of this name. The third variant (*Franziscus*), while following the later rules of German orthography, is not found in the any of the sources relating to the composer, and therefore its use in literature does not seem to be justified.

Using a Latinised form of forename and surname was common practice in

sixteenth-century Europe. Unfortunately, in the case of the composer from Gdańsk, this makes the task of identifying his nationality more difficult. Hermann Rauschnig has put forward the hypothesis that Rivulo came from the Netherlands¹. This intuitive supposition of the German scholar seems to be supported by the fact that the composer was closely associated with two objects of Netherlandish origin: with the manuscript Ms. Mus. 4003 from the Gdańsk Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences (referred to later as: *GdańPAN 4003*), and with the first Gdańsk carillon. Assuming that the musician was born in the Netherlands, and that his surname indicated the place from which he came, one should look for a locality with the name Rivulus or Rivulo². This Latin name was used, for example, in relation to an unidentified locality in the area of what is now the Dutch Limburgia³. It might have been Beek — a large village with quite a rich history, situated a dozen or so kilometres north-east of Maastricht⁴. However, it should be emphasised that linking the composer's origins to this particular locality is only one of the many hypothesis one might adopt. Unfortunately, the chances of verifying such hypotheses through archive material at present seem small.

The earliest dated mention concerning Franciscus de Rivulo appears in the accounts of the Marian church in Gdańsk on 4 May 1560. In one quarter the musician was described as a singer, later as a composer, but these items have been known for some time⁵. It is thus worthwhile to draw attention to another fact, not analysed previously, and that is the information about a payment of 24 marks 45 schillings to a composer from Gdańsk ('Komponist vhon Dantzke'), found in the accounts of the Königsberg court of Duke Albert under the date of 24 April 1561⁶. This might have been Franciscus de Rivulo, since we know nothing about other composers working in Gdańsk at that time, while we can be sure that his works undoubtedly reached Königsberg, since at least two of his compositions found their way into a local manuscript. This manuscript, bound together with Paul Kugelman's print *Etliche Teutsche Liedlein Geistlich und Weltlich...* (Johann Daubman, Königsberg 1558), is now held at Książnica Miejska [City Library] in Toruń, ref. No. 29–32 (referred to later as: *ToruńKM 29–32*). The manuscript was written in the Kugelman circle, and apart from many of his compositions, also contains vocal works by

other authors, including a four-voice motet *Vias tuas Domine* (No. 66) signed with Rivulo's name. This work, distributed in Europe in printed form in the fifth volume of *Thesaurus musicus* (Johann Berg & Ulrich Neuber, Nürnberg 1564), is located in the Königsberg manuscript after a song by Kugelmann (No. 47) with the date 22 July 1560. Rivulo's motet was probably entered there not much later, and thus the manuscript entry preceded the printed version by quite a significant period. It is possible that the generous honorarium paid to the composer from Gdańsk by Duke Albrecht in April of the following year — equal to his quarterly salary as a cantor in Gdańsk⁷ — constituted payment for this motet. *ToruńKM 29–32* also contains another composition by Franciscus de Rivulo — the song *Hier frischen reddick* (No. 16)⁸. This work — an interesting example of an onomatopoeic song reflecting the voices of street peddlers — was known primarily from the version in *GdańPAN 4003*. It was entered anonymously in the Königsberg manuscript, and thus scholars who noted its presence, not having the opportunity of comparing the two sources, regarded it as a separate composition, which only shared a similar text with the song of the musician from Gdańsk⁹. Two compositions by Kugelmann located a little further on in the same source (Nos. 28 and 29) have against them the date 16 May 1558; Rivulo's composition was thus probably written somewhat earlier. This version, which precedes by ca. five years the one from Gdańsk, also provides the first indication of the composer's activity, and indirectly points to the fact that even in 1558, before the commencement of the period regarded as the time of his employment in Gdańsk, he already had some contact with Königsberg. It is possible that he may simply have been staying in that city. This would also be indicated by a number of repertory convergences between the two manuscripts: *ToruńKM 29–32* and *GdańPAN 4003*. We could suppose that the second manuscript was at that time in the possession of the composer, who may have brought it from the Netherlands. In Königsberg 19 French chansons have been copied into it from the manuscript which was the property of Kugelmann¹⁰.

The chronology of the transmitted versions of *Hier frischen Reddick* seems to indicate that the work was written with Königsberg, and not Gdańsk, audience in mind. Interestingly, onomatopoeic songs, not all that typical for this

part of Europe, were also being written at more or less the same time by Paul Kugelman. In his print *Etliche Teutsche Liedlein Geistlich und Weltlich...* the latter includes two compositions of this type: *Vogel senger* (No. 10) and *Ich schwing mein horn ins* (No. 11)¹¹. We do not know which of the two composers first had the idea of writing a work of this type; however, one may assume that they inspired each other in some way.

As we know, Franciscus de Rivulo was associated on a permanent basis with the Marian church in Gdańsk from at least 1560. He also worked as the city cantor, and his duties probably included the management of the musical ensemble at the Artus Court¹²; the city carillon was also entrusted into his care¹³. That instrument was built by Jan Moer of Hertogenbosch and brought to Gdańsk in 1561¹⁴. This was one of the first carillons installed outside the Netherlands and, being a new invention, required expert servicing. The difficult art of adjusting the carillon melodies could have been mastered by Rivulo almost certainly only in that instrument's homeland; the function entrusted to the musician might thus be regarded as confirmation of his links with the Netherlands. It might also be the case that, as a practising carillonist, the cantor from Gdańsk either advised or mediated in the ordering of the instrument from the Hertogenbosch bellfounder.

The period spent in Gdańsk was also one of intensive creative effort for Franciscus de Rivulo. As many as 18 out of his 27 known works were preserved in local manuscripts, the majority of them in *GdańPAN 4003*¹⁵. His compositions, as well as a few other, mainly anonymous works, were probably entered there around 1563, as is indicated by the date on sheet 72v of the discantus book. These entries might have been made, at least partially, by Rivulo himself. The composer died in 1564, perhaps in the plague which ravaged Gdańsk at that time¹⁶. He left behind an apartment (probably one which came with his work, and was assigned to him by the city) which Philipp Schönberg, a singer from the Marian church, who took over the care of the carillon from the deceased composer¹⁷, later tried to get reassigned to himself by the City Council. Rivulo's successor was thus probably the latter's pupil and perhaps assistant at an earlier stage. We do not know the fate of Schönberg's application in the matter of the apartment; he did, however, un-

doubtedly inherit from his predecessor the manuscript *GdańPAN 4003*. We can tell this from the inscription ‘Sum Philippi Schönbergii Pruteni’, written on the first page of the manuscript with the date 1571.

The works of Franciscus de Rivulo were appreciated even during his lifetime — eight of his motets were published in the five-volume anthology *Thesaurus musicus* (Johann Berg & Ulrich Neuber, Nürnberg 1564). The legacy of the cantor from Gdańsk has also survived in numerous manuscripts, among which, beside the sources from Gdańsk, manuscripts written in the territory of Germany and Sweden were the most abundant. Their list can be recreated on the basis of the *Census catalogue*¹⁸ and *RISM*, and so it is worthwhile to bring to mind two manuscripts from Polish collections not included in these catalogues. The source of the unique Mass by Franciscus de Rivulo is the manuscript V 845-850, currently held at the library of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, which once belonged to the library of the Marian church in Elbląg¹⁹. Another manuscript containing the composer’s works is to be found at the Książnica Miejska [City Library] in Toruń, ref. No. 24–28 (referred to later as: *ToruńKM 24–28*)²⁰. This was written in 1561 or in 1581 – the ink of the inscription has faded, making it impossible to read the date with certainty, but assuming that the first one is correct, the manuscript should be regarded as the earliest source of Rivulo’s compositions apart from the collection created by Kugelmann. The manuscript contains twenty anonymously entered compositions, of which a quarter are works by the cantor from Gdańsk: *Heu mihi Domine*, *Vias tuas Domine* (a 6), *Dum compleverunt dies*, *Nuptiae factae sunt* and *Te aeternum patrem*, probably of his authorship. It is thus the richest manuscript source of Rivulo’s works after *GdańPAN 4003*, which contains 16 of his compositions.

It is worthwhile to take a closer look at the Gdańsk manuscript. The works of Franciscus de Rivulo were copied onto empty sheets left by earlier scribes, who took charge of the greater part of the manuscript, filling it with about 115 chansons. The part written in Gdańsk is made up of two segments — the first one is located between the original second and third books, the second one is placed in the third book, following a few chansons copied in earlier. In total, both blocks contain 16 works signed with the surname or with the

initials of Franciscus de Rivulo, together with 9 other compositions, 6 of them anonymous. The arrangement of this part of the manuscript, with numerous works by the Gdańsk composer which follow each other consecutively and are mostly unknown from other sources, seem to point to a deliberate arrangement planned by the author. At the beginning of the first block there are two works by Netherlanders: Adrian Willaert and Orlando di Lasso. These are followed by compositions by Rivulo, and the anonymous ones. In the second block attention is drawn, because of its attribution, to a work by Jacob Arcadelt — the alleged motet *Nuptiae factae sunt* is in fact a contrafacture of the madrigal *Com' esser puot amor*, perhaps created in Gdańsk. The remaining works in this part of *GdańPAN 4003* either carry Rivulo's surname or initials (FDR) or lack attribution. The full list runs as follows:

A Compositions written in between books II and III

- [1.] Adrianus Willaert [?] *Si purti vardo*
- [2.] Orlando di Lasso *Susanne ung iurs*
- [3.] Franciscus de Rivulo *Verbum caro factum est*
- [4.] Franciscus de Rivulo *Vias tuas Domine*
- [5.] Franciscus de Rivulo *Laudamus Dominum*
- [6.] Franciscus de Rivulo *O vos omnes qui transitis*
- [7.] [no author] *Castigans castigavit me Domino*
- [8.] Franciscus de Rivulo *Delectare in Domino*
- [9.] [no author] *Benedicamus patrem et filium*
- [10.] FDR *Beatus auctor seculi*
- [11.] [no author] *Verbum domini*
- [12.] FdR *Allein Gott*
- [12 a.] [no author] *Et filius datus est*
- [13.] FdR *Heu mihi Domine*
- [14.] FdR *Jubilate Deo*

B. Compositions in book III (after 8 anonymous chansons)

- [9.] F. de Rivulo *Ach Mutter liebste Mutter mein*
- [10.] F. d. R. *Weltlich Ehr und zeytlich Gutt*
- [11.] Fr. de Rivulo *Hier frischen Retick*
- [12.] [no author] *Nihil sodales*

- [13.] F. de Rivulo: *Auf auf auf auf von der Banck*
- [14.] Archadelt: *Nuptiae factae sunt*
- [15.] F. de Rivulo: *Descendit angelus*
- [16.] F. d. R. *Gloria tibi trinitas*
- [17.] F. d. R. *Gloria in excelsis*
- [18.] F. d. R. *Tota pulchra es amica*
- [19.] [no author] *Te aeternum patrem*

As can be seen, both fragments of the manuscript have been planned as a reasonably compact collection of Rivulo's works. The harmony of this assumption seems to be disturbed by the six anonymous compositions. One has the impression that those also may have been composed by Rivulo, and remained unsigned with his name only because the scribe was in a hurry, or regarded the attribution of the works as obvious — after all, the manuscript which contained them belonged to the composer. The same explanation could be used to account for the fact that the scribe at times uses the composer's full name, at other times his initials. Other evidence of the copyist's 'carelessness' can be seen in the fact that Rivulo's authorship in relation to certain compositions was generally indicated only in one voice (descant, alto or tenor). One should also note that no two anonymous works follow each other, and thus one signature might relate to at most two compositions. In the case of the work *Te aeternum patrem*, placed at the end of the part of *GdańPAN 4003* discussed here, the possibility of Rivulo's authorship is also supported by other arguments. The same composition found its way into the manuscript *ToruńK 24–28*, which, as has been mentioned earlier, provides an abundant source of anonymously entered compositions by Rivulo. Evidence that the maestro from Gdańsk did compose a *Te aeternum patrem* is provided by the table of contents from a lost organ tablature of Johannes Fischer of Morag: this title can be found there as item 159, with the initials FDR, i.e., Franciscus de Rivulo²¹. The composition is a thanksgiving hymn *Te Deum* in the alternatim technique: Rivulo provided polyphonic settings only for the odd verses of this work. The Toruń version of *Te aeternum* differs from the Gdańsk one only in being shorter, since it contains settings for nine, and not eleven, verses of the text.

Contrafactual adaptation of the madrigal by Jacob Arcadelt might also have been the work of Rivulo, since it is also to be found in the other source which offers an abundance of this composer's works — *ToruńKM 24-28* (here given two alternative texts inserted under the musical notation — *Veni Sancte Spiritus* and *Nuptiae factae sunt*). It is a strange composition in respect of its vocal cast — Arcadelt wrote it *a voci pari*; to be precise, for six bass voices. A performance of such a composition would thus demand the requisite number of skilled singers with the same voice registers, which no doubt would have been impossible to find in centres which did not have large and highly skilled ensembles at their disposal. It is likely that the Marian cantor was keen to have in his repertory such a virtuoso and unusual composition. The madrigal was not a particularly popular musical form in Gdańsk in the 1560s, and for this reason it was rewritten as a motet with two different versions of the text. The Gdańsk copy of this contrafacture contains additionally a special individual feature — namely, the copyist (perhaps Franciscus de Rivulo himself?) placed against the voices Christian names with initials which indicate the appropriate partbook (Albanus — alto, Dionisius — discantus, Thadeus — tenor, Bartholomaeus — bass, Valerianus — vagans, Simplicius — sextus).

Among the anonymous works which were probably written by Rivulo, *Nihil sodales* deserves particular attention. Otto Günther identified the text of this composition as the chorus from the play *Hecastus* by Macropedius²². Georgius Macropedius (originally Joris van Lancvelt), a Netherlandish humanist linked throughout most of his life with Hertogenbosch and Utrecht, was the author of textbooks and a number of theatre plays, the most popular of which was the drama *Hecastus*, published for the first time in 1539 and then reprinted in 1552. The author himself introduced into his plays simple musical compositions, and in the drama in question these were choruses placed at the end of each act²³. However, *Nihil sodales* is not one of those — it is a composition comprising a number of segments using texts from the beginnings of particular acts, and set to music in a somewhat more sophisticated manner than that of Macropedius. This type of work might have been commissioned in connection with a planned production of *Hecastus*. This play had been staged many times in various European cities, for example in Königsberg in 1563

and in 1574 in Gdańsk²⁴. If the musical setting of *Nihil sodales* was the work of Franciscus de Rivulo, this obviously could not have been intended for performance in Gdańsk. Of course, one cannot exclude the possibility that the Gdańsk premiere of Macropedius' play took place earlier, during the composer's lifetime, but it is also probable that Rivulo might have written this work for Königsberg, where he had friendly contacts. It should be emphasised that *Nihil sodales* is the earliest musical composition intended for the theatre to be found in sources from Gdańsk.

The last word has not yet been spoken on the subject of Franciscus de Rivulo. A critical examination of the sources containing his works, and further analysis of their various contexts, may support some of the current hypotheses and throw new light on this intriguing character. One can only hope that future research will enable us to identify the centres with which this prominent composer from Gdańsk might have been in contact prior to his arrival in Royal Prussia.

Notes

- 1 Hermann Rauschnig, *Geschichte der Musik und Musikpflege in Danzig. Von den Anfängen bis zur Auflösung d. Kirchenkapellen*, Danzig 1931 p. 29 [Quellen u. Darstellungen z. Geschichte Westpreußens, 15].
- 2 As an equivalent of the Latin *rivulus* (= *stream*) one might, for example, quote the Netherlandish *beek* (= *stream*) — in the area of today's Netherlands and Belgium there are seven localities called Beek; moreover, there is a number of names where the root *beek* is one of the component parts.
- 3 The name of this locality (in the context 'wonend te Rivulo') appears twice on the website devoted to the genealogy of Netherlandish families (http://www.mercurion.nl/genea/Knrs/D11_K1795.htm), where it is referred to as the domicile of persons connected with Maasbracht, a village situated not far from Maastricht.
- 4 While it has not been possible to obtain clearcut confirmation of the supposition that the name Rivulus (Rivulo) referred to this particular locality, nevertheless W.E.S.L. Keijser-Schuurman from Regionaal Historisch Centrum Limburg in Maastricht did not exclude such a possibility in his answer to my question.
- 5 H. Rauschnig, op. cit., p. 28.
- 6 Maria Federmann, *Musik und Musikpflege zur Zeit Herzog Albrechts. Zur Geschichte der Königsberger Hofkapelle in den Jahren 1525–1578*, Kassel 1932, p. 147.
- 7 From 1563 Rivulo received an annual salary from the City Council worth 200 marks; half of it was intended for the maintenance of descendants, cf. H. Rauschnig, op. cit., p. 28.

- 8 A catalogue of works from this manuscript can be found in: *Das Tenorlied. Mehrstimmige Lieder in deutschen Quellen 1450–1580*, vol. 2: *Handschriften*, eds. Norbert Böker-Heil, Harald Heckmann, Ilse Kindermann, Kassel-Basel 1982, pp. 291–300 [Catalogus musicus, 9]
- 9 Information about the existence of an anonymous *Hier frischen Rettick* in the Kugelmann manuscript is provided after Joseph Müller-Blattau by Danuta Popinigis, ‘Formtypen der weltlichen Renaissance-Polyphonie in der Musik der Danziger Kapellmeister (Rivulo, Zangius, Hakenberger)’, in: *Musica Baltica. Interregionale musikkulturelle Beziehungen im Ostseeraum. Konferenzbericht Greifswald — Gdańsk, 28. Nov. bis 3 Dez. 1993*, eds. Ekkehard Ochs, Nico Schüler, Lutz Winkler, Sankt Augustin 1996, p. 163 [Deutsche Musik im Osten, 8].
- 10 A more detailed analysis of the links between these two manuscripts — cf. Agnieszka Leszczyńska, ‘Franciscus de Rivulo and the Manuscript GdańPAN 4003’, in: *‘Uno gentile et subtile ingenio’: Studies in Renaissance Music in Honour of Bonnie Blackburn*, eds. Gioia Filocamo and M. Jennifer Bloxam, Turnhout 2007 (in print).
- 11 Paul Kugelmann’s introduction to the edition is dated 4 June 1558, therefore the works included in the collection must have been written earlier.
- 12 Wolfgang Klaus Niemöller, *Untersuchungen zu Musikpflege und Musikunterricht an den deutschen Lateinschulen vom ausgehenden Mittelalter bis um 1600*, Regensburg 1969, p. 129.
- 13 Archiwum Państwowe w Gdańsku [State Archive in Gdańsk] (referred to later as: APG) 300R/Vv 217 k. 1.
- 14 Andrzej Januszajtis, ‘Muzyka gdańskich dzwonów’ [‘Music of the bells of Gdańsk’], in: *Muzyka w Gdańsku wczoraj i dziś* vol. 1, Gdańsk 1988, pp. 10–11 [Kultura Muzyczna Północnych Ziem Polski, 3]
- 15 Cf. Danuta Popinigis, Danuta Szlagowska, *Musicalia gedanenses. The 16th and 17th Century Musical Manuscripts in the Gdańsk Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences. Catalogue*, Gdańsk 1990 [Kultura Muzyczna Północnych Ziem Polski, 4]
- 16 The number of people who died then is estimated to have been between 24000 and 33885, cf. Reinhold Curicke, *Die Stadt Danzig. Historische Beschreibung*, Amsterdam-Danzig 1687 p. 271. Reference to 1564 as the year of the composer’s death was found in APG by Andrzej Januszajtis, cf. Romuald Szyszko, *Twórczość Franciszka de Rivulo zachowana w XVI-wiecznych rękopisach gdańskich [The works of Franciscus de Rivulo preserved in sixteenth-century manuscripts from Gdańsk]*, in: *Muzyka w Gdańsku wczoraj i dziś* vol. 1, op. cit., p. 26.
- 17 APG 300R/Vv 217 k. 1.
- 18 *Census Catalogue of Manuscript Sources of Polyphonic Music 1400–1550*, eds. Charles Hamm, Herbert Kellmann, vols. I–V, Stuttgart 1979–1988 [Renaissance Manuscript Studies I].
- 19 Cf. Agnieszka Leszczyńska, ‘Późnorennesansowe fragmenty mszalne z dawnej biblioteki elbląskiego kościoła Mariackiego’ [‘Late Renaissance fragments of Masses from the old library of the Marian church in Elbląg’], in: *Źródła muzyczne. Krytyka — analiza — interpretacja, XXVIII Konferencja Muzykologiczna Związku Kompozytorów Polskich [Music Sources. Criticism — Analysis — Interpretation, 28th Musicological Conference of the Polish Composers’ Union]*, Gdańsk, 7–8 May 1999, eds. Ludwik Bielawski, J. Katarzyna Dadak-Kozicka, Warszawa 1999, p. 192; Agnieszka

- Leszczyńska, 'The Parody Technique in the Works of Renaissance Composers from the Gdańsk Area', *Musology Today: Poland in Europe: Musical Sources — Repertoire — Style*, 2006, p. 81.
- 20 Cf. Agnieszka Leszczyńska, 'A Neglected Manuscript Collection of Sacred Music from Sixteenth-Century Royal Prussia', in: *Musica Antiqua XIII, Acta Musicologica*, Bydgoszcz 2004, pp. 93–99.
- 21 Archiwum Państwowe w Toruniu [State Archive in Toruń], Kat. II, XIV/13 a. Tomasz Jeż in his article 'Spis treści pierwszego tomu tabulatury organowej Johannesa Fischera z Morağa' ['Contents of the first volume of the organ tablature of Johannes Fischer of Morağ'], *Muzyka* XLIV (1999) No. 3, p. 108 mentions this title, but, having read the initials next to this item as FOR, he did not identify the composer.
- 22 Otto Günther, *Katalog der Handschriften der Danziger Stadtbibliothek*, part 4: *Die musikalischen Handschriften der Stadtbibliothek*, Danzig 1911, p. 4.
- 23 R[ochus] v[on] Liliencron, 'Die Chorgesänge des lateinisch-deutschen Schuldramas im XVI. Jahrhundert', *Vierteljahrsschrift für Musikwissenschaft* 6 (1890) pp. 324–325.
- 24 E[rnst] A[ugust] Hagen, *Geschichte des Theaters in Preußen, vornämlich der Bühnen in Königsberg und Danzig von ihren ersten Anfängen bis zu d. Gastspielen J. Fischer's u. L. Devrient's*, Königsberg 1854 (reprint: Leipzig 1976), pp. 32–33, JOHANNES BOLTE, *Das Danziger Theater im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, Hamburg, Leipzig 1895, p.14 [Theatergeschichtliche Forschungen, 12].