

THE MYSTERY OF SACRAE CANTIONES (NUREMBERG 1597): REMARKS ON JACOB HANDL AND 16TH-CENTURY PRINTING PRACTICE*

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Izveček: Zbirka skladb Jacobusa Handla – Gallusa z naslovom Sacrae cantiones se je ohranila samo v enem izvodu, in to v Gdansk in Varšavi. To ni bila nova izdaja, temveč le ponatis četrtega zvezka skladateljevega monumentalnega dela Opus musicum, tiskanega v Pragi leta 1590, s spremenjeno naslovnico. Avtor razprave navaja razloge, ki kažejo na to, da je delo Sacrae cantiones nastalo na pobudo Georga Handla, skladateljevega brata in tiskarja, ki je na ta način upal povečati možnosti prodaje preostalih izvodov zbirke Opus musicum, ki so po skladateljevi smrti ostali še neprodani.

Ključne besede: Jacobus Handl – Gallus, glasbeno tiskarstvo, Georg Handl.

Abstract: A copy of Sacrae cantiones, a collection of compositions by Jacob Handl – Gallus published in 1597 in Nuremberg, is preserved as a unicum in Gdańsk and in Warsaw. However, this is not a new edition but merely a copy of the fourth volume of the composer's Opus musicum, printed in Prague in 1590, with a changed title-page. The author presents arguments to show that the Sacrae cantiones were created on the initiative of Georg Handl, the composer's brother and printer, who in this way hoped to increase the chance of selling the rest of the examples of the Opus musicum that remained in stock after Jacob's death.

Keywords: Jacob Handl – Gallus, music printing, Georg Handl.

In 1895 Josip Mantuani published in *Cerkveni glasbenik* an article in which he announced the discovery, at the Library of St Mary's Church in Gdańsk, of a bibliographical unicum among the works of Jacob Handl – Gallus.¹ Even then he noticed that the *Sacrae cantiones*, published in Nuremberg in 1597 by Alexander Philipp Dietrich (Theodoricus), which he had discovered, were not in fact a new edition of the composer's works but only a different edition of the fourth volume of the *Opus musicum*, printed in Prague in 1590. The two editions differ only in their title-page, whereas their content is identical. Mantuani repeated his conclusions in his bibliography of Gallus's works from 1905, referring to the *Sacrae cantiones* as "eine Bastardausgabe des IV Teiles vom Opus musicum".²

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¹ [Josip] Mantuani, Biblijografičen "unicum" Gallus-ovih del, *Cerkveni glasbenik* 18 (1895), pp. 65–67.

² Josef Mantuani, Bibliographie der Werke von Gallus, in: Jacob Handl (Gallus), *Opus musicum*.

In the twentieth century the ownership of the *Sacrae cantiones* changed a number of times: in 1912 the collection of St Mary's Church (then Protestant) was deposited with the Municipal Library of Gdańsk; it was then dispersed during the Second World War. Before the war the library held six out of the eight part-books of Gallus's print, but in 1951, after the wartime dispersal only three of these books were returned (cantus, altus and tenor). This state of affairs is reflected in the RISM catalogue.³ Recently, it transpired that the missing voices (bassus, quinta vox, septima vox) were held at the National Museum in Warsaw, together with single part-books from other music prints dating from the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, and originating from the valuable collection of St Mary's Church in Gdańsk.⁴ It thus became possible, more than 60 years after the end of the Second World War, to recreate the state of affairs that existed prior to 1939, the difference being that the part-books belonging to the same set are kept at two different locations: in Gdańsk and in Warsaw.⁵ This is by no means an isolated case – many music prints affected by the war and post-war turmoil suffered a similarly absurd fate. Sometimes, it is even the case that the part-books from the same set are preserved not only in different libraries but even in different countries.⁶

The rediscovery of the missing *Sacrae cantiones* volumes provides us with a good reason for examining afresh this peculiar edition, which since the days of Mantuani has existed only as a faceless bibliographical entry. Although the *unicum* from Gdańsk and Warsaw does not contain any unknown works by Gallus, or even new versions of them, it provides an interesting example of printing practice from the end of the sixteenth century. It also supplies us with a number of new suggestions regarding the biographies of Jacob Handl – Gallus and his brother Georg.⁷

Motettenwerk für ganze Kirchenjahr, vol. 2, ed. Emil Bezceny and Josef Mantuani, *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich* XII/1, Wien, Artaria, 1905, p. IX.

³ Cf. RISM A/I: H 1990. In 1955 the library was renamed the Gdańsk Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences (Biblioteka Gdańska Polskiej Akademii Nauk).

⁴ Paweł Gancarczyk, Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Music Prints at the National Museum Library in Warsaw, *Musicology Today* 4 (2007), in press. On the matter of the St Mary collection and its relation to the bibliophilic activities of Georg Knoffius, see Martin Morell, Georg Knoff: Bibliophile and Devotee of Italian Music in Late Sixteenth-Century Danzig, *Music in the German Renaissance. Sources, Styles, and Contexts*, ed. John Kmetz, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 103–126: 116–117 and 125–126.

⁵ Gdańsk, Biblioteka Gdańska Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Bibl.Mar.q.98–100; Warszawa, Muzeum Narodowe, Biblioteka, SD 728–730.

⁶ Elżbieta Wojnowska discusses this problem in a number of her articles (see in particular: Die Auslagerung und Zerstreung alter Musiksammlungen im 20. Jahrhundert – Polen und seine Nachbarstaaten, *Wissenschaftliche und technische Herausforderung der musikhistorischen Quellenforschung im internationalen Rahmen [Internationaler Kongress RISM 2002]*, the volume is in preparation).

⁷ At this point, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Marc Desmet, who shared with me the results of his research into the career of Georg Handl during the preparation of this contribution, as well as his knowledge about Jacob Handl – Gallus. See Marc Desmet, “Typographicum robor fractum”: Jacob Handl's relationship with the printing press, *De musica disserenda* III/2 (2007), pp. 11–24 (in this volume).



Figure 1

Jacob Handl, *Quartus tomus musici operis*, Praga 1590 (Kraków, Biblioteka Jagiellońska, shelfmark Mus.ant.pract. H 275/4 [olim Preussische Staatsbibliothek]; with permission).

A comparison of the extant examples provides convincing evidence for the claim that the *Sacrae cantiones* are in fact nothing less than the fourth volume of the *Opus musicum*. They are identical both in terms of content and of typographical details. The *Sacrae cantiones* are printed on the same paper as the *Opus musicum* – this feature finally confirms that the *unicum* is only another copy of the earlier edition from Prague. In Dietrich's printing house the first folios of the print, which contained the title-page and the abbreviated imperial privilege (on the *verso* side), were changed: the old sheets were cut out and the new ones glued in their place, which is very clearly visible in the extant part-books. The layout of the page and the information it contains (see illustrations) testify that the procedure was carried out for a specific purpose. The new title-page is laid out in the style encountered in other music prints from Dietrich's firm (e.g. the *Moralia* by Jacob Handl from 1596); it also gives the changed title ("Sacrae cantiones"), the date of publication (1597) and – obviously – information on the place of publication ("Norimbergae. In officina Typhographica Alexandri Theodori"). The aim was thus unambiguously

to produce, in a not very sophisticated manner, a “simulated” new edition which, so far as I know, is a practice without precedent in sixteenth-century printed music.

In order to understand the reasons for such an unusual change we need to go back to Prague, to the days when Jacob Handl was publishing successive collections of his compositions at the printing house of Georg Nigrin (Jiří Černý). We know very little about the relationship between the Slovenian composer and the Czech printer, although there is no doubt that the composer had a great deal of influence over the publication of his works.⁸ This impression is reinforced by the information, repeated in much of the literature, about Jacob’s brother, Georg Handl, who was a printer at Nigrin’s workshop. It is highly probable that the composer–printer relationship must in this case have been regulated by some form of legal agreement. A number of sixteenth-century contracts relating to the publishing of music have survived to this day, and this gives us some insight into the business procedures operating in the printing market. In the context of editions of Jacob Handl’s works, of particular significance are two of these: a contract, dated 2 January 1531, for the printing of four volumes of liturgical compositions by Carpentras (Elzéar Genet), and a contract dated 10 February 1543, for printing masses by Cristóbal de Morales. Both contracts relate to large projects in which the composers themselves played an important, perhaps even a leading, role.

In the first contract, Carpentras was not only the composer of the works being printed, but also their publisher. This meant that he himself was responsible for all the printing costs, for providing the paper, and for remunerating the labour involved. The printer – Jean de Channey – was only a contractor performing the work; the document describes clearly the requirements to be met (the notes must be well located on the staves), and the penalties resulting from non-compliance. After finishing the work, the printer was obliged to sell the typeset to the composer, and was not allowed to print other music for a period of three years. Channey also had to transfer to Carpentras the whole edition (500 examples), keeping only four examples for himself. However, it transpired that the printer was unable to cope with the difficulties involved in printing music. Thus towards the end of 1531 another agreement was signed, bringing into the project one Stephan Bellon, whose job it was to help with the printing of the music as written in the original manuscript. The new partner was to be responsible for a quarter of the costs, for which he would receive a quarter of the edition or its equivalent in cash. Carpentras and Bellon also agreed the conditions of sale: for example, one partner could not transfer his portion of the merchandise without the consent of the others.⁹

In the second contract, the composer (Cristóbal de Morales) shared the cost of printing with two publishers (Antonio de Salamanca and Giovanni Della Gatta). Morales was obliged to supply a manuscript of his works in a state ready for printing, to provide proofreading, and to cover the cost of the printing (inclusive of paper) of 250 examples

⁸ It was probably the composer’s idea to include 144 works in the fourth volume of *Opus musicum*. This needs to be interpreted within the context of number symbolism: the number 144 (12 x 12) may be regarded here as a symbol of fulfilment and perfection (this was the length of the walls of the city of Jerusalem).

⁹ Daniel Heartz, *Pierre Attaignant, Royal Printer of Music: A Historical Study and Bibliographical Catalogue*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1969, pp. 110–117.



Figure 2

Jacob Handl, *Sacrae cantiones*, Nürnberg 1597 (Gdańsk, Biblioteka Gdańska Polskiej Akademii Nauk, shelf-mark Bibl.Mar.q.100; with permission).

(the print run comprising 525 examples). In return, he was to receive 275 examples, of which he could sell only 50 in Italy, so long as the transaction was independent of any merchant or bookstore. The two remaining partners covered the cost of production of 275 examples, for which they received 250 examples, with the proviso that they were not to distribute them in Spain. The printer – as in the contract from 1531 – was only a contractor: he was obliged to print books of appropriate quality on the paper provided, for which he received a remuneration of 80 *scudi*. According to the contract, it was the composer himself who initiated the publication, and who had to obtain the licence for printing and a ten-year privilege to include the Kingdom of Naples, the Republic of Venice and the Papal States.¹⁰

An inventory, written a few days after the death of Jacob Handl, provides evidence that the composer must have worked under legal conditions similar to those that applied

¹⁰ Suzanne Cusick, *Valerio Dorico, Music Printer in Sixteenth-Century Rome*, *Studies in Musicology* 43, Ann Arbor, Mich., UMI Research Press, 1981, pp. 93–103.

to Carpentras and Morales in an earlier period. It tells us that he had in his possession a significant number of examples of successive volumes of the *Opus musicum*: 25 copies of the first volume, 60 copies of the second volume, 100 copies of the third, and 250 of the fourth volume.¹¹ One may thus conclude that the composer financed the publication of his works to some extent, in return receiving a share of the edition. Financial resources to cover the cost of printing would have come from the donations of the sponsors and patrons to whom he dedicated his works, and perhaps also from the income earned by earlier publications. Musical manuscripts also formed a part of Gallus's contribution, and he would probably have received a share of the edition by way of an honorarium, as was the case with the Masses by Morales.¹²

Taking into account the fragmentary nature of the data regarding sixteenth-century music prints, one can assume that Jacob Handl did not act alone in the enterprise of publishing his compositions. At that time, music book editions had print runs of 500 to 1500 examples, liturgical music being printed in a smaller edition size, while secular (including instrumental) music came in a larger one.¹³ Today, in the most favourable instance, only 5.3% of the edition is extant, and usually less than 1% of the printed examples is available to us.¹⁴ There are about 20 examples of each of the volumes of the *Opus musicum* surviving today. Clearly, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the size of the edition on that basis, but it does seem highly improbable that Nigrin would have printed fewer than 500 examples of Handl's music. Less than a year after the publication of the fourth volume of the *Opus musicum*, i.e., at the time of composer's death, he still had 250 examples in his possession.¹⁵ It is doubtful whether in such a short space of time, and already nearing the end of his life, he would have sold the greater part of his share. We can thus be certain that Gallus published his work in partnership with someone, sharing the publication costs and the printed examples. We do not know whether that person was Georg Nigrin, or the composer's brother, or some other person.

Let us return to Nuremberg, a city with a great printing tradition, where one of the music publishing firms was that of Alexander Dietrich. One has to admit that its achievements in that field were not spectacular: only four music prints (including Handl's *Moralia* and the "simulated" edition of the *Sacrae cantiones*) appeared under Dietrich's name during the years 1596–97, while eight prints appeared under the name of his wife Katharina during the years 1600–02. The majority of them are German prints of fairly low typographical quality,

¹¹ Jiří Pešek, Z pražské hudební kultury měšťanského soukromí před Bílou Horou, *Hudební věda* 20/3 (1983) pp. 242–256: 255.

¹² On the matter of the financial conditions under which composers printed their works, see Jane A. Bernstein, Financial Arrangements and the Role of Printer and Composer in Sixteenth-Century Italian Music Printing, *Acta musicologica* 63/1 (1991), pp. 39–56.

¹³ Richard J. Agee, A Venetian Music Printing Contract and Edition Size in the Sixteenth Century, *Studi musicali* 15/1 (1986), pp. 59–65.

¹⁴ Paweł Gancarczyk, W sprawie wysokości nakładów XVI-wiecznych druków muzycznych [On Edition Size of Sixteenth-Century Music Prints], *Polski Rocznik Muzykologiczny* 4 (2005), pp. 77–87: 86.

¹⁵ The fourth volume of *Opus musicum* was published toward the end of 1590 (see Dragotin Cvetko, *Iacobus Händl Gallus vocatus Carniolanus*, Ljubljana, SAZU, 1991, p. 96). The composer died on 18 July 1591.

containing works by local composers, such as Georg Körber, Johann Christoph Demantius, Melchior Franck and Christoph Thomas Walliser. The *Moralia* by Jacob Handl, published by his brother at the beginning of 1596, are undoubtedly one of the firm's greatest achievements in terms of music printing. Typographically, only the later *Motetae* by Christoph Johann Agricola, known as Noricus (1601) are comparable with the Gallus print.

Undoubtedly, Alexander Dietrich would not have made an appearance in the composer's biography had it not been for Jacob Handl's brother, Georg. According to the latest research by Marc Desmet, Georg Handl, initially active in Prague, probably moved to Nuremberg as early as the late 1580s. It is likely that he associated himself with Dietrich's printing house because of the multilingual editions of the Bible and the New Testament being prepared there, which included a Slovenian version.¹⁶ In July 1591 Georg returned to Prague in connection with the death of his brother Jacob; we know this from the inventory referred to earlier, made in Georg's presence.¹⁷ One may assume that the latter inherited the composer's estate, including the unsold examples of the successive volumes of the *Opus musicum*. This seems clear, for Jacob Handl died a childless bachelor so his brother was probably his only heir. Georg Handl thus found himself in the possession of 250 examples of the fourth volume of the *Opus musicum*, which he took to Nuremberg.¹⁸ A number of these examples were given a new title-page in 1597, undoubtedly on Georg's initiative or with his permission. However, what might have been the reason for changing the title *Quartus tomus musici operis* to *Sacrae cantiones*?

Firstly, we must remember that we do not know the legal framework relating to the publication of Jacob Handl's works by Georg Nigrin. It may be the case that the contract for printing these compositions specified precisely the conditions under which the composer was entitled to sell his share of the edition, as was the case in the quoted contracts from 1531 and 1543. Jacob Handl may, for example, have been prevented from distributing his prints in a particular area. In such a case the change of the title-page would have been an attempt to bypass the law, but this seems unlikely. The position of the composer in any contract would undoubtedly not have been weak or restrictive. As has already been mentioned, he was also a publisher (or, more precisely, a co-publisher) of his compositions, and he had a privilege from Emperor Rudolph II dating from 1588 that gave him unlimited power over his works.¹⁹ This privilege – analogous to the one granted by the Emperor to Orlando di Lasso in 1581 – shows that by the second half of the sixteenth century the concept of authorial copyright was already taking shape.²⁰ Regardless of this, one is struck by the disproportion between the numbers of extant examples of the fourth volume of the *Opus musicum* (23 examples)²¹ compared with those

¹⁶ M. Desmet, op. cit., p. 22.

¹⁷ J. Pešek, op. cit., p. 255.

¹⁸ This possibility had already been indicated by Josef Mantuani; see notes 1 and 2, above.

¹⁹ The abbreviated privilege was printed in the fourth volume of the *Opus musicum* on the verso of the title-page. See Hansjörg Pohlmann, *Die Frühgeschichte des musikalischen Urheberrechts (ca. 1400–1800)*, Kassel, Bärenreiter, 1962, pp. 272–273; D. Cvetko, op. cit., pp. 96–97.

²⁰ H. Pohlmann, op. cit., passim.

²¹ See RISM A/I: H 1985 and RISM A/I: HH 1985. The RISM catalogue does not list the copy from the Jagiellonian Library in Kraków, Mus.ant.pract. H 275/4 [olim Preussische Staatsbibliothek].

of the *Sacrae cantiones* (one copy). Until 1597 Georg Handl had been selling the books with the original title-pages, and therefore the new pages must have appeared only in a small part of the edition.

The solution to this puzzle may be provided by an analysis of the title-pages from sixteenth-century music prints. In the earliest prints, for example those of Ottaviano Petrucci, they contained only a short title and the name of the author, which facilitated the identification of particular books. With the availability of single impression printing, production of music books became commercialized, and the title-pages began to fulfil another important function, that of providing attractive packaging for the merchandise to entice buyers. Hence the appearance on them of beautiful wood engravings, while the titles, often very long, praised the quality of the compositions and their usefulness, as well as the fame of the composers. The guarantee of high quality of the repertoire contained therein was supposed to be provided by the phrase “cum gratia et privilegio”,²² although today in the majority of cases we are unable to establish who granted the privilege and whether it did exist in reality. The titles also often claimed that the volume contained newly composed, newly published or corrected works. The book market prospered by selling the latest offerings in music, especially those written by well-known composers.

It seems that Dietrich's firm did not break the law, and that the *Sacrae cantiones* were by no means a pirated edition, “eine Bastardausgabe”. The intention, most likely, was to refresh an edition, then a few years old, by adding a new title-page; and Georg Handl was the edition's full legal owner and administrator. In this manner, the book market gained an old product in new packaging, which improved its chances of selling, especially a year after the publication of Jacob Handl's *Moralia*, which finally established his fame. According to Desmet's research, in 1597 Georg Handl bought a printing house in Olomouc from Valentin Kheil.²³ When starting his own business, he must have needed capital, and the *Sacrae cantiones* may have helped him to obtain the necessary finance. As early as the spring of that year, a collection of religious works by Jacob Handl – Gallus, the *Sacrae cantiones* published in Nuremberg by Alexander Dietrich, appeared at book fairs in Frankfurt and Leipzig.²⁴ Probably only a few people realized that this was not a new title but only a reprint of the *Quartus tomus musici operis* published in 1590 in Prague.*

²² Richard J. Agee, The Venetian Privilege and Music-Printing in the Sixteenth Century, *Early Music History* 3 (1983) pp. 1–42: 13–15.

²³ M. Desmet, op. cit., p. 12.

²⁴ See Albert Göhler, *Verzeichnis der in den Frankfurter und Leipziger Messkatalogen der Jahre 1564 bis 1769 angezeigten Musikalien*, Leipzig, in Kommission bei C. F. Kahnts Nachfolger, 1902 (reprinted by Hilversum: Knuf, 1965), p. 16 (Göhler 1), no. 324.

* Translated into English by Zofia Weaver.

UGANKA ZBIRKE *SACRAE CANTIONES* (NÜRNBERG 1597):
POJASNILA O JACOBUSU HANDLU IN TISKARSKI PRAKSI V 16. STOLETJU

Povzetek

Leta 1597 je nürnbergski tiskar Alexander Philipp Dietrich natisnil posmrtno zbirko Jacobusa Handla – Gallusa *Sacrae cantiones*. Danes edini znani izvod tega tiska se nahaja na Poljskem: trije glasovni zvezki v Gdanku (cantus, altus, tenor), trije pa so bili pred kratkim najdeni v Varšavi (bassus, quinta vox, septima vox). Dva glasova sta še vedno pogrešana, tako da z glasbenega stališča zbirka ni popolnoma ohranjena. *Sacrae cantiones* ne prinašajo nič novega, saj gre za že znani, leta 1590 v Pragi natisnjeni, četrti del monumentalne zbirke motetov *Opus musicum* z novo naslovnico. Avtor pričujoče razprave navaja vrsto razlogov, ki podpirajo njegovo predpostavko, da je delo izšlo na pobudo tiskarja Georga Handla, skladateljevega brata, ki je s to potezo hotel povečati prodajo preostalih zvezkov monumentalne zbirke *Opus musicum*, ki so po bratovi smrti neprodani obležali v skladišču. Georg je v obravnavanem obdobju dejansko delal v Dietrichovi tiskarski delavnici, od leta 1597 pa je kupil hišo v Olomucu in ustvaril svoje lastno podjetje, za kar je nedvomno potreboval kapital.

Razrešena uganka zbirke *Sacrae cantiones* predstavlja začetek novega pogleda na pravni položaj, v okviru katerega je skladatelj Jacobus Handl svoja dela objavljaj pri praškem tiskarju Georgu Nigrinu. Zelo verjetno je tudi, da je razmerje med skladateljem in tiskarjem urejala neka oblika pogodbe. Zdi se, da je imel skladatelj sorazmerno velik vpliv na izdaje svojih del in da je sredstva za tisk deloma prispeval tudi sam, zaradi česar je prejel tudi delež dobička od prodaje svojih del. Število izvodov zbirke *Opus musicum*, ki so bili zabeleženi v inventarju po smrti Jacobusa Handla, kaže na to, da je imel za tisk svojih del poslovnega partnerja. Sklepamo lahko, da so v Pragi Gallusova glasbena dela tiskali v nakladi vsaj 500 izvodov.