

OLGA SETTARI (BRNO)

## JAN AMOS KOMENIUS — A CZECH HYMNOGRAPHER, MUSIC THEORIST AND EDUCATIONIST

We know a lot about the personality of Jan Amos (John Amos) Komenský, often called "The Teacher of Nations", thanks to the intense research realized by the Czechoslovak and foreign scholars — historians, educationists, linguists, theologians, etc. In the deluge of Komenský's works of didactic, linguistic, pansophic and other character one area, namely his relation to music, his views concerning the composition of music and his music-teaching efforts often escape our attention. So do also his own musical and editorial activities culminating in the edition of his famous Hymn Book in Amsterdam in 1659 (often called The Amsterdam Hymn Book). Komenský, following the footsteps of Jan Blahoslav, was one of the most outstanding representatives of the Unity of Brethren, whose historic importance for general education in the Czech Provinces in the period following the Battle of the White Mountain is well known. Komenský and Blahoslav had contributed a great deal to the development of musical theory and education. Blahoslav's applied musical theory together with Komenský's musical-didactic efforts were directed to a more generally apprehendible attitude towards the problematic of music in the contemporary Czech system of education. Besides these musical-educational efforts Komenský was also active as musical editor, his most important initiative in this field was the edition of the above-mentioned Amsterdam Hymn Book.

But let us have a closer look at Komenský's work with special regards to his relation to music in particular and to arts in general, in order to understand better some of his conclusions regarding musical theory. Komenský's views on music and art, on their role in the society were based on the ideals of the period, and also the antique philosophical and aesthetic opinions concerning the role of music and arts. He emphasizes meaning in the art and ethic content of the arts. In his view only art filled with wisdom and ethics is fully valuable and it should penetrate the whole life of man. Komenský explains his attitude to music from the viewpoint of the ethic principle and he considers music and its function as logical part of pedagogics and moral education. The stress

on the ethical component of the process of education is motivated among other things also historically — Komenský goes back to certain aspects of Hussitism, from which the Unity of Brethren developed. So e. g. in the preface of his *Schola Ludus* Komenský writes about the ethical and ideological content of the art (in his conception art covers a much wider field in line with the contemporary way of thinking, comprising also grammar, dialectics, handicrafts, etc.), and about the oneness of the content and form of the works of art. From questions of general character he is proceeding to the problem of national art, specific features of the Czech language and its importance for the national culture. In his work "On Czech Poesy" he deals with the mother tongue with relations between poetic and musical metrics. In connection with the prosodic rules of the antique poesy and taking up the efforts of his predecessor Jan Blahoslav Komenský works out his rules of Czech musical declamation on metric versification basis. He endeavours to reach maximum harmony between spoken and sung word and in line with his musical metric versification he arranged a number of hymns in his *Amsterdam Hymn Book*. In Komenský's literary legacy we find a number of theoretical maxims concerning the structure of a work of art (compositions). In his own poems he tried his hand in a new orientation; this then survived in the *Czech Reformation Hymns* and humanistic poesy and culminated in Kollár's poesy during the Czech national revival. This orientation is characterized by detailed emphasis on versification and on the use of rhymes.

Arts and music occupy an important place in Komenský's pedagogical system. The method of art in his view — thanks to its object and graphic character — is an indispensable means of developing the capabilities of the pupils, and supporting the use scientific methods. It penetrates the entire process of educating and cultivating the individual, from the youngest age to adulthood. Komenský therefore insists on the application of art education, beginning with nursery schools to university level. His well-known pansophistic principle "to teach everybody everything" comprises the requirement of uniform art education for everybody without exception; in fact it is one of the first attempts in socializing the arts. The highest objective of the musical education, in Komenský's conception, is to contribute to the shaping of the the personality of each individual.

The process of musical education in Komenský's system of education is based on a consequent connection of the theory and practice in line with the principles of modern didactics. "The Informatory of the Nursery School" is an example of a detailed pedagogical system worked out for the education of pre-school age infants. In the musical sphere it is an instruction for elementary vocal exercise, beginning of singing and playing an instrument. Komenský combines his didactic principles comprised by the "Informatory" with practical musical examples and he arrived at a distinguishing between active and receptive musical activities. On reading some of the passages of Komenský's *Informatory of the Nursery School* dealing with the problems of pre-school musical education, we can see that in some places he managed to anticipate certain ideas de-

finitely solved much later by the modern musical pedagogic (e. g. training for and development of the rhythmical feeling by children, very close to the very basis of Orff's *Schulwerk* and the emphasis on the correct proportions of the active and receptive musical activities in education, etc.). While Komenský emphasized the importance of music in the pre-school education, he attached naturally increased importance to it in the educational process proper; in his system it forms organic part of teaching in all school grades. Its purpose and educational objectives are best explained in Komenský's work *Great Didactics* implicating the requirement of close connection between aesthetic and ethical education. In his view the pupils have to master certain amount of practical musical knowledge, the fundamentals of musical theory, solmization and singing at sight, later also the fundamentals of musical composition and playing a musical instrument. The *Great Didactics* represent, from the viewpoint of musical education, a minutely worked through system. Besides the *Informatory* and *Great Didactics* there are remarks concerning music also in a number of Komenský's other works (e. g. the *Pan-sophic School*, *Analytic Didactics*, *Janua Linguarum*, *Rules of the Famous Leszno Secondary School* and *Preface of the Amsterdam Hymn Book*), but with the exception of the latter he is not dealing systematically with music.

Czech musicologists studying the problems of music with regards to Komenský's work concentrated on Komenský's musical-pedagogical and didactics views. They almost neglected a number of other questions, including Komenský's own hymnographic compositions. His first compositions reach to the period when he lived in his homeland but he fully developed these activities in his exile, starting in the year 1628. In exile, up to the end of his sacred hymns (translations, paraphrases, arrangements of hymns composed by other authors, as well as Komenský's own compositions) form individual and integral part of his extensive and and topically versatile life work. Komenský's hymnographic activities culminated towards the end of his life by publishing the *Amsterdam Hymn Book*. The latest research has proved positively that the *Hymn Book* published anonymously (as was the common practice in those years) in Amsterdam in 1659 was edited by J. A. Komenský, and he was also the author of the text of most hymns contained by the book. As regards musical authorship there are some doubts. For lack of direct proofs the composition of only some of the hymns can be hypothetically ascribed to Komenský. His *Hymn Book* occupies a specific place in the history of sacred hymns of the *Unity of Brethren*, it is the last item in a continuous sequence of the publications of the *Unity of Brethren*, published for the needs of the *Unity* at home and also abroad. It differs from the preceding prints in contents, number of hymns and their systematic order. The *Amsterdam Book* contains a total of 605 psalms and hymns. What shocks us most is the extraordinarily large number of hymns translated into Czech, prevailing over the new hymns (the 1659 *Hymn Book* contains 146 new hymns, i. e. hymns printed for the first time here). If we consider the overall cultural and historical situation in which the *Unity* found itself in the exile, we realize why were

the Brethren gradually losing contact with the original Czech musical composition and why was the number of translations and paraphrases increasing, to the detriment of original Czech compositions. It was the musical component of the Hymn Book that suffered most with this situation. On the other hand we should not neglect one of the most progressive features of Komenský's Hymn Book, namely the question of notation. The melody of each hymn was recorded with uniform white mensural notation on five lines with exactly marked mensuration. The melodies of the Hymn Book are all single-voiced, strophic and stylistically heterogeneous. We can find among them melodies very close to the Gregorian chant, airs taken from various French psalm paraphrases, hymns influenced by the German production (Martin Luther, Paul Eber, Nikolaus Hermann), Polish influence (Jan Kochanowski), but also melodies taken from the earlier Czech production, i. e. from the period when the Unity was still active at home (namely hymns by Jan Blahoslav and Jan Roh). From the musical point of view prevail melodic variants of new melodies over original ones since the flood of new religious texts forces the anonymous authors of hymns or editors of the Unity hymn books to create adequate new melodic variants. The stagnation in the quality of musical production comprised by Komenský's Hymn Book is without doubt due to the general trends of stagnation in the religious hymns. There are no direct indices that Komenský might be the author of some of these hymns, we have to guess and it seems that the 8 melodies, mentioned by Komenský in the preface to Hymn Book 1659 might be by him. It can be presumed that the rest of the melodies were reviewed by Komenský.

The preface to Komenský's Hymn Book is an important source of information, presenting Komenský as a theoretician of spiritual hymns. Komenský emphasizes in the Preface that he agrees with Jan Blahoslav in the question of versification and added also a survey of his own metric principles, he used these principles in arranging the earlier hymns and in writing texts for the new ones. Hence follow also the basic criteria of Komenský's aesthetics of the sacred hymn: his main requirements are — understandability of the words, unity of the content and form of the hymns (Komenský understands this unity as a harmony between text and melody and this, in his view, can be achieved on the basis of versification. The expressive aspects of Komenský's hymns, worked out in the spirit of these aesthetic standards, have already clear-out Baroque character. The inclusion of Komenský's Hymn Book to the European Baroque music development is a rather problematic affair: while the text of the hymns from the expressive point of view is fully in line with the Baroque way of expression, the musical component of the hymns is more archaic, especially in the sphere of melody it shows traces of Medieval musical thinking, influenced by popular airs and to a certain degree also by instrumental music.

The Czech musical science started to pay attention to Komenský and to his Hymn Book thanks to the efforts of Vladimír Helfert, a Brno musicologist and founder of the Department of Musical Science at the Brno University. During World War II Helfert planned to prepare a com-

plex edition of the Hymn Book in co-operation with Antonín Škarka, a Prague literary historian. Unfortunately besides Helfert's manuscript of all 605 hymns only some brief notes concerning the planned edition have been preserved. Helfert died before the end of the war. The transcription of Komenský's Hymn Book in Helfert's manuscript is a precious source for a systematic processing of the sacred hymns of the above period. The manuscript well reflects the theories prevailing in Helfert's time; the work is based on Helfert's specific approach to the rhythmical and metric interpretation of the melodies contained by the Hymn Book. Helfert attached equal importance to both the textual and musical component, in his view the metric structure should form the basis for the correct interpretation on the melody from the musical viewpoint. This fact with special regards to correct Czech musical declamation forms the most progressive element of Helfert's transcription and it has preserved its validity also in these days. One of Helfert's merits is that he was the first Czech musicologist launching a systematic research of Komenský's hymnographic work, raising the interest of the Czech musicologists in Komenský's legacy also from the point of view of musical theory. Foreign researchers may find interesting the latest book on the relation of the Unity of Brethren to Anabaptists, published in English, *The Anabaptists and the Czech Brethren in Moravia 1528—1628* by Jarold Knox Zeman (The Hague 1969).

## JAN AMOS KOMENSKÝ — ČESKÝ HYMNOGRAF, HUDEBNÍ TEORETIK A PEDAGOG

Komenský byl ve svých názorech na hudbu a umění poplatný nejen dobovým ideálům, nýbrž i antickým názorům na poslání hudby a umění. Zdůrazňuje především ideový a etický obsah v umění. Hudba Komenskému spadá logicky svou funkcí do oblasti pedagogiky a mravní výchovy.

Komenský požaduje uměleckou výchovu od mateřské školy až po vysokou. V jeho pansofické zásadě „učiti všechny všemu“ tkví požadavek jednotné umělecké výchovy všech bez rozdílu a zárodek socializace umění. Hudební výchova v pojetí Komenského se tedy organicky podílí na formování osobnosti. Hudebnévýchovný proces chápe Komenský jako důsledné propojení teorie a praxe na základě principů moderně pojaté didaktiky.

Téměř opomenuta dosud zůstává Komenského vlastní hymnografická tvorba. Vrcholím na sklonku jeho života vydáním Kancionálu (1659) v Amsterdamu; Komenský je v něm autorem textů celé řady nových písní v tisku obsažených, zatímco otázka hudebního autorství se jeví zatím jako problematičtější; pro nedostatek přímých důkazů můžeme Komenskému přisoudit jen několik melodií písní. Předmluva ke Kancionálu je důležitým pramenem pro poznání Komenského jako teoretika duchovní písně. Komenský sám zdůrazňuje svou souvislost s Janem Blahoslavem v otázce hudební časomíry. Začlenění Kancionálu J. A. Komenského do evropského hudebního baroka přináší dosud řadu problémů. Pokouší se je řešit česká hudební věda již od dob Vladimíra Helferta, jenž pomýšlel na kompletní vydání Kancionálu ve spolupráci s pražským literárním historikem Antonínem Škarkou.

R. P.

