Oratorios Performed at the Holy Sepulchre in the Bohemian Lands and Austria in the 18th Century (Part II)
On the Issue of Transferring Sepolcri and the Possibilities of their Semi-Staged or Staged Performance

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Abstract
This part of study deals with the oratorios performed at the holy sepulchre (sepolcri) and focuses particularly on the transfer of certain compositions or librettos and on their potential stage performances. In the 18th century, among the most interesting, original phenomenons of this genre belonged the performances of particular sepolcri in various places and years, as well as the problematic of “traveling” librettos, which were arranged by various composers. Right now, the most unanswered questions concern the staged or semi-staged performance practise of these works. In any case, both the holy sepulchre and painted prospect, which was often placed in front of an altar, have noteworthy theatrical features. It seems that the staged and semi-staged performances were popular in some monastic communities; however, information about this kind of performing practise is oftentimes ambiguous. By all means, the abovementioned aspects should be a topic of further research.

Keywords
oratorio, sepolcro, Holy sepulchre, Holy Week, 18th century, Austria, Bohemian Lands, Moravia
In the first part of this study related to oratorios performed during Holy Week by the holy sepulchre (sepolcri), we considered the genre in the wide range of forms that it acquired during the 18th century, as well as its structure and language (Musicologica Brunensia, 2018, vol. 53, Supplementum, pp. 121–153). We discussed certain aristocrats who had sepolcri composed by their composers, and especially religious orders that initiated the creation of sepolcri in many places in Austria and the Bohemian lands. Several examples have shown the types of themes that appeared in the sepolcri. This second part of the study will focus primarily on the possibilities of transferring these works, as well as on stage aspect of their performances.

Transfer

An interesting topic that deserves detailed research in the future is the transfer of specific works or librettos, especially the phenomenon of “traveling” librettos. These are librettos whose musical settings appeared in different places and in different versions, either in their original forms, in revised versions or as pasticcio, or with completely new musical settings. The identification of librettos by title is somewhat complicated by the fact that German titles often included a Latin maxim or biblical quotation. In general, two types of situations can occur with the titles. Sometimes a piece has the same or slightly different title, and it is the same or partially modified (usually shortened) version of a libretto. The sepolcro Ausgelegte schmerzliche Beweinung des angehefften Heylandes Jesu Christi, which is introduced by the text Dolorosa defletio in florenti & glorioso salutiferae crucis ligno affixi salvatoris Iesu Christi exposita, may serve as an example.\(^1\) The work was introduced by the Capuchin order in Vienna in 1704. It was performed at the same place in 1710 with the title Bis repetita threnodia pie plangens auctorem legis. Das ist: Widerholte und ausgelegte Beweinung des angehefften Heylands Jesu Christi.\(^2\) There is an undated libretto with only the title Schmerzliche Beweinung des angehefften Heylandes Jesu Christi from the Viennese Oratory order (in the A-Wn catalog dated back to 1725), which is a shortened version of the original libretto.\(^3\) Finally, a piece performed in the Viennese Augustinian order in 1730 has the same title, but it is the original, unabridged version of the text from 1704.\(^4\) Sometimes there are also situations when a completely different piece has the same or slightly different title (see below Die beschuldigte Unschuld).

One example of the re-introduction of a completely original musical work is Sant’Elena al Calvario by Antonio Caldara. Its premiere took place at the imperial court in 1731; the musical ensemble of Count Johann Adam von Questenberg introduced it in 1736 in Brno (not by the holy sepulchre, but on Palm Sunday in St. James’ Parish Church), and

\(^1\) Uniquely preserved libretto in CZ-PRERA, not labeled.
\(^3\) A-Wn, sign. 302732-B.
then probably on Good Friday at the holy sepulchre in the Church of St. Margaret in Jaroměřice. In the same year of 1736, this work by Caldara was presented by the Order of Knights of the Cross with the Red Star at the holy sepulchre in Prague’s St. Salvator Church, thanks to a copy of the musical score promptly provided by Count von Questenberg. In 1737, a year after Caldara’s death, it was performed again at the imperial court in Vienna, perhaps in memory of the emperor’s favorite composer.

Fig. 1 Sant’Elena al Calvario, Libretto, Brno 1736, Illustration („Creütz-Erfindung auf dem Calvari berg von der Kaÿserin Helena gemahlin Kaÿsers Constantini Magni Anno 326”)

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5 Libretto in CZ-R, P.I.dd.1, adl 1. The performance of the piece in Brno is undoubtedly associated with the fact that in 1736 Questenberg worked as Prinzipalkommissar (chief commissioner) at the provincial assembly held in Brno. A subsequent Jaroměřice performance can be deduced from numerous analogies, but there is no clear record.


7 Libretto in A-Wn, sign.1814-B.
We already discussed the complete transfer of the libretto to the sepolcro *Abgesungene Betrachtungen* from Vienna to Jaroměřice, and its new musical setting by František Antonín Miča (Franz Anton Mitscha). The sepolcro *Die beschuldigte Unschuld* is another example of a libretto transfer. It is, however, a completely different text, written decades earlier than the sepolcro of the same title *Die geschuldigte Unschuld* by Anton Weidner and Georg Reutter Jr., described in the first part of this study.8

The libretto *Die beschuldigte Unschuld* has completely different characters and storylines. The libretto written for Archbishop Esztergom, Count Emmerich Estérházy de Galántha went from Upper Hungary to Moravia, where it was significantly shortened and set by two composers, and then it went to Prague, where its new musical setting took place three decades after the original text was written. This libretto was created by Friedrich Sebastian Syhn, who acted as an occasional literary writer and clerk (*Kanzelis*) for Archbishop Emmerich Estérházy de Galántha in Pressburg.9 This was a single text divided into six short, separately performed oratorios, which were performed during Lent 1728, always after the Friday sermon, in the Archbishop’s Pressburg residence. The music was written by Matthias Schenauer, who worked for Estérházy as a composer. The whole piece has 61 vocal numbers, so each Friday during Lent a piece with approx. 10 numbers was performed.10

Soon after its premiere, Count Johann Adam von Questenberg acquired the libretto. The text was considerably shortened (presumably by Jaroměřice dean Antonín Dubravius) and then set by his in-house composer František Antonín Miča, but its narrative was preserved. Miča’s version consists of only one part containing 12 arias and two choruses, i.e. 14 vocal numbers. The role of Justice (*Gerechtigkeit*) was completely omitted, as well as the Choruses of the Vengeful (*Chor deren Rachgierigen*, or the Jews), making the text less dramatic. The Passion story is represented by the characters of the Judge, Prosecutor and the Saviour (der Richter, der Kläger, der beschuldigte Welt-Heyland), with the allegorical character of the Sympathetic Soul (*Mitleydende Seele*). Both choral movements – of Angels and Souls (*Engeln, Seelen*) – are meditative. Miča’s *Die beschuldigte Unschuld* was introduced on Maundy Thursday, April 14, 1729, by the Capuchin order in Olomouc11 and the following day – Good Friday – in the Church of St. Margaret in Jaroměřice. Another performance of this same work followed on Maundy Thursday in 1730 by the Capuchin order in Brno.12

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8 Libretto in A-Wst, sign. A-53840. The sepolcro is not dated; it was probably created after 1738, and performed on Good Friday in the Viennese Augustinian order. The characters are: Pilate, the Prosecutor, St. John, the Daughter of Zion and the Sympathetic Soul, Chorus of Jews and Chorus of Sympathetic Souls.


10 Libretto in H-Bu, sign. H 359 [collig. 46.]: XVIII0004. I want to express my gratitude to Ladislav Kačík, who provided me information about the libretto.

11 Libretto in CZ-Bk, sign. 09 G 064.

12 Libretto in CZ-Bu, sign. CH-0007.045, No 2.
A new musical setting of the same libretto (that is, the abbreviated version first set by Míča) stemmed from Johann Georg Orschler. He came from Silesian Wroclaw/Breslau and worked in various aristocratic musical ensembles: he worked for Count Johann Ludwig von Zierotin (Žerotín), who allegedly had him trained in Vienna (perhaps even by Johann Joseph Fux), as well as for Franz Anton von Rottal in Holešov/Holleschau, where he worked as Hofmeister (aulae prefectus), as Kapellmeister to Prince Johann Nepomuk Karl von Liechtenstein, and later probably as violinist to Thomas Vinciguerra von Collalto (Brtnice/Pirnitz). His sepolcro Die beschuldigte Unschuld was performed – like Míča’s several years before – by the Capuchin order in Brno in 1733. Perhaps Orschler composed this piece for Johann Matthias von Thurn und Valsassina, the Olomouc/Olmütz canon and provost of the collegiate chapter in the St. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Brno; in any case, it survived in Valsassina’s inheritance. Finally, the last known setting of the shortened version of Die beschuldigte Unschuld derived from Felix Benda, composer and organist at St. Michael’s Church in Prague, belonging to the Servite order. The Servite order also resided in Jaroměřice, and the libretto probably came to Prague this way. Felix Benda’s piece was premiered on Maundy Thursday, April 4, 1760.

František Antonín Míča’s sepolcri were typically performed in the Church of St. Margaret in Jaroměřice as well as by the Capuchin order in Brno or Olomouc. The sepolcro Die von der starken Lieb bezwungene, von der strengen Gerechtigkeit zum Todt verurtheilte, und von der undankbahren Welt auff das grausambste hingerichtete Unschuld, das ist: Jesus das Unschuldigste Lamb Gottes, is an analogy to this. The music was composed by the forgotten composer Johann Georg Ernst Caetan Lösel (Lesel) of Děčín, who later worked in several aristocratic musical ensembles in Germany (especially in Kleinheubach am Main). The lyrics were written by priest Franz Johann Zincke, and the piece was dedicated to Maria Philippine von Thun (the dedication takes up a whole page). It was performed at 2 o’clock in the afternoon on Good Friday in 1725, in the Chapel of St. John of Nepomuk in Podmokly (Tetschen-Bodenbach, also known as Roßawitz) at the Countess’s manor in Děčín. This sepolcro was later performed in Prague by the Theatine order on at 11 am on Good Friday in 1726; this libretto understandably doesn’t contain a dedication page to Countess Thun, and it doesn’t mention the author of the text. The two-part piece contains a total of 15 vocal numbers, featuring the following allegorical characters: Guilty World, Strict Justice, Strong Love and True Innocence (die verstossene

13 Libretto in CZ-R, sign. Z.f.18, adl. 7.
17 Libretto from Rosawitz: CZ-Pu, sign. 34 C 19, adl. 15; libretto from the Theatines: CZ-Pu, sign. 52 B 45, adl. 29.
Welt, die strenge Gerechtigkeit, die starke Liebe, die wahre Unschuld). Both librettos contain another page before the title page with the following: *Musicalisches DRAMA von dem bittern Leyden und Sterben JESU CHRISTI, celebriret Annô 1725, and 1726 respectively.* Emphasis on the dramatic aspect of the piece can be found on the title page, which states: *In einem Musicalischen DRAMATE entworffen [...] und vorgestellet.* These facts point to a probably staged or at least semi-staged performance, as the term “Dramma” was used exclusively in association with theater or theatrical scenery. This factor will be discussed in the following subchapter.

**Staged aspect of sepolcri**

In conclusion, we will discuss in detail the possible staged forms of oratorios meant to be performed by the holy sepulchre. In the 18th century these sepolcri were performed both without dramatic action (as a purely musical production) and – according to some scholars – partially or fully staged.

The ephemeral architecture of the holy sepulchre itself, as scenery with various biblical and allegorical characters, inscriptions, distinctive candlelight, etc., represents a distinct “theatrical” element. Austrian researcher Albert Camesina thus described the holy sepulchre in the chronicle of the Viennese Discalced Augustinians in 1702:

“The holy sepulchre is a beautiful park with many fountains; in front of this park is a large fountain with two shells or bowls, where the water is divided into three parts and falls into the shells; on this water lies a red imperial apple with a golden cross, and in the middle where the water parts there is a monstrance. Male and female figures in five different states are kneeling on each side of this fountain, holding golden bowls from which one can drink; there are also five white lambs next to these figures, who rushed to these springs, some drinking from the lowest places. The title of this concept is literally written on the facade plate: *With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation, Isaiah 12, 3.*”

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Similarly as in the theater, a painted backdrop was often placed in the churches, usually situated in front of the altar, while the holy sepulchre was often situated in the side chapels of the church. As is well known, some scenery designs by Giuseppe Galli Bibiena created for these purposes have been preserved. Matters of period performing practice relate largely to the specific form of staging during performance of oratorios by the holy sepulchre, but this has so far not been researched. Unfortunately the lack of sources will make it nearly impossible to answer this satisfactorily. Even archival research carried out by Jiří Sehnal in the Augustinian Canon order in Šternberk/Sternberg did not reveal anything further about practical performing matters, although it did reveal the hitherto unknown performance of sepolcri in the local Church of the Holy Trinity from 1731 to 1770 (with only a few exceptions). If we knew where the musicians and especially the singers were placed during the performance, we could more reliably determine what a semi-staged performance looked like, as mentioned by many musicologists, specifically Winton Dean, as well as Robert Haas, Howard Smither, Thomas Hochradner, and Michael Talbot. If the singers stood in front of the holy sepulchre or a backdrop, they could truly perform in stylized costumes and sing with the use of a few gestures that were inherently associated with Baroque theater (including musical theater). Even the relatively well-researched sources from the Moravian Jaroměřice church of Count von Questenberg have not yet provided a clear answer to this question. There is a mention of a staged performance of

21 Not only for the imperial court, but also for Servites in 1738. I would like to thank Andrea Sommer-Mathis for this information. In the previous period, the most significant author of sepolcri scenery designs was imperial court architect and stage designer Ludovico Ottavio Burnacini.


24 Talbot reports differences at the imperial court, especially between Leopoldine and Josephinian sepolcri. He records a certain similarity between sepolcri and the common oratorio in the sense that dramaturgy and poetic language are “arcaded”, the plots are simplified, the number of characters is decreased and a two-part structure is introduced. He states that the characteristic costumes and sophisticated backdrops forming a scenic background remained. Finally, he states that thanks to these changes, the term “oratorio di sepolcro” was preferred for sepolcri (“Nella sua forma originale, il sepolcro si distingueva per il fatto di non essere diviso nelle due parti usuali, come invece avveniva negli altri oratori eseguiti in gran numero presso la corte viennese durante la Quaresima, e per essere eseguito in maniera semi-scenica. Durante il regno di Giuseppe (1705–1711), comunque, si registrò un ‘riavvicinamento’ all’oratorio convenzionale: la drammaturgia e la lingua poetica si ‘arcadizzarono’, le trame furono semplificate, fu diminuito il numero dei personaggi e fu introdotta la struttura bipartita. Tuttavia rimasero i caratteristici costumi e gli elaborati fondali scenici. È per tale cambiamento che alla definizione di sepolcro fu preferita quella di oratorio di sepolcro.”). TALBOT, Michael. Legami viennesi di due opere di Vivaldi «al Santo Sepolcro». In Intorno a Silvio Stampiglia. Librettisti, compositori e interpreti nell’età premetastasiana. Prefazione di Gaetano Pitarresi. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi. Reggio Calabria, 5–6 ottobre 2007. Reggio Calabria: Laruffa, 2010, pp. 159–172.
an oratorio dedicated to St. John of Nepomuk, as Jaroměřice dean Antonín Dubravius borrowed costumes from the castle theater for its performance. While this information cannot be related to Jaroměřice sepulcri, the possibility of their at least semi-staged performance can also not thus far be reliably disproven.

Detailed operational and practical questions concerning the performance of these oratorios, even at the imperial court, have not yet been elucidated. For the imperial court, however, a note by Apostolo Zeno is suggestive; it can be found in the preface to his *Poesie drammatiche*: “[...] I tried to create an outline and elaborate on this dramatic poetry with the best possible artistic method, of which those who cultivated it believed that because it is not intended for a theatrical rendition but for mere singing, it is not subject to [any special] rules.” However, a letter dated May 22, 1734 contains essential information, where he stated that he was trying to create oratorio librettos in a way that they could be performed staged, as was popular in some orderly communities.

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26 “Fisso adunque con tutto lo spirito in questi due importantissimi oggetti, cercai di ridurre a miglior metodo d’arte la testitura e il lavoro di questa poesia drammatica, che per non essere alla rappresentanza, ma al solo canto ordinata, credevasi da chi la coltivava, non esser ella a regole sottoposta [...].” ZENO, Apostolo. *Poesie sacre drammatiche di Apostolo Zeno istorico e poeta cesareo, cantate nella imperial cappella di Vienna*. Venezia: Cristoforo Zane, 1735, p. VIII.


Fig. 2 Holy sepulchre, detail, Monastery Zwettel, Niederösterreich, 1744, Autor: Franz Anton Danné, newly reconstructed. Foto Andreas Gamerith.
As Janet Page writes, the Viennese Ursulines were one of those religious orders in which sepolcri were staged.\textsuperscript{28} Schindler writes about staged performances of Good Friday productions at Heiligenkreuz in the 18th century.\textsuperscript{29} A reference is also made to the libretto of the sepolcro \textit{Speculum doloris et poenitentiae. Das ist Die von der Liebe und Barmherzigkeit Gottes auf den wahren rechten Weg zur Seeligkeit geleitete büssende Sünderin Magdalena}. The title page states that the piece was performed vocally in an exemplary action (“\textit{in einer aufferbäulichen Action gesungener [...] vorgestellet [...]}”). It was performed on Good Friday in 1735 in Heiligenkreuz; the music was composed by Franz Pruneder.\textsuperscript{30} In the case of sepolcri by Gregor Joseph Werner, Kapellmeister of Prince Paul Anton Esterházy, we can assume their staged performance according to the formulation of the type “performed at a musical funeral scene and sung by the holy sepulchre” (“\textit{Vorgestellet in einer Musicalischen Trauer=Scen, und abgesungen Bey Dem Heiligen Grab}”) or “depicted in an oratorio performance” (“\textit{In einer Oratorischen Vorstellung entworffen}”). Johann Harich, and recently also Austrian theater scholar Matthias J. Pernerstorfer, have researched the possibilities of staged performance of Werner’s sepolcri.\textsuperscript{31} So far, research has shown that the librettos themselves, or the small number of preserved musical scores, provide much interesting information in this area of performance. It seems that the popularity of semi-staged and staged productions of sepolcri in Prague probably dates from the second half of the 18th century. We can generally say that some type of staged performance may be supposed in works termed Sing-Spiel, but the preserved librettos do not provide unambiguous evidence.\textsuperscript{32} The oratorio \textit{Deodatus à Gozzone} may serve as an example.\textsuperscript{33} It was composed by Franz Habermann, an undervalued composer of outstanding qualities originally from Bohemia, who also worked as \textit{maitre de musique} to Louise-Henri de Condé in Paris; his work in Prague dates back to ca. 1740.\textsuperscript{34} The libretto to his sepolcro \textit{Deodatus à Gozzone aus dem hochbefreyten ritterlichen}


\textsuperscript{29} SCHINDLER 1967/69, pp. 184–185.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., p. 187.


Oratorios Performed at the Holy Sepulchre in the Bohemian Lands and Austria ...

Orden s. Joannis Hierosolymitani ein glücklicher, und siegreicher Uberwinder [sic!] des abscheulichen, und giffigen Rhodischen Drachen, performed on Holy Saturday 1754 by the Order of St. John in Prague’s Church of Our Lady Under the Chain, states that the piece was performed as a Sing-Spiel (“in einem Sing-Spiel fürgestellet”), and it is labeled as a live image (“Sinnbild”). A semi-staged performance is therefore possible at the very least. The well-known and popular story of the courageous knight Gozon, of the Order of St. John, who lured a dragon out of its cave on Rhodes in 1345 and killed it with a sword, was used as a parable of Christ’s victory.

In other librettos, the phrase “performed as a sung poem” (Sing-Gedicht) appears. This is also the case in Fons Aquae salientis in vitam aeternam, Das ist: Der Brunn des lebendigen Wassers In dem Begeißleten Heyland, performed in the Ursuline institute in Prague in 1753, which speaks directly about a dramatic rendition: “Durch ein Sing-Gedicht bey dem heiligen Grab deren WW.EE. Jungfrauen der Gesellschaft St. Ursulae auf dem Hradchin Am Heil. Char-Freytag vorgestellet.” The introduction addresses in detail where the plot takes place.35

Another libretto of a sepolcro, performed in 1752 by the Prague Ursuline institute in the St. Anne chapel of the Church of St. John of Nepomuk on Hradčany, states that the piece takes place at a mourning scene. This is a work by anonymous authors, Der In dem Göttlichen Rath von Ewigkeit beschlossene Feld-Zug der Liebe Zu Bestürm- und Eroberung der Höllen-Porten.36 Performed on Good Friday at 2 o’clock in the afternoon, the piece is labeled as a sung poem (Sing-Gedicht) that was performed at an ephemeral mourning architecture (“Bey einem dieses Geheimnuß vorstellenden Trauer-Gerüst entworffen”). The title page is followed by an “Entwurf”, which represents a kind of introduction to a situation (similar to the Argomento in opera); in its conclusion, it states that the piece is intended “to be a stimulating example worthy of following at our mourning scene”.37 The allegorical characters that appear in the sepolcro are the Almighty Mercy of the Father (die allmögende Barmherzigkeit des Vaters), the Endless Love of the Son (die unermessene Liebe des Sohns), the Soul Shrouded by Everlasting Extinction (die den ewigen Untergang drohende Gefangenschaft der Seelen) and the So Wonderfully Achieved Liberation (die so wunderbar geschehene Befreung). It is a two-part work, with the first part consisting of 4 sections and the second of 7 sections, for a total of 11 sung numbers. The beginning of the second part presents a text that is not a quotation of the Bible.

35 Libretto in CZ-Pu, sign. H 788. The beginning of the introductory text (“Vorbericht”) states: “Es stellet dieses Sing-Gedichte einen der schmerzhaftigsten Theilen des Leydens unseres Erlösers vor [...]”. The end of the text states: The whole story takes place in the foyer of Pilate’s courtroom, which is dramatically presented by paintings on the holy sepulchre, as well as poetic art citing different parts of the Bible and the word of the Holy Fathers. (“Die ganze Handlung ist auf dem Vorhof des Richt-Saals Pilati, welches sowohl die Mahl-Kunst in dem Heil, Grab, als die Dicht-Erfindung Dramatisch mit fast gänzlicher Entlehnung verschiedener Stellen der Heil. Schrift, und deren Meynungen der heiligen Väter vorstellet.”)


37 “an unser Trauer-Bühne ein ermunterndes Beispiel der Nachfolge anzuerben [...]”
It is rather a description of the scene which presents a choice of scenical proposal in which God Decision says, like the word of the Father was said before, that according to hereditary guilt, he will redeem the world with a disgraceful death on the cross. The second part of the piece is introduced by a text: “[... ] it presents [a scene] for a field expedition to Golgotha of immense divine love, with which human eligibility for heaven has opposed the prison of hell, but has decided to exclude the fallen angels from its fruit.”

The terms Sing-Gedicht and dramatic performance (“drammatisch vorgestellet”) also appear in the oratorio performed by the holy sepulchre in Prague’s Loreto church in 1760. The title page states: Gedeon: ein geistliches Sing-Gedichte, das zu einem Schwerd gewordene Brod Gedeonis, als ein Vorbild ds Allerheiligsten Altar-Geheimüsses [...] drammatisch vorgestellet, und geistlich betrachtet. The music and lyrics were written by Prague composer Anton Moritz Taubner. It does not state on which day of Holy Week it was performed, but it does say that it began at 5 o’clock in the afternoon. The piece bears the name of the famous Old Testament judge Gideon, who fought against Midian invaders. Taubner was not the first to bring this Old Testament theme into a sepolcro. In 1737 the oratorio Il Gedeone was composed by Nicola Porpora, and performed on Good Friday 1740 by the Order of Knights of the Cross with the Red Star in Prague. However, the main characters and plot are different in Taubner’s piece. Shulamit appears as a parable of the Christian Soul in the image of Gideon. The character of Shulamit created a connections for verbal and moral comprehension. The other characters are Gideon, leader of the Israelites, armiger Phara, and the two Midian soldiers Apomassar and Thessalon. The choruses represent two quarreling nations, the Midians and the Israelites.

The piece contains 12 vocal numbers, but its form is very atypical. According to ancient teachings of rhetoric, the introduction is called the Syncrisis, and is quite an extensive text. This is followed by a certain prologue (Vorspiel), which presents a Lamento (long recitative and aria), “failing Shulamit” (die verzagte Sulamit). This prologue is followed by another text introducing listeners to the story (Inhalt des Sing-Gedichtes), which is followed in turn by the beginning of the first part. This is introduced by a text that clearly alludes to a staged performance, i.e. a description of a scene (ascent-Auftritt): on one side, the scene includes a backdrop of Mount Ephraim, with the Gilead mountains

38 “Stellet vor die Wahl des Entwurfes in dem Göttlichen Rath Schluss, kraft welcher sich das Wort des Vatters zuvor verordnet hat, nach vorgesehener Erb-Schuld die Welt mit den Schmach-vollen Tod des Crucifix zu erkauffen.”
39 “Stellet vor den Feld-zug nach der Schelldstatt unermessener Göttlicher Liebe, durch welchen Sie die Menschliche Himmels-Fähigkeit wider die Gefangen-Haltung der Höllen erforderen, die gefallene Engeln aber von denen Früchten derenselben außzuschliessen sich entschlossen hat.”
41 Libretto in CZ-Pu, sign. 52 C 08, adl. 5.
42 “Sulamitis: Die christliche Seele ein Bild des Gedeons, macht in den Vor- und Zwischen-Spielen den Zusammenhang des Wort- und sittlichen Verstandes.”
43 Northern Galilean upland and southern mountains – i.e. Ephraim (Samara) and Judean Mountains.
on which Gideon broke camp in the foreground; on the other side lies a section of the Israeli valley that shows the Midian night fires, including several tents along the banks of Jordan. The story begins in late twilight and lasts until midnight. This is followed by a biblical quotation (“Grundsatz”), and then the actual text of the piece starts. The first part contains only two arias, and is followed by the first interlude, in which Shulamit is summoning her courage. The second part offers another description: the scene depicts a huge camp of Midians, Amalekites and all allies from the East, of whom some sleep and others guard patrols by their fires at midnight. The second part also contains only two arias. In the second interlude, the monologue is led by the now bold Shulamit (Die getröste Sulamit, again a recitative and aria). Then comes the third part. It is accompanied by continuous music, with alternating recitatives – probably accompanied by an orchestra – and choruses; the conclusion of this part is a duet with Gideon and Phara. The last interlude of the triumphant Shulamit follows, and then the final chorus, entitled Gideon’s Gratitude (Der Danckbarkeit Gedeonis). It ends with these words: “Gott der hat heunt durch ein Brod Israël befreit von Tod welchs täglich von Himmel fallt.” The author therefore didn’t even try to create a parable of Jesus’ death and resurrection. It is indisputable that this work, in its structure, description of scenes, and even its story, evokes opera, and it departs from the contemplative compositions reminiscent of Christ’s sufferings that were characteristic of this genre. However, not even this piece can be clearly considered a theatrical rendition, because the battles that the libretto describes were inappropriate for staged rendering in a church. It is therefore not yet possible to give a clear answer concerning the semi-staged or staged performance of sepolcri in various locations based on the source samples studied so far.

The present study is a general introduction to oratorios performed by the holy sepulchre during Holy Week. It is an overview that points to the wide range of forms of these pieces, as well as to individual questions that need to be examined in more detail in the future. Specific examples from different areas were demonstrated to point to the multiplicity of this issue. Many questions will be answered only by more detailed research.


45 “Anderter Auftritt. Die Scen stellet das ungeheuere Laager deren Madianitter, Amalecitten, samt aller festlichen Bundes Genossenen vor, davon in Gesichte einige Theils schlaffende, theils wachende Vorposten bey ihren Feuern zu sehen, die Handlung ist in Mitternacht.”

46 Part Three offers the following description: the scene presents the area surrounding Bethbaraba and Bethsetta on the river Jordan, where the two contending sides broke their camps, and takes place several hours before sunrise. (“Dritter Auftritt. Die Scen entwerfet die Gegend um Bethbera, und Bethsetta an den Jordan, in welcher beede streittende Partheyen ihr Laager geschlagen, die Handlung ist einige Stunden vor Aufgang der Sonnen.”)

47 I would like to thank Otto Biba, Ondřej Macek, Vladimír Maňas, Vlasta and Hubert Reitterer, Jiří Sehnal, Petr Slouka and Jana Spáčilová for their consultation on this topic.
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Die von der starcken Lieb bezwungene, von der strengen Gerechtigkeit zum Todt verurtheilte, und von der undanckbahren Welt auff das grausambste hingerichtete Unschuld, das ist: Jesus das Unschuldigste Lamb Gottes. (Franz Johann Zincke/Georg Ernst Caetan Lösel), CZ-Pu, 34 C 19.


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