

Summary

This book, which looks at the music of the court of Hieronim Florian Radziwiłł in Slutsk (present-day Belarus) and Biała (present-day Biała Podlaska in Poland), is the first monographic treatise of this type to be prepared using archived materials.

The Radziwiłł family was one of the most powerful families in Poland. The main residence of Hieronim Florian Radziwiłł was Slutsk (from 1733) and Biała (from 1746). In addition to owning large landholdings in Lithuania, in the late 1740s the prince bought a mansion in Bad Vöslau, near Vienna.

Prince Hieronim Florian (1715–1760) received a home education, which was supplemented by two educational journeys abroad – in 1730 (to Leipzig and Dresden) and 1733–1735 (to Mannheim, Frankfurt-am-Main, Cologne, Düsseldorf, Utrecht, Amsterdam and The Hague). The prince became fluent in German and French, and took an interest in the arts, architecture, and technical and scientific matters. He played the harpsichord, learned to play the lute, and also had a beautiful singing voice.

The musical life of Radziwiłł's court can be divided into two periods: musical (1733–1746), and then musical-theatrical (1747–1760) when the prince's interest in the arts noticeably increased. In 1747, the prince restructured the janissary music band and enlarged the military band, whilst in 1748 he also increased the size of the court orchestra. From 1750 the prince attempted to introduce singers and, in 1752 in Slutsk, staged the first German comedies. The apogee of musical and theatrical life was seen in the years 1756–1758 when, in addition to the group of vocalists, a 24-member ballet company also performed at the court. The last two years of Hieronim Florian's life witnessed a weakening of musical and theatre activity, due to the difficulty in retaining incumbent artists, and meeting their financial demands.

Radziwiłł brought over artists from Gdańsk, Grudziądz, Toruń, Königsberg (present-day Kaliningrad) and Warsaw. From 1748, the main source of musicians became Vienna. Though wages paid to artists in Hieronim Florian's court varied in level, typically they were considered to be high. However, the prince did not always pay promptly, with payments sometimes made several

years in arrears. In addition, Radziwiłł was very strict, and for the smallest disobedience his employees could be sent to jail. Harsh living conditions led to widespread poor health amongst the musicians, sometimes even to fatalities. In 1758, former musicians resorted to lodging a complaint against the prince in the imperial court in Vienna, with the court ordering the prince to pay the outstanding amounts owed to the artists.

The court band operated from 1733 to 1760, with around 70 musicians (comprising of Poles, Czechs, Germans, Austrians and Italians) passing through during this period. From 1736 to 1747 the band generally had 8–11 members, and had a baroque character. Its size increased after 1748 and the number of musicians could be counted in the 20s or even up to 40, right up until it was disbanded. In 1748, the prince modernized the band, adapting it to the demands of the *galant style*. The type of operas staged, notably *dramma per musica*, demanded a company comprised of at least 20 artists (though typically more). In the period 1754 to 1758 the orchestra was made up of 29–30 musicians (plus 6 singers), and so can be considered as typical of an orchestra from the early classical period. The wind section dominated, which is characteristic of orchestras in areas influenced by Germanic culture, with the presence of trombones being particularly characteristic of Vienna's influence. An orchestra of almost 30 musicians should be regarded as significant in size, being nearly twice the size of those typically seen in the 1740–1780 period.

Radziwiłł also maintained a military band, which in 1749 consisted of 45 trumpeters and drummers, and from 1741 an elite band of oboe players were based at the main garrison. Radziwiłł also had a janissary music band of 24 members, compared to the 16–18 musicians normally seen in a group of this type. In addition to all these, Hieronim Florian created a group of horn players, who took part in the hunt both as musicians and 'whips' carrying lances. The vast majority of these military musicians, janissary music band members and horn players were locals.

From 1753 to 1759, Favier (first name unknown), a dancing master from Vienna, worked for Radziwiłł's court. In 1756, dancing masters Antonio Puttini and Louis Maksimilian Dupré were employed, with Puttini creating and training-up a 24-member dance group made up of local children.

Two Viennese theatrical companies – directed by Joseph Karl Hellmann (1753–1756) and Adam Egidius Büttner (1756–1759) – performed at the court. In 1756, the prince sought to poach actresses from the company of Konrad Ernst Ackermann (1712–1771), but it is not known whether he succeeded in bringing the ladies to Lithuania.

The children of peasants, those of Slutsk and Biała townsmen, occasionally those of impoverished nobility, and young, black-skinned slaves were mass educated in the estates of Radziwiłł. The teachers were foreign and

local artists, obliged through their contracts to educate the children. It was mostly boys who received education, though girls began to be included from 1756, initially receiving instruction in dance, and from 1759 in music too.

In its early years, Radziwiłł's bands used instruments which had belonged to the court musicians of Hieronim Florian's father. Only from the mid-forties were new instruments acquired, mostly bought within the Königsberg-Gdańsk-Grudziądz-Toruń-Warsaw axes, and also from Vienna. Materials for the construction of organs were brought in from Riga, Gdańsk and Kraków. Radziwiłł funded the organs in Leśna, near Biała (built by J.M. Pantzner), and part-funded the organ (built by Pantzner and A. Santer) in Żyrowice, which is in the Nowogródek region.

Instruments also were brought in by musicians themselves. For example, in 1748 a pedal harp designed by Jacob Hochbrucker, and a piano (of which the workshop of origin is not known) were imported from Vienna, whilst in 1758 a pantaleon was introduced.

Due to the absence of records of what pieces were performed by Radziwiłł's artists, it is difficult to carry out an analysis of the repertoire. A picture has been built up using secondary sources, mainly letters and diaries. This book also contains information about sheet music and other music-related literature belonging to the Radziwiłł family (from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries), references of which have been preserved in the archives of the Radziwiłł library in Nesvizh (present-day Belarus). The family's collection once formed one of the most impressive in Poland, and had belonged to various members of the family.

At the time of Hieronim Florian, the theatre repertoire was made up of comedies: popular German plays with music, which were an early form of the Viennese *Singspiel* and *commedia dell'arte* performed in German (or occasionally in Italian). No scenarios for the *commedia dell'arte* which were performed has survived, and even their titles are currently hard to discover. The repertoire was dominated by German plays, and just a few titles of pieces that were staged are known, such as: *About Anzelmus and Cupid*; *A Story of Two People Hanged*; *A Serious comedy*; *A Turkish comedy* (with music by L.P. Pomo von Weyerthal); *A comedy about a weak, but malicious and dishonest old crone, and her underling* (with music by L.P. Pomo von Weyerthal); *Merope*, a travesty libretto by A. Zeno, put on by K.J. Hellmann with input from Bernardon; and the comedy *Tatupapu*, by K.J. Hellmann, a piece featuring very beautiful ballet with young black-skinned children. It is likely that the composers of the music for most performances were Mayer and L. Pomo von Weyerthal, though perhaps J. Kohaut and other musicians were also involved.

Performances of *dramma per musica* were staged on average twice per year (from 1754). In the years 1754–1755 the producer of the opera repertoire was

Mayer, and then in the years 1756–1759 it was Giuseppe Torti. Plays were also brought in from Vienna and Berlin. Generally, rather than holding entire operas, excerpts of opera without stage action were performed. The prince's musicians had at their disposal scores of *dramma per musica* by J.A. Hasse (*Didone abbandonata*, *Lucio Papirio*, *Tito Vespasiano*) and Carl Heinrich Graun (*Silla*).

Dancing was a standard feature of all types of theatrical performances. After 1756, in addition to solo *divertissement*, short ballets appeared in the repertoire. Performances had a mainly rustic character, but also – as per the contemporary fashion – exotic threads could be seen. There was an attempt to bring pantomime dance to Radziwiłł's stages, but this didn't prove to be successful.

Cantatas and serenatas, along with opera and cantata arias by, among others, M. Götz, J. Kohaut and G. Torti, were performed at the court. Songs with piano accompaniment, including pieces by Gottfried E. Nauert are also likely to have featured.

Before 1748 instrumental suites (*ouvertures*) were amongst the genres to be played. After 1748, however, symphonies by masters of the early classical Viennese school dominated the repertoire, for example: symphonies by G.Ch. Wagenseil (which prior to 1754 did not have an opus number), and also, perhaps, symphonic works of M.G. Monn, who considered accepting the position of *Kapellmeister* at the court of Radziwiłł in 1748. In addition, symphonies by Götz and Mayer, and a huge collection (i.e. 161 pieces) of orchestral works by unknown composers were performed. The collection belonged to the conductor Tobias Hartwig, and may have included the aforementioned works by Monn. After 1756, symphonies were composed additionally by Torti and Kohaut. Concerts for solo instruments, *concerti grossi* and trio sonatas were played, including concertos for two solo instruments composed by one of the Graun brothers (most likely Johann Gottlieb) and works by Torti. Also featured were works for the solo bassoon by Sentinger, and *divertimenti* for harp by Götz; as too – it is believed – did works by J.B. Hochbrucker and compositions for lute by A.J. Hueber and Joseph Kohaut. Single pieces by Karl Kohaut may have been performed too. Karl was the brother of Joseph Kohaut, and he is known to have remained in contact with his sibling. Music for dance was represented mainly by minuets and polonaises, and perhaps kozaks too.

Pieces from the religious repertoire of the 1750s were brought over mainly from Vienna, and included works by Georg von Reutter. Minor religious works of Götz and Mayer were also played, as well as cantatas and oratorios, including some by Torti.

In the years 1752–1754 theatre buildings were built and fitted-out in Radziwiłł's residences. In 1752 a venue was created in Slutsk; the first performances taking place in the riding hall. In the spring of 1753 a detached wooden building with two outbuildings were constructed, and then at the

turn of 1754 performances were staged in the castle in Biała – initially on the ground floor, then – from May 1754 – in the large hall on the first floor. In the middle of 1758, Hieronim Florian moved the stage from the palace to the detached building which had been built in the palace gardens. In addition, in Slutsk in the autumn of 1759 a new edifice was built close to the old theatre.

The motives for Hieronim Florian Radziwiłł spending such considerable sums on music and theatre are no different to those of other magnates during the first half of the eighteenth century. The main reason for organizing and financing a „musical court” was to ensure that the much beloved entertainment took place, and to enjoy prestige in society. Sponsoring the arts was simply a necessary step in creating this image. Despite these motives it can be said that the music and theatre centers created by the prince in Slutsk and Biała were – along with Nesvizh and Białystok – among the best in eighteenth-century Poland.

Translated by Steven Hitchen