

Migratory and Traveling Musicians at the Polish Royal Courts in the 17th Century

The Case of Kaspar Förster the Younger

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The period under research spans the reigns of five Polish kings, who were Grand Dukes of Lithuania at the same time. They were Zygmunt III Vasa (who reigned 1587-1632) followed by his sons Władysław IV (1632-48) and Jan II Kazimierz (1648-68), and also Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki (1669-73) and Jan III Sobieski (1674-96). Towards the end of the 17th century, in 1697, the first of the two Polish kings from the Saxon Wettin dynasty ascended to the throne. These final years of the century are already within the chronological range researched in the MusMig project by Alina Żórawska-Witkowska.¹

I decided to accept the year 1595 as the beginning of the period under scrutiny. It was in that year that Zygmunt III, an elected monarch born in Sweden, son of Johan III Vasa and the Polish princess Katarzyna Jagiellonka, reorganized the royal ensemble.² As a result of a recruitment action that took place in Rome and was inspired by the Polish king, more than 20 Italian musicians came to Poland, including two *Kapellmeister*: Annibale Stabile (who died in April 1595, probably during the journey or shortly after his arrival in Cracow/Krakau) and Luca Marenzio (whose

1 See her article on pp. 151-169 in the present volume.

2 SZWEYKOWSKA/SZWEYKOWSKI, 1997, pp. 22-53; PRZYBYSZEWSKA-JARMIŃSKA, 2007, pp. 15-27.

stay in Poland lasted from 1595 until 1597 or 1598).³ From that time until the monarch's death, his court hosted a group of Italian musicians whose number remained stable. The group was managed by consecutive Italian *Kapellmeister*: Giulio Cesare Gabussi (1601-02) from Milan and two musicians recruited in Rome: Asprilio Pacelli (1602-23) and Giovanni Francesco Anerio (1624-30).⁴ Following Anerio's death shortly after his departure from Warsaw, Zygmunt made efforts to employ other Italian *maestri di cappella*, Claudio Monteverdi and Vincenzo Ugolini, but neither of them agreed to leave Italy for Poland.⁵

The royal ensemble during the reign of Zygmunt III was characterized by a frequent turnover of the members. Some musicians returned to their homeland, others went there for a visit and returned to Poland in the company of new singers or instrumentalists recruited at the monarch's request; in other cases, they would return to Italy permanently, but upon their return would encourage other musicians to replace them; also, some of the members traveled to the royal courts of Central and Northern Europe. As Zygmunt's successive wives were Anna and Constanze of Habsburg of Inner Austria, particularly close bilateral relations existed between Zygmunt's court and that of his brother-in-law, Archduke Ferdinand, in Graz (musicians traveled between Graz and Cracow; from the second decade of the 17th century, journeys were made between Warsaw and Graz).⁶ The exchange of musicians continued, although on a smaller scale, after 1619 when Ferdinand became emperor.⁷ In addition, Italian musicians active at the court of Zygmunt III proved to be an attractive "catch" for King Christian IV of Denmark. In 1607, several members of the ensemble left Cracow for Copenhagen (by names there were

3 BIZZARINI, 1998, pp. 203-221; PRZYBYSZEWSKA-JARMIŃSKA, 1998, pp. 96-101; PRZYBYSZEWSKA-JARMIŃSKA, 2001, pp. 93-98.

4 More in: SZWEYKOWSKA/SZWEYKOWSKI, 1997; PRZYBYSZEWSKA-JARMIŃSKA, 2007.

5 SZWEYKOWSKA/SZWEYKOWSKI, 1997, pp. 80-82; PRZYBYSZEWSKA-JARMIŃSKA 2014a, p. 7.

6 Cf. FEDERHOFER, 1963, pp. 522-526; FEICHT, 1963, pp. 122-124; FEDERHOFER, 1967, pp. 50-60; SEIFERT, 2004, pp. 249f.; PRZYBYSZEWSKA-JARMIŃSKA, 2014b, pp. 188-190, 202f.

7 SEIFERT, 2004, pp. 250-255; PRZYBYSZEWSKA-JARMIŃSKA, 2014b, pp. 188-196, 202f.

listed Vincenzo Bertolusi and Jacobus Merlis).⁸ It might be added that travels in this direction continued into the reign of Christian's follower, Frederick III.

It appears that taking these migrations into account in the MusMig database we are planning to develop will reveal a network of music-related connections that existed between the royal courts in cross-Alpine countries and expose the considerable impact of Italian musicians who, at various stages of their lives, pursued their activities in various centers, often in environments in which different religious creeds prevailed. Another noteworthy aspect is the links between the royal ensemble of the Polish king and musicians from Gdańsk (Danzig), which remained under Polish rule, but enjoyed considerable autonomy and possessed a specific culture, characterized by strong ties to Protestant Germany.

During the reign of Zygmunt III Vasa, the members of his ensemble included Andreas Hakenberger (born in Koszalin/Köslin in Pomerania). After leaving the royal court, he held the position of the *Kapellmeister* of St Mary's Church in Gdańsk (1608-27). Paul Siefert, born in that city, won a scholarship from the municipal council to study under Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck in Amsterdam; after brief sojourns in Królewiec (Königsberg, now Kaliningrad) and Warsaw, he returned to Gdańsk and, in 1623, became organist in St Mary's Church (a position he held until his death, in 1666).⁹ As early as in the 1620s, during his stay at court, Siefert criticized Italian musicians; in the 1640s, he entered into a dispute concerning the theory of music, in which his adversary was Marco Scacchi and which I shall discuss presently.¹⁰

When King Władysław IV Vasa ascended the throne after his father's death, he modified the music ensemble in a way that reflected his interest in theater and opera staged at his court. Another Italian employed as the new *Kapellmeister* was the above-mentioned composer and theorist Marco Scacchi (1632-49). He had already resided at court for eight years, employed as a violinist (in all probability, as a young man, he traveled to Poland in the company of Anerio, who had been his teacher in Rome and must have assisted him in perfecting his technique in Warsaw). It should be added, however that, before being appointed *Kapellmeister* at

8 HAMMERICH/ELLING, 1893, p. 75; CZAPLIŃSKI, 1968, pp. 95-97; PRZYBYSZEWSKA-JARMIŃSKA, 2007, pp. 156, 193.

9 PRZYBYSZEWSKA-JARMIŃSKA, 2002, pp. 114-116.

10 PATALAS, 2010, pp. 310-349 and the bibliography there.

the court of Władysław IV, Scacchi paid a visit to his homeland, during which he had opportunities to meet or become acquainted with Italian musicians and to learn about their views, the repertoire and performance practices prevailing in Rome in the early 1630s.¹¹

Like his predecessor, King Władysław recruited Italian musicians either directly in Italy or via the imperial court. Vienna was also home to his first wife Cäcilia Renata of Habsburg, who arrived in Poland in 1637 (her entourage also included a small number of German musicians).¹² Following the marriage of Władysław and his second wife Marie Louise Gonzaga of Nevers, several musicians from France found employment at court. During the 1630s and 1640s, members of the royal ensemble included musicians from Gdańsk, who showed great willingness to travel during the period that followed. While we find relatively ample sources on Kaspar Förster the Younger, his activity at court and his travels (which I shall discuss below), in the currently known Polish sources there is no information about the stay of the young Christoph Bernhard at the court of Władysław IV. Bernhard was a musician and theorist of music born in Kołobrzeg (Kolberg) in Pomerania who, in his adult years, pursued his activities in Dresden (from where he made two journeys to Italy), Copenhagen, Hamburg and (again) Dresden. Information about the musical education Bernhard received in Gdańsk and in Warsaw (it can be conjectured that he was taught by Marco Scacchi during the 1640s) is included in an obituary poem written after his death by Constantin Christian Dedekind, who was related to him by marriage.¹³ A similar case is that of Adam Drese who – according to sources known to Johann Gottfried Walther – visited Warsaw and collaborated with Scacchi for some time.¹⁴ When returning, he took with him copies of instrumental music written by composers employed at the Polish royal court. According to my hypothesis, Drese may have visited Warsaw in 1647, directly after meeting Heinrich Schütz in Weimar in February of that year.¹⁵ The Polish sources, however, contain no information whatsoever about Adam Drese's stay at court. More doubts arise about the information found in the sources preserved in Dresden, according to which

11 More in PATALAS, 2010.

12 SEIFERT, 2001, pp. 251-254; PRZYBYSZEWSKA-JARMIŃSKA, 2005, pp. 22-27.

13 SNYDER, 2001, p. 438.

14 WALTHER, 1732/2001, p. 199.

15 PRZYBYSZEWSKA-JARMIŃSKA, 2010, p. 24.

Marco Scacchi's students included Christoph Werner, singer of the St Catherine's Church in Gdańsk and participant in the dispute concerning music theory that occurred between the royal *maestro di cappella* and Paul Siefert, the organist at St Mary's Church in Gdańsk. Although it is confirmed in the sources that Werner and Scacchi maintained in contact, no evidence has been found of either Werner's stay in Warsaw or his receiving an education from Scacchi.¹⁶

Unfortunately, the political situation during the reign of Zygmunt III Vasa's second son, Jan II Kazimierz, did not favor the cultivation of musical life. The wars that started in 1648 caused the ensemble to reduce its membership. One of those leaving Poland for good was Marco Scacchi, replaced by the first *Kapellmeister* of non-Italian origin in the 17th century – Bartłomiej Pękiel. Other musicians also departed and were not replaced. Finally, in 1655, the muses became quiet. In the wake of the Swedish invasion, the royal castle in Warsaw had to be evacuated and the court dispersed. The *cappella* suspended its activities for two years. After reactivation, the *Kapelle*, now managed by Jacek Różycki, a Polish musician active at court since 1640s, never regained its former splendor. However, it still welcomed foreign musicians, and the regions from which new members were “imported” depended on matrimonial politics. Apart from the steady Italian presence, musicians from the imperial court arrived along with Eleonora Maria of Habsburg, the wife of King Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki, or from other Austrian and Hungarian *Kapellen*, followed by Frenchmen (represented by an entire ensemble) when Jan III Sobieski married Marie Casimire de la Grange d'Arquien. This period in the history of the royal ensemble is also, if not predominantly, referred to in incidentally identified foreign sources, which mention musicians active at the Polish royal courts, who were not included in the continuously updated lists of musicians elaborated on the basis of Polish archives.¹⁷ A good example is the organist and composer Orazio Pollarolo from Brescia (father of Carlo Francesco and Paolo). Had it not been for the research conducted by Italian historians, we would not be aware of the fact that Pollarolo and his disciple Paris Francesco Alghisi stayed at the court of Jan III Sobieski.¹⁸

This example and the cases quoted above testify to the poor state of preservation of the sources related to musical life at the courts of

16 PATALAS, 2010, p. 124f.

17 See PRZYBYSZEWSKA-JARMIŃSKA, 2002, pp. 71-80.

18 CROSATTI, 2009, p. 22; BIZZARINI, 2012, p. 208.

the Polish kings in the 17th century. Only vestigial sources produced by the ensemble itself have survived, including financial records (payroll documents listing musicians' names survive only for the years 1649-51). Apart from rare exceptions, musicians' letters, including official correspondence, have not been preserved. Neither is any musical material (like manuscript and printed scores and parts) used by the members of the ensemble available to researchers today. Musical prints from the royal library have been lost, including editions dedicated to the royalty. The repertoire of the *cappella* has been reconstructed mainly on the basis of copies produced in various circles, often foreign and of a different religious denomination. As for the publications of music composed by migratory royal musicians, editions which are known to have existed (but not all of them) are preserved in the form of (often unique and incomplete) volumes kept in various libraries throughout the world, only a small percentage of them in Poland.¹⁹

The list of foreign musicians²⁰ known to have been active at the Polish royal court (including over 150 names) has been compiled by "ferreting out" information from scattered sources of a very different nature. The list is dominated by musicians who were members of the ensemble during the first half of the 17th century. As for the later period (following the Swedish invasion, which is a watershed in the history of Polish culture), there is a need for comprehensive preliminary archival research.

Apart from foreign migratory musicians, one can distinguish a category of traveling musicians who arrived at the court (which resided mainly in Cracow, Vilnius or in Warsaw) from territories under Polish rule, but dominated by a religious creed and culture other than that of the royal circle. A representative of this group was Kaspar Förster the Younger from Gdańsk (1616-73), whose case is interesting because he changed his residence many times during his life, traveling from the north to the south and then back north, making sojourns somewhere in between or trips to the east and to the west. His experience included staying in environments which varied in terms of dominant languages and religious creeds, meeting musicians from various countries who

19 Cf. PRZYBYSZEWSKA-JARMIŃSKA, 2002, pp. 169-221 (chapter IV: Sources of Music Repertoire and Theoretical Writings).

20 I use the term "musicians" as an umbrella term referring not only to musicians as such (composers, singers and instrumentalists), but also to instrument-makers, copyists, music printers, librettists, dancers, and so forth.

composed stylistically diverse music and represented different performance styles. More than a century ago, the mark left by Förster's travels on his compositions was noticed by André Pirro²¹ and Arnold Schering,²² who pointed out the affinity of Förster's music to Giacomo Carissimi's compositions (especially to his Latin dialogues). In the late 1960s Søren Sørensen tried to identify Förster as a link that facilitated the reception of Claudio Monteverdi's style in the music of Dietrich Buxtehude,²³ while Jerrold Baab and Berthold Warnecke in their doctoral dissertations described the numerous ways in which Italian music influenced Förster's work.²⁴ Similar conclusions referring also to his instrumental compositions were reached by other researchers, including Lars Berglund²⁵ and myself.²⁶

As regards the available information about the musician's life, only part of it can be reconstructed from archive sources. A biographical entry included by Johann Mattheson in his *Grundlage einer Ehren=Pforte*²⁷ gives us information, especially from the period after leaving the Polish royal court, but many of those data have never been verified in the sources. As we assume that Mattheson was able to use contemporaneous accounts and documents that are no longer available to us (as was the case with many other musicians), his information may be relied upon and perceived as a valid source. In recent years, however, archive research has been resumed in Gdańsk (Jerzy Michalak)²⁸ and in Copenhagen (Bjarke Moe).²⁹ Its results have partially challenged the reliability of the information on Förster given by Mattheson, Carl Thrane and Hermann Rauschnig in their monographs about music culture at the Danish royal court and in Gdańsk respectively,³⁰ and in the outline of Förster's biography by myself.³¹

21 PIRRO, 1913, pp. 22-24, 69-85, 115-117, 245, 484.

22 SCHERING, 1911, pp. 158-161.

23 SØRENSEN, 1967.

24 BAAB, 1970; WARNECKE, 2004.

25 BERGLUND, 1994; BERGLUND, 1996.

26 PRZYBYSZEWSKA-JARMIŃSKA, 1992.

27 MATTHESON, 1740/1969, pp. 21, 73-76, 147.

28 MICHALAK, 2004; MICHALAK, 2009.

29 Most of the findings have not been published so far.

30 THRANE, 1908, pp. 16-28; RAUSCHNING, 1931, pp. 195-206.

31 PRZYBYSZEWSKA-JARMIŃSKA, 1987.

Kaspar Förster the Younger was born in Gdańsk, probably into a Lutheran family, on 22 February 1616 (he was baptized on the 28th of that month). His father, Kaspar Förster the Elder, had come to Gdańsk from Lower Lusatia (he was born in Zieckau, near Spreewald), his mother Maria Hintze was a citizen of Gdańsk and a daughter of Martin Hintze, a musician employed by the town council. It seems important to mention that Kaspar the Younger's godfather was the Gdańsk patrician Hans Czirenberg, father of Constantia, famous as a singer and keyboard player during the 1630s.³²

Kaspar Förster the Younger spent his childhood in Gdańsk; following his father's conversion to Catholicism in 1623, he was no doubt raised a Catholic, but grew up in a Protestant environment; his first music preceptor was most likely his father, who at that time was cantor at the Gymnasium and at the Holy Trinity Church, later (from 1627) *Kapellmeister* at St Mary's church. As a boy, Förster sung in the choirs managed by his father, probably performing music in the Franco-Flemish style, in the tradition of Johannes Wanning and Nicolaus Zange but also Italian music which Kaspar the Elder stocked in his bookshop, including *Flores prae-stantissimorum virorum*, an anthology possibly ordered and sponsored by him, prepared by Filippo Lomazzo (Milan 1626), dedicated to the afore mentioned Constantia Czirenberg.³³

It is probable, but not confirmed that the young Kaspar traveled to Warsaw to continue his music education in 1630. I assume that he joined (along with the new royal *Kapellmeister* Marco Scacchi) the entourage of Jerzy Ossoliński in the autumn of 1633, dispatched with an embassy of obedience to Pope Urban VIII; the ceremonial passage of the Polish envoy through the Eternal City took place on 28 November of the same year. In December of that year, Kaspar the Younger became a *convittore* at the Collegium Germanicum and joined the choir managed by Giacomo Carissimi at the St Apollinare church.³⁴

According to the nuncio in Poland Mario Filonardi, after leaving Rome, probably in 1636, Kaspar visited the Medici court in Florence³⁵ and set off on his journey to Warsaw to attend the wedding of Władysław IV and Cäcilia Renata of Austria (in September 1637).

32 MICHALAK, 2004, pp. 195f., 205f.

33 On the anthology and different opinions about its context see: GROCHOWSKA, 2002; MICHALAK, 2004, p. 207.

34 CULLEY, 1970, pp. 40, 208.

35 LEWAŃSKI, 1973, p. 36.

During the years 1637-52, Förster served the kings Władysław IV and Jan II Kazimierz as an alto singer. During this time, the main royal residence was in Warsaw, where the musician married Ursula Wigboldt and where his three children were baptized. He traveled with the court around the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania (e.g. to Vilnius, Cracow and Gdańsk). In addition, he traveled to Italy in 1644.³⁶

At the Polish royal court, he collaborated with composers from Italy (e.g. Marco Scacchi, Vincenzo Scapitta, Michelangelo Brunerio, Aldebrando Subissati) and from Poland (among others Adam Jarzębski, Marcin Mielczewski and Bartłomiej Pękiel, as well as musicians from Gdańsk: the young Christoph Bernhard, whom Förster was to meet in Germany many years later, and possibly Christoph Werner, another participant in the dispute between Scacchi and Siefert).

In 1652 – according to Mattheson – he traveled to Italy, from where he made a journey to Copenhagen. During the years 1652-57 and 1661-67, Förster served as *maestro di cappella* to King Frederick III of Denmark, but continued to travel. In Gdańsk, he served as the temporary *Kapellmeister* at St Mary's Basilica in 1654 and probably held this position during the years 1656-57, traveling between Copenhagen and Gdańsk³⁷. (It seems that not by accident Crato Bütner, a cantor at the St Salvator church started copying music of Italian and other musicians active at the Polish royal court, when Kaspar Förster the Younger was present in Gdańsk, and that the first part of music copied in Gdańsk found its way to Stockholm, to the Düben Collection).

Förster spent the years 1658-60 in Venice (taking part in the war between Venice and Turkey) and in Rome (where he once again met Carissimi and resumed their collaboration in 1660).³⁸ Also, he visited German cities such as Hamburg (in 1667, encounters with Christoph Bernhard, Samuel Peter von Sidon, and probably with Matthias Weckmann), possibly Dresden and Weissenfels (it is hypothesized that he met Heinrich Schütz there). At the court of Frederick III, Förster entered into collaboration with musicians from Denmark (and from Scandinavia in general), from Gdańsk, Germany, France and Italy; he also supervised the musical education of Johann Krieger; however, in all probability, he did not meet Dietrich Buxtehude.

36 PRZYBYSEWSKA-JARMIŃSKA, 1987, pp. 8-12.

37 Archival research in these two cities is still in progress. I am grateful for all source information to Bjarke Moe and Jerzy Michalak.

38 CULLEY, 1970, p. 245.

It is possible that, after leaving the Danish court and a journey to Dresden in 1667, Förster made a trip to Cracow to attend in September of that year the funeral of Queen consort Marie Louise Gonzaga de Nevers, the wife of two Polish Vasa kings: Władysław IV and his successor, Jan II Kazimierz (according to an extant account former members of the royal ensemble arrived from various countries to attend the ceremony).³⁹

He spent the last years in Gdańsk and nearby Oliwa (he lived with his widowed sister Barbara Helwig, but probably not in his own house – as wrote Mattheson – but as a guest of the Cistercians).⁴⁰ In Gdańsk, he could have been in contact with local musicians, such as Daniel Jacobi, Crato Bütner, Balthasar Erben, Thomas Strutius and Heinrich Döbel. He died on 2 February 1673 and was buried in the Cistercian convent in Oliwa.⁴¹

Kaspar Förster's preserved musical legacy consists of 48 compositions. They are mainly vocal-instrumental church concertos as well as Latin dialogues and instrumental sonatas, preserved in the form of manuscript copies made by Gustav Düben at the Swedish royal court in Stockholm and manuscripts from Gdańsk collected by him (most of them bearing the signature BEFASTRU whose meaning remains unexplained). Today, they are part of the Düben Collection in Uppsala.⁴² A few compositions have another manuscript copies kept in the music collections of Berlin and Dresden.⁴³ The interest in Förster's life and work shown by researchers from many countries gives hope that new biographical data emerges or previously unverified data finds confirmation, and that we shall be able to enter new or confirmed information into the MusMig database.

39 PRZYBYSZEWSKA-JARMIŃSKA, 2007, p. 134.

40 MICHALAK, 2004, pp. 208, 213.

41 SNYDER/BERGLUND, 2001, p. 106.

42 PRZYBYSZEWSKA-JARMIŃSKA, 1987b; DCDC.

43 PRZYBYSZEWSKA-JARMIŃSKA, 1987b, pp. 21-23, 33-34, 44.

Figure 1: Part of a map of Europe in 1648 with the most important cities for Kaspar Förster the Younger's biography underlined



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