

Music Documentation in Libraries, Scholarship, and Practice



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The Historical Music Collection at Wilhering Abbey

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English Abstract

The historical music archive of Wilhering Abbey, near Linz in Upper Austria, contains over 1,400 musical sources and is considered to be one of the most important collections of music in Austria. The long music tradition of the Cistercian abbey, which was founded in 1146, still continues to this day in the practice of regular High Mass with orchestral accompaniment and with a certain emphasis on organ music. The abbey church has two famous historic organs by the Austrian organ builders Nikolaus Rummel (1746) and Leopold Breinbauer (1884). The historic music archive documents this extensive practice especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Besides copies of musical works by a number of central European composers, there are manuscripts by some well-known Austrian composers who maintained contact with the abbey either by working as chorus masters, organists, or copyists; or through personal acquaintances, for example Matthias Pernsteiner, Father Hugo Dürnberger, Adolf Festl, Ignaz Arnleitner, and Anton Bruckner and his pupil Karl Borromäus Waldeck. Therefore, works by these composers ended up in the archival holdings as autograph manuscripts, copies, or printed music. Over half of the music holdings were documented through earlier RISM card indexes. Revising and supplementing these RISM data according to the latest research began in 2011. This paper gives a report on these current activities in the music archive.

German Abstract

Die Musiksammlung des Stiftes Wilhering

Das historische Musikarchiv des Stiftes Wilhering bei Linz in Oberösterreich mit seinen über 1400 Musikalien zählt zu den bedeutenden Sammlungen dieser Art in Österreich. Die lange Musiktradition der bereits im Jahr 1146 gegründeten Zisterzienserabtei hält bis zum heutigen Tag mit der Pflege von regelmäßigen Orchestermessen an den Feiertagen und einem Schwerpunkt auf der Orgelmusik an. Die Stiftskirche besitzt zwei historisch wertvolle Orgeln der österreichischen Orgelbaumeister Nikolaus Rummel (1746) und Leopold Breinbauer (1884). Das historische Musikarchiv dokumentiert diese reichhaltige Praxis insbesondere im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert. Neben den überlieferten Abschriften von Werken einer weit gestreuten Anzahl an mitteleuropäischen Komponisten stand eine Reihe von österreichischen Musikern auch in persönlicher Verbindung mit Stift Wilhering, sei es durch ihre ausübende Tätigkeit als Chorregenten, Organisten und Schreiber im Stift, sei es durch persönliche Bekanntschaften, so etwa Matthias Pernsteiner, P. Hugo Dürnberger, Adolf Festl, Ignaz Arnleitner, Anton Bruckner oder sein Schüler Karl Borromäus Waldeck. So gelangten Werke dieser Komponisten als Autographe, Abschriften oder seltene Drucke in das Musikarchiv. Knapp die Hälfte dieses Archivs wurde bereits durch frühere RISM-Aufnahmen dokumentiert. Diese Einträge werden seit dem Beginn des Jahres 2011 auf dem neuesten Forschungsstand laufend revidiert und um weitere Nachweise ergänzt. Im Vortrag wird ein Bericht über die laufenden Arbeiten im Musikarchiv gegeben.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The historical music collection of Wilhering Abbey is considered to be one of the most important collections of music in Austria. Its stocks are closely linked with the rich practice of music ranging from former periods until today. In the following presentation I would like to give you a brief overview of this local history of music as well as the related sources in the music collection of the monastery.

The Cistercian abbey of Wilhering, situated by the river Danube near Linz in Upper Austria, is one of the oldest monasteries in Central Europe. It was founded in 1146. In the following decades the first monastery building was constructed in the Romanesque style. Very early, in the middle of the 14th century, there is evidence of the existence of an organ. Besides the Gregorian chant, which is regarded as the highest form of liturgical music by the Cistercian order, the organ music must have been of particular importance from the Middle Ages until our days. The next organ to be built was the one by Master Paul Peuerl from Steyr in Upper Austria in 1619. In 1733 the whole monastery was burned down and neither the Peuerl organ together with the organ positives nor the music books with polyphonic music survived. Only several medieval manuscripts containing the Gregorian chant remained and are still kept in the library of the abbey.

The new church with its extremely famous architecture, ornamental decoration, its frescoes and paintings by Bartolomeo Altomonte is considered one of the most important existing monuments of the rococo period in Central Europe. Therefore, prayer and sacred music also became important considerations in the architectural conception of this church. The choir organ was built by the famous Master Nicolaus Rumel in 1746 as an architectural counterpart to the pulpit. Apart from some minor repairs the instrument has survived more or less in its original state.

The main organ was built by an unknown master of the famous Egedacher school. It was perfectly integrated in the architecture of the new rococo church. Thus, the practice of liturgical music reached a high representative level, especially during the ruling periods of three abbots: Johann Baptist Hinterhölzl, Raymund Schedelberger and his successor Alan Aichinger. Since that time the names of certain regentes chori, mostly clerics, and paid organists, mostly lay persons, who were also responsible for the copying music manuscripts have appeared in the documents. Therefore, a considerable number of music manuscripts originate from this period.

A special school of several choirboys provided regular church music for the abbey. Certainly, due to the lack of personal contacts to the great composers of the Baroque and classical eras, like in other Upper Austrian monasteries such as Kremsmünster or Lambach, the abbey's musical fame is not very well documented.

However, the many copies of music by Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Michael Haydn meet the expectations of a high musical standard. The musical practice continued during the Austrian Emperor Joseph II's reign, although the abbey was threatened with being abolished like other monasteries, such as the Benedictine Abbey Garsten near Steyr or the Cistercian Abbey Baumgartenberg by the river Danube. Considering the necessities of the liturgical services at the new bishop's church in Linz, a great number of music instruments and music manuscripts were transferred to the property of the archdukedom government and the new diocese. The contemporary copies of music belonging

to Wilhering Abbey contain instrumental church music of other Austrian composers from those times, such as Franz Aumann, Georg Pasterwitz and Stanislaus Reidinger.

At the beginning of the 19th century the Tyrolean Matthias Pernsteiner, who had been the titular organist of Wilhering for some years, is the first well-known composer I would like to mention. The name of a certain Joseph Löfler, organist and copyist, often appears in the music manuscripts. Father Evangelist Prandstetter who acted as regens chori from 1833 until 1859 gave new impetus to church music in Wilhering, linking this period to the very beneficial era of the highly reputed abbot Alois Dorfer. During his long ruling period covering the entire second half of the 19th century, economic and cultural life of the monastery flourished to a very respectable extent.

The well-known Upper Austrian composer Adolf Festl, born in Bohemia, who worked as an organist, teacher and who was an extremely prolific copyist in Wilhering from 1848 until 1861, contributed a lot to musical life in Wilhering. Like Anton Bruckner, he had Johann August Dürnberger as his teacher in Linz. Father Hugo Dürnberger, his son, was a member of the Cistercian convent in Wilhering. Father Hugo composed several pieces of religious music. In 1861 Festl went to the parish of Oberneukirchen in the northern part of Upper Austria, which is canonically administered by the Wilhering Abbey. To this place he transferred many copies of music. After his death in Linz in 1902 those copies were brought back to Wilhering as well as to the historical music archives of the Linz Cathedral. Over the last few years I have produced a complete record of this collection for the RISM database. Festl was in permanent contact with the composer Johann Evangelist Habert in Gmunden. This highly appreciated church musician was the main representative of Austrian Cecilianism. Concerning the inclusion of instrumental church music, for example, he was not, compared to Southern German Cecilianism, a hardliner, as he highly appreciated masses by Robert Führer, for instance. Some compositions by Festl are preserved in the collection. In 1850 he wrote a requiem for choir and orchestra on the occasion of the funeral service of the abbot Johann Baptist Schober in Wilhering. Furthermore, Festl arranged many pieces of music from the Baroque and classical eras by adding certain instruments like horns or clarinets to the original work. In Upper Austrian music history he was the most productive copyist I have ever come across. According to recent research, more than a hundred copies of music in the collections of Wilhering and the Linz Cathedral are connected with Festl's work. In 1860 Festl compiled the first summary inventory of the existing music manuscripts.

Anton Bruckner had found his spiritual home in the famous abbeys of St. Florian, Kremsmünster and Wilhering where he was on good terms with some Cistercian clerics. In Wilhering he highly appreciated the Baroque choir organ because of its brilliant sound. During his summer holidays he often visited this monastery and stayed there for several weeks. On the occasion of the special celebration of the Guardian Angels church holiday in Wilhering, Bruckner dedicated a composition to Abbot Alois Dorfer in 1868: the *Hymn of the Guardian Angels*, in German *Schutzengelhymnus*. Furthermore, Bruckner completed parts of his Mass in E-minor in Wilhering in 1882.

The artistically gifted Abbot Alois initiated the construction of the main organ. The Austrian organ builder Leopold Breinbauer, student of the famous Friedrich Ladegast, erected a tremendous monument. Bruckner's student, Carl Waldeck, was the first to give an organ concert on the completed instrument in 1884. It was Waldeck's creative spirit that laid the foundation of the acoustic disposition of this organ. It is interesting to note that Carl Waldeck composed a certain piece of music for two organs tailored towards the conditions in the Wilhering church.

The following abbot, Father Theobald Grasböck, decided to found a grammar school run by Wilhering Abbey. In 1895 he made the choirboys into the first form of this new school, which was gradually extended in the following years. The practice of music in the abbey was supported by the humanistic and musical education provided by the new grammar school. The school had a choir and an orchestra, which supported the church music and also concerts and plays in the abbey. Several well-qualified musicians taught music at the school and worked as regentes chori or organists at the church: Father Petrus Schmid, who played the organ and the harmonium and Johann Kirchschräger, the father of the later Austrian president Rudolf Kirchschräger, who was titular organist and music teacher and Otto Rippl, a very well-known Austrian organist and prolific composer, finally Karl Orel, later organist at the Benedictine Abbey of Kremsmünster and the Brno Cathedral and Julius Webinger, who worked as an organist, music teacher and was a well-known Austrian composer. At this point I would like to refer to the works of Franz Gruber, who had been teaching at the grammar school for many years until the beginning of the Second World War. He composed many pieces both of sacred and secular music. He left a great orchestral mass, the *Missa solemnis in honorem Sancti Theobaldi Abbatis*, dedicated to Abbot Theobald Grasböck on occasion of his 20 year anniversary as an abbot. Recently, this mass was found among the documents and its performance is planned for the upcoming Autumn Organ Festival Wilhering (Wilheringer Orgelherbst).

After 1945 Wilhering abbey and grammar school had to make a new start in every area of spiritual and cultural life. Several Cistercian clerics acted as regentes chori, most recently Father Balduin Sulzer from 1960 until today. He has achieved international reputation as a composer. While Father Balduin was working as the director of music at Linz Cathedral from 1981 until 1986, the highly renowned titular organist Johann Wilfried Hübl was appointed as regens chori. Both honorable artists took all efforts to revive and perform rare pieces of sacred music found among the stocks in the music collection Wilhering. So the long music tradition of the Cistercian abbey continues in the regular High Mass with orchestral accompaniment putting certain emphasis on organ music. In addition to being the successor to the organist Hübl, who died in 2000, I was recently appointed to manage the historical music collection, too. I would like to mention that I have just started work on this.

So far the music archives have been documented in several catalogues at different levels of archival depth. The complete collection contains about 1400 sources, generally in alphabetical order by the name of the composer. One third is printed material. The numerus currens, sometimes with supplements of letters after the numbers, was introduced at the beginning of the 20th century. The handwritten index cards, which were compiled by several people at that time, serve as the only complete record we have. It contains only basic information on composers, titles, instrumentation of works and whether the material is handwritten or printed. The first thematic catalogue was compiled by Karl Mitterschiffthaler in 1979. In his catalogue he only listed a selected part of the music collection, generally the manuscripts from the 18th and early 19th centuries as well as a very limited range of printed music. Probably parallel to this work, the RISM card indexes of the collection, based on the selection by Mitterschiffthaler, had been recorded and sent to the former editorial office in Kassel, so that they could be processed there. Strangely, the information on those records did not match the Mitterschiffthaler catalogue in all points. Some records are completely missing, while others quoted more precise data, for instance the physical size or the number of parts of the material. Due to the selective way of proceeding at that time the collection was locally divided into two parts: the first, which I call in Latin "series prima", holds the catalogued material, the second, called "series secunda", has not been revised. Nowadays, as the former signatures have been

maintained, the material must be searched for either in the first or in the second part of the collection. Although the numerus currens was not really destroyed, chances of finding documents have decreased. Moreover, the whole collection also contains some smaller parts including historical writings on music theory and education, several music manuscripts and prints, a corpus of compositions belonging to the former school orchestra, liturgical works such as some handwritten choirbooks from the 17th to the 19th century and finally a stock with historical periodicals on church music such as *Musica Sacra* or *Musica Divina*. Now, it is my responsibility to revise and supplement all the existent RISM entries compiled for the Wilhering collection, according to the latest research. It is my task to catalogue the music sources missing so far with the Kallisto program, too.

In the course of my research I decided to begin with the revision of the existing records by comparing each of them with every single document. Usually, the diplomatic titles and the information given on copyists, owners and other people have to be revised. Several musical incipits must be supplied. The dates of the sources must be specified according to the known ruling periods of the abbots, which are often cited as owners of the documents. All performance dates, watermarks and some numbers of recent work catalogues have to be supplied. Information concerning the numbers of pages and the actual state of conservation of the material has to be provided. Finally, the material has to be arranged and put into archival slip cases. The problem of the division of the collection will also be found in the new location, which reflects the progress of the work.

In the series prima of the collection I have revised over 300 sources so far, containing works by composers from the 18th and 19th centuries in alphabetical order from letters A to H. Of all these composers I would like especially refer to for instance:

from the 18th or late 17th century:

Anton Kajetan Adlgasser (2 titles), Johann Georg Albrechtsberger (5 titles), Ferdinand Arbesser (1 title), Franz Asplmayr (3 unique copies of string quartets, which are missing from the thematic catalogue. One of these pieces, called a "symphony" has recently been performed in Wilhering), Benedict Anton Aufschnaiter (6 contemporary copies), Franz Josef Aumann (10 titles, 1 work missing from the thematic catalogue), the Venetian composer Andrea Bernasconi (4 copies), Johann Nepomuk Boog (4 contemporary copies), Antonio Caldara (18 contemporary copies, one of them seems to contain a mass by Caldara unknown up to now), Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf (5 copies), the Viennese composer Father Georg Joseph Donberger (9 copies of rare compositions), Johann Ernst Eberlin (8 copies from the 18th and 19th centuries), the Upper Austrian composer of the early Baroque Franz Anton Ertl (8 copies), Father Raymund Fröhlich, Cistercian composer of the former Lower Austrian convent Säusenstein (2 titles), Johann Joseph Fux (5 copies, two pieces of music are missing from the work catalogue);

from the early 18th or 19th century:

Johann Caspar Aiblinger (2 titles), Ignaz Aßmayr (1 copy), the Tyrolian composer Alois Bauer (7 title), Franz Bühler (15 titles, also some printed first editions), Joseph Leopold Eybler (15 titles), Robert Führer (a very large number of manuscripts and early prints).

Finally, it should be noted that any further information on the sources in the music collection of Wilhering can be consulted in the RISM database. The number of these records will increase continuously. And now, to conclude I am going to present you an organ piece by the

above-mentioned Carl Waldeck, who felt very much obliged to Wilhering Abbey. It is his Prelude in B-flat-major, recently recorded by myself on the main organ of Leopold Breinbauer in Wilhering. The first edition of this piece is also contained in the music collection of the abbey.