



COMMUNICATION: CONFERENCE REPORT

Zelenka Conference Prague 2021: Seventh Edition

Velkopřevorský palác, Prague, 16 October 2021

Frederic Kiernan 

Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia
kiernanf@unimelb.edu.au

Ensemble Inégal held their seventh annual conference on the music of Jan Dismas Zelenka (1679–1745) at the Velkopřevorský palác (Grand Priory Palace) in Prague, under the auspices of the Ústav hudební vědy, filozofická fakulta (Institute of Musicology at the Faculty of Arts), Masarykova univerzita, Brno. This event formed part of the Zelenka Festival Prague–Dresden, and was supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic. It primarily addressed issues relevant to critical editing, although room was given for free papers pertaining to any aspect of Zelenka scholarship, and presentations were delivered online or in person. The programme is accessible at www.zelenkafestival.cz/zelenka-conference-prague-2021/.

The opening session, chaired by Janice Stockigt (University of Melbourne), focused on past, present and future directions in editing and publishing Zelenka's music. It commenced with a keynote address by Michael Talbot (University of Liverpool), followed by papers from Jiří Kroupa (Nadace pro dějiny kultury ve střední Evropě (Association of Central European Cultural Studies), Prague), Andrew Frampton (University of Oxford), Denis Collins (University of Queensland) and me (Frederic Kiernan, University of Melbourne). Talbot's address provided a fascinating reflection on his involvement in editing a variety of music dating from 1700 to 1750 and how his experiences might inform an eventual collected (or even complete) edition of Zelenka's music, something that is still lacking. Kroupa surveyed the production of Czech editions of Zelenka's music up to the end of the twentieth century, while Frampton, like Talbot, addressed the question of whether – and, if so, how – a complete edition of Zelenka's music might be accomplished, calling for an international, collaborative approach and a revision of the thematic catalogue of the composer's works. Collins connected the question of editing Zelenka's music to the field of music analysis, discussing how this field might benefit from, and contribute to producing, a complete critical edition. My own paper concluded the session by discussing the editorial challenges that arise in relation to Zelenka's motet 'Gaude laetare' (zww168), focusing on the reconstruction of the oboe parts. Because of a tight schedule, there was little opportunity for questions or discussion, but the session certainly made clear the need for progress towards a complete critical edition of Zelenka's output informed by collaboration across various domains of musicology.

After a brief pause, Thomas Hochradner (Universität Mozarteum Salzburg) chaired a session that moved beyond a focus on Zelenka to discuss current issues faced in the editing of baroque music more generally. Hochradner introduced the session with an excellent overview of developments in the hierarchies of evidence that inform critical-editorial work, with reference to philology and current and historical performance practices, and concluded with a reflection on how musicology can respond to these challenges. Tomasz Jeż (Instytut Muzykologii, Uniwersytet Warszawski) then presented a paper about the music of Czech Jesuits in Wrocław, in the context of a broader ongoing research project on the musical repertory of the Society of Jesus in the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth (1565–1773), the findings of which are published in the series *Fontis*

Musicae in Polonia (www.fontesmusicae.pl). Maciej Jochymczyk (Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Cracow) then examined the life and work of Polish composer Jacek Szczurowski (?1716–after 1774) in the light of the editions published in that series, and Peter Martinček (Vysoká škola múzických umení v Bratislave (Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava)) discussed issues related to the editing of vocal compositions which survive in the form of new German organ tablature. The session concluded with a paper by Alexander Rausch (Austrian Centre for Digital Humanities and Cultural Heritage, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften) about the practical and theoretical considerations involved in editing Fux operas.

The third and final session, consisting of free papers, featured presentations by Shelley Hogan (University of Melbourne), Jóhannes Ágústsson (independent scholar, Reykjavík), Claudia Lubkoll (Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Dresden) and Václav Kapsa (Akademie věd České republiky (Czech Academy of Sciences), Prague). Hogan's paper investigated the tempest scene in Marin Marais's *Alcyone* as evidence of changing performance practices in Zelenka's early years in Dresden, while Ágústsson revealed the identities of two further copyists of Zelenka, hitherto known only as 'ZS 1' and 'ZS 2', whose surnames were Scheffler and Seipt. Lubkoll then presented the findings of her study of paper bearing the 'Baroque ornament' watermark, which was made in Chomutov, Bohemia at the time of papermaker Johann Franz Ossendorf (died 1741), and the use of that paper for the music of Zelenka and his contemporaries in Dresden. Kapsa's paper concluded the conference with a study of the role of the pilgrimage site of Mariaschein (now Bohosudov, within the town of Krupka) in the musical contacts between Dresden and Bohemia during Zelenka's lifetime.

The event was most enjoyable, and the quality of individual presentations was generally very high. The hybrid format allowed for a diverse, international mixture of contributions and some discussion between participants, although interaction was at times cumbersome because of technical problems and difficulties with translation. I have attended all but one of the conferences in this series, and I find that the online alternative to in-person attendance does not compare favourably. The engaging discussions and collective reflections that regularly surround the presentations each year, sometimes extending long into the evenings, as well as the usual provision of live Czech/English translations of presentations to all attendees via earpieces, have had a tangible impact on the trajectory of my own Zelenka research in a way that online alternatives have not (yet). The interweaving of the conference with live performances of the composer's music has also made the event particularly stimulating for those who attend in person. However, online conferencing is likely to be of increasing importance for Zelenka scholarship in the future, because – Covid-19 concerns aside – the 2021 conference again highlighted that relatively little research on Zelenka is currently being carried out in the Czech Republic compared to work going on in other countries. Coordinated action across national borders will be crucial in driving the field forward.

Frederic Kiernan holds a PhD and MMus in musicology from the University of Melbourne. He is currently a postdoctoral research fellow at that university, investigating the relationship between music and loneliness, and he is a regular presenter at the Zelenka Conference Prague.