

# ■ **Abstracts**

## **of recently passed Australian Ph.D. theses**

*The Vespers psalms of Jan Dismas Zelenka (1679–1745) in the liturgy and life of the Dresden Catholic court church.*

Janice Stockigt

(The University of Melbourne)

This thesis examines the Vespers psalm settings of the Bohemian-born composer Jan Dismas Zelenka (1679-1745), compositions which represent a significant component of the liturgical music he wrote for the Catholic court church of Dresden. The works of this contemporary and acquaintance of Johann Sebastian Bach have suffered from a series of historical neglects and injuries culminating in the bombing of Dresden in 1945, an action which caused damage to and loss of contemporary sources of Zelenka's music. Documentation surrounding the circumstances of its composition and performance has been missing since that time.

Part I of the thesis investigates an unbroken set of annual letters (*Annuae Literae*) written between 1710 and 1740 by Dresden Superiors of the Society of Jesus who had been brought from the Province of Bohemia to staff the recently-founded Catholic court church of Dresden (1708). Happily, these letters survive in the Roman Jesuit archive (Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu). The conversion to Catholicism of the Saxon Elector August II re-established that religion in Lutheran Saxony and as a consequence, Catholic churches, most of them open for public worship, were founded within Saxon Electoral residences. The most prestigious of these was the chapel located in the renovated theatre of the Dresden palace. The liturgical and historical information to emerge from the study of these *Annuae Literae* not only provides an expansive view of the developing conditions under which Zelenka (and Heinichen) composed liturgical works but, in several instances, these sources furnish precise information on the occasions for which specific works were written.

In part II of the thesis, Zelenka's settings of Vespers psalms are examined. From the *Annuae Literae* the circumstances surrounding the office of Vespers of the Dresden Catholic court church have been extrapolated

and a Sanctoral has been reconstructed for this era of the church in which Vespers psalm sequences appropriate to the feasts of the liturgical year are suggested. A chronology, based upon paleographic features of the autograph scores and upon the proposed Sanctoral, has been offered for Zelenka's undated psalm settings. Interpretations of the mottos which always appear at the conclusion of the settings indicate the identity of the person(s) who commissioned these compositions. These settings, most of which were written during the latter half of the 1720s, reveal aspects of Zelenka's musical originality. Yet, they were composed within established traditions of text treatment and structure of psalm composition, traditions to be seen in psalm settings of his Italian, Bohemian and Austrian contemporaries and predecessors. A great variety of manners of setting the doxology text is to be distinguished in the extant compositions. Scrutiny of the scoring indications in Zelenka's extant autographs, as well as re-workings to be seen on scores of his psalm collection, provide evidence of changing performers and altering performance practices in the Dresden Catholic court church during the third and fourth decades of the eighteenth century, reflecting the development of the distinguished musical style for which Dresden was to become famous. The thesis concludes with an analysis of the features of Zelenka's highly personal musical style.

Primary sources include extracts from the foundation documents of the Dresden Catholic court church and transliterations (with translation) of musically and liturgically relevant sections of the *Annuae Literae* from the Dresden Jesuits. Over 100 musical examples, many taken from unpublished works of Zelenka, together with tables, plates, diagrams and bibliography are presented. Two appendices accompany the thesis.

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*The nature and meaning of music: Towards relativity and universality of musicality.  
A study in East-west comparative aesthetics of music.*

Gong Xiao-qiang  
(The University of Melbourne)

This dissertation explores the field of East-west comparative aesthetics of music by focussing on four main topics: 1) pre-Platonic and pre-Confucian cosmology of music with emphasis on the Pythagorean and Yin-yang schools, 2) Platonic and Confucian ethics of music, 3) transcendental philosophy of music as found in Boethius and in the Taoist school, 4) Eduard Hanslick and Ji Kang on the autonomy of music.

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*In what is constituted musical meaning, significance, value and greatness.*

Rhett H. Walker  
(The University of Melbourne)

The central purposes of this project have been to explore, to define and locate the nature of musical meaning, significance, value and greatness; to investigate and critically evaluate what has been said by others about these issues; and to establish reasonable and valid criteria by which each of these terms may be defined and established. Several hypotheses provide the *raison d'être* for what is argued herein. They are these:

- That musical meaning, significance, value and greatness are capable of definition and explanation.
- That no single theory of musical meaning, significance, value and greatness has provided a sufficient and universally satisfactory explanation of wherein and whereby each of these terms may be reliably fixed.
- That musical meaning, significance, value and greatness have their locus in the intrinsic material of a musical work, but may derive from musically extrinsic considerations as well

Historically, theories of musical meaning, significance and value have been formulated in a manner that reflects one of two fundamental and mutually exclusive philosophical positions: one being that musical meaning, significance and value consist only in the intrinsic musical material of a work; the other, that these same qualities consist in the power of music to communicate and/or to evoke musically extrinsic ideas, concepts and experiences. Musical value judgements typically reflect a similar polarisation of opinion. The thesis argued herein is that no single theory, as traditionally formulated, is alone sufficient to define satisfactorily the locus of musical meaning, significance and value, and that definition and application of these

terms involve a complex of considerations which can be satisfactorily accommodated only by, or through a perspective more comprehensive and flexible than that which has typified traditional theories. The dissertation culminates in several conclusions, principal among which are these:

- that musical meaning consists (a) in whatever has been intended by a composer that may be interpreted and comprehended by someone else in correspondence with the musical medium by and through which this meaning has been conveyed; and (b) in what is experienced or inferred by someone in correspondence with a musical work, which is a direct result of that correspondence and which, in turn, may be communicated to someone else with reference to the same work.
- that musical significance, that is, what makes a musical work (seem) momentous, eventful or remarkable, derives from an inter-relationship born of the psychical processes of someone in response to the substance and realisation of a given work, against the background and influence of a given cultural context and tradition, and one's own experience.
- that musical value is culturally dependent and derivative, and resides in and derives from a complex of considerations both intrinsic and extrinsic to any given musical work.
- that musical greatness, that is, widely acknowledged musical excellence, pre-eminence and renown, is born of extraordinary musical genius and is made manifest as observable and outstanding musical originality, creativity and skill: creative and musical singularity which, in turn, beget or afford a highly singular musical experience.