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The Life and Works of Heinrich Schütz

PAUL A. PISK

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THE LIFE OF HEINRICH SCHUETZ

When Heinrich Schütz was born in 1585 the two giants among the Renaissance composers, Palestrina and Lasso, were still alive and active. Their style was widely disseminated and adapted by composers of other nations, also in Germany. Hence we find our composer's early musical training based on the techniques of the 16th century. His studies in Italy, however, where he became acquainted with the new trends, changed his musical development, and he became the first great representative of the German baroque. The same evolution may be seen in his personal life, from the individuality of classic humanism to the more collective group-feeling of his mature years and the spiritual solitude of the late period. Schütz himself called his own life "mühselig" (troublesome). True, tragedy struck often, the darkest adversities of the Thirty Years' War uprooted him, but he never suffered poverty and already during his lifetime was acknowledged the greatest German composer.

Saxony is the country of his heritage, his birth, and his life. It was not unified, but divided into many principalities, some of them miniscule with separate sovereigns and courts. Koestritz, near Gera, the town

where Schütz was born Oct. 8, 1585, belonged to the duchy of Reuss. His family was of patrician origin, landowners, mayors, and innkeepers. The "Golden Crane" was the place of Schütz's birth, but after 6 years the slightly larger town of Weissenfels became the family's abode. There the inn "Zum Schützen" was Heinrich's real home, and in the late years of his life the composer retired to Weissenfels. It was there where the Landgrave Moritz of Hesse-Kassel on one of his travels stayed overnight at the inn and was captivated by the boy and his singing. An offer to take Heinrich as a choir boy to Kassel was first not accepted by the parents, but finally they consented and the 13-year-old left his home. Landgrave Moritz "The Learned" was a typical Renaissance prince. Gifted as a translator of classic literature, poet, and philologist, he was also an able composer and tried to make his court a brilliant cultural center. His court chapel was headed by Georg Otto, a fine musician who became Schütz's first instructor. The young choir boy attended the Collegium Mauritanum, an educational institution for young aristocrats and talented students from the higher middle class, founded by the landgrave. There Heinrich studied besides music, Latin, Greek, French, and other

humanistic disciplines. He was brilliant and very successful. When he lost his voice, he enrolled at the University of Marburg in the law school. His parents preferred for him a career as public servant (councillor), which was more lucrative and socially prominent than that of a musician. The landgrave, however, continued his financial support for his musical development and granted him a stipend to study in Venice with Giovanni Gabrieli. The art of this master represented the latest developments in madrigal composition and church music. However, he imparted also the solid foundations of strict counterpoint to the young German. The cultural atmosphere of the Italian city, the splendor of the services in St. Mark's Cathedral, and the exchange of ideas with other musicians contributed equally to the growth of our composer. Legend has it that Gabrieli willed his precious sealing-ring to Schütz as his most worthy successor. After Gabrieli's death, Schütz, who had spent more than 3 years (1609—12) in Italy, returned to Weissenfels. Still he had not decided to dedicate himself entirely to music and resumed for a short time his law studies, probably at the University of Leipzig. But finally he yielded to his "God-given talent," as he himself called it, with the consent of his parents. Landgrave Moritz appointed him as second organist in Kassel. He took the composer with him when he visited the elector of Saxony, Johann Georg I, in Dresden in 1612. The elector wanted Schütz's services for his court, but Moritz was unwilling to part with him. Lengthy negotiations started between the monarchs, and it was not until 1615 that Moritz had to give in and Schütz was appointed court Kapell-

meister in Dresden, a position he held with a few interruptions for 55 years. The judgment of history concerning Johann Georg I is ambivalent. It speaks for Schütz's loyalty and diplomatic tact that he was able to overcome many tensions between his employer and himself. In general the change of position was a blessing for Schütz, as the fortune of Moritz took a tragic turn for the worse and he even lost his throne.

The first years in Dresden were the happiest in the composer's private life. He married lovely Magdalena Wildegg, 16 years his junior, in 1619. She bore him two daughters, but the matrimonial bliss ended abruptly when Magdalena, only 24 years old, succumbed to the smallpox in 1625. Schütz never remarried. The next years brought more personal tragedies for him. In 1630 he lost his close friend, Johann H. Schein, an important composer in Leipzig. In the next year his father and father-in-law both died. Landgrave Moritz and Schütz's brother Valerius followed in 1632, his mother in 1635. Heinrich Posthumus Reuss, the composer's sovereign and personal friend, died in the same year. In his memory Schütz wrote one of his greatest works, the *Musical Exequies*, the first requiem in the German language. Only a short time later his brother George and his daughter Justina passed away. These events could not diminish the composer's creative power. Already 43 years old, he obtained a leave of absence from the elector in 1628 to travel again to Venice for study with Claudio Monteverdi, the genius of the early Baroque. Monteverdi's dramatic concertato style and his use of monody and ornamentation were absorbed by Schütz and incorporated in his own works. In

Venice he wrote also an opera *Daphne*, which, like most of his secular ceremonial works, is unfortunately not extant. The first years of the Thirty Years' War were comparatively bearable in Dresden, but when the Protestant and Catholic armies battled in Saxony proper and ravaged the area, the cultural life stopped almost completely and the activities of the court chapel were curtailed. The financial situation also became unbearable. Therefore Schütz asked the elector for a leave of absence to join the court of Christian IV in Copenhagen. The relations between the rulers of Denmark (Lower Saxony) and North Saxony were very close and the cultural climate very similar. In 1633 the composer was appointed Royal Danish Kapellmeister, without relinquishing his Dresden position. At that time simultaneous employment by several courts was possible. On his travel to the north, Schütz stopped for some time in Hamburg. From there he visited Amsterdam. Rembrandt's *Portrait of a Musician of 1633* is now believed to be Schütz's likeness, according to recently found proofs. The musical activities at the Danish court were variegated. The composer had to furnish compositions for wedding celebrations (a lost ballet) and other ceremonial occasions besides his religious works. When he returned to Dresden in 1635, the situation there had hardly changed; hence he revisited Copenhagen in 1637. On his way he established connections with the Brunswick court in Wolfenbüttel, probably as expert for the musical chapel of the duke. In 1638 we find the composer again in Dresden preparing the elaborate musical events for the wedding of Prince Johann Georg II. Among other compositions, Schütz wrote a ballet

with choruses, *Orpheus*, of which only the text has been preserved. In 1641 a grave illness of the composer is reported. From this year are dated his moving pleas to the elector for his indigent choristers and musicians and the complaints about the decline of the court chapel. In his request for another leave to Denmark the composer writes:

Inasmuch as at the present time, with the continuation of the war, I can be of no special service either to Your Electoral Highness or to your chapel . . . in view of these circumstances so adverse to my profession, and since my God-given talent may diminish and die and I myself suffer unbearable distress through lack of livelihood . . . I request a leave.

This third sojourn in Copenhagen lasted from 1642 to 1644 and was rich in creative activity. The 60-year-old composer returned to Dresden, where he was still employed. His desire, however, was to reside in Weissenfels and to come to Dresden only occasionally when his presence for special musical events was necessary. The reason for this arrangement was not only the composer's wish for more opportunity for creative concentration—his powers remained undiminished until the end of his life—but the increasing influence of Italian composers and musicians in the elector's staff. Schütz's loneliness was aggravated when his second daughter, Euphrosyne, died in 1655. Of his grandchildren only one survived him. The composer, however, retained his connections with diverse courts, and we find him in Weimar, Zeitz, and Wolfenbüttel as an honored consultant in musical affairs. Pension was finally granted by the new Elector Johann Georg II to the composer when

he was 72 years old. In the last decade of his life he composed some of his greatest works, the Passions and Psalm 119. He died in Dresden, Nov. 6, 1672. The famous court pastor, Dr. Martin Geier, delivered the funeral sermon in which he stressed the faith of the master, which never wavered in spite of his bereavements. To the necrology a fine biography was attached. Heinrich Schütz was buried according to his wish in the outer hall of the Frauenkirche (Church of Our Lady), which is not extant today. His epitaph bore the inscription *Exteriorum delictum, Germaniae lumen* (A joy for foreigners, a light for Germany).

Many of Schütz's private letters and his official correspondence are preserved. From these documents and from the prefaces to his works and observations of contemporaries we are able to form a clear picture of his personality and character. Righteousness and sincerity determined all his actions. Even in his dealings with his superiors, aristocracy and royalty, we find that he stood up for what he considered just, notwithstanding the awe and humbleness which was required in his time. Loyalty never deteriorated into obsequiousness. Devoted to his parents, he accepted their advice and judgment. Later, as husband and father, he treated his family with affection and tenderness. His personal friends considered him to be an understanding and congenial companion. For the choristers and instrumentalists, whose physical care and musical instruction was entrusted to him, he was not only a dedicated teacher but showed also social concern and human interest. More than once he interceded for them with the elector when their payments were in arrears due

to the war. He even supported them from his personal funds, which were rather limited. Intellectually forceful, highly competent in several languages, expert in classic literature, and eloquent as poet and writer, Schütz continued to study until his later life. Music, however, was the center of all his endeavors. He never doubted his mission as composer. He did not write, however, for the sake of art but in the service of religion. Luther had already stated, "Music is a noble, wholesome, and serene creation . . . by which we can know and praise the Creator." These words were the artistic creed of our master. The intellectual and practical side of his discipline (knowledge) had to be motivated by spiritual purpose (glorification of God). Brought up in a pious family, Schütz never deviated from the Lutheran creed. The individual relation between him and his Maker was deep and ever-present, the Bible was for him the revelation of God's Word, its exegesis essential as religious exercise. Genuine Christianity kept Schütz from taking sides in the feud between the Lutheran and Reformed confessions, which at this time almost wrecked Protestantism. In his works, most of them religious, he interpreted the Scripture in music, like sermons in sound. The stylistic devices and innovations which he absorbed from Italy's secular music were transferred to sacred works in the character of German seriousness and even gravity.

Musica Poetica

Before considering the general style of Schütz's music and his works, a short discussion of baroque musical thought as expressed by theorists of the 17th century

seems appropriate. Music as discipline was one of the liberal arts, as it was in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance. Two areas were distinguished. *Musica practica* dealt with performance and instruments, especially singing and counterpoint. *Musica theoretica* still retained the philosophical connotations of earlier writings: mathematical speculations and systematic explanation by numbers and relations to cosmology. Music was a mirror of God's creation and the heavenly hierarchies. The humanists established a third category, *musica poetica*. This concept stressed the creative element and originated in German Protestant music literature. The term was probably created by Melancthon. In detail it was expounded in the book *Musica poetica* by Joachim Burmeister (1606). The traditional (catholic) dualism between sacred and secular music was abandoned. Every creative musician may express himself freely and originally so that he will contribute not only to church music but to his own honor. In his last years Schütz declared the purpose of reworking, completing, and collecting his works in these words: "I hope to serve even after my death God, the world, and my own good name." *Musica poetica* advocated changes, renewal, and development against conservative eclecticism. The essential tenets are the *Figurenlehre* (teaching of figures). Burmeister defines a musical figure as a *gestalt* (formation) that occurs in the framework of a textural musical period which deviates from the simple type of composition. This definition is similar to the concept of rhetorics in humanism, which stresses deviation from the ordinary and elaboration. In fact the musical figures correspond to a certain

degree with the rhetorical, even in nomenclature. They are best explained in connection with the text. Musical declamation is considered imitation of rhetorical speech. The thinking in analogies and similes was a general characteristic of Baroque philosophy. The *Figurenlehre* is connected with the "affect" theory. Typical literary situations (not feelings) are musically interpreted. In his recent book on Heinrich Schütz, subtitled *Musicus poeticus*, Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht, the German musicologist, has brilliantly expounded this aspect of the master's art.

THE WORKS OF HEINRICH SCHUETZ

The preserved body of Schütz's music consists entirely of vocal works. It is not known whether the composer ever wrote instrumental pieces, though he was an accomplished organist. Except for the madrigals and some small individual items, it is religious music. The ceremonial compositions which the composer had to furnish for court festivities, among them stage works (ballets, opera), are lost. They are called *Nebenwerke* (secondary works) and amounted to not more than one tenth of his entire output. Three categories of the extant works may be established: (1) Collections of several pieces in groups, strictly organized according to modes or instrumentation; (2) Single smaller compositions; and (3) large, oratorio-like works. The chorus appears in various voice groupings according to the number of parts and range. Vocal solo parts and instruments are used in ever-changing combinations. The texts to these religious works originate from two sources, the Bible and, to a lesser degree, sacred songs. The composer selected them mainly from Luther's

German translation, but also set some passages from the Latin Vulgate to music. The Bible verses were either left in the original sequence as a unit or taken from several places and combined to a new composition. Sometimes a few words are changed, many are repeated. The Doxology often is omitted. Psalm texts are in the majority as they were in late Renaissance motets. Schütz preferred those that center on adoration of God or are sermon-like or prophetic. In many of these pieces the composer stressed the personal, subjective element. He repeats and emphasizes the word "I" to intensify the immediacy. Next to the Psalms the Old Testament is represented by the Book of Samuel, the Song of Songs, and Sirach. In the later years more verses from the gospels and epistles are found. Only one passage is taken from the Revelation of St. John, and one is taken from a meditation of St. Augustine, translated into German by Schütz himself. In general, dramatic content and intensity of language play a part in the composer's selection, for musical, not literary, reasons. The Sacred Songs, poems in Latin or German, are devotional in their thoughts between pietism and mysticism. Some are taken from the *Pre-cationes* (prayers) by Andreas Musculus. The relation to the liturgy in the church service is not clearly defined in the earlier works. As the words are not from specific parts of the service, such as hymns or antiphons, the music could be sung anywhere, e. g., Psalms as Introits, or even not in connection with any liturgy. In later works we find indications of specifications, especially in the Sacred Songs (as parts of the German mass) and definite liturgical pieces such as Magnificat and the Passions.

The monodic compositions, employing only a few solo voices, were ideal for devotional use in the private home. In the musical treatment of the texts Schütz never uses the Italian *stilo espressivo*. In his Latin works the music carries the text, in the German compositions he interprets the words by dramatic, realistic presentation, not by subjective psychological treatment as J. S. Bach later did.

Before discussing the composer's most important works in detail, some general remarks about his style may be appropriate. In all vocal compositions the melody is of prime concern. Schütz builds his melodies from small motives, sharply defined in pitch and rhythm, the latter often determined by the words of the text. The motives are propelled by repetition or sequence, forming larger units terminated by cadential clauses. Sometimes unbroken larger lines are found, or transformations of the material in new rhythmic and melodic shapes. According to the affects the musical contour of the motives may be related to the "figures," similar to rhetorical processes. Ascending lines may be linked to awakening, sunrise, power, resurrection; descending directions may indicate sleep, darkness, weakening. Very often we find wavering pulsating lines, hovering around one note. These may signify peace but also doubt, even crying. When motives move in two directions (up-down) the interpretation of fate or threat may be implied. In the opposite direction (down-up), annunciation, salvation, or prophecy could be suggested. Finally long stretches of sustained notes without any motion (pedal points) provide the feeling of quiet rest. This symbolic interpretation of the motives is subjective but aids in the under-

standing of the composer's intention. The character of the melodies is generally diatonic. Chromaticism is applied for intensification and often indicates tension or trauma. Purely declamatory passages provide alternation to strong melodic profiles. The thematic material usually changes with the respective text sections.

Schütz's harmony is still based on the church modes. Punctuations already contain the basic chord progressions familiar to us from tonal music. But they are missing between points of cadences. The juxtaposition of consonant but not functional chords which are not directly related to tonality sometimes creates the feeling of austerity and archaic spirit. The composer uses disjunct chords often to emphasize important or unexpected words of the text. For the same purpose dissonant harmonies are chosen.

The texture of Schütz's writing shows many facets. The basic polyphony of the Renaissance is still noticeable, but the independent vocal lines are no longer of equal importance. Like in Gabrieli's motets we notice parts that are rhythmically and melodically more elaborate and ornamented, so that a much more variegated sound picture emerges. This concertato style is one of the most characteristic devices of our composer. There may be thematic imitations or a freely flowing assembly of the voice parts.

Another element, also derived from the Italian baroque practice, especially in Venice, is the spatial organization. St. Mark's Cathedral had two choir galleries and two organs. Hence antiphonal singing resulted. Schütz also often uses double chorus, divided either in two even groups

or, according to range, in high and low register units. A remarkable innovation is the differentiation of these groups by dynamics. *Cappella* is the full body, and *favoriti* is a group of soloists or a few choristers alternating with the *cappella* or supplementing it. On the other hand the new baroque monody did not fail to influence Schütz's writing: one melody line, accompanied by chordal harmonies, played by organ or harpsichord, called *basso continuo* (thorough bass). In some works written for only one or a few soloists, Schütz used this technique. As this type of harmonic undergirding of melodies was widely used, Schütz added an optional *basso continuo*, sometimes even reluctantly, for the purpose of easier publication, in compositions where it was not essential. The composer was very style-conscious and explained his technique in some of the prefaces of his works.

Characteristic of the Baroque also was the addition of instruments to the vocal parts. In Schütz's scores their use is manifold. Sometimes only two or three are added, sometimes larger ensembles. In many scores the instruments are not specified. More often exact directions are given for strings and also flutes, woodwinds, and brass (even trombones). The special colors relate often to the text. The instruments may double vocal lines, more often they are independent, using the same motivic material as the voices, extending their scope, either complementing cumulatively or alternatively. Short instrumental *sinfonias*, *ritornels*, interludes, and postludes provide variety.

The formal organization of Schütz's music never lacks symmetry or balance

even when sections different in tempo and meter follow each other. Besides the through-composed works we find in others sections immediately repeated or transposed or framing the piece at the beginning and end. They very often appear in variants, rhythmically or melodically changed, but the derivations are recognizable. Two symmetrical parts in succession, followed by a single, longer one, called bar form, are common. Also arch-form and the rondo (returning ritornells between episodes) are successfully applied. Elaborate closing sections, like codas, lead to climactic endings. The dimensions change. Like Monteverdi, who enlarged the madrigal in his later years to multi-sectional units, Schütz extended the motet to the dramatic concertato. However, he did not yet diversify and separate several movements as was done in the later cantatas. Schütz's creative work has been thoroughly discussed and analyzed in the monumental biography by Hans Joachim Moser.

The scope of this essay permits only a general characterization of his important compositions. The division into three periods seems to be appropriate. The first group includes music written in Italy or shortly after his return from his first sojourn and shows the influence of Giovanni Gabrieli. The second group is comprised of the masterworks of his middle years following his second journey to Venice. Finally, the lofty creations of his last, lone-some years, are the crowning glory of his life work. This separation is only chronologically valid. The creative powers of the composer developed steadily; his unique genius was noticeable from the beginning.

Works Influenced by Gabrieli

The collection of *Italian Madrigals* (1611), secular songs of great beauty, opens the list of Schütz's publications. They are written in the standard way for five voices, only the last one increases the number to eight. They are arranged according to tonality. Schütz did not mention the poets of the texts. Today they have been identified. Foremost among them are G. B. Guarini, whose epic *The Faithful Shepherd* furnished the words for many other composers, and G. B. Marino. The word painting and the treatment of affects and dissonances is similar to the madrigals of his teacher Gabrieli and his peers. However, the sharply contrasting themes, the use of alternating long and short note values, the variegated voice combinations, and the mixture between intellectual refinement and realism are already highly subjective. It is interesting that the composer used one madrigal (No. 19) with a different German text as a sacred song.

The *Psalms of David* (1619) is a work of magnitude and splendor. It is poly-choral and utilizes large sound masses reinforced by added instruments. Among the 26 pieces, 20 are complete psalms, the rest are psalm sections. One is a canzone on a psalm paraphrase, while another is a Gabrieli madrigal in psalm disguise. The doxology is added in 12 numbers. The psalms are organized in groups according to their respective church modes. The composer mentions in his preface his use of *stilo recitativo*, almost unknown in Germany. This is not the monodic recitative of the opera but the declamatory rendition of the words, which must be intelligible. Rapid motion, discontinuous

rhythms, echo effects, imaginative use of word painting add to the brilliance. Manfred Bukofzer speaks of the successful transformation of the madrigal style into the sacred concertato in these psalms.

In the oratorio *The Resurrection History* (1623) the composer looks backward. Antonio Scandello, Schütz's predecessor in Dresden, wrote an Easter oratorio which is used as a model not only textually (combinations of the gospels) but musically. The old declamatory chant is somewhat renewed in the Italian monodic style accompanied by organ chords. The choral parts need added ornamentation, as in Renaissance practice. Even the final "Victoria" at the resurrection is found in Scandello's piece.

In parts of the *Cantiones sacre* (sacred songs) of 1625 we find also retrospective elements like the old, severe contrapuntal technique of the Renaissance motet. The use of dissonances, monodic elements, and the individualistic treatment of the words is modern. The texts are mystical Latin poems. There are only four voice parts, no instruments, and even the *basso continuo* is only optional. Pictorialism is less frequent than in the *Psalms of David*. The *Cantiones* are on a small scale. The *Becker Psalter* for the Reformed Church (1628) is the musical setting of 103 metrical psalm versions. Their author, Dr. Cornelius Becker, retained the content fairly accurately, but his poetic language is second-rate at best. The composer designated these songs for "church, schools, and homes." They are best fitted for devotional morning and evening exercises in the family. Only 13 pieces use traditional Protestant chorale melodies, all others are freely invented. Schütz's settings are in four rhyth-

mically free parts. Even here he avoids rigidity of pulse and harmony. His phrases are flexible, the chords personal. The *Psalter* was published in 1661 in a second edition which Schütz reluctantly supervised. It also appeared after the composer's death in later printings, the only one of his works in continued use. Here a few remarks about the tenuous relation between Schütz and the church-chorale may be added. The composer turned often to Protestant hymn texts but very sparingly to traditional melodies in contradistinction to J. S. Bach. Some writers, like Alfred Einstein, deny any essential use of hymn tunes by Schütz. Hans Joachim Moser tries to find more cases besides the *Psalter*, namely, in the *Exequies* and later works. Close inspection shows that some old melodies are recognizable but transformed or varied. One appears in a solo concertato with instruments. Chorales used for congregational singing are completely absent.

The Middle Period

The *Symphoniae sacrae* (first volume) were published in 1629 after the composer returned from his second Italian journey. This work is counted as the first of the middle period. The same title was used by Gabrieli and other composers for collections of sacred concertatos (no relation to the modern term "symphony"). Twenty Biblical texts in Latin are set for a diversity of 1-3 voices and 1-4 instruments which are exactly specified, for example, cornetto or schalmey. Lyricism in the voices blends with ornamented, often virtuosic, instrumental writing. The concertato style and the complete penetration of both media is fully established. The composer's imagination reaches its height in David's lament

for Absalom, the most famous piece of this set.

One of the loftiest creations of Schütz's art is the already mentioned memorial for Prince Heinrich Posthumus Reuss, the *Musikalische Exequien*, subtitled *A German Funeral Mass*. In this work the Christian profession of faith in immortality is coupled with deep personal grief for a close friend. The prince had selected Bible and hymn verses to be engraved on his coffin. These are used as text for the music. The work consists of three independent parts. The first combines the ideas of the Kyrie and Gloria of the mass. The words of the Kyrie contemplate death versus life in three Bible verses. The Gloria consists of nine stanzas of a church hymn, the last including a chorale melody besides nine Scriptural passages. In the center of the work a funeral motet for an eight-voice double chorus is placed. The third part is a concerto for a five-part chorus. Here Schütz combines the German version of the canticle "Nunc dimittis" with the passage from Revelation, "Blessed are the dead." The voices of two seraphim (sopranos) and a "soul in bliss" (baritone) are superimposed on the chorus, an unforgettable effect. The theological implications of this requiem are manifold. Schütz later suggested its performance for two holidays of the liturgical year.

The Seven Words on the Cross (ca. 1640) is a small oratorio of about 20 minutes' duration. It is prefaced and concluded by a five-part hymn. An instrumental *sinfonia* on motives of the first hymn follows, which is literally repeated before the conclusion. The text, taken from all the gospels, is sung not only by the tenor but also by soprano and alto re-

spectively. The fourth and seventh words are set for four voices in the manner of the Renaissance motet passions. The instrumental accompaniment is modest: two violins and organ. The character of this work, an eloquent lament, is intimate, its impact very strong.

The music of the two volumes of *Kleine geistliche Konzerte* (Small Sacred Concertos), written from 1636 to 1639 between the composer's visits to Copenhagen, is easy to perform and therefore best known. Due to the exigencies of the war, only one to five soloists are called for, no instruments, only the accompaniment by an integrated *basso continuo* (organ). The poems, mostly from the Bible (St. Augustine is included), are grouped in solos, duets, terzets, and so forth. Here the *stilo oratorio* based on Monteverdi's monody comes to full fruition. Secular bass motives, even traces of dances appear, and there is a perfect blending of various techniques. The first volume closes with a grand aria of 18 stanzas for which the composer provided an optional Latin text. The second volume contains more passages from the New Testament, all set ingeniously in various formal structures. Schütz planned a third volume, but only a few more single numbers are extant. A German continuation of the Latin *Symphoniae sacrae* (Vol. II) was published in 1647, dedicated to the Danish crown prince. There are 27 pieces (12 solos, 10 duets, 5 terzets) structurally akin to the *Kleine geistliche Konzerte* but with some instruments required. Again we admire the composer's versatility in exploiting various vocal ranges and structures. Some pieces are lighter, almost semisecular, and show Monteverdi's influence. One number, "I

Shall Not Die," is a moving personal thanksgiving after recovery from a serious illness in 1641.

The *Geistliche Chormusik* (Sacred Choral Music) of 1648, dedicated to the city of Leipzig and the St. Thomas Choir, is called by Philipp Spitta "the most beautiful motet collection of its time." In these 29 pieces the composer accomplished a synthesis of the strict polyphonic Renaissance technique with the accomplishments of the baroque. The title indicates that voices and instruments should be used (5-7 parts). However, the distribution is not exact, so in some pieces the use of fewer voices and even solos and more instruments is desirable. The composer did not choose to use *basso continuo* in this work. However, it was added in the printing "not from necessity but according to advise and desire" (of the publisher). In the extended preface Schütz addresses the younger German composers who write in concertato technique with *basso continuo* without mastering the art of true counterpoint. He enumerates the polyphonic techniques which he acquired in Italy. Music without this foundation is an "empty nut." The true kernel, though hard to "knack," is good counterpoint. In this work we find plenty of it. There is no melting of contrasting motives, no abrupt change of harmony or character. Still the music is not reactionary nor bland (*einerlei*), but a unique fusion of two styles which are applied differently to different texts. The liturgical content covers the year from Advent to All Souls' Day. As number 27 Schütz inserted a motet by Andrea Gabrieli (Giovanni's uncle) with a new text as homage to Italy.

To complete his *Symphoniae sacrae*,

Schütz, now 65 years old, published the third volume of this collection in 1650. He returned to large dimensions, for after the war the restrictions in personnel had ended. The work is scored for three to six vocal parts and two instruments with optional supplements in both categories. The texts from the New Testament have no explicit liturgical connection, though some are taken from the canon of the church year. Two hymns by St. Bernard and the Lord's Prayer are included. Like in the *Psalms* of 1619 but on a higher plain we find splendor in sound, structural variety, and individual traits in vocal and instrumental writing.

Comparatively simple is the four-part setting of *Twelve Religious Songs* from 1657. No instruments are called for, nor the *basso continuo*. Again it was added in the printing against the will of the composer. Christoph Kittel, organist and master of the choristers in Dresden, needed music for church and school use. In this collection the first nine songs correspond with the parts of the German Mass and Vespers. A German litany is added. For the schools' service two songs for grace at meals and a hymn were prepared. The style is not dramatic, but purely linear, and the spirit is evangelical.

Lofty Creations of the Lonesome Years

Schütz's genius reached new heights in the *Christmas Oratorio* (1664). The fuller title reads "History of the Joyful and Blessed Birth of . . . Jesus Christ. . . ." This work never shows the age of the composer. It is colorful, radiant, and abounds in new ideas. Schütz composed first the title for four-part chorus and five-part orchestra. Then follow eight *Intermedia*,

vignettes of the events connected with the Savior's birth. The story itself is recorded in *parlando* style like a recitative in opera, always in the joyful key of F major. In the *Intermedia* chorus, solo voices and instruments change according to the scenes and the mood. Highlights are the annunciation of the angel (soprano and strings), the song of the shepherds (three altos and flute), the Wise Men (tenors with strings), four high priests (basses with trombones), and Herod, who sings accompanied by two martial trumpets. The concluding chorus is a hymn of thanksgiving. The composer approaches the Christmas spirit by applying religious folk-play elements. One could even imagine a performance of this delightful piece on the stage.

To the realm of tragic drama belong the three *Passions*, written in the years 1665 and 1666. The versions of Luke, Matthew, and John are set to music. The composer wanted to convey the stark reality of our Savior's suffering. There are no instruments, no organ, no interpolations or changes of the Biblical words. A monophonic (single, unaccompanied) voice line, invented by Schütz but in the style of Gregorian chant, is used throughout, with only slight emphasis on certain words in melismas. The persons are only distinguished by the tonal range. Thus the words of Jesus are sung by a basso, while the evangelist is a tenor. Very short dramatic choral injections, the voices of the people, called *turbae*, are the only contrast. A short chorale precedes the action (setting of the title to music). A hymn is placed at the end. In spite of the austere objectivity, the dramatic impact is shattering. One thinks of the baroque wood carvings of the Passion.

Of great power also is the last work of the composer, the *119th Psalm*, written when he was in his 86th year. Divided into 11 separate sections, it is followed by the short *Psalm 100* and the *German Magnificat* for eight-part double chorus and two organs. This work is through-composed and changes in texture between homophony and polyphony. Monophonic intonation of the beginning heightens the spiritual feeling. On the title page one finds the sentence: "It is at the same time his final work and his swan song." Fittingly it ends with the doxology "Glory to God," the motivation for all of Schütz's music.

It seems inconceivable that the great spiritual music of our master could have been forgotten soon after his death. But taste had changed; lighter, secular musical genres were preferred. The Italian opera was in ascendance in Germany and music became a means of entertainment. Schütz shares this eclipse with Johann Sebastian Bach. The Thomas cantor's music, too, had to wait almost a century until it was resurrected and still longer before its true greatness was understood. In connection with the Bach revival in the 19th century the German historians also rediscovered Schütz and the first complete edition of his works began. However, systematic Schütz research had still to wait. Only at the end of the century was most of the Schütz literature published: biographies, analytical studies, documents and letters—almost all of them in German. To the 20th century belongs Moser's definitive biography, several books on various aspects of Schütz's works, and, recently, a new, critical complete edition of his music based on extended research. A Heinrich Schütz Society is active in Germany. Schütz festivals

are held regularly, even a periodical deals with his works. In the United States, Schütz has not yet achieved general acclaim. Hans Joachim Moser's great book has been translated into English, practical editions of several single works have been published, but performances are not yet too frequent. The recording industry has recently issued several discs, mostly from Germany.

In our time it is not easy to evaluate properly Schütz's greatness. His dynamic personality, consummate artistry, and ingenuity of inspiration do not express them-

selves in absolute music. They cannot be approached with esthetic theories or philosophical speculations. His music lives only in connection with the word which he intensifies. This word is the Word of God. Schütz prays, professes, and preaches in his music. To paraphrase Moser and an article by Walter Blankenburg: Schütz, who felt and formulated this music, was a true, enlightened, and noble Christian. Because the subjective and objective sides stand in complete equilibrium, his works have become for us the very epitome of Protestant church music.