

18TH CENTURY LATVIAN PROTESTANT HYMNALS: INITIAL OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

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Summary

This paper is the first attempt to gather and codify the broad range of 18th century Latvian hymnals with regards to Protestant traditions. In a musicological context, this is the first time a statistical summary and codification of these books based on the target audience has been presented. The research sketches out major directions of development, questions of content and format, provides a brief analysis of the reception of hymnals in Latvian society, a review of the level of saturation of books in society, the correlation between literacy and singing skills, as well as providing facts that characterise Latvian society's relationship with hymnals. Additionally, there is an analysis of the close relationship between the church singing tradition and the institution of organ performance and the role of the organ in the development of singing skills. The paper shows that the Protestant Church's songs became a part of Latvian oral traditions, rooted in Western European music language and the localisation of all literary texts, and this allows for further discussion into the transfer of Western European, mainly German, culture to Latvian society.

The production of Latvian books was mainly in the narrow frame of the "peasant library", which included only the Bible, handbooks (which included the hymnal), as well as the catechism and basic literacy primers.

If the layout and contents of the Livonian Gospels or the Handbook remained unchanged, then, in the first decades of the century, the hymnals grew visibly, and gained the content and form which remained the foundation and core of all further publication and processing of hymnals. Along with their numerical growth, the content of the books became richer and even the form changed. The expansion of the Protestant, or Lutheran chorales was particularly facilitated by the translations of the texts into meter and with rhyming, which allowed the chorales to be sung better. The first to do so was Christoph Fürecker (lat. *Füreccerus Cristophorus*, 1612–around 1685), whose translated songs spread in the second half of the 17th century.

In the field of Protestant literature in the 18th century, two traditions dominated – orthodox Lutheranism from one side, but from the other – piety and its radical form – the Moravian or Herrnhutian tradition, which began as a reaction to the orthodox foundation. The Moravian Church became a powerful national religious movement for both Latvians and Estonians in Livonia, along with notable singing practices with local forms of expression. That developed both thanks to the work of the Wolmarshof Teachers' seminary (1739 – 1749) and, later, the so-called Moravian quiet movement, when, due to the ban of the movement, Latvian self-organization grew. The Herrnhutian hymnals also saw a similar quantitative growth in the number of songs. Most of them

were provided by the German Pietist Johann Anastasius Freylinghausen (1670–1739) song collection. One can find also original songs without analogues elsewhere.

In 1806 in Courland and in 1809 in Livonia, the leaders of the Lutheran Church published a rationalistic hymnal, and the peasants, ignoring pressure from the pastors, refused to use this hymnal, and expressed a desire to continue using the old one. Organized protests were seen in many places in Livonia and Courland. The main cause of the peasant protests can possibly be found in the new, dry sapient characteristics of the hymnals, and the lack of an overall generalization – an ability to bring users together in one wave of experience (this is indicated by the peasants' criticism about some aspects – the songs had too much 'nourishment for the body' but not enough "nourishment for the soul"). The events around the new hymnal confirm that the relationship of the people with religion was not just an object, but also an independent subject, which was able to express its needs and choose between acceptable and unacceptable ideological and aesthetic forms for oneself.

The congregation was able to work with a very broad repertoire. In a musical sense, this mainly existed in the oral tradition and formed hundreds of melodies. Hymnals were without music but had instructions as to which melody should be used for the song.

A general occurrence since the beginnings the Reformation is contrafactum – replacing one text with another, without changing the melody, modifying the text to an existing melody. In that way, in the hymnals, new texts and translation versions were found alongside one another, and sung with the same melody. As far as we can tell, there are also new melodies, but those are fewer than new texts.

There are many notable local features in hymnals in Latvia. Those are associated with the creative work of landowner, poet, and musician Gustav von Mengden (*Gustav Freiherr von Mengden*, 1625 or 1627–1688) at the end of the 17th century. In 1686, in Riga, a two volume *Sonntages Gedancken eines Christen (One Christian's Sunday Reflections)* and rhythmized Psalms of David – *Der Verfolgete, Errettete und Lobsingende David, Das ist; Alle Psalmen Davids in Reimen gefaßet und auff denen bey der Evangelischen Kirchen gebräuchlichen Melodeyen eingerichtet* was published. Among the songs are the so-called chorale-arias with figured bass. Mengden is among the authors whose songs do not just appear in Livonian German but also Latvian hymnals, with translations by Svante Gustav Dietz (1670–1723). Altogether eight of Mengden's songs appear in Latvian hymnals. Another local feature is associated with the name Andreas Knopken (also *Knopke, Knöpken, Knopius, Knopf*, 1468–1539). The name of this 16th century Riga reformist and song author often appears in 18th century collections.

An important question is the dissemination of the hymnals in Latvian society. Relatively early – already in the last third of the 17th century – the books arrived in the lower levels of society. Even at the end of the 17th century, Latvian books circulated more in the cities. In the 18th century, they were extensively found in the countryside.

In Livonia in the last third of the 18th century, the observed literacy rate of adult peasants increased from approximately 40% to 66%. The most literate – in the Herrnhutian territories (up to 90%). The book numbers confirmed the dominance of hymnals. Further, the correlation between the level of literacy and the singing practice is a notable factor.

Books with song texts corresponded to chorale melody books, prepared in four voices for organ. The first chorale books were created in the Baltics in the first decades of the 18th century. Those were written by hand and used by organists, compiled and copied in handwriting from German chorale books and arranged for their own needs. The so-called choral interludes – *Choralzwischenspiele* were commonly used. This term was used to indicate longer figurations of notes, which grew into broader passages, concertlike cadences, to give time for the congregation to take the needed breath, to indicate the pause before the next line. A typical example – *Choral-Buch mit verschiedenen Zwischen-Spielen über ds Rigische Gesangbuch* (Riga, 1800), written by the Riga St. Peter's Church organist Julius August Fehre (1745–1812).