

MUSICAL PRACTICES OF LUTHERAN CHURCHES IN THE TOWNS OF LIVLAND DURING THE SECOND HALF OF THE 17th CENTURY

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Summary

Keywords: school, singing, organs, Livland, Cēsis, Limbaži, Valmiera

The musical life of large cities is frequently researched by European music historians. Riga is among these cities. During the 17th century when the Swedish Empire ruled over the Baltic Sea region, Riga was a part of Livland (nowadays the northern part of Latvia, or Vidzeme, and the southern part of Estonia). Outside this city, the musical culture in the towns of Livland was quite different. It is not as well documented as the music life of Riga.

The main purpose of this article is to determine the significance of musical practices in several small towns in Livland and to research their reflection in accessible historical sources. The article gives an interdisciplinary overview of musical culture in the churches of three towns of Livland – Cēsis (historical *Wenden*), Limbaži (*Lemsal*) and Valmiera (*Wolmar*) during the second half of the 17th century. These towns were chosen considering the historical documents that have survived.

The focus is on three characteristic themes – the teaching of singing in the church schools as well practical cantors' and organists' work that was fundamental to musical life in churches not only in Livland but also in other German-speaking countries in Europe.

Most of the surviving historical documents regarding musical practices in the churches of Livland are related to the cantor's work in St. John's Church in the town of Cēsis. These documents contain mostly court materials that reflect the regular strife between the Swedish administration of the town of Cēsis and the local town council and pastor that lasted at least seven years (1669–1675). Questions regarding the cantor's work in the church were only a few of the many causes of this strife. In spite of this, it is possible to reconstruct the musical life in St. John's Church of Cēsis in the 1670s thanks to these court materials.

Up to the middle of the 18th century, the cantor was one of the more respected professions in the German-speaking countries. He was a church music director (*Director cantus*) who composed, led the musical part of church service, conducted the choir, taught practical and theoretical musical knowledge and took part in the development of secular music. The cantor also had to play the organ. He was well educated, and therefore he received a larger salary than an organist or singer. The cantor of Cēsis met these requirements, and it was important both for the pastor of the congregation and the ruler³⁷ of Cēsis town.

37 The Count Axel Gustafsson Oxenstierna (1583–1654) was appointed ruler of Valmiera and Cēsis by the King of Sweden Gustav II Adolf.

It is known that the cantor position was also established at St. Simon's Church in Valmiera. Unfortunately, there are too few surviving documents that provide a broader description of this fact. Smaller congregations of Livland engaged a singer or a sacristan whose basic duty was to perform the Lutheran songs or lead the singing of the congregation during the Divine Services.

In the German-speaking countries, the children of the Lutheran city schools studied not only the Bible, Latin and Catechism but also learned the main church songs and sang in the Divine Services every Sunday. The surviving documents of the Law Schools of Cēsis and Limbaži also reflect similar requirements that were based on the general Lutheran agenda.

Thanks to the surviving document of the teaching program of the town school in Limbaži, it is possible to get to know the school's daily life and the place of music in it. The pupils had to start their day with a Morning song, and a church song *Verleihe uns Frieden gnädiglich (Da nobis pacem, Domine)* was sung after the lectures twice a day. Every Sunday the pupils sang in the church conducted by their rector. In the church of Limbaži, the musical life was managed by one person who was both the singer and the rector of the school. It is likely that school life was similarly organized in other towns in Livland, such as Valmiera, Koknese (*Kokenhusen*) and Valka (*Walk*) but there are too few surviving documents that can confirm it.

In the large churches of German-speaking countries, the ensemble of school children practiced both unison singing (usually on regular Sundays) or multi-voiced singing (mostly during the Festive days). It was also practiced at St. John's Church in Cēsis. As for the church in Limbaži, it is possible that unison singing was practiced here due to the smaller ensemble of school children.

The archival documents give insufficient information on the practices of organ music in the churches of Livland. It has been confirmed that positive organs were played in Valmiera and Cēsis. In the towns of northern Germany, musical life was increasingly dominated by organists rather than choral directors or cantors. According to surviving documents, it is possible that the musical life of St. Simon's Church in Valmiera was led by an organist who had the responsibility to play the organ and to accompany the congregation's singing during the Divine Service both on regular Sundays and the Festive days. This requirement was established by the ruler of Valmiera. Unfortunately, there are too few archival sources to determine the organ music repertoire in Valmiera and Cēsis.

The above-mentioned examples of musical practices in the churches of Cēsis, Limbaži and Valmiera also reflect a tendency to strive for a high quality of music and to imitate the large cities of German-speaking countries.