

JESUIT MUSIC SEMINARIES IN POLAND AND LITHUANIA DURING THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES

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Ignatius of Loyola founded the Society of Jesus primarily on the principles that Jesuits dedicate themselves to the administration of the Sacraments; to preaching; and to intense study and writings. Later, he added to these principles, the education of youth. In the houses of the Society, Ignatius required the necessary silence together with an atmosphere of focused concentration. The members of the Society were to be non-burden by anything that would distract them from their work; be it prayer, labor or studies.

In the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus there was an explicit prohibition of musical instruments, singing at mass and reciting the Hours in choir. Ignatius was convinced if the Jesuits sing mass and the Hours this would take them away from their proper duties.¹

However, the first generation of Jesuits already had taken notice to the fact that the singing of the Mass and the chanting of the Hours could serve as an important instrument within their mission work. The Rules of the Society prohibited stemly and strictly the development of every type of music within its houses but not upon what took place in music on the outside. The Regulations banned the storage and utilization of musical instruments in the Jesuit houses.² From the early beginnings of the Society of Jesus there existed an internal dissension among its members with regard to the strict policies relating to the use of chant and music.³ Ignatius gradually permitted the singing of vespers on certain days for a good reason – in some places the people practically demanded it.⁴

¹ *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*. (Critically edited in *Monumenta Ignatiana. Sancti Ignatii de Loyola Constitutiones Societatis Jesu*, 3 vols, Rome : 1934–1938), n. 586.

² *Institutum Societatis Jesu*, vol. 2 (Florentiae : 1893), pp. 45, 49.

³ T. D. C u l l e y – C. J. M c N a s p y. *Music and the Early Jesuits (1540–1565)*. ARSI 40 (1971), pp. 213–245.

⁴ *Constitutions*, n. 587.

The first Jesuits in Latin America, India and later in the Germanic and Slavonic countries performed extraordinary music in their churches.⁵ They knew all too well their mission could not be successful without the presence of music and chant in their churches.

In Poland and Lithuania, the Jesuits soon after opening their schools, commenced with the organization of choirs. Those who sang in these choirs did so during the ceremonies held in the Jesuit churches and schools. During some of the performances, which took place in the theatre, some bands played music and sang songs. Those bands were trained and maintained by the Jesuits. Chant was obligatory at the school in the three lowest classes. It was usually taught after the normal structured school classes for one-half of an hour.⁶

The first Congregation in the Polish province took place in 1587. During this time a debate ensued relating to the ongoing development of the *Ratio Studiorum*. The delegates presented the following statement to the Superior General: "In this province it is vitally essential a dispensation be granted in relation to the subject matter of chant and music. The people in Poland do not frequent nor attend places where there is perpetual silence. Therefore, it seems of immediate necessity in order to avoid great losses among the people that a revocation of those restrictions banning music and chant must be struck from the Society's documents".⁷ The Polish Jesuits asked for permission to introduce chant and music.

As Jesuits schools were on the increase and many students were attending them from the parish and cathedral schools, a new situation arose at the end of the 16th century. The cathedrals and main churches were discovering they had no one to sing in their choir since the students were attending the Jesuit schools. The local authorities tried to force the students of the Jesuit schools to attend church ceremonies and sing. This proved to be a serious obstacle against the student's studies.

The Superior General of the Jesuits, Francisco de Borja, in September 1565 wrote a letter to Krzysztof Strobell, the Rector of the Jesuit college in Braniewo.⁸ In his writing Borja recommends to create a boarding school for ten or twelve indigent boys. These boys would chant during the church services and in return the Church would pay for their studies. Superior General Borja had observed this to be a solution

⁵ J. W. O'Malley. *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 159-162.

⁶ *Memoriale relictum Collegio Vilnensi post visitationem*, 18 I 1639, in *Vilniaus akademijos vizitatoriu memorialai ir vyresniuju nutarimai* (Vilnius : 1987), p. 112.

⁷ *Acta Congregationis Provincialis Poloniae. De studiis*, 1587. In: L. Lukács (ed.). *Monumenta paedagogica Societatis Iesu*, vol. 7: *Collectanea de Ratione Studiorum Societatis Iesu (1588–1616)*. Rome : 1992, p. 323.

⁸ *Epistola P. Generalis Francisci Borgia ad P. Christophorum Strobel*, 29.9. 1565. In: Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (The Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus), *Germania*, 106, f. 18-18v.

within other countries. This proposal soon was to become a reality and the Polish Jesuits established at their colleges, boarding schools for the poor.

In 1568 the Jesuits opened public schools in Pultusk. Immediately they began to build boarding schools for boys who were poor.⁹ These boys also sang in the Church. Antonio Possevino created a boarding school for the poor in Braniewo in 1582.¹⁰ The students of these boarding schools were impoverished males who lacked the monetary means for basic living let alone for studies. The Jesuits subsidized their studies through moneys obtained from numerous foundations.

From its establishment those who attended the boarding schools were also trained in music. The members of the boarding schools attended Ecclesiastic services in the Jesuit church, chanted and played musical instruments in the school theater and traveled to other churches if there was a need for liturgical music. The boarding schools housed musical instruments, music sheets and musical compositions. These schools had evolved into outstanding facilities for learning and excellent conservatories in all aspects of music.¹¹

The majority of the boarding schools were established at the beginning of the 17th century. During the second decade the boarding schools were rapidly developing and expanding throughout all the Jesuit colleges.

The foundation and development of the music seminaries was a systematic process. Once the Jesuits opened a church, they tried to organize a musical band. Subsequent to opening a Jesuit public school they would construct a boarding school for the poor. Between the years 1609 – 1620 those boarding schools in existence had molded the structure in shape and form characteristic of the music seminaries.

Although the boarding schools were facilities designed to house young musicians in training (each facility had its own band), there were also other non-musician students who resided within if the school had ample space.

Provincial Marcin Hincza in 1633 composed a memo to the Congregation of the Polish province.¹² The purpose and necessity for this memo was the problem in which many of the skilled musicians were breaking away from the boarding schools after they had learned the music. This was proving to be a serious loss to the colleges. To prevent this in the future the Provincial decided each student be mandated to

⁹ *Instructiones Pultoviae datae per P. Laurentium Maggio, Praepositum Provinciae Austriae*, 24.9. 1568. In: L. L u k á c s (ed.). *Monumenta paedagogica Societatis Iesu*, vol. 3: 1557–1572. Rome : 1974, 165-166.

¹⁰ S. Z a ł ę s k i. *Jezuici w Polsce*, vol. 4 (Kraków : 1905), p. 17.

¹¹ J. K o c h a n o w i c z. *Geneza, organizacja i działalność jezuickich burs muzycznych*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2002.

¹² *Memoriale factum post Congregationem Provinciale anni 1633 Jaroslaviae a R.P. Martino Hincza Provinciali*. In *Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Polonia* 72, n. 193, f. 468.

take a written oath stating he must serve in the Jesuit church for a period of three years and until he had taught the understudy as his successor in the playing of the instrument or in singing.

The boarding schools by 1643 were financially independent. It was this accomplishment that motivated the Polish provincial, Fabrizio Banfi, to create a set of Regulations for: a system of accountability in the documentation and recording of its finances; a register of all musicians, their background history and responsibilities and a written inventory of all the musical instruments.¹³

The *Rules of the Prefect of the Boarding Schools for the Poor* of 1621 together with the Regulations directed towards financial accountability and written inventory of the musical instruments provided the core documents necessary for the internal mechanisms in the operation of the boarding schools. In 1655 the provincial, Stanislaw Jerzykowicz, officially affirmed that The Boarding Schools for the Poor (*bursa pauperum*) should be, henceforth, renamed “The House of Musicians” (*domus musicorum*) or “The Boarding School of the Musicians” (*bursa musicorum* = Music Seminary).¹⁴

What is very important there is no information about the existence of the boarding school for the poor and the music seminary at the same place as two autonomous facilities. It can, therefore, be deduced that the boarding school for the poor is a music seminary. They are one and the same. Therefore, a conclusion can be reached in the statement that the foundation of the music seminaries commenced at the end to the 16th century.

Some music seminaries had their own small foundations. Some income was generated through the demise to the life of an individual through their Will. For this the musicians had to pray for the benefactor or they had to make music during the Mass for the repose of his soul. Sometimes (but very rarely) the music seminaries were the sole proprietors of their real estate. This, also, served as a means for the generation of some income, provided foods and at times afforded a respite for the musicians. Almost all music seminaries held loans and any interest that could be generated and utilized was of utmost importance for the repayment towards the borrowed moneys. A significant source for income, especially among the larger music seminaries was that money collected from the outside performances of the musicians. The musicians presented programs in the Jesuit churches, in other non-Jesuit churches and monasteries, as well as they participated in the theatre and in ceremonies like weddings and funerals. For their contribution in those activities they were reimbursed.

¹³ *Memoriale relictum P. Provincialem Fabricium Banfi Collegio Posnaniensi*, 1.9. 1643. In: Biblioteka Jagiellońska (The Jagiellonian Library), manuscript 5194, f. 43v.

¹⁴ *Memoriale relictum per P. Provincialem Stanislaum Jerzykowicz Collegio Posnaniensi*, 25.4. 1655. In: Biblioteka Jagiellońska, manuscript 5194, f. 51.

Most of the expenses were designated for the musicians salaries since they worked under contract, the remainder was allocated to servants, food for the boys, their clothing, and finally for the choir as a means of purchasing new musical instruments and repairing those that were broken.

The administrators of the music seminary were: the Prefect, sometimes, a vice-Prefect, and a Jesuit scholastic. The Superiors selected very diligently those Jesuits who were to direct the music seminary. The Personnel Catalogs from the mid 17th century indicated by use of a remark if a Jesuit had knowledge of music (*scit artem musicam, callet musicam*). Such an individual could be appointed to a leadership position directing the choir or for supervision over the repertoire of the music seminary.

The primary role of the Prefect was that of administrator. His position did not necessitate he be a musician but the knowledge of music was a positive criterion in the decision making process for this position. Some of the Prefect's music seminary responsibilities included: the care and upkeep of the grounds; the maintenance and protection of the structures on its property; the writing of the Student Directory; manager and custodian of the Book of Contracts; supervisor over the inventories of the musical instruments and musical sheets and compositions; and controller of the documents, records and expenditures logged in and recorded all matters relating to financial accountability. The Prefect assigned work to the musicians and he accepted the invitations for all other outside performances.

The individual who took care of the every day-to-day practical activity was a Jesuit scholastic. This Scholastic was teaching or studying simultaneously while being engaged in some administrative duties. He was responsible for the supervision of the music seminary and the formation of its members. He moderated over the discipline within the seminary, presided over spiritual talks and discussions with the students, on occasion assisted in teaching some of the subjects from the public school, and oftentimes, contributed in some manner in the area of music. It was his obligation as well as that of the Prefect to visit the music seminary two times a day.

The Prefects of the music seminaries and the Scholastics were transferred very frequently. Because of this the actual direction of the music seminary fell into the hands of the Jesuit Brothers who resided within the same seminary for much greater periods of time. They were the instructors realistically responsible for the musical training of the pupils. During the first half of the 17th century very few candidates to the Society of Jesus had acquired any information relating to music prior to their entrance. At the end of the 17th century the circumstances had completely turned around. Many of the incoming Brothers entering the Society had background training in music since they came from the music seminaries.

The time frame for the student and his residence in the music seminary was in accordance with the terms of the Contract signed between the Prefect of the music

seminary and the parents or guardians. Wladyslaw Dauksza, a provincial in 1737, issued a declaration stating those students who learned music and who resided in the music seminary without charge, should not against their will be compelled to work in the church longer than 10 years.¹⁵ After this period they should be released. The exceptions to this declaration were the boys who were accepted in the seminary at the age of 7 when they were unable to read or write. These boys, if they learned music well would remain in the church no longer than 12 years.

An important purpose of the music seminaries was to provide boys with a sound and well-rounded general education. Very frequently the boys accepted had no previous education. If the non-educated student was accepted he was compelled to learn not only chant and the playing of musical instruments but he was obligated to learn to read and write under the direction of the older boys or from one of the Jesuit scholastics that worked in the seminary. After acquiring some basic knowledge the student began attending the Jesuit public school where his education would continue.

The daily schedule of the music seminaries was dependent on the schedule of the public school since most of the boys attended classes there. The daily agenda provided sufficient time for studies and a time for rest.

There were three class category levels of members in the music seminary: *inscripti bursae* – boys enrolled for the purpose of learning music and receiving instructions on how to sing; *respectivi* – boys who completed their skills in learning music and who now provided assistance in the teaching of playing musical instruments to the younger students (*respectivi* played in the band and in this way they could repay for their courses of study); *musici salariati* – trained musicians who received a salary for teaching the younger students music and chant. They played also in the band. This system could be located among the larger music seminaries where there was an excess of activities.

The characteristics of the Jesuit music seminary were:

- They were institutions independent from the college and from the Jesuit public school.
- Their purpose was to educate the student as a musician or a cantor. The alumni having completed their education would work outside the Jesuit institution.
- The music seminaries offered the opportunity to study at the public school or university (philosophy). Some alumni became priests, monks or teachers.

¹⁵ *Memoriale Praepositi Provinciae Lituaniae Ladislai Dauksza*. 30.9. 1737. In: Vilniaus Universiteto Biblioteka (Vilnius University Library), manuscript F3-2388, f. 701, no. 12.