

**WORK OF THE CECYLIAN RENOWAL OF THE POLISH ROMAN KATHOLIC CHURCH MUSIC
IN WORKS OF JÓZEF SURZYŃSKI**

27.05.2016 Poznań

ABSTRACT

The richness of the music performed during liturgical ceremonies is an indispensable element of religious culture - by accompanying liturgy, it becomes its integral part. This is the reason why, apart from artistic requirements, it also needs to meet the criteria set out by the Church.

The aim of this thesis is to present the Cecilian reform of church music and the associated activity of Rev. Dr. Józef Surzyński, a man who became a great advocate of its renewal in Poland.

Church music has been under the influence of secular art for ages. Every so often, loud calls could be heard for the renewal of liturgical music in order to restore it to the proper church style. It would usually return to the Gregorian monody, as the model of Catholic church singing. Religious orders played a tremendous role in caring for liturgical singing. Books of liturgical songs, performed by monastic and cathedral choirs, were created in medieval monasteries. This is how the rich repertoire of songs, referred to as Gregorian chants, was created and developed for centuries. To this day it is considered high art, born out of the spirit of faith, and serves as a perfect example of the combination of music and prayer.

The strong influence of 18th century theatre music on the church repertoire gave motivation to the protectors of its purity. This attitude of objection rightfully required the return to the original state. At the beginning of the 19th century, in Western Europe, especially in Germany, Austria, France, and Italy, the reformed Cecilian movement started to form. Its aim was to restore liturgical music in the spirit of the resolutions of the Council of Trent.

The ideals of Cecilianism reached Poland relatively quickly through a school in Regensburg, from which many Polish musicians graduated at that time. The most distinguished figure among them was Rev. Dr. Józef Surzyński. His tireless efforts to reform Catholic church music were focused not only in Poland, but also other European countries.

The musicological, editorial, and publishing achievements of Rev. Surzyński presented in this work constitute true gems of Polish liturgical music. The analysis of his

works points to the purposefulness of compositions and adaptations, but also their outstanding resonance, chantability, and creativity. They prove that Józef Surzyński was not only a great reformer, but also an indisputably remarkable composer of liturgical music at the beginning of the 19th centuries. He is an example of a faithful student of the school in Regensburg and an expert on pure church style. The Cecilian movement was the main esthetic inspiration of the priest-artist. This figure became the embodiment of all the premises of the Regensburg reform. He brought the ideas of the German movement of Saint Cecilia to the Polish soil, especially to the Archdiocese of Poznań.

He was a man of Renaissance in two ways. Firstly - a doctor of theology, musician and musicologist, conductor and composer, editor of magazines, publisher, and well as a simple organizer and community worker. Secondly - an enthusiast and promoter of Renaissance church music, to which he devoted his research over the manuscripts of Polish masters of polyphony found in Kraków.

The general tendencies of Romantics to discover national identity, their interest in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, enabled the rediscovery of the works of Polish masters of polyphonic music of the 16th and 17th centuries, which had been forgotten for years. Rev. Surzyński, just like Baini, focused on his musicological work with great passion and devotion. He published the discovered treasures of Polish choir literature in *Monumenta musices sacrae in Polonia* and presented them with the Poznań Archcathedral Choir.

When analyzing the life and work of this remarkable priest, it needs to be emphasized that all his musical efforts were focused on one goal: the fulfillment of all the ideals of the Cecilian movement. He wanted to restore the Gregorian monody as the first and privileged type of singing in liturgy and reached to the invaluable treasures of early music, mainly authored by Polish masters.

He founded organist and choir associations in different dioceses. He tried to improve the performance of organists by organizing proper music education. He published magazines propagating the renewal of church music. He believed that the reform of church music can only be performed by consistent education.

The renewal of music in the age of Cecilianism was guided by genuine care for its condition in churches and constituted a bottom-up effort of many musicians. It often encountered criticism from the opponents of the movement. It is, however, undeniable that the supporters of the movement that began in Regensburg were the ones who restored dignity and seriousness to improperly performed church music. During numerous moments in the history of the Church, when it contemplated the issue of comprehensive liturgical reform, the 19th

century effort of the Cecilianists turned out to be fundamental. This liturgical movements was undoubtedly a factor that led to the modern understanding of music in the Church and established its proper place in liturgy.

The initiative of resolving the urgent problems of the secularization of church music should be considered rightful and positive. Even if today, in retrospect, it may arouse certain discussions and controversies, the remarkable figure of Rev. Józef Surzyński needs to be remembered. He devoted his entire life to the works of Cecilianism, despite the fact that it did not bring him any spectacular recognition. The purpose of this work is to remind the modern generation that Rev. Józef Surzyński, a guide in the arena of 19th century church music, the Polish “Palestrina”, should be listed among the greatest musicians of the Polish land.

Leszek Górka