

ARTUR SZCZERBININ

*Akademia Muzyczna
im. Krzysztofa Pendereckiego
w Krakowie*

MID-SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY IMPROVISATION SKETCHES OF SAMUEL MARCKFELNER FROM THE LEUTSCHAU TABLATURE 13994¹

ABSTRAKT

Artur Szczerbinin, *Szkiece improwizacji Samuela Marckfelnera w pochodzącej z połowy XVII wieku tablatuře z Lewoczy SK-Le 13994.*

Autor omawia i analizuje fragmenty improwizacyjne zapisane w tabulaturze SK-Le 13994, a także podejmuje próbę ustalenia ich roli w procesie komponowania utworów klawiszowych.

In the reformation era Zips was one of the most developed regions in Hungary and also one of the most significant cultural centers². A large number of music sources, mainly related to the Protestant confession has been preserved in this territory. As for the art of organ playing in the

¹ This study is an extended version of a paper presented during the conference *Between improvisation, composition, and performance: organ playing in the seventeenth century* at the Academy of Music in Kraków, Kraków–Olkusz, 28–30 October 2019.

² M. Hulková, *Central European Connections of Six Manuscript Organ Tablature Books of the Reformation Era from the Region of Spiš (Zips, Szepes)*, „Studia Musicologica” 56 (2015) no. 1, p. 15.

region, the most important sources are six organ tablatures, located in the library of the Lutheran church in Levoča³, a town nowadays in the Slovak Republic, previously known as Leutschau, inhabited mostly by German Lutheran population⁴. Two of the tablatures are called Caspar and Johann Plotz tablatures. The other two are related to the composer and organist Johannes Schimrak and the last two are connected with Samuel Marckfelner. The shelf marks of these sources are as follows:

- SK-Le 13990a (1A) – Caspar Plotz
- SK-Le 13990b (2A) – Johann Plotz
- SK-Le 13992 (3A) – Johannes Schimrak
- SK-Le 13993 (4A) – Johannes Schimrak
- SK-Le 13991 (6A) – Samuel Marckfelner
- SK-Le 13994 (5A) – Samuel Marckfelner

Although the Plotz tablatures probably did not originate in Zips, the other four manuscripts contain inscriptions that link them with the cities located in Zips and Transylvania. The first layers of the tablatures 5A and 6A were written by an unidentified scribe. It is also not clear where these portions of the manuscripts were compiled. According to Marta Hulková, compositions from the print *Florilegium selectissimarum cantionum* compiled by Erhard Bodenschatz⁵ which have been transcribed in tablature 6A point to Silesia as the manuscript's likely place of origin, since the nearest available copy of the print exists in Breslau⁶. On the other hand, the compositions of Georg Wirsinger, rector of the Latin School in Karpfen (nowadays Krupina in southern Slovakia), transcribed in tablature 5A, do not have concordances in any other source⁷. Both tablatures 5A and 6A had been acquired by Samuel Marckfelner under unknown circumstances.

³ Evanjelická a. v. cirkevná knižnica.

⁴ For all the music sources preserved in the library of the Lutheran church in Levoča, see M. Hulková, *Levočská zbierka hudobní*, vol. 1–2 (unpublished dissertation), Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Komenského, Bratislava 1985; for the Leutschau organ tablatures see also L. Burlas, J. Fišer, A. Hořejš, *Hudba na Slovensku v XVII. Storočí*, Slovenská Akadémia Vied, Bratislava 1954.

⁵ RISM B/I: 1603¹.

⁶ There are no traces of this print in the Zips region.

⁷ M. Hulková, *Central European Connections...*, pp. 15–16.

The main topic of this article is the 5A tablature because it is the only one which contains fragments or complete examples written by Samuel Marckfelner. Analysing this can help us understand his art of organ playing more fully rather than on the basis of his complete compositions only.

Tablature 5A comprises 158 folios written in the new German tablature notation⁸. Based on the inscription by Marckfelner on folio 142r (*Anno Domini 1643 Coronae*), it is safe to assume that the older layer of the manuscript was compiled by the unidentified scribe before 1643. Marckfelner filled folios 107v–134r with music; additionally, his writing can be observed in many other places that had been left empty by the first scribe. The repertoire of the tablature 5A (275 pieces)⁹ consists mainly of sacred works: magnificats, masses, pieces based on melodies with German and Latin text, motets. In addition to that Marckfelner transcribed also several keyboard pieces: one praeludium, six praeambula, one fantasia, one fugue and two dances. The repertoire of the tablature 5A consists of pieces by popular European composers as well as pieces by less known composers, represented mainly in local sources. Among them are (in alphabetical order): Valentin Judex, Salomon Klein, Matthäus Apelles von Löwenstern, Andreas Raselius, Fabianus Ripanus, Ludovicus Ruschardus, Samuel Rühling, Johannes Schimrak, David Thusius, and Georg Wirsinger.

Samuel Marckfelner was born in 1621 in Kaschau (nowadays Košice in Slovakia)¹⁰. We know from two inscriptions in manuscript 5A (*Anno Domini 1643 Coronae; Gemacht ihm Jahr 1.6.4.8. [...] von Sa: Mar: zu Schössburg [...]*) that between 1643–1648 he stayed in Transylvania – in Braşov (Kronstadt) and Sighişoara (Schässburg). Slovakian musicologists presume that he might have studied there, but this hypothesis cannot be proved. Marckfelner was then already in his twenties, which makes it more likely that he assumed a position and worked there¹¹. In 1647 he became

⁸ The only exception is a melody of the psalm *Singet und rühmet* notated in mensural notation on fol. 27r, which is realized as a four-part canon on f. 84v with an inscription *Fuga in uno Sono*.

⁹ Hulková lists 274 pieces in this tablature because she omitted one unattributed piece following the *Fantasia octavi Toni*, see M. Hulková, *Levočská zbirka hudobnín*, vol. 1, pp. 121–142.

¹⁰ J. Petőczová, *Samuel Marckfelner bin ich genandt*, „Musicologica Slovaca” 2 (28) 2011, no. 1, p. 110.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 111.

an organist in Spisskie Vlachy (Wallendorf) and in 1648, after the death of Johann Plotz, he was appointed an organist in St. James church in Levoča. The following year he got married and obtained the citizenship. Later he also worked as a town-clerk. Baptismal certificates from 1650–1664 record the births of five of his children. He died on 20 September 1674 due to an unknown cause. It is important to bear in mind that at that time Levoča and Zips in general were very strongly influenced by the counter-reformation conflict (Zips was part of the Habsburg Empire). From the 3 September 1674 Lutheran services in Levoča were prohibited¹².

Pieces transcribed by Samuel Marckfelner can be divided into several groups:

Lutheran choral	21 (two of them doubled)
Sacred work with Latin titles	19 (one of them doubled)
Magnificat	14
Praecambulum	7
Mass [KG]	3
Dance	2
Fantasia	1
Fugue	1
Untitled entry	14
	= 82

The main topic of this article is the last group – fourteen untitled, anonymous entries. This group contains an intabulation of a madrigal *Als Filli schön und fromm* by Johann Hermann Schein¹³ (f. 64v–65r) which I will not take into consideration here. These short, sometimes unfinished fragments, consisting of a few up to a dozen or so semibreves, were most probably composed by Samuel Marckfelner. They occur very often after a finished composition, in a space left empty, or at the very bottom of the page. This fact may point to their role as examples or short notes made for remembrance that the organist could incorporate into his improvisations during the liturgy. It is worth noting that the majority of compositions from the other groups – pieces that the scribe had most likely tran-

¹² J. Petőczová, op. cit., pp. 111–112.

¹³ J. H. Schein, *Diletti Pastoralis*, Leipzig, Friedrich Lanckisch 1624 (RISM A/I: S 1387, no. 10).

scribed from other sources – are clearly fair copies. On the other hand, the untitled fragments look like ‘composing scores’: the handwriting is often slapdash, and a relatively high number of corrections points to the possibility that the entries were composed directly in the tablature 5A. Two of the entries consist of more than one example¹⁴. In such cases the separate examples were often divided with a vertical line or fermata. However, we can also find examples which occur one after another without any mark, and they are difficult to distinguish at first sight. Hereafter the individual examples are always treated separately, so their total number rises to seventeen.

The biggest group among the untitled pieces are cadences. There are twelve such entries and their length ranges from three up to dozen or more semibreves¹⁵. Among standard and almost homorhythmic cadences there are also cadences in which the author develops a musical idea. It could be an imitation of a short melodic motif (Fig. 1), a chain of suspensions (Fig. 2), or a sequence of unresolved cadences among which the most spectacular is the one on f. 4r because it greatly exceeds the limits of the meantone temperament (Fig. 3). This example is very informative. Firstly, it testifies to Marckfelner’s broad horizons: he may be counted among the small number of composers who experimented with the closed circle of fifths already in the third quarter of the 17th century. Secondly, it could not have been performed on the Leutschau organ and may have been intended for other keyboard instruments. Possibly it was also meant for didactic purposes, although so far there is no direct evidence of Marckfelner’s teaching activity. All his other pieces conform to the meantone temperament limits.



Fig. 1. 13994 (5A), f. 54v, b. 1–6

¹⁴ Untitled entries on f. 54v–55r and f. 141r.

¹⁵ Cadences occur on folios 4r, 54v–55r (4 examples), 55v–56r, 64v, 68r, 69r, 140r, 141r, 147v–148r.

Fig. 2. 13994 (5A), f. 55r, b. 22–35

Fig. 3. 13994 (5A), f. 4r

Within this group of pieces we also have to take into consideration a short fragment on folios 70v–71r which bears the title *Praeludium*, but in fact consists of one bass pattern (a cadence) with two upper voices, repeated eight times on different pitches (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4. *Praeludium*, 13994 (5A), f. 70v–71r

Another type of ‘exemplum’ can be described as a way of playing figurations above pedal notes. Examples of this kind are notated on folio

140r and also in the first part of the example on folio 141r (Fig. 5, 6). In practice it could be used to prolong the final note after the last cadence. Samuel Marckfelner uses this device for instance in his *Praeambulum primi toni* from the tablature 5A (Fig. 7).



Fig. 5. 13994 (5A), f. 140r



Fig. 6. 13994 (5A), f. 141r, b. 1–3



Fig. 7. Samuel Marckfelner, *Praeambulum primi toni*, 13994 (5A), f. 83v–84r

The next group of entries is focused on imitation. The example on f. 82v–83r shows the usage of two different subjects (Fig. 8). They are contrasting with each other as the first has the length of one brevis and is quite steady (b. 1–4, upper and middle voice) while the second (b. 7, upper voice) is half its length and it is livelier. The example is completed with a cadence that uses a motif from the second subject (b. 12–13). In both cases the bass part does not participate in the imitation.

Fig. 8. 13994 (5A), f. 82v–83r

The use of the same contrapuntal device, close imitation of short motifs can be observed in the so-called Plotz tablature¹⁶. This source originated in the first half of the 17th century, at least partly in Halle, since the hand of Samuel Scheidt has been discerned among the unidentified scribes of the source¹⁷. An inscription at the end of the manuscript, at least partly written by Scheidt¹⁸, mentions a certain Caspar Plotz, an organist in Brieg near Breslau, and Johann Plotz, probably his relative, although their relationship is unclear. Possibly the same Johann Plotz served as an organist in Levoča from 1641 to 1648 as Marckfelner's direct predecessor¹⁹. The source consists of two parts, the first notated in mensural notation and the second in the new German tablature. In the first part, which contains mainly Lutheran chorale melodies, many comments and interpolations written in new German tablature that refer to the way of playing and improvising on chorales can be noted. In one such example the scribe has written an imitation of a very short motif derived from the first phrase of the melody (Fig. 9); he called this technique 'variatio'. Apart from the

¹⁶ PL-Kj Berol. Mus. ms. 40056.

¹⁷ H. Dochhorn, *Scheidt (Familie)* [in:] *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Personen-
teil, Vol. 14, Kassel 2005, pp. 1217–1249.

¹⁸ K. P. Koch, „*In te, Domine, speravi, non confundar in aeternum*”. *Zur Kompositionsweise von Samuel Scheidt*, „Schütz Jahrbuch” 14 (1992), p. 81.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

earlier discussed example on f. 82v–83r, it resembles very closely the imitations written by Marckfelner on f. 54v (Fig. 1, b. 1–4) and f. 146v–147r (Fig. 10, b. 4–5, 8–9, 12–13, 16–17).



Fig. 9. Mus. ms. 40056, f. 10v

Fig. 10. 13994 (5A), f. 146v–147r

An entry on f. 146v–147r consisting of imitation could be also perceived as an example of a cadence. In general, these are expanded formulas repeated over the circle of fifths. The first three semibreves (Fig. 10, b. 1–3) of this fragment can suggest that it is an opening of a *praeambulum*. After the short opening it was possible to use a polyphonic structure based on pedal points (b. 4–7) and either finish the piece or continue with another pattern. Such a different pattern indeed appears at the end of the example (b. 20–23), suggesting a fresh material to continue the composition. This in turn leads us to the idea of building compositions (written or improvised) from smaller ‘building blocks’²⁰. It was very important for the organists of that time to be able to easily adjust the length of a piece to the liturgical action. Therefore, such short components presented in most of Marckfelner’s examples in the tablature 5A were very useful. If we take into consideration Marckfelner’s complete compositions called *Praeambulum*, it is very easy to distinguish individual sections that constitute a piece. Usually it begins with a short, often homorhythmic fragment which confirms the mode, and after this part a simple imitation can start. In some cases, the *Praeambulum* begins directly with a short imitation. In such examples the subject very often appears in different forms throughout the whole piece. It is crucial that there was no established form, so if the organist had to fill some time with music, he could pick from components such as sequences, chains of suspensions, figurations above pedal note or several types of cadences to build a shorter or longer piece.

There is only one untitled example, on f. 70v–71r, in which Marckfelner uses Gregorian chant as a basis for the composition. It is a *bicinium* with the psalm formula in the 8th tone placed in the lower voice (Fig. 11). The chant is presented in 13 equal semibreves. The upper voice has free material consisting of an uninterrupted flow of quaver figuration. After quoting the psalm formula, the lower voice joins in the passagework resulting in what Frescobaldi would call a *passo doppio* (b. 14–17). At the final cadence a third voice is added. This particular example is very informa-

²⁰ Very similar examples can be seen in the organ tablature from Samogitia, where they occur with an inscription *Exempla do Fantasia* (LT-Vn F105-67, f. 96v–98r); see *Liber Organistarum Collegii Crosensis Societatis Jesu*, ed. facs. L. Budzinauskienė, R. Murauskaitė, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Sub Lupa, Warszawa 2017 (*Fontes Musicae in Polonia*, B/II), pp. 218–221.

tive. In Lutheran liturgy, psalm formulas were used mainly for the Magnificat at Vespers. As there are many intabulated Magnificat settings in tablature 5A, we can imagine how the music played between the sung verses might have looked like.



Fig. 11. 13994 (5A), f. 70v–71r

It is worth noticing that Marckfelner uses the same ‘building blocks’ for his *Praeambulum ex C* which occurs in so called *Pestřij zborník*²¹ on f. 29v–30r (Fig. 12). It begins with figurations above pedal note, proceeds with a *passo doppio* and terminates with a diminished cadence. It is obvious that the use of both pieces is different but it proves that the same devices could have been used for various genres.

²¹ SK-BRnm (without signature); about the manuscript and its repertoire see *Introduction* [in:] *Pestřij zborník. Tabulatura Miscellanea*, red. L. Kačič, Hudobné centrum, Bratislava 2005, pp. 17–28.

Fig. 12. Samuel Marckfelner, *Preambulum ex C*, *Pestrý zborník*, f. 29v–30r

While speaking about preludes, we also have to mention the example written on f. 57v–58r. It resembles very clearly a short *praeambulum* because it constitutes a slightly more complex form which is not divided by distinct cadences. It is also a very interesting illustration of using the same ideas that Marckfelner notated in more sketchy entries. He begins the composition with a section which outlines the harmony (b. 1–7). The bass line consists merely of diminutions which fill the leaps between each chord. After this section the composer takes advantage of the imitation by repeating a short melodic and rhythmic motif between the two upper voices and the bass (b. 8–10:2), and then uses a sequence in order to lead this section to a deceptive cadence (b. 10:3–12). The subsequent model of playing figuration above long notes occurs very often in final sections and serves to prolong the last cadence (b. 14–17). In this fragment Marckfelner uses the device which he presented in the untitled entry on f. 141r (Fig. 6) and which gives an idea of playing figurations above the final note.

Fig. 13. 13994 (5A), f. 57v-58r

As it has been shown, the way of constructing musical forms was very practical. The completed and titled compositions by Samuel Marckfelner which turn up in the tablature 5A and in the so called *Pestry zbornik* reveal the idea of building pieces from smaller components which can be used interchangeably. The concept of musical form was clearly quite capacious. Nevertheless, we can observe some features which can be attributed to different genres. On the basis of Marckfelner's preambula/preludes and fugues it can be inferred that the latter are much more virtuosic than the former. The initial imitation begins always with the same rhythmic formula – one eighth note and two sixteenth notes. The figurations within the whole piece are mainly in sixteenths (Fig. 14, 15).

Fig. 14. Samuel Marckfelner, *Fuga 6 toni*, Pestrý zborník, f. 28v–29r, b. 1–8

Fig. 15. Samuel Marckfelner, *Fuga*, Pestrý zborník, f. 49v–50r, b. 1–17

The situation in the preludes looks different. Even if the piece begins with an imitation, its subject is almost always serious and in slower values, and the figurations throughout the pieces are mainly in eighth notes (Fig. 16, 17).

Fig. 16. Samuel Marckfelner, *Praeambulum secundi toni*, 13994 (5A), f. 3r

Fig. 17. Samuel Marckfelner, *Praeambulum*, 13994 (5A), f. 84v-85r

What can be observed on the basis of the analysis of the short fragments from tablature 13994 (5 A) and Marckfelner's complete keyboard compositions is a very close relationship between improvisation and composition. The way in which the above mentioned examples have been inscribed into the tablature bears witness to their didactic purpose rather than to the fact that the entries were considered an independent works. They could also serve as memory aids for improvisation. We should also realize that Marckfelner's complete corpus of compositions most probably has not survived to the present day. It means that we do not know what other devices he applied in his compositions or improvisations.

SUMMARY

A large number of music sources from 16th and 17th century has been preserved in the region of Zips. The six organ tablatures, now located in Leutschau, are very important manuscripts for the art of organ playing. The tablature SK-Le 13994 is also a significant source in terms of keyboard improvisation as it contains over a dozen of short fragments, most probably composed by Samuel Marckfelner. They were written down after the main part of the tablature had already been finished and occur in places left empty by the first scribe. Their fragmentary state may point to their role as examples or short notes made as prompts that the organist could incorporate into his improvisations during the liturgy. The analysis of these examples reveals significant similarities to other keyboard pieces by Samuel Marckfelner.

Keywords: organ tablatures, Samuel Marckfelner, improvisation, Zips, Leutschau.

SOURCES

Music manuscripts

- LT-Vn F105-67, organ tablature from Samogitia
 PL-Kj Berol. Mus. ms. 40056, organ tablature from Halle (?)
 SK-BRnm (without signature) *Pestryj zbornik*, organ tablature from Levoča (?)
 SK-Le 13990a (1A), organ tablature of Caspar Plotz
 SK-Le 13990b (2A), organ tablature of Johann Plotz
 SK-Le 13992 (3A), organ tablature of Johannes Schimrak
 SK-Le 13993 (4A), organ tablature of Johannes Schimrak
 SK-Le 13991 (6A), organ tablature of Samuel Marckfelner
 SK-Le 13994 (5A), organ tablature of Samuel Marckfelner

Early prints

Florilegium selectissimarum cantionum, Leipzig, Abraham Lamberg 1603 (RISM B/I: 1603¹).

Johann Hermann Schein, *Diletti Pastoralì*, Leipzig, Friedrich Lanckisch 1624 (RISM A/I: S 1387).

Score editions

Liber Organistarum Collegii Crosensis Societatis Jesu, ed. facs. Laima Budzi-nauskienė, Rasa Murauskaitė, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Sub Lupa, Warszawa 2017 (*Fontes Musicae in Polonia*, B/II).

Pestrý zborník. Tabulatura Miscellanea, ed. Ladislav Kačič, Hudobné centrum, Bratislava 2005.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Burlas Ladislav, Fišer Ján, Hořejš Antonín – *Hudba na Slovensku v XVII. Storočí*, Slovenská Akadémia Vied, Bratislava 1954.

Dochhorn Hendrik, *Scheidt (Familie)* [in:] *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Personenteil, Vol. 14, Kassel 2005, pp. 1217–1249.

Hulková Marta, *Central European Connections of Six Manuscript Organ Tablature Books of the Reformation Era from the Region of Spiš (Zips, Szepes)*, „*Studia Musicologica*” 56 (2015) no. 1, pp. 3–37.

Hulková Marta, *Levočská zbierka hudobnín*, vol. 1–2 (unpublished dissertation), Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Komenského, Bratislava 1985.

Introduction [in:] *Pestrý zborník. Tabulatura Miscellanea*, red. Ladislav Kačič, Hudobné centrum, Bratislava 2005, pp. 17–28.

Koch Klaus-Peter, „*In te, Domine, speravi, non confundar in aeternum*”. *Zur Kompositionsweise von Samuel Scheidt*, „*Schütz Jahrbuch*” 14 (1992), pp. 78–89.

Petőczová Janka, *Samuel Marckelfner bin ich genandt*, „*Musicologica Slovaca*” 2 (28) 2011, no. 1, pp. 108–120.