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The musical practice of the Sandomierz Benedictine nuns during the eighteenth century

ABSTRACT: The congregation of the Benedictine nuns of Sandomierz, active between 1615 and 1903, belonged to wealthy magnatial foundations, which allowed the convent to foster cultural activities. Special emphasis was placed on musical performance of various types – the musical adornment of the liturgy. The ‘Glory of God’, as Benedictine nuns referred to it, constituted the essence of their congregational life.

On weekdays, the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, Masses and – occasionally – other services in choir took six hours, and on numerous feast days of the liturgical year, when the Liturgy of the Hours was sung, not read, it required even more time. The higher the rank of the feast day, the greater was the effort to stress its importance by providing it with a proper musical setting, which led to the cultivation of musical practices of various kinds on special occasions. The musical repertory of the Sandomierz Benedictine nuns comprised plainchant without instrumental accompaniment, plainchant with organ accompaniment, polyphonic *a cappella* singing (referred to as ‘figure’), vocal-instrumental music (‘fractus’) and instrumental music.

A picture of religious musical practice emerges primarily from extant musical sources, and also from a ‘choir agenda’ from 1749, a convent chronicle of the years 1762–1780, ‘treasury records’ from 1739–1806 and convent registers. Eighteenth-century sources document the musical activity of twenty-four nuns of the Sandomierz convent, some of them considered to be ‘professional’ musicians and referred to as ‘singers and players’. The most interesting, but also most problematic, areas are vocal-instrumental practice and the likely constitution of the nuns’ music chapel. We find information about nuns playing keyboard instruments, violin, viola da gamba, tromba marina and horn.

KEYWORDS: musical culture, eighteenth century, Benedictine nuns, Sandomierz, musical sources, musical instruments, performance practice.

The congregation of the Benedictine nuns of Sandomierz, active between 1615 and 1903, belonged to wealthy magnate foundations, which allowed the convent to foster cultural activities. Special emphasis was placed on musical performance of various types, the musical adornment of the liturgy. The ‘Glory of God’, as Benedictine nuns referred to it, constituted the essence of their congregational life.

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even more time.¹ The higher the rank of the feast day, the greater the effort to stress its importance by providing it with a proper musical setting, which led to the development of musical practices of various kinds on special occasions. The musical repertory of the Sandomierz Benedictine nuns comprised unaccompanied plainchant, plainchant with organ accompaniment, polyphonic *a cappella* singing (referred to as 'figure'), vocal-instrumental music ('fractus') and instrumental music.

The musical setting of services celebrated on particular days of the liturgical year was determined by the congregation's 'Porządki chorowe' ('choir rules'), written down in 1749 by Scholastyka Moszyńska and attached to the Antiphoner that is currently held in the Diocesan Library in Sandomierz (shelf-mark L 1651). Scholastyka Moszyńska, probably cantor at that time, dedicated the 'rules' to her sister, Marianna Moszyńska, who might have succeeded her as cantor.²

On ordinary days, the canonical hours and Masses were usually read, but with the numerous saints days and feasts in remembrance of the events of salvation history, sung passages also found their way into the liturgy. According to the 'rules', the choir was supposed to provide a plainchant setting on ninety-two days of the liturgical year. In addition, it was obliged to perform on all Sundays and on those Saturdays when the Votive Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary was held.

Organ accompaniment is mentioned fifteen times, though it apparently always accompanied vocal performances at Sunday Masses. The Diocesan Library in Sandomierz is in possession of two large organ books containing, inter alia, accompaniments to Gregorian Masses in the form of a bass part or basso continuo,³ including a few plainchant Masses arranged in accordance with the occasion on which they were to be performed. We come across solemn Masses, Octave Masses, Masses of the Apostles, Masses for ordinary Sundays, a Requiem, a 'kasynieńska' Mass (probably 'from Monte Cassino' or possibly in praise of St Benedict) and a 'farwańska' Mass (possibly 'furmańska', referring to a 'furman', Polish for 'carter'

¹ As Małgorzata Borkowska, a Benedictine nun working on the history of female monasticism, has calculated, the number of hours devoted to liturgy was equal to the time spent sleeping. Małgorzata Borkowska, 'Liturgia w życiu benedyktynek sandomierskich' [Liturgy in the life of the Sandomierz Benedictine nuns], in Krzysztof Burek (ed.), *Klasztor Panien Benedyktynek w historii i kulturze Sandomierza* [The Benedictine convent in the history and culture of Sandomierz] (Sandomierz, 2003), 44.

² Henryk Ćwiek has also quoted this source in his article 'Muzyka wspólnoty zakonnej panien benedyktynek w Sandomierzu' [The music of the female Benedictine community in Sandomierz], in Burek (ed.), *Klasztor Panien Benedyktynek*, 54–74, at 59–61, where he focuses on the role of music in convent life and extant musical works, though not examining performance practice. An agenda from the Benedictine convent of Lviv (1748), containing a broader range of similar information, has been preserved to our times in the Benedictine monastery in Krzeszów, under the shelf-mark D4.

³ Shelf-marks L 1669 and L 1678: the former is the 'Dygulska hymnbook', the latter is largely similar.

or ‘wagoner’). The setting employs *alternatim* technique: a part of the Gloria text is usually omitted, and the instruction to ‘play’ is sometimes placed between verses.

Scholastyka Moszyńska mentions polyphonic vocal performances on fourteen days of the liturgical year, on one occasion from ‘little hymnbooks’ (‘z kancjona-lików’), possibly in reference to the extant set of two four-part hymnbooks L 1642 (from 1721), containing simple four-part settings of Latin and Polish chants.

Finally, the agenda lists six occasions of vocal-instrumental performances; a cantor noted that ‘fractus’ singing was allowed at Masses and Vespers during Christmas and Holy Week (‘Plancta on Good Friday and Stabat Mater on Holy Saturday’⁴), on 13 August (Dormition of the BVM) and 15 August (Assumption of the BVM), on the feast of the Presentation of the BVM, and at monastic professions.

Although Moszyńska’s remarks are not always entirely clear, her agenda shows a certain hierarchy to the musical settings in respect to their ‘festive character’. At the top was grand vocal-instrument ‘fractus’, followed by ‘Masses accompanied with organ’ and, finally, unaccompanied polyphonic chants.⁵ Compared with the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there is a significant decline in the status of polyphonic vocal performances. It no longer functions as the professional, polyphonic repertory familiar from Toruń convent part-books of the 1630s,⁶ but has evolved into a four-part, homorhythmic style.

A much richer picture of religious musical practice emerges from a later source – a monastic chronicle of the years 1762–1780. In those times, there were some musically trained nuns in Sandomierz – talented singers and instrumentalists regarded as ‘professional’ musicians and referred to as ‘singers and players’.⁷ They were led not by the cantor but by another nun responsible for vocal-instrumental

⁴ *Porządki chorowe*, Diocesan Library of Sandomierz (hereafter DLS), L 1651, p. 180. An interesting feature of the musical practice of Benedictine nuns, described in the agendas from both Sandomierz and Lviv, is the injunction to ensure that that ‘there was no silence’ at the Tomb of the Lord, that is, on the afternoon of Good Friday and Holy Saturday. ‘Cały dzień śpiewają przy grobie Żołtarz, albo cicho przegrawają, albo fraktują wedle sposobności y nabożeństwa swego’ (‘All day long at the grave they sing Żołtarz [a stanzaic song about the Passion], or quietly play or sing depending on the opportunity and possibility’), D4, 17.

⁵ ‘W niedziele postne msze bez organ, na nich spiewać Veni Sancte Spiritus y po elewacyey drugie rzeczy figurą’ (‘On Sundays in Lent, Masses shall be performed without the organ, *Veni Sancte Spiritus* is to be sung and the Elevation shall be followed with other polyphonic pieces’) [*Porządki chorowe*, BDS L1651, 175]

⁶ Those four part-books comprise around 200 pieces, including works by Palestrina, Lasso and Gallus. See also Magdalena Walter-Mazur, ‘A New Perspective on Musical Culture of the Polish Benedictine Nunneries in the Light of Toruń Sources’, in *Early Music. Context and Ideas 2* (Cracow, 2008), 137–159, and ‘Rękopis 127 Biblioteki Gdańskiej PAN księga głosową toruńskich benedyktynek’ [Manuscript 127 at the PAN Library in Gdańsk: a part-book of the Benedictine nuns of Toruń], *Muzyka*, 2010/2, 113–121.

⁷ The author of the ‘choir rules’ also refers once to ‘singers’, on the occasion of carolling at the manger (p. 178).

performances.⁸ Even their daily schedule differed, that they might have the necessary time to prepare and to focus on their performance during the services. The ‘singers and players’ took part in a Mass celebrated before the one attended by the entire congregation. Occasionally, they were also exempted from the duty to celebrate the canonical hours in the choir.

This group included nuns admitted to the convent without a dowry, highly appreciated by the congregation on account of their musical talents. Between 1698 and 1827, there were nine musically gifted nuns admitted without a dowry:

1. Zofia Bratysiewiczówna (1698–1730)⁹, a singer whose name or monogram appears on many manuscripts in the Sandomierz musical collection;
2. Zofia Strzemiańska (1719–1736), admitted ‘for her voice’;
3. Katarzyna Krzewska (1721–1769), chapel-mistress, an ardent singer;
4. Katarzyna Sroczyńska (1721–1729), admitted to the convent chapel as a violinist ‘for fractus’;
5. Marianna Balicka (1725–1732), an excellent positive player;
6. Jadwiga Dygulska (1738–1796), an outstanding positive player, scribe of musical books and presumed composer of a few short piano pieces. Born into a family of musicians;
7. Cecylia Zygmuntowska (1742–1789),¹⁰ a singer and multi-instrumentalist born into a family of musicians. She was given the position of chapel-mistress;
8. Agnieszka Sosnowska (1772–1827), a singer and instrumentalist ;
9. Elżbieta Dudkiewiczówna (1776–1794), a singer and a very good pianist and ‘tuba’ player, who was also learning to play the horn.

Besides this group, other nuns of noble origin, admitted with a dowry, could also have taken part in vocal-instrumental performances. The musical activity of some of them is documented in convent registers, in the chronicle or on the title pages of extant musical works. The following nuns were mentioned as scribes, dedicatees or manuscript owners: Anna Stogniewówna, Teresa Nubiszowska, Krystyna and Łucja Czeladzińskie, Marianna Moszyńska, Marianna Mokronowska and Urszula Morska. The eighteenth-century sources document the musical activity of twenty-four nuns of the Sandomierz convent, which enjoyed its musical heyday in the years 1740–1790. During that period, seven or eight performers might have

⁸ According to the chronicle, in 1764 the abbess appointed Nobiszowska cantor, and ‘Fractus was transferred from Krzewska to Zygmuntowska’, in Anna Szylar (ed.), *Dzieje klasztoru sandomierskiego od roku 1615* [History of the Sandomierz convent from 1615] (Sandomierz, 2005), 69.

⁹ Years spent in the convent.

¹⁰ On Zygmuntowska and other nun musicians, see Magdalena Walter-Mazur, ‘Status zakonnic śpiewaczek i instrumentalistek w XVII i XVIII wieku. Profesjonalizacja zakonnic-muzyków na przykładzie polskich benedyktynek’ [The status of nun singers and instrumentalists during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The professionalisation of nun musicians, based on the example of Polish Benedictine nuns], *Polski Rocznik Muzykologiczny* 2010, 57–79.

been living in the nunnery, although there is no certainty that the convent chapel was ever so numerous.

The question arises as to the musical education of the above-mentioned nuns. Given the lack of information about the music teacher's employment and about nuns learning from each other,¹¹ we can only presume that the musical practice of the Sandomierz convent depended on the skills of the nuns admitted to the congregation. Lessons in singing, given to all novices, covered the basics of solmisation and liturgical plainchant performed in services by the entire convent. However, the skills necessary for singing liturgical works were not sufficient for eighteenth-century virtuoso arias, which leads us to conclude that vocal-instrumental music must have been the domain of nuns with good vocal or/and instrumental technique already accepted into the convent. In 1787, when the convent lacked a talented vocalist or a nun singing the higher parts, a secular singer was employed, referred to as Kozłowska. She may not have been of noble origin, but was possibly from a family of musicians; treasury records mention her among the convent servants, which suggests she was a permanent resident.¹²

It is a well-known fact that musical talent was often a path to social advancement. In the case of a non-noble girl, being admitted to the Sandomierz convent, which usually accepted exclusively girls from families granted a coat of arms, was a means of moving up in the social hierarchy. The families of two nuns admitted to the convent without a dowry mentioned here already – Jadwiga Dygulska and Cecylia Zygmuntowska – did not, with all certainty, have any coat of arms. It is likely that their parents were musicians and provided the girls with a musical education with the idea of sending them to the convent in mind.¹³

A similar plan might have been prepared for a daughter or relative of a trumpeter named Chęciński, whom we will focus on later. In 1768, Miss Marianna Chęcińska stayed twice in Sandomierz 'on probation' before entering the novitiate, having earlier been to other convents. In the end, she gave up and left, which was commented upon by the chronicler, suggesting that the congregation was eager to accept a talented girl who 'was to be admitted out of mercy [that is, without a dowry] just for her talents and skills that might be useful in the choir and instrumental

¹¹ This practice would have been natural, and is likely to have been essential for learning the tromba marina. A mistress-student relationship among musically gifted nuns is confirmed repeatedly in Italian monasteries of different rules; see Craig Monson, *Disembodied Voices. Music and Culture in an Early Modern Italian Convent* (Berkeley, 1995), 36–56.

¹² Treasury records of the Benedictine convent in Sandomierz, shelf-mark G 889 DLS (accessible also as microfilm no. 18011 at the Polish National Library in Warsaw), covering the years 1787–1794. This may have been Franciszka Kozłowska, who learned guitar at the monastery girls' school from 1810 to 1818; see Szylar, *Działalność oświatowa benedyktynek sandomierskich w latach 1616–1865* [The teaching work of the Benedictine nuns of Sandomierz 1616–1865] (Lublin, 2002), 115.

¹³ For more on this topic, see also Walter-Mazur, 'Status zakonnic', 69–77.

chapel'.¹⁴ There is no information concerning the remaining musically active nuns accepted 'out of mercy'. They might have come from families of musicians or from impoverished noble families unable to provide their daughters with a dowry, which jeopardised their chances of marrying.¹⁵ It is likely that they had been trained in music since childhood and admitted to the convent as already musically skilled teenagers. We may assume that the music-making nuns of families with a coat of arms taught music in convent schools, as the curricula included singing and playing musical instruments. Ursula Morska, Scholastyka Moszyńska and Magdalena Witkowska were all pupils of Sandomierz convent school, and Łucja Czeladzińska, Marianna Mokronowska and Agnieszka Sosnowska taught there.¹⁶ Talented pupils might have been granted more music lessons, since the curricula of eighteenth-century Benedictine schools tended to be adjusted to the expectations and needs of both parents and pupils.¹⁷

It is difficult to comment on the likely cast of the music chapel. Apart from singers, there must always have been a nun playing a keyboard instrument. Numerous remarks on violin repairs might suggest the participation of one or two violin players – the latter being more likely given the setting of the extant works stored in Sandomierz Diocesan Library.¹⁸ In a large number of works – for instance in a composition by Krystian Ruth apparently written especially for the Sandomierz nuns – we come across an 'alto viola', presumably a viola part. Unfortunately, we cannot say which nuns played the viola da gamba, though one of them must have performed at the funeral of Katarzyna Wybranowska in 1765.¹⁹ There are no remarks concerning theorbo players, although such instruments were mentioned in the inventory of 1816.²⁰ The nuns must have also played the harp, since there is

¹⁴ *Dzieje klasztoru*, 119.

¹⁵ According to the chronicle, Elżbieta Dudkiewiczówna was an orphan (*Dzieje klasztoru*, 207). The practice of 'preparing' poor girls for convent life, in order to assure them of a peaceful and relatively affluent life, was widespread in Spain. Cf. unpublished work by Coleen Baade, 'Music and Music-making in Female Monasteries in Seventeenth-Century Castile', PhD diss., Duke University, 2001, quoted in Walter-Mazur, 'Status zakonnic', 62–64.

¹⁶ Szylar, *Działalność oświatowa*, 115, 155.

¹⁷ Małgorzata Borkowska, *Zakony żeńskie w Polsce w epoce nowożytnej* [Female convents in Poland during the modern era] (Lublin, 2010), 260.

¹⁸ Treasury records (DLS G889) make numerous references to purchases of new strings, as well as violin repairs and the acquisition of a new violin (in 1788).

¹⁹ *Dzieje klasztoru*, 76. Viola da gamba is included in the setting of two extant pieces: *Veni Creator Spiritus* by Roman Zajączkowski, dedicated to Katarzyna Muszyńska, Cappellae Magistra of 1706 (2CATB, 2vni, 2clni, viola da gamba, organ), and *Ave Regina Coelorum* of 1714, signed M.M., for 2C 2vni, viola 'Dygamba', organ.

²⁰ Apart from the piano and two 'old' violins, it mentioned two 'turubans without strings'. This information was found by Wiktor Łyjak in a document relating to the central authorities for religious denominations in the Kingdom of Poland, held in the Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, shelf-mark 855, p. 45. See Wiktor Łyjak, 'Przyczynki do dziejów muzyki u panien benedyktynek

a record in 1789 of the purchase of a consignment of strings for that instrument.²¹ The greatest problem for research is the role of the instrument referred to as a 'tuba'. A comparison with the music practice of nuns from southern Germany leads to the conclusion that this could have been a 'tuba marina', that is, 'tromba marina', otherwise known in Germany as 'Nonnengeige'.²² It must have been an important element of music practice in Sandomierz, as its playing was mentioned in the obituaries of three nuns. They probably performed the brass parts that are so common in the settings of extant works.²³ Only one motet, by the Benedictine nun Krystian Ruth about St Gertrude (dedicated to Marianna Moszyńska, also the dedicatee of the 'choir rules'), requires 'solo tuba'.²⁴ There is also an account of a nun playing the horn: Elżbieta Dudkiewiczówna, admitted to the convent without a dowry due to her 'talent for playing', was learning to play it 'with great commitment'. Despite the dearth of remarks on the nuns' instrumental skills, instruments must have been played, as there are references to performances in the parlatory for Prince Szembek and 'playing on instruments' for 'an Austrian colonel's wife', welcomed by the abbess in 1773.²⁵

Liturgical 'fractus', that is, vocal-instrumental music, seems to have played a mainly representative role. The history of the convent contains numerous remarks on nuns performing outside the liturgy on such occasions as the bishop's visitation,²⁶ the anniversary of the abbess's election,²⁷ the chaplain's name-day²⁸ and visits of noble guests²⁹. Moreover, many occasions, such as a forty-hour service connected with an indulgence, celebrated from 1674 in the Benedictine church, required a solemn liturgy, though it did not lack a representative element. All in all, during the period covered by the chronicle, vocal-instrumental music was clearly cultivated much more intensely than was mentioned in the 'choir agenda'.

w Sandomierzu' [On the history of music among the Benedictine nuns of Sandomierz], *Ruch Muzyczny*, 1983/16, 27

²¹ Treasury records, year 1789.

²² Linda Maria Koldau, *Frauen – Musik – Kultur. Ein Handbuch zum deutschen Sprachgebiet der Frühen Neuzeit* (Köln, 2005), 685–690.

²³ This instrument must have been in use, as the treasury records of 1787, 1790 and 1792 mention the allocation of certain sums for 'strings for the Tuba'. The name 'tuba marina' is a Latinisation of the more popular name 'tromba marina'; see Silke Berdux and Erich Tremmel, 'Trumscheit/Tromba marina', in Ludwig Finscher (ed.), *Musik in der Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Sachteil, vii: 972. Besides Marianna Moszyńska, two other nuns played this instrument: Elżbieta Dudkiewiczówna and Łucja Czeladzińska.

²⁴ Unfortunately, the part of that instrument was not preserved and we are unable to examine its musical texture.

²⁵ *Dzieje klasztoru*, 161 and 195.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 69.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 107.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 195.

As in other convents, the Sandomierz nuns would invite professional music chapels to add splendour to the celebration of Masses on major feast days. On the feast of the convent's patron saints, Benedict and Scholastica, this was the chapel of the Jesuit College. The nuns must have also established contacts with the collegiate chapel, as some of the compositions preserved in the Sandomierz collection, signed with nuns' names, were formerly in the possession of collegiate musicians. Instrumentalists playing at the convent were, of course, paid for their services, although it was common in convents for them to be treated with food and drinks at the gate. In the years 1770–1780, the treasury records documented numerous expenses, ranging from two to nine zlotys, 'on honey for the musicians'.³⁰ Such hospitality might have been rewarded with a composition; many of the extant Sandomierz music manuscripts are dedicated to specific nuns or to the 'choir of Benedictine nuns'. Among the donors or previous owners of the works preserved as belonging to the Sandomierz convent, we find six musicians of the Sandomierz collegiate, its two organists, one Jesuit and one musician of the Jesuit chapel.

In the context of Polish monastic music, the fact that the Sandomierz nuns and instrumentalists from outside the convent were giving joint vocal-instrumental performances of motets, concertos and arias is an exceptional phenomenon. Treasury records carry information concerning payments made to a Mr Chęciński, a trumpeter with the collegiate chapel, another 'trumpeter hired to accompany Mr Chęciński' and a 'bassist', as well as to other unnamed 'trumpeters'. From 1787, the 'singer Kozłowska' was also regularly paid. Performances of that type necessitated substantial modifications to the convent choir gallery. It was divided into two parts: one accessed from the church, outside the enclosure, via wooden stairs, the other via the first-floor convent corridor. However, at a certain moment, the entrance for secular musicians must have been linked to the convent corridor, since in the visitation protocol of 1762, Bishop Sołtyk recommended: '[...] and the gallery used by the musicians to access the choir gallery, was divided by an iron grille attached to wooden grating, fixed to the ceiling, which, not obstructing the light, would prevent anyone entering the convent corridor from the gallery'.³¹ The organ, ordered by Abbess Franciszka Tarłówna in 1752, had an original construction. In a contract signed by organ-maker Jan Bittner, we read: 'The instrument must have two keyboards, for laymen and nuns respectively'.³² It was placed on both sides

³⁰ The honey meant here, of course, is mead. The amount of money spent on it seems relatively high, bearing in mind that the convent laundress was paid twenty zlotys annually.

³¹ DLS G1098, quoted after Szylar, 'Kościół św. Michała w Sandomierzu' [The Church of St Michael in Sandomierz], *Nasza Przeszłość*, 99 (2002), 232.

³² A contract between Abbess Tarłówna and the organ-maker Jan Bittner, of 16 May 1752, DLS ZBS (documents of Abbess Tarłówna). Johann Bittner is likely to have been of German origin. At that time, he was entrusted with the conservation of the collegiate organ; see Stanisław Makarewicz, *Bazylika katedralna w Sandomierzu* [The cathedral basilica in Sandomierz] (Sandomierz, 1976), 23. The total cost of constructing and installing an eight-stop organ was 720 zlotys.

of the wooden grating and played by a secular organist on the south side and by a nun on the north.³³ Interestingly, in relation to the period in question, between 1769 and 1794, the treasury records do not mention any payment for an organist. It would seem, then, that the convent 'chapel' performed exclusively with nun organists, supported on the other side of the grille by trumpeters, a bass singer, and, at the end of the eighteenth century, a secular singer. A separate organ keyboard outside the enclosure must have been used only by visiting chapels.

Before the grand organ was installed on the choir gallery, the nuns accompanied themselves on a positive, which was subsequently given to the parish church in the convent town of Góry. The convent was also in possession of another positive,³⁴ a cembalo, a spinet and, from 1774, a clavichord or tangent piano, constructed by organ-maker Ignacy Skorupski³⁵. In 1789, we find the first mention in treasury records of a piano, referred to as Fort Piano.³⁶ It is interesting that the cembalo was used on the choir gallery during the liturgy. On 12 November 1763, the chronicler noted: '[on that] day, for the very first time the cembalo, installed on the choir gallery, accompanied Vespers, Compline and Litany'³⁷. At some point, apart from the organ and positive, there was another keyboard instrument on the choir gallery.³⁸ In 1765, we read in the chronicle: 'on that day Mr Doctor started to repair and tune the clavichord, as well as the spinet, taken from the gallery to the hall'³⁹. If the instruments were not transferred, one of them must have been also at the convent gate, where the nuns performed for noble guests, and the other in the vocal-instrumental ensemble's rehearsal room, presumably in a refectory, where the nuns occasionally performed the Litany, treated by the abbess with wine.⁴⁰

³³ DLS G 866 and 891, quoted after Szylar, 'Kościół św. Michała', 234.

³⁴ This might have been the small positive preserved in the collection of the Diocesan Museum in Sandomierz. See Urszula Stepień, 'Wyposażenie wnętrza kościoła pw. Św. Michała. Przyczynek do dziejów kultury artystycznej benedyktynek sandomierskich' [The furnishings and equipment of the interior of St Michael's church. A contribution to the history of the artistic culture of the Benedictine nuns of Sandomierz], in Burek (ed.), *Klasztor Panien Benedyktynek*, 95.

³⁵ DLS ZBS (documents of Abbess Siemianowska), various contracts, 30 July 1774; see Szylar, 'Kościół św. Michała', 234. The Benedictine nuns' tangent piano is currently held in the Diocesan Museum in Sandomierz; it is one of only two remaining in Poland; see Benjamin Vogel, 'Two Tangent Square Pianos in Poland', in *The Journal of American Musical Instruments Society*, XX (1994), 84–89.

³⁶ Registers from the years 1769–1794, shelf-mark DLS G 889. Quoted after Łyjak, 'Przyczynki do dziejów', 26.

³⁷ *Dzieje klasztoru*, 51.

³⁸ The positive is also likely to have been placed on the choir gallery, unless the author was referring to the organ: 'Nuns and priest sang the choral Mass with the accompaniment of the positive' (*Dzieje klasztoru*, 92).

³⁹ *Ibid*, 76.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 72 and 74.



Illustration 1. Small positive from the Benedictine convent of Sandomierz. Currently held in the Diocesan Museum in Sandomierz (photograph by kind permission of the Museum).



Illustration 2. Tangent piano ordered by Abbess Siemianowska in 1774 and made by Ignacy Skorupski. Currently held in the Diocesan Museum in Sandomierz (photograph by kind permission of the Museum).

Of the 600 or so works preserved in the collection of the Diocesan Library in Sandomierz,⁴¹ only some may be connected with the music practice of the Benedictine convent. Their title pages indicate various provenance, as the musical legacy of the Benedictines was merged with music collections of other convents dissolved earlier, whose books and archival collections found their way into the library of the Sandomierz seminary during the nineteenth century.⁴² With regard to around 100 vocal-instrumental works – Masses, including Requiem, Litanies and Vespers and their parts, motets, concertos, arias, plancta, carols and some instrumental pieces – we may assume that they belonged to the Sandomierz Benedictine nuns. Some of them were dedicated to a particular nun or to ‘the choir of the Benedictine nuns’, some bear ownership notes or are intended for the feast of St Scholastica, and others are signed by their donors or previous owners, confirming the convent chapel’s contacts with secular musicians. The settings of the extant works of proven provenance vary greatly and are typical of the eighteenth century, ranging from solo voices with basso continuo to voices with two violins, trumpets, oboes and horns. Occasionally, the title pages stipulate viola, viola da gamba, clarinet, bassoon and flute or ‘tuba’. The sparsity of information about performing sisters and musicians hired from outside the convent⁴³ makes it difficult to establish which of those parts, and on what occasions, were played by the nuns and which by secular musicians on the other side of the grille.

It is also possible that the nuns employed a different method of adjusting the performance of musical works. When it comes to male tenor and bass parts, the explanation seems obvious. The former could have been performed by a nun with a sufficiently low voice, with some notes transposed. The bass part – if there was no singer hired from the collegiate chapel – might have been transposed an octave up and sung by any nun. On one of the title pages of the oldest extant vocal-instrumental piece, *Concerto de resurrectione*, by Kazimierz Boczkowski, for two sopranos, bass, two trumpets and basso continuo, dated to 1700, we read:

⁴¹ The extant repertory housed in the Diocesan Library in Sandomierz, including the musical legacy of the Benedictine nuns, was first identified in the 1940s by Wendelin Świerczek. The list of musical works was published in his ‘Katalog rękopiśmiennych zabytków muzycznych Biblioteki Seminarium Duchownego w Sandomierzu’ [Catalogue of manuscript musical sources of the Seminary Library in Sandomierz], *Archiwa, biblioteki i muzea kościelne*, 10 (1965), 223–278.

⁴² On the strength of a decision taken by Stanisław Potocki, Minister of the Commission of Religious Confessions and Public Enlightenment. The first wave of dissolutions started after 1818. The greatest number of books found their way into the seminary library during the second dissolution, after the January Uprising. In 1904, the seminary settled in the buildings occupied until 1903 by the dissolved Benedictine convent. See Stanisław Bastrzyk, ‘Archiwum klasztoru Panien Ben. przechowywane w Bibliotece wyższego seminarium w Sandomierzu’ [The archive of the Benedictine convent held in the seminary library in Sandomierz], in Burek (ed.), *Klasztor Panien Benedyktynek*, 109–112.

⁴³ Unfortunately, the early eighteenth-century treasury records are not preserved.

‘these clarino parts shall be played by the violin’. Was the practice of substituting these parts with violin continued? During the second half of the eighteenth century, trumpet and horn parts could have been performed by hired trumpeters. But who was likely to have played oboe or flute parts? The texture and register suggest violin, as that instrument, along with keyboard instruments, was probably the basic means of musical performance. There is no doubt that any violinist could have played the viola part present in some settings. Almost every year, the extant treasury records carry information concerning new purchases of ‘strings for the gallery’. There are no annotations referring to repairs or acquisitions of brass instruments, although that proves nothing, since the horn *Dutkiewiczówna* learnt to play is also not mentioned (neither is the tangent piano that was apparently funded by the abbess in 1774). We may put forward the hypothesis that the nuns mentioned in the chronicle or convent register played ‘instruments’ without any further specifications; they could have had their own flute or oboe. In the extant manuscripts, two types of scoring dominate: of the 67 compositions, 22 are for voices, two violins and basso continuo, whereas 17 have additionally two trumpets. Vocal parts with basso continuo only are present in seven works. Other instruments, such as viola, tuba, oboe, horn, flute, bassoon and clarinet, are relatively rare; viola, oboe and horn are the most prominent among them. In respect to the performance of the trumpet part that is commonly present in settings from the Sandomierz repertory, it seems likely that it was played by a musician from outside the convent, as is documented several times in the treasury records. The substitution of trumpet with violin seems unlikely, as four violinists would then have been required to perform a piece. It might have been replaced by the *tromba marina*. What other reason could there have been for purchasing strings for that instrument? As for the performing of the parts of other instruments whose presence in the Sandomierz Benedictine convent is confirmed only on the title pages of the manuscripts, we shall take into consideration a few possibilities: those parts were excluded; musicians from outside the convent were hired (though that hypothesis lacks any obvious confirmation in the records); performance was left to the nuns (e.g. to *Dutkiewiczówna*, though the convent register mentions that she only learnt to play the horn, not that she actually played it); the brass parts were played by *tromba marina* or violin. The pieces composed for the Sandomierz Benedictine nuns by Joseph Ruth are scored for voices, basso continuo, two violins, viola (*Alto Viola*) and *tromba marina* (*Tuba*). As we can see, the picture of the vocal-instrumental practice of the Sandomierz Benedictine nuns still remains unclear, making our imagination oscillate between the rich tones of diverse instruments and the exotic sound of a chapel with *tromba marina* and a ‘reduced’ version for organ and violin. However, depending on the occasion and on current possibilities, each of those line-ups could have performed in the convent church.