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Melodiarium Hymnologicum Bohemiae

Melodiarium Hymnologicum Bohemiae is a digital database of facsimiles of sources of Czech, German and Latin sacred monody and is essentially *sui generis*; there are no other such digital databases of comparable scope for this repertory. Its address is www.firmadat.cz/melodiarium/, and the English version can be reached by clicking on the Union Jack icon. The idea of Czech musicologist Stanislav Tesař, *MHB* is an extremely ambitious project, which has involved a team of several Czech musicologists in its realization. It is now yielding the fruits of two three-year grants from the Czech Science Foundation and further support from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, which has funded the project from its inception. The amount of work that has been accomplished here is considerable but the sheer volume of material dictates that the catalogue will be for a long time a work in progress – it will not be complete for perhaps a decade. There is still much work to do; therefore this account is really more of a progress report than a conventional review.

Melodiarium Hymnologicum Bohemiae has a rather different mission than similar databases such as the Bärenreiter catalogue *Das deutsche Kirchenlied*. 'Fontes mondici Bohemiae et Moraviae' is the centrepiece of *MHB*; in this section, Tesař has endeavoured to create a database where scholars can have access to primary sources in isolation, without accompanying critical commentary or historical context. The database was conceived chiefly as a repository for primary sources; exemplars are available in a high-resolution format so that the researcher can examine them without having to resort to transcriptions or sift through editorial additions, omissions or modifications. To be sure, critical commentary and historical contextualization would ultimately contribute significantly to the overall value of the project, but data entry alone for even just the most important codices could take a team of two and three people several years to complete.

The easily navigable website has been translated from the original Czech into English, making it accessible to a much broader scholarly community. At the time this review goes to press, the English translation should be finished and the database made fully functional and accessible to researchers. (A translation into German is currently being undertaken, but is not as close to completion as the English version.) Songs may be retrieved by searching according to various parameters including incipit, first line of text, initial interval code, language, and so on. The common denominator in the database is the melody, which is exhaustively cross-referenced with all texts that are associated with it (this can be clearly seen in the concordance section, which includes dating, source title, page, song text, language, rubric and incipit number information). There is a section for annotations, which provides supplementary information such as whether a song appears in a given published

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edition, where it has been cited in musicological literature, and speculations about possible authorship.

One particularly useful function of the database is the melody search, whereby a researcher can enter a sequence of intervals and is immediately presented with a list of melodies that fit the desired parameters, with tolerance coefficients indicating the degree of similarity between a found melody and the exact interval sequence that was entered. Then by clicking on the signature for that melody, a page appears showing all the sources that contain that melody and all other pertinent information. Thumbnail images of the sources link to full-sized pictures of the appropriate pages. Text queries can be made according to the rubrics Texts, Authors, Editions, Literature and Notes.

The database presently contains approximately 95 per cent of the Latin repertory in the included sources from the fifteenth century and somewhat more than 70 per cent of the Czech and Latin repertory of sacred song from the first half of the sixteenth century. As work on the project is still in progress, some of its potential features have yet to be actualized. However, even in its present form, the database when made available will be a functional and versatile tool for the researcher of several centuries of sacred monody in Central Europe.

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