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The Visual Arts as a Source for the Historian of Music

CHAIRMAN: Geneviève Thibault, *France*
 PAPER: Emanuel Winternitz,¹ *USA*

PANEL:	Patricia Egan, <i>USA</i>	Claudie Marcel-Dubois, <i>France</i>
	Karl Geiringer, <i>USA</i>	Floris Van der Mueren, <i>Belgium</i>
	Jean Jacquot, <i>France</i>	Marc Pincherle, <i>France</i>
	Albert Van der Linden, <i>Belgium</i>	Wolfgang Stechow, <i>USA</i>

REPORTER: Alexander L. Ringer, *USA*

The Chairman opened the session with a brief survey of the principal points at issue, supplemented by WINTERNITZ who wished to restore a few "editorial cuts" to his original paper. WINTERNITZ reiterated the critical importance of the smallest details in representations of musical scenes and urged the evaluation of all visual evidence within the proper musical and non-musical context. The first bow theory is a case in point, since the Utrecht psalter continues to be referred to as the earliest visual evidence of bowed instruments in Europe, the accompanying text notwithstanding, which makes it clear that what the psalmist holds in his hand is not a bow but a rod used to measure the temple grounds. According to VELIMIROVIC, who intervened from the floor, Russian historians have pinpointed the depiction of a bow in Kiev as no later than the 11th century.

In response to WINTERNITZ, GEIRINGER submitted that the danger of faulty interpretation could be greatly reduced provided scholars observed the following basic rules: (1) examine the picture as a whole, find out whether minute details are of general importance; (2) make extensive comparisons, investigate whether you are dealing with an isolated example for which no supporting evidence is available or whether there are convincing similarities with other paintings; Renaissance representations differ not only from country to country but also from decade to decade; (3) keep in mind that certain techniques, such as drawing with soft coal, do not favor realism. Memling, on the other hand, painted so realistically that playable instruments have been reconstructed in accordance with the measurements suggested by his canvases.

Degrees of realism, GEIRINGER pointed out, have been subject to definite historical fluctuations. The realism of classical antiquity faded during the early Christian Middle Ages, only to make a strong comeback in the Romanesque period. The Gothic era is characterized by another decline, but the 15th century excelled in realistic representations of all kinds. Then, after the relative emphasis on fantasy in the late Renaissance, the Northern Baroque produced again works of unusual realism.

After the Chairman's remark that pictures often reveal the nature and techniques of specific music, as in the case of the lute where the position of the fingers may indicate whether monophonic or polyphonic music was involved, STECHOW warned that the supposed realism of 17th century Dutch painters is now regarded with a good deal of skepticism. For example, we know today that artists sacrificed realism to compositional considerations to the point of combining two churches from different sources. Such artistic license pertains to musical subjects, especially so since we often deal with allegories

¹ *Congress Report*, vol. 1 p. 109-120.

rather than still lives. Instruments represented together were not necessarily always played together.

WINTERNITZ agreed with the general idea of historical fluctuations but wished to distinguish between depictions of single instruments and groups of instruments. He also pointed out that in the Middle Ages extremely realistic and grotesque drawings appeared about the same time. Similarly, during the Renaissance Bellini might render musical instruments with the utmost precision, whereas some musician-painters followed their fancy in creating novel instruments which they may or may not actually have built themselves. Prints, too, often contain curious mixtures of correct and incorrect details. Thus, the title page of Weigel's *Musicalisches Theaterum*, a facsimile of which had been offered to the members of the Congress by the German Musicological Society, shows an exotic design in the lower right-hand corner, which is clearly based on a misunderstood model found in Praetorius. With all its emphasis on detail, the Baroque is full of ambiguity. No doubt, instruments, though depicted correctly, were often assembled in fantastic groupings, be it for compositional or allegorical reasons. GEIRINGER mentioned Jan Brueghel's *Allegory of Hearing* as a well known case in point.

EGAN then drew attention to the puzzling question of size. Did the instruments really grow as large as the pictures seem to suggest? The Chairman replied that at the end of the 16th century the lute had actually grown in size just as the number of strings increased. PINCHERLE remarked that in contrast with paintings, engravings nearly always produce interpretations of one kind or another. The Pierre Aubry collection of iconography presently housed at Pleyel's contains many striking illustrations. PINCHERLE then asked why musician's portraits had been excluded from the discussion. Some good painters were bad portraitists, not to speak of the fact that realism is entirely out of fashion today. Paul Klee's portrait of Stravinsky shows only a faint likeness to its model.

As supporting evidence that portraits have been accepted far too uncritically in the past, WINTERNITZ cited the recent work of Otto Erich Deutsch, which yielded extremely few reliable portraits of Mozart. Duplessis, who was fortunate enough to paint Gluck in a moment of true inspiration, figures as a rare case in history.

GEIRINGER had expressed regret earlier in the debate that the original paper bypassed the Far East altogether. MARCEL-DUBOIS now drew upon the history of Indian music to illustrate the necessity of relating musical iconography to factors of economic as well as musical change. The *vīṇā* is supposedly India's oldest instrument. But in the plastic arts the contemporary instrument, a cythern on wood bars, appears only from the Buddhist period of influence on, in other words, not before the 7th century. Ancient reliefs show an arched harp instead. What makes this case so particularly interesting is the fact that the arched harp was the product of economic dealings between Egypt and India. After the 6th century the arched harp disappeared; and, as Buddhism gained influence, the "modern" *vīṇā* took its place. Today the original *vīṇā* is preserved only in Madagascar and Cambodia.

The discussion then shifted to the fifth of the six suggestions for research made by WINTERNITZ at the end of his paper. JACQUOT observed that there were both drawings of planned stage performances and books describing such events. Of the *Intermedii* of 1589 we have music as well as a description of the stage and scene changes, though little knowledge of the theatre in the Uffizi Hall. Apparently most of the actors were also musicians representing allegorical figures in clouds and other machines, and there was much movement in space on a constantly transformed stage. However, except for a tribune above the entrance, facing the stage, which was reserved for musicians, we have no precise indications. Only the closest cooperation of art historians, theatre historians, musicologists and modern scenographers offers hope for the removal of such lacunae.

WINTERNITZ replied that in a sense the question raised by JACQUOT was also related to the problem of realism versus fantasy. Stage instructions must certainly be evaluated in this light. Apollo's lyre, for example, was not playable; the music came from behind the stage. Occasionally, to be sure, pseudo-ancient instruments could be played in a Renaissance manner, as some surviving depictions prove. One such instrument mixing fantasy with historical reality was a lyre with a long neck, really a *chitarraone*. Drawings in the Uffizi collection and in Vasari, too, tie the imitation of antiquity to contemporary practice. GEIRINGER interjected that such combinations were used off stage as well, *vide* the Welsh *crwth*, a lyra guitar, which Vogl still used for the accompaniment of Schubert songs.

VAN DER LINDEN drew attention to Hans Burkmayr's *Triumph of Maximilian* as an important visual source in need of further evaluation. He also urged a greater use of statistics in connection with problems of performance practice. The *Sebaldusgrab* book, for example, shows two *trumscheits* against 65 flutes. Yet today Renaissance music is performed mostly by fixed, balanced groups. Commercial factors, including the identity of the purchaser of a painting, should be taken into consideration no less than national differences in groupings of musicians, which were great but have not been sufficiently explored. The Chairman added that her own study of concerts revealed much more intimate music-making in the North than in Italy, where musicians tend to be represented in greater numbers.

JACQUOT then returned to the need for a thorough investigation of stage symbolism. Viewing the excellent exhibition of instruments at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, he had been impressed anew with the constant tendency toward symbolically-shaped instruments. WINTERNITZ replied that the question of symbolism exceeded the limitations of his topic. Allegorical problems, such as why certain figures hold certain instruments in their hands or why representations of David switched from the harp to the lyra da braccio, belong to a different category.

Speaking from the floor BOYDEN turned temporarily to practical problems of iconographic cataloguing. The University of California at Berkeley started an index of paintings related to music several years ago but was faced with serious descriptive problems. The Chairman informed BOYDEN that UNESCO may soon aid in the solving of the complex terminological questions involved. In July 1960 The International Council of Museums (ICOM) admitted a group called CIMCIM (Comité International pour les Musées et Collections d'Instruments de Musique) whose seat is Paris, and of which MARCEL-DUBOIS is secretary, WINTERNITZ and EMSHEIMER vice-presidents, and LUTHELEN president. Among the many tasks assigned to this group are: (a) the preparation and publication of an international repertory of museums and collections of musical instruments; (b) the choice of standards to be adopted for the cataloguing of musical instruments: these standards will be published with a critical essay on the principal systems of classification in use; (c) the writing of a booklet and planning of an extensive guidebook, containing practical advice concerning the preservation and restoration of musical instruments. An international center of reproductions of paintings, sculptures, tapestries, etc., is being created in Florence (Dr. G. Kaftal, 25 Via dei Tintori). Individual scholars and institutions are called upon to contribute to this general fund, where numerous photographs of instruments will be classified.

STECHOW asked that music itself be not excluded from such comprehensive undertakings. Although art historians greatly profit from the proper identification of musical pieces in paintings, he felt that few of his colleagues were even aware of the problem. In this connection, WINTERNITZ recalled the curious case of the recent Vermeer falsifications. One of the pictures contained a valve horn, which should have aroused anyone's suspicions immediately.

From the floor VELIMIROVIC added that the earliest possible dates of Byzantine churches can sometimes be based on the shapes of instruments, which are represented with amazing

realism. He cited a double pipe from the 14th century as an exact representation of an aulos. WINTERNITZ agreed that the aulos may have continued to exist much later than we think. Cities change rapidly but rural, particularly mountain areas, much more slowly.

VAN DER MUEREN expressed disappointment that the Congress had not seen fit to enter into questions of comparative style analysis. Art history neglects music and literature despite the common heritage of all the arts, but musicologists are co-responsible for this state of affairs. Comparative work groups are needed to liberate us from mutual isolation, and VAN DER MUEREN urged that a future congress deal specifically with parallel developments in the various arts. The Chairman agreed that we should try to rediscover the heritage of man, regardless of the manner in which it has been expressed through the ages. However, the extensive series of precise studies needed exceed the limits of any congress. With an eye upon the fruitless generalities often uttered in the past, STECHOW proposed discussions of a limited nature in which historians of music, literature and art with very special knowledge of the chosen topic would explore the artistic achievement of a particular country or even city at a given historical moment.

Though not unaware of the difficulties of communication that separate specialists in various fields, the panel as a whole gave VAN DER MUEREN'S proposal, as amended by STECHOW, its general endorsement.