

In the Shadow of the Conservatoire: the Prague Organists College (1830–1889/1890)

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In the early decades of the 19th century, three important music institutions were founded in Prague – the Tonkünstler Wittwen-und-Waisen Societät, the Conservatoire and the Organists College, opened in 1830 by the Verein der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik in Böhmen (the Society for Sacred Music in Bohemia, founded in 1826). The aim of the Society was to awaken an interest among the wider public in sacred music which, at that time, was neglected and in decline. The Organists College offered tuition to members of the Christian churches as well as to Jewish communities. During the one-year course, later extended to two, and subsequently to three years, the organists, and later also choirmasters, acquired a knowledge of harmony, counterpoint, figured bass, improvisation and composition, and also learnt how to perform sacred music. The school was attended by numerous outstanding musicians, from home and abroad, among them Antonín Dvořák and Leoš Janáček; in 1890, it merged with the Prague Conservatoire.

In the early decades of the 19th century, three important music institutions were founded in Prague – the Tonkünstler Wittwen-und-Waisen Societät, the Conservatoire and the Organists College. The Tonkünstler Wittwen-und-Waisen Societät (Society of Musicians) started its activities in 1803. Like the societies in London, Vienna and Berlin, its main goal was to secure pensions for musicians no longer able to work because of illness or advanced age and, in the case of their death, also for their widows and children. To gather the money needed, the Tonkünstler Wittwen-und-Waisen Societät, each year until 1903, organised several concerts, most of them at Easter and Christmas. The pensions were paid out until the Society was finally wound up in the years 1929–1930.¹

The foundation of the Prague Conservatoire, the oldest music school of its kind in Central Europe, was decided upon in 1808 by the Vereinigung zur Beförderung der Tonkunst in Böhmen (Society for Improvement of Music in Bohemia) which was interested in raising the quality of Prague's music life. The initial role of the Conservatoire, founded in 1810 and opened in 1811, was solely to educate orchestral players. From the point of view of teaching and choice of tutors, it followed closely the methods of the Paris Conservatoire. Very soon it became so famous that, in 1821, its board found it necessary to protest publicly against musicians who unlawfully claimed to be its alumni. A number of musicians, who studied at the Prague Conservatoire, found work abroad, while musicians from other parts of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and elsewhere, came to study in Prague.²

¹ For the activities of the Prague Society of Musicians cf. especially: Emanuel Antonín MELIŠ: 'O působení jednoty hudebních umělců Pražských k podporování vdov a sirotků' [The Activities of the Prague Society of Musicians], *Dalibor. Časopis pro hudbu, divadlo a umění vůbec* [Dalibor, the Music, Theatre and Arts Journal] 6 (1863), no. 11, pp. 81–82; Jan BRANBERGER: *Das Konservatorium in Prag (1811–1911)*, Prague 1911; Michaela FREEMANOVÁ-KOPECKÁ: 'Zur Händel-Rezeption in den Böhmisches Ländern in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart', in: *Händel-Jahrbuch* 35, Halle a. S. 1989, pp. 119–133; id.: 'Prague's Society of Musicians (1803–1903/1930) and its rôle in the music and social life of the city', *Hudební věda* 40 (2003), no. 1, pp. 3–28.

² For the activities of the Prague Conservatoire cf. especially August Wilhelm AMBROS: *Das Conservatorium in Prag*, Prague 1858; Josef Proksch, *biographisches Denkmal aus dessen Nachlaßpapieren*, Rudolf

The original Conservatoire curriculum did not include the teaching of singing, solo piano or organ. Solo singing was taught from 1815, and throughout the 19th century the Conservatoire competed in this field with a number of equally successful Prague schools of singing which, according to the press of the time, offered teaching on the same – or even higher – level. These music institutions were directed by choirmasters, singers and Kapellmeisters, with leading Prague opera singers Kateřina Podhorská and Jan Ludvík Lukes as well as the Estates Theatre Kapellmeister and composer František Škroup running their own schools. The school of the singer and music journalist František Pivoda too enjoyed great fame. The necessity of solo piano teaching at the Conservatoire was already being emphasised in the 1850s and 1860s; an independent piano class opened there, however, only in 1889. Up until then, piano teaching was in the hands of music schools set up by pianists and music teachers. The most important of these were the schools run by Wenzel Johann Tomaschek, Josef Proksch and Proksch's pupils including his own children Marie and Theodor (who, as well as his own school also directed the Musik-Bildung-Anstalt Matthias Heinrich in the Old Town), as well as those directed by other pianists, among them Bedřich Smetana. In 1850, there were more than ten private music schools in Prague with some of them in the late 19th century combining their work with publishing, lending music instruments (Jan Vincenc Micko), or language-teaching (Anna Faberová).³ Prague Conservatoire and the private music schools presented their work in the form of annual reports, semestral and annual public exams, and concerts. The concert programmes were put together in accordance with the taste of the period as well as the interests of the school directors while the press coverage of these events reflected the social and political situation of the age. When the Czechs were not granted the freedom enjoyed by the Hungarians, following the 1867 Austro-Hungarian 'Ausgleich' (splitting the Empire into two parts, dominated by the Austrians and Hungarians respectively), Czech music journalists heavily criticised the lack of interest in the Czech repertoire shown, by, among others, the Prague Conservatoire director, Josef Krejčí.⁴

Müller (ed.), Reichenberg 1874; Josef SRB-DEBRNOV: *Stručné dějiny konservatoře Pražské za dobu od r. 1808 do 1878* [A brief History of the Prague Conservatoire, 1808–1878], Prague 1878; *Památník zpěvického spolku Hlaholu v Praze vydaný na oslavu 50leté činnosti 1861–1911* [Album of the Hlahol Choral Society, published on the Occasion of the Celebrations of the 50 Years of its Activity], Prague 1911; Jan BRANBERGER: *Konservatoř hudby v Praze* (German version: *Das Konservatorium für Musik in Prag*) (1811–1911), Prague 1911; Tomislav VOLEK: 'Založení konservatoře – velký dar šlechty národu?' [Foundation of the Conservatoire – a great Gift of the Nobility to the Nation?], *Hudební rozhledy* 14 (1961), no. 20, pp. 878–879; Jan HRODEK: 'On the Beginnings of the Prague Conservatoire', in: *De consortis musicis et musicorum musicaeque in Bohemia Moraviaque circulatione 1600–1900*, Jan Vičar (ed.), Olomouc 1998, pp. 85–88; Jitřenka PEŠKOVÁ: 'Provádění Mozartových oper pražskou konzervatoří v 19. století' [The 19th Century Prague Conservatoire Mozart performances], *Hudební věda* 38 (2001), no. 3–4, pp. 397–415; Tomislav VOLEK: 'Mozartovy italské opery v nastudování Giovanni Gordigianiho' [Mozart's Italian Operas staged by Giovanni Gordigiani], *ibid.*, pp. 439–444; Michaela FREEMANOVÁ: 'The Prague Conservatoire in the Context of Nineteenth-century Bohemia', in: *Musical Education in Europe (1770–1914). Compositional, Institutional and Political Challenges*, Volume 2., Michael Fend, Michel Noiray (eds.), Berlin 2005, pp. 519–536.

³ The activities of Prague music schools are documented by the period press, memoirs and literature, and the poster and playbill collections of the National Museum – Czech Museum of Music and the National Museum – Bedřich Smetana Museum.

⁴ Cf. Dalibor, *Časopis věnovaný zájmům světské i církevní hudby* [Dalibor, The Secular and Sacred Music Journal] 3 (1875), pp. 409–410.

Future organists and choirmasters were cared for by the Organists College (Varhanická škola, Ústav pro vzdělání varhaníků a ředitelů kůru), opened in 1830 by the Verein der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik in Böhmen (Society for Sacred Music in Bohemia; Jednota k zvelebení kostelní hudby v Čechách, Spolek pro pěstování hudby církevní v Čechách), founded by the Bohemian nobility in Prague in 1826, approved by the Emperor on August 8th, of the same year, and officially re-founded on June 26th, 1853. Its aim was

‘to influence, through the medium of model performances of classic sacred music, the rise of music performed at church services, the cultivation of the senses of the public and the awakening of the interest of the wider public in sacred music, something which was at that time in decline and neglected’.⁵

In the early decades of the 19th century, and also in the late 18th century, a large portion of the sacred music which was performed during services all over Europe consisted, in accordance with the taste of the time, of opera arias with sacred texts. The Society’s aim was the reintroduction of proper sacred music. Following the instructions of the Emperor Franz I who, on September 9th, 1826, pointed out to the Society board, via the head of the Bohemian government and Austrian minister Count Franz Anton Kolowrat-Liebsteinsky, that sacred music should be heard only during services and that no posters should be printed on such occasions,⁶ the Society, in the first years of its existence, helped to finance initially three performances of ‘great works by famous dead composers’ („große Kompositionen verstorbener berühmter Tonsetzer“ – Ludwig van Beethoven, František Xaver Bixi, Carl Heinrich Graun, George Frederic Handel, Johann Adolf Hasse, Michael Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Johann Gottlieb Naumann, Antonio Sacchini, František Ignác Antonín Tůma and Georg Joseph Vogler), and also living authors (Joseph Leopold Eybler).⁷ In the following year, the number of performances increased to six and, in addition to works by those composers already named, they also included works by Johann Georg Albrechtsberger, and Louis Spohr.⁸ In these productions, linked in with the services in several Old

⁵ Josef SRB-DEBRNOV: ‘Varhanická škola v Praze’ [Prague Organists College], *Dalibor, Časopis věnovaný zájmu světské i církevní hudby* 7 (1879), pp. 147–148. (All Czech texts quoted in this article were translated by Michaela Freemanová and Penny Steer.) For the activities of the Verein der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik in Böhmen and the Organists College see also: Anton MÜLLER: ‘Über den Prager Verein der Kirchenmusik’, *Monatschrift des Vaterländischen Museums* 1, Prague 1827, pp. 76–79; ‘Jednota ke zvelebení kostelní hudby v Čechách’ [Society for Sacred Music in Bohemia], *Česká včela* [Bohemian Bee] (1837), p. 332; Jan BRANBERGER: *Konservatoř hudby v Praze* (German version: *Das Conservatorium in Prag*), Prague 1911; Dobroslav OREL: ‘Společnost přátel hudby duchovní’ [Society for Sacred Music in Bohemia], *Cyril* 43 (1917), no. 7, pp. 103–107; Karel HOFFMEISTER: ‘100 let pražské varhanické školy’ [One Hundred Years of Prague’s Organists College], *Hudební věstník* [Music News] 12 (1931), pp. 81–93; Michaela FREEMANOVÁ: ‘Varhanická škola v Praze (1830–1889) a v Brně (1882–1919)’ [The Organists College in Prague and in Brno], in: *Vzdělání a osvěta v české kultuře 19. století*, [Education and Culture in the 19th Century Bohemia]. Sborník z 24. plzeňského symposia k problematice 19. století, 4.–6. 3. 2004, Prague 2004, pp. 410–418.

⁶ Cf. Count Franz Anton Kolowrat-Liebsteinsky’s letter to the member of the Society board, Joseph Schütz, October 10th, 1826. Prague Conservatoire Archives, Organists College papers, box 5. I am indebted to the Deputy Head of the Prague Conservatoire Archives, Miloslav Richter, for the information on the Organists College documents, and for his generous help with this research project.

⁷ Erster Jahresbericht des durch Allerhöchste Entschlieſung Sr. Majestät vom 10. August 1826 bestätigten Vereins der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik (December 1827). Cf. Prague Conservatoire Archives, Organists College papers, box 5.

⁸ Zweiter Jahresbericht des durch Allerhöchste Entschlieſung Sr. Majestät vom 10. August 1826 bestätigten Vereins der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik (December 1828). Cf. Prague Conservatoire Archives, Organists College papers, box 5.

Town churches, the performers were the singers and orchestra of the Estates Theatre and students of the Prague Conservatoire, as well the Conservatoire Director, Friedrich Dionys Weber, and the Cathedral Kapellmeister Jan August Vitásek. The Society also supported performances of Giorgio Allegri's *Miserere* in the Our Lady before Týn Church (Theinkirche, Old Town Square) in 1827,⁹ a Concert Spirituell in the Estates Theatre on St Cecilia's Day in 1829, five sacred music and benefit concert performances organised by the Society itself (works performed here were by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, Luigi Cherubini, Christoph Willibald Gluck, Carl Heinrich Graun, George Frederic Handel, Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Sigismund Neukomm, Vincenzo Righini, Wenzel Johann Tomaschek, Georg Joseph Vogler, and Friedrich Dionys Weber), and, finally, twelve other productions, put on by choirmasters of the Old Town and Lesser Town Churches. In 1830, the Society members decided to concentrate their own activities around the Our Lady before Týn Church, where the memorial services for deceased Society members and, also financed by the Society, festive services on the occasion of the Emperor's birthday were held. They still supported sacred music making in several other Prague churches, as well as the St Cecilia's Day concerts, organised in aid of the newly opened Prague poorhouse. The first work ever heard at these concerts was Louis Spohr's *Die vier letzten Dinge*, performed by members of the Estates Theatre opera company and preceded by a Prologue, written by Prague poet Carl Egon Ebert and recited by the actor Johann Bayer.¹⁰ Another important goal was the organization of a competition, aimed at Bohemian composers, to write two Masses with orchestral accompaniment, later a *Te Deum* and *Veni sancte spiritus*, and *Graduale* and *Offertorium* (in 1833, 1834 and 1837; the awards were to be respectively fifteen and eight gold ducats, eight and five gold ducats, fifteen and eight gold ducats),¹¹ and also *Alma redemptoris*, *Ave Regina*, *Regina coeli* and *Salve Regina* (in 1839; the awards were to be ten and six gold ducats);¹² part of the money was gifted, on top of their annual contributions, by the Society members. The Society also published two volumes of easily performable sacred music (*Fugen und Präludien von älteren vaterländischen Compositoren*) edited by the Prague town councillor and music organiser Joseph Schütz, Jan August Vitásek, and the Cathedral organist, later also Kapellmeister, Robert Führer. This was printed in 1832 and offered for a subscription price of forty-eight kreuzer and for one gulden and twelve kreuzer

⁹ The performance of Allegri's *Miserere* was prepared by the Týn Church choirmaster Jan Štika. Cf. Štika's application for the financial support by the Society, Prague Conservatoire Archives, collection of correspondence, 2 C 441/548.

¹⁰ Vierter Jahresbericht des durch Allerhöchste Entschließung Sr. Majestät vom 10. August 1826 bestätigten Vereins der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik (December 1830). Cf. Prague Conservatoire Archives, Organists College papers, box 5.

¹¹ Sechster Jahresbericht des durch Allerhöchste Entschließung Sr. Majestät vom 10. August 1826 bestätigten Vereins der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik (December 1832); Siebenter Jahresbericht des durch Allerhöchste Entschließung Sr. Majestät vom 10. August 1826 bestätigten Vereins der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik (April 12th, 1834); Zwölfter Jahresbericht des durch Allerhöchste Entschließung Sr. Majestät vom 10. August 1826 bestätigten Vereins der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik (December 31st, 1838). Cf. Prague Conservatoire Archives, Organists College papers, box 5.

¹² Zwölfter Jahresbericht des durch Allerhöchste Entschließung Sr. Majestät vom 10. August 1826 bestätigten Vereins der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik (December 31st, 1838). Cf. Prague Conservatoire Archives, Organists College papers, box 5.

at bookshops. In the years 1831–1834, three volumes of twelve old and new church hymns with Czech and German texts were published; for festive occasions the organ accompaniment was supplemented by additional wind instruments. The editor was Jan August Vitásek; the correctness of the Czech texts was checked by the poets František Ladislav Čelakovský and Karel Alois Vinařický. The hymnals were to be distributed free of charge via the dioceses in poor parishes (or to be bought for forty-five kreuzer; the separately printed texts cost four kreuzer). Another useful publication (in German as well as in Czech translation by Norbert Waniek) was the *Belehrung über die innere Einrichtung der Orgeln, und die Art, selbe in gutem Zustande zu erhalten, wie auch kleinere Ausbesserungen derselben in Ermanglung eines Orgelbauers selbst vorzunehmen. Für angehende Orgelspieler verfaßt von Jos. Gartner, k.k. Hof-Organ-und-Fortepianobauer Prag. Mit 5 Tafeln in Steindruck*, offered for forty-eight kreuzer.¹³ The main goals of the Society, however, became the opening of a school for boy choristers ‘zum Behilf der Verbreitung eines höheren und veredelten Chorgesanges’ and, above all, of the Organists College.¹⁴

The Organists College derived some of its financial support from membership fees, donations and legacies. It was also supported by the nobility and high clergy, including the Archbishop of Prague, who acted as a patron of the school, and bishops and representatives of Prague and other dioceses, among them Mozart’s friend Joseph Franz Hurdalek. Further support came from the Prague Town Council and the Bohemian Savings Bank (Česká spořitelna), as well as from numerous private individuals – clergymen, abbots, abbesses and other members of religious Orders (including Order choirmasters), high officials and army staff (the first Head of the Society’s executive was the army officer, writer and folk-song collector Johann Ritter von Rittersberg). Individual support came from members of the affluent bourgeoisie (including the Prague Mayor Peter Sporschil), from lawyers (among them Beethoven’s lawyer and composer Johann Nepomuk Kanka), tradesmen, brewery and land-owners (including ladies – such as the brewery owner, philanthropist, Bohemian patriot and later co-founder of Prague’s Náprstek Oriental Museum Anna Fingerhut-Náprstková, or the wife of the brewery owner Sály, who offered his premises for social gatherings). Printers and publishers (Jakob von Schönfeld, Marco Berra), university professors, physicians and scholars (among others the musically talented physician Johann Theobald Held, or the important historians, philologists, and scientists Josef Dobrovský, Václav Hanka, Josef Jungmann, František Palacký, and the founder of the National Museum Count Kaspar Maria Sternberg) lent their support as did artists, theatre and stage directors and designers (Antonio Sacchetti, Johann Anton Stöger, Ferdinand Polavský and Jan Nepomuk Štěpánek, who was a member of the Society’s board) and, too, actors and musicians (actor Joseph Kainz, composer Joseph Dessauer). Money also came from other Bohemian towns as well as from other parts of the

¹³ Fünfter Jahresbericht des durch Allerhöchste Entschlieſung Sr. Majestät vom 10. August 1826 bestätigten Vereins der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik (1831). Cf. Prague Conservatoire Archives, Organists College papers, box 5.

¹⁴ Dritter Jahresbericht des durch Allerhöchste Entschlieſung Sr. Majestät vom 10. August 1826 bestätigten Vereins der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik (January 1830). Cf. Prague Conservatoire Archives, Organists College papers, box 5.

Empire – from, among others, the Archbishop of Vienna, and the Austrian Chancellor Klemens Wenzel von Metternich and his family.

The Society also had honorary members, such as the Estates Theatre Kapellmeister Joseph Triebensee, opera singers Kateřina Podhorská-Kometová and Karel Strakatý, the Prague Conservatoire Director Friedrich Dionys Weber and violin teacher Friedrich Wilhelm Pixis, and the organ-builder Joseph Gartner. (Helped by the gift of two hundred gulden sent by the Archbishop of Prague, Gartner built for the school a positive organ for as little money as possible and, for a number of years together with the organ builder Karl Eisenhuth, he cared without charge for this and other Organists College instruments, including their tuning.) There were also provincial and foreign honorary members: Adalbert Gyrowetz, Raphael Georg Kiesewetter, Louis Spohr, Ignaz von Seyfried, Joseph Weigl, the composer and Mayor of Teplice (Teplitz, North Bohemia) Joseph Maria Wolfram, and the Music Director and teacher at the Royal seminary in Dresden Ferdinand Mende who, in 1832, at the suggestion of the King of Saxony, had works by Jan Dismas Zelenka, performed in the Dresden court church, copied for the use of the Organists College.¹⁵ In the same year, the composer Karl von Doblhof-Dier made a presentation of his own compositions for the benefit of Bohemian parishes too poor to buy the sacred music themselves.

Some support came in kind or at reduced cost. The arts lover Joseph Franz von Daubek offered without charge the hall in his Old Town Platteis House for the Organists College public exams. The Gottlieb Haase Söhne printing-house produced the school's promotion material for one-quarter of the usual price. Prague tradesman Halla supplied the school with free stationery while publishers from Prague and elsewhere printed for free the Society's promotion materials, and made gifts of music as well as of Czech and German hymn books.¹⁶

The earliest subscription lists of the Society for Sacred Music in Bohemia date from 1826, the last from 1882. Subscriptions began at four gulden per annum (though the first-year subscription for new members of the Society was six gulden).¹⁷ Most Society members, however, gave more; some of them offered money specifically intended for purchases of music and books for the Society and the Organists College library, or sent actual music (František Voříšek – a talented composer, parson in Nekoř and brother of Jan Václav Hugo Voříšek – for example, donated his own works) or pictures to decorate the school walls.

The Organists College students' catalogues, surviving in two different archives, record not only the school curriculum, but also the social background and age of the students.¹⁸ The school generally concerned itself with the education of people older than the average Conservatoire student (where pupils in those days were

¹⁵ Cf. Prague Conservatoire Archives, shelf-mark 7449 (*Ad Missam pro defunctis Offertorium, Sanctus et Agnus*), 7450 (*Missa da Requiem*, ZWV 46), 7451 (*Litaniae omnium sanctorum*, ZWV deest?), 7452 (*Missa paschalis*, ZWV 7 and *Missa sonis musicis expressa*, ZWV deest).

¹⁶ Sechster Jahresbericht des durch Allerhöchste Entschlieſung Sr. Majestät vom 10. August 1826 bestätigten Vereins der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik (1832). Cf. Prague Conservatoire Archives, Organists College papers, box 5.

¹⁷ For the subscription lists cf. Prague Conservatoire Archives, Organists College papers, box 5.

¹⁸ Prague Conservatoire Archives, Organists College papers, box 1–5; Archives of the Capital of Prague, Prague Conservatoire papers, Organists College, box 1–5; I am indebted to the Director of the Archives of the Capital of Prague, Václav Ledvinka, for the access to the not yet generally available materials.

admitted from the age of ten, i.e. after they had finished their primary education); a number of them were over twenty, sometimes even thirty years old. They came from all walks of life. In addition to Conservatoire students who attended the College to brush up their knowledge of music theory,¹⁹ there were professional musicians, church choristers and organists as well as secondary school students, students and graduates of the Prague Polytechnics, philosophical faculty and law faculty of Prague University, dance teachers, artisans (in 1833 the organ builder Joseph Prediger, from 1837–1838 the clock maker Johann Nepomuk Bayer, who, in the later years, became the choirmaster of Prague's Vyšehrad Basilica and in 1861 Franz Stöhr, son of an important Prague brass instrument maker Franz Stöhr). Most of the College students, however, were by profession new or already experienced teachers who were expected by their employers to play the organ during church services. The College tuition was free, except for students from well-to-do families. Even so, students sometimes had to leave the school because they did not have sufficient means to live in Prague; the school board, in fact, asked future students for proof either of sufficient funds to support themselves or of someone who would be able to help them financially. The school offered tuition to the members of the Christian churches as well as to the Jewish communities – in the students' catalogues there are records of synagogal cantors and organists from Prague and from other towns, even from abroad. The Organists College graduates were able to find work abroad – and young people travelled to the College from distant parts of the Austrian Empire. Examples here are the Kapellmeisters and organists František (1819–1887) and Andrej (1824–1882) Žaškovský from Námestovo near Dolný Kubín (in Upper Hungary, today's Slovakia), active in Eger (Erlau) in Hungary and who substantially helped the development of the Hungarian Catholic liturgical music, or the Polish composer, pianist and music teacher Władysław Żeleński (1837–1921), later Director of the Cracow (Krakau) Conservatoire.

In its first school year (1830–1831), the College admitted twenty-five students. Originally, the Society board had calculated with only twenty places, but the interest in the new teaching institution was greater than its capacity. The eight hours of lessons per week were supervised by Jan August Vitásek, as a Director, and Robert Führer, appointed as Organists College teacher.²⁰ During a one-year course, offered from 1830–1835, the students acquired a basic knowledge of harmony and counterpoint, mastered playing of a figured bass, and learnt how to accompany services, how to improvise and how to compose a prelude (according to the classification tables, „Nach Mustern im einfachen Styl“; „Nach Mustern im figurirten Styl“, „Nach eigenen Erfindung“, „Nach selbst gefertigten contrapunktschen Ausarbeitungen“).

¹⁹ The shortcomings of the Conservatoire music theory teaching was expressed in the letters of the future Organists College students and their parents which survive among the Organists College papers deposited at the Prague Conservatoire and the City Archives of Prague; cf. also Josef SRB-DEBRNOV: *Stručné dějiny konservatoře Pražské za dobu od r. 1808 do 1878* [A brief History of Prague Conservatoire, 1808–1878], Prague 1878.

²⁰ *Vierter Jahresbericht des durch Allerhöchste Entschlieſung Sr. Majestät vom 10. August 1826 bestättigten Vereins der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik* (December 1830). Cf. Prague Conservatoire Archives, Organists College papers, box 5.

The first public exam was held on August 7th, 1831. Josef Proksch, whose diaries are an important source of information on Prague music life at this time, noted that this was not organised in the school itself but in the workshop of the organ-builder Joseph Gartner.²¹ He was not over-impressed:

„Heutigen Tages war erste öffentliche Prüfung der angehenden Organisten, welche der ‚Kirchenmusikverein‘, unter der Directionsleitung des Domcapellmeisters Wittassek, vom Organisten Herr Führer unterrichten läßt. Es wäre zwar am besten, diese Prüfung zu verschweigen, denn sie giebt uns für hier kein glänzendes Zeugniß, aber nachdem schon einmal die Herren selber die Sache an die große Glocke hingen, und vom vaterländischen ‚Interesse‘ was damit verbunden sei, in den Zeitungen redeten, darf ich ebenfalls meinen Theil für Euch, lieben Freunde, zur Verherzigung mitreden. Vorausgehend ist zu erinnern, daß der obgenannte Directionsleiter – bei allen Achtbarkeit – doch vermöge seiner Studien um ein halbes Jahrhundert zurückstehe, und daß er von damals, in der damals bräuchlichen ‚Generalbaßschule‘ von Förster festgesehen, sich für weiter ebensowenig um neuere Orgeltheorie, wie überhaupt um neuere Musikkultur kümmerte, ja sogar – eigenem Geständniße nach – ‚dieser modernen Flausenmacherei‘ grundsätzlich auswich!

Herr Führer, als ein treuester Schüler, hielt selbstverständlich an diesem Grundsätzen gleichen Sinnes fest und trug den Zöglingen schnurstraks nur wieder den Förster’schen Generalbaß vor.

Zu bemerken ist hiezu noch daß, ob zwar ‚Altmeister‘ Tomaschek und der Conservatoriumsdirector Dionys Weber mit im Kirchenmusikvereinsausschusse saßen, und auch Einer wie der Andere bemüht waren, einige Schritte über Förster hinauszugehen, sie damit nichts weiter erreichten, als ein gegenseitig persönliches Zerwürfniß, dass Herr Wittassek ganz diplomatisch benützte, eine Entscheidung des kirchlichen Oberhirten zu provociren. Versteht sich, lautete denn das Urtheil: In kirchlichen Musikangelegenheiten stehe allemal dem Domcapellmeister das letzte Wort zu; habe ausschließlich dieser über Lehrgang und Lehrmittel zu entscheiden.

So kam es denn auch ganz ordnungsgemäß, daß die armen Orgel-Candidaten sich zu Gunsten des verwitterten Förster’schen Generalbaßkrames heute zu Leid und Spott der meisten der Zuhörern mußten abquälen – oder prüfen lassen.“

Proksch’s ironical comments suggest that, at the beginning, the Organists College teaching was based on old-fashioned tutors (namely the second edition of the *Anleitung zum General-Baß* by Emanuel Alois Förster, Leipzig 1823),²² and that the director of the school had little interest in the new ways of sacred music writing. Contemporary records concerning the works studied at the school confirm this: in most cases, the works were by composers active in the 18th and first decades of the 19th century (among them Johann Georg Albrechtsberger, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Josef Preindl, and Maxmilian Stadler). Similar information is provided by a list of books and music accompanying a parcel containing manuscript paper, music and books on music theory that was sent to the Verein

²¹ Cf. *Josef Proksch, biographisches Denkmal aus dessen Nachlaßpapieren*, Rudolf Müller (ed.), Reichenberg 1874, pp. 262–264.

²² Cf. Prague Conservatoire Archives, 2 E 4574 (the book was originally a property of the Organists College).

der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik in Böhmen in February 1830 by Philipp Schöpke, representative of the Prague trading company Halla. It lists theoretic writings and tutors by German and Austrian organists, composers and music theoreticians (Justin Georg Knecht, Johann Baptist Lasser, Joseph Drechsler, Daniel Gottlob Türk, Karl Gläser, Conrad Kocher and Georg Friedrich Wolf), sacred music by Louis Spohr, August Ferdinand Haeser, Gottfried Weber, Johann Joseph Fux, Ignaz Franz von Mosel, Johann Gottlieb Naumann, and German and Czech hymn books from the 17th to the 19th centuries.²³

Despite its outdated ways of teaching, the school was in great demand. In 1831, it admitted forty students, and the teaching was extended to twelve hours a week.²⁴ In 1832, the number of students was forty-eight and the Society board started looking for new school premises.²⁵ Their original, modest setting and the teaching regime were described in his memoirs by the provincial teacher, choirmaster and popular composer of sacred music, Jan Kypta, who attended the Organists College from 1832–1833.

[In his day,] ‘teaching was done from 10.30 a.m. to 12 a.m., the afternoon was free. The classroom in Poštovská ulice [Post Street, today’s Karolína Světlá Street] was furnished with a nice, eight-stop organ, which we used for playing the exercises that were written on the blackboard. We were altogether sixty-three [author’s mistake?] pupils there, but only half of us made it to the end of the school year. Führer taught us figured bass, in German. He dictated everything separately, than he tested us and gave us each day an exercise to work out. For comfortable writing, everybody used a carton board to support the paper, and we wrote in pencil. Everybody sat at their own desk. I still see the grey head, sweet face and small figure of the elderly Vitásek, who used to come to see us. And what about Führer, slender, thin and tall? I see him pushing his spectacles up his pointed nose, his face narrow and pale, his fingers thin and long, so masterfully moving up and down the keys and I hear him recalling various stories from the lives of Haydn, Mozart, Sebastian Bach, Krebs, and others. [...] Every month at the Organists College, we had to write a music exercise which Führer corrected, marked and returned to us. In the first two months, my marks were just ‘good’, even when I was able to recite the music theory as readily as the Lord’s Prayer. What I recited, however, I did not understand. In the following months, I was classified ‘eminent’ [very good]. Führer called us, the students, to the blackboard, to give us exercises to work out and to play. During the whole course, I was at the blackboard twice. Exams started in June and were held in the presence of either two members of the board, or Vitásek. They, too, tested us, writing various exercises on the blackboard, to be worked out and played. Vitásek was present

²³ Prague Conservatoire Archives, collection of correspondence, 2 C 397/504. The school possessed J. G. Meister’s *Vollständige Generalbass-Schule* (Prague Conservatoire Archives 2 E 4573), J. F. Becker’s and G. Billroth’s *Sammlung von Chorälen aus dem XV. und XVI. Jahrhundert* (Prague Conservatoire Archives 2 E 4631), R. G. Kiesewetter’s *Ueber die Musik der neueren Griechen* (Prague Conservatoire Archives 2 E 4575), and F. W. Marpurg’s *Abhandlung von der Fuge* (Prague Conservatoire Archives 2 E 4572).

²⁴ Sechster Jahresbericht des durch Allerhöchste EntschlieÙung Sr. Majestät vom 10. August 1826 bestätigten Vereins der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik (1831). Cf. Prague Conservatoire Archives, Organists College papers, box 5.

²⁵ Siebenter Jahresbericht des durch Allerhöchste EntschlieÙung Sr. Majestät vom 10. August 1826 bestätigten Vereins der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik (1831). Cf. Prague Conservatoire Archives, Organists College papers, box 5.

when it was my turn to be examined. He wrote an exercise for me on the blackboard. It was a set of numbers, under which I had to write the notes, in a pitch and beat of my choice, and then work out the exercise and play it on the organ. At the final exam, Führer gave all of us together four questions and two exercises which we had to work out and submit immediately. In addition, the less able students had to compose three preludes for the exam and the better ones six and then play some of them. [...] Had Führer been fair, my diligence and progress should certainly have been rewarded. The top prizes, however, went to such students nobody would have thought of. I was awarded a second prize, which carried with it the title of a so-called 'accessit', and was presented with a volume of preludes and fugues. I tore this into pieces right there, behind the organ, because I had it already - we had each had to buy it - and such injustice made me furious. Führer took offence and reprimanded me severely, but I had lost any faith in him, and did not care at all: the main thing was, the school report was good.'

Back home, however, his supporters were not at all impressed by what he had learned. They assumed he would become an excellent player, and were disappointed by the tameness of his performance which they even considered bad:

'Before the Prague course, I played in a rather audacious manner, having no idea of what was right or wrong. In Prague, I learnt the rules of organ playing and harmonisation. My head was full of these - so much so that, when I had to play the organ, I was afraid of making a mistake; I lost the ability for quick thinking. Every aspect of knowledge has to be developed by exercise, and [my time] in Prague was too short to acquire the proper skills.'²⁶

Very soon, the school came under pressure from its own former students, who wished to revise what they had learnt; numerous young teachers, just out of school, needed to be shown how to deal with their church music duties. From 1835, the course had to be extended by a further year and each year there were two public exams, at the end of the winter and the summer semesters. The school admitted fifty-two students, to be taught altogether sixteen hours per week. Grades were given for behaviour („Moralische Benehmen“), attendance ('Frequentation'), knowledge of harmony and counterpoint, playing from a figured bass and the ability to accompany during services („Modulation und Praeludiren im einfachen Style“, „Praeludiren im figurirten Style“, „Praktische Anwendung des Contrap.[unctes]“). There was a separate assessment of a student's music knowledge before entering the school („Vorkentnisse und Musikalische Ausbildung überhaupt, zur Zeit der Aufnahme in das Institut“). The classification here was three-graded. The subjects were marked 'very good' („velmi dobře“, „E“ - „velká eminenc“, „sehr gut“), 'good' („dobře“, „e“ - „malá eminenc“, „gut“), 'fail' („nedosta-tečný“, „ungenügend“), the abilities 'excellent' („výborně schopen“, „vorzüglich befähigt“), 'able' („schopen“, „befähigt“), 'inable' („neschopen“, „nicht befähigt“).

²⁶ Cf. B. Pernica (ed.): *Deník Jana Kypty, opsaný jeho synem Bernardem* [The Diaries of Jan Kypta, transcribed by his son Bernard], Prague 1940, pp. 52-55, 58-59. The first one to take an interest in the problems of students who did not speak German and who therefore did not understand what was said to them at the College, was Karl Franz Pitsch.

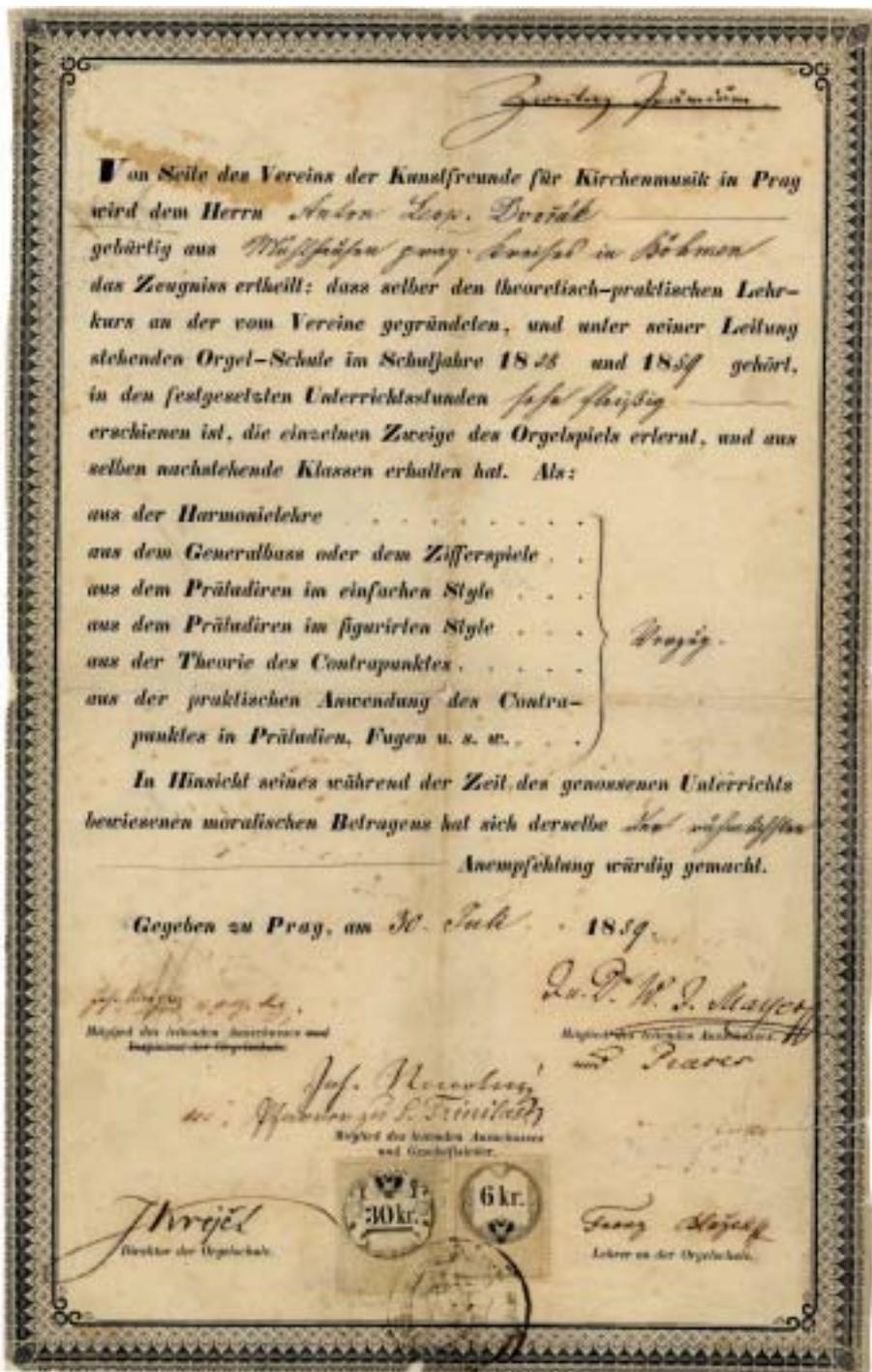


Fig. 1 Antonín Dvořák's Organists College certificate

Nachname	Geburtsort	Namen d. Vaters	Wohnung	Moralität	Schulbesuch
Blaha	Prerau	Anton	Prerau	ausgezeichnet	sehr fleißig
Branača	Prerau	Anton	Prerau	ausgezeichnet	sehr fleißig
Štorka	Prerau	Anton	Prerau	ausgezeichnet	sehr fleißig

Fig. 2 Catalogue of the Organists College students, 1858

In this context, the often repeated accusations made by some music historians that Antonín Dvořák was treated unfairly by the Organists College teachers as a mere practical musician, have to be taken with a pinch of salt. In the *Catalog der ordentlichen Schüler an der Organistenschule 1858*, the Organists College teacher František Blažek marked Antonín Dvořák as talented, but not sufficiently diligent and persevering („Sehr gutes Talent nicht aber so viel Fleiss und Ausdauer“ Cf. Fig. 2); all his classifications, whether for his record of attendance or for the exams, both theoretical and practical, were, nevertheless, marked „recht gut“, „em“ (at the half-year exam) and „Em“ (at the final exam). In the *Katalog der Zöglinge der Organistenschule im Schuljahr 1859. II. Jahrgang*, Antonín Dvořák's classifications were as follows:

„Moralität: Ausgezeichnet, Schulbesuch: sehr fleißig, Verwendung: sehr gut, Fortgang in den einzelnen Gegenständen: Generalbass und Harmonie-Lehre E, Modulation E, Choral E, Praeludium E, Contrapunkt und Fuge E. Ganzjährige Prüfung: theoretisch E, praktisch E. II. Praemium. Anmerkung: Vorzügliches doch fast

Fig. 3 Catalogue of the Organists College students, 1859

Nachname	Geburtsort	Namen d. Vaters	Wohnung	Moralität	Schulbesuch
Blaha	Prerau	Anton	Prerau	ausgezeichnet	sehr fleißig
Branača	Prerau	Anton	Prerau	ausgezeichnet	sehr fleißig
Štorka	Prerau	Anton	Prerau	ausgezeichnet	sehr fleißig

as a part of the final public exam, Antonín Dvořák performed Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in A minor*, and, together with Siegmund Glanz, Schellenberg's four-handed arrangement of Bach's *Great Fugue in G minor*; Cf. **Fig 5**).²⁷ Strictness of classification was, anyhow, a characteristic feature of the Organists College system of education – some other outstanding musicians received classifications similar to Dvořák's – the future Prague Conservatoire teacher Josef Förster, the future Directors of the Organists College Josef Krejčí and František Zdeněk Skuherský, the conductor and composer Václav Hugo Zavrtal (Sawerthal) and the famous piano teacher Vilém Kurz.²⁸

In the course of time, the prestige of the school gradually grew, as it broadened its aims and music interests. The diplomas designed for the Organists College in the late 1830s by the then Director of Prague's Academy of Arts, František Xaver Tkadlík (also the author of the 'castra doloris', erected in honour of the deceased members of the Society), were decorated with pictures of the Holy Trinity, St Cecilia, St Gregory, St Ambrose and the King David; the background showed the names of revered composers of sacred music – Gregorio Allegri, Johann Sebastian Bach, Giovanni Gabrieli, Jacobus Handl-Gallus, George Frederic Handel, Joseph Haydn, Orlando di Lasso, Benedetto Marcello, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina.²⁹ In 1842, the Society board was able to state that they had achieved their initial goal – the Organists College students were spreading the message of the importance of the true sacred music not only throughout the Bohemian Lands, but also in the other parts of the Austrian Empire, and even beyond. At that time, the school had altogether seventy-two students, fifty-two of them in the first grade. In addition to the organ, the singing of liturgical music and hymns was taught. There was an extensive library of music and music theory treatises, and the Society was able to offer the poor parishes as gifts more than four hundred and fifty copies of sacred music scores.³⁰

After the death of Jan August Vitásek and the departure of Robert Führer, who took over Vitásek's post as the Cathedral Kapellmeister, the Society in 1839 appointed as the Organist College Director the then Director of the Prague Conservatoire, Friedrich Dionys Weber (1766–1842, director of the Conservatoire 1811–1842, director of the Organists College 1839–1842) and, as teachers, the excellent organist, music teacher and composer Karl Franz Pitsch (1786–1858;

²⁷ Cf. *Catalog der ordentlichen Schüler an der Organistenschule 1858 (Fig. 2)*; *Katalog der Zöglinge der Organistenschule im Schuljahr 1859. II. Jahrgang*, Prague Conservatoire Archives (without shelf-mark, **Fig. 3**); *Zweiunddreißigster Jahresbericht des Vereins der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik in Böhmen / Trřidcátá druhá roční zpráva Spolku přátel umění pro chrámovou hudbu v Čechách (1859)*, Prague Conservatoire Archives, Organists College papers, box 5 (**Fig. 4**); *Einladung u. Programm zu der am 30. Juli 1859 Vormittags von 9 bis 1 Uhr im Lokale der Organistenschule (Bartholomäigasse, Convictgebäude 1. Stock, rückwärts) stattfindenden öffentlichen theoretisch-praktischen Jahres-Prüfung der Instituts Zöglinge des 1. u. 2. Jahrganges*, Prague Conservatoire Archives, without shelf-mark (**Fig. 5**).

²⁸ Cf. the Prague Organists College student catalogues, Archives of the Capital of Prague, Prague Conservatoire papers, Organists College (Varhanická škola), box 1–5.

²⁹ *Zwölfter Jahresbericht des durch Allerhöchste Entschließung Sr. Majestät vom 10. August 1826 bestätigten Vereins der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik (1838)*. Cf. Prague Conservatoire Archives, Organists College papers, box 5.

³⁰ *Vierzehnter Jahresbericht des durch Allerhöchste Entschließung Sr. Majestät vom 10. August 1826 bestätigten Vereins der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik (1842)*. Cf. Prague Conservatoire Archives, Organists College papers, box 5.


Einladung u. Programm **Pozvání a program**
 am 30. Juli 1859 Vormittags
 von 9 bis 1 Uhr
 in
Lokale der Organistenschule
 (Bartholomäusgasse, Convictgebäude
 I. Stock, rückwärts)
 stattfindende
öffentlichen
theoretisch - praktischen
Jahres-Prüfung
der Instituts-Zöglinge des 1. u. 2.
Jahrganges.

ku veřejné
theoreticko-praktické
Zkoušce celoroční
žáků varhanické školy
obou roků,
 která dne 30. července 1859
 v místnostech téhož ustavu
 (v Bartolomějské ulici, v Konviktu v I.
 poschodí)
od 9. do 1. hodiny dopoledne
 obřývána bude.

A.

Die Prüfung der Zöglinge des 1. Jahrganges besteht aus der Klavierausübung der Harmonik mit Inbegriff des praktischen Generalbassspiels.

B.

Die Prüfung der Zöglinge des 2. Jahrganges besteht aus der Lehre von der **Modulation**; es folgen schliesslich die Lehre von dem **Contrapunkte**, **Choral**, der **Imitation** und der **Fuge**.

Darnauf folgen:

C. Die Vorlesung eigener Compositionsversuche der **Instituts-Zöglinge**, bestehend in **Preludien** und **Fugen**. Zur Solenne können auch solche Insignanz der höheren, klassischen Orgelspiels angebotene Compositionen aus Vorlesung:

1. **Grosses Präludium und Fuge in A-moll**, mit obigenem Titel, von Joh. B. Bach, vorgelesen von Anton Dvořák.
2. a) **Ersler u. zweiter Satz aus der Orgelsonate in C-moll**, mit obigem Titel v. Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy;
 b) **Grosser Fuge in E-moll** von Josef Haydn, vorgelesen von Karl Hilka.
3. **Orgelphantasie mit Fuge in D-moll**, mit obigem Titel von C. F. Fuchs, vorgelesen von Karl Bruch.
4. **Orgel-Sonate in B-dur**, mit obigem Titel v. Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, vorgelesen von Siegfried Glass.
5. **Grosser Fuge in G-moll** von Joh. Bach, so eine Handschrift mit dem obigem Titel, angelehnt v. Friedrich Labung, vorgelesen von Siegfried Glass und Anton Dvořák.

A.

Zkouška této 1. roční zkoušky bude skládána z hry harmoniky s vepřím a praktického basu generalbasa.

B.

Zkouška této 2. roční zkoušky a zkoušky o **modulaci**, která přijde se začne o **kontrapunktu**, **chorálu**, **imitaci** a **teorii fugy**.

Na to následovatí bude:

C. Předložka chorálních skladbůch jakoby **1000** v předložek a fugách.

Ka každé o předložení bude následovat, k výše uvedeným klasickým varhanickým skladbám následující skladby:

1. **Velké preludium a fuga do A-moll** s obšírnými pedálem od J. B. Bacha, předčtení Antonínem Dvořákem.
2. a) **První a druhá sada ze sonaty pro varhany do C-moll** s obšírnými pedálem od F. Mendelssohn-Bartholdyho;
 b) **Velká fuga do E-moll** od Josefa Hayna, předčtení šel Karl Hilka.
3. **Fantasie pro varhany a fuga do D-moll** s obšírnými pedálem od C. F. Fucha, předčtení Karlem Bruchem.
4. **Sonata pro varhany do B-dur** s obšírnými pedálem od F. Mendelssohn-Bartholdyho, předčtení Siegfriedem Glasse.
5. **Velká fuga do G-moll** od J. B. Bacha, pro čtyři ruce s obšírnými pedálem, upravená Mendelssohnem, předčtení Siegfriedem Glasse a Antonínem Dvořákem.

Fig. 5 Programme of the Organists College public exam, July 30th, 1859

teacher of the Organists College from 1839, Director from 1844–1858; editor of the series of earlier Czech organ compositions, *Museum für Orgelspieler*, published in Prague from 1823–1834), and František Blažek (1814–1900, teacher of the Organists College from 1838–1891, Director 1842–1843). Pitsch was, from 1844, assisted by the composer, music teacher and theoretician Josef Leopold Zvonař (1823–1865), who then directed the school after Pitsch's death until the appointment of the organist, composer and music teacher Josef Krejčí (1821–1881, Director of the Organists College from 1858–1866, acting director of the Prague Conservatoire from 1865, full-time Conservatoire Director 1866–1881). Krejčí in turn was succeeded, from 1866–1889, by the organist and composer František Zdeněk Skuherský (1830–1892). In addition to the already mentioned Robert Führer and František Blažek, the sacred music composers, music teachers and choirmasters Zikmund Michal Kolečovský (1817–1868), Václav Emanuel Horák (1800–1871), and Adolf Průcha (1837–1885) were also appointed as teachers of the Organists College.

In 1856, the prominent Prague newspaper *Bohemia* was able to report on the summer public exam of the Organists College students in a much more positive way than Josef Prosch had done twenty-five years earlier:

„Es wäre wohl überflüssig, abermals der außerordentlichen Verdienste zu erwähnen, welche sich unser größter Representant der strengen Musik als Gelehrter, Künstler und Lehrer um die hiesigen Organistenschule erworben. Director Pitsch steht in seiner, nur der Wissenschaft und Kunst geweihten, aufopferungsvollen Wirksamkeit wahrlich so einzig da, daß das in jetziger Zeit so verschwenderisch gespendete Lob der Zeitpresse an jedes nur einigermaßen, nennenswerthe Verdienst ihm in einer Steigerung zu Theil werden müßte, deren wir uns gern enthalten. Die am 31. Juli stattgehabte Prüfung der Institutszöglinge gab einen neuen Beweis davon. Mußten die von ihnen dargelegten Kenntnisse in der Harmonielehre, in jener von doppelten Contrapuncte bis zum Choral, zur Punctation und endlich zur Fuge Staunen erregen, zumal wenn man die kurze Unterrichtszeit und den nicht immer günstigen Bildungsgrad der Elemen berücksichtigt, so befriedigten nicht minder die Vorträge theils eigener, theils fremder Compositionen. Von den ersten dürften insbesondere eine Fuge in G-, dann in C-moll, trotz der Schwierigkeit der gegebenen Subjecte, hervorgehoben werden. Auch eine Doppelfuge gehört in den glücklichen und reinen Besiegung der schwierigsten aller Formen hieher. Von den Productionen fremder Compositionen, unter denen zwei der unsterblichen Werke J. S. Bachs und die erste und sechste der herrlichen Mendelssohn'schen Orgel-Sonaten, überraschte besonders der erste Satz einer Sonate von Ritter.³¹ Dieser Componist ist bei uns noch wenig bekannt, und doch gehört er unter die ersten gegenwärtigen Poeten des königlichen aller Instrumente. Die entschiedene, meisterhafte Formbeherrschung, nicht minder aber die Kühnheit der Composition in diesem Fragmente erregten bei sehr tüchtigem Vortrage nicht geringe Sensation unter den anwesenden Kunstkenner.“³²

According to the minutes of meetings (printed now not only in German, but also in Czech) from these years and also over the next two decades, the Society

³¹ Most probably the honorary member of the Society, Magdeburg organist August Gottfried Ritter.

³² *Bohemia* 29 (1856), No. 182, August 2nd, pp. 170–171.

for Sacred Music in Bohemia and the Organists College continued to pursue their usual activities – especially teaching and supplying the poor parishes with quality sacred music. There was no change, either, to the ways in which they were financed. In addition to the contributions from the members of the Society, the College was supported by the Prague Town Council and the Bohemian Savings Bank, the Prague Ecclesiastical Commission (Kirchenfond), and also the Austrian Ministry of Education. The structure of the Society membership did not change either. There were some new names, however – among them the Prague Mayor Thomas Pstross, the important tradesman Adalbert Lanna, the industrialists Franz Ringhoffer and Moses Porges von Portheim, the owner of the Central-Bohemian Kladno coal-mines Florentin Robert, the important Czech politician František Ladislav Rieger, the famous Czech painter of historic subjects Jaroslav Čermák, and the Bishops of Lemberg (Lwow, formerly in Galizia, today in Ukraine) and Nitra (Neutra, in Upper Hungary, today's Slovakia). There were also other new members – Josef Klimeš, Mayor of Chrudim, East Bohemia (himself a good tenor and music organiser), the father of the future Organists College Director František Zdeněk Skuherský (born in Opočno, East Bohemia), and the organist of the Cistercian monastery in the South-Bohemian Vyšší Brod (Hohenfurth), and father of the school's 'Adjunct' (auxiliary teacher) Franz Oehn. Composers were represented by Zikmund Kolečovský, Josef Richard Rozkošný, Wenzel Heinrich Veit, Anton Buchtel (also a collector of musical instruments), there were former students of the school, František and Andrej Žaškovský, and Władysław Żeleński, music instrument makers represented by the piano maker Franz Anton Ullrich and the luthier Johann Franz Willer and music schools by their owners Peter Maydl and Vincenz Micko. The lists of members included other musicians from Bohemia, Austria (Vienna especially) and also Hungary. The list of the honorary members shows similar changes. This was extended by the addition of a number of Bohemian and Austrian musicians – among others the author of the Bohemian national anthem František Škroup, and his brother, composer and choirmaster Jan Nepomuk Škroup, Václav Emanuel Horák, the Conservatoire Director Jan Fridrich Kittl and the violin teacher Moritz Mildner, choirmasters Franz Drechsler, Albin Maschek, Ernest Maschek (active in Lausanne), Anton Proksch, from Reichenberg (Liberec, North Bohemia), brother of Josef Proksch, and also the Organists College Director, František Zdeněk Skuherský. Vienna was newly represented by Ignaz Assmayr, Johann Georg Lickl and the music journalist Count Ferdinand Laurencin, and Leipzig by the firm Breitkopf und Härtel. New names also appeared among the members of the Society board – the pianist, composer, music teacher, organiser and journalist Jan Ludevít Procházka, the music connoisseur, organiser, and also Capuchin monastery Prior Barnabas Weiss, the Old Town parson and canon Matthias Heinrich and the music historian, critic and composer August Wilhelm Ambros. After Ambros left for Vienna in 1871, he was given the status of honorary member; his Society position was taken over by a former pupil of the Organists College, the lawyer Josef Tragy who, in the future as the Head of the Society, was to play a substantial role in the merging of the Organists College with the Conservatoire.

Throughout these years, the school organs (already numbering three in the 1850s), were still cared for by Joseph Gartner, now also an honorary member

of the Society. After Gartner's death in 1866, this job was taken over by Karl Schiffner who, in the late 1860s, lectured to the students on the structure of the organ. Schiffner also built a new positive organ for the price of material and other related expenses and made a new pedal for one of the organs. There were other contributions in kind too – a glass harmonica, presented by the Society member Friedrich Eil, a viola d'amore, given by Anton Buchtel, and a small organ, left to the Society in her Will, by Joseph Gartner's widow. Gifts of music and treatises were offered by Prague publishers and musicians, in the early 1880s tickets for the Umělecká beseda (Artists' Club) concerts, to be distributed among the best students, were repeatedly sent by the publisher Velebín Urbánek and the Old Town Konvikt Hall was offered free of charge for the Organists College public exams. Of great importance was the insurance of the Society premises, organs and library against fire and other natural disasters. This was paid in the late 1850s and the 1860s, until his death in 1865, by the Society member and insurance specialist Heinrich Fügner (who entered Bohemian history mainly as a promoter of physical education and co-founder of the still existing Sokol [Falcon] Physical Education Society).³³

At their 1867 meeting, the members of the Society for Sacred Music in Bohemia discussed the problematic situation in Prague where, in contrast to Germany, only one organ – in a Protestant church – met the demands of modern organ playing. By contrast, the organs in the Catholic churches retained the by that time outdated broken octaves in their manuals and pedals. Another important issue was the lack of sufficient funding – starting in 1867, the Society had to introduce school-fees of five gulden per semester (poor students were able to ask for exemption from the new rule).³⁴ In 1872, the school could boast of nearly four thousand pupils educated during the forty years of its existence and their good standing at home and abroad.³⁵ There were, however, more serious matters to be dealt with: in 1870, the cancellation of the concordat between the Catholic Church and the state, and the new educational laws issued in 1869 led to the separation of the school and the church. The teachers were no longer obliged to take part in church services, and the Organists College was thus relieved of the burden of teaching music to people who had no interest in the subject. (The notes in the students' catalogues from the late 19th century, recording the laziness, lack of basic music knowledge, or talent, or any particular ear for music among a substantial number of these future teachers, make this absence of interest quite clear).³⁶ The Society, nevertheless, felt necessary to help the organists who, by the act of the separation of school and church, lost a substantial part of their income. Their choice was to

³³ Zweiunddreißigster Jahresbericht des Vereins der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik in Böhmen / Třicátá druhá roční zpráva Spolku přátel umění pro chránovou hudbu v Čechách (1859). Cf. Prague Conservatoire Archives, Organists College papers, box 5.

³⁴ Neununddreißigste Jahres-Versammlung des Vereins der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik in Böhmen / Třicátá devátá výroční schůze spolku přátel umění pro církevní hudbu v Čechách (1867). Cf. Prague Conservatoire Archives, Organists College papers, box 5.

³⁵ In addition to those already named, Organists College graduates included numerous important Czech musicians – among others the Directors of Prague Conservatoire Karel Knittl and Jindřich Káan z Albestů, and the composers Karel Bendl, Leoš Janáček and Josef Bohuslav Foerster; the College was also briefly attended by the violin virtuoso František Ondříček.

³⁶ Cf. the Prague Organists College student catalogues, Archives of the Capital of Prague, Prague Conservatoire papers, Organists College, box 1-5.

play either for free or for a wage that averaged 120 gulden per year. Given that this wage covered six to seven hundred services per year (only between sixty and seventy of them with instrumental music and singers), they would have earned less than an unqualified worker. There were, indeed, in Prague, better paid choirmasters, the wages of whom came up to between seven hundred and one thousand gulden per year. From this money, however, a choirmaster had to pay musicians, singers and bellows-operators. To ensure that even the less fortunate organists would be able to find extra work and that sacred music would not disappear entirely from churches, the Society decided to open a third class at the Organists College intended for the education of future choirmasters, and open only to the school's best students. To accommodate all the students, it was necessary to find new premises and to ask for more money, especially from the Ecclesiastical Commission and the government. (In the end, the Ministry of Culture and Education, the Bohemian government, and Prague town council contributed to the funds needed for the running the school, with a total of three thousand and one hundred gulden per annum; from 1880 the Bohemian government paid a further five hundred gulden.) There was, however, no thought of proposing that the school should be taken over by the state, as in Berlin. The private status of the College did have considerable disadvantages: when the school hoped to issue education certificates valid throughout the Empire, the application was turned down because such certificates were reserved solely for schools run by the state. Indeed, none of the music schools then in existence fell into this category; they were not able to apply even for tax relief.³⁷

The new course started in the school year 1871–1872. The curriculum of the first and second grade was similar to previous years. The second grade emphasised composition („Composition-Versuche – einfach, figurirt, Fuge“), reading from a figured bass and organ playing. The third grade was dedicated to lectures on music history and sacred texts, liturgical singing, musical form, analysis of compositions, figured bass and score reading and playing, organ improvisation, instrumentation and conducting. The ability to perform the tasks of a choirmaster was assessed separately; latterly, a student's abilities for the role of choirmaster and that of organist were considered as two different categories. Repetition of a school year was not offered automatically; in general, students who had to repeat one year several times were not allowed to continue into the third grade, even if their results in the end became considerably better.³⁸

The final report on the activities of the Society for Sacred Music in Bohemia and the Organists College was written twelve years later, on May 14th, 1884. The Society members discussed its disbanding (which required the approval of three-quarters of its members) and using its financial means, instead, for a foundation which would support the poor, exceptionally talented citizens of the Kingdom of Bohemia, studying music at home or abroad. The foundation was to be supervised

³⁷ Zweiundvierzigste Jahres-Versammlung des Vereins der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik in Böhmen / Dva a čtyřicátá výroční schůze spolku přátel umění pro církevní hudbu v Čechách (1872). Cf. Prague Conservatoire Archives, Organists College papers, box 5.

³⁸ For the Organists College students works, exam questions (in German and Czech), tutors (printed and copied by hand), and correspondence cf. Prague Conservatoire Archives, Organists College papers, box 1-4.

by an eight to twelve-strong board, consisting mainly of lawyers.³⁹ Five years later, during a sitting on July 4th, 1889, at five o'clock in the afternoon, the Organists College was merged with the Prague Conservatoire. In this way, the Conservatoire inherited the funds of the Organist College together with a huge collection of scores and books on music which, in 1872, consisted of 455 treatises, 335 organ compositions, and 1,471 other pieces, mainly by 18th and early 19th century composers.⁴⁰ In the late 19th century the collection was supplemented by Renaissance music (Tomás Luis de Victoria, Lodovico Viadana and Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina), and works by Czech and foreign supporters of the Cecilian (Cyrillic) sacred music reform (among them František Zdeněk Skuherský, Josef Förster, Pavel Křížkovský, Franz Xaver Haberl, Joseph Hanisch, Johann Gustav Eduard Stehle and Franz Xaver Witt), but seemingly not to the same extent by modern organ literature. (In 1887 the then Organists College teacher Karel Knittl was criticised for playing, during the exam, works by Charles Marie Widor, which he had chosen to show how organ music was written in France). The Conservatoire also acquired not only the core of its later famous composition department which, until then, it had lacked, but also new premises in which to open its own organ department. Even in the final years of its existence, the Organists College was modestly set up and equipped. The composer Josef Bohuslav Foerster, who attended the school from 1879–1882, described it as follows:

“The Organists College! Imagine a simple town flat, consisting of four small rooms. The first of them belongs to the school caretaker, who lives here with his wife, and regularly too with one college student, who also takes his meals there. The windows look out onto the dirty, narrow and always rather smoky Konvikt street, and the same is true also of the windows of the next room, a bit smaller and very cluttered, where there is a two-manual organ, with few stops, – still the best instrument, and the only decent one available to the students for their exercises. Next to the small room in which this organ stands, is an even smaller room with a tiny organ, two desks and a blackboard, mounted, according to the old custom, on a three-legged stand. It is through the door of this room that the students enter the school. Finally there is a slightly more spacious fourth room. Here too you can find several desks, as well as a raised teacher’s desk. In a dark corner on the left an organ looms up, a slightly better and bigger instrument than the one in the neighbouring room.”⁴¹

According to the inventory of the school’s assets, from 1883 there were also several string instruments (as a part of their curriculum, the students used to play string quartets), pictures, and eight models to demonstrate the historic development of the organ (made by the organ-building firm of Josef Chwatal and Son, from

³⁹ Dreijundvierzigste General-Versammlung des Vereins der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik in Böhmen / Tři a čtyřicátá valná hromada spolku přátel umění pro církevní hudbu v Čechách (May 14th, 1884). Cf. Prague Conservatoire Archives, Organists College papers, box 5.

⁴⁰ Cf. *Catalog saemtlichen Musikalien u. Lehrbücher und anderen auf Tonkunst Bezug habenden Werke [...] die sich in dem Archiven des Vereins der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik in Böhmen befinden*, Prague Conservatoire Archives, without shelf-mark.

⁴¹ Josef Bohuslav FOERSTER: *Poutník* [The Pilgrim], Prague 1942, chapter 30, Varhanická škola [Organists College], p. 192; for the Organists College regime cf. also pp. 192–201, and chapter 31, První hodiny [First Lessons] – „Státní zkouška“ [State Exam], pp. 202–203, 205–206.

Merseburg, Germany, and ordered and paid by Josef Tragy). After the two schools merged, the Conservatoire had to hire more rooms in the same house to accommodate its first ever solo piano teaching department. The school caretaker František Klíma, appointed by the Society for Sacred Music in 1885 and able, if necessary, to mend an organ, was suddenly forced to look after twelve rooms rather than the original four, spread over the ground, first and second floor and all full of pianos and organs. The remarkable history of the Prague's Organists College thus finally concluded, on September 28th, 1890, with Klíma's application for a pay-rise.

In Brno, the transformation of a practically-oriented Organists College into a school which would, apart from teaching, also organise concerts, was managed by the former Prague Organists College pupil, Leoš Janáček. Due to his initiative, the Society for Sacred Music in Moravia (*Jednota na zvelebení chrámové hudby na Moravě*) was founded in 1881. Its aims were similar to those of the *Verein der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik in Böhmen*: the teaching of Gregorian chant (Leoš Janáček was an ardent supporter of the Cecilian church music reform), the publishing of sacred music (preferably by native Moravian and Bohemian composers), and the foundation of an Organists College. As in Prague, the Brno College, opened in 1882, offered at first a one-year course, extended to two years in 1883, and in 1885 to three. The Prague Organists College served as a model for Leoš Janáček, but it was not the only one. From the beginning of his studies in Prague, Leipzig and Vienna, he aimed at establishing an original school which, in addition to the organ, piano, violin and singing, and later also wind instrument teaching, and orchestral and choral performance education, would offer a thorough knowledge of music theory and the basic rules of composition. In the last years before the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918, the Brno school already had three departments, teaching organ, piano and violin. From 1905 to 1917 the school also ran a course for village organists. Leoš Janáček found excellent teachers; his school combined music education with lectures and concerts, enriching the musical life of Brno. During the school year 1919–1920, he finally managed to achieve his original goal – the foundation of the Brno Conservatoire, with which his Organists College merged. When the new school became a state institution, he was, however, not appointed its Director; instead, he was offered the post of Professor of Composition at the Prague Conservatoire.⁴²

The Society for Sacred Music in Moravia existed for another thirty years; from 1948 to 1951 it financially supported a school educating church organists. The Prague *Verein der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik in Böhmen* was wound up on November 12th, 1903; the final document of its existence, dealing with the foundation set up in 1880 to support the poor students of the Organists College, was filed into the archives of the Prague Police Headquarters on September 11th, 1935.⁴³

⁴² For the Brno Organists college cf. especially Ludvík KUNDERA: *Janáčková varhanická škola* [Janáček's Organists College], Olomouc 1948; the College archives are deposited in the Department of Music History of the Moravian Regional Museum, Brno.

⁴³ Cf. Prague, National Archives, Prague Police Headquarters papers, 236 (XII/2).

Supplement

Contract concerning the merging of the Prague Organists College and the Prague Conservatoire (Prague Conservatoire Archives, 2 C 419)

Zwischen dem Vereine der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik in Böhmen und dem Vereine zur Beförderung der Tonkunst in Böhmen ist nachstehender Vertrag geschlossen worden:

1. Der Verein der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik in Böhmen übergibt und der Verein zur Beförderung der Tonkunst übernimmt auf die Dauer seines Bestandes die Erhaltung der vom ersteren errichteten Orgelschule in Prag.
2. Der Verein zur Beförderung der Tonkunst ist berechtigt die Orgelschule mit dem von ihm errichteten Conservatorium in Prag in der Weise zu vereinigen, daß dieselben eine Anstalt bilden.
3. Der Verein zur Beförderung der Tonkunst beziehungsweise dessen Pensionsinstitut übernimmt die Verpflichtung dem Herrn Franz Z. Skuhersky, gegenwärtigen Director der Orgelschule, im Falle seiner Dienstuntauglichkeit eine jährliche Pension von 1200 Fl. ö.W. in Worten: zwölf Hundert Gulden ö.W. und dem Herrn Franz Blažek, gegenwärtigen Professor an der Orgelschule, im Falle seiner Dienstuntauglichkeit eine jährliche Pension von 600 Fl. ö.W. in Worten: sechs Hundert Gulden ö.W. bis zu deren Ableben zu bezahlen.
4. Der Verein der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik leistet an das Pensionsinstitut des Vereines zur Beförderung der Tonkunst eine Einzahlung von 10.000 Fl. ö.W. in Worten: zehn Tausend Gulden ö.W. und übergibt den Rest seines gesammten Vermögens dem Vereine zur Beförderung der Tonkunst in Böhmen zur Verwaltung und vollständig freien Verfügung zu Gunsten der von ihm zur Erhaltung übernommenen Orgelschule.
5. Der Verein zur Beförderung der Tonkunst in Böhmen verpflichtet sich das ihm vom Vereine der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik in Böhmen übergebene restliche Vermögen nur für die zur Erhaltung übernommene Orgelschule und im Falle ihrer Vereinigung mit dem Conservatorium nur für das Conservatorium zu verwenden, und im Falle der Auflösung des Vereines das Vermögen demjenigen mit dem gleichen Verpflichtung zu übergeben, welcher die weitere Erhaltung der Orgelschule, beziehungsweise im Falle ihrer Vereinigung mit dem Conservatorium die weitere Erhaltung des Conservatoriums übernimmt.

Der Verein zur Beförderung der Tonkunst in Böhmen wird jedoch für den Fall seiner Auflösung hiermit auch ermächtigt, das restliche, vom Vereine der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik in Böhmen übernommene Vermögen zur Errichtung einer Stiftung zu verwenden, durch welche die Einkünfte desselben zur Unterstützung solcher mittellosen Angehörigen des Königreiches Böhmen dienen sollen, welche an einer in- oder ausländischen Musiklehranstalt den Musikunterricht genießen und zu Folge ihres Fleißes und hervorragenden musikalischen Talentes zu außergewöhnlichen Erwartungen berechtigen.

Die Kosten und allfälligen Gebühren dieses Übereinkommens trägt der Verein zur Beförderung der Tonkunst in Böhmen.

Prag, am 28. Jänner 1890.

Verein der Kunstfreunde
für Kirchenmusik in Böhmen.
Dr. J. Tragy
d.Z. Praeses
Dr. Otokar Mascha
d.Z. Ausschußmitglied
P. Barnabas Weiss
d.Z. Ausschußmitglied

Verein zur Beförderung
der Tonkunst in Böhmen
Ferd. Cas. Lobkowitz
d.Z. Präsident
Dr. Anton Spatenka[?]



Fig. 6 Contract concerning merging of the Organists College and the Prague Conservatoire

Ve stínu konzervatoře: pražská varhanická škola (1830–1889/90)

Michaela Freemanová

V prvních desetiletích 19. století byly v Praze založeny tři významné hudební instituce – Tonkünstler Wittwen-und-Waisen Societät (Jednota umělců hudebních), konzervatoř a varhanická škola. Tonkünstler Wittwen-und-Waisen Societät vznikla roku 1803, pražská konzervatoř byla otevřena roku 1811, varhanická škola v roce 1830. Zakladatelem varhanické školy byl Verein der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik in Böhmen, pečující o povznesení v té době zesvětštělé a upadající chrámové hudby. Tento spolek, který měl řadu domácích i zahraničních členů a podporovatelů z řad šlechty, duchovenstva, měšťanstva, umělců i vědců, a jehož prvním jednatelem byl Jan Ritter z Rittersberku, se staral o vzorové uvádění duchovní tvorby českých i cizích autorů 18. a 19. století při bohoslužbách v pražských kostelích, zejména v Týnském chrámu. Venkovské farnosti zdarma zásoboval zpěvníky a skladbami, které sám vydával nebo získával darem; kromě varhanické školy založil i školu pro chrámové zpěváky.

Prvním ředitelem varhanické školy se stal kapelník pražské katedrály Jan August Vitásek (1770–1839), po němž následovali Friedrich Dionys Weber, Karel František Píč, František Blažek, Josef Krejčí a František Zdeněk Skuherský. Na škole vyučovali Robert Führer, Václav Emanuel Horák, Zikmund Michal Kolešovský, Adolf Průcha a Josef Leopold Zvonař; studovali tu budoucí varhaníci, ředitelé kůru a autoři duchovní hudby z celé rakousko-uherské monarchie – mimo jiné Antonín Dvořák, Leoš Janáček a Josef Bohuslav Foerster.

Na rozdíl od konzervatoře a soukromých hudebních ústavů, které svou činnost na veřejnosti prezentovaly i pořádáním koncertů, byla varhanická škola orientována především na praktickou přípravu budoucích varhaníků a ředitelů kůru jak křesťanských chrámů, tak synagog. V průběhu původně jednoletého, později dvou- až tříletého kurzu její studenti získávali důkladnou teoretickou i praktickou přípravu v harmonii, kontrapunktu, hře generálbasu, improvizaci, skladbě a řízení kůru. Archiválie týkající se provozu ústavu dokládají, že se výuka v prvních letech existence školy opírala především o díla skladatelů a hudebních teoretiků 18. a počátku 19. století; ve druhé polovině 19. století patřila pražská varhanická škola k předním podporovatelům cecilianismu. Ve školním roce 1889/90 splynula varhanická škola s pražskou konzervatoří.

V Brně založil roku 1882 varhanickou školu Leoš Janáček; ve školním roce 1919/20 se stala součástí nově založené brněnské konzervatoře.

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