

Winfried Lüdemann is a Professor of Musicology and Chair of the Department of Music, Stellenbosch University. He has published widely on a diverse range of topics, including South African music and a biography of Hugo Distler (Augsburg, 2002). His keen interest in sacred music derives in equal measure from scholarly engagement and practical experience as organist, choral and brass band conductor and composer.



email: wl@sun.ac.za

HEINRICH SCHÜTZ: AGENT AND OBJECT OF RECEPTION HISTORY¹

WINFRIED LÜDEMANN
UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH

ABSTRAK

Die toename in belangstelling in die bestudering en uitvoering van vroeë musiek in Suid-Afrika vra vir akademiese besinning. Heinrich Schütz verteenwoordig een van die fokuspeunte in hierdie belangstelling en daarom is dit gepas om 'n Suid-Afrikaanse perspektief by die omvattende literatuur oor hierdie komponis te voeg. Die resepsiegeskiedenis van Schütz en sy musiek word nagevors en sy plaaslike toepassing word ondersoek. 'n Siening van Schütz word ontwikkel wat hom relevant maak vir die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks.

KEY CONCEPTS

Heinrich Schütz, early music, reception history, musical style, sacred music, choral music, stylistic diversity, liturgy, setting words to music, South African music

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The dramatic rise in interest in the study and performance of early music in South Africa over recent years cannot but spill over into scholarly engagement with the phenomenon as it occurs in this country. Since Heinrich Schütz represents one of the focal points in this interest it seems apt to add a South African perspective to the vast literature on the composer and to engage with

¹ A first version of this article was presented at the weekly Colloquium at Stellenbosch University on 14.10.2013 to coincide with the launch of the Unit for Early Music during that week and which culminated in a performance of the *Musikalische Exequien* by Schütz, directed by Martin Berger.

the question of his relevance in a country that is far removed – both geographically and culturally – from the epicentre of the early music revival.

The lens through which this perspective will be presented is reception history. For that reason a few remarks about reception history will not be out of place, since some readers of this journal may not be wholly familiar with the term. Reception history could be described most simply as audience response to music over time; it has to do with the interaction between music and listener in the historical life of a piece of music and the meaning that is read into such music once it has been embraced by its listeners and may even have become part of the so-called musical canon. Such responses to or meanings read into a musical work can vary strongly over time and place. It shows that musical meaning and significance is not fixed and immutable and lies as much in the perception of the listener as in the music itself.¹ This point deserves special emphasis within the context of religious music (the topic of interest of this journal). Where religious doctrines present themselves in exactly those categories: fixed and immutable,² it is not surprising that such tenets are frequently transferred to other aspects of religious practice as well, like music. For that reason genres and forms of sacred music, and the aesthetics on which they rest, tend to have particular longevity. As an example: the Genevan Psalter, boasting an unbroken tradition that goes back to the middle of the 16th century in Europe, is still in use in several Christian denominations in South Africa today. It has to be regarded as one of the oldest extant musical traditions in the country, having helped to shape the musical identity of many generations of Calvinist Christians. The same could be said of Gregorian chant as well as of some Lutheran chorales that have been adopted by Christian denominations across the spectrum. The previously long-held view of the organ as the ideal instrument for sacred music is another example of the slow turn-around time of such beliefs. And that is why it is so difficult for some congregations to come to terms with the questioning of these beliefs about music in the church that we are witnessing today and the radical change that accompanies it.

Reception theory is not limited to individual works; it applies equally to a group of works, the total oeuvre of a composer or, as we have seen in the previous paragraph, to entire repertoires or styles of music. Concomitantly, it applies to composers and what they are seen to represent. (In this respect the case of Heinrich Schütz is particularly instructive and will be explored in some detail below.) On first consideration it may seem that *listeners, audiences* or the *music public* in general are the prime agents in the reception of music and that they are responsible

¹ Influenced by ideas of Robert Jauss, so-called “reception theory” “disputes the notion that the meaning of a work of art is set for all time once it is released to the public, and can thus be understood purely by reconstructing contemporaneous conventions and beliefs. Against this latter ‘essentialism’ [...] the theory contends that a work has a historical life which merely begins at its appearance – a life in which it interacts with its audience, influences society and comes into relationship with new works that are created after it. Instead of a fixed understanding of a work in its own time, Jauss substituted the idea (adapted from Gadamer) of a ‘horizon of expectations’” (Bent, 2001:425). One of the most revealing investigations in this respect is Christopher Cockburn’s study of the reception history of Händel’s *Messiah* in South Africa (Cockburn, 2008).

² The far-reaching theological questions raised by this statement cannot be discussed here.

for its reception history. However, one should not lose sight of the role of *performers*. Their decisions about what music to perform also influences reception history in a significant way, because they are the ones who offer audiences their musical choices in the first place. The same goes for *scholars* and *authors* of text- and other books on music. Textbooks on music history have special importance in this respect, because they can determine the outlook on music of a whole generation of students. Because of the scarcity of live performances of the music concerned and because it is difficult to take cognisance of the entire body of scholarly literature on the topic, it is largely through textbooks on music history (and the particular perspective that is presented in such books) that the average South African music student will get to know about Schütz.

What is less frequently investigated than all the above examples is the active role that *composers* play in the reception of music. Composers never compose in a vacuum, their music is always written in response to other music (and, of course, to a particular social context). In a less formal discourse this is often called “influence”. In that sense composers also become agents in the reception history of music, because they take up and pass on characteristics of music by others, albeit through the prism of their own creativity.³ In my opinion this aspect of reception history has not received the attention it deserves. Schütz is a good example of this point, as will be shown below. It should also be mentioned that the early music revival and, specifically, historically informed performance practice are as much subject to reception history as they have been challenging received conventions of reception, thereby creating alternative views of the music concerned and thereby establishing a new orthodoxy.

Heinrich Schütz was born in Köstritz, Saxony in 1585. His musical gifts as a young boy drew the attention of the Landgrave Moritz of Hessen, a notable patron of music, who happened to hear his fine singing voice when staying over at father Schütz's inn. Moritz brought the young Schütz to his residence in Kassel to serve as a choir boy and also saw to it that he received a solid general musical instruction. When Schütz was twenty-four and already a law student Moritz intervened again by providing him with the means to further his musical studies under Giovanni Gabrieli in Venice, where he became one of the master's favourite pupils (1609-1613). After Gabrieli's death in 1612 Schütz returned to Kassel, but was soon called to Dresden to serve at the much more splendid court of the Elector of Saxony. Apart from brief periods of leave, the most important of which was a second visit to Venice (1628-1629), Schütz remained in this position for the rest of his life. By the time of his death in 1672 he was hailed as the most important German composer of his time and the “father of German music”.

Schütz's significance is summarised by Burkholder, Grout and Palisca in the following sentences:

Heinrich Schütz [...] was a master at applying the new Italian styles to church music. He studied in Venice with Giovanni Gabrieli, visited again during Monteverdi's years there, and brought their approaches back to Germany, where he was chapel master at the Saxon court in Dresden. He is particularly renowned for writing music that captures the meanings

³ It is worth mentioning that composers of vocal music may also have a bearing on the reception history of literature or poetry. As an example: who would know about Wilhelm Müller today if it were not for Schubert's famous song cycles *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Die Winterreise*?

and imagery of the text (2006:338). His synthesis of German and Italian elements helped to lay the foundation for later German composers, from Bach through Brahms (2006:342).

Taruskin describes his legacy in a similar way:

[...] Schütz saw himself primarily as the bringer of Italianate “light to Germany” (as his tombstone reads) and saw the composition of grand concerted motets and magnificent court spectacles as his true vocation. Given that ambition, his career was dogged by cruel frustration. His actual contributions, not only to the musical life of his time but to the historical legacy of German music, tallied little with his intentions. But his musical imagination was so great, and his powers of adaptation so keen, that what he did accomplish was arguably a greater fulfilment of his gifts than what he set out to achieve (2005:57).

And with reference to the *Symphoniae sacrae III* he writes:

Schütz's Gabrielian and Monteverdian sides had met at last in a unique “German” synthesis (2005:68).

These descriptions both emphasize, correctly so, the importance that Italian influence had in eventually shaping Schütz's compositional style. It should not be overlooked, though, that composers of that time were not as intent on creating unique personal styles (as the word “synthesis” in both above excerpts would seem to indicate) as on fulfilling the specific requirements of the particular styles and genres in which they composed. This accounts for the interesting phenomenon that Monteverdi's music presents itself to the modern observer in a stylistic diversity that is not encountered with composers of the late 18th or 19th centuries. For example, his *Missa “In illo tempore”* and his opera *L'Orfeo* are so far apart stylistically that it is difficult to recognise them as having been written by the same person. Awareness of the requirements and characteristics of the various styles and genres that were in use was, in fact, theorised by Monteverdi precisely at this time (see the foreword to his fifth book of madrigals, reproduced in Strunk 1950:405-412 and discussed at some length in Seidel 1998:1745-1746). I wish to argue that Schütz should, at least to some extent, also be understood in that way. In emphasising diversity above unity of style one is not imposing a stylistic ideal on him that is only fully appropriate to later generations of composers. In that way a more nuanced view of the composer becomes possible, one in which his oeuvre can be understood to consist of various strands that run parallel to each other and that are unified not by an imperative towards synthesis but by a distinctive creative voice and a particular gift for giving musical shape to words.

Accordingly, Schütz's music represents the culmination of several important strands of 16th and early 17th century music. The first major work by which he introduced himself after his return to Germany was the *Psalmen Davids* (Psalms of David), published as opus 2 in 1619, coinciding with the date of his wedding. This is a collection of 26 compositions in the polychoral Venetian style developed to a high art by his teacher Gabrieli, but applied to the still rather new translations into the German language of the Bible by Luther, instead of Latin. With this

monumental collection of psalm settings Schütz not only brings the polychoral style of the Venetian school to perfection north of the Alps, surpassing even his Italian master, but he also provides a full compendium of the art of polychoral composition in general, demonstrating all the conceivable possibilities of this extraordinary style of composition.⁴ In that sense Schütz was an agent in the reception history of this genre.

The second strand of musical style taken up by Schütz is that of the *seconda prattica*, brought to early perfection by Claudio Monteverdi. In order to study this style at its source, Schütz travelled to Venice once more, in 1628. Since his first visit there, the new genre of opera had come into full fruition. *Seconda prattica*, where the text is presented in a single melodic line accompanied by basso continuo, formed the basis of opera, oratorio and of several other genres of music.⁵ Again, Schütz took up this style of composition, brought it back home and, apart from several Latin compositions, transferred it to the German language. This enabled him to capture in music the meaning and imagery as well as the rhythm and inflections of the German texts and to indulge in word painting with an intensity that has hardly been surpassed and which earned him the title “musicus poeticus” from scholars of our time (c.f. Eggebrecht, 1959). His Christmas Oratorio (1664) represents a late example of this style.

The third strand of musical style preserved in the music of Schütz is that of the older *prima prattica*, the polyphonic, strictly contrapuntal style of the Franco-Flemish school of composers active all over Europe during the Renaissance period. The most important representative of this school in Germany was Orlando di Lasso (1532-1594), who spent the last forty years of his life at the court in Munich and whose influence, even on Protestant composers, was far-reaching. By his own testimony, the art of counterpoint formed the basis of the training Schütz received from his teachers both in Germany and Italy.⁶ Even though this style of composition was going out of fashion in the 17th century, Schütz still regarded it as a crucial component of his skill as a composer and encouraged others to follow his example. To emphasise this point he published, in 1648, the most important collection of German motets of the 17th century, under the title *Geistliche Chormusik* (Sacred Choral Music). In the foreword to this collection he consequently remarked on the importance of skill in the “style without basso continuo” (i.e. the *prima prattica*) in respect of the training of composers, before they went on to compose in the “concerted style” (i.e. the *seconda prattica*).⁷ However, Schütz updated the old Franco-Flemish style with

⁴ For lack of space an exemplification of this statement is not possible here.

⁵ Schütz’s pupil Christoph Bernhard preferred to use the terms *contrapunctus gravis* and *contrapunctus luxurians* instead of *prima* and *seconda prattica*, thereby avoiding the classification “old” and “new” (Braun, 1999:1403). Varwig presents a lengthy discussion on the justification of such stylistic labels in the chapter “Old and new worlds” of her book on Schütz (2011:161-193). Space does not permit a detailed account of the complexities of the debate that ensued around the origin of and justification for *seconda prattica*, as it was pursued by figures like Claudio Monteverdi, his brother Giulio Cesare, Giovanni Maria Artusi or Giulio Caccini, to name some of the main protagonists.

⁶ See Preface to *Geistliche Chormusik*.

⁷ Als bin ich hierdurch veranlasset worden deroglichen Wercklein ohne Bassum Continuum auch einsten wieder anzugehen / und hiedurch vielleicht etliche / insonderheit aber theils der

more modern harmony and rhythm and infused it with word painting and other so-called musical figures; but its emphasis on skilful counterpoint was foregrounded nonetheless.

The fourth stylistic strand in Schütz’s music appears in the last years of his career and is the most conservative of the four strands mentioned. It is found in the three passions he wrote when he was already older than 70 years, one each according to the gospels of Matthew, Luke and John, in which the story of Jesus’s suffering and crucifixion is told. These *Historiae* are probably the most typically protestant works in his output. Here he combined polyphonic (Franco-Flemish) motet style for the sections of the story given to the disciples, soldiers, crowd and other groups of people with the ancient style of liturgical recitation, typical of the tradition of unaccompanied plainsong, for the narrative and dialogue, to create works of the most austere serenity. The circumstantial fact that the works were written for performance during holy week, when it was the liturgical custom (in Dresden and elsewhere) to perform music without instruments, does not detract from that inner austerity. Works displaying such traits are not uncommon amongst composers in their old age.

Perhaps Schütz’s settings of the Psalms of Cornelius Becker represent another, albeit very thin strand. Cornelius Becker (1561-1604) was a Lutheran theologian who created rhymed versions of the psalms that were intended to stand in opposition to those of Ambrosius Lobwasser (1515-1585), who in turn consciously modelled his versions on the famous Genevan Psalter. Schütz set these texts to music, having found solace in them after the early death of his wife (Breig, 2006:362). In their melodic and harmonic simplicity they seem to represent a link to the style of the Calvinist composers of Geneva, even if they belong, ultimately, to the Lutheran chorale tradition.

As “receiver” of these various styles of music and by infusing them each with his personal genius, Schütz was the first composer to have added a German voice to the concert of European music.⁸ His particular skill at portraying a text in music, regardless of the style in which he was composing, and the complete balance between highest artistic aspirations and functional, i.e. liturgical requirements in his sacred music had a profound influence on some 19th century composers (such as Brahms) and numerous 20th century composers.⁹

Schütz and his music were forgotten after his death. It is doubtful whether even Bach was familiar with it. Kurt Gudewill speculates that Bach may have encountered at least some of the Becker

angehenden Deutschen Componisten anzufrischen / das / ehe Sie zu dem concertirenden Stylo schreiten / Sie vorher die harte Nuß (als worinnen der rechte Kern / und das rechte Fundament eines guten Contrapuncts zusuchen ist) auffbeissen / und darinnen ihre erste Proba ablegen möchten. (Schütz 1648, as reprinted in Kamlah 1965:VI). Joshua Rifkin sees the didactic aspect of this volume as Schütz’s response to the celebrated dispute between the Danzig organist Paul Siefert and the Warsaw choirmaster Marco Scacchi as to who was guilty of contrapuntal deficiencies in his music. Schütz clearly took the side of Scacchi (Rifkin, 1985:717).

⁸ Some scholars would argue that this distinction should rather be given to Michael Praetorius.

⁹ See Lüdemann (2008:22-23).

psalms on his journeys, as these were in use in Dresden until approximately 1800 (1965:211). It was left to the 19th and 20th centuries to rediscover the music of the composer who had elevated German music to a level equal to that of other European countries. He was first mentioned again in a scholarly book on Giovanni Gabrieli by Carl von Winterfeld, published in 1834. Johannes Brahms must have known at least some of Schütz's music, as is borne out by the motets *O Heiland, reiss den Himmel auf* (op. 74) and *Fest- und Gedenksprüche* for double choir (op. 109). These compositions are clearly indebted to the older composer.

Only in 1885, 300 years after his birth, was a comprehensive and editorially authoritative publication of Schütz's works initiated by Philip Spitta. This was one of the most important impulses for a truly remarkable Schütz renaissance that took off from then on and reached its climax in the years before and after the Second World War.¹⁰ This renaissance was remarkable not only in the sense that a neglected repertoire of highly important music and the presence of a composer of great historical significance was rediscovered but also because the figure of Schütz was now cast into roles that primarily served the purposes of those who did the casting. To describe this in all detail would go beyond the scope of the present article. It will suffice to say that, in various ways, he was made to serve the cause of German nationalism, Lutheran orthodoxy and liturgical revival, the doctrine of musical rhetoric and community (*Gemeinschaft*) sentiments (and their concomitant aesthetic aspirations) that were critical of modern industrial society. Schütz also became the patron saint of a school of composers who followed a conservative interpretation of neoclassicism and who were responsible for a far-reaching revival of protestant church music in Germany during the middle decades of the 20th century. Bettina Varwig traces most of these roles in her recent book *Histories of Heinrich Schütz* (2011). It provides a fascinating insight into the context in which these different roles originated. The plural in her title refers to the "manifold reception histories into which Schütz's music has fitted over the centuries" and which were "gradually absorbed into a master narrative of German music history" (2011:5).

In broad outlines this Schütz reception can be traced as follows. While the 18th century encyclopaedists Johann Mattheson and Ludwig Gerber had already described Schütz as the "father" of German musicians (Varwig, 2011:96), from the turn of the 20th century onwards he was increasingly seen to represent typically Nordic or Teutonic characteristics (Varwig, 2011:147).¹¹ Varwig recounts how attempts were made to include Schütz in a "Teutonic hall

of fame" together with other German heroes such as Barbarossa, Luther, Goethe, Wagner and Bismarck (2011:147).

At the same time Schütz was revered as a preacher or orator of Lutheran doctrine (Varwig, 2011:6, 11, 48). One of several protagonists in this respect was Hans Joachim Moser, who published an early standard biography of Schütz (1936). Varwig cites Moser elsewhere as stating that "Schütz, as a genuine Lutheran, put the interpretation of the 'Word' above everything", thereby turning him into a "true preacher of the Gospel" (2011:48). Willi Schuh goes even further in asserting that Schütz was a "herald, exegete, a preacher figure of almost biblical stature" (cited by Varwig, 2011:48). Closely connected with the image of Schütz as Lutheran orator is what Varwig calls "the invention of musical rhetoric" as a "key" to his musical language. Thrasybulos Georgiades was one of the important contributors to this approach by highlighting the difference between the Latin and German languages and pointing out that in the latter the accent in a word coincides with its semantically central syllable (Georgiades, 1954:55). Accordingly, Schütz was one of the first composers who engaged with the "historical task" (Varwig, 2011:202) of setting German prose to music, especially that of the relatively recent translation of the Bible, as was mentioned earlier on. Georgiades even goes so far as to maintain that his music "cannot be explained solely in terms of the currents of his time, but in the first instance represents the composer's engagement with language" (1954:64).

Numerous other authors followed this line of investigation, notably Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht, who, in his aforementioned book on Schütz, subtitled *Musicus poeticus* (1959), helped to develop this approach into a "doctrine of figures." Though this "doctrine" is still reiterated widely today (not least in a textbook like Burkholder, Grout and Palisca, 2006:341), Varwig dismisses it – not wholly convincingly – as a "fallacy" (2011:210).

In order to harness Schütz's music for the present (i.e. the 1920s and 1930s) its community ethos was highlighted. Communal singing was embraced during the years of the Weimar republic by "the left as much as the right as the panacea for Germany's cultural woes" after the First World War (Varwig, 2011:196), and the motets of Schütz's *Geistliche Chormusik* fitted this ideal perfectly. Hardly any other a-cappella music gripped the imagination of choirs as much as these motets. This fascination was extended to the three passions. Consequently, in the reception of Schütz's music at this time the motets and the passions came to overshadow all his other works. Adding yet another facet to Schütz's reception history these works came to serve as inspiration for a spate of contemporary motets and a-cappella passions by composers such as Hans-Friedrich Micheelsen, Kurt Thomas, Ernst Pepping and Hugo Distler. Distler even went so far as to adopt Schütz's title *Geistliche Chormusik* for his own collection of nine a-cappella motets op. 12.

These developments were closely aligned with the liturgical reforms that were introduced in protestant churches from the 1920s onwards. Audiences, church congregations, church musicians, church ministers and authors now began to see Schütz's music as resonating even more with the new theological trends of the time (strongly influenced by Karl Barth and others; c.f. Lüdemann,

refers to polyphony as another quality that was supposed to be typically German and cites Richard Eichenauer's characterisation of polyphony as the "eternal language of the German soul" (2011:152).

¹⁰ For an engagement with this renaissance see Eckart-Bäcker 1987.

¹¹ What these "German" characteristics are, is explained by Karl Storck in chapter 7 "Umgestaltung und Erneuerung der Musik aus deutschem Geiste" of his book *Geschichte der Musik* (Stuttgart 1910). Here he writes: "Dann aber ist auch leicht zu erkennen, dass die Musik zur ausgesprochen deutschen Kunst werden musste, dass sie nur durch Deutsche ihren höchsten Ausdruck erreichen konnte. Die Musik ist ja die Kunst der Innerlichkeit, weil sie unabhängig ist von äusseren Vorbildern, weil sie keinen Ausgleich zu schaffen braucht zwischen dem in der sinnlichen Natur Gegebenen und dem übersinnlich Erschauten" (Storck, 1910:422). And then he adds the telling statement: "Seitdem die Musik Ausdruck des seelischen Lebens, also Musik im eigentlichen Sinne geworden ist, ist sie eine deutsche Kunst" (1910:423). In this context Heinrich Schütz is named as an early composer in whose music this breakthrough into what we today would call autonomous music, as achieved by Händel, Bach and Gluck [!], is foreshadowed (1910:423). See Varwig (2011:152) for a further discussion of this topic. She

2008:23) and that it fulfilled the requirements of a 20th century protestant liturgy even better than that of Bach. This served to consolidate the reception of Schütz as the prototypical composer of sacred music even further.

Numerous performances of Schütz's music now took place and recordings were made, most frequently of his passions and motets. They came closest to the aesthetic of unaccompanied choral singing that was (incorrectly so, as it turned out) seen as the ideal performance practice during the time of Schütz and that resonated strongly, in respect of style and content, with the ideals of community and amateur choral singing mentioned above. Good examples of such recordings are those of 14 motets from *Geistliche Chormusik* by Gottfried Wolters and the *Norddeutscher Singkreis* (1958) and some of the *Psalms of David* by Rudolf Mauersberger and the *Kreuzchor* of Dresden (1965). Typically, the latter works are performed with organ continuo only and shun the use of other *ad libitum* instruments, as expressly suggested by the composer and that can be heard to great effect on recordings of today. The amateur choirs who cultivated Schütz's music during these decades were also typically larger in number and therefore produced a sound that is far removed from that of the approximately 25 (trained?) singers to be seen on the famous engraving of Schütz surrounded by his musicians in the Dresden court chapel (reproduced in Taruskin 2005:58 and elsewhere).

The keen observer will also note the absence of a few significant works in the Schütz reception of those years. Foremost amongst these are Psalms 122 and 137 from the *Psalms of David* op. 2, two of the most splendid works in the entire collection. In both of them praise and love for the city of Jerusalem is expressed by the poet and set to music in the most exuberant way by Schütz. Though it would be difficult to prove, the absence of these works in the reception does raise the matter of anti-Jewish sentiments that were – as is all too common knowledge – prevalent in Germany before the war and may have lingered on thereafter. By contrast, the name Jerusalem seems to have had a special meaning for Schütz as a devout Lutheran Christian: the Jewish heritage of the Bible is embraced by him wholeheartedly, even if it was imbued with Christian symbolism. That such works did not enter the repertoire until recently is a telling example of the vagaries of reception history.

Another interesting example of the reception of a work by Schütz is *Saul, Saul, was verfolgst du mich* (Saul, why do you persecute me, from Acts 26; SWV 415, *Symphoniae sacrae III*). This composition for two choirs, six soloists and various instruments was one of the first works by Schütz to have been included in English and American anthologies of Western music, like the one by Davison and Apel (1950:36-39). Why they singled out this particular piece is unclear, because it is arguably not the most characteristic work in the collection. It was also represented under the entirely misleading heading “German Church Cantata” on the monumental series of LP recordings *The History of Music in Sound*, Volume V, produced in the 1960s by EMI Records under the editorship of Gerald Abraham. It is performed here in an almost symphonic rendition by Arnold Goldsbrough and his orchestra. Since then this work has become one of the best known, or perhaps even the only widely known work by Schütz in the English speaking world.¹² It

is discussed at great length in the aforementioned music history textbook by Burkholder, Grout and Palisca (2006:341-342).¹³ And even Richard Taruskin, whose series *The Oxford History of Western Music* claims to bring a new approach to the writing of music history, can do no better than present a cooked-up discussion of the self-same work fifty years after Davison and Apel and the EMI series (2005:68-72). And not to be outdone, the Stellenbosch University Choir, directed by Acáma Fick, presented a rhythmically quite striking interpretation in their 1988 concert programme. In 2007 a paper on this work was even read at the annual conference of the then Musicological Society of Southern Africa. These examples show how the reception of a particular work can achieve a momentum of its own.

It is necessary now to turn to the question posed at the beginning: why should one talk about Schütz in South Africa today? For many decades his music has been performed in school and church choirs amongst local German speaking Lutheran communities on a regular basis. There even exists a South African Heinrich Schütz Society, founded by Klaus von Delft, a professor of German literature at the University of the Free State, Hans Bodenstein and others in 1969.¹⁴ This society has offered annual “Schützwochen” (choir workshops or retreats devoted to the cultivation of the music of Schütz and other, mostly German, composers of sacred music of the past and present) ever since. The hundreds of people, young and old, who participated in these annual retreats and who have embraced the music of Schütz as a precious heritage, have come almost exclusively from German speaking communities in South Africa. For that reason the work of the SA Schütz Society, remarkable and valuable as it may be in itself, has remained peripheral and without much impact on the Schütz reception and musical life of the country at large.

The reception history of Schütz (and of his contemporaries) in South Africa is, however, highly significant in a round-about way. Why? Because it never happened! Neither the early music revival of the time between the two world wars or thereafter, nor the influence this had on contemporary church music was taken note of in South Africa. This is so despite the fact that the simultaneous and concomitant organ revival did make an important mark on South African musical culture and the liturgical revival in Europe did leave some traces in the reform and compilation of the Afrikaans hymnal of 1976. The only work by Schütz that became widely known amongst the Afrikaans speaking community and eventually even found its way into the *Liedboek van die Kerk* is the small-scale motet *Aller Augen warten auf dich, Herre* (Alle oë wag op U, o Here, *Liedboek* no. 569). The Stellenbosch University Choir under Philip McLachlan included the Dutch version, from where this work came into Afrikaans, on one of its earliest recordings, probably dating back to the 1950s. But not even a single example of the Becker psalms found its way into the *Liedboek*.¹⁵

of *Music in Sound*. This is the only work by Schütz to be discussed by David Boyden in his erstwhile widely prescribed text book *An Introduction to Music* (1971:177).

¹³ The same is true for earlier editions of this book.

¹⁴ Hans Bodenstein served as president of the society for several years, while von Delft was the executive secretary.

¹⁵ An interesting footnote to Schütz in South Africa is the fact that the composer Dawid Engela made an Afrikaans translation of Schütz's *St. Matthew Passion* (date unknown). I don't know

¹² A similar fate has befallen “The Seven Last Words on the Cross”: its inclusion in Davison and Apel (1950:33-35) was followed by a recording on the already mentioned volume V, *History*

South African composers of sacred and secular vocal music only took sporadic notice of the revival of a polyphonic idiom for choral writing that made itself felt elsewhere in the world since the 1920s. In works like *Agter die rante* (1960) or *Psalm 19* (1962) by Rosa Nepgen the writing is loosened up a little so as to avoid a note-against-note texture. Less can be said of the choral music of Hubert du Plessis, a sensitive lied composer who has a great affinity for setting words to music. Even in an “exemplary” (Grové, 2013)¹⁶ setting of a Boerneef text like “Hoe stil kan dit word as sedoos gaan lê” the texture is strictly homophonic, with the emphasis on very expressive harmony. His Boerneef settings *Die dor swart wêreld* and *Op waterkruintjiesgatseiland* op. 48 are no different. A similar tendency can be observed in the collection of choral music in the recently published *FAK-Sangbundel Volume II* (2012; pp. 430-599). A homophonic style of writing, that has its roots firmly in the 19th century, is predominant in the vast majority of the 27 works selected (of which slightly more than half are on sacred words).

To return once again to the question raised at the outset: what relevance can Heinrich Schütz and his music have in South Africa today? If Varwig maintains that the Schütz master narrative of the 19th and 20th century has been “increasingly deconstructed since the 1990s” (2011:5)¹⁷ and that the status of Schütz scholarship and performance has been “cemented” as a “minority interest”, then the question of his relevance in this country is difficult to answer in the positive. It goes without saying that nobody will be attracted to images of Schütz as the father of German music, as a standard bearer of what is Germanic in music, as the preacher of Lutheran doctrine, as the epitome of liturgical music or as the figurehead of a community ethos. We would find it easier to associate with the more clearly musical aspects of Schütz’s reception: the profoundly expressive qualities of his music, his creative response to stylistic diversity, his understanding of vocal music and his ability to translate language into music. Especially those composers who are exploring the Afrikaans language and literature for its musical potential will find it instructive to study the music of Schütz. While composers like Arnold van Wyk, Hubert du Plessis, Roelof Temmingh and others have succeeded admirably in setting texts in the Afrikaans language to music in the genre of the art song, it is by no means clear whether the “historical task” (to use Varwig’s words) of setting Afrikaans words to music in the genre of sacred or secular choral music has as yet been achieved to a significant degree. In this sense a new phase in the reception of Schütz and his music could come about, illustrating that each attempt to arrive at a newly relevant and valid interpretation of music is in itself already part of an ongoing reception history.

In conclusion: I hope to have shown how reception history is an extremely important aspect of music. It tells us as much about the music as it does about the ideology of the time and

whether this Afrikaans version was ever performed.

¹⁶ Programme notes for a concert in the Endler Hall, Stellenbosch. He uses the phrase “een van die uitsoekwerkies in die jong Afrikaanse koorliteratuur.”

¹⁷ Already on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of Schütz’s birth Joshua Rifkin contributed to the discourse “towards a new image of Heinrich Schütz” by suggesting that the *Psalmen Davids* and the three books of *Symphoniae sacrae* should be regarded as “representing” the “centre” of the composer’s output (1985:719-720). The problem with a suggestion like this is that it merely tries to replace one bias with another.

environment in which it is performed. If it does not take place it can have wider implications than merely being absent and for impoverishing audiences. In the case of South Africa it raises the question as to what could have been if Afrikaans and other South African choral music had opened itself up to the music of Heinrich Schütz and his contemporaries and to modern revivals of polyphonic music as they were practised in the wake of Neoclassicism in Europe. In the meantime Schütz will continue to appear in performances of early music and will continue to be embraced by those engaged in furthering the cause of that music.

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Martina Viljoen is an associate professor in musicology at the Odeion School of Music, University of the Free State. She graduated with an interdisciplinary doctorate that combined the fields of musicology, philosophy, and studies on visual culture. She publishes locally and internationally on topics concerning hymnology, musicology, and the aesthetics of music. She was the guest editor on critical theory and musicology in a special edition of *The International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, June 2005. She also serves on the advisory panel of *The International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, and regularly reviews articles, book chapters and books for academic publishers in South Africa and abroad. For the past two decades she has supervised a substantive number of doctoral, masters and honours studies, many of which have appeared in accredited publications.



email: viljoenM@ufs.ac.za

GOSPEL HYMNODY: A LIVING CHRONICLE OF SUFFERING AND HOPE – OR PROMISCUOUS EVANGELICAL HUSTLE?

MARTINA VILJOEN
ODEION SCHOOL OF MUSIC, UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

OPSOMMING

Die doel van hierdie artikel is om die historiese ontwikkeling van gospelmusiek na te gaan aan die hand van die vraag of huidige gekommersialiseerde vorme daarvan steeds die godsdienstige oorsprong en ekspressiewe krag van die historiese model huldig. 'n Aantal "spirituals" en gospel liedere word aan die hand van metafoor-analise ontleed, waarby die benadering steun op Peter Jackson (2006) se argument dat die metaforiese neerslag van "gebaar" in godsdienstige diskoers op 'n diepgaande wyse by konstruksie van kulturele oordrag en historiese geheue betrokke is. Die fenomeen van lofprysingsmusiek word kortliks bespreek as invloedryke verskynsel binne Suid-Afrikaanse denominasies waar dit algemeen as "gospelmusiek" bekend staan. Daar word bevind dat hedendaagse gekommersialiseerde vorme die aard van gospelmusiek radikaal verander het, maar dat dit steeds as outentieke uitdrukkings van geloof gesien kan word. Nietemin is die sosiale appèl van historiese swart gospelmusiek nie in hedendaagse gekommersialiseerde voorbeelde aanwesig nie, en sluit die laasgenoemde eerder by die sentimente van "wit" gospelhymnodie aan. Onlangse voorbeelde van gospelkleetsrym weerspieël egter onverstaanbaarheid en godsdienstige