

Political Space and Political Speech/Song in Early Seventeenth-Century Breslau

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In 1611 and 1620 the Silesian Estates and the city of Breslau welcomed their newly elected overlords (Matthias II, King of the Romans and King of Bohemia, and Frederick V, Palatine Elector and King of Bohemia, respectively) with traditional celebrations. Both royal entries included welcoming speeches, gifts, processions through the city, triumphal arches, special liturgies, and music composed specifically for the occasions by Samuel Besler. The outward forms of both celebrations were similar; however, the music composed for them and the places here the music was performed differed greatly.

Matthias was a staunch Catholic who took a dim view of his Protestant subjects, especially a Lutheran imperial city such as Breslau. The celebrations for Matthias included a traditional triumphal arch erected in the city center, from which a newly composed double-choir motet as performed. The motet, sung in Latin, was a traditional plea for peace. Its style and structure is an example of what Athanasius Kircher later called "musica politica." After passing through the arch, Matthias attended a festive service in Breslau's Catholic cathedral on Sand Island.

Frederick, although Calvinist, saw himself as a guarantor of religious freedom for all Protestants, not only Lutherans but also for Calvinists, Hussites, Czech Brethren, and Anabaptists. His entry was arranged much like the one for Matthias; however, no Catholics participated in it. There was a triumphal arch, but the message it gave was quite different than the one built for Matthias. The entry also concluded with a festive service, but in the Lutheran Church of St. Elisabeth. The two newly composed motets, also for double choir, were German settings of Psalm 19 and Psalm 150. The primary musical features of these motets is that both are based on metrical psalm tunes from the Genevan Psalter and both are composed in the same style as German Lutheran chorale motets.

The music composed for both occasions and the spaces in which they were performed are concrete examples of political space and political speech used to communicate different messages to completely different rulers.