

« La musique rare et singulière... » Musical Accompaniment of the Festivities of the Order of the Golden Fleece in Prague (1585) in the Light of Newly Discovered Document

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The ceremony of the Order of Golden Fleece in Prague on 2 and 3 June 1585 became one of the greatest festivities of Rudolfine Prague. During the festival, Emperor Rudolf II (1552-1612) became a member of the Order together with his brother Ernst (1553-1595) and his uncle Karl II, Duke of Styria (1540-1590). Among the newly received knights of the Order there were also two members of high Bohemian nobility – William of Rosenberg (1535-1592) and Leonhard of Harrach (1514-1590). A detailed printed description of the festivities, published in 1587 by Paul Zehendtner vom Zehendtgrub, the secretary to the Archduke Ferdinand of Tirol, has been preserved. Zehendtner's text explicitly mentions music performance several times. However, it lacks more precise information on compositions performed. The paper therefore considers hitherto unknown narrative source preserved in the archives of the Order of Golden Fleece in Vienna. A manuscript report of the Order's secretary Oudard Cornu dit Bourgogne (†1594) throws more light on the musical part of the celebration and offers more hypotheses which compositions could have sounded through St. Vitus' Cathedral in Prague on 2 June 1585.