



Evangelická teologická fakulta

Oponentský posudek bakalářské práce

Název práce: Obraz husitství v operách 19. a 20. století.

Jméno studenta: Tomáš Gemza

Vedoucí: Dr. Pieter Morée **Oponent:** doc. Tim Noble PhD

Studium:

Text posudku:

The theme is potentially very interesting, looking at the image of the Hussite movement in operas during the time of the National Revival in the 19th century – the title refers to the 20th century, but in fact ignores it completely. After an introduction the work begins with an investigation of the use of music in the Hussite period, the hymnals and some important representative hymns from the period. Then, after a brief introduction to the history of opera and more specifically to operas with broadly Hussite themes, it offers a detailed description of three such operas, “Blaník” by Zdeněk Fibich, Karel Bendl’s “Dítě Tábora” and finally “Nevěsta husitská” by Karel Šebor. The work finishes with a concluding summary and some final thoughts of the student on the subject matter.

Positively, it should be said that the student has tried to work hard on the theme, and has done a lot of research, including going to the National Library in search of libretti. At that level, the work fulfils the demands of a bachelor’s work. There is also both a realisation of the complexity of the task the student has set himself, and some occasional insights into the real nature of the discussion.

However, the work is not without problems. Although layout does not make for a good work, the structure and even appearance of the text does no favours to the student. There is an extremely large upper page margin, which makes it look like each page starts one third of the way down. But more seriously, there is no clear division into either parts or chapters, just a series of sub-headings. To be fair to the student, there is a relatively clear structure, but this would have been greatly helped by having two or three chapters (“Music in the Hussite Period”, “The Birth of Opera and the Return of Hussite Themes”, “Three Nineteenth-Century Operas with Hussite Themes” might serve as one possible structure). The way the text runs on at the moment is not to the work’s advantage.

However, even with a clearer articulation of the structure of the work, there are problems. The part on music in the Hussite times takes up roughly one fifth of a dissertation which claims to be about the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Its relevance (except for the use of one of the Hussite hymns in an opera) is not clear, however interesting it may be in itself. The real interest of the work – something that on one or two occasions the student notes, especially in the last line of his conclusion – is in how the Hussite myth was used to support the ideas and aims of the Czech national revival in the nineteenth century. This means that the Hussite music itself is not really relevant, and if it is, it would be more in similarities in the way language is used. This is not commented on in the text, but some of the rhyme schemes and syllable counts would seem to me to be reminiscent of some of the Hussite hymns. Is this true for the music too? That would perhaps make this section more relevant.

The descriptions of the operas are thorough, but it is not always clear what end such extended descriptions serve. Occasionally there is a helpful comment from the student about what he finds important, but otherwise it is just a prolonged telling of the story, with some quotations. That is useful in the sense that these are generally not very well-known operas, but it does not seem to contribute greatly to the development of any argument.

The work overall then, whilst meeting the lower level of demands for a bachelor’s work, is lacking a driving and central focus. It does not manage to relate all the elements it uses, and in the end does not even give a very clear picture of the image of the Hussite movement in 19th century Czech opera. This would seem to be there as an anti-Catholic (and therefore by implication anti-Habsburg) element, showcasing a supposed glorious moment in Czech national history and identity-formation. But it is precisely that element that would need to be developed in this work.

Práci doporučuji k obhajobě

Zdůvodnění, závěr:

The work meets the basic levels of a bachelor's work. Although not well-done, the argument is at least understandable and the text is relatively clear. There is a certain amount of reading done, and some minimal critical engagement with sources used. These are rather limited, and the excuses for avoiding literature in foreign languages seem to me to be simply reasons not to do too much work, something the student is clearly keen on. The formatting is not well done – for example, it is customary to put book titles in italic font, and the page numbers in the list of contents do not always agree with the actual page numbers of the text. I would say that the work is between D and E.

Otázky, podněty k diskusi při obhajobě:

The main question that remains is the following: what is the image of the Hussite movement in the three operas the student has chosen? The subsequent questions are what this image says about nineteenth-century understandings of what it was / is to be Czech, and what this has to do with the historical realities of the fifteenth and sixteenth century Hussite movement and its successor bodies. And the final question, as this is a work in church history would be what this has to say about understandings of religion and religious belonging in the nineteenth century Czech context, and the relation between religious affiliation or non-affiliation and national identity.

Navrhované hodnocení: (A-výtečně, B-velmi dobře, C-dobře, D-uspokojivě, E-dostatečně, F-nedostatečně) **D-uspokojivě**

V Praze dne 23.8.2016

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podpis oponenta