

Organology as methodology to find realistic elements: musical instruments in Swiss marriage announcements and glass panels of the 17th century

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In Protestant Zurich of the 16th and 17th century luxury was forbidden and splendor remained behind private doors. Special forms of celebrations were developed in order to express admiration and respect for the wealthy and the powerful. Printed marriage announcements distributed to the public and painted glass panels as marriage gifts preserved in considerable number give evidence of this aspect of social life of the city. These gifts are *encomia*, glowing and enthusiastic praises of the bride groom and his father and family and of the bride and her family. Pictures with music scenes in printed wedding announcements are rare. One of the few examples is the following copper plate engraving for the announcement of the marriage between Johann Bernhard Holtzhalb and Elisabeth Hirzel in Zurich on 26 February 1644 by Conrad Meyer (1618-1689), the Zurich painter and engraver well known for his portraits and realistic landscape paintings.



Tædæ Emblematico-Ænigmaticæ, In Nuptias auspiciatissimas, Nobilitate, Pietate, omniq[ue] virtutum decore eximij Viri, Dn. Joh. Bernhaldi Holtzhalbii Inclytæ Reipubl.Tig. Ducentum-Viri; Viri Nobilitate, Pietate, omniq[ue] virtutum splendore præstantißimi, Dn. Joh. Bernhaldi Holtzhalbii p.m. Filij, Sponsi : ut et Genere, omniq[ue] virtutum nitore florentißimæ Virginis, Elisabetæ Hirtzelix, Magnifici, Amplißimiq[ue] Viri, Dn. Solomonis Hirtzelii ejusdem Reipubl. Tribuniplebis, & Laborophori, Filix, Sponsæ. Accensæ a Johanne Lavatero, b.l.st. XXVI. Febr. feliciter celebratas Tiguri 1644. (© Winterthurer Bibliotheken, Sondersammlungen, XVII_4687/23. [4] Bl. : III. ; 20 cm, signed "C.M.fe." [i.e. Conrad Meyer fecit]).

The three poems in Greek, Latin and German below the picture explain that we see a hunter who catches a hind not with bow and arrow but with the melody of his music instrument. A viola, partly hidden behind a lute, a crumhorn, a cornet and a trombone (or trumpet) lie on the floor. These representatives of all

categories of musical instruments are the emblem of *musica*. The hunter resembles Orpheus because the haunted animal, a small hind (female deer) in allusion to the bride’s name Hirtzel, is attracted by his music. But instead of bow and lyre he holds a flute, the instrument of a shepherd who calms the animal with love tunes. By combination of these allusions the picture, according to local tradition, hides several enigmata.

Iconographic models of the animal can be traced back to Zurich book engravings from the 16th century. The hind resembles the deer in Christoffel Froschauer’s folio bible from 1531 in the illustration of chapter two of the genesis (God creates Eve from Adam’s rib) engraved by a Zurich artist, probably Hans Asper, after a composition by Hans Springinskee. A deer is also among the animals from the Alps in the *Chronik der alten Eidgenossenschaft* by Johannes Stumpf with illustrations by Hans Asper, printed by Froschauer in 1547-48. A few years later similar pictures of deers and also other animals are published in Conrad Gessner’s *Historiae animalium*, printed by Froschauer in 1551-58, and in *Icones animalium quadrupedibus oviparis* from 1560.

Tracking down models for the musical instruments is more difficult. If we compare these instruments with Sebastian Virdung’s *Musica getutscht*, printed 1511 in Basel, and with Michael Praetorius’s *De organographia (Syntagma musicum 2)*, Wolfbüttel, 1619, Conrad Meyer’s instruments appear more modern than Virdung’s, mainly the viola in comparison to Virdung’s strange *Gross Geigen* (a *viola da gamba*), but more old fashioned than Praetorius’s instruments, mainly the string instrument. The only partly visible resonance body of the viola of the marriage picture features corner blocks and s-holes (reversed left to right!), known in Italy since about 1530, while Praetorius’s instruments of the violin family show modern f-holes mainly in use since about 1600.

Close resemblance of wind instruments appears in a consort with cornets and a trombone in the royal wedding scene used several times in Stumpf’s *Chronik* (1547-48), probably based on a design of Hans Holbein the younger. The recorder and the way it is played reminds us of the recorder players and open part books on the title page of Ganassi’s *Fontegara* (1535) with a bent and straight cornet in the foreground and string instruments with C-holes and a lute shown from the back side hanged on the wall.

More frequent are music scenes in the upper or lower corner fields of

glass panels which were not only presented as marriage gifts but also on other occasions. The unknown painter of Orpheus in the woods dated 1557 (three years before Conrad Gessner's first publication) seems to be familiar with the animals of the genesis in Froschauer's 1531 bible. But Orpheus's viola da gamba or lyra looks archaic, all the more as the picture is reversed left to right (Orpheus holds the bow with his left hand). As it seems the artist worked after a model for an engraving. The second glass panel of the pair of panels in the respective field shows a hunter with horn and dogs chasing the deer to the left hand side towards a net. (Glarus, Saint Fridolin for Carl Egeri, Zug; monastery of Muri, cloister; date at the bottom between the coat of arms).

Even more archaic is the harp played by Orpheus in a pen design for a glass painting, copied 1610 by Lorenz Lingg in Murer's atelier in Zurich from an earlier pen design of 1600-06. Also earlier harps always have a bent upper part to attach the strings. Here this part is straight while the usually straight or slightly outwards curved vertical column is bent in reversed s-shape (for comparison see woodcut of the common harp from Praetorius's *Syntagma musicum*, 2/1619 and Virdung's *Harpffen*, 1511). These unrealistic details seem surprising because the animals are quite close to nature and fit well between Froschauer and Gessner (Kupferstichkabinett der Staatlichen Kunsthalle in Karlsruhe, figure 591.2; compare to Sammlung Wyss, Bern Historisches Museum, Inv. 20036.404; compare to design from Sammlung Lavater, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Vienna, LAV 96/2040).

From his professional training and his family relations we may assume that Conrad Meyer knew at least the Zurich book illustrations and maybe even the model for a glass painting or wood cut from Murer's atelier. Meyer in 1649 married Susanna Murer (1614–1679), granddaughter of Jos Murer and niece of the glass painter, painter and engraver Christoph Murer (1558-1614). Meyer's designs of musical instruments are more realistic and modern than his contemporaries and predecessors. Still the mistakes in the design of the viola (reversed s-holes) and the lute (only four strings attached in a strange way) show that he did not design real instruments but worked after models. Direct borrowing from Italian and Flemish pictures with music scenes and open part books is possible (during his stay in Frankfurt on the Main in 1539 he evidently got acquainted with Flemish paintings) and needs further research.