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The embellishment of St. Cyril and Methodius' church in Prague-Karlín. Aim for the style integrity within the forty years of the ecclesiastic art development

ANNOTATION

This article concerns the embellishment of St. Cyril and Methodius' church in Prague-Karlín as a supplement to the previous article about its architectural realisation. Part of the embellishment, realised by eminent artists of the period, was created immediately after the architectural construction of the church, consecrated in 1863. The larger part, however, was not realised until much later, down to the activity of The Association for the Embellishment of St. Cyril and Methodius' church, founded in 1884. Recently discovered Records of the Association, which reveal frequent backstage discussions about the assignment of the tasks and their realisations, provide precious archive evidence. The article discusses also the unfulfilled conceptions of the embellishment. The church furniture and accessories of the 20th century are presented only marginally.

SUMMARY

The church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Prague-Karlín was realised in 1854–1863 by the architect Ignác Ullmann on the base of proposals by the architect Karl Rösner from Vienna. This Neo Romanesque basilica is an important ecclesiastical monument of the 19th century historicism period, and being the first realisation of this character, it became almost a model for other Prague suburb churches. Its art embellishment is a valuable and integral complex, covering mainly the extensive inner embellishment of the wall paintings beside the sculpture art in the front façade, figurative stained glass and the period furnishings. Karlín church was badly affected by the floods in August 2002 and extensively reconstructed in 2003–2007.

The construction of the Karlín church, including its embellishment, was to be completed to the millennium of St. Cyril (Constantin) and Methodius Apostles' arrival to Moravia in 1863. This aim proved to be too ambitious; although the architecture was completed, only the minor part of the embellishment could be realised due to the lack of finances. The intention of completing the embellishment was recovered with the approaching millennium of St. Methodius' death (1855) and with the 50 years' anniversary of Franz Joseph's I ascension to the throne (1898). The embellishment of Karlín church comes therefor from two independent phases, with a single exception. The first, related to the construction of the church architecture, was designed by the artists Václav Levý, Josef Mánes, Josef Matyáš Trenkwald or Petr Maixner. The second came with the foundation of The Association for the Embellishment of St. Cyril and Methodius' church in 1884, when artists František Sequens, Zikmund Rudl and painters Karl and Franz Jobst from Vienna were involved in the interior. Additions to the embellishment followed in the 20th century by František Urban, Čeněk Vosmík or Břetislav Kafka. The leading characters connected with the construction of the church were Václav Štulc, patriotically oriented priest, together with the Prague archbishop Bedřich Schwarzenberg. The new impulse for the completion of the embellishment in the 1880s was given by Ferdinand Lehner, a chaplain in Karlín.

This study presents a detailed overview of the embellishment in the period from the 1860s to the end of the functioning of The Association by the late 1930s, which is an interval of almost 70 years. The aim of the study is to evaluate the archive evidence, dominated by the newly accessible Records of the Association or the news in the period press. This article also contributes to the better understanding of the chronology of the complemented embellishment, the authorship of some parts or the ideological conception of the embellishment, rectified by real means.

Fig. 1. Prague 8-Karlín, St. Cyril and Methodius' church. General view of the front façade from the park (photo author / F. Malý, 2018).

Fig. 2. Prague 8-Karlín, St. Cyril and Methodius' church. View into the interior of the main nave from the presbytery (photo author, 2018).

Fig. 3. Ignác Ullmann (?), 1862: proposal of the ciborium main altar for the Karlín church (Archive ŘMK of the Karlín

parish 1862, scanned 2016).

Fig. 4. Kamil Pražák, Antonín Horák (?), 1868: View into the interior of the Karlín church. Lithograph as a donation for the construction of the main altar, paper (NG SGK, inv. nr. R 49285; photo © National Gallery Prague, 2018)

Fig. 5. Prague 8-Karlín, St. Cyril and Methodius' church. Václav Levý, 1867–1869: Christ between St. Cyril and Methodius, tympanum of the main portal (photo author, 2018).

Fig. 6. Prague 8-Karlín, St. Cyril and Methodius' church. Josef Matyáš Trenkwald, Gustav Vacek, 1867–1873: Christ in mandorla carried by angels, the semi-dome of the main apse (photo author, 2018).

Fig. 7. Prague 8-Karlín, St. Cyril and Methodius' church. Petr Maixner, Karel Maixner, completed in 1869: wall painting with the scenes of St. Wenceslaus' life by his altar in the southwestern side nave (photo author, 2018).

Fig. 8. Petr Maixner, 1864 (?): proposal of the wall painting by the altar of St. Wenceslaus in the Karlín church. Watercolour, 880 × 440 mm (incl. the mat; MMP, inv. nr. H 125.544).

Fig. 9. Petr Maixner, 1862: Assassination of St. Wenceslaus. Illustration from *Česko-moravská kronika* (copied from ZAP ET AL. 1862, 185–186).

Fig. 10. Prague 8-Karlín, St. Cyril and Methodius' church. Petr Maixner, Karel Maixner, completed in 1872: The Seven Joys of the Virgin Mary. Wall painting by Mary altar in the northeast side nave (photo author, 2018).

Fig. 11. Josef Mánes, around 1868: study of a head for the embellishment of the main door of St. Cyril and Methodius' church in Karlín, pencil, white chalk, paper, 154 × 202 mm (© private collection of Patrik Šimon, Prague).

Fig. 12. Josef Scheiwl, Čeněk Maixner, 1874: schematic depiction of the main doorway into the Karlín church after the proposals by Josef Mánes (copied from *sine* 1874, 353).

Fig. 13. Prague 8-Karlín, St. Cyril and Methodius' church. Foundation activity of St. Wenceslaus, medallion of the main door, set in 1879, medallions cast in The Götzl and Daněk factory in Karlín. Models of the medallions were created by Ludvík Šimek and Karel Dvořák after the sketches by Josef Mánes (photo author, 2015).

Fig. 14. Josef Matěj Navrátil, 1861: The proposal of the embellishment of the christening chapel in the Karlín church – God Father and the Four Evangelists. Gouache, paper, 455 × 294 mm (NG SGK, inv. nr. K 8654; photo © National Gallery Prague, 2018).

Fig. 15. Josef Matěj Navrátil, 1861: The Birth of Christ. The proposal of a wall painting for the Karlín church, gouache, paper, 275 × 220 mm (© private collection of Patrik Šimon, Prague).

Fig. 16. Bedřich Wachsmann, 1886?: view into the interior of the Karlín church prior the second phase of the embellishment, before the dividing of the main nave painting fields (copied from *sine* 1886, 733).

Fig. 17. Manuscripts of the Records of the Association for the embellishment of St. Cyril and Methodius' church from 1885–1938, an entry of the negotiation with the painters František Sequens and Zikmund Rudl (Archive ŘMK of Karlín parish 1885–1938, entry of 19. 12. 1895, fol. 172; photo author, 2018).

Fig. 18. Prague 8-Karlín, St. Cyril and Methodius' church. The window of the southwestern side nave, St. Edward and St. Theresa, made in the glassworks in Innsbruck after the proposal by Josef Mocker and František Ženíšek, donated by Eduard Brosch with his wife Emilie and Jan Kundrát with his wife Terezie, fitted latest in 1888 (photo author, 2018).

Fig. 19. František Ženíšek, 1886: St. Edward and St. Theresa, cardboard for the window of the Karlín church (copied from V. W. 1886, 596).

Fig. 20. Prague 8-Karlín, St. Cyril and Methodius' church. Karl and Franz Jobst, 1886: medallion of St. Agnes of Rome, ornamental painting of the vault of the main nave (photo T. Berger – T. Záhoř, 2005).

Fig. 21. Prague 8-Karlín, St. Cyril and Methodius' church. Karl Jobst, 1886: The Fair Shepherd. The lunette by the central portal of the main nave (photo T. Berger – T. Záhoř, 2005).

Fig. 22. Max Pirner, 1886–1887: The death of St. Methodius. Proposal for a lunette painting of a Cyril and Methodius cycle for the presbytery of the Karlín church, watercolour – pastel, cardboard, 215 × 275 mm (NG SGK, inv. nr. K 39703; photo © National Gallery Prague, 2018).

Fig. 23. Prague 8-Karlín, St. Cyril and Methodius' church. The window of the northeast side nave, St. Ludmila and St. Edmund, made in the glassworks in Innsbruck after the proposal by Josef Mocker and František Sequens, donated by Emanuel Brabec with his wife Marie and JUDr. Edmund Kaizl, fitted in 1888 (photo author, 2018).

Fig. 24. Prague 8-Karlín, St. Cyril and Methodius' church. View into the presbytery (photo author, 2018).

Fig. 25. František Sequens, prior 1890: Ascension of Christ. Coloured preliminary drawing for a scene from the Christological cycle of the main nave of the Karlín church, charcoal – watercolour, paper, 405 × 650 mm (NG SGK, inv. nr. K 30753; photo © National Gallery Prague, 2018).

Fig. 26. Prague 8-Karlín, St. Cyril and Methodius' church. František Sequens, 1892: The Death of St. Methodius. Lunette painting of Cyril and Methodius cycle by the evangelic (northeast) side of the presbytery (photo T. Berger – T. Záhoř, 2003).

Fig. 27. František Sequens, prior to 1890: composition proposal for the evangelic (northeast) side of the presbytery of the Karlín church, pen and pencil on paper, 313 × 264 mm (ZČM, inv. nr. UMP 19066; photo author, 2014).

Fig. 28. Prague 8-Karlín, St. Cyril and Methodius' church. Zikmund Rudl, 1896–1898: Crucifixion of St. Peter from the Apostles' Acts cycle. The epistle (southwest) side of the main nave (photo T. Berger – T. Záhoř, 2005).

Fig. 29. František Sequens, prior to 1896: The Birth of Christ. Proposal for a lunette painting of Cyril and Methodius cycle for the evangelic (northeast) side of the main nave of the Karlín church, coloured ink drawing on trace paper, 645 × 900 mm (MMP, inv. nr. 037.561).

Fig. 30. Prague 8-Karlín, St. Cyril and Methodius' church. František Sequens, Felix Jenewein (?), Antonín Krisan, Gustav Miksch, 1897–1898: The Birth of Christ. A scene of the Christological cycle on the evangelic (northeast) side of the main nave (photo T. Berger – T. Záhoř, 2006).

Fig. 31. Felix Jenewein, 1896–1898: The Birth of Christ. Proposal for a painting of the Christological cycle for the evangelic (northeast) side of the main nave of the Karlín church, charcoal – watercolour, paper on cardboard, 693 × 965 mm (originally NG SGK, inv. nr. K 39856, currently unknown location; copied from MUSIL 1996, 231).

Fig. 32. Felix Jenewein, 1896–1898: Arrival of the Apostles, proposal for a lunette painting of Cyril and Methodius cycle for the presbytery of the Karlín church, charcoal – watercolour, paper on cardboard, 678 × 956 mm (© The Felix Jenewein Gallery in Kutná Hora, inv. nr. VU 507/G).

Fig. 33. Prague 8-Karlín, St. Cyril and Methodius' church. Antonín Krisan, Gustav Miksch, Felix Jenewein (?), 1898: Arrival of the Apostles. Lunette painting of Cyril and Methodius cycle by the south side of the presbytery (photo author, 2018).

Fig. 34. Prague 8-Karlín, St. Cyril and Methodius' church. František Urban, 1903: Christening of Christ. Embellishment of the christening chapel (photo author, 2018).

Fig. 35. Vienna, Altlerchenfeld, parish church „zu den heiligen sieben Zufluchten“ („The Seven Saints' Refuges“). View into the main nave interior (photo author, 2017).

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