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From Practice to Theory: Bernardino Stefonio's *De tragoedia*

Wednesday, 22.06.2016, 18:00
Zentrum für Alte Kulturen („Atrium“)
Langer Weg 11, SR 5

Bernardino Stefonio (Poggio Mirteto, 1562 – Modena, 1620) is one of the most prolific and influential authors in the history of Jesuit theatre and, more generally, in the history of Renaissance drama. His tragedies – *Sancta Symphorosa* (1591), *Crispus* (1597), and *Flavia* (1600) – represent the first attempt to shape contemporary religious theatre on the model of classical theatre. Stefonio is therefore often presented as a playwright who influenced, through his plays, the theoretical reflection and Jesuit treatises on drama. The discovery of a manuscript preserving a work *De tragoedia*, written by Stefonio at the end of the 16th century, offers a new perspective on the influence of Stefonio as a theoretician of the tragic in the Collegio Romano and on the theoretical background of his plays. Moreover, this text is presented as a dialogue between five of the most distinguished Italian humanists of the time, that is, Jacopo Sadoletto, Pietro Bembo, Giangiorgio Trissino, Annibal Caro, and Bernardo Tasso. The analysis of the dialogue offers a contribution to the understanding of the relationship between the Jesuit Society and the previous humanistic cultural tradition.

