

DLA thesis

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**How Mihály Mosonyi's Composing Style was Formed in the Face of his
Church Music Compositions**

with his Three Masses Known so far in the Centre (1840-1854)

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I. Precedents of the Research

Mihály Mosonyi's church music life-work was only slightly touched upon in some early publications. Kornél Ábrányi, his first major biography writer in *Mihály Mosonyi, His Life and Character* (1872) undoubtedly produced something significant, however, it has a number of shortcomings and it lacks accuracy.

Following Ábrányi, in 1936 János Káldor published a study in German entitled *Michael Mosonyi*, which turned out to be a milestone. In this study Káldor highlights the shortcomings of Ábrányi's writing, and gives an analysis of some of Mosonyi's works for the first time. He was striving to be exhaustive and he even made a list of Mosonyi's works on the basis of all available information. He professedly found Mosonyi's Hungarian spirited works more valuable.

István Sonkoly definitely concentrates on Mosonyi's church music. In the short articles *Mihály Mosonyi's Church Music* (1941) in the journal 'Katolikus Kántor', *Mosonyi Mihály's Unknown Ave Verum* (1946) in the journal 'Magyar Kórus' and in *Mihály Mosonyi's Unknown Manuscripts* (1948) in the journal 'Zenei Szemle' he praises Mosonyi's sacred music. However, without any thorough knowledge of the compositions he could not determine its rank among other similar works of the period. Although he contradicted the theory according to which Mosonyi composed only Hungarian works after he had assumed a Hungarian name, he could only prove it with the choral work *Libera*.

The *Mihály Bónis-Monograph* (also published in Hungarian), which first appeared in 1960 (the extended version in 2002), relies on basically all the stockpiled data and corrects the incorrect pieces of information. He also considered Mosonyi's nationally inspired compositions the top of his career, however, he avoided forming extreme opinions. The above mentioned publications do not go into details about Mosonyi's sacred music, and despite the fact that Bónis has been researching Mosonyi ever since and he regularly publishes his results, there are still inaccuracies.

I could back up Mosonyi's life-work in the field of church music with the help of other sources. The thesis entitled *The Music Life of the Main Church of Pest in the Middle of the 19th Century, in the Face of Ferenc Bräuer's Conductor Activities* by Ágnes Horváth (2012) proved to be very useful. The accurate documents found in archives and music libraries along with church music centeredness are all traceable here.

Thanks to Peter Scholcz's researches more and more of Mosonyi's sacred music has turned up in the past 20 years. He has mainly focused on performing and recording the compositions. He has not published his research results, and the modern publications have only served his own use. In my thesis I would like to provide a thorough summary of Mosonyi's life-work in this field.

II. Sources

I started my research relying on the latest list of works made by Károly Sziklavári and Péter Sholcz's research results (through personal discussions) of the last two decades. Besides the sources listed in the previous part (Precedents of the Research) I also studied Mosonyi's publications in the topic of church music which appeared in *Zenészeti Lapok*. I read Liszt's letters written to Mosonyi and baron Augusz, and I studied relevant writings about the facts determining the music style of the period and before.

Zsuzsa Domokos: *Franz Liszt's Esztergom Mass in Mihály Mosonyi's Interpretation* (2016)

Veronika Juhász: ... "It is the young generation of the nation from whom we can expect the cultivation of Hungarian music ..." How Mihály Mosonyi supported the cause of Hungarian music (2016)

Zoltán Farkas: *From Topos to Style: an Analysis of the Music of Minor Music masters in the 18th Century* (2012)

Ágnes Horváth: *Cecilianism in Hungary from 1870-1950* (2018)

Zsuzsa Domokos: *Franz Liszt's Esztergom Mass in Mihály Mosonyi's Interpretation* (2015)

Ágnes Sas: *Music Festivals and Musicians of St Martin's Cathedral of Bratislava in the 18th Century* (1998)

Katalin Szőnyi-Szerző: *Facts for the Music History of Kosice* (2017)

Ágnes Watzaka: *The Prince of Esztergom's Art World: Károly Seyler, 1815-1884* (2008)

Bónis's writings about the relationship between Liszt and Mosonyi and his shorter articles in connection with Mosonyi were also of great help to me: *Franz Liszt and Mihály Mosonyi* (2005); *Liszt, Erkel and Mosonyi in a Viennese Paper* (2011); *Mosonyiana, the Latest Achievements of the Mosonyi Research, I-IV* (1989); *Rakoczi March, Kossuth Symphony, Székely fonó, 20 writings about Hungarian Music* (2015).

The coverage of Mosonyi's works in the period's concert life is of high importance, so I studied the relevant parts of the following books: *Franz Liszt in Hungary* by Legány Dezső (1986), *Vocal fons. Hungarian Music Life of the 19th Century in the Face of Critics* by Marianne Pándi (2001), *Franz Liszt's Concerts in Budapest. Chronicles of Sixty Decades* by Ede Sebestyén (1944); and read newspaper articles of the period.

Besides these I relied on some useful parts of books and studies which contributed to getting to know and evaluating Mosonyi better: *The Master of Hungarian Music. Mihály Mosonyi* by Géza Falk (1937), *Retospect 2* by Zoltán Kodály (2007), *Data for Mihály Mosonyi's Family History* by Michael Gollowitzer (1973), *Centuries of Hungarian Music* by Bence Szabolcsi (1961), *Reference Book of Hungarian Music History* (1979).

I received the music to be studied from the Music Department of Széchenyi Library, from Péter Sholcz, László Tardy and from the Music Department of Liszt Museum.

III. Research Method

During my work I had to study a lot of literature to extract the information necessary for my thesis. I also researched writings about Mosonyi's contemporaries, I was striving to feel the spirit of the period so that I could understand Mosonyi's mentality as deeply as possible. To achieve this end I studied not only the writings tightly related to the topic but I also looked into all the references. In my thesis I do not touch upon Mosonyi's other workfields, I even mention biographical data only when needed for the topic. I also compared reports of his time and contemporary composers' works to those written by Mosonyi so that I could highlight Mosonyi's outstanding art.

As far as the stylistic analysis for the study of music is concerned I relied on my own experience of 32 years of oratory singing and 25 years of oratory conducting. My model was Emil Platen's study of J. S. Bach's St. Matthew Passion (2006) and the *Notes for Haydn's Six Big Masses* by Benjamin Rajeczky (1960).

In the Hungarian versions of the foreign texts – apart from some well-known psalms and sacred quotations – I was trying to translate everything word for word in the interest of a better understanding.

My thesis can contribute to the fuller exploration of Hungarian church music of the 19th century, and hopefully Mosonyi will not be mentioned among the undeservedly forgotten minor masters, but will be remembered as the founding father of romantic Hungarian church music.

IV. Research results

I was truly impressed by Mosonyi's sacred music, and as a performing conductor I was surprised to see that not only did he never appear in concert programmes but it was also difficult to get his scores. First I wanted to deal with the whole of his life-work, but when I saw that the assessment of his church music – even by experts – was not worthy of him, I decided to do everything in my power to change this.

My aim was to prove that Mosonyi was a lot more at home in church music than in other more highly praised nationally inspired genres. He felt at ease in sacred language, and these works are basic values in Hungarian national romanticism.

My thesis is the first to analyse Mosonyi's church music in depth, especially his Mass No. 4 in A major, which has never got any attention in any publications. I would like to prove that from the beginning Mosonyi had a very well-based romantic musical language including his characteristic and specific style. In the first half of my thesis I summarized the research results published so far, and in the second half I analysed Mosonyi's known church music compositions from the point of view of form, harmony and orchestration. It, too, comes as a novelty that I made a comparative analysis of his three known masses also comparing them to works written by his contemporaries who influenced him. As a result of this I found that many of the features of his own style had appeared in his first sacred composition, Mass in C major. And although the influence of the Vienna classicists can undoubtedly be felt, he has got his own special, romantic features.

V.Documentations of activities related to the topic of the thesis

On several occasions I have had the opportunity to perform Mosonyi's sacred compositions as a part leader in Debrecen Kodály Choir, as the president of the Music Society of Hajdú-Bihar county and as the conductor of Sol Oriens Choir.

As a conductor:

18th December 2010: Advent concert of Sol Oriens Choir– Libera and Sanctus, Benedictus, Agnus Dei from Mass in C major (Assembly Hall of Debrecen University). Performers: Andrea Muzsi, Sára Repka, János Vincze, Máté Fülep, Lyra Symphonic Orchestra

19th December 2015: Advent concert of Sol Oriens Choir – Libera and Mass in C major (St. Anne's Church, Debrecen). Performers: Andrea Muzsi, Sára Repka, Gergely Biri, József Csávás, an orchestra specially organised for the occasion

6th December 2015: festive concert of the Music Society of Hajdú-Bihar county – Libera performed by all choirs (Liszt Hall of Debrecen Music University)

17th December 2016: Advent concert of Sol Oriens Choir – Ave Maria, Mass in F major (St. Anne's Church, Debrecen). Performers: Kármén Bódi, Johanna Rapcsák, Ádám Mike

18th September 2015: as a singer I took part in a concert conducted by Ádám Medveczky– Jubilate Deo, Mass in C major (Matthias Church, Budapest). Performers: Zsuzsanna Bazsinka, Jutta Bokor, Zoltán Nyári, Ferenc Valter, Debrecen Kodály Choir, MÁV Symphony Orchestra.