

DLA Thesis

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Interpretative Approaches to the
Organ Works of Jean-Louis Florentz

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I. Background and research objectives

The literature dealing with the work of Jean-Louis Florentz has so far been unexplored in Hungarian. One of the important objectives of our dissertation is to introduce the life and œuvre of the composer to the Hungarian academic community, thereby initiating domestic Florentz research and promoting more frequent performances of his organ works. Florentz's interdisciplinary personality and compositional individuality were shaped by diverse cultural and scientific experiences. The international scholarship on Florentz has primarily focused on illustrating the inspirational background of his works, analyzing and contextualizing his music-theoretical innovations, and uncovering the symbolic systems behind the compositions. Performances of organ pieces and their transcriptions for different instrument types have only been briefly touched upon in previous studies. Consequently, there is a gap in the literature regarding a comparative examination of the performative aspects of his works in relation to their theoretical background. Therefore, another key aim of this dissertation is to study the interpretative aspects of Florentz's organ works, particularly *Debout sur le soleil*, Op. 8, and to explore the adaptation aspects of his organ compositions.

II. Sources

Florentz regularly published analyses related to his own works, in which he details the inspirational background, the compositional tools, and the symbolic systems of his pieces. In addition to these studies, my research heavily relied on the compositional sketches of Florentz's works and the "analytical score" of *Debout sur le soleil*, which are available in the archive of the Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine at Caen, France. Regarding biographical aspects of Florentz, the reference background was provided by Marie-Louise Langlais's collection *Témoignes croisées*, a memoir where the most prominent features of Florentz's life are explored through recollections from the composer himself and his contemporaries. The most detailed and up-to-date overview of the knowledge related to Florentz's organ works is given by Michel Bourcier's monograph *Jean-Louis Florentz et l'orgue*, which also provides references concerning alternative adaptations and the intentions of the composer. The dissertation greatly relied on a recently conducted written interview with Michel Bourcier, as well as an audiovisual masterclass with Olivier Latry, both of which addressed many interpretative issues regarding *Debout sur le soleil*.

III. Method

In the section examining the biographical aspects of the dissertation, Florentz's reflections were compared with recollections of individuals who had a significant impact on his life. This was aimed at providing an authentic and nuanced picture of Florentz's youth and his relationship to the prevailing musical spirit of that time. Regarding the adaptability of Florentz's organ works, our goal was to outline, analyze, and where appropriate, contrast the criteria that allow a performer to transpose Florentz's organ compositions onto different instrument types. Within the context of international scholarship, a novel feature of this dissertation is the chapter dedicated to the interpretative aspects of *Debout sur le soleil*. In this section, several performances of Florentz's *magnum opus*, which offered valuable insights from an interpretative perspective, were compared. We carefully situated the key performative questions concerning *Debout sur le soleil* within the theoretical background established in earlier parts of the dissertation.

V. Results

With this dissertation, our aim was to create a broad yet nuanced perspective on the oeuvre of Jean-Louis Florentz, in which the references seek to highlight, in a comprehensive manner, the main focal points of international Florentz research to date. We hope that the scholarly background presented in this way will serve as a useful guide for future researchers interested in the subject. Florentz's often highly utopian instrumental expectations pose considerable challenges for performers of his organ works. In this dissertation, we have sought to collect and systematize the generally valid, objective considerations accumulated in the existing literature, which may assist performers in making informed and authentic choices among the possible adaptation alternatives for the organ works. In the chapter examining the interpretative aspects of *Debout sur le soleil*, we aimed to map the performance-related criteria that decisively influence the interpretation of the work. The dissertation has also enriched Florentz scholarship with two significant documents: the interview with Michel Bourcier published in the Appendix, and the Olivier Latry masterclass made available online. Both sources contribute valuable new insights into the performance background of *Debout sur le soleil*, which had not previously been accessible.

V. Documentation of activities related to the subject of the dissertation

January 14th, 2016., Organ Recital, Saint Anne's Church, Debrecen: *Les Laudes* Op. 5 : I. *Dis-moi ton nom...*

February 20th, 2017., Organ Recital, Paris, Saint-Gervais Church: *Les Laudes* Op. 5 : I. *Dis-moi ton nom...*, V. *Pleurs de la Vierge*, VII. ...*Seigneur des Lumières*

March 12th, 2024., Organ Recital, Budapest, Liszt Academy, Great Hall, *Debout sur le soleil* Op. 8