

Abstract of a DLA thesis

Liszt Academy of Music

Doctoral School 28

of Art History and Cultural History

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Ad nos, ad salutarem undam –

Liszt responds to his experience with an opera

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I Research background

The topic of my doctoral thesis is the analysis of compositions of Franz Liszt written on the themes of the opera *Le prophète* by Giacomo Meyerbeer, namely the organ piece *Fantasie und Fuge über den Choral "Ad nos, ad salutarem undam"* and the piano cycle *Illustrations du Prophète*. It is my strong belief that both works are important landmarks in Liszt's oeuvre as they go far beyond the characteristic features of the genre of paraphrase that was so fashionable in the era of romanticism. In these two pieces of Franz Liszt one can clearly see the intention to preserve traditions and, at the same time, to daringly renew form and dramaturgy.

The three-volume monograph *Franz Liszt* by Alan Walker, in which the author follows the life of the virtuoso and composer from the beginnings until the period after Liszt's death, was a great help in writing my thesis. The second volume of the trilogy, *The Weimar years 1848-1861*, was the most decisive influence on my work since the two compositions I was examining had been written in the

beginning of the Weimar period. The book *Liszt Ferenc: A jövő zenésze* (Franz Liszt, the musician of the future) by Lajos Bárdos and the study *Liszt Ferenc: Ad nos ad salutarem undam* (Franz Liszt: Ad nos ad salutarem undam) by Lajos Zeke also inspired thoughts when examining the connections but these two exciting and important works helped me mostly during the analysis of the compositions so I used these resources as background materials.

However, my intention in writing this thesis was also to fill a gap because there is very little Hungarian literature on this topic.

II Sources

I did not deal with the sources on the genesis of *Illustrations* because my thesis focuses on the analysis of the compositions. For the basis of my analysis, I used the edition of Martin Haselböck from 1985 as the most recent scholarly publication of the composition.

III Methods

In the first part of my thesis I examined the characteristic features of the genre of paraphrase through the analysis of the piano cycle. I also touched upon the introduction of Meyerbeer's opera and the connection between Liszt and the organ. In my analysis, I pointed out how Liszt arranged the themes of Meyerbeer's work in the composition of his cycle *Illustrations*. In the analysis of the piano cycle, I always compared the plot of the opera to the structure of the paraphrases.

In the second part of my thesis I called the attention to the characteristics of the monothematic method of composition in the analysis of *Ad nos, ad salutarem undam*.

IV Results

While I was becoming familiar with the piano paraphrases inspired by *The Prophet* and analysing the greatest organ piece of the oeuvre, the recognition crystallised in my mind that his encounter with the organ played a decisive role in shaping the creative side, and the entire oeuvre, of Liszt.

While writing the analyses, it became clear for me that even though you can find signs of a symbiosis of the virtuoso (primarily the piano player) seeking to use spectacular solutions and the composer absorbed in refining his work in both pieces, the composition features that go far beyond the genre of paraphrase are much more present in the organ piece. I gave a detailed account of these phenomena in my analyses.

V The documentation of the activities related to the thesis

When I start dealing with a piece of music unknown to me, and when I familiarise myself more thoroughly with the same piece, I always pay particular attention to its broader music history and cultural history background.

It is my strong belief that no matter which era a piece of music comes from, examining its complex system of historical and compositional connections can reveal a number of new aspects that may broaden my scope, improve my approach and inspire me as a composer, a performer and a teacher. It is particularly true in the case of the music of Franz Liszt because his oeuvre reflects the seminal interactions of different forms of art in a way that is almost unique among 19th century composers.