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Theatrical drama and Franciscan simplicity in oratorios by Ferenc Liszt

ABSTRACT: The works of Ferenc Liszt are both influenced by the romantic mood and various opposing trends of the church music of his era. In his oratorios *Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth* and *Christus*, as well as in the unfinished *St Stanislaus*, one may discern such features as drama, mysticism, universalism, and national elements. In these vocal-instrumental works the composer makes use of two languages, German and Latin, as well as of various types of the archaisms such as quotations from Gregorian melodies. In Liszt's compositions, choral monodies become 'motifs' – the recurring themes which appear frequently and in a variety of versions. Dramatic expression and lyricism are particularly dominant in *St Elisabeth*. The *Christus* oratorio, which resembles a *mysterium*, because of the absence of a libretto and the use of liturgical texts, is characterised by the abundance of harmonic solutions. The oratorios reveal both the composer's uncommon piety and his striving to reform the church music of his times.

KEYWORDS: Ferenc Liszt, oratorio, *Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth*, *Christus*, *St Stanislaus*

Ferenc Liszt's vocal-and-instrumental works remain almost unknown in Poland. His art songs are not performed and his oratorio works are presented extremely rarely, usually as part of festival programmes. The same applies to Polish literature. A general description of Liszt's oratorio works can be found in volume five of *Formy muzyczne* [Musical Forms] by Chomiński;¹ they are also mentioned in the first Polish monograph of the composer, written by Stanisław Szenic.² It is surprising that a book over 500 pages long devotes only half a page to the *Christus* oratorio, two and a half pages to the *Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth* [The Legend of St. Elizabeth] oratorio, and more to the unfinished *St. Stanislaus*, which contains references to the history of Poland. Considering the years in which the monograph was written (1969) and published (1975), it may be assumed that its content was influenced by the political situation. The *Christus* oratorio is not even mentioned by Stanisław Dybowski, the author of Liszt's second Polish, admittedly

¹ Józef Chomiński, Krystyna Wilkowska-Chomińska, *Formy muzyczne*, vol. 5: *Wielkie formy wokalne* [Musical Forms, vol. 5: Large Vocal Forms] (Kraków: PWM, 1984).

² Stanisław Szenic, *Franciszek Liszt* [Ferenc Liszt] (Warszawa: PIW, 1975).

very concise, monograph, published in 1986 by Wydawnictwo Szkolne i Pedagogiczne [School and Educational Publishing House]. Analyses of selected songs of the author of *Ungarische Krönungsmesse* occasionally appeared in the publishing series 'Music and Lyric', edited by Mieczysław Tomaszewski and published by the Academy of Music in Cracow, but they were mostly written by foreign authors.³ This paper is intended to make up, although on a modest scale, for this significant gap. The author describes the oratorio compositions by Ferenc Liszt, which among other things reflect the composer's Romantic attitude.

His religious works reveal opposing, yet still coexisting Romantic trends. The characteristic features of Liszt's oratorios include drama, mysticism, universalism, national elements, and *correspondance des arts*. They were written during the last stage of his life and creativity. The composer worked on them for a long time; 1857-1862 – *Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth*, 1855-1868 – *Christus*, 1874-1880 – the unfinished *St. Stanislaus*. The first two end the period during which his most outstanding works were created. Although both of them are recognized as oratorios, they have varied formal structures. *Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth* and *St. Stanislaus* resemble musical dramas and share certain characteristics with operatic works, e.g. they were written to libretti – the first one to a libretto by Otto Roquette, the second – to one by Karl Erdmann Edler. *Christus* has an entirely different form; although the composer classified it as an oratorio, it does not contain any specially written literary text but, rather, fragments from the *Bible*, medieval hymns and liturgies selected by Liszt himself. Originally, Liszt intended to commission a libretto from the revolutionary poet Georg Herwegh (1817-1875),⁴ about which he wrote to his friend, Princess Carolyne zu Sayn-Wittgenstein:

We then resumed discussing the *Christus* project in detail – you will know what I am talking about – and I think he will execute it soon and magnificently. In this work I will declare my faith and love to you, and if my strength does not leave me, it will also include greatness and beauty [...].⁵

³ Francis Claudon, "Liszt et Hugo: les possibilités de la melodie en langue française"; Serge Gut, "Die Heine-Lieder von Franz Liszt"; Leszek Polony, "Zwischen Liebestraum und Todesvision. Zwei Lieder von Franz Liszt nach Freiligraths Gedichten", *Muzyka i liryka*, vol. 9, ed. Mieczysław Tomaszewski (Kraków: Akademia Muzyczna, 2000). Leszek Polony, "Tristesse – Vertonung des Textes von A. de Musset im Hinblick auf das Liederschaffen von Franz Liszt", *Muzyka i liryka*, vol. 8, ed. Mieczysław Tomaszewski (Kraków: Akademia Muzyczna, 1999); Roman Kowal, "Du bist wie eine Blume Heinego w pieśniach Schumanna, Liszta i Wolfa" ["Du bist wie eine Blume' by Heine in Art Songs by Schumann, Liszt and Wolf"]; Mieczysław Tomaszewski, "Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh Goethego w pieśniach Zeltera, Schuberta, Schumanna i Liszta" ["Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh' by Goethe in Art Songs by Zelter, Schubert, Schumann and Liszt], *Muzyka i liryka*, vol. 3, ed. Mieczysław Tomaszewski (Kraków: Akademia Muzyczna, 1991).

⁴ Ferenc Bonis, a description of the oratorio in the booklet (p. 31) accompanying the 1994 recording of the work made by Hungaroton Classic HCD 12831-33. Liszt met Herwegh during his stay in Switzerland, where he also met Wagner.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 266. Letter by F. Liszt dated 8 July 1853.

This statement reflects the dualism characterising this artist-cosmopolitan, a Hungarian who did not speak Hungarian, but regarded himself as such, a musician-wanderer, who was criss-crossing Europe during his concert tours, a faithful friend and, finally, an abbé. The composer's original intention did not come to fruition, and he used the poetic texts of *Evangelienharmonie* by Friedrich Rückert. Liszt came up with the idea for the work in 1857, when he was conducting the *L'enfance du Christ* oratorio by Hector Berlioz⁶. Another text considered for the piece was a draft created by Princess zu Sayn-Wittgenstein, later on developed by Peter Cornelius, a multitalented composer, poet, painter, and a representative of Neudeutsche Schule (The New German School), which aimed at creating 'Musik der Zukunft' ('The music of the future'). Liszt, who in Weimar drew to himself artists-supporters of progress in music, e.g. Wagner, Berlioz or Cornelius, also wanted to reform church music:

[...] music has to attest to its source being mankind and God, it has to [...] bring hope, to purify man, and to bless and praise the Lord. In order to do that a new music is called for. [...] Such music has to be stately, robust and powerful. It has to combine the theatre and the church on a grand scale. It has to be dramatic and sacred, magnificent and simple, ceremonial and serious, passionate and dissolute, tempestuous and calming, pure and fervent. That would be *fiat lux* of art!⁷

On the other hand, Liszt supported the Cecilian Movement [Cäcilienbewegung], aimed at renewing Catholic Church music in the spirit of the Gregorian chant and a *cappella* singing. In his writings he fiercely criticized music heard in French churches, above all those in Paris, pointing out that when the priest raised the Host you could often hear a whining organist playing variations on the theme 'Di piacer mi balza il cor' or *Fra Diavolo*.⁸ In a comment kept in a pathological style, the composer asked:

Wann – wann werden wir eine Kirchenmusik haben?! Kirchenmusik! ... Doch wir wissen nicht mehr, was das ist: die großen Offenbarungen eines Palestrina, eines Händel, eines Marcello, Haydn, Mozart, leben kaum in Bibliotheken.⁹

⁶ Bonis, 31. Liszt conducted the oratorio during the 35th Niederrheinische Festival in Aachen.

⁷ *Fiat lux*, Latin for "Let there be light". Władysław Kopaliński, *Słownik wyrazów obcych i zwrotów obcojęzycznych* [A Dictionary of Foreign Words and Phrases] (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1994), 169. The quotation given here comes from: Alfred Einstein, *Muzyka w epoce romantyzmu* [Music during Romanticism], trans. Michalina and Stefan Jarociński (Kraków: PWM, 1965), 226.

⁸ The first is an aria from the opera *La gazza ladra* by Rossini, the other – from an opera by Auber. I quote after: Franz Liszt, 'Über die Kirchenmusik', *Franz Liszt: Schriften zur Tonkunst*, ed. Wolfgang Marggraf (Leipzig: Philipp Reclam, 1981), 72.

⁹ "When will we have church music?! Church music! ... We simply do not know what it is: the only places where great revelations by a Palestrina, a Händel, a Marcello, a Haydn, or a Mozart are still alive are libraries". Quoted after: *Franz Liszt: Schriften zur Tonkunst*, 73.

Although the words refer to liturgical music, in his oratorios Liszt met the requirements of Cecilianism, turning to the original sources, i.e. the Holy Scriptures and Gregorian melodies. However, Liszt's two hagiographical oratorios are not epic in character, as they lack the *testo* part. The presence of many characters, the presentation of their emotions and behaviour through dramatic dialogues, indicate their affinity with stage compositions. This is why, when writing a 'musical history' of St. Elizabeth, Liszt referred to it as a legend. The very division of the work into scenes is closer to the opera or drama genres than to the oratorio. It was staged while the composer was still alive, although he protested against it, believing that its deeper message went far beyond what could be presented on a stage.¹⁰ The *St. Stanislaus* oratorio, which is devoted to a Polish bishop, is dramatic in nature, and the extant libretto indicates that, unfortunately, no music was composed for the parts with the biggest emotional charge. Its dramatic character is also attested to by the stage directions, which are included in the sheet music.

The oratorio structure was also affected by extra-musical factors. Grand Duke Carl Alexander von Sachsen-Weimar approached Liszt with a proposal to celebrate the 660th anniversary of St. Elizabeth's birth (1207-1231) at Wartburg castle in 1867 with a musical monument. The composer was familiar with the frescoes depicting stories from St. Elizabeth's life to be found at Wartburg castle in Eisenach by the Austrian painter Moritz von Schwind (1804-1871). The libretto was drafted by Carolyne zu Sayn-Wittgenstein. Although on the colour cover of the score the composer did not reproduce any of the painter's works and no mention is made of them in his letters, the titles of the oratorio's six parts are nearly identical with those of the frescoes.¹¹ It was not the first time that Liszt found a creative impulse in works of fine art.¹² He was also inspired by the book *Das Leben der heiligen Elisabeth von Ungarn* by János Nepomucen Danielik.¹³

¹⁰ János Mátyás, "Das Werk". Text in the booklet accompanying a recording made by Hungaroton Classic HCD 12694: *Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth* (Budapest: Hungaroton Classic, 1996), 22.

¹¹ János Mátyás, "Von der Themenwahl bis zur Aufführung", in the booklet Hungaroton Classic HCD 12694: *Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth*, 16.

¹² Liszt's fine art inspirations are described by Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, "Anch'io son pittore. Liszt jako kompozytor *Sposalizio* i *Penseroso*" [Liszt as the Composer of *Sposalizio* and *Penseroso*], *Muzyka* 42 (1997/1), 93-115. Bianca Nassauer, "Moritz von Schwinds Freskenzyklus als Inspirationsquelle für Franz Liszts Oratorium *Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth*", *Wie Bilder klingen*, ed. Lukas Christensen, Monika Fink (Wien, Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2011), 55; the author mistakenly states that Princess Carolyne zu Sayn-Wittgenstein was Russian by birth. Michael Palotai, *Liszt's Concept of Oratorio as Reflected in His Writings and in Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth* (PhD diss., University of Los Angeles, 1977), 500.

¹³ Paul Merrick, *Resolution and Religion in the Music of Liszt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 166-167.

Moritz von Schwind, <i>Elisabeth-Fresken</i>	Ferenc Liszt, <i>Elisabeth-Oratorium</i>
Ankunft der vierjährigen Elisabeth	Ankunft der Elisabeth auf Wartburg (1a)
Das Rosenwunder	Landgraf Ludwig (Das Rosenmirakel, 2c)
Elisabeths Abschied von Ludwig, der in den Kreuzzug zieht	Die Kreuzritter (Der Abschied Ludwigs von Elisabeth, 3c)
Die Vertreibung Elisabeths von der Wartburg	Landgräfin Sophie (Vertreibung [Elisabeth] aus Wartburg, 4c)
Elisabeth-Galerie: Die sieben Werke der Barmherzigkeit, Medaillonfresken im Elisabethgang; Elisabeths Tod als Nonne in Marburg	Elisabeth (Chor der Armen, Stimmen der Werke der Barmherzigkeit 5c; Elisabeths Hinscheiden, 5d)
Elisabeths feierliche Grablegung in Marburg	Feierliche Bestattung der Elisabeth (6)

Liszt's composition is based on actual events; Elizabeth's parents were the King of Hungary, Andreas II Arpád, and Gertrud von Kärnten-Andechs-Meran. It is worth mentioning that Elizabeth's mother's sister later became St. Hedwig of Silesia. She was regarded as a paragon of virtue by her niece, who lived by the Christian deeds of mercy, which was also shown in the paintings by Moritz von Schwind.¹⁴ *Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth* is split into two parts, in accordance with the dramatic action. The first part presents the happiness of the young couple and Elizabeth's good deeds. Towards its end, there is a hint of the dramatic events still to come. Elizabeth's fate is sealed when, after hearing about the death of her husband Ludwig in the crusades, she is expelled from the castle by her mother-in-law. The composition ends with Elizabeth's beatification,¹⁵ which the libretto does not mention explicitly.

The *Christus* oratorio is divided into three parts, corresponding respectively to the birth of Jesus, his most important deeds, his crucifixion and resurrection. We learn about them above all from the titles of the work's individual numbers, as its text is mainly composed of prayers, hymns, the eight blessings, and a fragment of *Stabat Mater*. Some of them, such as *Pater noster* or *Hosanna, benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini*, have become part of the liturgy of the Mass. The *St. Stanislaus* oratorio was designed as a work composed of four scenes, the last one of which, probably the shortest, contained a suppliant chant of King Boleslaw II, who had killed bishop Stanislaus, and a closing chorus, glorifying Poland, based on two words: 'Salve Polonia!'. In all his oratorio compositions Liszt alternates two languages; the stories of saints' lives use Latin for prayers, while the entire *Christus* is written in this language. However, the titles of the work's parts are in German.

¹⁴ The frescoes are reproduced on the website: <http://www.phil-fak.uni-duesseldorf.de/germ3/Wartburg/pic/moritz06.jpg>. Accessed: March 10, 2012.

¹⁵ Elizabeth was beatified by Pope Gregory IX on May 27, 1235 in Perugia.

Liszt's oratorios, which are Romantic in nature, are a hybrid genre, hence the presence of static scenes, such as the thanksgiving duet of Ludwig and Elizabeth in the second scene, Elizabeth's prayer in the fifth scene or the chorus of angels in the same part. The *St. Stanislaus* oratorio contains such a fragment in the form of the aria of the king doing penance for his crime, which is entitled *Psalm 129. De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine*. A characteristic feature of 19th-century composers, apologists of programme music, including those belonging to the New German School, was their preference for 'representative' symphonic music. Oratorio works written not only by Liszt, but also by Berlioz, well-known composers of symphonic poems or programme symphonies, include extensive instrumental passages. These are the initial instrumental introductions (*Einleitung*) to the first two of Liszt's oratorios and the one called *Interludium* to the story of St. Stanislaus. The composer makes the orchestra illustrate certain scenes, such as 'The March of the Crusaders' or a storm in *St. Elizabeth*, 'Song of the Shepherds at the Manger' and 'The March of the Three Holy Kings', or the rough lake in the *Christus* oratorio. In *St. Stanislaus*, which refers to Poland's history, the fourth scene is preceded by an extensive two-part orchestral interlude. The first part is based on motifs from the religious hymn *Boże, coś Polskę*, the other makes use of the melody of *Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła*, both regarded as national anthems¹⁶ by the beginning of the 20th century. Furthermore, nearly all sections of Liszt's oratorios have long orchestral introductions, especially those in *St. Elizabeth*. They have a static influence on the work, but even operas and musical dramas are not devoid of such instrumental fragments.

The basic method of building the form of Liszt's oratorios is the leitmotif technique, known not only from Wagner's dramas, but also from the symphonic poems by the author of *Tasso*. As an apologist of Beethoven, the composer follows the master in providing examples of motivic and thematic work also in his religious pieces. Melodies drawn from Gregorian plainsong become the central themes in Liszt's oratorios. In the *St. Elizabeth* oratorio score Liszt included a 'catalogue of motifs' [*Verzeichnis der Motive*], or rather themes, and expressions of gratitude, given in 'Schluss-Bemerkung', to all those who had provided him with music examples of old church songs and folk tunes.¹⁷ They are quoted at various points throughout the score, marked with digits and letters as follows:

1. The fifth antiphon for St. Elizabeth's feast: *Quasi Stella matutina* (*Einleitung*, 1a, 1d; 2b, c, d; 3b, c; 4c, d; 5a, d; 6a, e),
2. A Hungarian church song about St. Elizabeth from the *Lyra coelis* print (5c, d; 6a, c),

¹⁶ Emil Bohn, *Die Nationalhymnen der europäischen Völker* (Breslau: M. and H. Marcus, 1908). Both songs are also included in a Czech collection *Slovanské hymny* (Praha: F. Šimáček, 1900).

¹⁷ Liszt thanks, among others, the Hungarian composer Michael Mossonyi. Quoted after: Mátyás, "Das Werk", 23.

3. A Hungarian folk song (1b, 4c, 5b, 6a, b, c),
4. An old song of the pilgrim crusaders (4d, 6a).

Furthermore, Liszt's composition includes many instances of a Gregorian chant motif based on the 'g-a-c' sequence, which initiates, among other things, *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, *Magnificat* or *Crux Fidelis*. It becomes the motif of the cross in 'The March of the Crusaders' (3a and 3d). This motif will later be used by Liszt in the vocal-and-instrumental composition entitled *Via Crucis*.

The *Quasi Stella matutina* melody, in E major, which in the 19th century was regarded as a key expressing gentleness, joy, festivity, the feminine character, brilliance, modesty, and as the most luminous of all the keys,¹⁸ is used in the oratorio as Elizabeth's theme; it constitutes the framework of the piece, it initiates the composition (*Einleitung*) and it closes it with the final, prayer chorus 'Tu pro nobis mater pia, Roga regem omnium'. The theme head runs throughout the composition in various tonal, harmonic, structural and instrumentation arrays. High register and the sound of flutes playing the main theme of the composition are Elizabeth's musical characteristics. The motif and thematic working used in *Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth* is an example of a combination of old melodic patterns and 19th-century harmonic solutions. The secular layer of the oratorio is illustrated above all by a folk song motif, reminding us of Elizabeth's Hungarian origin. It appears whenever the heroine reminisces about her home country.

A similar motif and thematic working technique is used by Liszt in the *Christus* oratorio. Also in this case a Gregorian chant quotation appears in the opening *Einleitung*. *Rorate coeli de super*, known as an Advent tune, becomes a theme of a fugato, developed by stringed instruments, while woodwind instruments intone the motifs of the theme. The second part of the *Einleitung* has a 'pastorale' character (reminiscent of the shepherds' song at the manger) in 12/8 time signature, and so the *Einleitung* functions as an announcement of the coming of the Messiah, which happens in the second number of the work. The above-mentioned Advent tune also appears as a quotation in the part entitled *The Eight Blessings* in the organ part. Another quotation, this time from the *Pater noster* psalmodic chant, is placed in *The Lord's Prayer* part. Austere, 'hard', repeated sounds, often doubled in octaves, sung by a male choir, form the musical setting for Christ's words 'Tu es Petrus' (No. 8).

The section called *The Entry into Jerusalem*, which is an orchestral fragment and a chorus based on the text 'Hosanna, benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini', shows a connection with Gregorian chant, melodically related to the singing of the words 'Ite missa est'. The section has fragments with an austere, psalmodic melody juxtaposed with dissonant chord fragments. A Gregorian melody appears again

¹⁸ Cf. Jarosław Mianowski, *Semantyka tonacji w niemieckich dziełach operowych XVIII i XIX wieku* [The Semantics of Keys in German Operatic Works in the 18th and 19th Centuries] (Toruń: Adam Marszałek, 2000).

towards its end, when the words 'filio David, Hosanna' are sung by tenors. Here the composer displays all his craft, intermingling various Gregorian motifs, which appear either in the orchestral or the chorus parts. At the climax of the jubilee chorus the motifs are doubled in octaves, and sung *fortissimo* and in augmentation.

Jesus's Mother standing by the cross is 'illustrated' by the composer with the text of the *Stabat Mater dolorosa* sequence and its medieval melody. It runs through this part of the work many times (in eight stanzas). In terms of melody, the paschal hymn *Alleluja, O filii et filiae!* is also based on a Gregorian chant. With regard to the hymn, the composer used a quasi theatrical solution – the score contains a comment (quasi-stage directions) that the small female choir (eight to ten voices) performing the hymn and the accompanying instrumentalists (flute, oboe, clarinet or English horn) should be located at a place invisible to the public. Liszt suggested that the work could also be performed without the above-mentioned instruments, only with the accompaniment of a harmonium. These facts, as well as the *pianissimo* dynamics, are intended to indicate that the choir is of 'heavenly origin'.

The final chorus about the resurrection is initiated by the initial motif of the *Rorate coeli* melody. Similarly to *Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth*, here the composer recapitulates the previously quoted Gregorian melodies (*Rorate coeli, Filio David, Alleluja*), which also appear in the form of a stretto. The work ends with the reappearing *Rorate coeli* motif. The section is made to sound archaic not only by such medieval motifs but also by its characteristic harmony, achieved by frequently repeated fifths, which is a reference to the ascetic organum. In four- and six-voice sections the composer uses the modal way of combining chords, based on that applied by Palestrina, the patron of 'genuine' church music.

Liszt's *Christus*, which does not follow the usual oratorio pattern, shows an enormous diversity of textures. Out of the total 14 numbers, ten are performed by a choir. It is in this part that a richness of settings can be found: psalmodic singing, imitative voice leading, homophony for a two- to six-voice choir (occasionally, a seven-voice one), frequent octave doubling or the synthyony of fifths, but also fragments saturated with chromaticism. The *Stabat Mater speciosa*¹⁹ hymn, which expresses the joy of the happy Mother of God, was written for a six-voice choir and an organ.

Most solo parts are to be performed by a vocal quartet; only some fragments are sung by a solo voice, e.g. the Gregorian chant in 'The Angelic Annunciation' is sung by a soprano, *Gloria in excelsis Deo* is announced by a tenor, 'The Blessings' are intoned by a baritone, the words of Jesus in the fragment illustrating a storm on the Lake of Gennesaret and in the Passion section are sung by a baritone. Solo fragments are also to be found in an extensive sequence entitled *Stabat Mater*

¹⁹ The text follows the structure of *Stabat Mater dolorosa*; its words were replaced to express joy.

dolorosa. The parts with the greatest emotional charge, boasting a nearly Wagnerian harmonicism, are *The Passion* and *Stabat Mater dolorosa*. The extensive orchestral fragments, following the symphonic poem structure: *Einleitung*, *Song of the Shepherds at the Manger*, and *The March of the Three Holy Kings*, are also of 19th-century origin.

Christus by Ferenc Liszt is also exceptional in terms of its accumulation of rhetorical means, such as *passus duriusculus*, *aposiopesis*, particularly frequent repetitions of *epizeuxis* and *climax*, a special example of which is the rising progression of parallel fifths sung in the closing chorus with the words 'Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat'.

The weakest connections with the simplicity of choral chanting are displayed by the *St. Stanislaus* oratorio.²⁰ The incompleteness of the musical score does not allow one to determine conclusively to what extent the missing parts might be related to medieval music. The existing score includes for instance an orchestral *Introduction*, whose lowest sounds form a melody resembling a Gregorian one. Under the notes there is the Latin text of a hymn for the martyr's feast – *Deus tuorum militum*.²¹ Of interest is the alternation of phrases containing motifs of Gregorian provenance in the orchestral part with lamentation chants of folk complaining to bishop Stanislaus about the king's lawlessness and oppression. A six-voice chorus 'Beschütz uns', although homophonic and with a Romantic harmony, resembles the dense sounds of Palestrina's compositions. The aria of the bishop's mother, who asks her son to defend the people, even at the cost of his life, has a dramatic nature. The combination of a lamentation melos with a male choir psalmody, sung in octave doublings, four-voice fragments and an independent part of the organ are to be found in the aria 'De profundis clamavi' (*Psalms 129*) of the king doing penance for his crime. This heart rending fragment comprises monodic sections of the solo voice or the organ. Of interest is the initiating motif, which is based

²⁰ As stated by Wincenty Kadłubek in his *Chronicles of the Kings and Princes of Poland*, on April 11, 1079 King Bolesław II and three of his courtiers burst into the Church on Skalka, when the bishop was saying Mass. The king killed the bishop by striking him on the back of his head with a sword, and quartered his body in the monastery yard. The king was subsequently banished and went to Hungary. There is also a tale that the last two years of his life were spent by the king doing strict penance at the Benedictine abbey at Osjaku (today Ossiach) in Austria. This information is given at: <http://www.mbkp.info/swieci/stanislaw.html>. In fact, there is a tombstone at the abbey church at Ossiach with the inscription: *Rex Boleslaus Polonie occisor sancti Stanislai Epi Cracoviensis* (Bolesław of Poland, killer of Stanislaus, bishop of Cracow). A study of the tomb, conducted in 1960, revealed that it contained bones of a man, remains of a suit of armour and valuables of Polish origin from the 11th century. Information given at: <http://www.swstanislaw.eu/html/pokuta.html>. Accessed March 10, 2012.

²¹ The music material of the oratorio has been found at various libraries across Europe, and the preserved fragments of the work were written in various years, with some of them having been published, as for instance two polonaises for piano, which came out in print in 1952. Because they were subtitled "de l'oratorio St. Stanislaus", they were appended to a modern publication, prepared by Paul Munson and published by A-R Edition, Madison, 1998.

on a major seventh. The oratorio ends with a four-voice chorus, using only two words: 'Salve Polonia'. In terms of melody and rhythm, its first sounds are taken from *Mazurek Dąbrowskiego* (Poland's national anthem).

The instrumental parts of the work are also of interest. These include an introduction, which has already been mentioned above, and an orchestral interlude commencing the fourth scene, entitled, like the final chorus – 'Salve Polonia'. It is composed of two parts; the first based on the melody of the hymn *Boże, coś Polskę* and the other on *Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła*. The composer quotes the melody of the two Polish compositions, and works on their motifs. The solemn nature of this fragment is emphasized by the monumental sound of a full orchestra with an enlarged percussion section.²² There also exist two instrumental fragments, most probably originally designed as instrumental interludes: these are polonaises for piano, with the subtitle: 'de l'oratorio St. Stanislaus'. The melodic of the first one is related to the violin part in bars 248-257 in the first scene, and the other one ends with the melody of the Polish national anthem.²³

Ferenc Liszt's interest in religious music was not out of the ordinary, but his attitude to religion was exceptional. He was very pious all his life; when he was a youth (1827) he intended to become a priest, and 'he would devote as much time to religious books as to his music'.²⁴ The publications that affected the composer's entire life included: *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis,²⁵ lives of saints, especially the life of his patron – St. Francis of Paola, the writings of priest Félicité Robert de Lamennais, who pressed for reforms of the Catholic Church, e.g. criticized the absence of poverty among priests and church hierarchs. The composer identified himself with figures who had lived a truly Christian life, such as St. Elizabeth. Liszt was magnanimous; he financially supported Wagner, whom he adored, gave concerts with proceeds going to the poor or flood victims, funded Beethoven's monument in Bonn and one of Bach in Eisenach. He was also familiar with matters related to art, music and musicians, which he described in literary sketches and published in 'Gazette musicale de Paris'.²⁶ It is not surprising then that so many of his vocal compositions, but also instrumental ones, have a religious context. The oratorio with the greatest number of performances in the 19th century was *Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth*, premiered on August 22, 1865 in Pest, conducted by the composer himself. A year later the piece was conducted by Hans

²² Apart from timpani, there are also: a triangle, hi hats, a snare drum and a drum.

²³ Paul Munson, introduction to: Franz Liszt, *St Stanislaus* (Madison: A-R Edition, 1998), VIII-IX.

²⁴ Szenic, 52. The author of the book refers to information provided by Lina Ramann, a biographer who knew Liszt personally.

²⁵ An Augustinian monk, known also as Thomas van Kempen, the probable author of *The Imitation of Christ*.

²⁶ Liszt's articles were published in the years 1835-1836. Quoted after Szenic, 77.

Bülów in Munich.²⁷ *Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth* was presented in the stage version at Wartburg castle on August 28, 1867²⁸, and in 1884 in Weimar.²⁹ The *Christus* oratorio was performed much less frequently.

How Liszt intended to renew religious music is attested by what he wrote to Carolyne zu Sayn-Wittgenstein:

Anyway, I can say, honestly and with all modesty, that among the composers known to me there is no one with such a strong and deep feeling for religious music as your humble servant. Besides, I am greatly helped by my former and present studies into Palestrina and Lassus, and afterwards Bach and Beethoven, those top achievers in Catholic art; I truly believe that in three or four years I will capture the entire spiritual sphere of church music, which for the last twenty years has been dominated by veritable mediocrities, who will no doubt accuse me of not practising religious music – this would indeed be true if one were to recognize their rubbishy, worthless pieces as examples of such. This is similar to other areas; it is about 'going back to the basis', as Lacordaire³⁰ pointed out, and reaching those live sources spurting until eternal life...³¹

²⁷ Hans Engel, *Franz Liszt* (Potsdam: Athenaion, 1936), 60. The author also gives the dates of the successive performances of *St. Elisabeth*, e.g. 1869 in Vienna, 1882 in Brussels and Zurich.

²⁸ Szenic, 406-7.

²⁹ Engel, 60.

³⁰ Jean Baptiste Henri Dominique Lacordaire (1802-1861), a French religious writer, collaborator of the priest Lammenais. Co-editor of the *L'Avenir* journal, criticized by the Vatican. In 1840 he joined the Dominican Order. From 1860 he was a member of the French Academy. Information given at: http://portalwiedzy.onet.pl/12228,,,lacordaire_jean_baptiste_henri,haslo.html. Accessed on March 10, 2012.

³¹ Szenic, 318. Interestingly, he refers to Bach as a representative of Catholic music.



