



Summary

Franz Liszt's Piano Music from the Years 1835–1855 in the Context of the Idea of *correspondance des arts*

Franz Liszt was one of the most prominent intellectuals of his century who wished to renew music by integrating it with other arts, especially poetry. The composer sought different possible means of this integration, developing his own concept of instrumental music, which he called poetic music. Liszt used various techniques to help the listener experience the unity of arts in his music – most frequently by adding a programme, including a title or poetic quotation, to inspire the listener's imagination. Other means include attempts to transfer structures of literary works and to apply poetic techniques in the realm of music as well as to transform individual musical parameters so that they render the extra-musical content.

Liszt's artistic activity reflects the cultural context of the epoch and the artistic life in Paris of the first half of the 19th century that had shaped his personality. Artists residing in Paris at the time inspired one another, discussed parallels between their different fields of art, and sought to transfer techniques between their fields of artistic inquiry. Nowadays, this phenomenon is commonly referred to as *correspondance des arts*, though the term itself came into use much later.

The question of *correspondance des arts* in the context of Franz Liszt's piano music has not been the subject of systematic research. The aim of this book is to fill this gap by providing the analysis of selected works by Liszt and by showing the multiple links and determinants that had influenced the development of his aesthetic ideas. Liszt's sensitivity to the impulses coming from the other artistic fields and his ability to use these influences in a creative manner made him absolutely exceptional as a composer. It is not without reason that Charles Baudelaire said of Liszt,

“singer of great Pleasure and eternal Fear, philosopher, poet, and artist, I send you my greetings in immortality!”¹

The book consists of five parts, arranged thematically to create parallels between the history of French culture of the first half of the 19th century on one hand and Liszt’s music on the other. Liszt was not only a composer but also a seasoned essayist and a great lover of literature, whose wit may be compared to that of the most prominent literary figures of his day, which explains in part why music and literature intertwine so closely in his works.

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The first part of the book is a review of the enormously rich literature on the subject, serving as an introduction to Liszt studies broadly understood. Considering that most of this research is not easily available to Polish readers, I provide critical summaries of the most important international and national studies about Liszt. This part of the book also shows the history of research on the life and artistic activity of Liszt from the point of view of the history of their development and the changing methodological paradigms related to the development of musicology itself, and in the larger context of the humanities over the past two hundred years – from anecdotes and memoirs to academic studies. What had dominated in the 19th century were tales and free interpretations concerning episodes from the composer’s life. The initial interest in his person and artistic activity coincided in time with the period of Liszt’s greatest piano triumphs, hence the tales about the composer were often exaggerated in their construction of his persona as a virtuoso with superhuman abilities. The 20th century brought about more academic works concerning individual aspects of Liszt’s artistic activity and attempts at a holistic understanding of his oeuvre. In this part of the book I also point the crucial aspects in Liszt studies, placing special emphasis on the works by Emil Haraszti as well as the explosion of Liszt-related research linked with the centenary of the composer’s death in 1986 and the bi-centenary of his birth in 2011. The important contribution of this part of the book is the attempt to place Franz Liszt’s piano music within the context of humanities, offering a view of this music from the perspective of musicology, literature, and cultural studies.

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In the second part of the book, I examine the idea of *correspondance des arts* in its cultural context. Using philosophical treatises and the artists’ reflections, I show the grounding of the idea of *correspondance des arts* in social environment (artistic salons, national institutions, Masonic lodges, artistic associations, cooperation between artists). This part ends by reviewing different ways of realising the idea of correlation and unity of arts

¹ Ch. Baudelaire, *Le Thyrses*, in: *Œuvres complètes*, ed. C. Pichois, Paris 1985–1990, p. 336: *chantre de la Volupté et de l’Angoisse éternelles, philosophe, poète et artiste, je vous salue en immortalité!*

in the works by French Romantics, many of whom were Liszt's friends and acquaintances. Each of those elements is presented in chronological order to show the development of the concept together with the whole range of surrounding phenomena.

A brief overview of the aesthetic reflection shows the evolution of the French thought concerning the unity between arts in the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century. The summary begins with some reflections on the source of the idea of correspondence, the basic rule of judgement or manner in which the arts move us (Dubos), the meaning of imitation and division of arts according to their function in everyday life (Batteux, Chastelleux). Next, the discussion continues by considering the combination of music and poetry as sources of language that are able to affect emotions (Rousseau, Chabanon, Villoteau), seek common elements between the arts (Diderot), and the strong affiliation with the rules of rhetoric (Lesueur, Villoteau). Authors of treatises also point out the semantic potential of instrumental music (Lacépède). They see the unity between art and emotions, which may become the art's source and its aim (Ballanche, Framery, Lamartine). The subsequent changes to these theories are related to the forth-coming period of romanticism: the idea of unity of arts appears in the sphere of moral idea (Cousin) or in the moment of perception (Stendhal, Delacroix). What is also noticed are the coincidental effects caused by different arts via different means (Cousin, Stendhal). Finally, art becomes considered to be divine (Hugo) and Christian (Chateaubriand, Lamennais, Hugo). Some see its source in poetry (Hugo, Genin). Others pondered over the unity between arts and artists (Stendhal, Deschamps, Gautier, Delacroix), to finally notice mutual inspiration and interpenetration of arts (Baudelaire).

A short review of the conditions that gave rise to the idea of *correspondance des arts* allows us to state that the close relations developed by the artists who frequented one another and helped shape this phenomenon. Artists met regularly at the Masonic lodges, the associations, institutions or the salons. They discussed and worked together, which made the widely-understood idea of the *fraternité des arts* natural for them. Initially these discussions concerned the participation in para-religious movements and the socio-artistic societies originating from Masonic lodges. Next, these activities were completed by the establishment of the Institute de France (for which the academic and artistic cooperation was one of the bases for functioning), as well as the close relations between artists at salons.

One may also notice some changes taking place in the perception and activity of those institutions. Sometimes one institution would transform into another as, for example, the transformation of Masonic lodges into associations, and in turn, of the associations into the Institute de France. These events were tightly connected with the space of ideas, in which they functioned, and both spheres – ideological and cultural – were intertwined, whereas collaboration and continuous development were treated as an ideal basis for the majority of associations.

In artistic practice, relationships between individual fields of art were visible on different levels and with different intensity, from simple allu-

sions in the titles or themes of works to profound modifications of artistic means. Creative activities of romantic artists show incredible persistence in their aim to overcome barriers between arts and seek new means of expression. Undoubtedly, the connections between arts were among the most important directions of their research, which became for them the main point of reference and the source of inspiration. The profound need to create new artistic phenomena and the wish to affect the recipient in a more and more intense manner were the basis of all experiments with language, sound, and image. On this basis, a very interesting artistic dialogue – one of the most important aesthetic indicators of the 19th century art – was created.

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The third part of the book deals with Liszt's aesthetic views as expressed in his writings and letters. I contextualize here to what extent the artist's views reflected those of his colleagues and also what unique elements he brought into the aesthetics of 19th century music. These reflections are complemented with selected elements from Liszt's biography, which allow us to notice links between his choices and artistic activities on the one hand and the French culture of the epoch on the other, including artistic associations, Masonic lodges, salons, academic and cultural institutions, and music lessons that had shaped Liszt's personality. As Liszt wrote in *Lettres d'un bachelier ès musique*: days of the first youth are important for people as it is then that their personality and self-consciousness is shaped.²

Liszt's letters and writings show how many ideas he assimilated. We may notice among them the echoes of Chastelleux's reflections on the inseparability of music and poetry, the search for convergences between arts in the spirit of Diderot, and the relationships between artists that were so important for the romantics such as Nodier, Deschamps, and Delacroix. In his reflections concerning instrumental music and opera, Liszt very often pointed out the selection of musical means appropriate to the subject (Lesueur, Berlioz), mentioned the symbolical representations of emotions and emotions themselves as a source of art (in the spirit of Lacépède, Balanche, and Lamartine) as well as the ability of music to recall memories (Rousseau, Framery). Moreover, he wrote about the moral meaning of art and the leading role of artists (Cousin, Lamennais). He also mentioned the slackening of forms and genre norms (Hugo) and made comparisons in order to explain a phenomenon just as his friends-comparatists used to do (Ozanam, Ampère).

The study of Liszt's aesthetic reflections helps our understanding of the evolution of the composer's views. As early as in 1832, Liszt explained one field of art by means of another in order to revive the feelings of his pupil as in the case of his lessons with Valérie Boissier. In 1835, he considered

² F. Liszt, *À M. Lambert Massart*, in: *Sämtliche Schriften*, v. I, ed. D. Altenburg, commentaries S. Gut, Wiesbaden–Leipzig–Paris 2000, p. 198.

the role of an artist to be a spiritual leader; one year later, in 1836, he wrote about the unity of painting and music in his discussion of Hector Berlioz's talent (*Concert de M. Berlioz*), and again, in 1837 – about poetic and picturesque music (*Compositions pour piano de M. Robert Schumann*). In 1839 he told Marie d'Agoult that he wished to integrate poetry with piano music. He also explained one sphere of art by means of another in his famous *Lettre* addressed to Berlioz, pointing out the connections between great masterpieces, products of human genius. Some years later, in 1843, in a letter to Countess d'Agoult he described the ideal of artist – the combination of a poet, painter and musician in one person (count Poggi) – and he sought the technical and expressive similarities between arts. Several years later he considered the possibility of “writing down” memories in music (letter of 1846) and in 1849 he thought about the establishment of a competition in Weimar that would integrate different artists. Finally, in 1853 Liszt formulated the concept of programme music determined by a poetic idea and clarified that it meant a perfect union of poetry and music, and in the following years he elaborated on the means of making this synthesis possible on different levels of the musical work.

Liszt's ideas were rooted in the French culture in which he grew up. In turn, as Haraszi suggests, Liszt's strong immersion in this culture could help explain why the German audience (especially in Weimar) would not be able to fully appreciate the composer. This overview also shows how Liszt's artistic output ideally fits numerous phenomena that were manifestations of the romantic idea of artistic unity. In his aesthetic deliberations one may see tendencies to transform one sphere of art under the influence of another and to seek analogies between them, in particular the musical equivalents of poetry, which may be classified as representing the fullest manifestations of *correspondance des arts*.

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In the fourth part of the book, I analyze the texts that serve as the programme of Franz Liszt's piano pieces. I present these works from a double perspective. First, I discuss them as individual literary (or artistic) pieces in the contexts of their origin. Second, I explain the manner in which Liszt composed those programmes – how he chose fragments from his favorite authors, changed the order of the verses, creating in turn original, self-contained wholes.

In the first piece, *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* (1835), the programme consists of a title referring to the collection of poems by Lamartine; a foreword and quote from a narrative by Chateaubriand is later used in the score itself. The first big cycle (*Album d'un voyageur*) is dominated by references to the places Liszt visited and complemented with passages from poetry and dedications. In this collection one may also differentiate between programme layers such as titles and quotes from literature. In subsequent cycles this task was more and more difficult. In the second part of *Années de pèlerinage (Italie)* both elements are much related to one another, as in the majority of pieces these are only the titles referring to

particular poetic and artistic oeuvres that constitute their programme, just like in the etude *Mazepka*. On the other hand, *Drei Nottornos (Liebesträume)* seem to be an exception for neither the genre nor the title links them directly with poetic elements but points to their subject matter and character. Moreover, the titles of song originals were the first lines of quoted poems, thus constituting the unity of the programme. The last mentioned cycle, *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* of 1853, is a kind of summary and assembly of all possible dependencies of types and programmes. We have in this case a foreword, a dedication, and poetic quotations preceding the pieces, whose titles refer to particular texts.

It is difficult to call this an evolution; rather, these reflect various perceptions of the programme's role and its structure as well as an conscious attempt to exert control over the listener. As Liszt wrote in the foreword to *Album d'un voyageur* that music should not be merely a pleasure, but above all, the object of reflections and a carrier of poetic content.

Typically romantic motifs dominating Liszt's programmes include religion, voyages, and questions about the meaning of life, art, and love. In his first pieces one may note some resemblance in the subject matter: René, Obermann, and Childe Harold are protagonists escaping from civilisation, wandering through the world to find their own personality, aim and, sense of life.

Liszt often quoted in his letters some artists and described masterpieces he dealt with. He also liked to make "notes" from his favourite authors, which can be easily traced in his letters. The collections of programme texts are partially shaped like these notes, which make narrative wholes. A specific selection of programmes and the manner of their composition make these texts somehow "support" the reception of music, and their application became Liszt's rule of composing, a type of *forma mentis*, as Francis Claudon called it.³

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The last part of the book contains an analysis of Liszt's selected pieces that feature an abundance of techniques and expressive means. Many of these are based on the programme of the piece. However, in order to understand these correlations, one must first examine the music itself. The following analyses focus on the programmatic aspects, placing a particular emphasis on the structure of pieces and its similarity to the structure of programmes, as these dependencies constitute one of the most important features of *correspondance des arts* according to Étienne Souriau's theory. Nevertheless, in all musical parameters one may notice how a poetic idea determined each individual parameters of a musical work.

The analyses of piano pieces presented in this part of the book make it possible to arrive at certain generalisations concerning Liszt's compositional techniques and the musical realisation of his aesthetic postulates. Above all, one may notice the co-existence of traditional elements such as

³ F. Claudon, *Au «siècle des comparaison». Liszt et la littérature*, „Revue Silène”, p. 4.

musical forms (sonata, variations) and the musical rhetoric and achievements of other 19th century composers, on both technical and expressive grounds. On the technical ground, there are the full usage of sound possibilities of the 19th century piano, the orchestral treatment of the instrument, the combination of forms and genres, the paraphrases of one's own pieces and of pieces by other artists, and the new means of piano technique; on the expressive ground, one must note the new meaning of musical expression and the changing hierarchy of elements in a musical work.

Moreover, Liszt worked out several elements that became unique to his artistic activity, among others synthesis of main musical thoughts in the last parts of pieces regardless of their form or genre, leitmotifs, piano cycles being complete wholes, in which every piece had its function, application of semantic variation, tempo and texture changes and referring to means typical for the French romantic poetry (quotes, mottoes, expressivity uniting the cycle, meta-relations between different pieces, contrasts, ambiguities).

Even more important in Liszt's music are the background elements that determine the form: articulation, dynamics, registers of the instruments, tempo, and texture. With these background elements, he created his own expressive language. As early as in the 1830s, Liszt provided solutions that became common practice only at the turn of the 20th century. These solutions include individual sound's centralization (*Après une lecture du Dante*), melodies based on scales other than the major-minor tonality (e.g. pentatonic scale in *Sposalizio*), complex multisound compounds (*Invocation*) or sound effects as the foreground element (*Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* 1835).

What remains noticeable is the influence of programme on each parameter of a musical piece – from an individual motif (*Lyon*) and the structure of theme (*La chapelle de Guillaume Tell*) to the structure of the work (*Après une lecture du Dante*) and even the whole cycle (*Album d'un Voyageur*). This determination of the musical parameters by poetic ideas constitutes a perfect realisation of Liszt's concept of poetic music.

In the aforementioned pieces one may also notice some constant correlations between musical parameters with the extra-musical meanings. However, it is the programme that ultimately defines them, which stresses the importance of this element, thanks to which the composers could create a musical language capable of expressing what is usually beyond music, as Liszt wrote in the foreword to *Album d'un voyageur* in 1841.⁴

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Since his early years, Franz Liszt was known for his erudition and audacity to seek new musical solutions. As early as in 1832, while giving piano lessons, he explained music to a pupil by making references to literature. He also greatly emphasised the poetic element in his piano

⁴ F. Liszt, *Avant-propos*, in: *Album d'un voyageur* I, III, *Clochette et Carnaval de Venise*, ed. A. Kaczmarczyk, I. Mező, Budapest 2007, p. 2.

improvisations that Émil Deschamps summarised in the following way, “Liszt! Liszt! who in his artistic ecstasy would change,/Notes into verses, keyboard into lyre”.⁵

In his writings Liszt made comparisons between the arts, and also sought analogies between the artistic activity and the private life of individual artists. He was also an art critic who while writing about art often used ekphrases, similarly to his colleagues – the writers. Doing so, he could express feelings, aroused by a particular work. In this way the act of combining arts could take place in the listener’s mind, just as in the case of Liszt’s description in 1839 of *The Ecstasy of St. Cecilia* by Raphael.

For Liszt, there was not one artistic domain that would not inspire him. Among his works we find many that are inspired by the life and the art of other artists. Sometimes the name of a particular artist appears in the work’s title (*Canzonetta del Salvatore Rosa*, *Tre Sonetti del Petrarca*, *Après une lecture du Dante*); at other times Liszt refers only to one work by a selected artist (*Il Penseroso*, *Sposalizio*).

The attempts to transfer the techniques of one art to another also brought about the change of artistic means within music. Liszt gladly referred to artistic means typical for poetry, created cycles with elements uniting the whole (title, topics, recurring motifs, structure, character), used quotes from other authors, and from his own artistic output. Moreover, he tried to transfer structures of one work to another, as shown in *Sposalizio* and *Après une lecture du Dante*.

Franz Liszt was one of the most prominent artists and proponents of the unity of arts, and in turn helped transform the musical language. As Serge Gut put it, Liszt was “in music the equivalent of Lamartine in literature”,⁶ both technically and expressively. The analysis of Liszt’s piano music in the context of the idea of correspondance des arts fully confirms this thesis, providing better to understand his work in all its complexity. It also opens ways for further research concerning this extraordinary artist, whose genius had helped propel music of the 19th century into new directions, and has continued to fascinate scholars into the present.

⁵ É. Deschamps, *À Liszt*, «*Pianiste*» 1833, issue 9, p. 141: *Liszt! Liszt! qui changerait, sans changer le délire,/ Les notes pour les vers, le clavier pour la lyre.*

⁶ S. Gut, *Franz Liszt. Les éléments du langage musical*, p. 301: *il est en musique ce que Lamartine est en littérature.*