

LISZT – PROGRAMATIC IDEALS: *HARMONIES POÉTIQUES ET RÉLIGIEUSES*

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Motto:

“Le programme n’a pas d’autre but que de faire allusion préalable aux mobiles psychologiques qui ont poussé le compositeur à créer son oeuvre et qu’il a cherché à incarner en elle.”²

Liszt

SUMMARY. After long years of glorious journeys and disillusionment, the mature virtuoso, the “wandering son” finds his homeland and his identity and he retreats in order to create. He draws again on his old muse, the verses of Lamartine, and, in the middle of turmoil, he gives birth to a delightful pianistic page. The starting point was one of his youth pieces, in one part, (1833) bearing the same title that Liszt decides to give, twenty years later, to a cycle of ten pieces. He will create his own “reminiscence”, where parts evoking memories of people and events succeed among moments of prayer of a solitary soul, converting his existence into “a mute hymn for Divinity and hope” (Lamartine).

Keywords: Liszt, Lamartine, poetry, religion, piano, Chopin, Carolyne Wittgenstein.

The birth of the Poetic and religious harmonies

Liszt’s memorable tour from his glory days, *Glanzzeit*, lasted for 18 months (1846-7) and included the Danube region and Ukraine. He started from Vienna, in 1846 and held concerts in Prague, Pesta, Timișoara, Arad, Sibiu, Cluj, Bucharest, and Iassy. February 1847 finds Liszt in Kiev, and

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² The programme has no other aim but to refer to the psychological reasons which drove the composer to create his works and which he tried to embody in it. Jean & Brigitte Massin, *Histoire de la musique occidentale (History of Western Music)*; Fayard Publishing House, 2009, p.795.

then he continues his tour in Odessa, he crosses the Black Sea and plays before the Sultan in June 1847, in Constantinople. Erard sent him the best pianos for these concerts and Liszt said they were "magnificent". On the way back he continued the series of concerts in Odessa and ended the tour in Elisavetgrad, in September.

In Kiev, in February 1847, he met Princess Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein, his second great love. Carolyne was 28 at the time, 7 years his junior. It was at her estate in Woroniŋce, 150 miles away from Kiev, that Liszt spent three months (until January 1848) and composed part of the *Poetic harmonies*.

Liszt and Lamartine

The 48 poems of the volume *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* were mostly written in Italy, when Lamartine was Embassy attaché in Florence (1826-28). For Lamartine 1829 is the year of his election as a member of the French Academy, on November 5. On November 16, his triumph was dimmed by the loss of his mother. In 1837 Lamartine obtained a seat in the Chamber of Deputies and became well appreciated due to his discourses against the death penalty (anticipated by Byron in England) and for the ban on slavery. His political influence culminated in 1848, when he was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs. After 1851 he withdrew from public life and had to write texts and studies in order to make a living. He died in 1869 in Paris and remained forgotten for several decades.

The religious themes played an important part in Lamartine's poems, especially in *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*, published in 1830; some of his verses were transposed on the music of Franz Liszt.

The poems, now masterpieces of Lamartine's writings, succeed one another without a connection, building a symphony to the glory of God. Although their tone is bitter, they emanate faith from a trusting soul.

These hymns on the goodness and the power of our creator are inspired by the sunny and happy days spent in Tuscany. And yet, he prefers the simplicity of his native land to bright Italy and wishes to spend his final days on earth in Milly.

Therefore, in *Hymne* the poet raises towards Heaven, at dusk, a cheerful love song, homage to God, together with the waves of the sea, the forests, the flowers and birds.

In contrast, *Novissima Verba* sees the poet in a moment of depression, where he glances at the life that passes him by, he remembers his sentimental and intellectual disillusionments and thinks of the threatening death; nevertheless, his conscience allows him to see a consoling God, whose image rests his present fears and illuminates his memories of the past.

These verses were written in mourning, as Lamartine was marked by his mother's death in the fall of 1829. "This is maybe the most elaborate of Lamartine's collections"; published in four volumes, the poems present "many impressions, from nature and life, on the human soul", accompanied by the warning "Ces vers ne s'adressent qu'à un petit nombre" (These verses are only meant for few).³

In 1834 a short piano piece was issued, entitled *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*, on the verses of Lamartine⁴, with the specification "these verses are not for all":

E.g. 1



Ces vers ne s'adressent qu'à un petit nombre.

Il y a des âmes méditatives, que la solitude et la contemplation, élèvent invinciblement vers les idées infinies, c'est à dire vers la religion; toutes leurs pensées se convertissent en enthousiasme et en prière, toute leur existence est un hymne muet à la Divinité et à l'espérance. Elles cherchent en elles mêmes et dans la création qui les environne des degrés pour monter à Dieu, des expressions et des images pour se le révéler à elles mêmes, pour se révéler à lui: puisse-je leur en prêter quelques unes!

Il y a des coeurs brisés par la douleur, refoulés par le monde, qui se réfugient dans le monde de leurs pensées, dans la solitude de leur âme pour pleurer, pour attendre ou pour adorer; puissent-ils se laisser visiter par une Muse solitaire comme eux, trouver une sympathie dans ses accords, et dire quelque fois en l'écoutant: nous prions avec tes paroles, nous pleurons avec tes larmes, nous invoquons avec tes chants.

(LAMARTINE. Avertissement des harmonies poétiques et religieuses.) 5

³ *Guide de la musique de piano et de clavecin. Sous la direction de François-René Tranchfort (Guide of Piano and Clavichord Music. Coordinate by François-René Tranchfort).* Fayard Publishing House, 1987, p. 467.

⁴ Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869), French poet, writer and politician, one of the pioneers of French Romantic poetry. In 1829 he became a member of the French Academy.

⁵ "These verses are only intended for the few. There are meditative souls raised invincibly by solitude and contemplation towards infinite ideas, that is, towards religion; all their thoughts are expressed in enthusiasm and prayer, their entire existence is a silent hymn to the Divinity and to hope. They search within, and in the creation that surrounds them, for steps to ascend to God, for expressions and images to reveal His presence within them, and to reveal themselves to Him: May I offer something to them! There are hearts broken by grief, stifled by the world, that seek refuge in the world of their thoughts, in the solitude of their soul, to weep, to wait, or to adore; may they be visited by a solitary muse such as them, may they find sympathy in her chords, and say sometimes in hearing her: we pray with your words, we weep with your tears, we appeal with your songs."

Extrêmement lent.
 avec un profond sentiment d'ennui.

Senza Tempo.

pesante languendo.

con duolo.

(très accentué.)

mf *p* *dimin.*

rallentando.

cres - cen - do ed agitato. - - - - - diminuendo.

staccato. *Ped.* *dolce.* *molto rallent.*

cantando espressivo. *m.d.*

calmato. *dolce.* *poco agitato.*

Liszt between 1830-50

Liszt's piano works date back to 1834; the two pieces inspired by Lamartine, *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*, in their original version and *Apparitions*⁶, were composed the same year. *De profundis* for piano and orchestra, remained unfinished, also joins the list. Liszt was living a personal drama following the loss of his father and of a love interest. The revolution in July 1830 raises him from lethargy and he even plans on writing a *Revolutionary symphony*, dedicated to La Fayette⁷; he will give up on that project, but he will use the fragments for *Héroïde funèbre*, in 1850.

⁶ *Apparitions* comprises three pieces, it promotes the new esthetique and proves the innovative genius of the composer seven years after Beethoven's death;

⁷ Marquis Gilbert du Motier de La Fayette (1757-1834) became famous during the Independence war of the United States with England and during the French Revolution.

Pensées des morts, the first version of the *Poetic and religious harmonies*, dates from 1833⁸, the year he met countess Marie d'Agoult, his first passion, who will give him three children and will be his partner for ten years. She is also the one who, after the break-up, will shame him, picturing him as a failed painter, Guerman, in the pages of her novel *Nelida*, published under the pseudonym Daniel Stern. About the novel, on January 3, 1847, Liszt wrote Marie from Bucharest: "No, a hundred times no, not for a moment was I offended by the pages of this novel. I have said it and repeated it twenty times to a hundred persons, who do not agree with me about that, that I am not the least shamed by it."⁹

Given this state of mind, it is very possible that this is the reason for him returning to the *Harmonies* only 13 years later, when he meets Carolyne and manages to distance himself from the first version, written at the beginning of his relationship with Marie.

In 1834 he is impressed by his meeting with friar Lamennais, excommunicated by the Pope for his philosophic and revolutionary ideas¹⁰, and to whom he will dedicate his work *Lyon*, inspired by the movements of the weavers in the fall of 1834. Among Lamennais's ideas, comprised in his theses, many have raised the interest of great personalities such as Victor Hugo, George Sand and Pushkin¹¹.

The cycle *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*, in its 1834 version, does not contain indications of tonality or measure, the composer notes *Senza tempo*, and this part will appear as the fourth piece in the late edition (1847-52), entitled *Pensées des morts*, announcing the sombre style of the final period. Later on (1845-52), Liszt will also include other pieces in the cycle.

The pieces are lyrical, most of them remarkable in their profoundness, but not in their virtuosity and, with the exception of the seventh part, *Funérailles*, they are rarely played in concerts, as they are more meditative than brilliant.

⁸ Jean & Brigitte Massin, *Histoire de la musique occidentale (History of Western Music)*; Fayard Publishing House, 2009, p.790.

⁹ *Correspondance de Liszt et de la comtesse d'Agoult (Correspondence of Liszt with the Countess d'Agoult)*, vol II, p. 370, *apud* Theodor Bălan, *Liszt*, Editura Muzicală, Bucharest, 1963, p. 110.

¹⁰ Theodor Bălan, *Op. cit.* p. 63

¹¹ The laws of art mingle with those of science and life; art plays a great role in the progress of humanity; the conception on the mission of the artist, as a prophet preaching the ideals of the future;

The two versions, 1834 and 1945-52:

E.g. 3

Liszt, Harmonies poétiques et religieuses

1847 Cycle	1853 Cycle
[Invocation]	Invocation
Hymne de la nuit	Ave Maria (new)
Hymne du matin	Bénédition de Dieu dans la solitude
Litanies de Marie	Pensée des morts
[Miserere d'après Palestrina]	Pater noster
Pater noster, d'après la psalmodie de l'église	Hymne de l'enfant à son réveil
Hymne de l'enfant à son réveil	Funérailles (new)
[Pensée des morts]	Miserere d'après Palestrina
La lampe du temple	Andante lagrimoso
[Encore un hymne]	Cantique d'amour (new)
Bénédition de Dieu dans la solitude (?)	
[Postlude] ²⁷	

Liszt wrote on May 2, 1832, in a letter to Swiss pianist Pierre Wolff:

"I have been working like possessed by demons with my spirit and my fingers - Homer, the Bible, Plato, Locke, Byron, Hugo, Lamartine, Chateaubriand, Beethoven, Bach, Hummel, Mozart, Weber, they are all around me. I study them frantically; I also study for 4-5 hours, thirds, sixths, octaves, tremolos, repeated notes, cadences etc. Oh – if I do not lose my mind – you will find an artist when you arrive! Yes, an artist as you wished for, one that is needed today!"¹²

In reality, he studied more, 10-12 hours, training the pianistic apparatus until reaching complete independence of the fingers and elasticity of the hands and wrists, without forgetting about the musical message and expression. He studied various timbres, dynamics, various modes of simultaneous attack, preoccupied by perfecting a superposition of melodic plans.

Elaborate techniques, with studies that he tried, can be found in the *Technical exercises* noted later, as it can be seen from the letter to Princess Wittgenstein (in August 1868).¹³ Liszt is one of Beethoven's followers in covering the entire keyboard to obtain the orchestra effect. His contemporaries said he "orchestrated" with his fingers. He was a fast learner, but tours exhausted him, as each concert was followed by the preparation of the following one, with permanently renewed repertoire, which meant long study hours – as Liszt himself confessed in December 1839, in a letter sent from Vienna to Marie d'Agoult.

¹² Hamburger Klára, *Liszt kalauz*, Zeneműkiadó, Budapest, 1986, p. 237.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

The paraphrase period

The 1830s-40s are filled with tours in Switzerland and Italy and the impressions of these journeys are included in character pieces: Liszt composes a remarkable number of fantasies, paraphrases, reminiscences from famous operas, classic-romantic art songs as well as organ pieces by Bach.

Virtuosity studies composed in this first period (1826-53)

Among the 48 *Transcendental Études* [*Études d'exécution transcendante*], or *Étude en 48 exercices dans tous les tons majeurs et mineurs*, 12 were composed in 1826; the following 12 were comprised in the second edition: 24 *Grandes études*, in 1837. *Mazeppa* is sketched in 1829, but the final version only dates from 1851. The études are only published in 1852 (Breitkopf und Härtel) with a dedication for Carl Czerny, his devoted teacher.

Grandes études de Paganini is composed in 1838, with a second version dedicated to Clara Schumann (1851, Breitkopf und Härtel).

Trois études de concert (1849) follow, dedicated to Edouard Liszt (a younger uncle on his father's side) as well as two concert études: *Waldesrauschen*¹⁴ and *Gnomensreigen*¹⁵ 1862-63, dedicated to Dionys Pruckner, disciple from Weimar, closing the études series.

Consolations (Six pensées poétiques), composed before 1849 (published in 1850, by Breitkopf und Härtel), have no dedication, their title being inspired by Charles Augustin de Saint-Beuve's volume, published under the pseudonym Joseph Delorme.

The two ballads – the first one, *Le chant du croisé*¹⁶ (1845), appeared in Leipzig in 1849, dedicated to prince Eugen von Wittgenstein, nephew of the princess, talented sculptor and maker of Liszt and Wagner's effigies and the second one, (1853), published in 1854 – will complete this period's piano works.

¹⁴ Forest murmurs.

¹⁵ Dance of the Gnomes.

¹⁶ Chant of the crusader.

The symphonic poems (1848-57)

Liszt's fascination for orchestral sounds and his interest for the poetic world will be expressed in his symphonic works. A new meeting with Lamartine's verses will give birth to the masterpiece *Les Préludes* (1848)¹⁷; although the initial project was the poet Joseph Autran, the dedication remains the same as for the *Poetic harmonies*, Princess Carolyne de Wittgenstein¹⁸ (1854). Much like Verdi, Liszt is charmed in his operas by historic themes and romantic heroes such as those created by Victor Hugo, in *Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne* (1848-49) and *Mazeppa* (1851), by Byron - in *Tasso* (1849), by Schiller - in *Les Idéaux* (1857), but also by mythological heroes, such as *Prometheus* – by Herder (1850), or *Orphée* (1854), or the eternal Shakespeare – in *Hamlet* (1858); another source of inspiration could be a painting by Kaulbach, for finding national identity, in *The Battle of the Huns* (1857).

Another characteristic of his works is the permanence of the religious feeling; in his study entitled *On religious music* Liszt had condemned the low quality of the religious service as well as the lack of vocal training of the parish singers and of the organ players: "the organ, this Holy Pope of instruments, can be now heard as a prostitute selling itself with *vaudeville arias and even galops?*... When will we finally have religious music? ...but we have no idea of what that is... the old ideas on this type of music expressed by Palestrina, Händel, Marcello, Haydn, Mozart, they barely exist in libraries. These masterpieces will never again lose the dust that covers them."¹⁹

Poetic and religious harmonies – the 1847 version. Analytic aspects

The 1847 version of the *Poetic and religious harmonies* is a cycle for piano composed by Liszt in Woronińce, in the Poland - Ukraine area, at the estate of princess Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein (née Iwanowska). The composing parts are as follows:

¹⁷ Printed in 1856, by Breitkopf und Härtel Publishing House.

¹⁸ In the beginning, the composer intended to write a cycle called *Les Quatre Éléments* (*Les Aquilons*¹⁸, *Les Flots*¹⁸, *Les Astres*, *La Terre*), four choir pieces on the verses of Joseph Autran, in 1844, on the occasion of a triumphant tour in Marseille; an overture was supposed to begin the cycle, but it was presented separately, with the author's orchestration and not the one of Joachim Raff¹⁸ with a new title and program¹⁸; the beginning formula, pizzicato in octaves, comes from the piano reduction in *Les Flots* and the motive "c-b-e" the motto of the poem, comes from *Les Astres* and accompanies the words "Homme épars sur ce globe qui roule". Also, the writing of the string section from Andante maestoso (measure 35) from the poem is found in *Les Flots* too, proving the composer's rigour in constructing his original works.

¹⁹ Franz Liszt, *On religious music* in *Romantic pages*, Editura Muzicală, Bucharest, 1985, p. 44, is one of the French articles published by Liszt between 1835-40 in Schlesinger's *Revue et Gazette musicale*, in Paris.

Harmonies poétiques et religieuses:

- 1) Invocation (Lamartine) (1847)
- 2) Ave Maria (1846)
- 3) Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude (1847)(Lamartine)
- 4) Pensée des morts (1834)(Lamartine)
- 5) Pater noster (1846)
- 6) Hymne de l'enfant à son réveil (1844)
- 7) Funérailles (1849)
- 8) Miserere d'après Palestrina (1851)
- 9) Andante lagrimoso (1850)
- 10) Cantique d'Amour (1847)

1. The first part of the *Poetic harmonies, Invocation*, was composed in 1847 and completed in Woroniŋce; the tempo is *Andante con moto*, tonality E major, 3/4, the form - sonata.

Liszt quotes from Lamartine seven verses from each of stanzas 13 and 15 of the poem with the same title:

E.g. 4

Invocation

Élevez-vous, voix de mon âme,
 Avec l'aurore, avec la nuit!
 Élanchez-vous comme la flamme,
 Répandez-vous comme le bruit!
 Flottez sur l'aile des nuages,
 Mêlez-vous aux vents, aux orages,
 Au tonnerre, au fracas des flots;

.....
 Élevez-vous dans le silence
 À l'heure où dans l'ombre du soir
 La lampe des nuits se balance,
 Quand le prêtre éteint l'encensoir;
 Élevez-vous au bord des ondes
 Dans ces solitudes profondes
 Où Dieu se révèle à la foi!

(Lamartine)

20

The musical discourse begins with a motto-motive “c# e f# g#” appearing in different variations and transpositions along the piece. The final version of this first part will be amplified until 203 measures (from 61).

²⁰ Rise up, voice of my soul, / With the dawn, with the night! / Leap up like the flame, / Spread abroad like the noise! / Float on the wing of the clouds, / Mingle with the winds, with storms, / With thunder, and the tumult of the waves.

Rise up in the silence / At the hour when, in the shade of evening, / The lamp of night sways, / When the priest puts out the censer; / Rise up by the waves / In these deep solitary places / Where God reveals himself to faith!

E.g. 5

Andante con moto

sotto voce

6

mf cre - - -

5

sotto voce

molto

The beginning sound “C”, as in the *Preludes*, sends us to Princess Wittgenstein – could that be “C” from Carolyne?

The main theme has a hymn character with a pentatonic profile, while the second theme (measure 30) evokes the beginning of Beethoven’s *Sonata op. 111*: the rhythmic-melodic profile, the insertion of arpeggiate chords - in Beethoven’s piece, in glissando - in Liszt’s composition, the closing seems to contain Beethoven’s dilemma “Muss es sein?” which ends Quartet no. 16 in F major op. 135 (1826);

E.g. 6

Liszt – *Invocation, T2*

Beethoven – *Piano Sonata, op. 111, p. I*

Maestoso.

cresc.

Beethoven – *String Quartet, op. 135, Final*

Grave

Muss es sein?

Allegro

Es muss sein! Es muss sein!

Grave, ma non troppo tratto.

What surprises is the novelty of the language: a succession of unresolved seventh chords, augmented fourth leaps, eleventh chords.

2. The second part, *Ave Maria*, was written in 1846 and is a transcription of a choral piece; it begins with an introduction in Moderato, and continues with a prayer in Cantabile, in B flat major, 4/4, with the form:

Thematic introduction A B A _{varied} coda

The introductory part has in its soprano an ostinato in octaves on F – possibly “F” from Franz, the replica of the first part?

The answer comes with the theme from Cantabile, which begins with “F” as well.

The vocal writing and the inserted text are preserved.

3. The third part, *Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude*, sketched in 1845 and completed at Woroniñce in 1847 unfolds in Moderato, in F# major, 4/4, in a tri-strophic form:

A B C A _{varied} coda.

Liszt quotes the first stanza of Lamartine’s poem with the same title:

E.g. 7

D’où me vient, ô mon Dieu! cette paix qui m’inonde?
 D’où me vient cette foi dont mon cœur surabonde?
 À moi qui tout à l’heure incertain, agité,
 Et sur les flots du doute à tout vent ballotté,
 Cherchais le bien, le vrai, dans les rêves des sages,
 Et la paix dans des cœurs retentissants d’orages.
 À peine sur mon front quelques jours ont glissé,
 Il me semble qu’un siècle et qu’un monde ont passé;
 Et que, séparé d’eux par un abîme immense,
 Un nouvel homme en moi renaît et recommence.

(Lamartine) ²¹

²¹ „Whence comes to me, O my God, this peace that overwhelms me? / Whence comes this faith in which my heart abounds? / To me who just now, uncertain, agitated, / And on the waves of doubt buffeted by every wind, / Sought goodness, truth, in the dreams of the wise, / And peace in hearts resounding with fury, / When barely on my brow a few days have slipped by, / It seems that a century and a world have passed; / And that, separated from them by a great abyss. A new man is born again within me and starts anew.”

An anacrusic descending trichord: e# - d# - c# introduces the theme proper: c# - f# - g# - a# ..., we notice the beginning on C# (Cis), the same "C" from *Carolyne*, from the *Invocation*.

E.g. 8

It is one of the most beautiful parts of the cycle, it reflects the maturity of the style; the middle part stands out as a distinct part, the abridged reprise being prepared by a *parlando*. The Coda rememorates the piece's themes, on Lamartine's verses.

The tempo is *Moderato*, the tonality F# major (a reference to Franz), 4/4, and the form:

A B C A_{varied} Coda

Section A is *Moderato*, an ample part, of the form a b a_{varied}

The *cantando sempre* theme pertains to the tenor, the bass marks the organ part, the accompaniment emerges in the soprano, with figurations of changed notes, while the alto performs tenth arpeggios:

The a_{varied} reprise maintains the indication *sempre cantando* and *poco a poco animato il tempo*, there is no obvious contrast between a and b, but we notice the sublime sounds of the "celestial concert": these are the bells and harp effects required by the inventiveness and mastery of Liszt's piano writing; after 26 measures it becomes *espressivo molto*, culminating with *rinfz. e sempre più appassionato* (measure 121) and ending in *accelerando, crescendo molto* (measure 132):

A short transition period follows in B flat major, (with an effect of descending third), which will also emerge later, see A_{varied};

The initial tonality in *fff* returns, followed by a caesura; the Tempo I. reprise evinces a thematic coda with the same distribution of voices as in the beginning (the theme in the tenor...) after which A ends in *ppp* and *perdendosi*.

Section B, Andante in D major 3/4, represents a middle and recalls Schumann's miniatures from *Album for the Young*.

Section C, Più sostenuto, quasi Preludio, in Bbmajor, 4/4 evokes Schubert's *Impromptu* in Gbmajor, with a theme in discant, the harmonic figuration in the middle voice and the organ part performed by the bass; the part ends with a transition to F# major *rinfz. e appassionato* leading us to an abridged reprise.

The thematic reprise, *A*_{varied} Tempo I. Allegro moderato, begins with *dolce*, then *poco a poco animato* the harmonically amplified theme and *arpeggiato*, with a harp effect on a harmonically figured bass, *moto perpetuo*:

E.g. 9

A climax (measure 87) amplifies the orchestral theme in *ff rinfz. molto sempre più appassionato*, which needs to be maintained; Liszt repeats this indication after six measures;

Measure 100 represents the climax, in *fff*, followed by a stringendo; the moment is stressed melodically as well by an enharmonic modulation (F# major – B flat major). From this moment on the musical discourse goes through a lyrical episode (measure 109-140), and Andante semplice espressivo closes this “blessed” part.

4. *Pensée des morts* (1834, which a version of the previous piece, *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* which appeared in the following year - 1835), adopts the initial monothematic form. The initial Senza tempo becomes Lento assai, in the second edition, in 5/4, A minor (it begins with a diminished sixth chord C – E flat- A, A = the chord's root = A – a possible reference to Adam Liszt, the mourned father?)

I. The first section, *Lento assai, pesante* begins with a descending trichord (in the same tenor register), see *Bénédiction* (up to measure 25), with a motto: *Recit. lento*, which appears 6 times, the last time in the thirds:

E.g. 10



II. The second section, *poco a poco più accelerando*, introduces virtuosity passages, swift glissades on augmented fourth and diminished fifths intervals in *rinforzando assai, agitato assai* octaves, in *ff*, reflecting Liszt's writing style; in measure 43 Chopin's motif from the revolutionary study appears tragic, the minor third is diminished, the tempo is reserved, and the tone lamentoso; a second wave of de turmoil, *animato stringendo* (measure 48), in 7/4, then 5/4, then *più stringendo* will culminate in an *ff, rinforzando assai*.

III. The third section inserts a new material starting with measure 58, in Eb major – a harmonic choral in *ff* on *De profundis clamavi: De profundis clamavi ad te Domine; Domine, exaudi vocem meam. Fiant aures tuae intendentes in vocem deprecationis meae.*²²

IV. There follows an abridged reprise of the beginning, *Tempo I* (in E minor, then A minor) with a memento role.

V. *Adagio dolcissimo* marks a transition period to the *Adagio, cantabile assai*, which seems to be an evocation of Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* or of Schubert by the evocation of the *Impromptu* in G flat major.

We can notice a connection to *Bénédiction* by the descending trichord (a-g-f#) which emerges as a symbol-motif all through the discourse.

All starts with the "A" sound - possibly "A" from Adam (the father); this is the part that gave the piece its title, even though it preserves few elements of the original variant;

²² *From the depths, I have cried out to you, O Lord; / Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.*

Liszt is critical towards the first version in his words on the cycle's appearance in 1852: "A part of this collection appeared too soon, due to inattention. Today the author recants that much truncated and flawed edition and publishes the same fragment again, with the necessary changes, as beginning for *Harmonies, Pensée des morts*".²³

After a beginning with an ad libitum declamation, everything seems subject to rigour: the tonality is specified, and the notation of measure alternation (5/4, 7/4, 3/4 and 4/4) replaces the old indication *Senza tempo* – a surprising innovation from a 23 years old young man. *Pensée des morts* evokes dead ones beloved by Liszt, thus: in Adagio cantabile assai Schubert's figure appears by the *Impromptu* in Gbmajor, as well as Beethoven's in the *Moonlight Sonata*.

The idea of death often returns in Liszt's music, as in this *Pensée des morts* part. Two days after his father's death, he composed a funeral march in his memory. To abbot Felicité de Lamennais, considered "a saint" by Liszt, he dedicated the Lyon revolutionaries' march, with the motto that became Liszt's creed: "Live working or die fighting".

5. *Pater Noster* (1846), the fifth piece of the cycle, is the transcription of a choral piece composed later for an a cappella choir.

The beginning in Andante, aeolian on A – the father's (Adam Liszt) invocation; in terms of meter, it alternates 3/4 (16, then 12 measures) and 4/4 (5 and 20 measures). The prayer's text appears in writing, the melodic line follows it naturally, without repetitions, in modal harmonies:

E.g. 11

Andante
Pa - ter no - ster qui es in cae - lis san - cti-fi -
mf

6 ce - tur no - men tu - um. Ad - ve - ni - ar
f

²³ Hamburger Klára, *Op. cit.*, p. 276.

The melodic line respects the tenor’s medium register of the original choral variant, except for the middle part, where the accompaniment is refreshed by a figuration in eighth notes, above the text: “Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie, et dimite nobis debita nostra ...” The finale suggestively stresses the relationship between F[rantz] and C[arolyne] by the succession of harmonies in *F* and *C* on the text “Sed libera nos a malo, Amen.”

6. *Hymne de l’enfant à son réveil* (1844). Like the preceding one, *Pater noster*, this merely three minute part had a previous choral history, however not a cappella, like *Pater Noster*, but with a piano accompaniment²⁴. The subsequent pianistic variant does not have the inscribed text, and the later choral one is ampler and contains a text full of a child’s candour who prays on waking up for a shelter for the orphan, bread for the poor, liberty for prisoners, and for himself, honesty and justice in soul and words:

E.g. 12



The tempo is lively, Poco Allegretto (110 measures), the tonality serene, A flat major, in a rocking Sicilian rhythm - 6/8, with the indication *una corda, dolcissimo*, with no chromatic harmonies and simple rhythms; the tonal plan is more varied: section A in Ab major (31 measures), a short recitative in the homonymous tonality – A flat minor (10 measures) accomplishes the transition to B - without *sempre dolce espressivo* in E major (8 measures), the re-transition (4 measures) to an *A_{varied}*, with a *quasi*

²⁴ Ben Arnold, *Liszt Companion*, Piano Music: 1835-61, Greenwood Publishing Group, London, 2002, p. 95.

arpa climax towards the sections's middle. Andantino (61 measures), the second section of *The Hymn* begins in a ludic manner in *pp dolcissimo* with a unique motif resembling Schumann's *Aufschwung*.

7. *Funérailles* (October 1849); F minor, 4/4. On the title page we can read "Oct. 1949" and it is a possible reference to the martyrs of the Hungarian revolution, while the dotted rhythm of the slow part certifies this intention; at the same time, the threatening bass in the slow part of the octave passage invokes Chopin by quoting the *Polonaise in A flat major*, his death being a second reason for the mourning declared in the title. In his letter to princess Carolyne of Wittgenstein (1851), *Funérailles* were not part of the cycle, *Miserere* being the 7th part and *Andante lagrimoso* ("Tombez, larmes silencieuses") the 8th. It is the best known part of the cycle, a master's masterpiece²⁵, as Klára Hamburger rightfully claims.

The piece starts with an *Introduzione*, in *Adagio f pesante* (1-23 measures), with a pedal in D flat in bass (may "des" mean "Dies irae?"), followed by the succession of diminished chords with a diminished seventh, and the melodic line contoured by these sombre harmonies shapes a sinuous "passus duriusculus", rarely interrupted by a minor third (measure 4):

E.g. 13

Introduzione
Adagio ^{*)} October 1849

The musical score for the introduction of *Funérailles* is presented in two systems. The first system shows the piano and bass staves. The piano part begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a *pesante* marking. The bass part features a *des* (D-flat) pedal point. The second system shows a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, with a *des* (D-flat) pedal point. Dynamics include *mf* and *sempre marcato*. A measure number '4' is marked at the start of the second system.

²⁵ Hamburger Klára, *Op.cit.*, p. 280.

Section A starts after the *lunga pausa* of the *Introduzione* (measures 24-55); the theme in bass, *pesante* (C-Ab-G-F-E-Eb-Db-C – anticipates Messiaen’s third mode: tone, semitone, semitone, transposition 2 – Db Eb E F G Ab A B C Db), has a descending profile, in a dotted rhythm, with a mourning character, harmonically counterpointed by the soprano *sotto voce* in a funeral march rhythm. The soprano takes over the theme amplified in the octaves, *La melodia sempre accentata* (measure 39), followed by a *crescendo molto* (52) but painfully collapses into *pp*:

E.g. 14

The image shows a musical score for Section A, measures 20-24. The score is in bass clef with a key signature of two flats. Measure 20 shows a piano introduction with a 'lunga pausa' and 'ritard.' markings. Measure 24 features a 'pesante' bass line and a 'sotto voce' soprano line.

The middle part (B – measures 56-108) begins *lagrimoso dolce*, but in the middle becomes *più agitato ed accel.* and culminates in *fff*.

In the third section (C, measures 109-155), the tempo becomes increasingly alert (*poco a poco più moto*), Liszt suggests an assault in this part: the whirl of the triplet accompaniment from the bass recalls Chopin’s *Polonaise-Fantaisie* op. 61 in Abmajor, to which Liszt himself will refer later. His intention was to adopt the bass’ design, but, of course, in a different manner: tritone sequences in legato at Chopin, - trichords in staccato at Liszt; one of Liszt’s disciples, Frédéric Lamond, wrote that the master had stopped him once by the octave passage of the *ostinato*, saying to him: “I am not interested in how fast you can play the octaves. What I want to hear is the hoof of the Polish cavalry, before they crush the enemy.”²⁶

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 282.

Liszt - *Funérailles*

109 poco a poco più moto *)

sotto voce ma un poco marcato *mf* sempre stacc.

113

Chopin - *Polonaise-Fantaisie, Allegro maestoso* op 61

a tempo

f *dim.* *p*

The coda (measures 156-191) is a *thematic memento* (except for the introduction), which successively brings back the mourning theme (measures 156-176), fragments of *lagrimoso* (177-184) and five measures from a last desperate, repressed assault (measures 185-189).

8. *Miserere, d'après Palestrina* (1851) is a new part processed from a choral piece dating from 1845, a penitence composed after Palestrina's *Miserere*.

The *Largo* surprises us by the unusual minor (chromatic) mode in E, with a mourning character; the measure is not given (but can be inferred - 4/4) and ends with a 'Picardy 3rd':

E.g. 16

Musical score for E.g. 16, featuring a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked "Largo" and the mood "quasi recitativo". The lyrics are: "Mi - se - re - re me - i, De - - us, se - cun - dum magnam mi - se - ri - cor - di - am tu - am. Et se - cun - dum mi - se - ra - ti -". The score includes dynamic markings like "mf" and "cresc.", and articulation like "tr" (trills).

The sober 12 measure theme continues with two ornamental and register variations: variation I (measure 13-24), more animated, (*poco più mosso*), in *pianissimo*, with a tremolo figuration above the soprano theme, with a perdendo rit finale; variation II (measures 25 - 36), brings the theme back to the middle register and amplifies the arpeggiato figuration of the soprano and the dynamics in the *forte*; the finale, *sempre forte*, and the coda of 7 measures (37-44) will end the part in a determined, dramatic *fortissimo* - "Miserere mei, Deus, secundum magnam misericordiam tuam. Et secundum miserationem tuam, dele iniquitatem meam."²⁷

9. *Andante lagrimoso* (1850) in G# minor has no title, it is a meditation on Lamartine's verses, two strophes of the poem *Une larme ou consolations*²⁸:

E.g. 17

Tombez, larmes silencieuses,
 Sur une terre sans pitié;
 Non plus entre des mains pieuses,
 Ni sur le sein de l'amitié!

Tombez comme une aride pluie
 Qui rejaillit sur le rocher,
 Que nul rayon du ciel n'essuie,
 Que nul souffle ne vient sécher.

(Lamartine) ²⁹

²⁷ Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy great mercy. And according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my iniquity.

²⁸ Weep, silent tears.

²⁹ Fall, silent tears, / Upon an earth without pity; / No more between pious hands, / Nor on the bosom of friendship!

Fall like an arid rain, / Which splashes on the rock, / That no ray from the sky can wipe away, / That no breath can come to dry.

The part has a free, improvisational character, section I (measures 1-41) starts with a syncopated introduction (measures 1-4), and the theme (measures 5-6), modulates from G# minor - C minor - B minor; a tempo brings the theme back to the new tonality (B minor) and after the enunciation places it in the tenor, until the cadence (measure 41); section II (42-60) changes the register into an superacute *dolcissimo* in A minor, continues with a tonal instability and ends *poco accelerando* on an arpeggio which suggests an Eb major; section III (61-87) begins in Ab major; the introduction (5 measures) overlaps the binary-ternary rhythm, after which it continues in the manner in *Pensée* and *Bénédiction* evoking Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann; cadences in E major; the thematic, meditative coda in Mi major ends the meditation on a six-four chord.

10. *Cantique d'Amour* (1847, completed at Woroniñce), the last part of the cycle, starts with a discrete Introduction, *una corda* in E major 3/4 (measures 1- 6 – the last measure rest has a *suspence* character); a scale begins to contour in the soprano: C-D-Eb-F#-G-B; section A - in Andante, reminds of the serenade genre with the theme in the tenor in *mezzoforte cantando*, accompanied by *quasi Arpa* in *piano* (measures 7-45):

E.g. 18

The image displays two staves of musical notation for Liszt's *Cantique d'Amour*. The top staff, measures 1-6, is marked *Levato, quasi improvvisato* and *una corda*. It features a syncopated introduction in the bass and a melodic line in the treble. The bottom staff, measures 7-45, is marked *Andante mf cantando* and *quasi arpa* in *piano*. It shows a scale in the soprano (C-D-Eb-F#-G-B) and a piano accompaniment in the bass with arpeggiated figures. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Section B – keeps the armour, however in Bbmajor, 4/4, (measures 46-59), with the theme’s beginning on F - F[ranz], maintained in the same register, however with a *dolcissimo* accompaniment [*quasi Campanella*] (we might say); the discourse becomes *poco a poco agitato* and ends in *crescendo molto*;

Section A returns with four variants: A_{varied} : 3/4 (measures 60-107) – begins in the upper register (one major seventh higher: G-Bb-D); in a_{v1} (measures 60-78) it alternates the *quasi Arpa* and the *quasi Campanella* accompaniment, and in a_{v2} (79-93) it overlaps them, while the theme goes over to the initial tonality and register; in a_{v3} (94-108), the theme is doubled in octaves in the soprano, with an accompaniment of bells; a_{v4} (109-123) amplifies into a *fortissimo appassionato*; it maintains the soprano register, with unfolding chords, while the accompaniment borrows double harp sounds; the *poco accelerando* coda (124-140) ends this *Love hymn* and the entire cycle in an apotheosis-like *fortissimo*, possibly intending to suggest wedding bell sounds, may it be the hope for a *campanilla de sposalizio*?

E.g. 19

The image displays a musical score for a piano and voice. The score is divided into two systems. The first system starts at measure 118 and features a vocal line with a tenor clef and a piano accompaniment. The piano part includes a tenor clef and a bass clef. The music is marked with 'ten.' and 'sf' (sforzando). The second system starts at measure 121 and continues the vocal and piano parts. It includes a 'poco accel.' (poco accelerando) marking. The score uses various clefs (tenor and bass) and dynamic markings (sf, ten.) to indicate performance instructions. The music is written in a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 4/4 time signature.

The chromatically nuanced harmonies, the required harp effects (*quasi arpa*), determined Liszt to transcribe this part for the invoked instrument. Liszt played *Cantique d'amour* in concert for a long time; it is the declaration of love addressed to princess Sayn-Wittgenstein; as a matter of fact, *Andante lagrimoso* (9) and *Cantique d'amour* (10) were composed during the relationship with Carolyne; the sentimental *Cantique* seems to be a replica of his celebrated paraphrase *Love dreams*, after *O lieb so lang du lieben kannst*, on Uhland's verses.

Conclusions

- A true prototype of the Romantic hero, Liszt finds his inspiration in history and mythology, following in the footsteps of Shakespeare, an idol for the romantics, Byron, Herder, Schiller, Victor Hugo and Lamartine; Lamartine's influences can be felt in the lyrical parts, but, as in the

symphonic poem *Les Préludes*³⁰ with a heroic ending, Liszt also feels the need for violent confrontations with adverse fate in the *Poetic and religious harmonies*. Therefore, in the final part of the *Funérailles*, the virtuoso passages for the left hand and the explosive successions of trichords in staccato remind us of Chopin's passages in *Polonaise-Fantaisie* op. 61 in A flat major on the terrible battle of the Polish cavalry against the tsar's army.

- Another characteristic of his work is its misyique aura, the permanence of the religious feeling, which explains the attraction he feels towards the poems of Lamartine; with the exception of 7. *Funérailles* and 10. *Cantique d'amour*, the other eight pieces are dedicated to faith: four of them are inspired by the religious spirit of Lamartine's poems (1. Invocation, 3. Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude, 4. Pensée des morts and 9. Andante lagrimoso) and the other three by Christian prayers (2. Ave Maria, 5. Pater noster and 8. Miserere d'après Palestrina).

- Ever since losing his father (Adam Liszt), the idea of death and the tragic feeling appear obsessively in Liszt's compositions. In *Funérailles*, the pedal on d flat from Introdutione, in tempo Adagio *f pesante* (1-23 measures), makes us think of a funeral procession, while the menacing repetition of d flat – “Des”, seems to suggest “Dies irae”. Dotted rhythm and the indication “Oct. 1949” recalls of the martyrs of the Hungarian revolution, and the quotation of the *Polish in A flat major*, with the threatening bass of the slow part from the octave passage, is a requiem for Chopin.

- The cycle *Année de Pèlerinage* (1883) dates from the period 1867-1877 and contains a large number of funeral pieces: *Aux cyprès de la Villa d'Este*, *thrénodie I-II*, *Sunt lacrimae rerum, en mode hongrois* and *Marche funèbre*, in memory of Maximilian, killed in Mexico (1867).

- During his last years, he composed: *Csárdás macabre* (1882) and *La lugubre gondola* (1883), a sinister prevision of Wagner's death, one year later.

- One of Liszt's favourite stylistic elements is “thematic transformatism”, according to which an initial theme changes into a new, metamorphosed one.³¹

- Regarding the particularities of his interpretative style, two techniques are highlighted, giving that specific colour: the harp effect, with successive glissandos, and the “campanella” effect (see Paganini), with bell sounds and interposed octaves or harmonies, all played in dazzling pace and unfurled along the entire keyboard.

³⁰ The symphonic poem *Les Préludes* was inspired by *Ode* by Alphonse de Lamartine, *Nouvelles méditations poétiques* of 1823.

³¹ Alain Cophignon, p. 111.

- Liszt, the visionary. In their 1934 version, the *Poetic and religious harmonies* began with a part which bore a rather unusual indication: *Senza tempo*. In the 1853 version, he will return to that part, writing: “Part of this collection appeared too soon, due to lack of attention. Today, the author revokes that much truncated and inaccurate edition and publishes again, the same fragment, with the necessary changes, as the beginning of the *Harmonies*, that is, *Pensée des morts*.³² Beginning with a declamation: *ad libitum*, everything is followed by rigor: the tonality is noted and the measures (5/4, 7/4, 3/4 și 4/4) replace the old notation, *Senza tempo* – unusual for those times and for a 23 year old composer; if the 1853 version renounces agogic renewal, there are surprising searches in the tonal area: after *Introduzione* in *Funérailles*, section A begins after a *lunga pausa* (measures 24-55), with a theme in bass, *pesante*, anticipating Messiaen with the third mode (c – ab-g-f-e-eb-db-c): tone, semitone, semitone, transposition 2 – db- eb- e- f – g- ab- a- b- c- db. His intention to explore new languages is not accidental – proof of that is his late years’ work *Bagatelle* “ohne Tonart”, where he uses the 12 sounds series.³³

- Liszt, the nostalgic. As *Pensée des morts* was initially the first part of the *Poetic and religious harmonies*, we can only assume that it was meant to commemorate the departed: his father Adam, Beethoven and Schubert. We can also notice a connection with *Bénédiction* in the descending trichord a-g-f#, appearing as a symbol-motive along the entire piece. It all starts with the sound “a” – a possible invocation of his father = “A” from Adam, and, in *Adagio cantabile assai*, Schubert and Beethoven also appear, invoked by the *Impromptu* in G flat major, as well as by the *Moon sonata*. The idea of death is recurrent in Liszt’s music, hence the title *Pensée des morts*. Two days after his father’s death, he composed a funeral march in his memory. He also dedicated the march of the Lyon revolutionaries to friar Felicité de Lamennais, whom he considered to be a saint, with a motto which became his credo: “To live working or die fighting”.

- Carolyne Wittgenstein’s role. In February 1848, Carolyne followed Liszt to Weimar, her role in the artist’s life being overwhelming both spiritually and materially: she convinced him to give up the exhausting concerts and encouraged him to compose; his work may not have been so vast and diverse, had she not been by his side in these years of maturity; in

³²Hamburger Klára, *op. cit.*, p. 276.

³³*Bagatelle ohne Tonart* is part from Liszt’s waltzes *Mefisto* (initially the 4th). It was composed in 1883 and only edited post-mortem, with the number S. 216a. the piece was first played in Weimar, on June 10, 1885, by Hugo Mansfeldt, Liszt’s disciple. In Klára Hamburger, *Op. cit.* 394–398.

his testament from 1860, Liszt wrote about Carolyne: "All my joys come from her, and all my worries go to her for annihilation."

- The generation after Liszt. Cosima Wagner wrote in her diary: "My father [Liszt], in his infinite modesty, impressed even R.[ichard], who admitted in an excess of merriness that he had 'stolen' much from the symphonic poems..."³⁴

- Bartók had in his repertoire in 1904, the *Mephisto Waltzes*, the *Variations on Weinen, Klagen, Funérailles*, the *Piano Concerto*, *Dans macabre* and had noted down in his biography: "I am studying Liszt again, particularly less celebrated pieces, such as *Années de Pèlerinage*, *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*, *Faust Symphony*, *Dans macabre* and others, and, except for some exterior aspects, I have reached the essence. I have discovered Liszt's true value, and, from the point of view of music evolution, I have known a genius much greater than Wagner or Strauss."³⁵

- Nowadays, famous recordings by Claudio Arrau, Vladimir Horowitz, Arthur Rubinstein, Martha Argerich, Sviatoslav Richter, Arnaldo Cohen, and Krystian Zimerman have been joined by those of Philip Thomson, Steven Osborne and Evgheni Kissin, Daniel Goïti.

- 20th-21st century musicology. Ben Arnold: "The 1853 cycle *Harmonies poetiques et religieuses* contains more notable works than the earlier cycle, but thematically it is more loosely organized, making it less successful in performance as a single composition. The popularity of the *Benediction* and *Funerailles* also make performances as a cycle seemingly erratic because of the obscurity and quality of several of the other pieces."³⁶

- Such a critical view can be contradicted by the performances of great pianists capable to render the contrast between the parts endowed with great ampleness, the brilliant (*Benediction*) or the dramatic ones (*Funérailles*), and the introverted ones, *Ave Maria* and *Pater noster*, which have choral origins. The problem is the duration of the entire cycle's performance, namely 83:48.

- Another opinion, belonging to Olivier Alain³⁷, remarks the complexity of Liszt's style, a synthesis of Thalberg's pianistic technique, the effects of Paganini's "bewildering" violin performance, the "splendour" of Berlioz's orchestration, the harmony of Schumann and the specific sonority of Chopin, to which he added, he says, "a diversity of colours and a gradual

³⁴ Cosima Wagner, *Die Tagebücher*, vol. II (1878-83), p. 165, quoted by Rena Charnin Mueller, New York, 1996, August 15th, in the *Preface* to the score edited by Editio Musica Budapest, 1997.

³⁵ Hamburger Klára, op. cit. p. 271.

³⁶ Ben Arnold, *Op. cit.* p. 96.

³⁷ Olivier Alain (1918-1994), composer, organist and musicologist.

extension of the sound force that has never been seen before.” Olivier Alain’s conclusion must also be remarked: “Liszt’s virtuosity is not, must not be a purpose in itself. It is but a means in the service of the sonorous intention. It must be seen in reality as a starting point and not as a finishing point.”³⁸

Translated in English by: Roxana Huza and Alina Pop

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³⁸ Jean et Brigitte Massin, *Op. cit.* p. 790.

