

THE ORGAN MUSIC OF LISZT

by
ZOLTÁN GÁRDONYI

According to Raabe's catalogue, the number of works by Liszt approaches 700 and according to Searle this round figure is actually some seventy more than this; his forty works for the organ make up a negligible proportion of his oeuvre. Indeed, of these forty works there are scarcely ten which were originally intended for the organ. Another twenty are organ transcriptions of works Liszt initially intended for some other medium (orchestra, or voice, or something else), and about a dozen are transcriptions of works by other composers, originally written for some other medium.

Nevertheless, a comparison with the number of organ works by contemporary composers of his stature will reveal that perhaps only Mendelssohn wrote a similar number of pieces for the instrument, while Schumann has left scarcely any mark on the history of organ music; Berlioz, Chopin and Wagner have left no mark at all. Before them, the Viennese classics composed no works for solo organ either.¹ This seems to fully justify asking why, after Bach the instrument has been dominated by a few transitional or minor composers, whose names by now have been more or less forgotten.²

Classical music had reflected universal human ideals irrespective of religious differences, the organ with its liturgical restrictions, and as an instrument put almost exclusively to church use, became outdated. Furthermore, from the second half of the 18th century onwards, the ideal of sound changed in music: the rigid, impersonal sound of the organ proved unsuitable for flexible, dynamic transitions called for by *empfindsam* music playing. Neither the craft of organ building nor the art of organ playing stayed abreast of musical developments; other instruments and the voice saw the arrival of an age of virtuosity, the majority of church organists only reached a stage of mediocrity and indeed most of them remained below that.³

Let us first take a look at the circumstances under which Liszt developed an active relationship with organ music. Apart from the instruments used in religious services, there were practically no organs in the countries which Liszt visited in the 1830s. It is true, however, that church organs were not restricted to strictly liturgical music. From the Age of Enlightenment at the latest, religious devotions with music called vespers or motets, were held in Catholic and Protestant churches alike, and the Roman Catholic

1 Unless one considers Mozart's pieces intended for the player organ as such works, and at the same time leaves out of consideration Haydn's and Mozart's compositions intended as inserts in religious services in which the organ plays concertante with the strings or the orchestra, and Mozart's *Mass in C major* with a solo organ section, dating from 1776 (K. 259).

2 Ph. Em. Bach, Christian Heinrich Rinck, Adolf Friedrich Hesse, Gustav Adolf Merkel, et al.

3 J. Rheinberger, the composer of a great many organ works, who from 1867 onwards taught the organ at the Royal Music School of Munich, considered J. S. Bach's organ sonatas to be unperformable. (Friedrich Högner in *Musik und Kirche*, 6/1974, p. 282.) In Chapter 3 of his *Studien zur Orgelmusik Franz Liszts* (Munich, 1973) Peter Schwarz outlines the intellectual background to the organ music of the 19th century, without, however, devoting adequate attention to the organ works of Liszt's day and the full scope of the organ music by Liszt himself; apart from his three great compositions in the genre, Schwarz only tackles the *Missa pro organo* and the *Requiem für die Orgel*.

liturgy even allowed organ pieces to be inserted in the mass.

*

We have no information whatever on Liszt having performed, or even having been familiar with any solo organ work before 1841. During his childhood in his native village of Doborján, he could have scarcely heard organ music, nor could he have played the organ.⁴ In all probability the first time the Doborján church saw an organ was in 1840, when during a visit home Liszt made a donation of 100 ducats towards the purchase of one. This organ with one manual, no pedal and with five stops is today in the Doborján Liszt Museum.

In 1836 Liszt attended a religious service in the Calvinist Church in Geneva, where psalms were sung to an organ accompaniment, and he included this in his Swiss musical itinerary, the cycle of piano pieces entitled *Album d'un voyageur* (although he omitted it from the final version of the cycle, which appeared in 1853).

Also during his stay in Geneva, in December 1836 Liszt went on an outing in the neighbourhood. When he and his companions visited the Cathedral of St Nicholas in Fribourg, Liszt's improvisation on the church organ left a deep impression on George Sand and the Swiss linguist Adolphe Pictet, both of whom committed their experience to paper. The instrument, which at the time included 64 stops, was built by a Fribourg craftsman, Jean Pierre Joseph Aloys Moser, between 1824 and 1834. Moser's father had learnt the craft from Johann Andreas Silbermann in Strasbourg. Liszt at the time could scarcely have had a more intimate relationship with the organ than that provided by the similar arrangement of the keyboards in the organ and the piano. He must have found his way among the pedal keyboards too, yet he could have hardly used them for anything more than producing sustained pedal basses. The registers were handled by the organ-maker himself, who happened to be present, presumably following Liszt's general requests. However, it must have been the protracted sound, differing so radically from that of the piano, and even more the tremendous mass of sound of the organ, which seemed almost superhuman compared with the volume of the contemporary piano, that inspired Liszt in an improvisation which prompted both of his literary companions to set down their experience⁵. According to George Sand, Liszt began playing *pianissimo*, and his modulations died away in the depth like a shadow; then he intoned Mozart's *Dies irae*, suddenly changing to *fortissimo* and giving rise in the imagination of the novelist to visions of the Apocalypse.

Adolphe Pictet described Liszt's improvisation mainly by using musical terms: "There commenced a gloomy, strict Adagio; flickering, dark modulations kept interweaving like misty fog along a line of dissonances; meanwhile more definitive formations were seeking to find shape and light as it were, and then disappeared as a sublime image of chaos. The prelude closed at the peak of tension to be followed by a firm, serious theme, in the majestically deep tones of the organ, slowly, after the manner of Bach's fugues, in higher and higher registers. The solemn theme was joined by another, fast and sparkling subject, and while the first followed the strict laws of harmony, the second developed freely, in unexpected combinations and with striking effects. There ensued a singular struggle between the two themes: they wound about each other in desperate efforts, almost in the manner of Laocoon wishing to escape from

4 V. page 21 of the catalogue issued by the Doborján Liszt Museum in 1981.

5 Ramann, I, pp. 372-4

the grasp of the serpents. Finally the first theme emerged victorious, the broken harmony was re-established, and the themes united in an inexpressible fashion. The theme developed with the sweep of a genius, concluded the artist's improvisation in the manner of a hymn of majesty, employing all the means of the splendid instrument."

These descriptions, like Heine's description of Liszt's improvisation of the piano,⁶ testify to the fascinating effect the young composer's improvisations unfailingly had on his listeners.

According to a brief report, on May 1, 1839 Liszt played a Bach fugue on the organ of the Church of San Luigi degli Francesi, at a religious service organized by the French embassy in Rome.⁷ The work presumably was not an organ piece but either the Fugue No. 1 in C sharp minor from *Das wohltemperierte Klavier* or the fugue from the *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue*.⁸ An even more taciturn report, though of no little interest, is that on May 4, 1843 Liszt played the organ at a church concert in Moscow.⁹

*

Maria Eckhardt describes an episode which could easily fit into a novel.¹⁰ She quotes from the recollections of the French poet Joseph Autran (1813-1877). Liszt set four of Autran's poems for male choir with piano accompaniment, and later, in the summer of 1845, he met the poet again in Marseilles, on his way back from a concert tour of Spain and Portugal. Maria Eckhardt writes: "After attending a banquet, Liszt and Autran hurried to the La Major Cathedral, on the seashore, where Autran was to be best man at the wedding of a friend of his at midnight, and Liszt had undertaken to play the organ. Due to an accident the young couple did not arrive, but Autran had, nevertheless, the wonderful fortune to have Liszt play the organ in the old church for him alone."

"He played, he improvised, a passionate and magnificent symphony upon Dante's *Divina Commedia*," wrote Autran, "of which we had been talking just previously. In succession he led me through the Inferno, Purgatory and Paradise, with a variety of expression and emotion the recollection of which will never fade from my memory. The sea, in the intervals, roared on the shore in a confused din of applause. Such a *chef-d'oeuvre* for a single listener, this really was more than munificence. This music, which ought to have demanded an admiring crowd, spread itself in the empty church with an overflow of sonority that at times became terrifying."

Mention should also be made of some more relevant information, according to which shortly after the Marseille episode, Liszt played the organ at one of his concerts in Mulhouse in Alsace.¹¹

All this deserves attention both from the technical and an intellectual aspect. From a technical point of view the young Liszt's encounters with the organ indicate that the virtuoso pianist, accustomed to a seven-octave keyboard, was faced with the keyboards of the organ, encompassing four or at most four and a half octaves; he learned of the dynamism of the organ that cannot be influenced by the cumbersome movement of the

6 1837, Ramann, I, p. 429.

7 Ramann, I, p. 518

8 Cf. Ramann, II-I, p. 157.

9 Raabe, I, p. 282.

10 "Liszt Marseille városában" (Liszt in Marseilles), *Magyar Zene*, 1981. No 3, and "Liszt à Marseille," *Studia Musicologica*, 24, 1982.

11 Raabe, I, p. 284.

keys of the instrument and with the evenly prolonged, yet less impulsive, sound of the organ pipes as compared with the sound of the piano chords, which quickly dies away after they have been struck.

This latter difference of a prolonged sound is in the organ's favour as far as the part lines are concerned; this brings us to the intellectual comparison, as does the wide choice of timbre and volume offered by the variety of organ pipes, and last but not least, to the difference between the dynamic possibilities inherent in the pianos and organs of that time. It must have been precisely the dynamic extremes of the organ, the contrasts between the virtually superhuman mass of sound and the whispering *pianissimo* that carried Liszt to improvisations which gave rise to apocalyptic and to Dantean associations in his listeners. Liszt must have had little practice in the use of the pedal keyboards, but his skill in the use of the manual keyboards certainly surpassed that of many a professional organist.

It was presumably Mendelssohn's prompting that led Liszt to take a profound interest in J. S. Bach's organ music. In 1840 Mendelssohn gave a concert of Bach's organ works in St Thomas's Church at Leipzig. Schumann enthused in writing over this concert. In 1841 Liszt wrote literal piano transcriptions of Bach's organ prelude and fugue in A minor and of that in E minor; he included these pieces in his piano concerts in Berlin in the winter of 1841-1842. Later he transcribed more of Bach's great organ preludes and fugues to the piano with a literal exactitude that leaves no sign of the works having been originally scored for some other instrument.¹²

Liszt might also have been known some of Mendelssohn's organ works. The six organ sonatas Mendelssohn wrote between 1839 and 1845 transplant to the organ the classic Viennese sonata form of independent movements. This was also done later by Johann Gottlob Töpfer of Weimar¹³ in his first organ sonata in D minor, of 1851, and by G. A. Merkel of Dresden in all of his many organ sonatas. From 1845 onwards Schumann composed a few works for the organ, or more exactly for the pedal-piano — a piano fitted with a pedal keyboard in addition to its ordinary manual keyboard and used by organists for practice at home. This may have prompted Liszt to have a *piano-orgue*, made by the French firm of Alexandre et fils, set up in the music room of his home in Weimar's Altenburg.

This instrument was used by Liszt in composing in 1850 his great four-part fantasia on themes from Meyerbeer's *The Prophet*. He intended the fourth part, the fantasia and fugue *Ad nos, ad salutarem undam* for four hands, with the second player also playing the pedals. A minor change was called for to have the piece performed by one player on the organ: those parts moving in the lowest and highest registers of the piano keyboard had to be reduced so as to fit to the narrower keyboards of the organ, the piano figurations had to be supported by sustained notes, and so on. The piece is only known today in this version, or more exactly in the form it features in A. Eckardt's version furnished for concert purposes, as Liszt first and lengthiest original organ composition. Liszt took as the theme of his work a four-line chorale-like melody of Meyerbeer's,¹⁴ beginning with the words *Ad nos, ad salutarem undam* which is woven

12 Ramann, II—I, p. 157; Raabe, II, p. 66.

13 See more in Milton Sutter: "Liszt and the Weimar Organist-Composers" (*Liszt Studien I: Kongressberichte Eisenstadt, 1975*, Graz, 1977) pp. 203-13.

14 See Raabe, II, p. 224 (Footnote 23).

into the opera's libretto. The words relate to the opera's plot, based on the Anabaptist movement of 1530; however, Liszt took no inspiration from the text, only the musical material of the theme and from this he brought forth a great, three-section movement, in which a great many variations coalesce.

In addition to the work's aesthetic quality, the technical precision in the use of the organ also deserves attention. The use of the pedal keyboard is not restricted to longer or shorter organ points and supporting of the basses of broad chords; there are also pedal trill passages resembling double-pedal and kettle-drum rolls and it is even assigned a role in the development of the theme through a marked rhythm in the fugue section. Typically, even the rhythmically augmented sounding of the theme is assigned to the pedal.

Liszt's fantasia and fugue *Ad nos. . .*, like his Piano Sonata in B minor stands peerless both as an organ work of its own kind, within the whole oeuvre of Liszt's and indeed among all the instrumental works of the day. In a way the organ sonata in C minor Julius Reubke, a Weimar student of Liszt, composed in 1856, two years before his premature death stands comparison with it. Following in Liszt's wake also was Carl Müller-Hartung (1843-1908), who in the 1860s wrote single-themed organ sonatas composed on chorale themes throughout.¹⁵

Liszt dedicated his fantasia and fugue *Ad nos. . .* to Meyerbeer, whom he held in high esteem; the work was first performed in 1855 in Merseburg, by Alexander Winterberger, one of Liszt's eminent pupils of the Weimar years. It was to him Liszt dedicated his second major organ work, the prelude and fugue on a theme using the notes B-A-C-H (in German nomenclature). This combination of four notes has been used by several composers, starting with J. S. Bach himself in the unfinished final fugue of *The Art of Fugue*, and including Schumann; it carries in itself an extension of the limits of tonality. From this motto-like kernel, Liszt's work unfolds rich harmonic possibilities in a condensed form, and here too, he creates from a single theme a whole range of figurative and rhythmic variations. Like *Ad nos. . .*, this work is a fantasia in both formal plan and structure; this also leaves its mark on a fugue-like second section which enters almost imperceptibly. The work had its premiere in 1856, again in Merseburg, and again performed by Winterberger. A piano version was not published until 1983, in Volume I/5 of the *Neue Liszt-Ausgabe*. The organ work was given its final form in 1870, of which a piano transcription was also written soon after, finally being given the title *Fantasia and Fugue*, which more closely matches both form and contents. According to two of Liszt's pupils from the composer's late years (A. Göllerich and A. Stradal), the Hungarian character of the section marked "marziale" in Bars 220-228 of the latter work bears out Liszt's conviction that one of the forebears of the Bach family had been of Hungarian extraction.

Liszt dedicated this final form of his "B-A-C-H" organ work to Alexander Wilhelm Gottschalg (1827-1908), who from 1847 was a teacher and organist in Tiefurt, near Weimar. Gottschalg had learnt the fundamentals of organ playing from J.G.Töpfer at the Weimar Seminar, and from 1855, after establishing contact with Liszt, gained an insight into how organ music could be interpreted.¹⁶

*

15 See M. Sutter, op. cit.

16 See M. Sutter, op. cit.

In a posthumous book *Franz Liszt in Weimar und seine letzten Lebensjahre*, which appeared in 1910, Gottschalg related a few episodes of his relationship with the composer: Liszt and Gottschalg enjoyed inspecting organs in the Weimar area to work out interpretations of various works, mostly by J. S. Bach. Gottschalg amusingly recounts one such occasion that took place in Dehnstedt: "In order that I could hear how a Bach fugue should sound, he would reach over my shoulders to play on the manuals while I would play the pedals because he had no great fluency on them. Since he usually took very fast tempi it was often an effort for me to keep up with him."

Gottschalg relates one occasion when Liszt made some suggestions for playing Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D minor. Gottschalg had played the work pleno on one manual as customary. Liszt suggested otherwise: "In terms of technique, it is totally satisfying ... but where is the spirit? Without this, Bach is a Book of Seven Seals! Surely Bach did not play his works in such a manner; he, whose registrations were so admired by his contemporaries! When you are playing on a three manual instrument, why should the other two manuals be ignored?"

Even if Gottschalg cannot be strictly called a pupil of Liszt's, he had closer links with Liszt's Weimar circle than many of the composer's piano pupils. In 1870 Gottschalg became the court organist of the Weimar Grand Duke, but even then (and indeed after Liszt's death too), he remained all his life a loyal and diligent guardian of everything Liszt has composed or transcribed for the organ. One of Gottschalg's purposes was to provide his fellow organists with conceptually valuable yet technically not too exacting organ music. He had this goal in mind when from 1869 on he brought out his volumes *Repertorium für Orgel, Harmonium oder Pedalflügel*. The subtitle tells us that the series had been revised by Liszt, who from that time on had most of his organ works published in them. Gottschalg's relationship with Liszt also helped him achieve merit as a teacher and writer on music—his memoirs concerning Liszt have proved to be of lasting value.

Let me make here a brief reference to some of Liszt's works in which the organ is assigned merely an accessory role. The earliest of these is the first version of his Ave Maria for mixed choir from 1846, with ad lib (in the original edition, *willkürlich*) organ accompaniment. Here, as in the accompaniment of many other of his choral pieces, the organ is restricted to backing the intonation, or at places the dynamism of the vocal parts. There are several references to the use of the pedal keyboard, but only as the redoubling of the pedal bass an octave lower. An organ accompaniment of a similar structure again appears in his Mass for Male's choir (1848) and, from the 1860s, in a number of liturgical or, at least, church choral works.

First however there appears a new instrument in Liszt's works—the harmonium, which was invented in the early 19th century and improved on in the times to come. The harmonium was originally intended to be an instrument resembling the organ, yet as against the rigid sound of the organ, suitable for flexible dynamic transitions, in French *orgue expressif*. In Liszt's works the harmonium served partly to provide accompaniment to choral works and partly as an alternative instrument for some organ works without any pedal parts, and even for a few pieces intended for the piano. In this context I should mention a specific instrument, the *Orgel-Piano*, which unites the qualities of the harmonium and the pianino, and which was made in Paris to Liszt's commission. The instrument was in Liszt's possession at the latest from the time he

moved to Pest, and it presumably helped him score works for the piano or the harmonium,¹⁷ and also to draw up a number of original works or transcriptions intended for the organ or the piano, the harmonium or the piano, or indeed sometimes in way of a treble alternative, for the organ, the harmonium or the piano.

Neither in these pieces nor in his actual organ and harmonium works did Liszt give any sign of wishing to make use of the performing technique which by the middle of the century allowed a gradual increase or decrease of volume on both the harmonium and the organ.¹⁸

Returning to the accessory role of the organ, this instrument is indispensable in Liszt's *Gran Mass*, even though the sections to be played on the pedal keyboard are still restricted mostly to the sounding or backing of individual bass notes, while the manual play is quite animated at certain points. At the words "*et homofactus est*" there is a reference to the special organ stop, the *Vox humana*. In the case of the *Faust Symphony*, the organ part of the epilogue, with the men's chorus, is merely restricted to sustained chords, and according to the score, can be played on the harmonium instead of on the organ. By quoting the hymn *Crux fidelis*, woven into the work, the score of the symphonic poem *Hunnenschlacht* allows for a similar option. In the Magnificat that forms the last section of the *Dante Symphony*, the female choral parts are definitely supported by the harmonium, as is the case in the section intended for the female choir in *The Legend of St Elizabeth*— the chorus of the angels.

*

To return to the works for solo organ, the organ piece *Évocation*, which Liszt composed in 1862 in Rome, presents an admixture of improvisations resembling a fantasia and a more or less free paraphrase. The atmosphere of the piece drew inspiration from the dusk and mystical resonance of the Sistine Chapel indicated in the subtitle, while the musical material recalls the memory of Mozart, who at thirteen heard here Allegri's *Miserere*, which he later wrote down from memory. The contrast woven out of the gloomy penitential psalm and the evocation of Mozart's *Ave verum corpus* lifts Liszt's *Évocation* above his other organ works of an arrangement character.

In the following year, 1863, Liszt completed his cycle of variations, *Weinen, Klagen*, and indeed almost simultaneously in two versions, one for the piano and one for the organ. Both in theme and in the chorale that closes the work (*Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan*), Liszt started out from the opening and closing choruses of Bach's Cantata No. 12. Both the opening chorus of the cantata and its later variant, which constitutes the Crucifixus movement of the *Mass in B minor*, consist of variations which are formed out of the harrowing, doleful material in the chromatically descending, four-bar bass progression, repeated in twelve phases. The striking and, at places, dramatically staggering unfolding of the chromatic and harmonic possibilities inherent in the organ, make Liszt's fifty-odd variations an outstanding work of its time.

The fact that, as he did with *Évocation*, Liszt dedicated this technically highly

17 As for instance "Angelus!" (*Années de pèlerinage* III, 1) and the first four pieces of *Weihnachtsbaum*. I myself am acquainted with this particular instrument of Liszt's—during my time as a teacher, it stood in Lecture Hall X. Of its two keyboards the upper one, encompassing seven octaves, sounded a pianino mechanism, and the lower one of five octaves belonged to a harmonium with three divided ranks of pipes. (See also Dezső Legány's article in *NHQ* 93. Editor's note.)

18 This was introduced in French organ music (C. Franck) sooner than in German (Max Reger).

exacting organ piece to Gottschalg, must have been a symbolic gesture by which the composer wished to express his lasting gratitude to his "legendary cantor." His collaboration with Gottschalg sparked off a process by which Liszt diverged more and more in his later organ works from his earlier virtuoso piano or orchestral-oriented scoring and from the monumental length of his organ works.

Even during his Weimar years it might have been Liszt's relationship with Gottschalg that led him to enrich the repertoire of organists by transcriptions of both his own works, and works by other composers intended for other media. More than once such transcriptions were made with the cooperation of Gottschalg, but their final shape always bears the hallmark of Liszt's spirit. Some of them had their origin in symphonic music, as for instance in certain sections of Liszt's *Dante Symphony* and his symphonic poem *Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne*, in his symphonic poem *Orpheus*, or Otto Nicolai's *Kirchliche Fest-Ouverture*. Other works originally intended for choral and orchestral ensembles include the majestic closing movement of Bach's Cantata No. 21 (*Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis*) and the Pilgrims' Chorus from Wagner's *Tannhäuser*. In keeping with their originals, these transcriptions are usually animated or even virtuoso organ movements. Works originally intended for vocal performance, however, seem to have lent themselves to technically less exacting organ transcriptions. This is the case with Liszt's own two Ave Maria choruses (1853 and 1875), his choral work *Ave maris Stella* (1880), and also with Orlando di Lasso's motet *Regina coeli*, the Ave Maria attributed to Arcadelt, Bach's motetic cantata movement, *Aus tiefer Not*, Mozart's *Ave verum corpus* and the Agnus Dei of Verdi's Requiem.

The organ transcriptions of these works for church use are marked by lean scores which mainly move in broad note values and lack any ornamental elements. In this respect Liszt doubtlessly came near to the principles of the Cecilian movement, which had started out from Rome, but had also taken root in Bavaria. Even earlier his compositions included themes drawn from plainsong, and he also displayed model harmonic progressions that had been accomplished in 16th-century choral music. The aim of the Cecilian movement was to revive sacred music, and it wished to realize this in purely vocal choral music; Liszt, however, extended it to the field of organ music as well. This is best represented in his *Salve Regina* of 1877, intended for the organ or the harmonium. The basic melody of the work is a Gregorian Blessed Virgin antiphon with a Dorian melodic line,¹⁹ which Liszt shaped into an organ movement of stylized simplicity and technical straightforwardness. This movement adds entirely new features to Liszt's late creative period.

*

Of a similar structure is Liszt's *Rosario* of 1879, an organ work which again exhibits his characteristic technique of composition; the three short movements evoke their titles through typical transformations of the basic melody. Also from 1879 is Liszt's organ mass (*Missa pro organo*). As in many of his other sacred works, the movements of the mass are linked by motif. As is frequently the case in the music of Liszt's late period, the melodies and the harmonic realm of the work are marked by

¹⁹ Liszt took this melody from a book of scores, which has survived and is today preserved at the Ferenc Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest (J. G. Mettenleitner: *Manuale breve*, 1861, Regensburg, pag. 65: *Antiphona IV*). The melody is not identical to the widely known melody in the major key, sung to the same words, which was written by Henry Dumont.

essential turns which have been arrived at by tiny shifts. Similar features are apparent in the seven short movements (1883) that are contracted from the material of an earlier Requiem for male choir.

This basically ascetic stylization, partly recalling the Cecilian, forms only one aspect of the excessive contrasts in Liszt's personality. Even though his loyalty to the Pope (Pius IX) is borne out by two organ works of the same subject (*Der Papst-Hymnus*, 1863 and *Tu es Petrus*, 1867), the piano must still have retained its special attraction for him. This can be seen in the following two quotations from accounts Michelangelo Caetani, the Duke of Sermoneta sent to the Grand Duke of Weimar about Liszt, who was then living in Rome. The quotations are from Klara Hamburger's paper:²⁰ "Later, on the death of the present pope, Mr Liszt might again return to his piano and abandon the organ of St Peter's (May 21, 1865)." "The Abbé Liszt, who at the moment acts in Rome the role of David beside Saul, had his piano rolled into the interior of the Church" (January 9, 1866). Liszt at the same time also exhibited a keen interest in concertante organ music. The year 1866 brought meetings with two French organist-composers. One was Camille Saint-Saëns, whom Liszt met in Paris before the performance there of his *Gran Mass*, and for whom he wrote a few directions on registration in the first of his two *Legends*, originally intended for the piano, obviously for a future performance on the organ. These instructions were even included in the first edition of the work, published by the Paris firm of Heugel in 1866.²¹ The other Frenchman was César Franck, whose improvisation Liszt listened to with utter delight on April 6, 1866 in St Clotilde's church in Paris.²²

Of the two, Liszt established closer contact with Saint-Saëns. It was at Liszt's insistence (although no longer under his baton but that of the Court conductor Eduard Lassen) that Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Dalila* had its premiere in Weimar on December 2, 1877, thirteen years before the opera was first performed in Paris. In a letter of December 9, 1877, Liszt wrote to Olga von Meyendorff that Saint-Saëns as an organist was of the same calibre that Bach had been in the field of the counterpoint.²³ In the same letter Liszt used the term "the organ, the Pope of instruments," putting it in quotation marks. It would be well-nigh impossible today to establish whether this humorous simile came from Berlioz, from Saint-Saëns, or even from Liszt himself.

On March 6, 1879, Saint-Saëns gave an organ recital in Budapest's Dohány utca synagogue, which at the time boasted the best organ in the capital. This recital was also attended by Liszt.^{24, 25}

Finally a few words on Liszt's connections with organ music in Hungary. On October 27, 1846, Liszt, as the guest of Bishop János Scitovszky of Pécs, played the

20 *Magyar Zene*, 1979/2.

21 In Liszt's organ works which have appeared in print, there are scarcely any registration indications which come from Liszt himself; some originate from Gottschalg and some from Bernhard Sulze, the organist of the Weimar Stadtkirche of the time (see M. Sutter, op. cit.). It was Liszt who, together with Sulze, initiated a kind of notation for the pedal part that wished to differentiate between notes to be played by the right foot by having the stems drawn upwards and those scored for the left foot with downwards-running note-stems.

22 As described by Vincent d'Indy in his biography of Cesar Franck published in 1906.

23 *The Letters of Franz Liszt to Olga von Meyendorff 1871-1886*, Washington, 1979.

24 Margit Prahacs: *Franz, Liszt, Briefe in ungarischen Sammlungen*, Budapest, 1966, pp. 395-6.

25 In his book *Begegnung mit dem Genius* (Vienna, 1934), L. Karpath mentions that Liszt himself once also played on the same organ.

organ at the city's cathedral.²⁶ Less widely known is the fact that, in September 1856, Liszt was invited by Count István Károlyi and he played the organ at the inauguration of the instrument in the Fót church, an event commemorated by the memorial plaque on the organ itself. In the autumn of 1872, or perhaps the beginning of 1874, Liszt, during visits to Horpács, may have played the organ of the parish-church at nearby Nagycenk and perhaps also the small organ in the Széchenyi mausoleum.²⁷

The Offertory movement, for full orchestra, from Liszt's *Hungarian Coronation Mass* has been included in an organ transcription in Gottschalg's Repertory. This brief movement, clearly Hungarian and elevated to the hymnic, though only a transcription, forms an essential part of the history of Hungarian organ music.

As Dezső Legány's research has discovered,²⁸ Liszt was the chairman of the committee which judged organists competing to play at the world fair in London in 1871. The audition was in the Kálvin tér Calvinist Church in Budapest. On February 16, 1883, to inaugurate the organ of the Budapest Academy of Music, János Koessler, the first organ teacher of the Academy, played, in the presence of Liszt, a transcription of the composer's *Legend of St. Elizabeth*.²⁹

In a Hungarian context mention should also be made of one of Liszt's distant relatives, Alajos Hennig, born in 1826. Hennig became music teacher and later Rector of the Jesuit college at Kalocsa. He played the organ fairly well. Liszt presented him with a copy of his organ mass, a work held in high esteem by Hennig.³⁰

In 1883 Liszt transcribed to the organ or harmonium, his song to Petőfi's poem, "God of the Hungarians", for baritone choir with piano accompaniment. Even if the transcription is not as organ-orientated as is the Offertory mentioned, it still has its place in the history of Hungarian organ music.

In the 1880s Liszt composed a few works intended expressly for the grand organ, including a multi-section work resembling a fantasia, for the inauguration of the new organ at Riga Cathedral, which employs the melody of the chorale *Nun danket, alle Gott*. A much more typical and concentrated piece is Liszt's *Introit*, which appeared in print only after the composer's death, in Gottschalg's edition, as did *Trauerode* with its gloomy poetry. The latter is a transcription of an orchestral work of the same title, dating from 1860, which, owing to the self-evident alternation of tonal contrasts, can be almost considered as a genuine organ work. The keystone of Liszt's organ music is the prelude he intended as the opening of a choral psalm with brass accompaniment *In domum Domini ibimus (Zum Haus des Herrn ziehen wir)*.

The works Liszt wrote for the organ from 1850 onwards broke through the bounds of the conservative organ music of the day. Developed out of a single central theme, they are large-scale fantasia-like pieces, requiring a monumental instrument. After the virtuoso organ pieces, which could even count as symphonic poems, and which have

26 Prahács, op. cit. p. 459.

27 Sándor Margittay in the preface to his publication of *Liszt's Organ Works* (pp. V-VI).

28 *Liszt Ferenc Magyarországon 1869-1873* (Ferenc Liszt in Hungary 1869-1873), Budapest, 1976, pp. 75-6.

29 Prahács, op. cit. pp. 433 and 435. The transcription was written by Carl Müller-Hartung, who in 1865, on Liszt's recommendation, was invited by the Grand Duke of Weimar to take the post of Kapellmeister, and in 1869 was appointed conductor of the Court Opera. See M. Sutter, op. cit.

30 Prahács, op. cit. p. 421.

remained outstanding to the present day, Liszt's glowing contacts with Thuringian organists in the 1860s seem to have marked a turning point diverting him from his earlier technical pretension. The atmosphere of the Rome years and his approach to the Cecilian movement set him in the direction of a more vocally-oriented way of scoring. Out of all this Liszt sifted those features which best suited his own personality. In his late period he wrote a few organ pieces which are a virtual microcosm of his music.