

Ágnes Watzatka:

## **EXPOSÉ ON A PLANNED DOCTORAL THESIS**

CONTENT:

1. Topic, research questions and method
2. State of research, important extant literature
3. Short list of publications relevant for the subject
4. Personal qualification
5. Rough structure of the thesis

### **1. Topic, research questions and method**

The title of my planned thesis is:

PLAINCHANT MELODIES IN THE WORKSHOP OF FRANZ LISZT.

The thesis will answer two main research questions:

1. Where did Liszt take the quoted plainchant melodies from?
2. What did he do with them in the process of composition?

The thesis will thus be conceived in two main parts:

#### 1. Liszt and the plainchant of his time.

The main research question will be subdivided into several related questions:

- How was plainchant practice in the 19<sup>th</sup> century?
- Where could Liszt hear plainchant? (places where he lived, travels)
- What sources of plainchant did he get acquainted with?  
(liturgical books in his possession)
- What kind of knowledge did he acquire about plainchant?  
(theory books he owned or borrowed for reading)

#### 2. Plainchant melodies in the most important compositions of Liszt.

This part will contain the presentation of the methods used by Liszt in quoting and integrating plainchant in the different compositions. The analyses will be made around the following questions:

- How did Liszt note the borrowed melodies? Did he quote the whole melody or only fragments of it, or a modified, maybe recomposed version of it?
- How did Liszt adapt the non-rhythmic melodies to the rhythms of classic music?
- What kind of harmonic accompaniment did he add to these melodies?
- Did he use plainchant melodies as themes, did these melodies gain importance in the shaping of the musical form?
- Other questions that may rise during the work.

A third part of the thesis will contain a systematic review of the analyses made and the conclusions.

## 2. State of research, important extant literature

The output of the great composers has been researched in such detail, that there is hardly anything important to be added to the huge amount of information already provided by scholars. One does not attempt to write new theses on Bach, Mozart or Beethoven.

Franz Liszt's position is a different one. Franz Liszt belongs to a "second" line of important composers, together with Schubert, Schumann, Chopin, Berlioz, Wagner, Mendelssohn and others. However, there is something special about Liszt. The tumultuous life of the child prodigy, the outstanding young virtuoso, the court conductor and composer, the abbé composing church music, the piano teacher, offers an impressive and multifaceted image of a man having his life and interests radically changed every 10-12 years. The preferred image is that of the young virtuoso, a master of the stage, a handsome, bold and original young man achieving world fame, and making friendship with princes and kings. In contrast to this, the abbé wearing cassock, studying theology, attending church services and composing church music, is almost completely ignored. This is the reason why Liszt's church compositions were, and to a certain extent still are an incompletely researched field.

1.

There is a single systematic work discussing in detail the question of plainchant as it appears in the works of Liszt:

- Heinrich Sambeth: *Die gregorianischen Melodien in den Werken Franz Liszts und ihre Bedeutung für die Entwicklung seiner Religiosität und Kunstanschauung.*

This is a doctoral thesis submitted to the University of Münster in 1923, almost 100 years ago. In the past 96 years Liszt-research has been enriched by a great number of studies made in the most different fields. Many unknown manuscripts were found and made public, and thus a great amount of new information became available. There are more works which need to be analyzed, the data provided by Sambeth need a thorough completion.

2.

An important thesis on Liszt's church music, *Revolution and Religion in the Music of Liszt*, was submitted by Paul Merrick to the University of Sheffield in 1987. This work contains information on more works of Liszt, however the topic of plainchant in Liszt's output is discussed only briefly.

3.

In the later decades, a French musicologist, Nicolas Dufetel dedicated himself to the church music of Liszt.

One of his two master theses, *L'idée de réforme dans la musique religieuse de Franz Liszt: Pour un 'canon' de la musique catholique?* (Tours, 2005) deals with Liszt's use of plainchant melodies, and especially with his plans to reform church music.

The other master thesis, *Franz Liszt Christus Entre théologie et dramatisme* (Tours, 2004) presents the oratorio *Christus*, referring to the use of plainchant, too.

Dufetel's PHD thesis, *Palingénésie, régénération et extase dans la musique religieuse de Franz Liszt* (Tours, 2008), is a valuable contribution to Liszt's church music, summing up the former results and adding a series of new and interesting observations. It dedicates only two smaller chapters to the use of plainchant melodies, based on examples from the oratorios *Christus* and *Cantantibus organis*.

A shorter summary of these chapters were published in 2012 in an article with the title *L'atelier grégorien de Franz Liszt, ou la voie du "Psallite sapienter"* (Études Grégoriennes XXXIX, Solesmes, 2012). Unfortunately, Dufetel is not a plainchant scholar, more of his analysis are unrevealing.

Summing up the situation of the extant literature on Liszt's use of plainchant, we may affirm that:

1. The only comprehensive and detailed work in the field was written 96 years ago; thus it contains much outdated and incomplete information.
2. More recent works only discuss parts of the topic, mostly without a professional knowledge of plainchant and thus providing much questionable and unrevealing information.
3. There has been very little research done on plainchant practice and sources in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. An accurate discussion of Liszt's use of plainchant needs to take into consideration this aspect, too.
4. In Liszt's personal library in Budapest, 26 books related to plainchant are preserved, and further ones are in the Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek in Weimar. These books were never thoroughly studied. Even their connection to the plainchant studies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and to Liszt's use of plainchant was very scarcely made.

### **3. Short list of publications relevant for the subject**

#### A. Plainchant in the XIXth century.

- Carl Gustav Fellerer, „Die Gregorianik im 19. Jahrhunder“. In: *Studien zur Musik des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Regensburg, Gustav Bosse Verlag, 1984, 9-95.
- Franz Carl Prassl, „Anton Bruckner und der gregorianische Choral seiner Zeit in Österreich“. In: *Anton Bruckner - Tradition und Fortschritt in der Kirchenmusik des 19. Jahrhunderts*. Pb.: Friedrich Wilhelm Riedel (Kirchenmusikalische Studien 7). 2001, 75-95.
- Denise Launay, *La musique religieuse en France du Concile de Trente a 1804*, Société française de musicologie et Éditions Klincksieck, Paris, 1993.

- Théodore Nisard, *Études sur la restauration du chant grégorien*, Vatar, 1856.
- Pierre Combe, *L'histoire de la resaturation du chant grégorien*, Solesmes, 1969.

### B. Liszt and plainchant

- Heinrich Sambeth, *Die gregorianischen Melodien in den Werken Franz Liszts und ihre Bedeutung für die Entwicklung seiner Religiosität und Kunstanschauung*. Münster, 1923.
- Paul Merrick, *Revolution and Religion in the Music of Liszt*, Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Nicolas Dufetel, *Palingénésie, régénération et extase dans la musique religieuse de Franz Liszt*. Tours, 2008.
- Nicolas Dufetel, “Liszt’s Gregorian sources in Budapest and Weimar: ‚Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth‘ and ‚Christus‘ “. *Der Ganze Liszt – Liszt-Interpretationen. Internationaler Liszt-Kongress, Oct. 2011, Weimar*. <halshs-01422199>
- Nicolas Dufetel, “Religious Workshop and Gregorian Chant: The Janus Liszt, or How to Make New with the Old”. James Deaville and Michael Saffle. *Liszt’s Legacies. International Liszt Conference held at Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada*, Pendragon Press, pp. 43-71, 2014. <halshs-01422220>

### C. Articles related to the different works of Liszt.

Considering their great number, they cannot fit in this document.

### **Personal qualification**

The lack of relevant literature regarding the use of plainchant in Liszt’s works is mostly due to the lack of musicologists specialized in both 19<sup>th</sup> century music/ Liszt and plainchant.

I obtained my first diploma in musicology. As a member of the Franz Liszt Museum and Research Centre, I had opportunity to study Liszt’s autographs and first prints in our museum, I could do research in important research centres owning valuable Liszt autograph collections, such as the Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv in Weimar or the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna. I could also participate in a number of international Liszt-conferences in Germany, France, Italy and Slovenia.

In the time, I had the chance to widen my formation through studies in theology and in church music. Being a student of László Dobszay, a renowned scholar of plainchant and founder of the internationally acknowledged Schola Hungarica, I received a thorough knowledge in both the theory and practice of plainchant.

I speak fluent English, German and French (I hold lectures and write articles in all the three languages), which provide access to the literature written in all of these languages. A special importance comes to the French language because of Liszt's strong French connections, his extensive French correspondence, the major importance of the French contribution to the restoration of plainchant, and the writings of Nicolas Dufetel.

Having thus all the necessary qualifications, I shall most probably be able to write my thesis, which will cover a great lack in the field of Liszt-research.

## **5. Rough structure of the thesis**

### I. LISZT AND THE PLAINCHANT OF HIS TIME

- A). Plainchant in the 19th century
- B). Liszt's experiences of plainchant (Raiding, Pottendorf, Vienna, Paris, Weimar, Rome, Budapest, etc.)
- C). Liszt's personal connections to plainchant theorists: Joseph Fétis; Joseph d'Ortigue; Abbé Raillard, etc.
- D). Liszt's books related to plainchant:
  - 1. Liturgical books
  - 2. Manuals for accompanying plainchant
  - 3. Theory books

### II. PLAINCHANT MELODIES IN LISZT'S COMPOSITIONS:

#### ***A. Instrumental music.***

##### 1. Piano pieces.

- a. *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*
  - Nr. 1. Pater noster
  - Nr. 5. Invocation
- b. *B Minor Sonata*
- c. *De profundis* and *Totentanz*

##### 2. Symphonic Works.

- a. *Eine Symphonie zu Dantes Divina Commedia*
  - Nr. 2. Purgatorio. Magnificat (*Magnificat-Intonations*).
- b. *Zwei Episoden aus Lenaus Faust.*
  - 1. Der nächtliche Zug. (*Pange lingua*)
- c. *Hunnenschlacht.* (*Crux fidelis*)

#### ***B. Vocal music.***

##### 1. Masses.

- a. *Missa Solennis* (Graner Festmesse)

- b. *Missa choralis*
- c. *Ungarische Krönungsmesse*

## 2. Oratorios

- a. *Die Legende der heiligen Elisabeth*
- b. *Christus.*

## 3. Other vocal works

- a. *Te Deum laudamus*
  - b. *Cantantibus organis*
- etc.

## III. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

### A. Plainchant in Liszt's works. Typical and unusual procedures regarding the:

1. Melody;
2. Rhythm;
3. Harmony;
4. Thematic work.

### B. Other observations and conclusions.

### C. The importance of plainchant in Liszt's oeuvre.