

G. Shpak

**SPIRITUAL-SEMANTIC AND GENRE-STYLISTIC ASPECTS OF
ORATORY BY F. LISZT “CHRIST”**

The Article deals with the stylistic and spiritual and semantic aspects of the oratory by F. Lyst “Christ”, considered in line with the genre and stylistic evolution of the composer’s creativity.

Keywords: *Oratory, romanticism, the oratorio “Christ”, and Tssetsilianskoe movement.*

The creative heritage of F. Liszt covers a variety of genre spheres. The subject of research interest in the national musicology is often its instrumental compositions - piano and symphonic ones, in which the innovative aspect of its work is concentrated to the most extent. Spiritual choral works by Liszt have not become yet the subject of basic research in the domestic musicology. Nevertheless, they constitute a very significant part of the creative activity of the composer, describing not only the features of his mature period, but the essence of the romantic conception of God and the creation in general. The foregoing stipulates the relevance of the topic of the presented article, the subject of which is the genre and stylistic and spiritual and semantic specifics of the oratorio “Christ” by Franz Liszt, which has recently become the subject of the intense performance interest.

The creation of the called oratorio covers the period from 1862 to 1866, known as the “Roman Privacy”. The spiritual atmosphere of the “Eternal City”, communication with Pope Pius IX, the introduction in 1865 to the Franciscan order, the adoption of the abbot dignity - all this identified the genre and stylistic specificity of the composer at that time. “My life here proceeds more peacefully, harmoniously and orderly than in Germany - wrote F. Liszt. - ... On Sundays I regularly go to the Sistine Chapel to wash and to temper my spirit into the sonorous waves of the Jordan Palestrina” [10, p. 247].

Mention of Palestrina and constant contact with the composer of liturgical singing tradition emphasizes the spiritual and creative musician orientation during this period on the idea of reforming the church music and Tssetsilianskyoe

movement. The aforementioned is correlated with *Messi* by Franz Liszt, his *Requiem* and oratorios, in particular, with the oratorio “*Christ*”, the text of which was arranged by Liszt (with the assistance of Caroline Wittgenstein) based on the fragments of the Bible, the Catholic Mass and Latin hymns.

The Oratorio consists of three parts, covering together the entire earthly life of Jesus Christ: I – “*Christmas Oratorio*”; II – “*After Epiphany*” (Epiphany); III – “*The Passion and Resurrection*”. High spiritual meaning of each of the stages of its way supplemented the biblical motto of the oratorio, which expresses the essence not only of the work but also of the whole of Christianity: “*With the truth love everything was returned to the one who is the Head, Christ*” (Eph. 4: 15). Dominance in the oratory of the idea of love in all the richness and variety of its manifestations also connects this work with spiritual and aesthetic searches of romanticism. At the same time “*in reliance on the texts of the Bible and the Catholic liturgy, through the description of Jesus’ earthly fate of the composer recreates a large-scale panorama of life in Europe of the second half of the XIX century - writes A. Demchenko. – That’s why he brings maximum performing resources (four soloists, children’s and mixed choirs, organ and orchestra) and monumentality inadvertently comes into competition with *Passion* by Bach and Handel*” [3, p. 34]. Formal belonging of the composer to the Catholicism, appealing to his cantatory rules of church singing assists here with the free composition “*alignment*” of biblical quotations, also comparable with the Protestant spiritual and creative practice. This confirms the spiritual position by F. Liszt-romantic, who did know any confessional limits in the works, which, however, did not prevent him from moving aggressively towards the creation of “*true church style*” in his “*Liszt’s*” understanding.

At the same time, in this work a musical principle gets the further development and more in-depth understanding. In the opinion of V. Krivezhenko, as a part of this work, “*the word is treated like the word in the liturgy, as claims the idea of faith, and expresses a generalized state of mind rather than the action. Such an understanding of the role of speech allows likening the oratorio to the cycle of*

vocal and symphonic compositions, where it helps the music to express certain images and moods, and is a kind of program, presented in three kinds of written, but not always sounding words". Among such there are distinguished names of parts of the work, epigraphs and biblical quotes, comments in Latin, clarifying the meaning and content of instrumental sections of the oratorio; canonical texts of prayers and hymns, which act as "a kind of ritual symbols, reminiscent of certain religious acts dedicated to a particular event in the life of the Christ" [6, p. 113].

I Part of the analyzed composition "Christmas Oratorio" consist of five numbers: Introduction; "Pastoral and Proclamation of the Angel"; "Stabat mater speciosa" ("There was a great mother ..."); "The singing of the shepherds at the manger"; "March of the Three Kings". No.1 of this section of the oratorio is a kind of instrumental overture, directly anticipating the miracle of Christmas. At the direction of Franz Liszt, as a verbal "program" of this episode acts a fragment of the prophecy of Isaiah: "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; Let the earth open and bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together. I the Lord have created it" (Is. 45:8).

The intonation basis of the first section is the Catholic hymn of the church singing "Rorate coeli", included with a Latin translation (Vulgate) of the aforementioned text of Isaiah's prophecy in the life of the Catholic Advent. Its related options of Lutheran Christmas songs, including the German Protestant version of the prophecy of Isaiah ("O Heiland ..."), at different times were introduced in his works G. Schütz (motet), Bach (Cantata 132), J. Haydn (Mass "Rorate coeli desuper") and other authors. Anyway, various versions of the songs in the unity of the spiritual and poetic and musical expression embody the expectation of the Messiah, who saves the world and enlighten the light of high spiritual teachings.

This episode in Liszt's oratorio leads directly to the second section of the orchestra "foreplay" of oratorio, in which the composer uses another everyday chant "Coeli enarrant gloriam Dei", voiced some of the text of Psalm 18 – "The heavens declare the glory of God and the works of the hands His heralds Hard ..." -

the meaning of which partly overlaps with the above-cited verses of Isaiah's prophecy. The image of the greatness of divine glory in the framework of Liszt's oratorio is texturally and dynamically allocated: polyphonic configurational "weaving" of the previous section is opposed to dense choral-chord texture, isolated and emphasizing each sound-vertical of everyday chants.

The final section of the orchestral introduction anticipates direct pastoral style No. 2 "Christmas Oratorio", which represents an instrumental version of the songs of everyday "Angelus ad pastores", based on the Gospel story of Luke (2: 10-12). M. Kalvokoressi indicates the use of the church music in the works of A. Gabrieli, C. Monteverdi, Hans Leo Hassler, J. P. Sweelinck and M. Pretorius, the legacy of which at different times represent both the Catholic and Protestant traditions [14, p. 216].

No. 2 "Pastoral and proclamation of the angel" is voiced by already familiar from the previous section musical material in vocal and choral version. Alternating soprano solo (Gospel verse) and a female chorus ("Hallelujah") resemble church practice responsories. The dedicated "Christmas" section oratorio determines its style and overall emotional tone in a spirit of pastoral musical topics. The latter in different religious traditions embodied "the dream of some kind of primordial harmony of man with the world ... as the ideal "beautiful place", the embodiment of grace of the divine nature". [5] This idea-pastoral sense is captured in the Christmas spirit concerts and sonatas by Corelli, Torelli, Manfredini, Locatelli; in the "Christmas Oratorio" and "Organ Pastoral" by J.S. Bach. Liszt showed interest in it at different periods of creative activity. So in the "Pastorale" and "Eclogue" of the Swiss cycle (1855), he uses the Christmas songs of alpine herdsmen, thus, reproducing "quotations topos" of the Christmas pastorals. The analyzed above musical material of the "Christ" oratorio fully reproduces the stylistic and genre figures of pastorals indicated above.

They are also evident in No. 4 "Singing of Shepherds in the Manger". Allocated pastoral and Christmas stylistics, No.4, by a distinct remark of H.E. Smither, is complemented by the introduction of so-called "Lombard rhythm" [15,

p. 231], which “is characteristic of not only Italian music, but also of the Hungarian ...” [12, p. 319-320]. The widespread use of such original syncopation by Liszt reports the national Hungarian flavor to the analyzed section.

The final section of the Christmas “cycle” of the “Christ” oratorio is Part V “March of Three Kings” (the Magi), by which Liszt as a program understanding prefaces a fragment of the Gospel of Matthew (2:9-11). The genre signs of the March processions are combined with the intonation of the German Protestant Christmas hymns, and are devoted to the worship of the Magi.

The cycle of the Christmas “Christ” oratorio No. 3 “Stabat mater speciosa” (“There was a great mother ...”) is distinguished, often referred to as a Christmas “Stabat mater”. As it is known, “Stabat mater dolorosa” is one of five medieval sequences canonized by the Council of Trent. It was used in the feast of the Seven Sorrows of Mary (September 15), as well as the official anthem sounded on Good Friday. Most researchers consider “Stabat mater speciosa” as the derivative of “Stabat mater dolorosa”. According to P. Sakharov, “it differs from dolorosa by the fact that by replacing one or two words, in each line the content of all the text is changed so that the front of our mind’s eye appears not at the foot of the Virgin of the Cross, and in the manger in Bethlehem cave,” [11]. Her figurative and semantic content served as the basis for the numerous Christmas carols in various folk traditions, including those in Hungarian, while in the professional practice of composing the text has been in little demand. The most striking example was his interpretation No.3 of Liszt’s oratorio “Christ”.

Liszt defines this section as the “hymn”, thereby indicating his connection with the terms of the prayer chants. “The image of the Mother of God displayed here - says Yu. Derkunov, - is revealed Liszt in two ways: on the one hand, it is a joy, admiration newborn Mary, on the other - anxiety, apprehension severity intended Savior suffering”. The author connects these biblical images and situations with Liszt himself, who had to endure the death of his daughter Blandina and son Daniel. “Thus, Liszt managed at once to make an arch leading to the

second “Stabat mater”, in which the “story” canvas depicts an embodiment of foresight of Mary” [4, p. 104].

“Stabat mater speciosa” by Liszt can be presented as free rondal track covering 23 verses of the medieval text. A choral psalmody as the overriding principle of “reports” meaning the idea of this part of the text, according to H.E. Smither, represents an upgraded (within the era of Franz Liszt) version of polyphonic technique, referred to as *falsobordono* (*fauxbourdon*) [15, p. 231]. In this case, it refers to “designation of psalmodological *rechitassii* in the chord presentation, applied from the end of the XV century” [8, p. 858]. A similar method has also certain analogies and with the polyphonic technique of J. Palestrina, in particular his “*Improprietarii*”, a chord style of which once struck the contemporaries of the composer with its clarity, novelty and at the same time pointed to the potential of the new polyphony in liturgical singing practice, not contradicting the spiritual tradition of the high union of the Word and his vocal-sounding tone.

Another reminder of the image of the Mother of the God, not less significant in the oratory, than the image of Christ, becomes No. 12 “Stabat mater dolorosa” of the third part of the oratorio. In Liszt’s oratorio “*ominorenni*” version of sequence oriented in Fa Minor is presented, causing an analogy to the famous choral masterpiece of the XVIII century – “Stabat mater” by J. Pergolesi. In this case F. Liszt adjusts the sound quality of the minor itself, introducing a chromatic alteration, *uv. 2*, which together with the timbre qualities of mezzo soprano evoke images of grieving and suffering of the Mother of the God. “From these two words” – “There was Mother”, “Stabat Mater”, as from the grain grows a deployed poetry, prayer- crying, where the scene of the Crucifixion is recreated, and if taken out of the dark ages with “close-up” figures of the Mother of the God and Son are illustrated, and cries torn from the heart, and the willingness to share the meal with Jesus and Mary” [1, p. 23].

It is significant that two of the most significant episodes of the Gospel narrative as Christmas and the Passion of Christ are represented by Liszt texts and

hymns, it is directly associated with the Virgin Mary. “If her Son the prophet [Isaiah] called ‘the man of sorrows’, it deserves the name of “wife of sorrows” ... It was a real party to the sufferings of Christ, and never cease to be a model of faith for the Church” [7, p. 20]. Such keen interest of Hungarian F. Liszt to the image of the Virgin is presented as quite logical also for the reason that for centuries Hungary was widely known in Europe primarily as a *Regnum Marianum* - Kingdom of Mary, the Virgin Mary and she is often referred to as “The Great Queen of Hungary” [13].

The second section of the oratorio “Christ” – “After Epiphany” also includes 5 numbers: “The Beatitudes”; “Our Father”; “The base of the church”; “Miracle”; “Entry into Jerusalem”. Their collection outlines an earthly journey of Jesus Christ up to the Passion and Resurrection. No. 6 “Beatitudes” represents a vocal and choral composition, the text of which is the basis of a fragment of the Gospel of Matthew (5: 3-10). It is opened by organ solo, built on the motif “Rorate coeli”, transferring directly into the main theme of “Commandments ...”. Similarly F. Liszt performs not only intonation, but semantic connection of the parts of the oratorio. “Rorate coeli” (P. I) symbolized the spiritual readiness of the Old Testament human community to the appearance of the Messiah, while the beginning of Part II of Oratorio (“Commandments ...”) is directly connected with the spiritual essence and perception of Christian doctrine, in which the Sermon on the Mount was one of the most important moments. The composition of F. Liszt is focused on E-major diatonicism as a “perfect” tone in the work of the Romantics. The following number - the prayer “Pater Noster” (“Our Father”) (No.7) is maintained in a similar style, which is the basis of intonation everyday tune.

Part VIII – “The base of the church” is one of the most important in the spiritual and semantic sense. Its text basis includes extracts from the Gospels of Matthew (Matt. 16: 18) and John (Jn. 21: 15-17): “Simon, son of Jonah! Do you love me? ... Feed my lambs”. Applied by F. Liszt, Catholic, to a fragment of the Gospel of Matthew is naturally enough, as papal Rome defends for centuries, as opposed to other denominational traditions, its interpretation of the spiritual

meaning of the words of Jesus addressed to Peter. According to his opinion, the outstanding role and place of the apostle Peter in the New Testament story creates the foundation for the formation of Catholicism within a special “theory of the papacy” and the relevant special situation of the Catholic Church in the Christian world.

F. Liszt creates a bright three-part choral composition with the features of the varied dynamic reprise. Recent sections (for the text of Matthew) differ with solemn and hero-type character. The fanfare turnovers of the orchestral party are found side by side here with the harsh choral psalmody, recreates the majestic image of the Church, yea, eludes the forces of evil. The middle section - questioning about Love - is focused on the tonal scope of the “ideal” E Major. Fanfare gives way to gradual melodic turns, tertian doubles as an attribute of music consent and harmony. The personification of power becomes not a physical confrontation, but Love.

One more striking dynamically-picturesque episode of oratorio “Christ” under the right is considered No. 9 “Miracle”. Its semantic program foundation is focused on the Gospel story of Matthew (8:24-26). The central idea of the story is the reproach of Jesus Christ to his disciples in lack of faith, generating fear in the emergency, confusion. It is love and deep faith that can become a true spiritual stronghold for a human-being who “shall not prevail the gates of hell”. The similar spiritual and semantic content of this oratorio issue is implemented within a three-part composition, somewhat reminding the operatic stage.

Appearance of a miracle of Jesus Christ to his disciples makes the occurrence of the next section of the oratorio, referred to as “Entry into Jerusalem” naturally determined. Its solemn and hymn character creates dramatic contrast both with respect to the previous number (“Miracle”), and in relation to the final section of the oratorio, focused on the symbolism of Passion and Stabat mater. Semantic basis of No.10 is the Gospel story of Matthew (21:4-9) of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem shortly before his martyrdom. “The Jews had the custom: kings and winners rode into Jerusalem on horses or donkeys, and people celebrated

with shouts, with palm branches in their hands met them. Christ so solemnly entered Jerusalem, but not as the king of the earth or the winner in the war, and as the King, whose kingdom is not of this world, but as the winner of sin and death". [2]. A kind of "refrain" of this solemn event was the words "Hosanna" and "Hosanna in the highest", denoting a solemn prayer exclamation, turned to the God. However, the triumphal entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem meant his taking the path of suffering on the Cross. In No. 10 of the Franz Liszt's oratorio festive and solemn side of this biblical narrative was "voiced". It is represented as a grandiose orchestral and choral composition, texture and dynamic scope of which will withstand subsequent intimacy "Agony in the Garden". The whole number of large-scale oratorio is built on intonation modifications of the only theme – "Benedicamus Domine", fixed in vocal manuscripts in the XIII century. According to P. Merrick, cry "Benedicamus Domine" – "God Bless" with the appropriate melody, and sounded in reply "Deo gratias" – "Thanks to God" - were used in the Roman Mass as a dismissal rather than the traditional "Et missa est" in the services Lent. The appeal of F. Liszt due to this chant is stipulated by the spiritual meaning of the related text, based on the blessings and intercession of the God that a person needs. Thus it closes the meaning of the ancient "Hosanna", "Hosanna in the highest" as pleas for salvation and prayer exclamation, sounding repeatedly in the text No. 11, and the blessing of God, sealed in the ancient everyday chant used by F. Liszt.

F. Liszt designated Section III of the work as "Passion and Resurrection". It consists of four numbers: "Agony in the Garden"; "Stabat mater"; "Oh, sons and daughters of God" (Easter hymn); "Resurrection", "Christ has conquered". One of the most tragic climaxes of the oratorio, of course, can be regarded as No. 11 imprinting the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane (Matt. 26: 38-39). From the point of view of Christian theologians, the spiritual meaning of the "Agony in the Garden" shows that Jesus Christ had two wills: divine and human. "Human, by weakness of the flesh, renounces suffering, and divine that His will is ready to go for it", - wrote Athanasius [9]. Designated ideological and semantic orientation of the scene

(baritone monologue), emerging from the show sincere human emotions to the highest humility and willingness to accept their fate, determines the plan for its tonal intonation deployment, focused on the sequential movement of the sadly-centered lamentoz cis-moll to the enlightenment of the Choral diatonic Des-dur, involving gradually descending melody lines (catabasis) of vocal symbolizing the “Acceptance of the God’s will”.

No. 13 “Oh! Sons and daughters” (Paschal hymn) symbolizes a tragic turning point in the development of the oratory line. This number (as well as No. 8) was introduced by F. Liszt after the end of the oratorio. It was represented as a treatment of the Passover hymn about the resurrection of Jesus Christ and wives-bearers. According to M. Kalvokoressi [14, p. 217] in this case F. Liszt used the hymn of “Chant du Temps, de Paques”, dated 1623. In other versions the source of its themes is the earlier French spiritual melody of the XV century. Anyway, Liszt treatment is as close to the source as it is possible, because the author’s beginning is manifested here to the minimum extent. The final part of the oratorio “Resurrexit” (No. 14) is opposed to it, summing up the whole work. Its hymn solemn character, determined by a certain idea of the resurrection and victory over death is underlined not only by the powerful chord choruses of choral parts, but also with the dynamic and essential role of the orchestra. The summing up quality of this number is in the fact that it highlighted major spiritual themes-quotes presented in this oratorio, and defining its highest spiritual meaning. In the rhythmic sounds there is repeatedly a motive “Rorate coeli”, symbolizing the expectation of the Messiah, and the willingness of his spiritual acceptance and chanting “Angelus ad pastores”, embodying the good news about the appearance of the world Saviour, and finally, “Benedicamus” as a symbol of the God’s blessing, given to a human-being.

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