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### “MUSICAL” SŁOWACKI AND MUSIC WRITTEN TO SŁOWACKI’S WORKS

Juliusz Słowacki is regarded by scholars as a “musical” poet, “the subtlest musician in poetry”.<sup>1</sup> From the time, when Zygmunt Krasński announced that Słowacki “was born to be not a painter, but a musician”, a few dozen literary and musicological scholarly texts have been written which have dealt with the influence of music on Słowacki’s poetics.<sup>2</sup> This issue has become a permanent research theme and is usually divided into four sub-themes:

- Linguistic motifs of musical origin (“music in a poem”, which concerns the thematic level of a literary text. Scholars who have written about it include: Ignacy Matuszewski, Józef Reiss, Stefania Skwarczyńska, and, to a lesser extent—Juliusz Kleiner and Andrzej Boleski).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This phrase is taken from the anonymous obituary by Jan Koźmian, published by „Przegląd Poznański” (Poznań 1848, vol. 9, 688). Koźmian’s authorship was confirmed on the basis of his *Pisma* (vol. 3, Poznań 1881, 217-218). Quoted in: *Sądy współczesnych o twórczości Słowackiego (1826-1862)* ed. by B. Zakrzewski, K. Pecold, A. Ciemnoczołowski, Wrocław 1963, 299.

<sup>2</sup> I discussed these issues in more detail in „Najsubtelniejszy muzyk w poezji?” *Juliusz Słowacki a muzyka* („Roczniki Humanistyczne” 2006).

<sup>3</sup> I. Matuszewski, *Słowacki i nowa sztuka (Modernizm). Twórczość Słowackiego w świetle poglądów estetyki nowoczesnej. Studium krytyczno-porównawcze*, Warszawa 1911, t.1; J. W. Reiss, *Juliusz Słowacki a muzyka*, „Życie Śpiewacze” 1949, no. 7/8; S. Skwarczyńska, *Ewolucja obrazów u Słowackiego*, Wrocław 1925; J. Kleiner, *Muzyka w życiu i twórczości Słowackiego*, in Idem, *Studia o Słowackim*, Lwów 1910; A. Boleski, *W sferze wyobraźni poetyckiej Juliusza Słowackiego. Główne motywy*

- Prosody, euphony, eurhythmics, metrics (“musicality”, “rhythmicity”, “melodiousness” of poetry, seen by many scholars mostly in Słowacki’s early poetry. Czesław Zgorzelski, in a masterly manner, also analysed it in the context of Słowacki’s late lyric poetry).<sup>4</sup>
- Closer or looser structural analogies of literary texts to musical forms (vocal and instrumental, the most characteristic example of which is the famous “fugue” in the monologue of Grabiec from the first act of *Balladyna*, which was suggested with a lot of flippancy by Juliusz Tenner).<sup>5</sup>

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*obrazowania*, Łódź 1960. These findings are repeated in the book by Irena Chyła-Szypułowa, *Muzyka w poezji wieszczów* (Kielce 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Czesław Zgorzelski, *Juliusza Słowackiego - „Śpiewu tajemnice”*, in *Juliusz Słowacki w stu pięćdziesięciolecie urodzin. Materiały i szkice*, ed. by M. Bizan and Z. Lewinówna, Warszawa 1959; Idem „*Miniatury*” liryczne Słowackiego, in Idem, *Obserwacje*, Warszawa 1993; Idem, *Elementy „muzyczności” w poezji lirycznej*, in *Ibidem*, Idem, *Na sprowadzenie prochów Napoleona*, in *Ibidem*. This problem has been dealt with in many sketches, essays and books. See, for example, J. Kleiner, *Juliusz Słowacki. Dzieje twórczości*, ed. by J. Starnawski, vol. I, *Twórczość młodzieńcza*; vol. II, *Od „Balladyny” do „Lilii Wenedy”*, vol. III, *Okres „Beniowskiego”*, vol. IV, *Poeta mistyk*, Kraków 1999; J. Weysenhoff, *Muzyka wiersza Słowackiego*, „Kurier Warszawski” styczeń 1909, reprint in Idem, *Mój Pamiętnik Literacki*, Poznań [1920]; M. Piekarski, *Mistrzostwo formy u Słowackiego*, in *Księga pamiątkowa ku uczczeniu setnej rocznicy urodzin Juliusza Słowackiego*, ed. by W. Hahn, Lwów 1909, vol. II; C. Jellenta, *Harfy Juliusza Słowackiego*, „Muzyka” 1927, no. 6; A. Boleski, *Juliusza Słowackiego liryka lat ostatnich (1842-1848)*, Łódź 1949; M. Zembaty-Michalakowa, *Instrumentacja głoskowa w powieściach poetyckich Juliusza Słowackiego na tle porównawczym*, „Prace Literackie” XV, 1973. The problem of ‘songability’; of Słowacki’s poetry appears also on the margins of considerations about his writings. See, for example, I. Opacki, *Jeżeli kiedy – w tej mojej krainie*, in *Juliusza Słowackiego rym błyskawicowy. Analizy i interpretacje*, ed. by S. Makowski, Warszawa 1980; W. Kubacki, *Religia smutku*, „Przegląd Humanistyczny” 1960, no. 4.

<sup>5</sup> J. Tenner, *O pierwiastkach muzycznych w poezji Słowackiego*, „Biblioteka Warszawska” 1910, t. I, 521. The popularity of Tenner’s interpretation is supported, for example, by the fact that Marek Troszyński, while writing about Grabiec, stated “while talking about his background and childhood, emulating the rules of composition of fugue”, and he even did not give the source of this idea.

- Assumed affinity of Słowacki’s biography and works with the lives and works of other composers, particularly with Fryderyk Chopin (research on this motif has been very extensive, from Cyprian Norwid and his *Czarne kwiaty* (*Black Flowers*) to Maria Cieśla-Korytowska’s volume *Romantyczne przechadzki pograniczem* (*Romantic Walks on the Borderlands*),<sup>6</sup> but also to others—for example Richard Wagner.<sup>7</sup>

Sometimes even considerations of the type of lyrical imagination of Juliusz Słowacki take the form of the question of whether “he was more a musician or a painter”<sup>8</sup>. In this context, my interest in the musical reception of Słowacki’s works, appears, as if automatically, as a natural consequence of deliberations about the “musical” Słowacki. After all, his poems “are a continuous melody [...] they should be sung to music, not recited.”<sup>9</sup> What kind of music should they be sung to, though? Which poems have been provided with music by composers? The answer to these questions is, as it turns out, generally quite difficult.

In the book *Austeria “Pod Królem Duchem”* (*Austeria “King-Spirit”*) Marek Troszyński, enthusiastically greeted the publication of the record by Angelika Korszyńska-Górny *Anioł ognisty. Mistyczne*

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(M. Troszyński, *Austeria „Pod Królem-Duchem”*, Warszawa 2001, 210). Less popular was Bohdan Pociąg’s concept about *Uspokojenie* (*Calm*) as an equivalent of the sonata form (B. Pociąg, *Muzyczność „Uspokojenia”*, in *Potrącić strunę poezji kamienną. Szkice o „Uspokojeniu” Juliusza Słowackiego*, ed. by S. Makowski, Warszawa 1979). Alicja Okońska wrote about the influence of opera on Słowacki’s dramas (*Wpływ opery na dramaty Słowackiego. Charakterystyka ogólna*, „Muzyka” 1961, no. 1). Two other articles on this subject were published in „Muzyka”: 1961, no. 2; 1962, no. 2.

<sup>6</sup> M. Cieśla-Korytowska, *Dlaczego się minęli* and *Duch czy „kalkul”*, in *Eadem Romantyczne przechadzki pograniczem*, Kraków 2004. The entry *Chopin Fryderyk* was placed in Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz’s controversial book, *Słowacki. Encyklopedia*, Warszawa 2004, 63-66.

<sup>7</sup> The first one to build this analogy was Ignacy Matuszewski (op. cit.), it was also eagerly used by Stefania Skwarczyńska (op. cit.).

<sup>8</sup> D. Kudelska, *Juliusz Słowacki i sztuki plastyczne*, Lublin 1997, 11-41.

<sup>9</sup> J. Koźmian, op. cit., 299.

*poezje Słowackiego (Fiery Angel: Mystical Poetry of Słowacki)* and stated:

Juliusz Słowacki's lyrical poetry, which *so far has been beyond the scope of interest of well-known and experienced composers*, (emphasis – A.S.) is a challenge—both ambitious and risky.<sup>10</sup>

And further, developing in a way Kleiner's idea of the immanent, "internal music" of Słowacki's poems:<sup>11</sup>

The multi-layered musicality of Słowacki's poetry has paradoxically made it into an object not very attractive for musicians: after all, if something sounds very musical without music or tune, adding music seems superfluous. As a result of this, we do not have, also in the earlier Polish musical tradition, "pieces" from Słowacki. It is true that sometimes during a particularly solemn mass you can hear the choir singing *Bogurodzica (The Mother of God)*, one of the revolutionary lyrics of Słowacki, but it is an exception. Korszyńska's record is a true novelty in this area.<sup>12</sup>

It is difficult to agree with this forthright opinion. *Skąd pierwsze gwiazdy (Wherefrom First Stars)* by Mieczysław Karłowicz has been sung—as Bolesław Wallek-Walewski wrote—"by the whole crowd of Polish singers",<sup>13</sup> an opera *Mindowe (Mindowe)* by Henryk Jarecki, a distinguished and the favourite disciple of Moniuszko, was perceived for a long time by musicologists as an attempt to introduce to Polish operas Wagnerian drama,<sup>14</sup> a whole series of pieces by Ludomir

<sup>10</sup> M. Troszyński, op. cit., 208.

<sup>11</sup> J. Kleiner, *Sztuka poetycka Słowackiego*, „Pamiętnik Literacki” 1950, no. 39, 19.

<sup>12</sup> M. Troszyński, op. cit., 211.

<sup>13</sup> B. Wallek-Walewski, *Słowacki w muzyce polskiej*, „Gazeta Literacka” 1927, 7.

<sup>14</sup> In the articles preserved on microfilm in the National Library (mf. 6231) the first reviews of *Mindowe* appeared, with reactions to its novelty: "This work was the first important opera since Moniuszko, which drew the attention of the whole nation to its author"; "This opera in four acts has a lot of musical novelty for a contemporary audience. It has beautiful and interesting choral effects, extraordinary dealing with moods, strengthened by instrumentation, dramatic tension which last throughout

Różycki, Apolinary Szeluto, Feliks Nowowiejski and Henryk Mikołaj Górecki, who argued that Słowacki was for him “a poet of the heart, for each day”, whom he “would never cease reading”.<sup>15</sup> All these compositions testify that more than “pieces” have been composed to Słowacki’s works. However, it is true that these compositions have either not been identified with Słowacki (few people remember that *Wherefrom First Stars* comes from the narrative poem *W Szwajcarii* (*In Switzerland*)), or are known today only to a narrow circle of musicologists and music lovers. It is obvious that only very few people, apart from the audience of the festival “Warszawska Jesień”, had a chance to listen to *Fragmenty* (*Fragments*) by Zygmunt Mycielski, to the extracts from *Góry się ozłociły – szafiry mórz ciemnieją* (*Gilded Mountains – Sapphires of Seas Darken*).

Also, very few people know *Audycja VI* (*Programme VI*) by Andrzej Krzanowski, or *Rapsod* (*Rhapsody*) for soprano and orchestra by Tadeusz Szeligowski; only sporadically performed and never published, poignantly interpreting fragments of the fourth song of the fourth part of *King-Spirit*. In fact, there are numerous examples of such contemporary musical compositions inspired by Słowacki’s works, which function mostly outside the popular trends. They prove that Korszyńska’s record is not as unique as it might seem, and that Słowacki’s works are not ‘beyond the scope of interests of well-known and experienced composers’. A composition played in concert halls, but preserved only in manuscript form, is the cantata

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the opera from the beginning to the grand epilogue of act IV [...] four performances of this opera in Lwów in 1880 were popular, although critics regarded this music as ‘Wagnerian novelty’, difficult to understand. However, the melodious lyricism was original and only in the use of brass instruments and the treatment of choirs a Wagnerian, or more general Western influences can be traced in the Lithuanian-Polish mindset of the composer.” The argument about Wagnerian influences was repeated by later critics and researchers. Elżbieta Wąsowska did not agree with it, claiming that Jarecki’s use of leading and returning motifs “has nothing in common with the complex and consistent technique of leading motifs in Wagner’s dramas”. (E. Wąsowska, *Twórczość operowa Henryka Jareckiego*, „Muzyka” 1989, no. 4, 22).

<sup>15</sup> H. M. Górecki, “Powieć państwu szczerze...”, “Vivo” 1999, no. 1, 46.

for baritone and small orchestra *Listy do Matki* (*Letters to Mother*) by Roman Palester, as well as songs by Witold Frieman and Jan Adam Maklakiewicz; out of four songs by Henryk Mikołaj Górecki only two have been published.<sup>16</sup> But in the past we also had the situation that compositions used to be praised by critics while today they gather dust in musical archives. Operas were particularly popular: *Mazepa* (*Mazepa*) by Adam Müncheimer<sup>17</sup>, *Goplana* (*Goplana*) by Władysław Żeleński, *Beatryks Cenci* (*Beatrix Cenci*) by Ludomir Różycki and symphonic poems: *Lilla Weneda* (*Lilla Weneda*) by Henryk Opieński, *Pożegnanie Ellenai* (*Farawell to Ellenai*) by Feliks Nowowiejski, cantatas and songs. A reviewer of “Kurier Polski” wrote about *Duma ukraińska* (*Ukrainian Dumka*) by Henryk Jarecki, composed to the words of a juvenile poem of Słowacki, with enthusiasm, which from our perspective today may seem to be exaggerated, but not fully unfounded:

In some parts Mr. Jarecki showed such talent that, as connoisseurs assure us, we can put this composition at the same level as, for

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<sup>16</sup> Państwowe Wydawnictwo Muzyczne published two songs op. 3: *Do matki* (*[W ciemnościach postać mi stoi matczyna...]*) (*To Mother – [In the Darkness My Mother Stands...]*) and *Jakiż to dzwon grobowy* (*What a Funeral Bell*) to the fragment of *Ody do wolności* (*Ode to Freedom*). While these songs remained in manuscript form *Śpiewy do słów Juliusza Słowackiego*, op. 68: 1. *We łzach, Panie, ręce podnosimy do Ciebie*, (*In Tears, We Raise Our Hands to You, o Lord*) 2. *Panie, o którym na niebiosach słyszę* (*Lord, of Whom I Hear in Heaven*) which are now owned by the composer. Henryk Mikołaj Górecki admitted in the private conversation with the author of this article that he intends to publish these two songs as well.

<sup>17</sup> A. Lisowska writes: “[...] it was regarded as one of the better operas of the period after Moniuszko. The opera was purchased by the opera house in Antwerp, but as this institution went bankrupt it was not staged. Ricordi was interested in *Mazepa* as well. Jules Massenet read the score and judged it in positive terms: ‘It is beautiful, dramatic, melodious, and I like it very much’. The Italian press, after the performance of *Mazepa* in Turin, stressed the mastery of its instrumentation and Italian melodic.” (A. Lisowska, A. Żórawska-Witkowska, *Twórczość operowa kompozytorów warszawskich*, in *Kultura muzyczna Warszawy drugiej połowy XIX wieku*, ed. by A. Spóz, Warszawa 1980, 189).

example, the second part of *Midsummer's Night Dream* by Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy.<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile, *Ukrainian Dumka*, forgotten by performers, and therefore unavailable to audiences, remains unused in the archives of the Polish National Library, together with many other musical manuscripts – including *Dziesięć pieśni do słów Słowackiego* (*Ten Songs to the Words of Słowacki*) op. 136-9 by Apolinary Szeluto.

The phenomena described here which decide about the limited access and perception of compositions inspired by works of Słowacki make the quoted statement of Troszyński a model symptom of what is usually thought about the relationships between Słowacki's poetry and music, but also of the musical reception of his poetry. There is one more intriguing and worrying issue at stake here: musical compositions based on Słowacki's texts have never been treated with interest by scholars. The neglect of such an important issue—because of its importance in the overall reception of Słowacki's works—is particularly surprising in the context of musical compositions inspired by works of Mickiewicz; which were studied thoroughly back in the nineteenth century by Władysław Wszelaczyński<sup>19</sup> and later by such distinguished researchers as Arthur and Marion Coleman, Zdzisław Jachimecki, Zofia Lissa, Jan Prosnak, Karol Musioł, Kornel Michałowkis, and Mieczysław Tomaszewski.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, more

<sup>18</sup> Biblioteka Narodowa (National Library), mf. 83083.

<sup>19</sup> W. Wszelaczyński, *Adam Mickiewicz w muzyce. Szkic muzyczno-bibliograficzny*, Lwów 1890.

<sup>20</sup> A. P. i M. M. Coleman, *Mickiewicz in music*, New York 1947; Z. Jachimecki, *Poezje Adama Mickiewicza w utworach polskich i obcych kompozytorów*, „Wiedza i Życie” 1949, no. 4, 363-371; Z. Lissa, *Adam Mickiewicz i muzyka*, „Życie Śpiewacze” 1949, no. 1/2, 14-16; J. Prosnak, *Ze studiów nad twórczością muzyczną do słów A. Mickiewicza*, Warszawa 1955; *Adam Mickiewicz w pieśni polskiej i obcej*, ed. by Z. Lissa, O. Łada, Kraków 1963; K. Musioł, *Mickiewicz w muzyce europejskiej*, „Poradnik Muzyczny” 1976, no. 7/8, 7-10; K. Michałowski, *Poezja Mickiewicza w kompozycjach muzycznych*, in A. Mickiewicz, *Dziela wszystkie*, ed. by K. Górski, t. 1, part IV, ed. by Cz. Zgorzelski, Wrocław 1987; M. Tomaszewski, *Mickiewicz*, entry in *Encyklopedia muzyczna PWM. Część biograficzna*, v. M, ed. by E. Dziębowska, Kraków 2000, 242-248 (extensive bibliography provided there as well).

research is being done all the time and discussed at conferences<sup>21</sup>, while songs written to Mickiewicz's poems are published in collected editions<sup>22</sup> and recorded on records which form "thematic monographs" devoted to "Mickiewicz in Music" and to the musical inspirations of Mickiewicz.<sup>23</sup> As the names of Mickiewicz and Słowacki are used almost always together when the topic of Polish Romanticism is raised, this discrepancy in the treatment of the "musical" aspects of their heritage is very surprising. When compositions set to Mickiewicz's poems are known and popularised, the problems of the musical reception of Słowacki's works is almost totally neglected.<sup>24</sup> It is usually simply assumed that, as Adolf Chybiński put it:

<sup>21</sup> Uniwersytet Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań), for example, organized the symposium *Mickiewicz i muzyka (Mickiewicz and Music)*, which resulted in the book *Mickiewicz i muzyka. Słowa – dźwięki – konteksty*, ed. by T. Brodniewicz, M. Jabłoński, J. Stęszewski, Poznań 2000.

<sup>22</sup> The most recent ones include: *Pieśni solowe do słów Adama Mickiewicza*, ed. by E. Wąsowska, Warszawa 1998; *Mickiewicz w pieśni na głos i fortepian. Pamięci wielkiego poety Adama Mickiewicza w dwusetną rocznicę urodzin*, ed. by B. Stryzewska, Kraków 1998. Songs to Mickiewicz's texts are also published in more popular editions, for example the ninth chapter of the songbook edited by Zbigniew Adriański (*Złota księga pieśni polskich. Pieśni, gawędy, opowieści (Golden Book of Polish Songs: Songs, Lays, Tales)* Warszawa 1997) is entitled *W kręgu Mickiewicza i Chopina (In the Circle of Chopin and Mickiewicz)*.

<sup>23</sup> The record entitled *Romantyczność (Romanticism)* may serve as an example. It was recorded by Polskie Radio Białystok on the bi-centenary of Mickiewicz's birth in 1998 DUX 1998 (DUX 0113).

<sup>24</sup> In the first three decades of the twentieth century, in the period when two important events were celebrated: the 100th anniversary of the poet's birth in 1909, and the movement of the poet's ashes to Poland in 1927, only four short press articles were published (A. Chybiński, *Juliusz Słowacki w muzyce polskiej*, „Pamiętnik Literacki” 1909; B. Wallek-Walewski, op. cit.; E. Starczewski, *Muzyka do słów Słowackiego*, „Teatr Ludowy” 1927, no. 5; J. Głowacki, *Juliusz Słowacki w muzyce*, „Dziennik Polski” 1927, no. 159-160) proving the apparent lack of composers' interest in Słowacki's work and explaining this fact by his specific poetic language, which—in contrast with the poems of authors used in different songbooks—presents musicians with many problems of a formal nature, particularly because of the varied flow of versification, making it difficult for composers wanting to write songs based on periodical structure.



Słowacki, unlike Mickiewicz or Krasiński, created relatively very few lyrical poems suitable for the compositional technique typical of musical lyrics. His poems, although perceived as musical, have features not suitable for singing, because they contain proportionally few vowels, crucial for singing. Obviously, dramatic texts of Słowacki share these features as well. [...] Słowacki’s poems cannot stand supplementation with music, because they abound in musical (in terms of literature) features [...] <sup>25</sup>.

Verification of this position in scholarly terms is almost impossible because there does not exist any up to date bibliography of compositions written to Słowacki’s texts, or inspired by them. Volume XI of *Bibliografia literatury polskiej „Nowy Korbut”* (*Bibliography of Polish Literature „Nowy Korbut”*) edited by H. Gacowa, published in 2000, did not include a separate part on music, and therefore the most important point of reference was the bibliography made by Wiktor Hahn, which was added to the subsequent volumes of *Dzieła Wszystkie* (*Complete Works*) by Słowacki, edited by Juliusz Kleiner. Although very precious, this bibliography has become obsolete. Therefore, I attempted to prepare updated documentation on the basis of the available bibliographical sources, but primarily on the basis of my research in musical collections in Polish libraries and archives. The result of this research is *Bibliografia kompozycji muzycznych do dzieł Słowackiego*, (*Bibliography of Musical Compositions to Works of Słowacki*), which contains the titles of musical compositions (together with their descriptions and bibliographical placing) written to Słowacki’s works, as well as theatre and radio music inspired by his poetry and compositions “In Memorial”—altogether 528 items.<sup>26</sup> I subjected my *Bibliography* to statistical and qualitative analysis in the dissertation entitled *Poezja „...nutami niesiona”. O muzycznej recepcji twórczości Juliusza Słowackiego* (*Poetry “...Powered by Notes”*.

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<sup>25</sup> A. Chybiński, op. cit., 225, 227.

<sup>26</sup> This is the second part of the Ph.D. dissertation *Poezja „...nutami niesiona”. O muzycznej recepcji twórczości Juliusza Słowackiego* (Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski, Lublin 2005).

*On the Musical Reception of Juliusz Słowacki's Works*). Although the attempt to put the musical reception of Słowacki's works into phases was an extremely interesting task, the most intriguing part, as it turned out, was the reading of Słowacki's texts found in musical notes. It so happens because composers which is obvious enough—change some lexical or grammatical forms into more contemporary ones, often making semantic shifts in the process, but they also create new 'units' out of fragments of several texts (some of them not necessarily by Słowacki). What is more, they sometimes add their own words to fragments taken from Słowacki and they give these transformed fragments their own titles depending on their tastes and sensitivities. It is a fascinating phenomenon, particularly for a historian of literature, because it shows—to put it bluntly—"what composers do with Słowacki". It also shows the direction in which the reception of the chosen Słowacki's texts goes.

Here we have one of the more intriguing examples: a composition by Roman Palester: a dodecaphonic cantata for baritone and small orchestra (flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, French horn, trumpet, harp, piano, celesta, timpani, vibraphone, marimba, bells, triangle, string quintet) to the letters of Słowacki.<sup>27</sup>

At the beginning of the deliberations about *Letters to Mother* it should be stressed that the composer had a very reluctant attitude to the great Romantic tradition and that Słowacki was not his favourite poet. In documents which are left concerning Palester there is not a single document which would suggest that Słowacki was for him someone similar to what he was to Górecki—"a poet of the heart". However, there we come across "Słowackiusz". Palester took texts for his vocal-instrumental composition either from the writers of the Old Polish period of literature (Wespazjan Kochowski, Szymon Szymonowic, Jan Kochanowski), or from writers of his own period

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<sup>27</sup> R. Palester, *Listy do Matki*, not published, Archiwum Kompozytorów Polskich XX i XXI wieku sygn. Mus. CXCIII rps 2; mf.14447; – mf.14448. The copy of the composition's score is also located in Central Note Library: sygn.66614 and 67471; voices for orchestra, sygn.66613 [a] and solo voices, sygn.66613.

(Kazimiera Iłakiewiczówna, Stefan Żeromski, Rainer Maria Rilke, Oskar Miłosz, Kazimierz Sowiński). The only exception was Schiller. Palester happened to write, most probably he was commissioned to do so, music for theatrical performances of Romantic dramas: *Samuel Zborowski* (*Samuel Zborowski*), *Kordian* (*Kordian*), *Balladyna* (*Balladyna*), *Dziady* (*Forefathers' Eve*) and to radio-plays: *Tukaj, albo próba przyjaźni* (*Tukaj, or Trying to Make Friends*).<sup>28</sup>

Słowacki was not for Palester, so it seems, an important poet. On the last page of the—unfortunately unfinished—autobiographical tale *Słuch absolutny* (*Absolute Pitch*) in one point of his humorous self-description, which was to be a form of an ending, we can read these “characteristic features of Palester” (on a separate manuscript page)

He liked wine (Burgundy), blondes and dark-haired women, he liked to laugh, to chat [crossed out—A.S.], Brzozowski, Chateaubriand, Dante, the *Odyssey*, *Zemsta* (*Revenge*) by Fredro, Toqueville, Aron. He adored: Mozart – *The Marriage of Figaro*, some songs by Schubert, *Tristan*, *Dafnis et Chloe* and others. Negative: He exaggerated everything!!! [underlined—A.S.]. He was always wrong with politics. [Below: title and contents pages]<sup>29</sup>

Reading the whole of this autobiography confirms the conviction that Palester associated Romantic poetry with the pathos of school declamations during patriotic anniversary celebrations, which were disliked by students, with the obsolete ways of teaching and the matriculation exam, in which Palester chose a topic on the attitude of Wyspiański to Mickiewicz and Słowacki and fiercely attacked these “Bards”. The only Romantic poet who fared better with Palester was Norwid.<sup>30</sup>

From various perspectives Palester’s cantata is a very mysterious composition. It is known that Palester finished it finally most probably

<sup>28</sup> See Z. Helman, *Roman Palester. Twórca i dzieło*, Kraków 1999.

<sup>29</sup> R. Palester, *Słuch absolutny*, manuscript in Archiwum Kompozytorów Polskich XX i XXI wieku (no numbers), 129, 137.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*.

in the summer of 1987, because he wrote about in the letter to Zofia Helman.<sup>31</sup> However, when did he start it? Was it with this composition that his musical ‘adventure’ with Słowacki’s letters started? It is difficult to answer these questions unambiguously. The first information of Palester’s work on Słowacki’s texts come from “Ruch Muzyczny” in 1959, when in the column entitled “Polish Music and Musicians Abroad” we read: “To commemorate ‘The Year of Słowacki’ Palester prepares *Pieśni* (*Songs*) for the piano to texts of letters of our great poet.” Palester himself wrote in the letter to Bronisław Horowicz, dated 20 July 1959: “[...] I have written an extremely dodecaphonic cantata to texts of Słowackiusz entitled *Letters to Mother*”.<sup>32</sup> *Songs to Texts of Słowacki* are listed by Jerzy Gajek<sup>33</sup> and Adam Sutkowski, who specify in detail performers—baritone and an instrumental band and the year when it was done—1957 (!), stating that this composition belongs to Palester’s most important “chamber vocal-instrumental compositions”.<sup>34</sup> While Małgorzata Janicka-Słysz in *Spis utworów Romana Palestra* (*A List of Roman Palester’s Compositions*) included the following items: *Letters to Mother*, cantata for baritone and small orchestra, words J. Słowacki (1984) and *Matka* (*Mother*), cantata for baritone and small orchestra, words J. Słowacki (1984).<sup>35</sup> And here we have a puzzle I cannot solve. Did we have two compositions to the words of Słowacki: the first one finished in 1957, the second in 1987? Even if we agree with Zofia Helman that Palester “gave the titles of works he only planned, or which existed as very rudimentary sketches, never to be completed”,<sup>36</sup> which introduced confusion as far as scholars are concerned, it is still very characteristic that Słowacki’s letters were with Palester for some 30 years. They appeared as if

<sup>31</sup> Z. Helman, op. cit., 321.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Helman, op. cit., 320.

<sup>33</sup> J. Gajek, *Muzyka Romana Palestra*, „Kultura” Paryż 1966, no. 10/228, 101.

<sup>34</sup> A. Sutkowski, *O twórczości muzycznej Romana Palestra*, „Kultura” Paryż 1977, no. 3/370-8/371, 184.

<sup>35</sup> M. Janicka-Słysz, *Krakowskie lata Stefana Kisielewskiego i Romana Palestra*, in *Krakowska szkoła kompozytorska 1888-1988*, ed. by T. Małecka, Kraków 1992, 97.

<sup>36</sup> Z. Helman, op. cit., 320.

accidentally (the direct impulse to use them was probably the 150th anniversary of Słowacki's birth); maybe they were rejected, and returned, in a “tamed” version as a theme of the composition written at the end of his life.

The text of this composition is made out of fragments of *Letters to Mother* by Słowacki, compiled by Palester. That is why the composer used *Letters to Mother* as the title, clearly showing the origin of the hypotexts embedded in the musical hypertext.<sup>37</sup> It is worth noting, however, that because of the semantic unity of the connected fragments which constitute the lexical layer of the composition, another title would, perhaps, be more appropriate: *List do Matki* (*A Letter to Mother*). Zofia Helman wrote a long time ago:

The textual basis is composed of individual sentences and phrases taken from Słowacki's letters. Used out of context, they create a new whole with a consistent mood.<sup>38</sup>

This mood, set by the semantics of the text, is, according to Helman, who interpreted it in the context of Palester's biography, constructed out of “home sickness, memories of the past, love for an absent person, alienation, melancholy, resignation, weariness, premonition of death.”<sup>39</sup> This short, and quite adequate list suggests that Palestra's attention, while adopting Słowacki's letters for his purposes, was directed only at very specific fragments, which he treated in a way which might be called ‘utilitarian’—that this intended to show the state of spirit of the composer himself, who was moved neither by Słowacki's works nor works by other Romantic poets.

And here we have the lexical text of Palester's composition:<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The concept of “intersemiotic intertextuality” is developed by me in the dissertation (*Poezja „...nutami niesiona”. O muzycznej recepcji twórczości Juliusza Słowackiego*, op. cit.).

<sup>38</sup> Z. Helman, op. cit., 321.

<sup>39</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>40</sup> In square brackets I put words which the composer has treated with ellipsis, taking into account the closest context for the particular fragment of the cantata's lexical text.

COLLOQUIA LITTERARIA

My dearest! I received your letter when I was on the ocean's shore, the most beloved, the nicest of letters, because so full of mirth, from a happy soul taken, with open mouth sung to God [truly the hymn, which God owes to spirits of angels].

[I received it during the first days of my visit to the sea and] I took it to the windy fields [so similar to our steppes], painted with the rainbow of marine flowers, surrounded by blue sea, where I felt that everything, sad [and widely blue] answered your letter. [So you have noticed at last, my love, that everything which we considered punishment is God's blessing, that we received more from Him than is our due, because look at people—some of them appear to be more happy than we, but they have no hearts, and are more miserable than us, though they have no souls] [...].

(Pornic, 12 August 1844)

My Mother [are we so old, or have we slept for so many years, that we lack so many people?] Will God join us at one time [for the reason] so that we could say to each other before death that we have lives... so that we could read in our altered faces this same word... we have lived... [My Mother—a smile—let joyful thoughts and joyful dreams come to you].

(Genève, 27 November 1833)

In the meantime I live more in the past than in the present. Many of my old dreams have appeared before me, the picture darkened and tawny, full of pale faces, and as long these phantasms, which I used to know once, persisted that I gave them power over my thoughts and, obedient, I try to create things dead anew and those irretrievably lost, forward to memory [...] and the past has such power over me that even while trying to draw others' history I create my own sadness at the same time [...]

(a fragment from a fictitious letter of Słowacki; in Pini's edition it is listed as authentic and dated c.a. 1835)

[We are all bleak, and we tire one another with this bleakness, because we have no families, no family connections—each of us returns to empty walls [...] ] we have learnt not to cry over the miseries

of others, as monks, very few of us have preserved a warm heart and the gift of living with other people, but it cannot be otherwise [and others, if they were in our place, might be worse]. So, when you think that our fate is enviable, think that deep inside it is the saddest bunch of people, devoid of hope and [almost all] positive emotions [...] As for me, I have an impression that I am most gladdened by the beam of the returning spring—that shows the fact that I have nothing which would make me glad in a tempestuous manner... [Think, then, what a festivity this must be for me, when in this colourless world and the state of the soul, I receive a message from you, even the briefest message, even just a few words, a sign merely that your hand touched this paper].(...)

(Paris, spring 1842)

And now I will tell you with no exaltation that you have first place in my heart [if I was dying, I would have my heart cremated and delivered to you, because its ashes belong solely to you. I have found all the people somehow wanting, those to whom I have wanted to give my heart]. I will give your name [in Christening] to the most beautiful of my daughters and it will sound for a long time, filled with the smell of convallarias, which grow on Czercza—that is the only thing I can—give to our sorrow a song, a voice, an echo.

[I kiss you, my dear. Let the sadness of this letter not make you sad. Let it make you mellow, and make the spring nicer and greener. Let the fragrances of flowers enter through your window, and let the smell of Easter food go out of your door; let the garland of grey beggars with jambels in their hands move away from your threshold—my soul will be everywhere and with you forever. Christ promised that it will be till the end of the world].

(Paris, 16 February 1841)<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> The fragments left out by the composer are taken from: J. Słowacki, *Dzieła*, ed. by J. Krzyżanowski, vol. VI, *Listy do matki*, ed. by Z. Krzyżanowska, Wrocław 1983; the text of the fictitious letter is taken from: *Dzieła Juliusza Słowackiego*, ed. by Tadeusz Pini, vol. III, *Pisma prozą – Listy. Z czterema ilustracjami i sześciu podobiznami autografów*, Warszawa 1933, 367. This letter was placed as the last one in the chapter *Listy do matki i rodziny*. There is the following information accompanying the letter provided in the footnote: “The letter without the beginning and the ending,

The way in which the composer compiled the fragments, sentences and phrases, selected by himself, is characteristic: he was not concerned at all with the chronology of these texts, chronology which matters if we want to see these fragments in the context of the spiritual evolution of the poet. The Słowacki of his “final years” and the young Słowacki are two very different people.

So, Palester started with a sentence from the letter written by the seriously ill Słowacki during his stay in Pornic (1844), where he for his health’s sake “bathed in the sea for the whole month”, living in a harmonious state of mind, full of “internal joy”, which we can already see in the sentence quoted in the square bracket, which follows immediately after the fragment selected by the composer. The poet in the further part of the letter consistently encourages his mother “to keep her spirits high”, because moments “sad and full of grief” lead to a “dejected spirit”. The key point of the whole epistle could be summarized in the sentence: “Blessed you are because you live in heart and are already filled with sorrow.”<sup>42</sup> Roman Palester, however, has not had his share of sorrow, because soon he quotes a “sad” fragment evoking the “melancholy” of the Genève letter written eleven years earlier. Then we have this fictitious letter, wrongly assigned to Słowacki, and then we jump to the fragment from 1842, dictated by remorse caused by quarrels among the Polish émigré community and—in the end—one more letter, sad, but not hopeless, from February 1841. This flippancy in the treatment of chronology, connected with the characteristic drive to eliminate words and sentences introducing more cheerful accents, results in the situation that, in the context of all of Słowacki’s works, the text shaped in this way sounds false and the only thing it reveals is the state of the composer’s mind (soul). It is in fact Palester’s letter made out of Słowacki’s sentences, or sentences which he thought had been written by Słowacki—not a reconstruction of the period as presented by Słowacki. Słowacki’s

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probably from 1835, revealing the sources for *Horsztyński (Horsztyński)*. Published in “Czas” on 15 April 1933.

<sup>42</sup> *List do matki z 12 sierpnia 1844 [Pornic]*, op. cit., 376-379.



text, the model text, was therefore shattered. It no longer connects the horizon of readers with the horizon of the writer's world.<sup>43</sup> It was shattered in a way which might testify to—as Gadamer would have put it—the unsuccessful “fusion of horizons” (*Horizontverschmelzung*) of the poet and the composer. I introduce a hermeneutic aspect to these deliberations because in this discrepancy, this crack, which the comparison of the hypertext with the hypotext brings, I see the reason for Palester's (not very specific) lack of satisfaction with the final effect. In the letter which has been quoted before, written to Zofia Helman on 2 September 1987, Palester wrote:

*Letters to Mother* is *fix und fertig*, but I need to re-write the final version. It is not very good, there is something false in it, I *don't know what* [italics A.S.] So, it goes...<sup>44</sup>

While Zofia Helman, in the monograph of Palester's work referred to so many times here, at the end of the fragment dealing with the cantata which is being discussed now, stated:

It is difficult to explain why the composer regarded the composition as not good, and on top of it he added that there is something “*false*” *in it*. [italics, A. S.]. It is true, this cantata does not introduce any new sound variations or formal novelties, and stylistically it resembles earlier compositions of Palester more, but at the same time the aura of melancholy, ennui, dying seems to correspond well with the mental state of the composer in his final years.<sup>45</sup>

It seems that the answer to the question about the real cause of Palester's dissatisfaction with the composition—in view of the fact that, as even the expert of his works admitted, it is not devoid of some objective values—is this unsuccessful *Horizontverschmelzung*.

So, Roman Palester writes his letter, helping himself to phrases from Słowacki, which he makes “his”, crossing out, from the original,

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<sup>43</sup> Z. Helman, op. cit., 321.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 322.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 323.

personal fragments of the poet about the area where he grew up (“windy fields” are for Słowacki “so familiar to our steppes”), or particularly intimate words directed to his mother (“if I was dying, I would have my heart cremated and delivered to you [...]”).

This observation is not to suggest that the text constructed by Palester was in strong concord with the hypotext (or rather with hypotexts). The composer had the right—and, in a sense, also an obligation—to re-create according to his own idea. The idea, as it turns out, is quite straightforward, because the selection of suitable sentences, remaining within one semantic field, was additionally strengthened by the musical layer, which makes additional comments on words.

The word “Czerczy” is pronounced by a baritone solo, with no accompaniment of instruments, and afterwards we have three repetitions of sound combination of instruments with a muffled, matted timbre with Beethoven’s rhythmic motif of fate.

Zofia Helman<sup>46</sup> went on to quote a fragment of a letter which she had received from Palester in March 1988:

These notes “about death”, which were in *Treny (Threnodies)* [...] and mostly these 3 notes *gis, h, g* (that is the third and the sixth), are repeated in the composition about Luigi [in *Espressioni*], and lately they have been used in *Letters to Mother* (the mood is so sad at the end).<sup>47</sup>

Why, when the word “Czerczy” is spoken, does a general pause in the instrumental section appear (something akin to the rhetorical figure of *aposiopesis*)? Is it a key-word? Did Palester stay in the vicinity of Słowacki’s Krzemieniec? Did he know Słowacki’s beloved spots in the “land of youth”? No—such facts are not given in the composer’s biographies, or in his own autobiography. Palester was emotionally

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<sup>46</sup> Z. Helman, op. cit., 322.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 323.

more connected with the province of Galicia with its nightingales.<sup>48</sup> The reason for the general pause in this particular place should be seen in the wish to use euphonic features of this grinding-sounding word. It is to draw attention to Beethoven’s “motif of fate”, or—as Constantin Floros put it—the “motif of death”, repeated by Palester three times by celesta and harp. The audience, even if they miss these “notes of death”, cannot miss the conventionalized motif from Beethoven’s *Fifth Symphony*.

These two motifs, transformed in various ways (diminution, augmentation, inversion.), are on the musical level of *Letters to Mother* present all the time, stressing individual words thanks to connotations connected with a clearly marked semantic field.<sup>49</sup> It is at this moment that a certain redundancy appears, “adding sorrow to sorrow”, a notion which Słowacki so clearly condemned in the controversial letter to his mother containing his critique of Chopin’s polonaises.<sup>50</sup> This redundancy is much bigger, because in bars 98-99 the string quintet recalls “the motif of sighs”, and when we look closely at the musical line of this cantata, we see that its wavy character is connected with the constant return, both in the vocal and in the instrumental parts, of a musical-rhetorical figure *imaginatio crucis*, based on the “image of a lying cross clearly prefigured by the symbols of musical notation of the four elements”.<sup>51</sup> Maciej Gołąb, while writing about the complex methodology connected with the “motif of the cross”, stated that

<sup>48</sup> R. Palester, *Słuch absolutny...*, op. cit., 32.

<sup>49</sup> “Motif of fate”, played by the harp and the grand piano appears, among others in beat 79 with the words “and the future [has such power above me], it appears in beat 84 played by the flute 9 (“I cause [sadness]), in beat 158 it is played by the marimba and the harp („Czerczy”), in beat 161 (“I can do only this”) it is transformed rhythmically into triole motifs. “Notes on death” in the clear version appear in the fragment by the piano (beats 64-65 “meanwhile I live more in the past than in the present”), beats 70-71 (“and so long these acquaintances have insisted...”) and in the fragment by the viola (beat 88), the violin (beat 121) and the oboe (beats 162-163), but as Zofia Helman stated “the rotating tertiary cells which can be derived from ‘motif of death’ are the structural foundations of the whole piece”. (op. cit., 32).

<sup>50</sup> J. Słowacki, *List do matki z lutego 1845 roku*, op. cit., . 391.

<sup>51</sup> M. Gołąb, *Spór o granice poznania dzieła muzycznego*, Wrocław 2003, 214.

this figure loses its semantic marking when it is devoid of the lack of “support” in the lexical text (for example in Chopin’s song “Poseł” (“A Messenger”) it appears during the words “this cross”) and in the structure of the composition (being its beginning and ending).<sup>52</sup> It seems that this statement, if not rash, is at least controversial. Even if the logic of the direction of the musical line makes the motif referring to *imaginatio crucis* return in many places of the composition, maybe beyond the composers consciousness, the ear of a careful audience of *Letters to Mother*—familiar with a motif like B-A-C-H—will most probably catch it and connect it to other figures, which together with the “motif of fate”, the “motif of sighs” and the “notes of death” form one semantic field.

It would seem that in this dodecaphonic, after all, cantata the composer—creating a new, clearly elegiac lexical text and including it in a musical-literary structure so strongly marked with conventional motifs evoking melancholy, sorrow, fear of death, tragedy—paradoxically became more “Romantic” than Słowacki himself. The letters of the poet placed in the different context create new value, different not only structurally, but also semantically. Being in an intertextual relationship with its hypotexts, this value becomes at the same time a testimony of a specific reception of Słowacki’s works, showing clearly that such readings of the poet’s works can be fascinating. It is also worth focusing research on this part of musical literature, remembering that not only Mickiewicz, but also Słowacki, “the subtlest musician in poetry” was interesting to composers.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 214-222.

A. SEWERYN, "MUSICAL" SŁOWACKI..."

44. 154

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Tr.

Tb.

C.

o-wo-ńd-ne za-pa - - chem kon-wa - - lji, co ros-nie na

mp

pp

Solo

con sord.

154

COLLOQUIA LITTERARIA

Handwritten musical score for 'Listy do Matki' by Palestrina. The score includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Cl. b.), Trumpet (tr.), Trombone (tr.), Percussion (P.), Double Bass (Dob., Mb. Ar.), Cello (Cel.), Violoncello (Vcl.), Marimba (Mrb.), and Organ (Op.). The score is marked with dynamics such as *pp*, *ppp*, and *mp*. A large handwritten number '4' is visible on the right side of the score. The lyrics for the vocal part are: "Czer-czy. To jed-no mo-gę: dzi-więk, —". The tempo marking is *sempre tranquillissimo, J = 36*. The page number '158' is written in a box at the bottom left of the score.

R, Palestrina, *Listy do Matki*, a fragment of notation with words with words "smell of lilies of the valley in Czerczy. Next to the word "Czerczy" there appears a pause, then Beethoven's 'motif of fate' – in the marimba fragment (Mrb.)