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Liszt and the issue of so called Gypsy music

ABSTRACT: The article attempts to shed light on Liszt's connections with so called Gypsy music, with particular emphasis on the sources and manifestations of the composer's interest in the subject. The paper also shows the effects of Liszt's thought on his academic successors.
Liszt's fascination with Gypsy music and culture is discussed by outlining his childhood memories as well as indicating numerous personal contacts he had with renowned Gypsy musicians. The author of the paper also links Liszt's enchantment with Gypsy culture with his readiness to identify his travelling virtuoso status with that of a Gypsy-wanderer. Special attention in the article is put on Liszt's book *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie* (1859). The author of the article claims that Liszt's cosmopolitanism may be a key factor while explaining the composer's predilection to Gypsy culture and music. While focusing on the reception of Liszt's views on so called Gypsy music by the posterity Bartók's interpretation of Liszt's ideas is reminded. Discussed are also their repercussions in the second half of the twentieth century and early twenty first century.

KEYWORDS: Franz Liszt, Gypsy music, Hungary, Hungarian music, national music, Béla Bartók

The enormous impact that the book by Franz Liszt *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie* (1859)[1] had on the perception of music performed by Gypsies in the nineteenth century is not only undeniable, but despite passing years his book is still of interest to musicologists and ethnomusicologists, both in Hungary and – what is perhaps even more important – beyond its borders.[2] Not only Liszt's contribution to the shaping of the romantic, idealized image of 'Gypsyness' in music, but also his proposition how to define Gypsy music itself are debated.[3] Although historical and linguistic reasons for confusing these notions (i.e. treating

[1] Franz Liszt, *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie* (Paris: Nouvelle, 1859).

[2] See Bálint Sárosi, "Gypsy Musicians and Hungarian Peasant Music", *Yearbook of the International Music Council* 2 (1970), 8.

[3] The term 'Gypsy music' is still ambiguously understood and used even today. It can mean the music created and cultivated by the Roma, but may relate to the musical repertoire only performed by Gypsies musicians playing for non-Gypsies, especially in so called 'Zigeunerkapellen' active, since the end of the eighteenth century, mainly in Austria and Hungary. What's more, the term 'Gypsy music' is sometimes applied to artistic compositions both for professionals and amateurs, which merely refer in their titles to the imagined Gypsy world.

the terms 'Hungarian music' and 'Gypsy music' almost synonymously) had roots predating the book by Liszt, they became internationally discussed as a result of the volume's first edition. Liszt's reputation as a splendid virtuoso and composer contributed to the popularity of his book and views contained therein. The importance of Liszt's writing lied in bringing to the public attention the music cultivated by Gypsies notwithstanding the fact that the text was not free from factual errors, simplifications and sweeping statements. Its far-reaching repercussions can be still witnessed today, sometimes overshadowing even the results of the work by Hungarian researchers trying – since the nineteenth century – to grasp holistically the phenomenon of the music performed by Gypsies in Hungary.

In this article an attempt to shed some light on Liszt's connections with so called Gypsy music is undertaken, with particular emphasis on the sources and manifestations of his interest in the subject. It also aims at showing the effects of Liszt's thought on his academic successors.

1. Liszt's fascination with Gypsy music and culture: origins and manifestations

a. Childhood memories

Liszt's fascination with music performed by Gypsies (which he himself called Gypsy music) can be dated back to his childhood time spent on Hungarian territories. As a young boy he often listened to popular there bands called 'Zigeunerkapellen': before leaving to Vienna as a young boy he had the opportunity to hear one of the most famous Gypsy violin virtuoso of that time, highly acclaimed János Bihari. Several years later Liszt compared his playing to drops of nectar seeping into the ears of listeners. The long lasting impression the meeting made on him was described by Liszt in his book *Des Bohémiens et leur musique*.[4]

b. Personal contacts with Gypsy musicians

Liszt's personal encounters with other Gypsy musicians were also quite numerous. For example, during his stay in Hungary in 1839 he participated in glamorous outdoor balls, usually accompanied by Gypsy bands. While writing – in a highly emotional manner – about his visit to the place of birth, the composer mentioned in one of his letters to the Countess Marie d'Agoult the ball during which he asked musicians (most probably Gypsies) to play waltzes for him.[5]

[4] Liszt, *Des Bohémiens*, 471: "Nous n'étions déjà plus si enfant quand, en 1822, nous entendîmes ce grand homme entre les virtuoses bohémiens, pour n'avoir pas été frappé et impressionné par lui au point de garder fidèle souvenance de ses inspirations ".

[5] Stanisław Szenic, *Franciszek Liszt* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1969), 134.

The composer actively sought opportunities to meet Gypsy musicians, hankering after listening to music performed by them. For example during his stay in Russia, he went on trips outside Moscow in order to get acquainted with music by Gypsies staying in camps around the city. According to an anecdote, during one of these escapades the virtuoso listened so intently to choral songs by Russian Gypsies that he had lost track of time and was even late for his own concert. Later that night – still under the spell of the music he had succumbed to – Liszt improvised on the themes he had heard, what was greeted as a 'lovely surprise'.[6]

Furthermore, in order to honor Liszt's arrival in St. Petersburg a Russian composer Michail Glinka threw a party in so called Gypsy style. After a private concert and a sumptuous meal, the guests were asked to move to the living room which was turned for that occasion into a forest with huge amount of firs, with a real glowing fire, etc. The scenery was supposed to remind the authentic Gypsy camp, and in order to make the whole situation even more real a choir of Gypsies was also invited.

In the next decade, in 1850s, Liszt continued his contacts with Gypsy musicians, not only writing about these meetings but also expressing his anxiety accompanying him while awaiting them ('Then quick to the Gypsies, as I did yesterday'[7]). Liszt was clearly fascinated with the mastery of Gypsy musicians, especially those coming from the territories of the Habsburg empire. For example he dearly admired a dulcimer virtuoso – Pál Pinter[8] as well as was stunned by the virtuosity of Lautaru Barbu – the legendary nineteenth century Romanian Gypsy violinist, renowned for his incredible ability to play by ear repeating immediately the most complicated tunes.[9]

c. Enchantment with Gypsy culture

Succumbing to the charm of Gypsy culture Liszt showed his fascination with it not only in the realm of his own music, but also in others, 'down to the earth' areas of his life. For example, as a legend has it, the generally admired luxury travel carriage Liszt owned, which served as a lounge during the day and at night as a bedroom, was modeled after a glamorous Gypsy wagon.[10]

Liszt also served as a guardian and patron for a young Gypsy musician Jozsy ('Josi') Sarai. Composer took into custody a twelve-year boy sent to him by Count Sándor Teleky since the child was displaying considerable musical talent. Despite financial investments in the education of the youngster, his progress (or rather

[6] Ibid. 180.

[7] Franz Liszt, *Briefe*, ed. La Mara, vol. 4 (Leipzig: Breitkopf&Härtel, 1893-1905), 316.

[8] Dezsö Legány, *Ferenc Liszt and His Country 1869-1873* (Budapest: Corvina, 1976), 204.

[9] See Constantin Noica, *The Cantemir Model in Our Culture, or Memo to the One-Above Regarding the Situation of the Spirit in the Three Romanian Provinces* (Bucharest: Editura Athena, 1995), 49-51.

[10] Szenic, *Franciszek Liszt*, 181.

its lack) disappointed Liszt, who left him in care of the boy's own brother – also a Gypsy musician.[11] Eventually Jozsy Sarai established himself in Debrecen, where he married a local Gypsy girl and settled down taking a job as a musician in a Gypsy band led by Boka Károly.[12]

Liszt happily referred to his acquaintance with Jozsy as evident in the book *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie*. He also proudly informed about receiving from him – years after they had parted – a letter, which he even published in *Neue Pester Journal* dated 21 September 1879.[13]

d. Identifying with the status of a Gypsy-wanderer

Most likely Liszt was not only charmed with Gypsy culture and music, but also – and perhaps primarily – he identified himself with the status of Gypsies as eternal wanderers. In a letter to Caroline von Sayn-Wittgenstein dated August 13, 1856, he wrote about the duality of his own nature and confessed that he felt in one half the Gypsy, and in the other Franciscan ('Zu einer Halfte Zigeuner, zur andern Franziskaner'[14]).

Indeed, like Gypsy musicians Liszt transgressed the boundaries between the performer and composer. His musical works blurred the borders between the concept of composition (codified on paper) and spontaneous improvisation. In his works he did not avoid accumulating musical figures typical for improvisation, including repetitions, digressions, or short phrases. For Liszt the concept of composition 'remained tied to the musical event as a performative experience'.[15] It can be said that an inspired Gypsy musician, improvising on the spur of the moment and wandering around in search of an opportunity to play (similarly to professional instrumentalists of the epoch) became the *alter ego* of Liszt himself as a virtuoso also constantly traveling while undertaking numerous tournées.[16]

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[11] Ibid., 191-192.

[12] Ibid., 192.

[13] Michael Short, ed., *Liszt' Letters in the Library of Congress* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2003), 45, accessed August 28, 2010, http://books.google.pl/books?id=viPBTA49dUC&pg=PA45&lpg=PA45&dq=sarai+liszt&source=bl&ots=teXspSnhtd&sig=h_-nAr4MlkRSXujNqjIn1bjutO4&hl=pl&ei=ylJ6TLiEOMWjOKybib8G&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=6&ved=0CDgQ6AEwBQ#v=onepage&q=sarai%20liszt&f=false.

[14] Liszt, *Briefe*, 316.

[15] Leon Botstein, "A Mirror to the Nineteenth Century: reflections of Franz Liszt", in: *Franz Liszt and His World*, ed. Christopher H. Gibbs et al. (Princeton-Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 555.

[16] See Anna G. Piotrowska, *Romantyczna wizja postaci Cygana w twórczości muzycznej XIX i pierwszej połowy XX wieku* [Romantic Vision of the Gypsy in Musical Compositions from the 19th and first half of the 20th century] (Kraków: Musica Iagellonica, 2012), 110-121.

2. Liszt's book *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie*

a. Background of the work

When as a well recognized pianist Liszt paid a visit in his native country he 'became fascinated by the music of the Gypsies, itself a seminal childhood experience'.[17] He sensed that music played by Gypsies could have served as a source for creating Hungarian national idiom in music and as a consequence Liszt idealized an image of Hungarian 'Gypsyness'. However, the composer fell victim to the misunderstanding spread in the nineteenth century by word of mouth claiming that Hungarian musical traditions were synonymous with Gypsy ones. Hence in *Hungarian Rhapsodies* Liszt alluded to tunes which – at least in his opinion – were authentic Gypsy. According to the contemporary American musicologist Jonathan Bellman, *Hungarian Rhapsodies* generally refer to the tradition of imitating (in artistic music) sounds of Gypsy bands which was quite popular on Hungarian territories at that time. He suggested to call this style *hongrois*.[18] Liszt used, among others, dance tunes coming mainly from *verbunkos* and *csardases*, as well as made use of songs included in various collections of printed music. Thus in his *Hungarian Rhapsodies* he referred also to some works by nineteenth-century Hungarian composers.

One of the features of *Rhapsodies* recognized as representative for style *hongrois* is the use of the scale c d e-flat f-sharp g a-flat b c' conceptualized by Liszt as so called Gypsy scale. In addition, Liszt imitated on the piano the sounds of such instruments as violins and dulcimer traditionally encountered in Gypsy bands playing on Hungarian territory. *Hungarian Rhapsodies* also allude to the virtuosity of Gypsy musicians, what is suggested even in commentaries directed to performers, for example in the form of such specifications as 'play in Gypsy style' (e.g. *Hungarian Rhapsody* No. 7).

At a level of macro-form *Hungarian Rhapsodies* reproduce a layout of *csardas*, based mainly on the contrast between basic musical elements (tempo, rhythmicity) and expression. The composer retained the original names of the dance parts, internally dividing *Hungarian Rhapsodies* into *lassan* and *frisska*.

Liszt intended to publish his *Hungarian Rhapsodies* along with a text (intended as short) explaining their origin. He sought the help to edit it and in 1847 he asked for assistance his friend and life partner Marie d'Agoult. However, already by 1854 the planned introduction – possibly a postscript – grew to the size of a book that eventually came out in print for the first time a few years later, i. e. in 1859 as an already mentioned book *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie*. It is often

[17] Klara Hamburger, "Program and Hungarian Idiom In the Sacred Music of Liszt", in: *New Light on Liszt and His Music*, ed. Michael Saffle et al. (New York: Pendragon Press, 1997), 240.

[18] Jonathan Bellman, *The Style hongrois in the Music of Western Europe* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 196.

claimed that Liszt's then-companion – princess Caroline von Sayn-Wittgenstein was responsible for the final stylistic shape of the book, although, the views expressed in the work belonged to the composer himself.[19]

b. Sources of the so called Liszt's error

In the book Liszt acknowledged Hungarian Gypsies as taking care of Hungarian national music and believed Hungarian music was preserved by Hungarian Gypsy musicians. Although recognizing the important role of the Hungarian nobility concerned with propagation of Hungarian ideals, the composer strongly emphasized the Gypsy contribution. The controversial thesis forwarded in the book had, however, deep historical roots and the composer reverberated in fact opinions generally circulating that time. As one of the first collectors of Hungarian songs and the music scholar Mátray Gábor (1795 or 1797-1875) wrote in 1854 Hungarian people did not cultivate national music and allowed Gypsies to disseminate it.[20]

It needs to be stressed that Liszt's book as one of the first in European historiography discussed the issue of music performed by Gypsies in such a comprehensive way. The popularity of the book not only entailed from the fact that Liszt undertook that cutting-edge topic or from the author's fame, but was also the result of the above mentioned controversy and the interest it aroused on Hungarian territories when it first had appeared.

The immediate point of criticism was the straightforward identification of Hungarian music with Gypsy music. Already in the year of the publication of the book in Paris, the Hungarian press was swept by an avalanche of critical reviews. As one of the first to talk on the issue was Kálmán Simonffy – a composer of popular *magyar nóta*. In September 1859, having acquainted himself only with extracts from the book printed in *La France Musicale* he wrote an open letter to Liszt, overtly accusing him of misleading the readers.[21] In the following public debate, the book was discussed by luminaries of the cultural life in the mid-nineteenth century in Hungary, including Gusztáv Szénfy and István Fáy. To the most heavily attacking belonged August Ritter von Adelburg[22] and Samuel Brassai. The latter's work from 1860 *Magyar vagy cziganyeze?* not only pinpointed a lack of

[19] Anna G. Piotrowska, *Topos muzyki cygańskiej w kulturze europejskiej od końca XVIII do początku XX wieku* [Topos of Gypsy Music in European Culture from the end of 18th to the beginning of 20th century] (Kraków: Musica Iagellonica, 2011), 83-85.

[20] See: Gábor Mátray, "A magyar zene és a magyar cigányok zenéje" [Hungarian music and the music of Hungarian Gypsies], in: *Magyar- és Erdélyország képekben*, ed. Ferenc Kubinyi et al., vol. 4 (Pest: Emich Ny., 1854), 118-125.

[21] Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt*, vol. 2, 'The Weimar Years 1848-1861' (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 385.

[22] August Ritter von Adelburg, *Entgegnung auf die von Dr. Franz Liszt in seinem Werke Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie (Die Zigeuner und ihre Musik in Ungarn) aufgestellte Behauptung dass es bloß eine Musik der Zigeuner gibt* (Pest: Robert Lampel, 1859).

elementary knowledge displayed in Liszt's book, but also provided readers with an outline of history of Gypsies in Hungary based on historical documents dating from the fifteenth century onwards. The author also analyzed the music played by Gypsy bands in Hungarian areas.[23] Brassai primarily accused Liszt of the lack of competence and scientific rigor, as well as an inaccessibly ornate style of speech. He even compared prosody of Liszt's book to 'stinky' Hungarian weeds used by fishermen to catch fish in order to make them first dizzy.[24] In his work Brassai summed up widely disseminated arguments against Liszt's work, expressing the opinion of many Hungarians who could not accept the claim forwarded by their famous compatriot. However, the situation seemed delicate given the international status and prestige of Liszt: on the one hand it was clear Hungarians needed him as an ambassador of their music in Europe, on the other hand, though, they did not welcome such a promotion of their music as offered by Liszt. Nevertheless, the impact of Liszt's book became a fact. In the European literature of the second half of the nineteenth century any references to music performed by Gypsies were usually combined with the name of Liszt and mention of his book. But – although there is no doubt that Liszt was appreciated as a musician and most authors remained impressed by his accomplishments as a composer and virtuoso, and even as a music promoter – at the same time they were acutely aware of Liszt's controversial views on Gypsy music presented in the book *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie*. For example English Carl Engel wrote that 'the style of this book is rather bombastic, and the author state but few instructive facts, although he displays much sentiment respecting the music of the Gypsies'.[25]

c. Liszt's cosmopolitanism

The mid-nineteenth century atmosphere saturated with national liberation slogans influenced also the roots of so-called Liszt's error resulting from his desire to create a Hungarian national epic. One of composer's inspirations was the concept of ossianism. Already in 1846 Liszt described Hungarian tunes as 'half Ossian' and 'half Gypsy'.[26] According to the contemporary German musicologist Detlef Altenburg while creating the fundaments of the Hungarian national music Liszt based on the following six principles[27]:

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[23] Sámuel Brassai, *Magyar vagy czigány zene. Elmefuttatás Liszt Ferencz: Czigányokról irt könyvére* [Short essay about Ferenc Liszt's book "On the Gypsies"] (Kolózsvár /Cluj/: *Az Ev. Reform. Főtanoda* Könyvnyomdája, 1860).

[24] Ibid., 12.

[25] Carl Engel, "The Literature of National Music. Treatises (continued)", *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 20 (1879/432), 72.

[26] Emile Haraszti, "Franz Liszt–Author despite Himself: The History of a Mystification", *The Musical Quarterly* 33 (1947), 511.

[27] Detlef Altenburg, "Liszts Idee eines ungarischen Nationalepos in Tönen", *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientarum Hungaricae* 28 (1986), 219.

1. every nation is entitled to create its own ideal of poetry reflecting its unique history;

2. the music of Hungarian Gypsies offers the potential for Hungarian national epic;

3. Hungarian Gypsies are Hungarian bards;

4. music played by Gypsies in Hungary equals Hungarian folk music;

5. music performed by Gypsies is characterized by distinctive, unique features;

6. national epic expressed via music strongly affects listeners thus stimulates the crystallization of national ideals and encourages to undertake certain action.

Under these assumptions Liszt established his positive interpretation of Gypsy music, i.e. not only did he claim its existence (and this fact was frequently questioned since Gypsies sometimes were regarded as merely Hungarian musicians), but he also opted for its authenticity. Above all Liszt attributed it an illustrious role in the creation of Hungarian national music considering Gypsy music as a primary source for Hungarian national music. As a composer he followed that route by incorporating into his works (described as 'Hungarian') tunes he believed to be of Gypsy origin.

Liszt's interest in creating Hungarian national idiom in music was dictated not only by his Hungarian sentiments, but also by the situation of the nineteenth-century musical Europe. By incorporating folk elements in his own compositions Liszt could count on positive response among visitors of Parisian salons seeking refreshing musical news, especially from distant European countries. It can be claimed that before Liszt already his friend Frédéric Chopin realized this need very well. Apart from the multifaceted causes that made the latter reach for the treasury of Polish folk music, there is no doubt that musical *Polishness* in the shape proposed by Chopin became a sought after quality for western listeners. The myth of authenticity associated with Chopin's mazurkas, polonaises, etc., helped to build up the image of Chopin as a Polish national bard and surrounded his work with romantic aura.[28]

As an eulogist of Chopin's talent, but also his immediate rival Liszt – a gifted pianist and a composer of numerous piano pieces – also reached out to the source offered to him by his own homeland. Being a child of his epoch[29] he fully comprehended the expectations bestowed upon him. Musical attractiveness of his own native country provided Liszt with various 'ready to use' musical patterns. Some modern musicologists (including James Parakilas, Richard Taruskin) regard this

[28] See: Anna G. Piotrowska, "Fryderyk Chopin jako kompozytor narodowy – interpretacje i reinterpretacje" [Frederic Chopin as a national composer – interpretations and re-interpretations], in: *Chopin w polskiej szkole i kulturze*, ed. Zofia Budrewicz et al. (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Pedagogicznego, 2011), 39.

[29] Carl Dahlhaus, *Between Romanticism and Modernism. Four Studies in the Music of the Later Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 83.

type of nationalistic sentiments as a specific manifestation of (self-) promotion and categorize it as a 'touristic' type of nationality in music.[30]

However, Liszt was perceived as a propagator of *Hungarianism* by his compatriots. As an honored and successful artist travelling throughout Europe, he seemed to be an excellent candidate to serve as an ambassador for Hungarians fight for the political recognition within Habsburg empire. Before Liszt no other Hungarian composer managed to establish such a high European status or to enjoy such a reputation and fame. Liszt's potential to promote Hungarian culture and music was then soon acknowledged. Numerous gestures towards Liszt testify his unique role for Hungarians and his recognition by them: in January 1840 in Pest the composer was handed over a national symbol – a sword: apparently he treasured it as one of his most precious souvenirs which he (with other trinkets of sentimental value) left to the love of his life, the duchess Caroline von Sayn-Wittgenstein.

The position of Liszt as a national composer needs to be, however, commented in the light of his unmistakably cosmopolitan carrier as a piano virtuoso. Born in 1811 in Hungarian Doborján[31] already at the age of eleven he left his native country. However, both in private and public statements Liszt always expressed his attachment to Hungary, writing, among others about 'the feeling of devotion which I have particularly nurtured towards my native land'.[32] Two years after the visit to Hungary in 1839, Liszt admitted that 'only my fatherland has my profoundest gratitude, not only as an artist [...] but as a man'.[33]

Furthermore, his attitude to Hungary did not change over the decades to come: in the early 1870's the composer reiterated that 'I remain from birth to death Hungarian in heart and mind, and accordingly wish to further the development of Hungarian music'.[34] However, it was often reminded that he did not have sufficient command of Hungarian: his desperate attempts to master the language were always halted by problems with pronouncing certain words (for example 'Gyöngye' meaning 'pearl'). Most likely, however, Liszt could understand Hungarian, since it was the language his servant Miska Sipka used while dealing with other Hungarians.[35] Nevertheless, the composer stayed truthful to German and French not only for communication purposes but also reading extensively in these languages.

Liszt's general education – quite circumstantial and probably rather neglected – was, in principle, supervised by Marie d'Agoult, who 'molded, like a sculptress,

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[30] Richard Taruskin, "Nationalism", in: *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 17, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 2001), 699; John Parakilas, *Ballada Without Words: Chopin and the Tradition of the Instrumental Ballade* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1992).

[31] Nowadays Raiding in Oberpullendorf district in Austria.

[32] See Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt*, 386.

[33] See Haraszti, "Franz Liszt-Author despite Himself", 504.

[34] See Legány, *Ferenc Liszt and His Country*, 164.

[35] Ibid., 163-164.

the soul and mind of her young lover'.[36] The composer's further intellectual development took place under the influence of Caroline von Sayn-Wittgenstein. Liszt's lack of understanding of Hungarian culture manifested sometimes also in the sphere of music: for example once he included in the programme of his concert improvisation on a Czech tune convinced that it was a Hungarian one.[37] Hence one might ask if Liszt – as a cosmopolitan – had a moral right to create what he called Hungarian national music and to decide about the definition of Hungarian and Gypsy music? Barbara Skarga writes that cosmopolitanism and nationalism do not have to be mutually exclusive, not being an alternative for each other at the same time.[38] It seems to me that especially in Liszt's case cosmopolitanism can be characterized as an attitude in which 'what is strange, other is as much of interest [...] as something own, simply because the mankind is ranked higher than the nation'.[39]

3. Reception of Liszt's views on so called Gypsy music

a. Bartók's interpretation of Liszt's ideas

Liszt's controversial thesis presented in his book posed considerable difficulties for future generations of academics. Especially Hungarian researchers found themselves in a hard situation since – as József Ujfalussy suggests – at the beginning of the twentieth century the situation of Hungarian music, despite the passage of several decades after Liszt's death, remained *de facto* unchanged.[40] In these circumstances Béla Bartók tried to challenge the legend of the great Hungarian romantic composer. Bartók quickly realized the importance of his predecessor in promoting Hungarian music throughout Europe. He wrote that 'Liszt as composer had more international than national character'.[41] Above all, Liszt was the precursor of musicological literature on music making labelled as Gypsy music and Bartók – as an avid ethnomusicologist – also undertook the study of this type of music.

Already in 1911 Bartók wrote about the so called Liszt's error, returning to this issue several times later in his writings. Bartók's aim was an ultimate explanation

[36] Haraszti, "Franz Liszt-Author despite Himself", 500.

[37] Szenic, *Franciszek Liszt*, 135.

[38] Barbara Skarga, "Czy pozytywizm jest kierunkiem antynarodowym?" [Is Positivism a National Current?], in: *Swojskość i cudzoziemszczyzna w dziejach kultury polskiej*, ed. Zofia Stefanowska (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1973), 303.

[39] Ibid., 278.

[40] József Ujfalussy, *Bela Bartók* (Budapest: Corvina, 1971), 58.

[41] Béla Bartók, "On Modern Music in Hungary" (1921), in: *Béla Bartók's Essays*, ed. Benjamin Suchoff (Lincoln-London: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 474.

of reasons that triggered off the colossal misunderstanding whose victim Liszt fell. According to Bartók his great predecessor was not fully aware of the linguistic conventionality of assigning Hungarian Gypsies the authorship of the repertoire performed by them. Bartók explained that Liszt 'in his work *Des Bohémiens* is perhaps even more extraordinary: he believes that the melodies played by the Gypsies and used in his compositions are the creations of the Gypsies themselves. According to Liszt, the melodies of the Hungarian peasants have no musical value whatsoever. It is absolutely evident that he was not acquainted with any of the or, at least, with very few, since he never thought to collect them systematically'.[42]

The so called Liszt's error became the subject of a talk given by Bartók in February 1936 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Liszt's death celebrated at the Hungarian Academy. There Bartók focused on four questions, namely:[43]

1. 'How much do the present generation understand Liszt's works?'

2. 'What influence did Liszt's music have on the general development of the art music?'

3. 'Liszt's famous book on Gypsy music'

4. 'With what justification do we regard Liszt as a Hungarian?'

Bartók had no illusions as to the nature of the error by Liszt and in the 1936 speech he highlighted the causes leading to Liszt's confusion of notions, believing that the romantic composer basically duplicated the already popular and vastly circulating ideas. Bartók also drew attention to the linguistic trap that – unfamiliar with Hungarian language – Liszt fell prey to: the term 'Gypsy music' meant in the nineteenth century Hungary the music performed by Gypsy bands. Thus the imprecise use of the expression 'Gypsy music' could result in terminological misinterpretation. Bartók pointed out, however, honorable objectives Liszt was pursuing. Even the very act of publishing the book *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie* Bartók considered as an act of courage, especially in the light of Liszt's – contrary to general beliefs – thesis proposed there.

Despite some critical remarks the 1936 speech bears clear traces of Bartók's sympathy to Liszt, and his great admiration for the composer's personality and musical talent. In his later *Harvard Lectures* Bartók also stated that 'Liszt appeared, discovered what he called and believed to be Gypsy music, which was however Hungarian urban music propagated by Gypsy bands'.[44]

Emile Haraszti – another Hungarian scholar of music working mostly in France in the first half of the 20th century – also discussed the relationship between Hungarian and Gypsy music (e.g. during the first Congress of the International Society for Musical Research in 1930). Again he emphasized the role of Liszt – much as controversial as influential.

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[42] Béla Bartók, "Hungarian Folk Music" (1921), in: *Béla Bartók's Essays*, 69.

[43] Béla Bartók, "Liszt Problems" (1936) in: *Béla Bartók's Essays*, 501-510.

[44] Béla Bartók, "Harvard Lectures" (1943), in: *Béla Bartók's Essays*, 361.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Liszt's attitude was criticized not only by Hungarians. In Poland Karol Szymanowski drew attention in 1925 to the exotic factor he found in Liszt's works. He wrote that, 'Fr. Liszt was in my opining typical 'exotic', who – despite being Hungarian, drew from Hungarian folk music (or rather Gypsy!) rhythms and melodies to be used in his famous Rhapsodies with such a same dazzling talent, skills and ... indifference as if he was drawing from the rich treasury of music from the East, for example, had he known this music better'.[45]

Nonetheless, Liszt as an academic authority was called upon in various publications. For example an American Albert Thomas Sinclair wrote in 1907 an article about so called Gypsy music where he completely relied on Liszt and even proclaimed that 'All Hungarian musicians are Gypsies. All Hungarian music is simply Gypsy music. Liszt states this, and it is true'.[46] Sinclair believed that Liszt studied, understood and described Gypsy music as only a great musician can.[47]

Liszt's views were disseminated due to the translation of his work into foreign languages. For example already in 1861 Hungarian translation by József Szekely appeared, and the same year Liszt's personal secretary, composer Peter Cornelius prepared an abridged German edition which was published in Pest and Leipzig[48]. In the late nineteenth century another German translation was undertaken by Lina Ramann[49] and in the early twentieth century an English version was issued.[50] In 2006 Italian translation was published. Liszt's book has not as yet been translated into Polish language, contrary to other work by Liszt, namely that on Chopin, which appeared in Poland several times.[51]

b. Repercussions of Liszt's concept in the second half of the twentieth century and early twenty first century

A lot of controversies aroused around the so called Liszt's error also throughout the twentieth century. Hungarian researchers continued Bartók's ef-

[45] Karol Szymanowski, "Zagadnienie 'ludowości' w stosunku do muzyki współczesnej (Na marginesie artykułu Beli Bartoka u źródeł muzyki ludowej)" [The Issue of 'Folk' in the Relation to Modern Music (On the Margins of Bartók's article)], *Muzyka* 10 (1925), 8-13.

[46] Albert Thomas Sinclair, "Gypsy and Oriental Music", *The Journal of American Folklore*, 20 (1907/ 76), 16.

[47] Ibid., 24.

[48] Franz Liszt, *Die Zigeuner und ihre Musik in Ungarn*, transl. Peter Cornelius (Pesth--Leipzig: Heckenast, 1861).

[49] Franz Liszt, *Die Zigeuner und Ihre Musik in Ungarn*, transl. Lina Ramann (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1883).

[50] Franz Liszt, *The Gypsy in Music*, transl. Edwin Evans (London: William Reeves, 1926).

[51] See: Franz Liszt, *Fryderyk Szopen*, transl. Felicjan Faleński (Warszawa: Gebethner i Wollf, 1873); idem, *Chopin*, transl. Maria Pomian (Lwów: H. Altenberg, 1924) and idem, *Fryderyk Chopin*, transl. Maria Traczewska (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1960 – new editions in 2010, 2011).

forts aimed at clarifying the state of affairs trying to shed more light on the origins of the confusing attribution of Hungarian music to Gypsies. At the same time, however, for other researchers the views expressed by Liszt still provided a starting point for their own observations.

Among numerous Hungarian ethnomusicologists dealing with music by Gypsies (Roma) one of the most influential became Balint Sárosi. He was not only the author of many books and contributions devoted to the music performed by Gypsies in Hungary (most notably *Cigányzene* of 1971[52] translated into English by Fred MacNicol and published in 1978[53]), but also a reviewer of works on the issue of so called Gypsy music. Sárosi never avoided confrontation with the concept by Liszt trying to explain the controversy accumulated around it by recalling the meanders of identifying Hungarian folk songs, popular song, *verbunkos*, etc. with Gypsy repertoire as well as by tracing the fate of Gypsy musicians on Hungarian territory. The next generation of Hungarian ethnomusicologists (among others Katalin Kovalcsik and Iren Katalin Kertész Wilkinson) followed in his footsteps aware of the ambiguity of the semantic notion of 'Gypsy music' as popularized in the nineteenth century.

And yet, Liszt's ideas on music played by Gypsies in Hungary still can be considered very much alive. In 1994 in a journal dedicated to studying Roma culture *Études Tsiganes* Alain Antonietto published an article entitled 'Histoire de la musique tsigane instrumentale d'Europe centrale', in which he approximated the history of Gypsy music in Hungary.[54] In 1996, also in French, Patrick Williams published *Les Tsiganes de Hongrie et leur musique* dealing with Hungarian Gypsy music.[55] Having spent some time in Hungary, the author, ventured writing a book modeled on Liszt's one: this influence is even strikingly visible in the title of Williams' book. What's more, Liszt's book served as a source of factual knowledge (confirmed by numerous citations) and, consequently, Williams repeated in his work the same statements, simplifications or even mistakes as Liszt. Also Hungarian composer's aesthetic views seem close to Williams. The central point of his book is the question about the relationship between Hungarian national music and so called Gypsy music. He wrote, among others, about Gypsy virtuoso as an embodiment of 'political ideal of Hungaresness'.[56] Williams claimed that the Hungarian Gypsies 'occupied a special place in Hungary as interpreters of a national music'.[57]

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[52] Bálint Sárosi, *Cigányzene* (Budapest: Gondalot, 1971).

[53] Bálint Sárosi, *Gypsy Music*, transl. Fred Macnicol (Budapest: Corvina, 1978).

[54] Alain Antonietto, "Histoire de la musique tsigane instrumentale d'Europe centrale", *Études tsiganes* 3 (1994), 104-133.

[55] Patrick Williams, *Les Tsiganes de Hongrie et leurs musiques* (Paris: Cité de la Musique, 1996).

[56] Ibid., 33 ("Le virtuose tsigane incarne l'idéal politique hongrois").

[57] Ibid., 52 ("Rumungre occupèrent en Hongrie la place particulière d'interprètes de la musique nationale").

In his 2011 work *Liszt's Transcultural Modernism and the Hungarian-Gypsy Tradition* Shay Loya proposed a new, completely different and innovative interpretation of Liszt's views by linking his attitude with a transcultural phenomenon.[58] According to the American researcher, Liszt was fascinated with the music played by Hungarian Gypsies, especially by *verbunkos*, which itself – according to the musicologist (he stressed it a few times in his work) is a transcultural phenomenon *par excellence*. The term 'verbunkos' author defines as 'a collective generic and stylistic term'.[59] Stressing the transcultural nature of *verbunkos* Loya also interchangeably used the words *Hungarian-Gypsy* while talking about *Hungarian-Gypsy tradition* and music. Thus, for the researcher, the enthusiasm shown by Liszt to this kind of music making, as well as his commitment to its promotion (both in his publications and compositions referring to *verbunkos*) betray transcultural character of Liszt's actions and attest (at the same time) their universality.

Modern musicologists attempting at reinterpretation of Liszt's views not only evaluate them in various ways, but also show their different connotations. For example, an American musicologist David Malvinini claims that the meaning of Gypsy music in Liszt's eyes was not another manifestation of the exoticism – as popularized in the nineteenth century, but 'a consciousness of the communicative essence of music'.[60] Another American researcher, Jonathan Bellman also believes that the interest in the exotic was neither the only nor the most important motive behind Liszt's opinions and compositions.[61]

It seems to me that it can be claimed that raising awareness of the phenomenon of music performed by Gypsies and the more and more widespread access to it (either in the form of texts dealing with this issue or in the form of compositions which – as Liszt thought – were based on authentic Gypsy melodies) entailed what can be called an 'appropriation' of the music by Gypsies into European culture on the basis of taking 'care' of it. In Liszt's book we should, however, pay special attention, above all, to the multidimensionality of the work, in which exotic discourse was intermingled with national. Thus, in my opinion, Liszt suggested the duality of interpreting the so called Gypsy music in European culture, at the same time perceived as familiar, but also as 'other'.

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[58] Shay Loya, *Liszt's Transcultural Modernism and the Hungarian-Gypsy Tradition* (Rochester: Rochester University Press, 2011).

[59] Ibid., 61.

[60] David Malvinni, *The Gypsy Caravan: From Real Roma to Imaginary Gypsies in Western Music and Film* (New York-London: Routledge, 2004), ix.

[61] Bellman, *The Style hongrois*, 130.