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MUSICAL REPRESENTATION OF THE RELIGIOUS MESSAGE IN ZOLTÁN GÁRDONYI'S *HÁROM NAGYHETI KÉP* (THREE HOLY WEEK EVENTS)¹,²

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SUMMARY. Zoltán Gárdonyi (1906-1986) composed his work entitled *Három Nagyheti Kép (Three Holy Week Events)* in 1966. At that time, he was a professor at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, in Budapest. He composed the work for organ and a string ensemble (1st violin, 2nd violin, viola, cello, double bass). The work has three movements, as the title Három Nagyheti Kép (Three Holy Week Events) suggests.⁴ This paper analyses the work in question in detail, from a harmonic and formal point of view.

Keywords: Gárdonyi Zoltán, Három Nagyheti Kép, Three Holy Week Events, organ, strings, harmony, forms, structure, religious message

Zoltán Gárdonyi was a man of deep religious faith and wholeheartedly resonated with the spiritual charge of the Holy Week at the time when he composed this work. The premiere of the piece took place in the same year, in Budapest, at the Reformed Church of Kelenföld, during the Good Friday service. His then 20-year-old son, Zsolt Gárdonyi, played the organ voice of the composition.

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Holy Week, in the Christian church, the week between Palm Sunday and Easter, observed

⁴ "Holy Week, in the Christian church, the week between Palm Sunday and Easter, observed with special solemnity as a time of devotion to the Passion of Jesus Christ." Source: https://www.britannica.com/topic/Holy-Week, accessed in October 27, 2021.



Evangelical Church of Kelenföld, Budapest, Hungary

Forty years later, the work was also played in Szeged, during Palm Sunday service.

The title of the **first scene** (movement) – "Mount of Olives" - was inspired by the following biblical quote: "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives." (Matthew 26, verse 30)⁵, which the composer also included in his manuscript. The melodic essence of the music is one of the 17th-century adaptations of Psalm 148 from the Reformed Hymnbook, which represents hymn no. 278 of the then Hymnbook, entitled "Dicsőült helyeken, mennyei paradicsomban" (In Glorified Places, in Heavenly Paradise).

⁵ King James Version, source: https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2026%3A26-30&version=KJV, accessed on October 25, 2021.

E.g. 2



Hymn nr. 278: "Dicsőült helyeken, mennyei paradicsomban" (In Glorified Places, in Heavenly Paradise)

The composer transposes the melody of this hymn into G major and composes Scene (movement) 1 in G major. During the 1st movement, the voice of the string instruments continuously alternates with the voice of the organ. This dialogue lasts almost to the end of the movement. The two "characters" play together only in the five bars preceding the closing of the movement, between bars 64-69.

⁶ Digitális Reformed Hymnbook (reformatus.hu) In the current Reformed Hymnbook this is hymn 196. We excluded the subsequent stanzas.

	1st stanza			2nd stanza					E.g. 3			. 3				
	Intro.	Α	trans	. A .	trans	. B .tran	ıs. Av1	trans.	Av2	trans	. Bv1	insert	ion	Code	etta	
	b	ar 5.	10.	14.	19.	V 23.	36.	41.	43.	48.	50.	V 61.	V 64.	69.	71.	
Strings	4		4	1	4	-	5		5	1	11	}	5		1	1
Organ		5		5		13		2	İ	2		3	5	2		1

The table above shows the breadth of the bar segments. As it is apparent, the quadratic, 4, and 2-bar segments alternate with the odd-tempo segments, such as 3, 5, 11, 13. For the most part, connecting chords tie the segments together (see bold lines in the table). Of the 11 connecting chords, 10 = G major (!) and 1 = D major. In three cases, there is no connecting chord between the segments (see wavy lines in the table). However, the fact that most of the connecting chords are in G major does not render the harmonization itself monotonous. The composer colors each motif of this movement with chromatics, mostly chromatic lower changing tones, but there are also a number of transition notes and lower as well as upper note suspensions.

E.g. 4



Scene 1, bars 1 to 4

The composer makes the sound so colorful with the chromatic ornamental notes that makes the analysis of certain segments a challenging task. I am referring here, among others, to certain bars of the Bv1 formal part:



Scene 1. bars 52-55

The cello voice of example 4 and then the 2nd violin, viola and cello voices of example 5 illustrate by way of a programmatic depiction the movement of the "migrating" eighths: "they went out into the mount of Olives" as the text says, we encounter such approaches already in the music of J. S. Bach.

Strophe 1 lasts until bar 34. In this, the upper voice of the organ manual plays the hymn's melody, with orchestral interludes. It is composed in a BAR form (A A B or Stollen, Stollen, Abgesang). Its outline is as follows:

E.g. 6

1. Strophe

Stollen	Stollen	Abgesang			
Introduction A	transition A	transition B trans.			
(b. 1-5) (b. 5-10)	(b. 10-14) (b. 14-19)	(b.19-23) (b.23-34) (b.34-35)			
4 b. + 5 b.	+4b. + 5b.	+ 4 b. + 12 b. + 2 b.			
G-major	G-major	D-major DGeGeDGea G			

The transition of the second Stollen is the same as the introduction of the first Stollen. From the standpoint of scales, the two initial formal parts are a stable G major, while in the B section (Abgesang) part the composer

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modulates into D major, and then with rich chromatic movement he carries out 9 modulations in 12 bars in the following scales: D major \rightarrow G major \rightarrow e minor \rightarrow D major \rightarrow G major \rightarrow e minor \rightarrow D major \rightarrow G major \rightarrow e minor \rightarrow a minor \rightarrow G major. Bars 32-35, or the closing bars of strophe 1, and the transition into strophe 2 return its tonal stability to G major.

*

Strophe 2 begins in bar 36. In this, the strings play the hymn's melody, with the lower strings having the Av1 – cello and double bass, while the 1st violin has Av2 segment. Between the two parts there is a 2-bar transition, a 1+1 bar sequence, played by the organ. There is also a 2-bar transition the Av2 and Bv1 parts, also played by the organ, by way of a sequence and minor sixth canon.

The structure of strophe 2:

E.g. 7

Stollen	Stollen	Abgesang	Codetta	
Av1 transition	Av2 transition	Bv1 insertion		
(b. 36–41) (b. 41-42)	(b. 43-48) (b. 48-49)	(b. 50-60) (b. 61-69)	(b. 68-71)	
5 b. + 2 b.	+ 5 b. + 2 b.	+ 11 b. + 3+5 b.	+ 4 b. (1 bar overlap)	
G-major	G-major D-major	DGFgbGcgeaDG - GCgG	G-major	

The Bv1 formal segment (Abgesang) begins in bar 50 and within this part the 1st violin continues to play the hymn's melody, while the other string instruments carry out its counterpoint.

E.g. 8



Scene 1, bars 48-51.

Similar to strophe 1, the Bv1 part is twice the size of the Av segments. The composer continues on with part B via a 7-bar insertion, which consists of two stanzas, 3 + 5 bars, 1 bar overlap with the Codetta's opening bars. In the first stanza of the insertion the organ is playing, while the ending motif of the hymn is inserted in the upper voice of the manual, while in the second stanza the organ takes on an accompanying role, and the closing motif of hymn, augmented into a phrase, is played in unison by the strings. The double bass plays the head-motif in a dislocated manner, a bar behind the rest (see bar 65).

E.g. 9



Scene 1, bars 64-67.

The composer closes this first scene with a four-bar Codetta, in which, on a prolonged G chord, the organ manual plays the motif depicting movement with the right hand, raising its closing tone to B5 (the motif's highest point in the entire work).

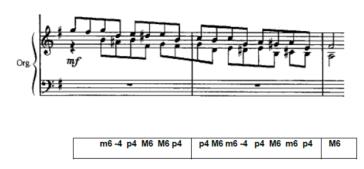
E.g. 10



Scene 1, Codetta

During the movement, we come across solutions that are interesting from the point of view of harmony, such as distance-based phenomena. For instance, the organ voice transitioning between bars 48-49:

E.g. 11



Moreover, the composer colors the harmony of the scene with a number of seventh and ninth chords, we also encounter several chromatic elements, and in many cases, he uses the 6th chord inversion.

He carries out modulations for close, 1st and 2nd degree scales.

The smooth eighth pulse illustrating movement, is taken over from instrument to instrument, laces through almost the entire movement that was written in a steady *Andante con moto* tempo and a 2/2 meter.

The dynamics in the A parts is *forte*, while in the B parts is *mf*. The second stanza of the final insertion, starting with bar 53, as well as the Codetta, further elevates the dynamics to *ff*, as a sort of arrival at the top of the Mount of Olives.

*

The second scene (movement) is entitled "*Gethsemane*" and in its writing the composer was inspired by the following biblical verse: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities…" (Book of Isaiah, chapter 53, beginning of verse 5).⁷

The melodic essence of the material is represented by the Lutheran hymnbook's "O dear Jesus, what have you sinned" hymn:

King James Version, source: https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2053%3A5&version=KJV, accessed on October 28, 2021.

E.g. 12

E.g. 13

J. Crüger 1598-1662



198 - Oh, dear Jesus⁸

This melody, which is in f minor in the Hymnbook, the composer transposed into e minor. As scene 1 was dominated by the pulsating eighth rhythm, this movement is characterized by the funeral march's dotted rhythm, or that which also features sixteenth rests during the entire scene, from almost the beginning to the very end.



Scene 2, Bars 1-4.

⁸ Evangélikus Énekeskönyv (The Evangelical Hymnbook) Song 198.: Ó, drága Jézus (Oh, Dear Jesus) (lutheran.hu)

The formal structure of scene 2 is as follows:

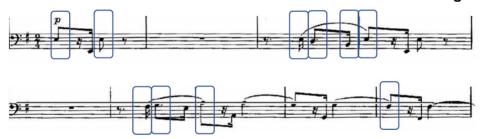
E.g. 14

Α	transition	Av1	transition	Av2	Av3	transition	Av4	Codetta
bar1-10	b. 10-14	b.15-24	b. 24-29	b.29-41	b.41-49	b.50-55	b.55-66	b.66-72
10 bar	4 b.	9 b.	5 b.	12 b.	9 b.	5 b.	12 b.	6 b.
e-	e-minor	f# d C a	a d f# G	GgdC	b d# e	AacC	e a D	e
minor_	bg	e G		gaeC	CdB		e	
D F f#				GC				

Formally, the movement is a variation, the main parts of which are 9, 10, 12-bar segments, and the transitions between the main parts consist of 4-5 bars. There is no transition between two particular parts, namely Av2 and Av3, but the others are linked together by transitions in every case. The movement closes with a 6-bar Codetta.

In the main parts, the melody of the passion is present in increments, placed in the low and dark registers of the organ:

E.g. 15



Scene 2, bars 1-10. - organ

The disjointed melody is accompanied by the strings with the funeral motif in alternative diatonic and chromatic chords. The dynamics of the main formal parts are always *piano*, increasingly working towards a short, powerful *forte*.

The transitional segments are gradual sequences that process the following motif. The melodic arc of the motif is characterized by a reverse chromatic approach, or the reversed alteration:

E.g. 16



Scene 2, bars 10-15.

The motifs also appear in an inversion, in reverse order, as they appear in the viola, then are taken over by the 2nd violin and then finally by the 1st violin (see bars 24-29). With their fragmented melody and reverse chromatics, they create a strange atmosphere and have a special effect. In each case, the *forte* dynamics characteristic of the transitional segments also contribute to said context. The transitional parts are bound together by the organ, as a conclusion in bars 50-55. The descending melody ranging over an octave decreases from *forte* into *piano*.

E.g. 17



Scene 2, b. 50-55.

There is a lot of modulation in this movement. Only the starting 6 bars and the ending 15 bars are in a stable e minor. In addition to these bars, each segment, be they main formal parts or the transitional parts, abound in modulations. Specifically, 21 of the 72 bars are tonally stable and

51 evoke feelings of unrest. What contribute to the achievement of this atmosphere are the reverse chromatics and a non-octavian melodic approach, as well as the alteration of chord elements using chromatics.

In the bars of the Codetta, the ascending chords of the organ evoke a peculiar *vibrato* effect, following the composer's + *Tremulant* written instruction.

E.g. 18



Scene 2. bars 65-72 9

The tempo of the movement is a stable *Grave*, its meter 2/4.

*

The title of the **third scene (movement)** is "Golgotha". In its creation, the composer got his inspiration from Luke 23: 44-45, which are: "44 And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. 45 And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst." Motivated by the feeling of the last (Cv1) formal segment, I would also add verse 46: "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost."

Musically, this movement, adapts hymn 339 of the Reformed Hymnbook: "Jesus, the Lamb of God".

[&]quot;Tremulant. A tremulant is a device on a pipe organ which varies the wind supply to the pipes of one or more divisions (or, in some cases, the whole organ). This causes their amplitude and pitch to fluctuate, producing a tremolo and vibrato effect. A large organ may have several tremulants, affecting different ranks (sets) of pipes." Source: Tremulant - Wikipedia, accessed on October 29, 2021.

¹⁰ King James Version, source: https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2023%3A44-46&version=KJV, (accessed on October 31, 2021).

E.g. 19 11



339. "Jesus, the Lamb of God"

The composer transposes this Polish melody into g minor - which is the starting scale of scene (movement) 3.

The formal structure of the movement:

E.g. 20

Α	В	insertion	Av1	Bv1	trans.	Av2	trans.	С	Cv1	insertion	Coda
b.1-12	13-	29-34.	35-	45-	53-54.	55-	64.	65-	73-	83-89.	88-
D. 1-12	28.		44.	52.		64.		72.	82.		97.
12bar	16b.	6b.	10b.	8b.	2b.	10b.	1b.	8b.	10b.	7b.	10b.
gdg f#g dBb d/gg	9 Bb Eb g Bb Eb	g	B b g F b b f b b f b b d b D b a e b a b	A b g b f b b e b G b b d d	d	gd CF d	d	g f# A b B b g d g	g a f# A b b A b g	G	G (E) G (E) G

¹¹ The Digital Version of the Reformed Hymnbook - Református Énekeskönyv (reformatus.hu). In the present volume it is included as hymn 497.

Scene 3 takes the form of a peculiar rondo, parts of which also return in their varied versions. The dimensions of the formal segments are flexible, the main parts are 8, 10, 12, 16 bars long. The occasionally occuring insertions and transitions are shorter, ranging from 1 to up to 7 bars.

In segment A, the melody of the hymn appears in a staggered fashion at the 1st violin, as well as within bars 1-2 of the organ, with its alternating sixteenths:

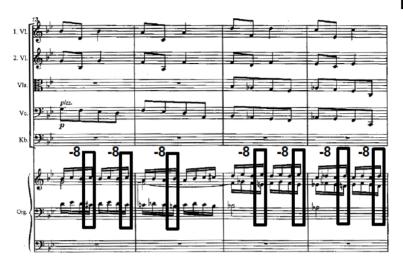


Scene 3, bars 1-4.

While the strings play the hymn's melody in *piano* employing *pizzicato*, the sixteenths of the organ ripples in *poco forfe* on the manual, above a long-held G organ point. The *Agitato* tempo also determines the distressed atmosphere of the whole musical event. The starting bars are also highly modulatory, the antecedent phrase contains 7 modulations (see the precise scales in the table of the formal structure). These are closely-related keys to g minor, mostly minor scales. The median phrase of the tripodic musical period now contains only two keys (d minor, g minor), or a single modulation, while the consequent phrase is tonally stable in g minor.

From bar 13 in formal segment B, the character of the strings as well as the organ changes. The G pedal is interrupted and the organ switches to a thrill-like material, playing a series of diminished octaves while the strings play pendulum-like passages, as well as tetrachords and tetratones. The 3rd line of the hymn's melody occurs fragmented at the 1st violin.

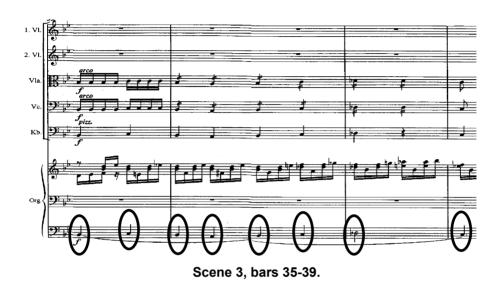
E.q. 22



Scene 3, bars 13-16.

In segment B, the scales are more widely distributed, and here the composer, alongside the 1st or 2nd closely-related scales of g minor, he inserts an A flat major bar (see bar 17).

A 6-bar insertion leads towards the next Av1 section with a semichromatic sixteenth note passage and extended organ points. Under the guise of the *forte* notes of the viola and cello repeated in sixteenths, as well as the quarter *forte pizzicatos* of the double bass, which has a terrifying effect, the organ manual continues the sixteenth passage of the transition's last two bars, causing dissonance by the chromatic changing notes, fourth and second interval occurrences. The hymn's melody is played by the organ pedal in quarter notes, in an emphatic *forte*.



In this segment, the composer makes very dense tonal jumps, there is a lot of modulation, he changes 15 keys in the range of 10 bars. Here, too, he composes in predominantly minor scales and descends to such depths as: b flat minor, d flat minor, a flat minor.

In the Bv1 form, the organ's manual continues the waving sixteenth passages of the previous segment, while the low strings play the notes of the hymn's third line with sustained notes, and then accompany with pizzicato quarter notes the continuation of line 3 of the hymn's melody, which also occurs in the organ pedal.



Scene 3, bars 45-48.

The composer depicts this segment in very dark tonal colors, and even goes beyond the circle of fifths to modulates into such tones as: g flat minor (!), then G flat major, b flat minor. In addition to the Av1 segment, this part is the most crowded from the standpoint of keys. Over the course of eight bars, we find 12 keys, all of which are brought in by a tonal jump. The chromatic chords, seconds, diminished fourths used once after the other make this part dissonant and very disturbing.

After a 2-bar rhythmic transition made of repetitive sixteenth triplets, within the Av2 segment the hymn's opening melody occurs in the organ manual, played in *forte*. Above it, the strings play "trembling" sixteenth triplets.



Scene 3, bars 53-56.

This formal segment is very rich in sound and disturbing as well, but in terms of its keys the modulations become rarer, the composer returns to the keys of g minor, d minor, C major, F major.

After a transition bar, the C-segment "erupts" with elemental force, with a cell reminiscent of Beethoven's fate motif. In the case of the lower strings, the composer emphasizes every element. As a reminder: "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost." The second phrase of segment C, continues to depict Jesus' suffering on the cross by way of a beautiful meno agitato melody. My knowledge of musical dramaturgy also encourages me to highlight this formal part as the entire three-movement work's center of gravity.

¹² King James Version, source: https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2023%3A44-46&version=KJV, accessed on October 31, 2021.

E.g. 26



Scene 3, bars 64-72.

Its modulations become sparse and regrouped once more around g minor. An effectively dissonant element is the fourth chord occurring in bar 67, which represents a *fortissimo* rendition of Jesus' cry. The composer repeats this segment in Cv1 form between bars 73-82, then changes key signatures into G major, and spreads the consequent phrasal melody of the C part over the voices of the ensemble by way of an insertion and a Coda, indicated as *Tranquillo*, or in quietly, calmly.





Scene 3, b. 83-97.

Finally, I will quote the end sentence of the words describing the piece within the pages of the published sheet music:

"At the end of the piece, the softly ascending melodic line evokes the death of the Savior, and the celestial hope of the resurrection alike."

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