

“nach Ges dur”: Liszt’s Marking in His Copy of Handel’s Opera *Almira**

Paul MERRICK
Liszt Ferenc University of Music
Budapest

In the autumn of 1879, Franz Liszt composed his only piano work based on Handel, the *Sarabande and Chaconne from Handel’s Almira* (S181, R25, see *Example 1*, pp. 352–358).¹ In a letter written from the Villa d’Este in September 1879 Liszt refers to his composition as “un morceau de concert pour piano”. The letter begins: “Mon installation au chœur d’Albano aura probablement lieu Dimanche, 12 Octobre.” (Liszt was made an honorary canon of Albano.) The piece, together with some arrangements, he says: “me rapporteront au delà de la somme offerte au chapitre d’Albano, *da impiegarsi in oggetto sacro*” [will bring me more than the sum I gave to the chapter *to be devoted to some sacred object*].² Liszt’s title on the manuscript is:

Walter Bache (in London) / freundschaftlich gewidmet / Sarabande und Chaconne / aus Händel’s Singspiel: Almira / für Pianoforte, / zum Concert Vortrag bearbeitet / von F. Liszt.

The English pianist and conductor Walter Bache (1842–88) was a pupil of Liszt in Rome for three years from 1862 to 1865, during which period he lived in the city and was organist at the English church. A tireless exponent of Liszt’s music, Bache invited the composer to London in 1886 to attend the English premiere of Liszt’s oratorio *The Legend of St. Elizabeth*, which Bache had organized.

The *Almira* piece is catalogued by Humphrey Searle as an original work, not an arrangement. In his book on Liszt’s music Searle says: “the transcrip-

*The contents of this article were originally presented as a paper at the International Musicological Society conference held in Budapest in August 2000.

¹ The piece is published in Series II, volume 14 of the New Liszt Edition (Editio Musica Budapest) and recorded by Leslie Howard in the Complete Music for Solo Piano – volume 6, Liszt at the Opera–I on the Hyperion label CDA 66371/2.

² *Franz Liszt’s Briefe*, ed. La Mara. Band VII, Leipzig, 1902, N° 258, 30th September 1879, Villa d’Este.

Example 1

Walter Bache (in London) freundschaftlich gewidmet
SARABANDE UND CHACONNE
 aus dem Singpiel „Almira“ von Georg Friedrich Händel
 Für Pianoforte zum Konzertvortrag bearbeitet von F. Liszt

R 25, SW 181

Herausgegeben von
 Inna Mota, Irina Salyuk

Andante ¹⁾

rinforz.

Sarabande

mp

mp espressivo

una corda

¹⁾ „[...] ziemlich bewegt.“ (L.K., 51)
²⁾ „[...] das erste Halb- etwas länger [...]. Die zweite ganz kurz.“ (L.K., 149)
³⁾ „[...] rather agitated.“ (L.K., 51)
⁴⁾ „[...] the first half somewhat longer [...]. The second one completely short.“ (L.K., 149)
 Z. 12-43

tre corde

mp

una corda

tre corde

simile

mp un poco espr.

cresc.

⁵⁾ „[...] gar nicht schnell.“ (L.K., 149)
⁶⁾ „[...] not far at all.“ (L.K., 149)
 Z. 13-43

Zur Kürzung weiter
Chaconne, Pag. 116

145 *pp* *p marcato* *la melodia*

150 *sempre legato*

153 *espressivo*

156 *sempre legato*

160 *espr.*

163

178 *f* *espr.*

174 *pp* *(lunga)*

179 *pp*

181 *pp* *(lunga)* *tr.*

184 *p* *espr.* *cresc.*

179 *p*

167 *p* dolce
luna corda
52a

170 *p*
dolce armonioso
52a

173 *p*
molto legato
52a

176 *ppp*
percolando
52a

181 *p*
Chaconne
Allegretto
52a

187 *f*
52a

193

199 *p*

205 *p*
legato

211

217 *p*

223 *p* stacc. scherzando

* „[...] sehr schwer, nicht zu schnell!“ (L.K., 149)

* „[...] very heavily, not too fast.“ (L.K., 149)

This musical score consists of two systems of staves, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The first system covers measures 232 to 245, and the second system covers measures 246 to 280. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (p, mf, f, ff), articulation (accents, slurs), and performance instructions like *legato*, *cresc.*, *sf*, *simile*, *ritardando*, and *rinborz.*. Measure numbers 232, 233, 239, 245, 249, and 255 are clearly marked at the beginning of their respective staves. The piano part features complex textures with triplets and sixteenth-note patterns.

282

285 **Grandioso, trionfante** (tempo della Sarcabande)
ff sempre

287 sf

289 sf

291 sf

293 sf

294

296

298

301 **Allegro**
sempre ff

307

313

318

The musical score consists of two systems of staves. The first system contains measures 282 through 301, and the second system contains measures 302 through 319. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 2/4 time signature. Dynamics such as *ff*, *sf*, and *ff sempre* are used throughout. Performance markings include accents, slurs, and articulation marks. The tempo and mood are indicated as **Grandioso, trionfante** (tempo della Sarcabande) and **Allegro**. The score is marked with *Sca* and *ScaA* throughout.

tion of the Sarabande and Chaconne from Handel’s *Almira* amounts to an original work on Handel’s themes”.³ In the opera, a chaconne and sarabande are danced by the courtiers in the opening scene, which is the coronation of Almira as Queen. Liszt reverses the order of the dances, placing the chaconne, which is quick and forward-moving and not the *basso ostinato* type, after the slow sarabande. In Liszt’s work, the chaconne corresponds to a scherzo-like third section (or movement in a theoretical over-all four movement pattern).

Almira, Handel’s first opera, was performed at Hamburg in 1705. In 1878 the opera was revived there in shortened form as part of a series of historical concerts. A copy of the piano score (vocal score) of this version of *Almira* figures in the catalogue of Liszt’s library of music published by the Liszt Museum in Budapest (see *Example 2*).⁴ At the end of the sarabande in act one this copy contains an inscription in red crayon in Liszt’s hand: “nach Ges dur” [to G \flat major] (see *Example 3*). As the second section of Liszt’s piano piece is in G \flat (see score bar 104), then we may assume that Liszt took the Handel originals from this copy of the vocal score of *Almira*, and that his inscription in it referring to G \flat major is evidence of his intentions regarding the tonal organization of the work he wanted to compose.

The key signature of G \flat is very rarely used by Liszt. After examining around 300 original works I found none where the main tonality is G \flat major with a signature of 6 flats. The works in question are from the following sections in the catalogue by Humphrey Searle published in volume eleven of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London 1980):

S1	opera (<i>Don Sanche</i>)
S2–66	sacred choral works
S95–126 and S691	orchestral works, including with piano
S136–254	original works for piano 2 hands
S259–268	organ works (supplemented by the volumes of the Universal Edition edited by Martin Haselböck)
S269–350	songs and recitations

The most that can be found is a key-signatured *section* in G \flat in the following works in other keys:

Songs:

S327	<i>J’ai perdu ma force et ma vie</i>
S304	<i>Le vieux vagabond</i>

³ Humphrey Searle: *The Music of Liszt* (New York, 1966) p. 115.

⁴ *Liszt Ferenc Hagyatéka/Franz Liszt’s Estate II. Zeneművek/Music*, ed. Mária Eckhardt (Budapest, 1993) p. 218 (N^o 730).

Almira.

„Der in Krohnen erlangte Glückwechsel
oder
Almira, Königin von Castilien
in einem Singspiel auf dem grossen Hamburgischen
Schauplatz vorgestellt am 8. Januar 1705.“)

Singspiel
in 3 Handlungen
von
G. F. HÄNDEL

für die historischen Opernabende des Hamburger Stadttheaters
bearbeitet von
J. N. FUCHS.

Bühnen-Aufführungsrecht vorbehalten.

Partitur Pr. M. 36... netto.
Clavier-Auszug Pr. M. 6... netto.
Textbuch Pr. 20 Pf.

Die Bearbeitung ist Eigenthum des Verlegers.
Eingetragen in das Périsus-Archiv.

LEIPZIG, FR. KISTNER.
(K. K. Oesterr. goldene Medaille.)
5426. 5427.

Zieml. v. Szécsényi
F. J. Kozsa
* Budapest *

Example 2: The title page of Liszt's copy of the piano score of Handel's opera *Almira*

Sarabande.

The image displays a musical score for a Sarabande, consisting of five systems of piano notation. The first system is marked *p*. The second system has a *f* marking. The third system includes a *Fine.* marking and a *p* marking. The fourth system features dynamic markings *cresc.* and *f*. The fifth system concludes with a *Da Capo* marking and a handwritten inscription in cursive: "nach Ges dur".

Example 3: The Sarabande from *Almira* with Liszt’s handwritten inscription at the end “nach Ges dur”

	Piano:
S181	Sarabande and Chaconne from Handel's <i>Almira</i>
	Organ:
Bd.V	<i>Missa pro organo</i> , Credo

Hence, as can be seen, the section in six flats G \flat major in the Sarabande and Chaconne from *Almira* is the only example of the use of this key in the piano music. (The many examples of the use in the piano music of the enharmonic key of six sharps F \sharp major are too well known to require detailed mention here.⁵)

The G \flat section in the *Almira* piece is marked *religioso* (see Example 1, bar 104). This marking – surprisingly – is hardly found in Liszt's piano music. Works with a religious content where it does not occur include the following:

- *Années de pèlerinage* books I, II, III
- the cycle *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*
- the *Consolations*
- the various sets of *Studies*
- the two *Lugubre Gondolas*
- the two *St Francis Legends*.

Liszt therefore does not use the marking where we might expect him to. In the *Almira* piece, however, we find two rarities (the key of G \flat and the marking *religioso*) occurring together. Are they connected?

*

As Liszt's inscription in the Handel score is the name of a key, he draws our attention to the relationship of G \flat to the main tonality of the work, which is g minor moving to G major. Encouraged by this, we should examine his keyboard works from this standpoint, and look for the group that shares this tonality. There are 5 Liszt keyboard pieces in g minor – G major (in chronological order):

1. S139.6 *Vision* (transcendental study) 1851
[based on the 1826 g minor study *Molto agitato*, which has different music]
2. S162.3 *Tarantella* 1840, 1859
(preceded by – and joined to – the piece *Canzone* in e \flat minor based on *Nessun maggior dolor*, from *Otello* by Rossini)
3. S461 *À la chapelle Sixtine* (piano, organ) 1862

⁵ For a discussion of this question see Paul Merrick: G \flat or F \sharp ? The cycle of keys in Liszt's music, in *Liszt 2000* (Budapest 2000), p.188.

4. S163.3 *Aux cyprès de la Villa d’Este, Threnodie II.* 1877
 (from book III of *Années de Pèlerinage*)
 5. S181 *Sarabande and Chaconne from Handel’s Almira* 1879

Three of these pieces, *Vision*, *Chapelle Sixtine* and *Sarabande*, contain a section in b minor between the g minor and the G major. As such they constitute a separate group within the g–G pieces. The pattern of keys used in the three pieces is shown below:

1. *Vision*, Transcendental Study no. 6

gm	bm	Gma
bars 1–12	bars 13–31	bars 32–70

2. *À la Chapelle Sixtine*, based on Allegri and Mozart

gm bm	Bma	gm bm	F#ma Gma
Miserere	Ave verum	Miserere	Ave verum

3. *Sarabande*, *Almira*

gm	Gbmabm	gm	Gma
----	--------------	----	-----

The title of the sixth transcendental study (*Vision*) is Liszt’s own, and not an invention of the publisher. Liszt added the title to his revision of the publisher’s copy when he prepared the set of *Transcendental Studies* from the earlier *Grandes Études* (see *Example 4*). At Weimar Liszt gave titles to many of the already existing studies, having in some cases drastically altered the music. As the given factor in the original set of 12 studies – intended in 1826 to be 48 pieces “dans tous les tons majeurs et mineurs” – was the sequence of keys (whose arrangement beginning in C major, A minor, and moving through the flat keys to 5 flats D \flat major, B \flat minor, remained constant throughout the whole process of arriving at the final version, which includes the last of the independent reworkings of *Mazeppa* in d minor, the first study to be given a title), then in practice Liszt was faced with the task of considering key character. His youthful study in g minor was completely rewritten, more than half of the new version being in G major (out of 70 bars, only 12 bars are in g minor). Thus the title “*Vision*” refers more to the major mode than the minor.

The second of this group of three pieces in g minor–G major also originally bore the title *Vision*. This becomes clear in a letter Liszt wrote from Rome to Weimar in 1862 in which he informs the Grand Duke that the oratorio *St Elizabeth* is finished, going on to say:



Example 4: Liszt's revision of the 24 *Grandes Études* from which derived the *Études d'exécution transcendante* (Stiftung Weimarer Klassik, Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv, 60/123). First page of No. VI with the title "Vision" in Liszt's hand

En plus, j'ai écrit quelques autres compositions qui se rattachent au même ordre d'émotion. L'une d'elles s'intitule *Vision à la Chapelle Sixtine*. Allegri et Mozart en forment les grandes figures.⁶

If two out of this group of three pieces contain the "vision" idea, then does the same idea lie behind the third piece, the Handel *Sarabande*? There exists the possibility that Liszt connected the "vision" idea with the key that the two pieces with this title are in – an association based on key character. An examination of Liszt's music in the key of G (minor and major) lends support to this assumption. The following tables include all Liszt's music in these keys, taken from the sections of Searle's catalogue mentioned above.

⁶ Briefwechsel zwischen Franz Liszt und Carl Alexander, ed. La Mara (Leipzig, 1909). No. 90 Rome, 1st November 1862. For fuller text of this letter see Example 5.

deuil a frappé votre famille¹). Je devais vous exprimer combien je m’associe à tous les sentiments qui honorent la mémoire du Prince défunt; pardonnez-moi d’y avoir manqué alors que tant d’affliction m’oppressait. Il est certains états de l’âme où l’on ne sait guère comment on vit; il semblerait que ce soit quelque autre qui prenne ce soin pour nous! —

Enfin, puisqu’il faut vivre quand même, je m’y reprends par le côté qui m’a souvent ménagé de l’adoucissement et donné quelque fortitude. C’est vous dire, Monseigneur, que je travaille et que je fais ce que je puis pour remplir ma tâche.

La *Légende de Sainte Elisabeth* est terminée. Puisse cette œuvre servir pour sa part à la glorification de la «chère Sainte», et propager le céleste parfum de sa piété, de sa grâce, de ses souffrances, de sa résignation à la vie, de sa douceur envers la mort!

En plus, j’ai écrit quelques autres compositions qui se rattachent au même ordre d’émotion. L’une d’elles s’intitule *Vision à la Chapelle Sixtine*. Allegri²) et Mozart en forment les grandes figures. Je les ai non seulement rapprochés, mais comme reliés l’un à l’autre. La misère et les angoisses de l’homme gémissent dans le *Miserere*; l’infinie miséricorde et l’exaucement de Dieu y répondent et chantent dans l’*Ave verum corpus*³). Ceci touche au plus sublime des mystères; à celui qui nous révèle l’Amour victorieux du Mal et de la Mort.

Si cet argument paraissait trop mystique, je pourrais me rabattre sur un trait de la biographie de Mozart, pour expliquer la donnée musicale indiquée. On sait que, lors de son séjour à Rome, il nota le *Miserere* d’Allegri durant l’exécution à la Chapelle Sixtine, soit pour en garder plus fidèle mémoire, soit peut-être pour faire brèche au système prohibitif qui, dans

le bon vieux temps, s’étendait jusqu’aux manuscrits de musique. Comment ne pas se souvenir de ce fait, dans l’enceinte même où il s’est passé? — Aussi y ai-je souvent cherché la place où devait être Mozart. J’imaginai même que je le voyais et qu’il me regardait avec une douce condescendance. Allegri se trouvait là tout près et semblait presque faire un acte de contrition sur la célébrité que des pèlerins d’ordinaire peu aptes aux impressions musicales ont pris soin d’imposer exclusivement à son *Miserere*.

Puis, lentement, apparaissait dans le fond, du côté du Jugement dernier de Michel-Ange, une autre ombre, d’une grandeur indicible. Je la reconnus instantanément avec transport, car tandis qu’Elle était encore exilée en cette vie, elle avait consacré mon front par un baiser. Jadis, Elle aussi avait chanté son *Miserere*, et nulle oreille n’avait entendu jusque-là des gémissements et des sanglots d’une aussi profonde et sublime intensité. — Rencontre étrange! C’est sur le mode d’Allegri, et le même intervalle — une dominante obstinée — que trois fois le génie de Beethoven s’est posé, pour y laisser à jamais son immortelle empreinte. Ecoutez la *Marche funèbre sur la mort d’un héros*¹), l’Adagio de la *Sonate quasi Fantasia*²) et le mystérieux *Convito* de spectres et d’anges de l’Andante de la 7^{me} Symphonie. L’analogie de ces trois motifs avec le *Miserere* d’Allegri n’est-elle pas frappante? —

Avez-vous gardé souvenir, Monseigneur, du *Cantique de Saint François*? Je me suis aussi avisé de le composer, et à cette occasion, en relisant l’ouvrage d’Ozanam³) sur les poètes franciscains en Italie, au 13^{me} siècle, — livre d’un sens excellent et délectable — j’y ai trouvé quelques détails intéressants relatifs à ce Cantique. Probablement M. Hase les aura consignés, avec son talent si justement apprécié, dans son histoire de Saint François. Au risque donc de ne vous apprendre que des choses que d’ailleurs vous savez déjà beaucoup

1) Herzog Bernhard von Weimar, Onkel des Großherzogs, war im Juli 1862 verstorben.

2) Gregorio A. (1590—1652), seit 1629 päpstlicher Kapellmeister, Komponist des berühmten neunstimmigen *Miserere*, das in der Charwoche in der Sixtinischen Kapelle gesungen wird. Von Mozart wurde es nach dem Hören heimlich aufgeschrieben.

3) Von Mozart.

1) Eroica.

2) Cis-moll-Sonate.

3) Antoine Frédéric O., französischer Schriftsteller (1813—53).

Example 5: Extract from Liszt’s letter to Carl Alexander dated Rome, 1st November 1862

Where the words of a sung piece seem relevant to the question of key character, they are quoted.

Music in G major (G–G)

Songs

- S1 *Don Sanche* no. 24: Vainement vous voulez me fuir
aria of Alidor (in disguise as the evil knight Romualde)
[Alidor the magician disguises himself to cause a fight, his intention being to save Don Sanche and bring him to the Castle of Love]
- S273 *Die Loreley (...das kommt mir nicht aus dem Sinn)*
- S312 *Wie singt die Lerche schön (Sonnenschein* occurs 4 times in this short song)
- S290 *Morgens steh ich auf und frage*
- S345 *Reimar der Alte* from *Wartburglieder* (no. VI)
(*Wenn früh ob dem Bergfried die Sonne ersteht*)

Choral

- S2 *Legend of St Elizabeth*
Ascent of Elizabeth’s soul and song of the angels (Part 2, no. 5)

- S3 *Christus*: no. 2 (Pastorale) and Salutation of the angels, no. 3 Stabat Mater speciosa (speciosa = radiant), no. 10 Entry into Jerusalem, section *Hosannah*, no. 12 Stabat Mater, section *Virgo virginum praeclara* (praeclara = very bright)
- S7 Cantantibus organis (St Cecilia's words: *fiat cor meum immaculatum*)
- S8 *Male voice Mass*: Gloria, Sanctus
- S9 *Gran Mass*: Sanctus
- S10 *Missa choralis*: Gloria
- S12 *Requiem*: Dies Irae, section *Sed tu bonus*
- S14 *Psalm XVIII*: section *In der Sonne*
- S32 Christus ist geboren (2 out of 3 versions)
- S34.1 Ave maris stella
- S48 Der Herr bewahret (*das Licht*)
- S50 12 alte deutsche geistliche Weisen: no. 3 Nun ruhen alle Walder
- S56 Rosario (3 choruses)
- S58 O sacrum convivium: section *mens impletur gratia, et futurae gloriae*
- S60 *Zur Trauung (Sposalizio)*, Ave Maria III (a late vocal version of the piano piece) section in organ introduction

Orchestral

- S1 No. 22 Entr'acte from *Don Sanche*: *Adagio* section (representing sunrise)
- S3 *Christus*: Pastorale (Adoration of the Shepherds at the manger)
- S95 *Ce qu'on entend* (symphonic poem no. 1): section *Andante religioso*
- S101 *Festklänge* (symphonic poem no. 7): section *dolce (con grazia)*

Organ (Universal Edition)

- Bd V *Missa pro organo*: Rosario, Nun ruhen alle Walder
- Bd VI Ave maris stella: Ave Maria IV (1881)

Piano

- S154 *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* 1834: final section (bar 63) *Andante religioso* (the music up to bar 63 has no key signature)
- S156.II *Fleurs mélodiques* nos. 3, 4, 9
- S156.III Two (out of three) Paraphrases (*Fleurs mélodiques* nos. 10, 12): *Ranz des Vaches* (cowherd's song) Op. 10 no. 1 (= *Montée aux alpes/Ascent to the pastures*) *Ranz des Chèvres* (goatherd's song) Op. 10, no. 3 (= *Allegro finale*) (the 3 pieces are in G, C and G)
- S173.4 *Pensée des Morts* (from cycle *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*, 1852): final section (related to the music of 1834 piece, but without the *religioso* marking).

A notable feature of the music in G major is the prominence of the sun, which features in the songs S312 and S345, in the psalm S14, in the orchestral music of S1, and in the 2 piano pieces from S156.III (the assumption being here that Liszt thought of the ascent to the pastures in the Swiss Alps as an association with bright sunlight and snow). The presence of Mary in the choral pieces (three times in S56, twice in S3, and once each in S34.1 and

S60) complemented by the two Mary pieces in volume VI of the organ music is probably related to the sun idea. An association of Mary and the sun is extremely well-known in the Catholic tradition, deriving probably from the reference in the book of Revelation chapter 12: “Signum magnum apparuit in caelo: mulier amicta sole...” [A great sign appeared in Heaven: a woman clothed with the sun...]. This prominent association of G major with light, or brightness in Liszt would correspond logically with his choice of the title “Vision” for the transcendental study in g minor, and its reconstitution as a piece primarily in the major key.

Music in g minor

Songs

- S1 *Don Sanche* no. 7: Duet of Alidor and Don Sanche: Transports jaloux, transports affreux; ... quand il n’est pas heureux
 S285 Das Grab und die Rose
 S286 Gastibelza

Choral

- S2 *Legend of St Elizabeth*: Chorus of the Poor (part II, no. 5)
 S9 *Gran Mass: qui tollis peccata mundi* in Gloria
 S53 *Via Crucis: O Traurigkeit* (chorus, death of Jesus) (station XII)

Orchestral

- S95 *Ce qu’on entend* (symphonic poem no. 1): section marked *lugubre, dolente* (6 bars after letter G)

Organ

Slavimo slavno slaveni
 Chorale *O Traurigkeit*

Piano

- S136 1826 studies no. 6 *Molto agitato*
 S153 Scherzo 1827
 S199 *Nuages gris* [this much discussed piece has the key signature of 2 flats, clearly signifying g minor]
 S205.4 Teleky (*Historical Hungarian Portraits*)[a tragic figure, who committed suicide in 1861]
 S206.2 *Trauermarsch* (related to the Teleky piece; both use an ostinato bass taken from Mosonyi’s *Funeral Music for Széchenyi*)

A notable feature of the music in g minor is the idea of mourning, or *Trauer* in German, found in the song S285 (Das Grab), the choral piece S53, the orchestral music S95 (*lugubre*) and the piano pieces S199 (*nuages*) and S206.2 (together with S205.4). Again the prominence of a single idea seems evident in Liszt’s g minor – a good English word would be gloom, which has

the idea of both literal and subjective darkness – poor visibility and poor disposition. The Latin *nubes* contains both meanings, as does the common use of the word “cloud” or “clouded” in many languages. It seems clear that the piece about the Sistine Chapel (see *Example 6*) therefore begins with an evocation of the gloom (poor visibility) out of which the vision(s) of Allegri and Mozart appeared to Liszt (as he describes in the letter). The transcendental study *Vision* (see *Example 4*) may be said to begin in the same way with the same idea (music in the low register in g minor).

The musical score is for the opening of the piano version of 'À la Chapelle Sixtine'. It is written in G minor and 3/4 time. The tempo is marked 'Lento **'. The right hand begins with a 'mf marcato' dynamic, followed by 'cresc.', 'rinforz.', and 'lungo' markings. The left hand has a 'p' dynamic and a 'trem.' marking. The score includes a section marked 'sotto voce sempre marcato' and 'ten.'.

Example 6: The opening of the piano version of À la Chapelle Sixtine
New Liszt Edition (EMB) Series II, Vol. 12, page 20

Taken alone, the evidence is enough to conclude that for Liszt the 2 keys g minor and G major in combination formed a constituent factor of the “vision” idea behind the two pieces given that title. This being the case, we may legitimately include the Handel piece as belonging to the same musical idea – as a piece whose “tonal narrative” expresses the same journey from darkness to light implicit in the other two pieces.

Here we should return to Liszt’s 1862 letter, with its use of the words “another shadow” in the context of Allegri and the Miserere theme. This other shadow is, rather surprisingly, Beethoven, whom Liszt also envisioned in the chapel, alongside Mozart and Michelangelo. As this is an entirely musical connection, unrelated to the topography of the occasion, the question arises: “what was Beethoven doing in the Sistine Chapel?” The relevant part of the letter, in translation, is as follows:

Then there emerged from the background, next to Michelangelo’s *Judgment Day*, slowly, unutterably great, another shadow [i.e. as well as Mozart and

Allegri]. Full of inspiration, I recognized it at once; for while he was still bound to this earth he had consecrated my brow with a kiss. He, too, had once sung his *Miserere*, as no human ear had ever heard such a deep and sublime sighing and sobbing. Strange! Three times has the genius of Beethoven made use of Allegri’s style, even to employing the same intervals – an ever-returning dominant – in order that it may always leave an impression of his immortality. One should listen to the “Funeral March on the Death of a Hero” [Piano Sonata in A♭ op. 26, slow movement *Marcia funebre sulla morte d’un Eroe*], the Adagio from the *Sonata quasi una fantasia* [the so-called “Moonlight” in C sharp minor], and the mysterious dance of angels and spectres in the Andante of the Seventh Symphony. Is not the relationship of these three motives with the *Miserere* of Allegri quite striking?⁷

The tonal context (of the Allegri quotation) in which Liszt’s vision of Beethoven takes place is again g minor. Did Liszt have an association, perhaps biographical, that linked Beethoven to this tonality?

First, the 1862 context must be clarified. Liszt refers in the letter to several works by Beethoven which contain “miserere”-like themes. It is the *musical* relationship which occasions the appearance of Beethoven alongside Allegri in Liszt’s vision. The whole occasion thus acquires a heightened significance at this point: Liszt’s use of a miserere theme in his Allegri/Mozart piece (and of miserere-like themes in other pieces) can by association lend the music a Beethovenian resonance.

The chronological search for any link between Beethoven and g minor in Liszt leads us to the Scherzo for piano S153 (see above in the list of music in g minor) written in the year of Beethoven’s death. The autograph MS is dated 27th May 1827, and was written in London. The title “scherzo” stems from Busoni, who acquired the MS in England in 1909, and published it in 1922 as a facsimile of the autograph together with his own transcription.⁸ There is no title in the manuscript, only “Allegro molto quasi presto”, but the style of the piece is Beethovenian – perhaps Busoni gave it the title “scherzo” because it is like a Beethoven scherzo (see *Example 7*). Is the piece a tribute to Beethoven, who died in March 1827? If so, is the g minor here an early “trauer” association? In April, May and June 1827 Liszt kept a

⁷ In the La Mara edition of this letter (see footnote 6 and Ex. 5) Liszt’s reference to “La Marche funèbre sur la mort d’un héros” is incorrectly identified in a footnote as “Eroica”. For the subject of Liszt and the *Miserere* see Zsuzsanna Domokos: *The Miserere Tradition of the Cappella Sistina*, mirrored in Liszt’s Works, in: *Liszt 2000. The Great Hungarian and European Master at the Threshold of the 21st Century* (Budapest, 2000), p.117.

⁸ The piece [with the title *Scherzo*] is published in Series I, Vol. 13 of the New Liszt Edition. Busoni’s 1922 edition appeared as an appendix of the journal “*Faust. Eine Rundschau*”. He acquired the autograph MS from its owner Frits Hartigson (1841–1919), a Danish pianist who taught at the Royal College of Music in London. Before giving it to Busoni, Hartigson had allowed it to be published in facsimile in the *Allgemeine Musikzeitung* in 1896.



Example 7: The opening of the 1827 *Scherzo* in g minor, S153

religious diary⁹ which centres on Easter (which was in April) and the sacraments of the Catholic Church. There are quotations from religious writers. This was immediately after the death of Beethoven.

Was there a connection in the young Liszt's mind between the writing of the diary and the death of Beethoven? Did Liszt's regard for Beethoven have a religious character? Certainly Liszt's claim (mentioned in the 1862 letter) that he was "consecrated" by the composer's kiss (*Weihekuss*) in Vienna in 1823 reflects such an attitude. Throughout his life Liszt referred to this event.¹⁰ In 1827 Liszt was 16 years old, and the kiss had taken place when he was 12. In 1880 an English clergyman, the reverend Hugh Reginald Haweis of St. James's Church in Marylebone, London, visited the Villa d'Este and later reported the 70 year-old composer's conversation thus:

"Ay, when I was a very young man, and in public too, it was difficult to get the great man to go and hear rising talent; but my father got Schindler to induce Beethoven to come and hear me – and he embraced me before the whole company."

This was an event not to be lightly forgotten, and hardly after fifty-seven years to be alluded to without a certain awe; indeed, Liszt's voice quite betrayed his sense of the seriousness of the occasion as he repeated, with a certain conscious pride and gravity,

"Oui, j'ai reçu le baiser de Beethoven."¹¹

⁹ *Franz Liszt Tagebuch 1827*, ed. D. Altenburg and R. Kleinertz (Vienna, 1986).

¹⁰ The authenticity of the Beethoven kiss has been called into question, partly because the conversation books (which have Schindler's words, but not Beethoven's replies) give the impression that Beethoven did not go to hear the young Liszt play. Alan Walker concludes that the question is not *whether* it took place, but *where*, and puts forward evidence for the kiss having taken place not at the concert, but in Beethoven's home. See A. Walker: *Franz Liszt. The Virtuoso Years 1811–1847* (New York, 1983), pp. 81–85.

¹¹ H. R. Haweis: *My Musical Life* (London, 1886), pp. 657 and 616.

During this visit Liszt played to his visitor *Angelus* from the third book of *Années de Pèlerinage* – on the same piano which the previous year he had used when composing the Handel *Sarabande*. We can see that the Beethoven kiss was a constant theme in Liszt’s mind.

Another event in 1827 also relates to the key of g minor. After a concert in London on 25th May Liszt was invited to the home of a talented boy Charles Salaman (1814–1901), where they played duets together. Salaman later published an account of the visit: “Liszt [...] wrote out a specially amended version of the sixth study, *Molto agitato* in G minor.”¹² Thus on two occasions only a day apart in 1827 – May 25th and 27th – Liszt wrote out music composed by himself in g minor. Was Liszt preoccupied with the key at this time? The copied g minor study is the one that later became *Vision*. Was there a memory in the older Liszt of g minor being linked to 1827 and the death of Beethoven? Is this part of the reason why Beethoven, and the “kiss of consecration”, should appear to Liszt in the Sistine Chapel alongside Allegri? Were the key of g minor/G major, the title “*Vision*”, and the figure of Beethoven part of a broader musical picture?

The chief “*miserere*” characteristic of the Beethoven themes he quotes in the letter is pointed out by Liszt – namely their melodic use of a repeated dominant as a kind of *miserere topos*. On this basis, the Handel *Sarabande* lies very close to this group of works. In combination with the key of g minor, there is good reason to think that Liszt thought of it as another *Miserere*-type theme, an example of *Trauermusik*. This supposition is strengthened by the 4 bars of introduction Liszt added to the Handel original, which feature the repeated dominant (see Example 1), together with Liszt’s performing instruction quoted in a footnote in the modern edition:

[...] das erste Halbe etwas länger ... Die zweite ganz kurz. [The first minim a little longer, the second one quite short]¹³

Here the stress on the first minim given by slightly lengthening it makes the music heavy, like mourning. The effect is elegiac, lending the music a religious solemnity far removed from the character of courtly dances in a baroque opera. The conclusion must be that if Liszt’s g minor *Sarabande* is a “*miserere*” type theme, then it belongs to the sphere of his Beethoven associ-

¹² For this account, see Charles Salaman: “Pianists of the Past” in *Blackwood’s Magazine* 170 (London, 1901), pp. 308 and 314.

¹³ Liszt’s performing instruction, given in the footnote of the first page of the EMB edition, comes from *Franz Liszts Klavierunterricht von 1884–1886. Dargestellt an den Tagebuchaufzeichnungen von August Göllerich*, herausgegeben von Wilhelm Jerger (Regensburg, 1975), p. 149.

ations. In conjunction with the “vision” idea expressed in the G major ending, the piece provides a link, via the Sistine Chapel, between Handel and Beethoven in Liszt’s musical thinking.

At this point we should consider the form of Liszt’s only piano work based on Handel.

Sarabande, Almira

sarabande	(sarabande varied)	chaconne	sarabande
gm	Gb.....bm	g	G
[1. exposition	development		recapitulation]
[2. 1st movement	slow movement	scherzo	finale]

This is a reduced version of Liszt’s large four-in-one form, a combination, or telescoping, within a single movement of the outline of sonata form together with the four individual movements (or sections) of a sonata/symphony, as found for example in some of the symphonic poems and the *B minor Sonata*. This further adds to the possibility of a Beethovenian inspiration having contributed to the work’s genesis.

The “vision” idea behind the three pieces in g minor/G major has a religious character (most obvious in the Sistine piece). Liszt did not change Handel’s key (the original g minor) – his piece is therefore another of those pieces “about” g minor. Handel was not an opera composer for Liszt, but, as for most 19th century musicians, an oratorio composer, in particular the composer of the *Messiah* – in a word, the English Handel. The choral works formed the substance of Liszt’s contact with the composer (even though as a pianist he played the E major *Harmonious Blacksmith* variations). Liszt conducted *Messiah* in 1850 (twice), 1851, 1857 and, with *Judas Maccabeus*, at the Handel centenary in 1859. He knew *Zadok the Priest* and the coronation anthems, *L’Allegro ed il Penseroso*, and the *Ode to St Cecilia*. He referred to Handel’s oratorios in his article on Berlioz’s *Harold in Italy*. There are comments on Handel’s music in his letters that reveal his admiration for the composer.¹⁴ A childhood experience that surely left an impression on Liszt was

¹⁴ For example his comment in a letter to Moritz Hauptmann, cantor of the Thomaskirche in Leipzig, dated Weimar, September 28th 1855: “By the same post I send you, with best and warmest thanks for your friendly letter, the volume of Händel’s works which contains the anthems. The second of them, “Zadok the Priest and Nathan the Prophet anointed Solomon King”, is a glorious ray of Händel’s genius, and one might truly quote, of the first verse of this anthem, the well-known saying, “*C’est grand comme le monde*” [“It is as great as the world”].” English version in *Letters of Franz Liszt* collected and edited by La Mara translated by Constance Bache (London 1894, reprinted 1969), vol. I, p. 254.

the occasion in 1825 when on June 2nd he heard 6000 children sing the *Hallelujah* chorus in St. Paul’s Cathedral.¹⁵

Finally, to return to our topic – Liszt’s inscription in the Handel score – we should consider contemporary statements concerning the character of keys. In her book on the history of key characteristics, Rita Steblin quotes from the *Traité de mélodie* (1814) by the theorist Anton Reicha (1770–1836):

The keys of F# and Gb, which are seldom used and which are one and the same key on the piano, are consequently very different in their nature; the former is very brilliant or piercing, while the latter is very sombre. [...]

This observation is important in the case of enharmonic transitions, because, when the key of F# is suddenly changed into ...Gb we fall...into a very sombre key... On the piano, this difference is little felt; but in the orchestra it can produce bad effects, completely contrary to the intention of the composer.

A note by Czerny, whose German translation of the *Traité* appeared in 1832, reads:

Even on the piano, a composer of fantasy and finer feelings can make the peculiar observation that, for example, in composing an Adagio in ... Gb major, completely different ideas occur to him, and the piece takes on a totally different character (a different colour), than if he writes it in...F# major.¹⁶

Liszt was a pupil of Reicha in Paris, beginning in 1826, and earlier his teacher in Vienna had been Czerny. The perceived sombre character of Gb mentioned here by these musicians I contend was part of Liszt’s g – G programmatic narrative – it served to *darken* the already gloomy g minor and, by changing the mode, give a glimpse of the ending in G major. Because he thought of the key of Gb in terms of the sort of key character described by Reicha and Czerny, Liszt almost never used it. And because he wanted his tribute to Handel to reflect the great religious composer, he decided to use this symbol of darkness by adding to it the performance direction *religioso*, thereby emphasising its narrative role in the tonal journey from the g minor “miserere” opening to the G major splendour and light at the end. We can say that Liszt here uses the Gb as “G, but flattened”, i.e. as a *shadow* of the final bright G major.

¹⁵ See William Wright: More Light on Young Liszt—London, 1824–1825, in *Liszt 2000* (Budapest, 2000), p. 46: “On Thursday 2 June, Liszt was in the congregation at a midday service in St. Paul’s Cathedral and heard six thousand Charity School children sing the *Hundredth Psalm* to the French/Genevan sixteenth-century Psalter melody under the great cathedral dome with Thomas Attwood at the organ. A report of the service published in *The Times* added that the children joined in the singing of certain passages from the *Coronation Anthem* [i.e. *Zadok the Priest*] and at the end reinforced the gentlemen of the choir and the boys of His Majesty’s Chapel Choir in the singing of the “Hallelujah Chorus” from Handel’s *Messiah*.”

¹⁶ Rita Steblin: *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor, 1983), Chapter 7, Psychological Factors: The Sharp-Flat Principle, p. 131.

Other associative factors that may have contributed to the religious character of the piece and the high quality of its inspiration include Liszt's memories of hearing Handel's *Messiah* in London in his youth, g minor and the miserere *topos*, Beethoven's death, and the kiss of consecration in 1823. To this we should add the imminent religious ceremony at Albano, and the associative musical logic that lay behind his dedication of a piece based on a Handel opera performed in Hamburg to his English pupil "in London".

To sum up, the key of g minor in Liszt shows its character in basically three ways:

1. as *Trauermusik*, or gloomy music, as in the Allegri Miserere;
2. as part of the *Vision* idea when associated with G major;
3. as a religious key in the context of the first two together.

I suggest that these three in combination were transferred to the key of G \flat major when the composer added the rare key to this piece. Thus:

1. G \flat is sombre, to match the "*Trauer*" of g minor;
2. G \flat , by being "G in the dark", relates to the *Vision* idea by putting the brightness of the ending in a shadow at the beginning;
3. G \flat , viewed in this context, becomes thus part of the religious tonal narrative that underlies the whole piece, hence Liszt's *religioso* marking.

The inscription "nach Ges dur", therefore, was a "memory-jogger" inserted by Liszt into the vocal score of the opera to remind himself of the *idea* he had formed about the composition – an idea stemming from the character of the key of g minor, and involving a tonal narrative found elsewhere in his output in conjunction with the title "Vision". The role of G \flat in this narrative is shown in the marking "religioso", which looks forward to the "trionfante" marking of the ending in G major.

The evidence considered above about the genesis of this piece points to the fact that key character almost certainly formed part of the composer's aesthetics. This suspicion is reinforced when his works are grouped according to their keys. Clearly for Liszt key and content were related without the need to give a work any title. This is purely musical thinking, and lies previous to the composer's verbal invention of an epigraph or programme.

It is in this context that Liszt's inscription "nach Ges dur" in his copy of *Almira* should be considered. It shows that Liszt was thinking about key not only before sketching the music itself, but that such thinking played a decisive role in the creation of content and form in a large piece.