

SUMMARY

Feliks Rączkowski (1906–1989) – an organist, improviser, composer, educator and animator of musical life – contributed significantly to the development and promotion of Polish musical culture in the 20th century. His aim was to disseminate and ennoble Polish organ music at every level of education and society. He popularized it through concerts (over 800 recitals in Poland, in most European countries and in the United States), radio recordings (for Polish Radio and foreign broadcasters and for Polish Television) as well as numerous publications. He is a member of one of the oldest generations of virtuosi who initiated organ music festivals in Poland. He was an artistic director (partly also an initiator) of, among others, festivals in Kamień Pomorski, Koszalin, Gdańsk-Oliwa and Kazimierz Dolny.

Through his compositional work and the ministry of church music (including his service as an organist in the Church of the St. Cross in Warsaw), he aimed at raising the level of religious music in Poland. His compositions are mainly organ and religious works intended for performing in the church. From the middle of the 20th century Rączkowski was considered one of the most prolific creators of church music. His works were performed by both: professional choirs and esteemed soloists, as well as by amateur parish and religious groups. He is known primarily as the author of church songbooks, which are still the basic material for church organists. Feliks Rączkowski's sacred art is a homogeneous collection, focused and formally accurate, and at the same time rich in texture and subject matter. He is characterized by a liturgical style – which favours prayer and concentration. Rączkowski was able to obtain interesting sound effects by uncomplicated means. In the simplest forms he was able to reveal original creativity, good taste, solid knowledge of the workshop and, at the same time, his ability to subordinate rich imagination to practical goals. As an active church organist, he had a good sense of time and the needs of the liturgy and services.

As a teacher, he was Professor at Higher State School of Music (PWSM) – later Fryderyk Chopin Academy of Music (currently the FCUM) and the Academy of Catholic Theology (currently UKSW). He educated a group of organists, including: Augustyn Bloch, Jarosław Ciecierski, Andrzej Chorościński, Jerzy Erdman, Marietta Kruzel-Sosnowska, Stanisław Moryto, Tadeusz Olszewski, Urszula Ptaszyńska-Grahm, Gabriela Rzechowska-Klauza, Marian Sawa, Andrzej Siekierski and Maria Terlecka. From the notes left in his diary and from the memories of his students and friends, Rączkowski emerges as a man of exceptional conscientiousness and profound spirituality, which translated into his everyday life and creative activity.

The aim of this dissertation is to reproduce Rączkowski's biography, as well as to systematize and analyze his work on religious issues in the context of the composer's artistic life and spiritual standpoint. The coherence of the artist's life and creative way is deeply-rooted in Rączkowski's spirituality. This integrity enables analysing Rączkowski's life and creativity as *locus theologicus*.

This dissertation is the first study treating Rączkowski's life and activity holistically, with due insight and attention to detail. Reconstruction of his biography with the most elaborate factographic precision, locating it in a broader context, reference to Rączkowski's personal statements and references as well as archival sources are an attempt to capture the relationship between his life and artistic attitude and religious creativity, and to find an answer to the question about the type and consequences of the impulse creative. The conducted research is an attempt to integrate the results of the analysis of Rączkowski's religious work, deepened by theological interpretation.

The development of the topic includes two parts: theoretical-analytical (volume 1) and documentary (volume 2 – annexes). The methods of elementary and comparative analysis (referring to sources and to Rączkowski's work) and the heuristic method were applied. Historical issues were based on enumerative induction and genetic explanation. The chapter covering the analysis of Rączkowski's religious creativity in relation to spiritual orientation uses methods combining elements of functional analysis, focused on intertextual meaning, entered into the horizon of interdisciplinary comparative studies, taking into consideration the music-symbolic interpretation proposed by Stanisław Dąbek.