MUSICAL ARRANGEMENTS AND QUESTIONS OF GENRE: A STUDY OF LISZT’S
INTERPRETIVE APPROACHES
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Through his exceptional creative and performing abilities, Franz Liszt was able to transform compositions of many kinds into unified, intelligible, and pleasing arrangements for piano. Nineteenth-century definitions of “arrangement” and “Klavierauszug,” which focus on the process of reworking a composition for a different medium, do not adequately describe Liszt’s work in this area. His piano transcriptions of Schubert’s songs, Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique* and the symphonies of Beethoven are not note-for-note transcriptions; rather, they reinterpret the originals in recasting them as compositions for solo piano.

Writing about Liszt’s versions of Schubert’s songs, a Viennese critic identified as “Carlo” heralded Liszt as the creator of a new genre and declared him to have made Schubert’s songs the property of cultured pianists. Moreover, Liszt himself designated his work with Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique* and the symphonies of Beethoven “Partitions de piano”: literally, piano scores.

As is well known, concepts of genre in general create problems for musicologists; musical arrangements add a new dimension of difficulty to the problem. Whereas Carl Dahlhaus identifies genre as a tool for interpreting composers’ responses to the social dimension of music in the fabric of individual compositions, Jeffrey Kallberg perceives it as a “social phenomenon shared by composers and listeners alike.” The latter concept provides a more suitable framework for discussing the genre of transcriptions, for their importance derives in large part from relationships between the original and the derivative works, both as constructed by Liszt and perceived by critics and audiences.
During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Liszt’s transcriptions of songs and symphonies were construed as both compositions for pianists and subsets of the originals. Consequently, these compositions should be studied for their own musical value as well as for the light that they shed on the original works. Liszt’s transcriptions are derivative and at the same time created distinct genres.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

During the nineteenth century, the practice of taking musical compositions and rewriting them for new performing forces—especially the rapidly developing piano—enjoyed an accelerated popularity. This process of musical transformation was not new in the nineteenth century; composers at least as far back as the Renaissance routinely manipulated existing works to create new performance possibilities. Still, the nineteenth century witnessed a dramatic increase in the publication of arrangements, driven by two opposite, yet parallel forces: (1) the growth of amateur music making in the home; and (2) the rise of virtuosity, especially as displayed in public concerts. More narrowly, the piano transcription became an important vehicle through which an increasing segment of the musical public could come to know a wide variety of music, participating in domestic performances as well as attending virtuoso concerts across Europe.

As the piano shifted from being a fixture in aristocratic homes to becoming a central feature of bourgeoisie homes, arrangements of symphonies, operas, and songs for both piano duet and piano solo appeared in increasing numbers. Catalogs from music publishers as well as publishers’ advertisements in music periodicals provide evidence of the proliferation of piano arrangements for amateurs. Performance of arrangements in the home became a way for young musicians to intimately learn repertoire originally composed for chamber ensembles, orchestras, and opera houses. Even more than solo piano transcriptions, which tended to be more difficult, four-hand works could be performed by amateurs and yet still convey all the essential elements
Looking back at his youth, Theodor Adorno recalls the role of transcriptions—and those for two performers in particular—in introducing him to wide-ranging musical repertoire:

As a child, I learned through piano duets the music which we are accustomed to calling classical. There was little from the symphonic and chamber-music literature that was not pressed into service at home with the aid of those oblong volumes uniformly bound in green.²

Arrangements for both piano solo and piano four hands provided many works for the amateur pianist to master; in addition, this repertoire helped expand the knowledge of orchestral, operatic, and vocal works.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, due to significant developments in the construction of pianos in the early nineteenth century and the rise of musical virtuosity, nineteenth-century professional pianists could faithfully render many different genres on the piano. Because of his exceptional creative and performing abilities, Franz Liszt (1811-86) artfully fashioned compositions of many types into unified, intelligible, and pleasing arrangements for piano. Consequently, alongside original compositions Liszt would successfully program works originally composed for orchestras, chamber ensembles, operatic companies, and singers in his solo piano recitals.

Concert programs from the 1830s and 1840s show the frequency with which Liszt performed these works on stages across Europe, and reviews contained in musical journals, private memoirs, and correspondence confirm their success with critics and audiences. In one such concert in Paris on 20 April 1840, Liszt performed a solo concert that included his

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arrangement of the finale of Beethoven’s Pastoral Symphony, his fantasy on Lucia di Lammermor, two transcriptions of Schubert lieder, an etude, and a galop. In correspondence to her father, Comtesse Agénor de Gasparin declared the success of the entire program, including the arrangements: “It was a real triumph; every piece brought the house down.”⁴ She continued by praising the “precision and power” of the symphonic transcription, which “surpassed anything that can be conceived,” and stating that the performance of Erlkönig was sublime.⁵ This scene, of Liszt performing arrangements and original compositions for piano in concerts across Europe to great acclaim by audiences and critics alike, was repeated time and again during his tours of the continent and the British Isles.

The French pedagogue and critic François-Joseph Fétis praised the piano transcription for its usefulness in disseminating orchestral repertoire:

If one can enjoy the pleasure of hearing the productions of great composers only with the apparatus of an orchestra, they will remain little known, the taste for music will remain limited, and the progress of this art will proceed much too slowly. But [the piano is] a most valuable instrument that offers all the harmonic resources of a collection of differing instruments, that enjoys over the orchestra the advantage of uniformity and spontaneity of intention, and which can often rival its effect...Finally, the piano obviates the fuss and bother of having to gather together a large number of musicians in the same place.⁵

Fétis does not limit his observations to either domestic performance or virtuoso performances in concert halls. Broadly, the piano is useful in both settings, with quality compositions in the hands of a capable performer, whether amateur or virtuoso, to present compositions originally created for instrumentalists, vocalists, or a combination of the two, for enjoyment by escalating numbers of listeners.

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⁴ Ibid.
One significant effect of Liszt’s transcriptions was the dissemination of the works of his fellow composers, including some who are well known today but had not enjoyed that same popularity before Liszt’s efforts. By transcribing Franz Schubert’s songs and Ludwig van Beethoven’s and Hector Berlioz’s symphonic works for piano, Liszt helped them reach audiences that may not have had opportunities to hear these works in their original form. Although Beethoven’s symphonies and the *Symphonie fantastique* by Berlioz received frequent performances, the size of the required ensemble necessarily limited their number. On the other hand, at the time of his death Schubert’s music was little known outside his circle of friends in Vienna.6 A decade later, Liszt’s discovery of Schubert and the subsequent flurry of publications and performances of Schubert/Liszt transcriptions helped launch his songs into the mainstream where they remain to this day.

Further, a pianist such as Liszt could profit from the popularity of the original work with the performance of a song or symphony transcription or an operatic paraphrase that had been well received in its original form. The enthusiastic reception of Liszt’s virtuoso performances of transcriptions and arrangements by audiences throughout Europe is well documented. Writing in Berlin’s *Vossische Zeitung* in 1841, Ludwig Rellstab reviewed a concert in which Liszt “played seven pieces on the piano entirely alone.”7 Although not impressed by Liszt’s transcription of Beethoven’s *Adelaide*, Rellstab found the performance of *Erlkönig* utterly compelling. Rellstab implied that the public knew *Erlkönig* and then suggested that the brilliant performance by Liszt was something new. “To a quite different sphere, increasing the sensual excitement still further, belonged his playing of Schubert’s *Erlkönig*, a work widely known and heard, and yet now heard

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for the first time, truly electrifying the audience, which caused it to be encored more by their ever-renewed applause than by express demand.8

In light of the widespread composition and performance of transcriptions, how then did musicians and non-musicians alike view them—and more specifically the masterpieces composed by Liszt—in an era when they both stood alongside and replaced the originals in both performances, public and private, and publication? Today with easy access to musical publications, recordings, and live performances, piano transcriptions are not as highly regarded as original works because through the process of arrangement the compositions lose the full effect—specifically all of the timbral nuances—of the original. But in the nineteenth century, when music was less accessible in all forms (and completely non-existent as recordings until the very end of the century), publications and performances of transcriptions served as a necessary and viable substitute for the original.

The overarching problem of this dissertation can be posed as follows: Do transcriptions, arrangements, and paraphrases constitute genres unto themselves or should these compositions be seen as representing a subset of the original genre? More specifically, are the changes made by Liszt in the process of transcription—most notably instrumentation—sufficient to change the generic identification of a composition? Although questions of genre can be asked about a wide range of arrangements due to the vast number, type, and quality of arrangements in the nineteenth century, I will focus on Liszt’s compositional output for solo piano and more specifically his work with Schubert’s songs, the symphonies of Beethoven, and Berlioz’s Symphonie fantastique. The question then becomes this: when Liszt transcribed for piano a symphony or a song, was the transcription still thought of as a product of the original composer or was it considered to be a Liszt piano composition?

8 Williams, Portrait of Liszt, 178.
Scholarly Work on Liszt’s Arrangements

During the last several decades of the twentieth century Liszt scholars began to give serious consideration to that part of his compositional output consisting of transcriptions, particularly those for solo piano, four-hand settings, and works for two pianos. Before this time, from the middle decades of the twentieth century through approximately 1970, transcriptions were not accepted as legitimate compositions and consequently were not studied. This denigration of non-original works followed a period—from their composition during the nineteenth century through the early to middle decades of the twentieth century—when transcriptions were not only produced in large quantities, but also frequently performed, highly acclaimed, and often discussed.

Looking back at the period when arrangements were overwhelmingly ignored, Hans Keller sought in a 1969 article entitled “Arrangement for or against?” to “discredit our naïve, over-simple belief that ours is the age of authenticity, whereas the 19th century was the age of irresponsibility, excusable only on the level of genius or supreme talent.” Indeed, the mid-twentieth century musical world maligned non-original works—if it acknowledged them at all—purely on the basis of their non-authenticity, without taking into account their position in nineteenth-century musical culture and practice and their value in helping to shape understanding of the original compositions.

Evaluation of the genre of Liszt’s transcriptions of Schubert’s songs, Beethoven’s symphonies, and the *Symphonie fantastique* will be useful in determining the importance of these compositions in the nineteenth century and consequently the value that modern scholarship should afford them. Further, as these compositions are unveiled in this study, it will become

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9 Liszt did compose transcriptions for instrumental combinations other than piano; however, most of his transcriptions are for one or two pianists on one or two pianos.

obvious that they are not simply either exact re-creations of the original or completely new works. Rather, they reflect both the original composition and Liszt’s compositional style for piano and thus should be considered viable contributions to the pianist’s repertoire and grouped into distinct genres within Liszt’s oeuvre.

Classification of Liszt’s Arrangements – Overview

The organization of Liszt’s works lists over the last century and the attempted publication of complete-works editions demonstrate the shifts in value of non-original compositions. Due to the enormous volume of compositions (including multiple versions of certain works) and the changing estimation of non-original works, the task of publishing the complete works of Liszt and compiling a complete and accurate catalog of them continue to be fraught with problems. The inclusion (or non-inclusion) and classification of transcriptions in twentieth-century works lists and “complete” editions reflects the prevailing value of non-original works at the time the publication was completed.

Editions of Liszt’s works appeared at both ends of the twentieth century. The first, entitled Franz Liszt: Musikalische Werke and published by F. Busoni, P. Raabe, and P. Wolfrum

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11 There are two primary camps in the attempt to compile a definitive list of Liszt’s compositions. Most recently, the Eckhardt-Mueller catalog with its new numbering system has become the most comprehensive list of Liszt’s compositions. (See Maria Eckhardt and Rena Charnin Mueller, “Liszt, Franz: Works,” New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell, 2d ed., 29 vols. (London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2001), 14:785-872.) However, Michael Short and Michael Saffle, two scholars who have also done significant work in attempting to compile an accurate assessment of Liszt’s compositional output, do not agree entirely with the list compiled by Eckhardt and Mueller. Written primarily as a review of the Eckhardt-Mueller catalog, Short’s and Saffle’s “Compiling Lis(z)ts: Cataloging the Composer’s Works and the New Grove 2 Works List,” Journal of Musicological Research 20 (2002): 233-262, provides an overview of the attempts to catalog Liszt’s compositions as well as pointing out mistakes that they see in the most recent catalog along with their proposed corrections. In addition, the pianist Leslie Howard and Short are currently preparing a two-volume thematic catalog, which Pendragon Press claims will present in “definitive form essential information about every one of Liszt's works.” In this new catalog, compositions will be presented alphabetically with cross references by genre, translated title, and nickname. See Michael Short with Leslie Howard, “A New Liszt Catalogue,” in Liszt and His World (Stuyvesant, New York: Pendragon Press, 1998), 75-100.
from 1907 to 1936, does not attempt to include all of the “non-original” works.\textsuperscript{12} The Beethoven symphony transcriptions and the transcriptions from Wagner’s operas stand as the lone representatives of “non-original” works. Thus, this thirty-three volume edition contains only approximately one third of Liszt’s total compositional output and an even smaller percentage of non-original works.\textsuperscript{13} Conversely the \textit{Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke}, which began publication in 1970 and continues today, includes not only original works but also all kinds of arrangements.\textsuperscript{14} The editorial decision to include all of Liszt’s compositions, whether original or based on a pre-existing work, illustrates the contemporary trend toward legitimizing this repertoire.

Another longstanding problem has been the organization of compositions in Liszt’s works lists. A brief examination of Liszt’s works lists from the two editions of the \textit{New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians}, published a mere twenty years apart but containing catalogs conceived half a century apart, highlights the shifting schools of thought in classifying the non-original works of Liszt along with his original compositions: from a system with two classifications of works (original and non-original) to one where works are divided according to performing force (i.e. piano solo, piano four hands, symphonic, etc.) regardless of the degree of originality.


\footnote{14 The \textit{Franz Liszt: Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke} was started in 1970 by Editio Musica Budapest. Currently, the first two (I. Works for piano solo; and II. Free arrangements and transcriptions for piano solo) of its proposed total of ten series are complete. Hereinafter, this complete edition of Liszt’s works will be referred to as the NLE.}
The works list compiled by Mária Eckhardt and Rena Charnin Mueller and appended to the Liszt entry in the second edition (2001), makes great strides in the organization of Liszt’s compositions. Unlike previous lists, it does not privilege original works over transcriptions. Instead, compositions are grouped according to performing force, such as piano solo, piano four hands, two pianos, chamber music, orchestral, solo instrument and orchestra, sacred choral music, etc. with all compositions in a category presented chronologically.

Appended to the Liszt articles in the The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (1980) and the New Grove Romantic Masters (1985), the works list by Humphrey Searle includes “non-original works” such as transcriptions and paraphrases as a separate category. The first section titled “Works” includes only “original” works organized by genre. The second section includes “Arrangements, Transcriptions, etc.” divided according to instrumental ensemble and then alphabetically by the last name of the composer of the original work. Conceived in 1954 and originally appearing as the works list in both the fifth edition of Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians and Searle’s monograph The Music of Liszt, Searle’s organizational structure was the standard for half a century.

These are just two of the numerous methods of categorizing Liszt’s compositions, but they represent the opposite ends of the spectrum: at one extreme, complete segregation and at the other, total integration of original and non-original compositions. Although total integration of all compositions appears to legitimize the latter, it may in fact not be the best method to present Liszt’s oeuvre to the public. Because nineteenth-century composers, performers, and critics

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valued Liszt’s solo piano transcriptions of Schubert’s songs and Beethoven’s symphonies and, in fact, “categorized” them as distinctive compositions, methods of organizing Liszt’s compositions should highlight their distinct characteristics.

Liszt on His Beethoven Symphony Transcriptions

Liszt himself weighed in on the use of the piano to disseminate symphonic works more widely and his new method of creating symphonic transcriptions. In a letter to Adolphe Pictet dated September 1837 (and published in the Revue et Gazette musicale on 11 February 1838), Liszt discussed in some depth his piano arrangements of orchestral works. As a prelude to this discussion, he first justified his personal devotion to the piano and then expounded upon the capabilities of the modern instrument and its importance in the current musical culture.

Liszt’s response to Pictet’s question of why he is “occupied so exclusively with the piano, so disinclined to attack the far broader fields of symphonic and operatic composition”16 is both passionate and colorful:

My piano is to me what a ship is to the sailor, what a steed is to the Arab, and perhaps more because even now my piano is myself, my speech, and my life...I have definitely made up my mind not to abandon the study and cultivation of the piano until I have done everything possible or, at least, everything that I can possibly do for it today.17

16 Franz Liszt, An Artist’s Journey: Lettres d’un bachelier ès musique, 1835-1841, trans. Charles Suttoni (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 44. In his introduction to An Artist’s Journey and an article entitled “Liszt’s Writings and Correspondence,” Suttoni acknowledges what he considers to be “the nagging question of authorship” of Liszt’s literary works due to the fact that the women in Liszt’s life, Marie d’Agoult and later Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein, assisted him with their creation. Suttoni resolved that despite the involvement of these women, “Liszt himself was basically responsible for the musical matters these works discussed and the ideas they expressed. He did, after all, sign them as their sole author and assumed all public responsibility for them. Thus, they count as his.” Charles Suttoni, “Liszt’s Writings and Correspondence,” in The Liszt Companion, ed. Ben Arnold (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2002), 29. See also Charles Suttoni, “Introduction,” in An Artist’s Journey, x.
17 Liszt, An Artist’s Journey, 45.
He proceeds to rank the piano “highest in the instrumental hierarchy” because of its harmonic capabilities borne out in its “ability to recapitulate and concentrate all of musical art within itself.”\textsuperscript{18}

Although Liszt suggested that Pictet perceives him to be uninterested in symphonic and operatic composition, Liszt justifies the capability of the piano to replicate an orchestra:

Within the span of its seven octaves it encompasses the audible range of an orchestra, and the ten fingers of a single person are enough to render the harmonies produced by the union of over a hundred concerted instruments.\textsuperscript{19}

While acknowledging that arrangements still lack “varied sonority,” he asserts that they have developed considerably over the previous number of years:

Even though we still lack the essential element of varied sonority, we have nonetheless managed to produce symphonic effects that are satisfactory and which were completely beyond the ken of our predecessors, because the arrangements made up to now of great vocal and instrumental compositions betray, in their poverty and uniform emptiness, the lack of confidence that they had in the instrument’s resources. The fainthearted accompaniments, poorly distributed melodies, truncated passages, and meager chords were more of a \textit{traduction} than a \textit{translation} of the ideas of Mozart and Beethoven.\textsuperscript{20}

Liszt then underscores the preeminence of the piano and the importance of piano arrangements: “Thus the piano has, on one hand, the capacity to assimilate, to concentrate all musical life within itself and, on the other, its own existence, its own growth and individual development. It is simultaneously, as an ancient Greek might say, a \textit{microcosm} and a \textit{microthea} (a miniature world and a miniature god).”\textsuperscript{21}

It is true that during this period of his life Liszt focused on piano compositions, but by no means did he completely ignore symphonies, operas, and even songs. He did not cultivate them

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 46.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 47.
in a traditional manner, that is, by composing original compositions in these genres, but rather through his song and symphony transcriptions and operatic paraphrases.

In a preface written by Liszt for the publication of his initial Beethoven symphony transcriptions in the late 1830s, he touts the ability of the piano—and its mere seven octaves—to present orchestral compositions.

But the extension of its capabilities acquired by the piano in recent times as a result of the progress made in execution and the refinements introduced in the mechanism make it possible to do more, and better, than has been done up till now. Through the indefinite development of its harmonic power, the piano is tending to assimilate all orchestral compositions to itself. In the space of its seven octaves it can produce, with few exceptions, all the characteristics, all the combinations, all the figures of the most scholarly composition, and leaves the orchestra with no other advantages (though they are indeed immense) but those of diversity of timbres and of mass effects.\(^\text{22}\)

This begs the question of whether Liszt believes that a piano arrangement can replicate a symphony, which he asks and then answers with a resounding yes and no: while it can “produce, with few exceptions, all the characteristics, all the combinations, all the figures of the most scholarly composition,” an arrangement lacks diversity of tone-colors and mass effects, which he describes as immense advantages for the symphony. He thus provides a fair assessment of the abilities and deficiencies of the arrangement for piano in reproducing a symphonic work.

In a letter written to the publisher Breitkopf and Härtel in 1863 regarding his Beethoven symphony transcriptions, Liszt suggests that performance of the symphonies by piano students—obviously via his transcriptions—can serve as a valuable tool in the development of technical skill and musical understanding:

The manner in which this arrangement of Beethoven’s symphonies appears makes it possible even to pupils of the first classes of the conservatories to play them passably a \textit{prima vista} on condition that to succeed better they must practice, which is always advisable anyway. Which study would deserve more care and assiduity than that of these masterpieces? The more one devotes himself to them, the more benefit he will draw, first

\(^{22}\text{Liszt’s Preface to the Beethoven Symphonies, 1st edition (Rome, 1839).}\)
of all with regard to sense and aesthetic understanding and later also in respect of technical ease and of the improvement of virtuosity.\footnote{Imre Mezõ, “Liszt’s Transcriptions for Piano of the Symphonies of Beethoven,” introduction to \textit{Ferenc Liszt: Transcriptions IV: Symphonies de Beethoven} of the NLE, trans. Erzsébet Mészáros, ser. 2 (Budapest: Editio Musica Budapest, 1991-1993), 17-19:xv.}

While his early transcriptions—including that of the \textit{Symphonie fantastique}, those of the Beethoven symphonies made in the 1840s, and many of Schubert’s songs—were performed during his years of virtuoso touring through 1847, the publication of the complete Beethoven symphony transcriptions in the 1860s did not serve the same purpose. The statement that piano students could perform these compositions and subsequently benefit from this study suggests another purpose for their composition.

\section*{Arrangement and Genre}

As an extension of Liszt’s goal of replicating the “multitude of details and minor features that contribute so powerfully to the perfection of the whole,”\footnote{Liszt’s Preface to the Beethoven Symphonies, 1st edition (Rome, 1839).} I propose that during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Liszt’s transcriptions of songs and symphonies were thought of as both compositions for pianists and also as a subset of the original. Consequently, these compositions should be studied for their own musical value and also as they shed light on the original.

This dissertation will reach beyond existing studies of this repertoire to examine issues of genre and transcription in the nineteenth century. In attempting to define the genre of arrangements, I will examine (1) the process of arrangement, including the meaning of the various terms used to describe non-original works; (2) the effect of the process of transcription on the genre identity of songs and symphonies in the estimation of composers, critics, performers and/or audiences; (3) Liszt’s compositional process in creating his transcriptions of songs and
symphonies; and (4) the estimation of these compositions as representing or belonging to unique genres. These issues will be explored within nineteenth-century contexts, with emphasis on a selection of exceptionally crafted transcriptions in Liszt’s oeuvre.

Examination of the process of transcription in theory and in practice during the nineteenth century will be accomplished through the study of (1) writings on transcription and arrangement in musical dictionaries and encyclopedias as well as in musical journals; (2) Liszt’s writings about the process of transcription and his evaluation of specific works; and (3) audience reaction to both printed transcriptions and their performances.\(^\text{25}\)

Genre theory as it relates to the study of musical composition, and specifically the transformation of musical compositions, helps address questions related to the identity of transcriptions and paraphrases. The identification of genre, often by means of the title, has a decisive effect on the expectations of both performers and audiences. The aspects of context, function, and community validation play important roles in defining musical genres.\(^\text{26}\)

Obviously, the process of transcription alters some of the key elements of a composition, particularly instrumentation, and by extension context and function, that help place it within a particular genre. Consequently, performers and listeners must adjust their expectations of a musical composition and of musical genres in general to reconcile the transcription with the original.

The repertoire cited to support my discussions of musical transcription and genre will come from Liszt’s work with Schubert’s songs, Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique*, and

\(^{25}\) Although critical reaction can be considered part of the factual foundation of transcription study in that it offers information about the reception history of these compositions, it can also add to the interpretation of process and of types of meaning. The performance of certain transcriptions, such as Liszt’s transcriptions of Schubert songs, helped popularize the original compositions. The overlapping reception of the original and the transcription can aid in the study of meaning of transcriptions and the relationship between two related works of different genres.

Beethoven’s symphonies. Examination of the specific elements that undergo transformation will be undertaken in analyses of both the songs and the symphonies. In addition, where possible, I shall use Liszt’s writings to support my study of his musical works. Although I shall not attempt to provide an overview of Liszt’s transcriptions, arrangements, and paraphrases as they fit into his life and oeuvre, I shall, make specific references to compositions, writings, and events in Liszt’s life to support my arguments.
CHAPTER 2

ARRANGEMENT IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Nomenclature of “Arrangement”

Although related to each other, the English language terms transcription, arrangement, and paraphrase tend to designate different processes and products in the adaptation of musical compositions. Today scholars generally employ “arrangement” to serve as the umbrella term for all varieties of adaptation. For example, the second edition of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* provides the following definition of arrangement: “the transference of a composition from one medium to another or the elaboration (or simplification) of a piece, with or without a change of medium.”¹ According to this definition and as further discussed in this entry, arrangements can be compositions adapted for different instruments (or voices) or the recomposition of a work for the same instrument(s) in order to make it more difficult, easier, or more suited to improvements in instrumental design.²

Coexisting under the general umbrella term of arrangement, transcription and paraphrase lie at the opposite ends of the spectrum: transcription is a literal reworking of the original, while paraphrases are freer adaptations. The “arrangement” entry in *New Grove 2* emphasizes this view as it states that in either kind of arrangement “some degree of recomposition is usually involved, and the result may vary from a straightforward, almost literal, transcription to a paraphrase which is more the work of the arranger than of the original composer.”³

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² Ibid.
³ Ibid. Emphasis mine. The “transcription” entry in *New Grove 2* does not provide much useful information for this study. The entry opens with the following:
   Transcription is a subcategory of notation. In Euro-American classical studies, transcription refers to copying of a musical work, usually with some change in notation (e.g. from tablature to staff notation to Tonic Sol-fa) or in layout (e.g. from separate parts to full score) without listening to actual sounds during
In a 1981 article entitled “Liszt and the Schubert Song Transcriptions,” Alan Walker differentiates transcription from paraphrase in the same manner. He describes the transcription as “strict, literal, objective” in seeking to “unfold the original work as accurately as possible, down to the smallest details.”\(^4\) In contrast, the paraphrase “as its name implies, is a free variation on the original.”\(^5\) He sees this “free variation” as “metamorphosis,” which can “concentrate exclusively on one theme, decking it out with ever more complex ornamentation; or it can embrace the entire act of an opera, mixing and mingling the material en route, giving us (so to speak) an aerial view of the original composition.”\(^6\)

Building upon these definitions, which suggest that “arrangement” serves as the catch-all word to describe the general process of transformation, I propose an additional meaning for it. The term “arrangement”—defining either the process or the finished product—can refer to compositions subjected to some degree of recomposition that is neither extremely literal nor exceptionally free, but rather somewhere between transcription and paraphrase. This idea is presented in the definition in the fourth edition of *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*. Following a traditional opening statement that defines arrangement as adaptation, the entry continues thus: “[t]he terms transcribe and transcription are sometimes used interchangeably with arrange and arrangement. Often, however, the former imply great fidelity to the original.”\(^7\) For instance, some of Liszt’s adaptations of Schubert’s lieder for piano are not strict note-for-note

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\(^5\) Ibid.

\(^6\) Ibid., 51-52.

transcriptions, yet the amount of recomposition does not rise to the level of paraphrase. Such a work may best be described as an arrangement.

In attempting a precise differentiation between the German terms, one encounters the same difficulties. **Bearbeitung** (literally “reworking”) serves as the umbrella term encompassing all kinds of transformation including transcription [*Transcription, Übertragung*], orchestration, instrumentation, piano reduction [*Klavierauszug*], paraphrase, reminiscence, and recomposition.\(^8\) Alternatively, “Arrangement,” “arrangiren,” “Transcription,” and “Klavierauszug” refer to a more specific kind of reworking. Christopher Gibbs suggests that attempts should be made to clarify the specific nature of the transformation, since, for example, “[a] *Bearbeitung* of a Schubert song could refer to an almost endless variety of arrangements, as well as to a transposed or translated version, an edition, a later revision by the composer, or even another setting of the same text.”\(^9\)

These terms, however, have not always been defined as such. In fact, the *New Grove* 2 article on arrangement points the reader back a mere fifty years to the fifth edition of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1954) and its “arrangement” entry to draw attention to the variability of these definitions.\(^10\) Although the “arrangement” entry in *Grove 5* does not differ significantly from that in *Grove 4* (1940), one addition in *Grove 5* illuminates mid-twentieth century thought on the continuum of arrangement. In 1954 the preeminent musical reference work in English differentiated arrangement, transcription, and paraphrase as follows:

> Arrangement may be said to differ from ‘transcription’ by being a more literal reproduction of an original, the latter term being understood to mean an adaptation more


intimately suited to the nature of the new medium, taking greater liberties with the original, but not treating it as freely as would be done in a paraphrase.\textsuperscript{11}

The continuum suggested by this definition reverses the position of arrangement and transcription from the places they generally hold today.

Similarly, in a 1935 article entitled “Arrangements and Transcriptions,” Evlyn Howard-Jones makes the following distinction: “[a]rrangements I would call a playing of the notes in another medium, transcriptions a recreation or making-over with regard to their imaginative and creative content.”\textsuperscript{12} In order to further explain these definitions, Howard-Jones provides an example of each: “[t]he first is as though one should play the Bach Flute Sonatas on the Violin or the Grieg Violin Sonatas on the Viola, making the necessary adjustments for the change in medium; the second is exemplified by the Liszt Tristan Liebestod, a definite re-making of the orchestral and vocal material into a new piece.”\textsuperscript{13} Following a history of arrangement over a period of four centuries—from the Elizabethan era to Liszt—Howard-Jones restates the definitions in terms of piano arrangements and transcriptions; he considers arrangement to be the “transference to the keyboard of the actual notes of the original” and transcription “a new conception or recreation of the idea in terms of the new medium.”\textsuperscript{14} This distinction between transcription and arrangement is the same as that found in Grove 5: arrangement is a literal process while transcription involves more creative effort by the composer.

For purposes of this dissertation, however, the modern conventional usage in English as laid out in New Grove 2 and The Harvard Dictionary of Music (4\textsuperscript{th} edition), will be followed: the term “arrangement” will serve as a catch-all to refer to works based upon a preexisting musical composition, “transcription” will more specifically refer to compositions that are a literal

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 1:223.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, 308.
In addition, “arrangement” will also be used to designate a work that falls somewhere between a strict transcription and a free paraphrase. As will be seen in later chapters, Liszt’s work with songs and symphonies is not as strict and literal as scholars want to make it. Still, these will be referred to as transcriptions or arrangements.

Contemporary distinctions in the meaning of transcription and arrangement are not as pronounced in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century dictionaries and encyclopedias, as evidenced by the omission of seemingly relevant terms. The terms “Arrangiren” (in German language works) and “arrangement” (in English language works) appear consistently, whereas the term “transcription” (in both English and German language sources) appears less than half the time. Consequently, as we turn to an historical examination of this process the focus will shift from the distinctions between the terms themselves to examining the content and structure of the definitions of arrangement, specifically what aspects are retained by the various writers and their differing understandings of the terms.

Terminology

Grappling with the vast terminology surrounding non-original works means confronting an inventory of processes through which the works have been altered. The following German terms appear as entries in music dictionaries and encyclopedias: “Arrangiren,” “Arrangement,” “Bearbeitung,” “Klavierauszug,” and “Transcription.” Within these entries, additional words

\[15\] Liszt’s paraphrases were generally fashioned from the leading operas of the day and employed three to eight themes from the entire opera. This corpus of works will not be examined specifically in this dissertation. 

referring to this process include “Einrichtung,” “Auszug,” “Reduction” and “Übertragung.”

Terms employed in nineteenth-century English and American writings as well as current
discussions of the subject include “arrangement,” “transcription,” and “paraphrase” as dictionary
entries, and refer to versions, reworkings, recompositions, adaptations, translations, and
transformations to help define these processes.

In addition to the terms used in writings about arrangement, others were utilized by Liszt
and his publishers in the titles for his compositions. Influenced by his years in Paris, many of the
arrangements possess distinctively French titles such as “Réminiscences” (e.g., Réminiscences de
Lucia di Lammermoor), “Illustrations” (e.g., Illustrations du Prophète), “Transcription” (e.g.,
Deux transcriptions d’après Rossini), and “Paraphrase” (e.g., Rigoletto: paraphrase de concert).
The term “Fantasie” is employed in both German (e.g., Fantasie über Motive aus Beethoven’s
Ruinen von Athen) and French titles (e.g., Fantaisie sur des motifs favoris de l’opéra La
sonnambula). The paraphrase on Meyerbeer’s Les Huguenots uses both “Réminiscences” and
“Fantasie” in addition to stating that it consists of themes from an opera to be played on the
piano: Réminiscences des Huguenots de Meyerbeer: Grande fantaisie dramatique sur des thèmes
de l’opéra Les Huguenots de Meyerbeer pour le piano par F. Liszt.¹⁷

¹⁷ Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart does include the term “Arrangiren” but points the reader to the entry for
“Bearbeitung.” (See Gesine Schröder and Thomas Bösche, “Bearbeitung,” Die Musik in Geschichte und
it can be noted that “Arrangiren” entries are generally shorter than the entries for “Klavierauszug.” This may be a
result of the rising popularity of the piano in the nineteenth century and the increasing number of arrangements
specifically for piano.

¹⁷ Alan Walker references a marginal note in Liszt’s hand-corrected copy of Lina Ramann’s biography, where Liszt
“observed that he was the first to use the titles ‘Paraphrase,’ ‘Transcription,’ and ‘Reminiscence.’” Walker suggests
that Liszt ought to be given credit for introducing these terms. Alan Walker, Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years, 1811-
Dictionaries and Encyclopedias

Entries for “arrangement” and “transcription” in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century dictionaries and encyclopedias acknowledge that arrangements appeared as early as 1588 and reference specific musical examples from as far back as the early eighteenth century and continuing through the works of their contemporaries. *A Dictionary of Musical Terms* by Sir John Stainer and W.A. Barrett published in 1876 includes a definition of “arrangement” that also provides an historical overview of the process. After defining arrangement as “[a] selection or adaptation of the parts of a composition, to fit them for performance by other voices or instruments than those originally designed,” the authors highlight examples from Nicolas Yonge’s “Musica Transalpina” of 1588 through arrangements of Haydn symphonies by J.S.C. Possin (1755-1822).18

In the “arrangement” entry in *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, which first appeared in the 1870s, C. Hubert H. Parry considers J.S. Bach’s arrangements to be the first with “any great artistic value” and consequently devotes some space to discussing a number of these.19 At the conclusion of the article, a list of adaptations by composers of their own works includes numerous eighteenth-century examples by Bach and George Frideric Handel along with nineteenth-century examples by Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Brahms.20

Despite the fact that arrangements existed during and before the eighteenth century, discussions of this repertoire did not appear in eighteenth-century reference works. Entries for

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19 For example, see C. Hubert H. Parry, “Arrangement,” *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Sir George Grove, 4 vols. (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1900), 1:89. Because the “arrangement” entries in all five editions of Grove’s dictionary are very similar, they will be referred to as a whole unless the point under discussion relates to one of the variations between the editions, in which case the specific edition(s) will be identified.
“arrangement” (or “Arrangiren” or “Bearbeitung”) and “transcription” are absent from major reference works before 1800, including Sébastien de Brossard’s *Dictionaire de Musique* (1705), Johann Gottfried Walther’s *Musikalisches Lexikon* (1732), and James Grassineau’s *A Musical Dictionary* (1740), essentially an English translation of Brossard’s dictionary.

*Reference Works Written Prior to the Mid-Nineteenth Century*

The earliest musical reference work with a definition for arrangement or transcription that I have worked with is Heinrich Christoph Koch’s *Musikalisches Lexikon* (1802). As the first major musical reference work to address this topic, Koch’s single volume includes shorter entries than those in later works. The entry for “Arrangiren, arrangirt” is succinct and to the point. The example provided is general in nature, an entire opera arranged merely for wind instruments or as a quartet, and does not identify a specific composer or composition.21 The entry for “Clavier-Auszug” is considerably longer but remains general in its discussion of the repertoire and devoid of specifically named musical examples.22 These early definitions of arrangement and “Clavier-Auszug” provide a basis for elaboration in later reference works.

*Mid- to Late-Nineteenth Century Reference Works*

A number of the mid-century German reference works include paragraph-length definitions for “Arrangiren,” “Transcription,” and “Klavierauszug.” Although these entries mention nineteenth-century musical compositions as examples, they fail to rigorously discuss the

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music. The terms that gained entry into nineteenth-century German dictionaries are outlined in Table 2.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Publication</th>
<th>Author and Title of Publication</th>
<th>Relevant Entries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1835-1838</td>
<td>Gustav Schilling, <em>Enzyklopädie der gesammten musikalischen Wissenschaften</em></td>
<td>Arrangiren, Klavierauszug</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>Bernsdorf, Eduard. <em>Neues Universal-Lexicon der Tonkunst.</em></td>
<td>Arrangiren, Klavierauszug</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of note, the “Klavierauszug” entry in Eduard Bernsdorf’s *Neues Universal-Lexikon der Tonkunst* is quite succinct and refers the reader back to the “Arrangiren” entry. Further, although the complete title of Arrey von Dommer’s *Musikalisches Lexicon. Auf der Grundlage des Lexicons von H. Ch. Koch* suggests that it is derived from Koch’s *Musikalisches Lexicon*, comparison of their entries for these two terms reveals that Dommer’s work bears little resemblance to Koch’s dictionary in this respect.  

The eleven-volume *Musikalisches Conversations-Lexikon*, initiated by Hermann Mendel in 1870 and completed by Dr. August Reissmann in 1880, includes entries for “Arrangiren” and “Clavier-Auszug” as had appeared in earlier works but also incorporates entries for “Arrangement” (the process of transformation *[Umsetzen]* or arrangement *[Einrichten]*) and “Transcription.” Like the distinction between the English definitions of arrangement and transcription established at the beginning of this chapter, Mendel’s discussion of “Arrangiren” references the general topic of transformation and encompasses a wide variety of works, whereas he sees “Transcription” as specifically concerned with the transference of vocal songs to the piano. Moreover, it is interesting to note that Mendel’s “Clavier-Auszug” article, and to a lesser extent that for “Arrangiren,” use some of the exact same wording as found in Dommer’s entries. While the first couple of sentences of the “Arrangiren” articles are parallel, approximately half of the “Clavier-Auszug” articles are the same.

*Early Twentieth-Century Reference Works*

Although written later than the music to be studied in this dissertation, several late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century comprehensive reference works will also be useful because of their references to and analysis of later nineteenth-century music. All five editions of Grove’s *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* consistently include encyclopedia-length articles on “arrangement,” despite the fact that an entry defining “transcription” appears in only one of the editions, as shown in Table 2.2.
The discussion of “Arrangement, or Adaptation” remains fairly consistent despite the 75-year span between the first edition and the fifth edition. The most significant differences between the first and the fifth editions, evident already in a comparison of editions two and three, have to do with replacing a discussion of specific compositions with a section entitled “The Function of Pianoforte Arrangement.” As mentioned earlier, another significant change in the

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24 The first edition of *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, edited by Sir George Grove, was originally published in four volumes between 1877 and 1889 with a subsequent reprint in 1900 incorporating corrections. All references to the first edition herein are from the 1900 reprint. The second edition, entitled *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and edited by J.A. Fuller Maitland, appeared in five volumes in 1904; all references to the second edition are from the 1916 reprint. The third edition, also entitled *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, was edited by H.C. Colles and published in five volumes in 1927; the reprint used herein is from 1937. H.C. Colles continued to serve as editor for the fourth edition, dated 1940 and also in five volumes. The content of the “arrangement” entry in the fourth edition is exactly the same as that in the third edition. The fifth edition, in nine volumes with original copyright of 1954, was edited by Eric Blom; all references to this edition are from the 1955 reprint.

fifth edition is the addition of a paragraph that specifically lays out a continuum placing
arrangement as the most literal, paraphrase as the freest treatment, and transcription somewhere
between the two.

Only the second edition includes a separate article, brief as it may be, on “transcription.”
Subsequent editions simply read “TRANSCRIPTION, see ARRANGEMENT.” Despite the later
apparent equivalence of these two terms suggested by the disappearance of “transcription” in the
third, fourth, and fifth editions, the second edition attempts to highlight distinctions between the
two. The two-part definition begins as follows: “I. A term which in its strict meaning should be
the exact equivalent of ARRANGEMENT, but which in practice implies a different, and in most
cases a far less worthy production, since the transcriber rarely if ever fails to add something of
his own to the work he selects for treatment.” 26 The entry continues with a brief enumeration of
examples ranging from tunes contained in the Virginal Books to compositions by Liszt. The
author of this article, J. A. Fuller Maitland, who also serves as the general editor for this edition,
points out that “[e]arnest musicians seem always to have viewed these productions with the same
disapproval” but then legitimizes the practice and acknowledges that some transcriptions can
faithfully represent the original:

Here and there, of course, are to be found transcriptions which consist of something
besides unmeaning runs and brilliant passages, and which even help to elucidate the
intention of the original composition. Among Liszt’s versions of Schubert’s songs, there
are a few such as the ‘Erlkönig,’ of which this may be said, but in spite of such brilliant
exceptions as this the form cannot be regarded with unmixed satisfaction. 27

In addition to praising some of Liszt’s transcriptions, the author points out that many
transcriptions do not do justice to the original: “[t]here are instances, too numerous to mention,

27 Ibid.
of transcriptions of well-known pieces for instruments utterly inadequate to their performance."28

This entry lays out the multi-faceted aspects and the varying qualities of this type of composition.

The second part of the definition reads as follows: “II. The more useful kind of transcription is that which, by compression and condensation, presents the principal features of a composition for the student’s guidance in such a way that they can be performed on the organ, pianoforte, or other solo instrument. (See ARRANGEMENT.)”29 The inclusion of two definitions for this term begs the question of the difference in meaning between them. The second part of the description describes literal compression and condensation to present the principal features for a practical purpose, whereas the first part admittedly includes both compositions characterized by unmeaning virtuosity and those that are able to illuminate the original.

Analysis of “Arrangement” Entries

Over a period of two-hundred years, from Koch’s definition in 1802 through that found in New Grove 2, the characterization of “arrangement” remained fairly consistent. Most definitions, regardless of length, start with a basic description of what it is. For example, the latest definition begins as follows: “Arrangement (Ger. Bearbeitung). The reworking of a musical composition, usually for a different medium from that of the original.”30 Although one of the most general overviews of the process, this definition presents the essential elements of the arrangement as (1) a reworking that (2) involves a different medium. Working from the same idea, various definitions over the years employed slightly different wording in attempting to elucidate this concept.

28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
The process of reworking is consistently identified by the verb *einrichten* (to adapt) and, in the case of Bernsdorf, as an “Einrichten oder Umsetzen eines Tonstücks” (adaptation or transferral of a piece of music). The description of the change in medium is more varied and in most definitions more specific. While Koch and Dommer state that arrangement occurs when the music is adapted for different instruments, which, as suggested by Koch, may consist of fewer parts than those contained in its full score, Mendel and Bernsdorf add a short phrase that specifies the kinds of differences in performing forces: that is, both number (*Zahl*) and type (*Art*). Following this succinct encapsulation of the process of arrangement, the entries continue by presenting both general examples as well as assessments of the process and its product.

In contrast, the entries for “Arrangement” that appear in the first four editions of *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians* do not open with a basic definition; rather they dive right into an analogy of arrangement as the musical counterpart of literary translation. As mentioned earlier, the fifth edition includes a paragraph that differentiates arrangement from its two counterparts, transcription and paraphrase:

> Arrangement may be said to differ from ‘transcription’ by being a more literal reproduction of an original, the latter term being understood to mean an adaptation more intimately suited to the nature of the new medium, taking greater liberties with the original, but not treating it as freely as would be done in a paraphrase.

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Although not directly defining arrangement, the implication of this newly added paragraph is that arrangements (and transcriptions and paraphrases) are “reproductions” in a “new medium” in which the composer has taken some liberties.

The examples offered in the various entries are almost as diverse as the corpus of arrangements created during the nineteenth century. Koch uses a single example, namely “an entire opera arranged merely for wind instruments or as a quartet.”

Mendel and Dommer provide a longer list of possibilities, namely orchestral works for: (1) two- or four-hand piano, (2) string quartet, (3) individual string and wind instruments, or (4) wind instruments alone.

Bernsdorf “categorically protest[ed] against a harmful type of arranging” and suggested by way of example “an aria for soprano arranged for trombone or trumpet; Mendelssohn’s Songs without Words arranged for the whole orchestra; and an entire opera arranged for two violins or even flutes.”

Although he did not list specific offending works, Bernsdorf was presumably aware of such mockeries.

Bernsdorf provides two justifications that excuse the process of arrangement: (1) a small orchestra may reduce richly orchestrated compositions to accommodate its instrumental forces; and (2) music may be made more accessible to foster familiarization with and examination of its ideas.

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35 Koch, “Arrangiren, arrangirt,” 166. “Arrangiren, arrangirt wird gebraucht, wenn ein Tonstück für andere Instrumente, oder auch für weniger Stimmen als die Partitur desselben enthalt, eingerichtet wird. So hat man z.B. ganz Opern, die für bloße Blasinstrumente, oder auch als Quartetten arrangirt sind.”


38 Ibid. “Es giebt eigentlich nur zwei Gesichtspunkte, unter denen das A. entschuldigt werden kann: erstens die Nothwendigkeit, die, um nur Eins anzu führen, z.B. kleinere Orchester zwingt, reich instrumentierte Stücke ihren Kräften gemäß zu reduciren, und zweitens das Bedürfniß, Sachen überhaupt sich zugänglicher zu machen und sie in
making a composition larger (by increasing the number of instruments), or retaining the size of
the ensemble while changing the nature of the instruments, only one is justified according to
Bernsdorf’s rationale. Although he concedes that piano reductions play an important role in
dispensing knowledge of larger works, he has low regard for piano transcriptions and
paraphrases that create flashy showpieces from art songs and arias.

Analysis of “Klavierauszug” Entries

Throughout the nineteenth century, the German-language musical reference sources
included separate entries specifically discussing the “Klavierauszug” in addition to the entries
entitled “Arrangiren.” In the case of Bernsdorf, the definition is short and does not fully engage
with the issues: “[t]he arrangement of a musical piece composed for several and various
instruments, or as song with instrumental accompaniment for performance on the piano or
fortepiano.”39 As mentioned earlier, Bernsdorf’s discussion of this topic appears in the
“Arrangiren” entry.40 This organization of the information, however, proves to be the exception,
as most entries for “Klavierauszug” present fully developed discussions of the issues distinct
from those appearing under “Arrangiren.”

Beginning with Koch’s Musikalisches Lexikon and continuing in the works of Dommer
and Mendel, “Klavierauszug” is defined as “the adaptation of a full score for piano”—literally a

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1857), 2:619. “Klavierauszug nennt man die Einrichtung eines für mehrere und verschiedene Instrumente, oder für
Gesang mit Begleitung von Instrumenten komponirten Tonstücks zum Vortrag auf dem Klavier oder Fortepiano.”

40 Bernsdorf, “Arrangiren,” 1:294. “In letzterer Beziehung spielen die Klavierauszüge (s.d.) eine bedeutende Rolle
und sind auch in der That fast unentbehrlich für die Kenntnissnahme größerer Werke, Opern, Oratorien, u.s.w., von denen
in sehr vielen Fällen gar keine Partitur vorhanden ist.”
The essence of these definitions is the practical and scholarly purpose of the piano score. Dommer elaborates on the term *Auszug* (reduction), explaining that “in most cases this adaptation cannot include all the voices of the score but rather for the most part is focused on the most essential, and consequently does not give the score completely but rather only a reduction of it.”

Koch first states what piano reductions are not, namely compositions intended for performance by a solo pianist. Rather, he suggests that reductions of operas, cantatas and other popular large-scale works for the piano can foster more wide-spread dissemination of these works among music enthusiasts for the purpose of study and domestic practice and can be produced and therefore distributed less expensively than would be possible with full scores.

The second point is reiterated by Koch in his conclusion when he states that the practice of creating piano reductions is based merely on financial considerations, since “for a true connoisseur of music a composition will stand on its own ground only in its perfect form, that is in the full score.”

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43 Koch, “Clavier-Auszug,” 342. “Man macht dergleichen Auszüge gemeiniglich nur von Opern, Cantaten, und andern beliebten Kunstwerken von großem Umfange. Sie haben nicht sowohl zur Absicht, dass sie von einzeln Personen, so wie ein fürs Clavier arrangirtes Tonstück, vorgetragen werden sollen sondern man sucht durch dieses Berfahren hauptsächlich solche Kunstwerke auf eine wohlfeilere Art unter Kenner und Liebhaber der Kunst, theils zum Studium, theils zur Privatausübung derselben unter kleinen Zirken, zu verbreiten, als es durch die Herausgabe der vollstan digen Partitur geschehen kann.” “Such reductions are commonly made only from operas, cantatas and other popular large-scale works. They are not [originally] intended for performance by a single person, as is the case with pieces [originally] cast for piano; rather, this method is an attempt to disseminate [these large-scale] works among connoisseurs and enthusiasts of music—partly for the purpose of study, partly for domestic practice—and do it inexpensively and more effectively than is possible through the publication of full scores.”

44 Ibid, 343. “…daher nur für jetzt die Bemerkung, dass sich für den Kenner ein solches Kunstwerk nur in seiner Vollendung, das heißt, in seiner vollständigen Partitur, behaupten kann.”
Although presenting essentially the same justifications, Dommer outlines the practical functions of piano reductions as follows:

1. making works accessible for domestic performance for those not skilled in reading full scores;
2. facilitating the accompanying of rehearsals of vocal works for orchestra; and
3. providing more cost-effective scores for purchase by the public.\(^{45}\)

Based on the stated purpose of these reductions for piano, Dommer elaborates on the modifications required to create a coherent work:

Since in many cases the hands of any individual player can not handle all the parts of the full score, it is necessary to reduce them so that first and foremost the movement of the leading (principal) parts remains recognizable. Rather than compromise the clarity of the whole through overload, it is better to omit, alter, or place in different registers those parts of the orchestral score which are fillers and which on the piano obscure the movement of leading (principal) parts and make clear execution difficult. Preparation of such a reduction is hence a difficult task, (especially for someone who is not the original composer): it requires not only a detailed knowledge of the musical structure but also a most thorough study and complete understanding of the work, as well as keen artistic sensibility to highlight those parts of the full score that contribute to the clarity of the picture that the composer created with far more extensive means, and to transfer them to the arrangement. Which of the secondary parts and fillers may be omitted and which are necessary for clarity must be more carefully weighed, so that the work is not distorted nor the composer's ideas rendered unrecognizable.\(^{46}\)

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\(^{45}\) Dommer, “Clavier-Auszug,” *Musikalisches Lexicon*, 172. “Dieser hat auch im wesentlichen nur den practischen Zweck, die Tonwerke auch solchen Personen, die des Partiturlezens nicht kundig sind, zugänglich zu machen, Ausführung, derselben privatim oder in kleinen Cirkeln zu ermöglichen und auf diese Weise zu einer weiteren Verbreitung des Kunstwerkes, als durch Herausgabe der vollständigen Partitur geschehen kann, beitragen zu helfen. Grössere Vocalwerke mit Orchester werden gewöhnlich auch im Clavierauszuge (d.h. das begleitende Orchester für Clavier arrangirt, die Stimmen selbstverständlich in Partitur darüber) herausgegeben, sowohl um die Anschaffung derselben, als auch dem begleitenden Musiker beim Einstudiren seine Aufgabe zu erleichtern.”

\(^{46}\) Ibid. “Da die Hände des einzelnen Spielers in vielen Fällen den ganzen Stimmeninhalt der Partitur nicht wiedergaben vermögen, kommt es darauf an, die alsdann nothwendig werdende Reduction so vorzunehmen, dass vor allem die Bewegung der Hauptstimmen kenntlich bleibt. Es ist besser, einzelne Füllstimmen, welche im Orchester zurücktreten, am Clavier aber den Gang der Hauptstimmen verdunkeln und den deutlichen Vortrag erschweren würden, fortzulassen oder zu ändern oder in anderes Lage zu bringen, als die Klarheit des Ganzen durch Ueberladung zu beeinträchtigen. Die Verfertigung eines solchen Auszuges ist, namentlich für jemand, der das Tonstück nicht selbst verfasst hat, unter Umständen eine schwierige Aufgabe; es werden nicht nur genaue Kenntnisse vom Tonsatz, sondern auch das sorgfältigste Studium und vollkommene Verständniss des Kunstwerkes, sowie ein feines Kunstgefühl vorausgesetzt, um aus der vollen Partitur diejenigen Züge hervorzuheben und in den Auszug zu übertragen, die zur Anschaulichkeit des Bildes, welches der Tonsetzer mit weit umfänglicheren Mitteln hergestellt hat, nothwendig sind. Es muss dabei aufs genaueste gefühlt und erwogen werden, was von Neben- und
Dommer summarizes the process of reduction as follows: determining the essential parts, making adjustments for performance on the piano, and deleting the superfluous. Thus the adapter/arranger must evaluate all aspects of the whole in order to determine the comparative importance of every note in striving to create a composition that clearly represents all important features of the original.

Although *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians* does not include a separate entry for the piano arrangement, beginning with *Grove 3* a section entitled “The Function of a Pianoforte Arrangement” is appended to the “Arrangement” entry. Seemingly an equivalent to the frequent entry “Klavierauszug” in the German dictionaries, this new section by Leonard Borwick indicates the purpose of the piano arrangement in the opening paragraph—“[i]n considering the subject of the Arrangement we must not overlook the important part played by the pianoforte score in widening our musical range and in providing the means at once for the enlargement and gratification of our taste”\(^47\)—and its justification in the closing paragraph: “an arrangement is justified as it is creative and serves in some way to interpret and illumine the original.”\(^48\)

Borwick’s overview of the piano arrangement echoes the function of a piano reduction outlined by nineteenth-century German scholars and then tackles the process of creating a successful piano score and the characteristics of an acceptable product. The focus of Borwick’s discussion centers around the qualities of judgment and the technical skill required to effectively

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\(^{48}\) Ibid., 125.
reduce large compositions for the piano, specifically the art of selecting and distributing the material.

To present the matter of an intricate score in compact, playable form, with judicious modification, where necessary, of figure or figuration to meet the requirements of a keyboard technique—this is not within the gift of every musician, however score-versed or score-learned he be. For that instinctive right handling of the material by which it is subdued to pianoforte uses we must look to the pianist born and bred, with his practised sense and mastery of the keyboard. It is no difficult matter to present to oneself the broad outlines and contents of a score. The art lies in the selection and still more in the disposition of the material to the new medium. The conversion into a pianoforte style is not complete until all dead-weight is removed and combinations are found so favourable to the two hands that the mere manipulation is for delight and the whole thing tends, in the common phrase, to “play itself.”

Where this ease and smoothness of delivery is secured on a basis of harmony that is faithful to the original, it matters little what detail is shed by the way. Much of the ornament and rhetorical figure will be shorn away; intricacies of part-writing will have to be smoothed out; even some rhythmical movement may have to give way to the need for a strongly established harmonic structure and melodic outline. On the other hand, if wooed in the right spirit, a piano will do wonders in the way of conveying the character and distinctive quality of instruments of the orchestra, both brass and wood; while a harp flourish, pizzicato, or the tremolo of drums or strings, are among the more plausible and easily executed effects. It should, in fact, be possible for an auditor conversant with orchestral timbres to conjure up for himself a rough pattern of the score from hearing a good piano version performed with right intelligence and perception.49

Borwick’s discussion reaches beyond the basic nineteenth-century elucidation of a piano arrangement to describe what Liszt accomplished with his renderings of Schubert’s songs and the symphonies of Beethoven and Berlioz for piano. With his superb mastery of the keyboard, Liszt did not merely reduce the original score but rather interpreted it for performance on the piano. In fact, Borwick specifically identified Liszt’s arrangements of the Beethoven symphonies, which he described as “contrived with much ingenuity to give the maximum of orchestral effect” and embodied with “restraint and decorum.”50 In opposition to the general pianoforte arrangement characterized as a “simplified form” and “a more or less easy pianoforte

49 Ibid., 124.
piece,” Borwick describes Liszt’s repertoire as one in which “[t]he player of mere average capacity would soon find his progress checked by the octave flights, the rapid chord successions, the difficult articulations in both hands and all manner of stirring incident that meets him by the way.”

Thus while the general definition of the “Klavierauszug” focuses on the process of reduction—the identification and presentation of the essential parts of the original—that results in abundant compositions for study, domestic practice, and further dissemination of the original, Borwick’s examination of the same topic acknowledges that Liszt went beyond mere reduction. As will be discovered, Liszt interpreted the original while at the same time maintaining its integrity. Borwick’s justification of the piano arrangement excludes trite compositions, with their mere reduction, and embraces more substantial works, such as those of Liszt, that both interpret and shed light on the original.

**Analogies for Arrangement**

Entries that extend beyond the recitation of a basic definition and generic examples often employ non-musical comparisons in an attempt to further explain the process of musical arrangement and the relationship between original and derivative works. The two analogies that appear in definitions of arrangement as well as reviews of compositions in other kinds of writings are the literary translation and the engraving. Liszt himself employed both analogies when stating that in his work with the Beethoven symphonies he desired to be on the same level as both the “intelligent engraver” and the “conscientious translator.”

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51 Ibid.
52 Liszt’s Preface to the Beethoven Symphonies, 1st edition (Rome, 1839).
analogies compare shared characteristics, metaphors also invite comparison, but in a more direct manner.

The use of metaphors to convey musical concepts goes back several centuries. For example, ideas from rhetoric were often used to describe musical form. Mark Evan Bonds argues that although metaphors obviously do not have a total congruence and thus provide a limited comparison of music and rhetoric, they can aid in understanding musical concepts.53 Further, “[m]etaphors are more than a mere substitution of one term for another: they reflect broader processes of thought that often associate extended networks of images and functions beyond the individual terms in question.”54 Within the analogies of translation and engraving, metaphors that highlight specific aspects of the process or the product of arrangement in this way become apparent.

**Literary Translation**

The arrangement entry in all five editions of *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians* opens with the following: “ARRANGEMENT, or ADAPTATION, is the musical counterpart of literary translation. Voices or instruments are as languages by which the thoughts or emotions of composers are made known to the world; the object of arrangement is to make that which was written in one musical language intelligible in another.”55 Rather than following the conventional practice of defining a term and then elaborating on its meaning, C. Hubert H. Parry links musical arrangement and the literary translation at the outset, in that he equates both voices and instruments to languages.

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54 Ibid.
The entry continues with elucidation of the various nuances of this analogy. Parry moves immediately to a comparison of the persons tasked with the transference of a work from one method of delivery to another. As a means of fleshing out this analogy, he compares the roles of the arranger and the translator rather than comparing the works themselves.

The functions of the arranger and translator are similar; for instruments, like languages, are characterized by peculiar idioms and special aptitudes and deficiencies which call for critical ability and knowledge of corresponding modes of expression in dealing with them. But more than all, the most indispensable quality to both is a capacity to understand the work they have to deal with. For it is not enough to put note for note or word for word or even to find corresponding idioms. The meanings and values of words and notes are variable with their relative positions, and the choice of them demands appreciation of the work generally, as well as of the details of the materials of which it is composed. It demands, in fact, a certain correspondence of feeling with the original author in the mind of the arranger or translator.\textsuperscript{56}

The focus of this analogy is the analysis that must be undertaken by both the arranger and the translator due to the inequivalencies in both verbal and musical languages. Complexities inherent in literary classics and musical masterpieces preclude simplistic word-for-word translation or note-for-note transcription. Whereas a literal transference from one language or medium to another may result in an acceptable derivative work, a thorough understanding of the original work and its languages or modes of musical expression will result in extraordinary derivatives.

One primary difference between literary and musical arrangements, as noted by Parry, is the relationship of the translator/arranger to the original author/composer. In general, literary translations have been made by other great authors, whereas musical arrangements have been created by both composers of the original works and other great masters.

Authors have often been fortunate in having other great authors for their translators, but few have written their own works in more languages than one. Music has had the advantage of not only having arrangements by the greatest masters, but arrangements by them of their own works. Such cases ought to be the highest order of their kind, and if

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
there are any things worth noting in the comparison between arrangements and originals they ought to be found there.\textsuperscript{57}

For example, in addition to transcribing the songs and symphonies of other composers for piano, Liszt also arranged his own songs and symphonic works for various mediums of performance. While his songs were arranged for solo piano, the symphonic poems also exist as arrangements for piano duet, two pianos, and/or other keyboard instruments.

\textit{Artistic Works}

Because the piano has the ability to convey the essence of orchestral compositions, Liszt views piano arrangements as vehicles for the dissemination of large-scale compositions in the same way that an engraving can represent the essence of a painting to a widespread audience. He expounded on this comparison in his letter to Pictet that was published in the \textit{Revue et Gazette musicale} in 1838:

The piano is a means of disseminating works that would otherwise remain unknown or unfamiliar to the general public because of the difficulty involved in assembling an orchestra. Thus it bears the same relation to an orchestral work that an engraving bears to a painting; it multiplies the original and makes it available to everyone, and even if it does not reproduce the colors, it at least reproduces the light and shadow.\textsuperscript{58}

Through the analogy of visual works, namely the relationship of an engraving and a painting, Liszt introduced the discussion of the replication of orchestral effects and sounds by the piano. He pointed out that: (1) an arrangement makes the work available to a wider audience in the same way that an engraving multiplies a painting; and (2) as an engraving produces the distinction between light and shadow without the replication of color, an arrangement can also reproduce the basic musical elements without tone color. Although piano transcriptions

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
obviously do not replicate the various timbres of a symphony or a song, Liszt’s careful transference of orchestral idioms to the piano provides a good idea of the sound produced by the orchestra.

As Borwick points out, “[i]t should, in fact, be possible for an auditor conversant with orchestral timbres to conjure up for himself a rough pattern of the score from hearing a good piano version performed with right intelligence and perception.”59 This task is greatly aided if listeners have the full timbral sound of the original in their ears through previous exposure. A piano transcription does not provide exact orchestral details and sounds, but, as Borwick suggests, it can provide a listener with clues as to the basic layout of the instrumental color.

Bernsdorf used the same analogy in his “Arrangiren” entry: “[a]n arrangement is to the original composition as the engraving is to the oil painting; one can easily recognize the drawing and the composition but not the color palette, nor the vivid coloring.”60 Again, while the general framework can be easily and accurately reproduced, the colors are not transferred. He did not elaborate on further nuances of his analogy.

In the section entitled “The Function of Pianoforte Arrangement,” Leonard Borwick updates the analogy and compares the piano score to “the photograph, one of whose uses in another sphere is the reproduction and distribution of the great masterpieces of plastic and pictorial art.”61 Although similar to the engraving, the relationship between a photograph and any other piece of visual art is one that can be understood by twentieth-century audiences.

In his 1810 review of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, E.T.A. Hoffman provides one more variant of this analogy: a sketch. Concluding with a generally disapproving evaluation of an

unidentified piano duet arrangement of a symphonic work, Hoffman did mention a use for arrangements and provide qualified praise for this particular publication:

Normally the reviewer is not especially in favour of arrangements, but it cannot be denied that the solitary enjoyment in one’s own room of a masterpiece one has heard played by the full orchestra often excites the imagination in the same way as before and conjures forth the same impressions in the mind. The piano reproduces the great work as a sketch reproduces a great painting, and the imagination brings it to life with the colours of the original. At any rate the symphony has been adapted for the piano with skill and insight, and proper regard has been paid to the requirements of the instrument without obscuring the distinctive qualities of the original.62

Although Hoffman had access to the full score of the symphony and undoubtedly had heard the symphony for purposes of his review, he acknowledges the ability of an arrangement—specifically a four-hand arrangement—to provide further enjoyment of the symphony. Despite the obvious lack of color in the piano’s “sketch,” prior knowledge of the work allows a listener to recreate the instrumental sounds in his mind thus promoting a satisfactory listening experience. Neither Dommer nor Mendel include an analogy to explain arrangement.

Evaluation of Analogies

The various analogies used to explain the process of arrangement and the work of the arranger focus on different aspects of the relationship of the resultant work to the original. Within these analogies specific metaphors, such as idiom and color, facilitate the discussion of similarities. Comparisons with the translation focus on the difficulty in adapting idioms from one language to another and parallels in adapting musical idioms from one instrument to another. The analogy serves as an aid in illuminating the difficulties one faces when attempting to create a musical transcription. Configurations of notes natural to one instrument are not necessarily as

effective when literally transcribed for a different instrument. As such, an understanding of idioms in both languages or media is necessary for an excellent translation or transcription.

The analogy involving visual works—transference of a painting to an engraving or a sketch—focuses on the dissemination of the original work to a wider audience despite the loss of color. This kind of replication will preserve the basic shape of the original, but not the color. In the same way, although a piano transcription successfully conveys many aspects of a symphony it obviously loses the multiple colors bestowed by the differing instrumental sounds. This analogy stresses the fact that although the derivative work has lost the detail of the original, it can still convey its broad outlines.

In expressing his desire to add valuable compositions to the corpus of published piano arrangements appearing in the nineteenth century, Liszt draws on the analogies of the engraver and the translator.

I would have regarded it, I admit, as a rather useless way of occupying my time to publish a twentieth variant of the symphonies done in the manner customary up till now, but I shall consider these hours well spent if I have succeeded in transferring to the piano not only the broad outlines of Beethoven’s composition but also the multitude of details and minor features that contribute so powerfully to the perfection of the whole. I shall be satisfied if I have accomplished the task of the intelligent engraver and conscientious translator, who capture both the spirit and the letter of a work and thus help to propagate knowledge of the masters and a feeling for beauty.63

While acknowledging that he is not the first composer to undertake the task of transcribing Beethoven’s symphonies, he affirms his aim to be both an intelligent engraver and a conscientious translator who conveys both the overarching essence of the original work as well as its details. Both analogies, as used by Liszt and other nineteenth- and early twentieth-century musical scholars, contribute to an understanding of arrangement.

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63 Liszt’s Preface to the Beethoven Symphonies, 1st edition (Rome, 1839).
Conclusion

As a whole, the definitions of “Arrangiren” and “Klavierauszug” in musical reference works illuminate the understanding and estimation of non-original compositions in the nineteenth century. The reworking of musical compositions for different combinations of instruments from those of the originals was called “arrangement” and encompassed innumerable combinations of forces. As evidenced by the general examples provided, arrangements varied in both style and quality. “Klavierauszug” referred to a piano reduction defined as a literal reworking for performance on that instrument. The purpose of this kind of composition was invariably practical: to aid in the study of large-scale compositions, facilitate domestic practice, and further the dissemination of repertory in ways that could not be accomplished by a large ensemble such as an orchestra. These definitions focused on reduction.

As a means of explaining the process and the resultant works, writers made comparisons with other modern means of disseminating original works, namely the literary translation and the engraving. Whereas the literary translation involved adjustment to create an intelligent transference of idioms, the engraving analogy focused on the derivative work allowing wider dissemination.

These definitions do not, however, specifically address compositions such as Liszt’s transcriptions for solo piano of Schubert’s songs and the symphonies of Beethoven and Berlioz. Because Liszt’s works were not simply piano reductions but rather interpretations of the original that became part of a pianist’s repertoire, they need to be evaluated in a different light. Still, the analogies of the engraving and the translation succeed in elucidating the products of all kinds and qualities of piano arrangement and are therefore useful for discussing Liszt’s works.
Liszt’s piece *Soirées de Vienne*, moreover, also flies in the face of the standard definitions. This set of virtuoso piano compositions certainly reworks Schubert’s waltzes, but it does not involve a change of medium. Liszt employs thirty-five themes from Schubert’s dances for piano to create nine concert pieces *also* for solo piano. He thus stretches nineteenth-century definitions not only in interpreting songs and symphonies in his arrangements for piano but also in elaborating on small-scale piano compositions to craft larger works with no change in medium.

In the same manner that a translator of a literary work must take into account idioms available in both languages, Liszt adjusted the symphonic score for a logical and accurate reproduction on the piano, albeit without the orchestral color. The level of his arrangements allows him to be called without reservation an intelligent engraver and a conscientious translator.
In a discussion of the ideal of fidelity or authenticity, Lydia Goehr poses a thought-provoking question: “does the transcription of a work offer the public something independently valuable, such that it comes to be judged on its own terms independently of reference to the original work? Or should it always be judged in relation to the original work?”\(^1\) The question to be examined in this chapter is precisely what Goehr posits: specifically how composers, musical scholars, and audiences thought about (and to some extent still think about) transcriptions regarding their relationship to the original and their status as independent compositions. When one attempts to understand musical compositions and ultimately to place them within some system of classification, questions of musical genre come to the fore. Because of their very nature, however, there will rarely be clear-cut answers regarding the genre of arrangements. Goehr continues: “The advantage of this sort of indeterminacy—the advantage of there not always being a clear answer to this question—should be obvious to those who find it valuable and interesting to judge a given composition both as an independent work and as a transcription.”\(^2\) Although the situation is not clear-cut, Goehr suggests that the two views can exist in harmony.

At various times during his compositional career, Liszt created literal transcriptions, freer arrangements, and paraphrases. As with designations of original compositions such as symphonic poem, sonata, etude, or string quartet, Liszt often chose titles for his non-original works that communicated his conception of these compositions to his audiences. For instance, his early work with operas yielded titles such as “Reminiscences,” “Illustrations,” “Paraphrase,”

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2 Ibid.
and “Fantasie” that indicate the freedom with which Liszt treated the original material. 3 While not a title per se, Liszt specifically designated his symphonic transcriptions as *Partitions de piano*.

The title pages in the original published editions add several layers of identifying information for the works. For instance, the title page for the first version of the Fifth Symphony published by Breitkopf & Härtel reads “SYMPHONIES DE BEETHOVEN. / Partition de Piano / … / PAR / F. LISZT” and the inner title page reads “Cinquième / SYMPHONIE / DE / Beethoven. / Partition de Piano / par / F. LISZT.” 4 In addition to indicating the composition’s source, namely Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, this page also labels this new score as a *Partition de piano*. In this case, Liszt’s use of this designation conveys his conception of these transcriptions.

Writing to Adolphe Pictet in September 1837, Liszt pointed out that he “first proposed a new method of transcription in [his] piano score of the *Symphonie fantastique*” in which he transferred “not only the symphony’s musical framework, but also its detained effects and the multiplicity of its instrumental and rhythmic combinations to the piano.” 5 He then explained the reasoning behind his choice of the designation as it relates to his compositional method:

I called my work a *partition de piano* [piano score] in order to make clear my intention of following the orchestra step by step and of giving it no special treatment beyond the mass and variety of its sound. 6

Liszt utilized the same process in his work with Beethoven’s symphonies. In the same letter he states “[t]he procedure I followed for Berlioz’s symphony I am currently applying to those by

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3 See chapter 2 for a list of titles that Liszt employed for his arrangements of operatic themes.
4 NLE, Ser. II, 18:156. I have eliminated the dedication information that also appeared on the title page as it does not have any bearing on the topic.
6 Ibid.
Beethoven… The first four symphonies are already transcribed, and the others will be completed shortly.”  In this correspondence, Liszt presented both a label for and a description of his carefully thought-out process for transferring an orchestral work to the piano.

A quarter of a century later, in correspondence to his publisher Breitkopf and Härtel dated 28 August 1863, Liszt again stated his preferred designation for his orchestral transcriptions of the Beethoven symphonies.

By the title *Partition de Piano* (which is to be retained and translated into German as ‘Clavier-Partitur’ or ‘Pianoforte-Partitur’?) I wish to indicate my intention to combine the performer’s wit with the effects of the orchestra and to make the different sonorities and nuances felt within the restricted possibilities of the piano.8

Liszt considered his symphonic transcriptions to be a success because he did not simply arrange the original; rather, he translated both the structure of the composition as well as its details into something that was effective when performed on the piano. In writing about his symphonic transcriptions, he reveals his careful consideration of the process involved as well as his desire to create compositions that musically reflect the original. It appears that his faithfulness to both the symphonic sound itself and the notes in the score led to his title for this corpus of works.

On the other hand, Liszt did not come up with a specific title for his song transcriptions. In thematic catalogs, concert programs, and writings about the compositions, they are simply designated by the original song title and the name of the composer along with some indication that they are indeed transcriptions. For instance, published scores present titles that generally follow a pattern such as “[Composer’s] Lieder [übertragen] for the Piano by Franz Liszt.” Still, his work in this area is anything but formulaic and patterned. While retaining the overall conception of Schubert’s songs, he added a pianistic flair that made these compositions a part of the repertoire for cultivated pianists, including Liszt himself, who performed them during his

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7 Ibid., 46-47. At this time, only the 5th, 6th, and 7th symphonies had been “transcribed” by Liszt.
recitals. A Viennese critic identified as “Carlo” asserted boldly: “In the Schubert song
transcriptions, he has created a new genre.”

Why is it important to examine what nineteenth-century composers, critics, and
audiences thought about the genre of musical arrangements, specifically Liszt’s transcriptions of
songs and symphonies? Considering derivative works simply as reductions of the original that
happened to be played on the piano and considered to be substitutes for the original—such as
translations of literary works or reproductions of artworks—means that they retain little
significance today in an era with easy access to live performances, recordings, and publications
of the original compositions. Nineteenth-century estimation of Liszt’s symphonic and song
transcriptions as interpretations of the original and not merely reductions justifies our accepting
these compositions as legitimate.

Genre: Definition

Genre is defined as “a category of artistic composition, as in music or literature, marked
by a distinctive style, form, or content.” Derived from the Latin genus, namely “a class, group,
or kind with common attributes,” genres can be used to classify works with like characteristics.
Lawrence Dreyfus offers the following description: “the categories by which people (at any

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9 “In den Übertragungen Schubert’scher Lieder hat er eine neue Gattung geschaffen.” From Wiener Zeitschrift für
Kunst, Literatur, Theater und Mode (7 December 1839), 147:1176. Quoted in Otto Brusatti, Schubert im Wiener
10 Despite the fact that we can identify genre designations for Liszt’s transcriptions of songs and symphonies, the
breadth of arrangements created in the nineteenth century—including everything from free paraphrases to literal
transcriptions for solo piano, piano duo, two pianos, other solo instruments, other chamber ensembles or even a full
orchestra, for performance on the concert stage or in the home—renders the identification of a uniform genre across
the board of non-original compositions impossible. Consequently, the scope of this discussion will be limited to
these two “genres” of Liszt’s transcriptions for solo piano.
historical moment) slice up kinds of experiences and think about them as discrete objects.”¹³
Thus genres are defined both by common characteristics and the way in which audiences
encounter their representative works.

Literary theories of genre provide a useful foundation for launching a discussion of
musical genre. In her monograph *Genre*, a study of this topic in literature, Heather Dubrow
defines genre as “a code of behavior established between the author and his readers.”¹⁴ The
identification of genre by an author makes a pronouncement about writers of the past, authors of
the future, and their readers. According to Dubrow, the author “is in effect telling us the name
and rules of his code, rules that affect not only how he should write the work but also how we
should read it.”¹⁵ Further, the relationship between authors and their readers is a “generic
contract” whereby the identification of a genre through a title and other signals indicates
intentions of the author, who “in effect agrees that he will follow at least some of the genres in
which he is writing, and we in turn agree that we will pay close attention to certain aspects of his
work while realizing that others, because of the nature of the genres, are likely to be far less
important.”¹⁶ Codes of behavior and generic contracts can be transferred to the study of musical
genre: a contract between a composer and a listener, performer, or critic can also be identified by
title and create expectations with regard to form and style based upon the characteristics of
previous similar compositions.

However, as Carl Dahlhaus points out, the seeming straightforwardness inherent in the
general definition of genre yields confusion when one attempts to nail down its meaning in
music. “What a musical genre is seems straightforward. But attempts at articulating the criteria

¹³ Laurence Dreyfus, *Bach and the Patterns of Invention* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press,
1996), 139.
¹⁵ Ibid., 31.
¹⁶ Ibid.
that determine a genre lead one into maze-like complications.”\textsuperscript{17} The difficulties will be magnified in this study, as it necessarily reaches beyond traditional studies that examine original compositions in order to consider issues of genre of non-original compositions.

An understanding of nineteenth-century perceptions of genre will be valuable in determining how its critics and audiences evaluated transcriptions. Jeffrey Kallberg summed up the importance of analyzing music in relation to both contemporary and historical genre theory as follows:

Research into the effects of genre should involve the reconstruction of contexts and traditions, and the perceptions of composers and their audiences, both historical and modern. This formulation properly locates genres as a communicative concept, one that actively informs the experience of a musical work.\textsuperscript{18}

The classification of Liszt’s symphonic and song transcriptions provided by Liszt himself and the Viennese critic “Carlo” demonstrates that these compositions were considered distinctive. Study of them should not just generate general descriptions of the compositions and processes but rather should lead to greater understanding of Liszt’s intentions and compositional methods and, consequently, their importance in the nineteenth century. Thus a brief study of both contemporary and historical views of genre will help provide a methodological framework for understanding and evaluating Liszt’s song and symphony transcriptions.

Dreyfus discusses the relationship between genre and form in writings on musical composition by Heinrich Christoph Koch. Koch’s \textit{Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition} from 1793 codifies an understanding of composition that culminates in the “arrangement of short compositions” such as dance forms and, finally, “larger compositions” including recitatives.

\textsuperscript{17} Carl Dahlhaus, “Was ist eine musikalische Gattung?”, \textit{Neue Zeitschrift für Musik} 135, no. 10 (1074): 620.
arias, choruses, overtures, symphonies, and sonatas. In comparing compositions with similar forms, Koch looks at distinguishing features to differentiate genre. For instance, when discussing the similarities between the sonata and the symphony he also notes the primary difference between them: “[b]ut as similar to one another as the forms of the sonata and the symphony may be in the number of periods and course of modulations, as different, conversely, is the inner nature of the melody in the two. This difference, however, can be better felt than described.”

Koch differentiates between the character of the symphony and the sonata as follows: “the melody of a sonata must be extremely developed and must present the finest nuances of feelings, whereas the melody of the symphony must distinguish itself not through such refinement of expression, but through force and energy.”

Dreyfus concludes that for Koch, form serves simply as one important feature of genre along with phrase-structure, melodic characteristics, and quality of expression.

In reviews of five sonatas published in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* from 1838 through 1844, Schumann projects orchestral characteristics onto a piano composition. These discussions, which appeared after the publication of his review of the *Symphonie fantastique*, demonstrate his propensity for hearing orchestral effects in non-orchestral music. For example, in a review of Schubert’s op. 140 *Grand Duo* published in June 1838 Schumann believed that the composition was a transcription of a symphony.

Moreover, I regarded it as a symphony transcribed for the piano, until the original manuscript—in which it is indicated as “four-hand sonata” in his own hand—required me to commit otherwise. I say “required,” because I still cannot get away from my [earlier] thoughts. Someone who writes as much as Schubert, in

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21 Ibid., 203.
the end, does not make many mistakes with titles; and thus he perhaps in haste entitled his work “sonata,” while in his head it stood completed as a symphony. To mention the more general reason yet: in a time when his name first began to be known, one always more likely found a publisher for a sonata than for a symphony. Familiar with his style and the manner of his treatment of the piano, and comparing this work with his other sonatas, in which the purest piano-character is expressed, I can explain it to myself only as an orchestral piece. One hears string- and wind-instruments, tuttis, individual solos, drumrolls. The great, broad symphonic form, even the reminiscences of Beethoven symphonies—as in the second movement [the reminiscence] to the Andante of Beethoven’s second symphony, and in the last movement to the last movement of the A-Major symphony—as [well as] several paler passages, which seem to me to have been lost by the arrangement [for piano], [all of these] support my opinion in the same way. With that I would like to defend the Duo, however, against the reproach that it was not always thought of properly as a piano piece and that something was expected of the instrument that it can not do, while, as an arranged symphony, it would be considered with a different eye. If we accept it as such, then we are approximately one symphony richer.\textsuperscript{24}

The character of this piano composition caused Schumann to hear orchestral sounds. Further, as will be seen in the discussion of his review of the \textit{Symphonie fantastique}, he did not hesitate to discuss the orchestral qualities of the \textit{Symphonie fantastique}, a composition that he saw as a piano composition but rightfully comprehended as a symphony.

Liszt’s transcriptions raise similar issues of genre when compared with the original compositions as they project the character of the underlying symphony. His symphonic transcriptions retain the form of the original symphonies. Thus features of form, style, nature, and feeling are not sufficient to distinguish Liszt’s transcriptions of songs and symphonies from the original works.

In a modern study entitled “Chopin and Genre,” Jim Samson addresses genre, style, and form and notes that “[a]ll three are based on repetition, codifying past repetitions and inviting future repetitions.”\textsuperscript{25} However, Samson suggests that the elements of genre reach beyond the


nineteenth-century determinative factors of style and form to include context, function and community validation. Consequently, the social aspect of music becomes as important in defining a composition as the constituent musical elements themselves. When discussing community validation as an important aspect of genre, Samson goes so far as to say “[t]hus a genre can change when the validating community changes, even where the notes remain the same.” Although Samson employs the repertoire of Chopin’s original piano music as the basis of his discussion, these concepts are also significant in the study of non-original compositions: arrangements for solo piano often resulted in significant changes in context, function, and community validation between an original work and its derivative. Symphonic transcriptions arranged for performance in domestic settings are the most drastic example. However, Liszt’s performances of his song transcriptions on concert stages also falls into this category.

In “Was ist eine musikalische Gattung?” Dahlhaus suggests that genres of music are distinguished by their distinct characteristics, but that the same kinds of characteristics do not apply to all genres. For instance, whereas “a mass is defined by the unvarying text that is its basis, the liturgical function that it serves, and the high stylistic level that it should maintain,” a very different kind of composition, namely the string quartet, is defined by “instrumentation, types of forms, and aesthetic distance from popular music.” Therefore, “[a] musical genre is a transmitted norm that a composer makes his or her own, but a norm that connects criteria of different dimensions.” Along these same lines, Dubrow suggests that genres function in a similar manner to human personalities in that “[l]ike different personalities, different genres are

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26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Dahlhaus, “Was ist eine musikalische Gattung?”, 620-621.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., 621.
distinguished from one another by which characteristics predominate.” 31 Instead of demanding that all genres contain the same characteristics,

[i]n comparing genres as in comparing different personalities, we find that various elements may assume the same function: some people express their aggressiveness by making satirical comments and others by playing team sports, while the kinds of order and repetitiveness created in one genre by an elaborate metrical pattern, may be built into other genres through, say, rhyme or narrative patterns instead. 32

In the same way that personalities, literary genres, and genres of original music can be distinguished by different kinds of characteristics, genres encompassing arrangements or transcriptions are differentiated by other sets of criteria—obviously instrumentation, but also the manner in which the arranger worked with the original material. In general, the stylistic features of the underlying work do not determine genres of arrangements, in that a song by Schubert could be arranged by two different composers, yielding two completely different results, and thus two different kinds of arrangement. Instead, the techniques Liszt employed in the transformation of a song or symphony into a composition for solo piano are vital factors in determining the genres of his non-original works. Thus while the concept of genre is the same with regard to both original compositions and arrangements, the terminology used to discuss the two will be completely different.

How then did composers, scholars, and audiences evaluate transcriptions with respect to form and style, and secondarily, based upon outward characteristics such as the title? Further, did changes in the performance medium affect the perception of the genre of these compositions?

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32 Ibid.
Composers’ Identification of Genre

Kallberg identifies the individuality in Chopin’s Nocturne in G minor that “has led some to dismiss genre as a conceptual category that is of little use in criticism.” However, because Chopin himself specifically designated the work as a nocturne, Kallberg believes that “[u]nless the title was arbitrary or cynical, the concept of genre must have meant something to Chopin and his audience.” Consequently, his study of genre as it applies to this nocturne aimed to recover the meaning that Chopin hoped to communicate, as opposed to viewing genre and, in this case, the title nocturne simply as a means of classification. Similarly, Samson suggests that although a genre title “partly conditions our response to its stylistic and formal content,” it does not create a genre. Rather, “it is the interaction of title and content that creates generic meaning.”

The title pages of the publication of the symphony transcription itself leaves no doubt that the composition is derived from Beethoven’s symphony and is at the same time a work of Liszt. Liszt’s designations for these works, namely *Partitions de piano*, are meant to communicate something to his audiences. As seen earlier in the letter to Pictet, Liszt viewed the label as a means of conveying his “intention of following the orchestra step by step.”

However, because Liszt’s *Partitions de piano* from the 1830s are the first works in this “genre,” the designation does not refer back to works that would provide a context for critics and audiences. Rather, by specifically designating his symphonic transcriptions “piano scores” and then further explaining his method of transcription, Liszt himself specified the generic contract.

I applied myself as scrupulously as if I were translating a sacred text to transferring, not only the symphony’s musical framework, but also its detailed effects and the multiplicity

34 Ibid., 239.
35 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
of its instrumental and rhythmic combinations to the piano. The difficulty did not faze me, as my feeling for art and my love of it gave me double courage. I may not have succeeded completely, but that first attempt has at least demonstrated that the way is open and that it will no longer be acceptable to arrange the masters’ works as contemptibly as has been done to this point.39

The question then becomes this: what did he attempt to communicate to his listeners through this label? As stated by Liszt, he believed that the piano could effectively present the sounds of the symphony, including the framework, the detailed effects, and instrumental and rhythmic combinations. Further, he considered piano transcriptions to be valuable tools for presenting the works to wider audiences, and he carefully thought out ways in which the transcription could best reflect the original.

Although not exactly analogous to Chopin calling his idiosyncratic work a “nocturne,” Liszt’s identification of his symphonic transcriptions as Partitions de piano communicates his conception of these works; it does not place them crudely in a category. Whereas in Chopin’s Nocturne in G minor, the title communicates a genre that would not otherwise be discerned through the melodies, accompaniment, rhythms, and large-scale tonal and formal plan, even a cursory consideration of the Partitions de piano confirms the designation “piano score.” Liszt’s discussions of this designation and compositional process aid scholars in further understanding of the works.

Scholars’ Identification of Genre

The bold statement by the Viennese critic known simply as “Carlo” provides the best evidence for an understanding of, at a minimum, Liszt’s transcriptions of Schubert’s songs as constituting a genre unto themselves. Part of the justification for this statement lies later in this passage: “Schubert’s immortal songs will be the property not only of cultured singers, but also of

39 Ibid.
cultured pianists." These song transcriptions are not regarded simply as versions of the original songs; rather, Liszt’s transformation of the song rises to a level of independence from the original, while at the same time retaining a strong association with it.

Although I have argued that Liszt’s *Partitions de piano* are in fact a genre distinct from the symphony, Schumann reviewed Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique* solely from Liszt’s piano transcription. One wonders how he could undertake such a monumental task with such limited resources. Schumann knew that the score was in fact a symphony; his readers did not initially know that his analysis was not based on the full symphonic score. He did not evaluate the score as a composition for piano, but rather as a symphony that was being distributed only as a piano score. These facts suggest that Schumann had confidence in both Liszt’s understanding of the symphony and his ability to convey it accurately in pianistic terms.

Without these nineteenth-century evaluations and careful and unprejudiced study of the transcriptions themselves, Liszt’s work with the songs and symphonies is often erroneously thought of today as little more than “literal” transcription of the original. Consequently the derivative works are not considered to be legitimate compositions or genres. Alan Walker discusses arrangements and transcriptions in his writings, but his simplistic evaluations do little to promote an understanding of Liszt’s work in this area. As discussed in the previous chapter, Walker accurately defines transcription as “strict, literal, objective…[seeking] to unfold the original work as accurately as possible, down to the smallest details.” But he then projects this narrow definition onto the majority of Liszt’s arrangements of Schubert’s songs: “[w]e are probably correct to call the Schubert song arrangements ‘transcriptions,’ although one or two of

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them do stray over the border and behave, albeit fleetingly, like paraphrases." As will emerge in the following chapters, although Liszt’s transcriptions of songs and symphonies do closely follow the original, they are by no means strict note-for-note transcriptions nor are they entirely objective.

The topic of musical genre in general creates problems for scholars, and the genre of musical arrangements, as suggested earlier, adds a whole new dimension of difficulty. Whereas Dahlhaus identifies genre as a tool for classifying musical compositions, Kallberg perceives it as a “social phenomenon shared by composers and listeners alike.” This concept fits well with the genre of transcriptions, as their importance is not based on the composition itself, but rather on the relationship of the original to the derivative work as carried out by Liszt and perceived by critics and audiences.

Based upon these classifications of like compositions, we can begin to construct a method for understanding genres of transcriptions. Kallberg suggests that “[g]enre exerts a persuasive force. It guides the responses of listeners.” Thus scholars with a knowledge of the distinctive features of Liszt’s work with symphonies and songs can evaluate the compositions not as the original nor simply as a piano composition, but rather as reflections of the original cast as pieces for the piano.

One area of scholarship that is transparent in its evaluation and understanding of non-original works is the thematic catalog or any other list or compilation of compositions, since lists of compositions must necessarily classify to create some semblance of order. Right at the outset, these scholarly works demonstrate whether or not original compositions are privileged above

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42 Ibid.
arrangements. Under that initial layer of organization, the division of compositions within the various media of performance adds another level of generic organization. Although the easiest methods of organizing Liszt’s compositions are by originality or performance medium, the classification of compositions based upon title, form, and style would be more accurate.

The “Catalogue of Works” compiled by Humphrey Searle, which appears in various sources from 1954 to 1985 including his monograph, *The Music of Liszt*, and the Liszt entries in *Grove 5* (1954), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music* (1980) and *The New Grove Romantic Masters* (1985), segregates original compositions from non-original compositions at its most extreme level. This list first presents all original works (numbers 1 through 350) and then all “Arrangements, Transcriptions, etc.” (numbers 351 through 701). Within the “Pianoforte Solo” section of the non-original works, Searle divided the compositions as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.1. Searle’s Organization of Compositions in <em>Grove 5</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(b) Arrangements, Transcriptions, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVIII. Pianoforte Solo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>384 – 460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Paraphrases, Operatic Transcriptions, etc. (arranged by composer of original work)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>461 – 577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Pianoforte Scores, Transcriptions, etc. (arranged by composer of original work)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Searle’s division of non-original solo piano compositions does not highlight the uniqueness of the *Partitions de piano* or the Schubert song transcriptions, for all of these compositions are lumped under a single heading “Pianoforte Scores, Transcriptions, etc.” along with arrangements

of all other genres of music except opera. All arrangements derived from operas, including the paraphrases and the more literal transformations of a single notable episode from Wagner’s operas, appear under the heading “Paraphrases, Operatic Transcriptions, etc.” The only unifying factor in these compositions is the underlying work: opera. In fact, the fidelity of the Wagner arrangements to the original makes them resemble the song transcriptions more than the operatic paraphrases. In short, Searle’s arrangement of compositions relied solely on the genre of the original rather than on Liszt’s treatment for piano.

Whereas Searle divided compositions by originality, August Göllerich, in his 1908 biography entitled *Franz Liszt*, employs an overall hybrid organization and then further divides the non-original compositions for solo piano according to whether the underlying composition was vocal or instrumental (Table 3.2). In this system, for instance, Liszt’s work with Schubert’s *Müllerlieder* stands alongside his paraphrase of Bellini’s *Sonnambula*—two works with completely different styles, forms, and methods of arrangement.

Table 3.2. Instrumental Compositions in August Gollerich’s “Verzeichnis der Werke Franz Liszts”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Erste Abteilung: Instrumental-Kompositionen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IV. Werke für Klavier allein zweihändig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Original-Kompositionen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Bearbeitungen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Von Volks-Melodien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Übertragungen von Meister-Melodien (Opern-Phantasien und Transkriptionen von Gesängen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Klavier-Partituren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Klavier-Auszüge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although Göllerich divided piano scores (Klavier-Partituren) from other kinds of arrangements, the fact that the operatic paraphrases and song transcriptions are lumped together shows that he did not necessarily view the song transcriptions as a separate genre. When lists of compositions ignore Liszt’s titles, including Partition de piano and Réminiscences, and distinct groups of works such as his transcriptions of Schubert’s songs, they do not present these compositions as distinct genres.

The 1877 Thematisches Verzeichniss der Werke, Bearbeitungen und Transcriptionen von F. Liszt and its predecessor, the Thematisches Verzeichniss der Werke von F. Liszt. Von dem Autor verfasst from 1855, both of which Liszt helped prepare, divide compositions by performing force and then by select sub-genres, which naturally include originality.47 The organization of the works lists in the first three editions of Grove’s dictionary echoes this organization.48 Table 3.3 outlines the arrangement of orchestral works, works for piano and orchestra, and works for piano in Liszt’s catalog along with a comparable method of organization in the first three editions of Grove’s Dictionary.


Table 3.3. Organization of Instrumental Compositions in the *Thematisches Verzeichniss* and the early editions of *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematisches Verzeichniss</th>
<th>Grove 1, 2, and 3&lt;sup&gt;49&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Werke für Orchester</td>
<td>I. Orchestral Works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Original-Compositionen</td>
<td>1. Original</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Bearbeitungen</td>
<td>2. Arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Ungarische Rhapsodien und Märscbe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Werke für Pianoforte und Orchester</td>
<td>II. For Pianoforte and Orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Original-Compositionen</td>
<td>1. Original</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Orchestrierungen (mit Pianoforte principale)</td>
<td>2. Arrangements, Pf. Principale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Werke für Pianoforte allein</td>
<td>III. For Pianoforte Solo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Original-Compositionen</td>
<td>1. Original</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Bearbeitungen</td>
<td>2. Arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Fantasien, Reminiscenzen, Illustrationen, Paraphrasen und Transcriptionen von Motiven aus Opern und anderen Motiven</td>
<td>3. Paraphrases, Transcriptions, etc., from Operas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Ungarische Rhapsodien und Märscbe</td>
<td>4. Rhapsodies, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Clavier-Partituren (Partitions de Piano) von Symphonien, Ouverturen etc.</td>
<td>5. Partitions di Piano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Transcriptionen von Gesängen und Liedern</td>
<td>6. Transcriptions of Vocal Pieces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) Bearbeitungen für Pianoforte zu vier Händen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Bearbeitungen für zwei Pianoforte</td>
<td>IV. Arrangements for 2 Pianofortes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;. Stücke für Pianoforte und Violine</td>
<td>V. Pianoforte and Violin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;. Für Violoncelle, Pianoforte, Harfe und Harmonium</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;. Compositionen und Transcriptionen für Orgel (auch Harmonium oder Pedalflügel)</td>
<td>VI. For Organ or Harmonium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;. Für Violine und Orgel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>49</sup> The organization of compositions in the first three editions of *Grove’s Dictionary* is identical. With regard to the inclusion of compositions and details about the compositions, there are a few differences among the editions.
By including six sections for solo piano compositions, the compilers of this list more accurately divided the compositions by kind. Admittedly, it would be difficult to categorize each of Liszt’s more than three hundred solo piano compositions by style, kind, title, etc.; still, such a system would be immensely more useful than a crude organization merely by chronological order. As will be seen, the methods of arrangement Liszt applied in his transcriptions of the symphonies and the songs are different. Thus in the same way that nocturnes are differentiated from other genres of solo piano compositions in Chopin’s œuvre, these two genres of non-original works should also be distinguished.

Audiences’ Identification of Genre

How then do listeners of a performance of a transcription evaluate that composition: based on the genre of the initial composition or on the medium of the derivative work? The answer to this question cannot be stated definitively for every listening situation.

Christopher Gibbs suggests that the classification of a lied transcription is not universal for all listeners but rather is based upon a listener’s knowledge of the original. For a listener who knows the original song intimately, a performance of the transcription would be almost the equivalent of a performance of the original song because the listener would have the ability to “provide the words silently during the performance of a textless working” and assume the role as “a silent performer in concert with the pianist.”50 At the other end of the spectrum, audiences without knowledge of the original work are relegated to the position of admiring the transcription simply as a piano composition.51 Finally for listeners who possess a general knowledge of the

51 Ibid., 271.
original composition and its text, the transcription becomes “program music.”52 This listener
would not have the ability to recreate the original in their mind, but would know enough about
the composition to identify it as a song and not simply a piano composition.

This issue of audience knowledge can be applied to transcriptions of symphonies and
purely instrumental music as well. Despite the restricted instrumental color, performance of an
orchestral work on a keyboard—either two-hand or four-hand—allowed the keyboardist(s) to
better appreciate and understand a composition before hearing a symphonic performance. One
mid-nineteenth-century commentator believed that performance of a transcription prior to
hearing the original symphony actually enhanced the listening experience:

If a complete understanding of large and important orchestral works can be obtained only
by repeated performances, then piano arrangements are all the more desirable the less
such works can be heard in their original version. They provide an opportunity for one to
become familiar with the form and content, to follow better the intention of the composer,
and to help one become better acquainted with anything that is strange or unfamiliar.
Attending a concert after such private study, one’s ear will be struck by the fresh colors
of the instruments…an advantage that is not to be dismissed lightly.53

Further, in an April 1837 letter to George Sand, Liszt related the story of a performance
in which verbal information biased the audience towards one work to the detriment of another.
He played a Johann-Peter Pixis trio in the place of a trio by Beethoven and then subsequently
performed the Beethoven trio under Pixis’s name. For the trio supposedly by Beethoven, “[t]he
bravos were more numerous and vigorous than ever, but then when the Beethoven trio was
performed in place of Pixis’s piece, the audience found it cold, mediocre, and even boring to the
point that many people became incensed, declaring that it was most impertinent of Pixis to
present his composition to an audience who had come to admire the great composer’s

52 Ibid. This “program music” would be similar to Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique* that included a general
description of the “action” portrayed by each movement without specific text being assigned to each phrase of the
work.
53 *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 44, no. 52 (28 December 1842): 1047. Translation in Thomas Christensen,
“Four-Hand Piano Transcription,” 263.
masterpieces.” When audiences did not have intimate knowledge of compositions and instead relied upon verbal information to evaluate a composition, their perception could be skewed by the incorrect information.

Liszt’s experiment in audience reception suggests that evaluation of a composition or a composer was not static or based solely on the work itself; instead, prior knowledge and preconceived notions played a part in the evaluation of musical works. Consequently, Gibbs’s hypothesis that a song transcription could be considered either a subset of the original, a piano composition, or a distinct composition based on a pre-existing work, rests on recognition that listeners’ reactions would be based on the level of their knowledge of the original work.

Because Liszt performed in many concerts across Europe during his years of touring as a virtuoso pianist, it is highly probable that his audiences included all three categories of listeners.

Since an uninformed listener would presumably not be able to identify a song or symphony transcription as such, it seems safe to say that this person would most likely identify the genre very generally as “solo piano work.” But a listener with at least a vague knowledge of the underlying work would probably categorize it as something other than a composition for solo piano.

How then did listeners evaluate these seemingly incongruent publications and performances? In all likelihood, as already stated, the reaction to Liszt’s transcriptions of Schubert’s songs and Beethoven’s and Berlioz’s symphonies was not static in all situations and for all listeners. Based on the foregoing, it will not be possible to establish conclusively a single genre identification for transcriptions that holds for all members of all audiences from the nineteenth through twenty-first centuries.

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Conclusion

In the same way that Chopin’s Ballades were the initial works of a genre, Liszt created two distinct genres for solo piano: the song transcriptions and the *Partitions de piano*. The designations of these new works served as the starting point for communicating Liszt’s intentions to nineteenth-century audiences. Liszt himself identified his symphonic transcriptions as *Partitions de piano* and at the same time laid out his conception of his work along with his method of transformation. Further, his Schubert song transcriptions are identified as a genre by the Viennese critic “Carlo.”

In an article entitled “Transcription, Authenticity and Performance,” S. Davies suggests that a transcription should “resemble and preserve the musical content of the original work.”

Still, “[a] transcription must depart far enough from the original to count as a distinct piece and not merely as a *copy* of the original.” Liszt’s transcriptions of songs and symphonies accomplished both tasks superbly. As he transcribed and interpreted the original compositions, he created works that are not distinguished by their form or content, but rather by the manner in which he transformed the original for piano.

The contemporary addition of context, function, and community validation in the determination of genre adds a new dimension to evaluating Liszt’s transcriptions, since the change in medium often resulted in changes with respect to all three. For example, symphonies that were necessarily performed in large concert halls when transcribed in two-hand or four-hand piano versions could have been performed in smaller, more intimate locations such as parlors or perhaps just smaller concert halls. On the other hand, Schubert’s songs that were initially

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56 Ibid., 217.
performed in private venues in Vienna reached much larger audiences as Liszt presented his works on concert stages throughout Europe.

Because of the numerous defining factors for genre, including form, instrumentation (and by extension idiomatic writing for the instrument[s]), performance space, and audience, and the variety of transcriptions in the nineteenth century, including transcriptions for the piano and transcriptions for many other instrumental combinations including orchestra, it is not possible to define the genre of Liszt’s transcriptions as unequivocally either the genre of the original—albeit in a new medium—or as virtuoso compositions for solo piano. They are in fact distinct compositions that aurally resemble the original because of Liszt’s skill in transferring the orchestra and the voice to the piano.
CHAPTER 4
PLAYING SONG: LISZT’S RENDITIONS OF LIEDER

Beginning in 1838, Liszt undertook in earnest the transcription of Schubert’s songs. In these works, he retained the qualities of song even without the most essential elements of a song—namely the text and the vocal timbre—while at the same time creating a pianistic work. During the more than ten years in which he programmed this repertoire in numerous concerts across Europe, Liszt created close to sixty Schubert song transcriptions. These range from faithful adaptations that preserve the elements of the original, including key, melody, harmony, accompanimental patterns, and form, to renditions that take considerably more liberties with the original.1 Because of the tendency of song composers to set multiple stanzas of text with the same or similar accompaniment and Liszt’s propensity to adjust the “form” of his transcriptions in that each stanza has a slightly different musical setting, most of these transcriptions fall somewhere between note-for-note transcriptions and free paraphrases.2

Robert Schumann stated that Liszt’s transcriptions of Schubert introduced “a new style in the school of piano playing.”3 And while acknowledging that the transcriptions, as performed by Liszt, had been embraced by the public, he also points out their difficulty:

This is a fitting occasion to mention Franz Liszt’s transcriptions of Franz Schubert’s songs, which have found such favor with the public. Performed by Liszt, they are said to be highly effective, but no other than master hands will undertake to render them; they are perhaps the most difficult pieces ever written for the pianoforte. A witty fellow wondered whether a simplified edition could not be arranged; he was merely curious to know what would result, whether this might not be the pure Schubert song. Not always.

2 Although I will argue that Liszt’s work with Schubert’s songs are not literal, objective, note-for-note transcriptions, for purposes of ease, and in the absence of a designated genre, in this dissertation I will use the term transcription to refer to these works.
Liszt has changed and added; the way he has done it testifies to the powerful nature of his conception, his playing; others will be of different opinion. It all amounts to the old question whether the reproductive artist may set himself above the creative one, whether he be allowed arbitrarily to modify the latter’s works for his own purposes. The answer is easy. A bungler is ridiculous when he does it badly; an intelligent artist may do it as long as he does not destroy the identity of the original. This type of transcription has introduced a new style in the school of piano playing.4

Schumann focuses on Liszt’s role in transforming songs for piano, specifically the “powerful nature of his conception, his playing,” when he poses the question about the importance of the “reproductive artist.” Schumann approves of the composer who can create an intelligent transcription that still reflects the nature of the original; Liszt was such a composer. But Liszt’s work also embodied his own pianistic style and Schumann recognized that “Liszt has changed and added” to Schubert’s songs.

Since the performance of a German lied involved the collaboration of only a singer and a pianist, songs could be performed virtually anywhere—in the home, in small public settings, and in large concert halls. Thus, unlike piano transcriptions of large symphonic works or operatic paraphrases, in which a significant reduction in performing forces permitted considerably more performances, there was no clear function that Liszt’s song transcriptions served. In fact, his concerts and recitals occasionally found him accompanying singers in performances of Schubert’s songs alongside solo performances of the same repertoire. Further, whereas simplified transcriptions of songs that could be readily performed by amateur pianists would have garnered a large retail market, the difficulty of Liszt’s Schubert song transcriptions makes it abundantly evident that his works were not responsible for disseminating Schubert to the masses through private performances in the home. Why then did Liszt undertake with such fervor the task of transcribing Schubert’s songs for solo performance on the piano?

4 Ibid., 154-155.
The previously mentioned Viennese critic identified as “Carlo,” who heralded Liszt as the creator of a new genre with his Schubert song transcriptions, provided a rationale for Liszt’s engagement with song:

It is a successful attempt to reproduce the melodic and harmonic beauty of the new classical song as a lyrical whole for the piano alone, and to perfect it with the power of singing and declamation without sacrifice of any of his keyboard richness. The composer’s skillful, characteristic, and tasteful treatment [of the material] has made these pieces favorites nearly everywhere. Schubert’s immortal songs will be the property not only of cultured singers, but also of cultured pianists.

Whereas lieder required a singer in collaboration with a pianist, song transcriptions expanded the repertoire of the solo pianist. Liszt’s reproductions do not simply incorporate the vocal melody into Schubert’s accompaniment; rather, they are virtuoso piano works that weave together and elaborate on both the vocal melody and the accompaniment originally conceived by Schubert.

Because Liszt was not the first composer to transcribe lieder, obviously something in Liszt’s transcriptions stood out from the mass of earlier transcriptions and caused this critic to hail the creation of a new genre. The use of the word “Gattung” in this context is interesting and begs the question of what the new genre is. Christopher Gibbs suggests that it is in fact subservient to another genre when he suggests that “the Lied transcription became a viable subgenre. . . in large measure because Schubert’s Lieder invited such treatment.” But what exactly is this a subgenre of: the vocal song or the concert piano work? Were these transcriptions thought of as renditions of song without a sung text or were they a new type of piano composition? Or perhaps somehow both?

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7 Ibid.
A review by Johann Wilhelm Christern of an 1840 concert in Hamburg given by Liszt reveals that he performed “[t]wo songs by Franz Schubert, Ständchen and Ave Maria, arranged for piano solo by the performer.”8 Christern elaborates on the effect of these songs when compared to the genre most readily associated with Mendelssohn, namely “Songs without Words.”

The second, greatest force, a bright point of light of wondrous perfection, was reserved for Liszt’s rendition of two “Songs without Words” adapted from Schubert. Felix Mendelssohn captured this province with his singing keys, and how our Liszt now graces it with the garlands of celebration and sadness associated with the deep-souled Schubert! Do you know the double appoggiatura to the delicate echo of this “Serenade”? We may impudently claim that through his originality Liszt has invested this kind of playing, too, with a wholly new and loftier spirit. The piano is no longer so weak, no longer so stupid. It reproduces in all their nuances the emotions felt by its greatest master and its greatest conqueror.9

Liszt’s versions are viewed as renditions of song; he has transferred Schubert to the piano.

In an 1838 letter to her brother Felix, Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel goes a step further when comparing Mendelssohn’s “Songs without Words” to those by Liszt: “when text is removed from sung lieder so that they can be used as concert pieces, it is contrary to the experiment of adding a text to your instrumental lieder—the other half of the topsy-turvy world.”10 In this personal correspondence, Hensel acknowledged the purpose and function of lieder transcriptions—as concert pieces—and the tenuous relationship between songs that have been stripped of their text and songs upon which people attempt to impose a text.

The fact that Liszt did not simply retain Schubert’s accompaniments or form, but instead added embellishments characteristic of idiomatic piano writing underscores the fact that he made a significant number of Schubert songs a part of the virtuoso pianist’s repertoire. At the same

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9 Ibid.
time, retention of the essential elements of the original shows his intent to align the derivative works with their vocal counterparts. Although conceived in a completely different manner from Mendelssohn’s songs, Liszt literally created “Lieder ohne Worte of a distinctly Lisztian type.”

Liszt and Schubert

Liszt lived in Vienna in 1822 and 1823, studying primarily with Carl Czerny. Schubert was living and working in Vienna at the same time, but there is no evidence that the two met. A “posthumous partnership,” nonetheless, began in the 1830s when Liszt returned to Vienna on his concert tours and poured himself into transcribing Schubert’s songs. Following the success of the publications of Liszt’s Schubert song transcriptions by Diabelli and Haslinger in 1838, Haslinger commissioned him to compose additional such works. Liszt obliged, but also voiced his weariness with the task: “Haslinger overwhelms me with Schubert. I have just sent him twenty-four more new songs. . .and for the moment I am rather tired of this work.”

During Schubert’s lifetime, only one third of the approximately six hundred songs he composed had been published. A decade after his death, the publication and performance of Liszt’s transcriptions helped turn the tide in Schubert reception. By 1840, the transformations of Schubert’s songs by Liszt had been published in Vienna, Leipzig, Paris, London, and Milan.

Writing about Vienna’s concert life in 1869, some thirty years later, the Viennese music critic Eduard Hanslick noted the frequency with which Liszt performed these compositions and the impact that the performances had on attitudes toward Schubert:

Liszt’s transcriptions of Schubert Lieder were epoch-making. There was scarcely a concert in which Liszt did not play one or two of them; even when they were not listed on the program they would have to be played. Far be it from me to praise the artistic value of these transcriptions or even to see a glorification of Schubert in them. When one takes away the words and voice from Schubert Lieder, one has not glorified them, but rather impoverished them. Still the fact remains incontestable that Liszt, through these paraphrases, did a great deal for the dissemination of Schubert Lieder. Printed concert programs prove that since the appearance of Liszt’s transcriptions of Schubert songs, the originals have been publicly sung more frequently than before: the power of virtuosity proves itself once again and this time served a good cause.16

Although Hanslick’s estimation of the transcriptions was not very high, he did see the benefit of Liszt performing virtuoso renderings of Schubert’s songs in public concerts. Schubert was somewhat known in Vienna and even less outside it, but transcriptions of his songs by Liszt and others performed in concerts across Europe helped bolster his fame.17

Liszt did not undertake this task merely as a compositional exercise; he knew the songs as both an audience member and an accompanist. Writing to Lambert Massart in the summer of 1838, Liszt noted that he heard the baritone Baron von Schönstein, a friend of Schubert, perform Schubert’s songs and then commented on both the performance and the songs themselves:

Their translation into French gives a very poor idea of the union of the words, which are generally quite beautiful, with the music of Schubert, the most poetic musician who ever lived. The German language is admirable for conveying emotion, and that is why, perhaps, only a German can fully understand the simplicity and imagination of many of these compositions, with their capricious charm, the melancholy abandon. Baron von Schönstein interprets them with the skill of a great artist and sings them with all the

artlessness of an amateur who gives vent to his feelings without being preoccupied with what the public will think.\textsuperscript{18}

Liszt’s critique of this particular performance reveals his knowledge of the songs in their original language, including the poetic text and the musical tone.

Liszt had also experienced Schubert’s conception of \textit{Erlkönig} as a partnership between singer and pianist, for in August 1837 he accompanied the French tenor Adolphe Nourrit in a performance of \textit{Erlkönig}. A critic writing in the \textit{Courrier de Lyon} stated the following:

To fully understand all that is moving, terrifying, and uncanny in “Erlkönig,” one has to hear that celebrated ballad by Goethe and Schubert performed by Liszt and Adolphe Nourrit. Who but Nourrit would be able to convey in such a precise and distinct manner the three totally different voices of the father, the child, and the Erlking? . . . Who but Nourrit could excite such feelings of pity and terror and move the audience so profoundly? . . . But then, who but Liszt could follow the singer through all the nuances of his interpretation and instill his playing with an energy and power that doubled the terror the audience felt when hearing the cries of the doomed child? Who but Liszt, taking those many rapid scales, whose thunder-like rumblings make us shudder with fear, would have dared to intensify their reverberations by playing them in octaves?\textsuperscript{19}

The collaboration with this talented singer served as a prelude to Liszt’s own interpretation of the song for concert pianist. This critic noted Liszt’s ability both to enhance the singer’s interpretation of the song and to use his own performance to intensify the text. Consequently, as stated by Schumann and the Viennese critic “Carlo,” “[t]his type of transcription has introduced a new style in the school of piano playing”\textsuperscript{20} while making “Schubert’s immortal songs…the property not only of cultured singers, but also of cultured pianists.”\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 52.
\textsuperscript{20} Schumann, \textit{On Music and Musicians}, 155.
Arrangement as Commentary

Schubert’s Text Settings: Commentary on the Poetry

Liszt’s adaptation of songs for the piano are extensions of Schubert’s creation of them in the first place. When Schubert selected a poem and set it to music, he made the poem his own. By elevating the pianist’s role from that of a subordinate accompanist to being on a footing at least equal to that of the vocalist, Schubert changed the consistency of song. In the same way, when Liszt transcribed Schubert’s songs, he utilized Schubert’s musical conception of the poetry and then went one step further to make the settings his own. As suggested by Gibbs, Schubert’s lieder invited the creation of a new genre.22

Schubert’s innovations with the lied were the ideal starting point for Liszt’s virtuoso concert works for solo piano. The process of adapting a literary text for a musical setting involved the composer’s interpretation of it: first, whether the text was set exactly as written or lines were deleted or repeated; second, whether the composer determined that the meaning of the text was static enough for strophic form or whether the text called for a more varied setting, either modified strophic or through composed; and finally, what accompanimental patterns, melodies, harmonies, rhythm, texture, and other musical effects could help portray the overall tone and meaning of the text. In addition to questions regarding interpretation of the text, the composer’s compositional style also came into play. Consequently, a poetic text employed by different lied composers yielded numerous interpretations.

In the process of elevating German song from modest settings of the eighteenth century to the position it held in the early nineteenth century, Schubert composed in every major style and form, including folk-like strophic settings, extended through-composed songs, ballads, and song cycles. The Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung reported on Schubert’s stretching of the

previously accepted conventions of song: “Herr F.S. does not write lieder in the accepted sense, nor does he wish to…. Instead, he composes free songs [Gesänge], sometimes so free that we were better advised to call them capriccios or fantasias.”

Carl Dahlhaus describes this output of Schubert as falling safely between strophic song and entirely free compositions: “it seems as though Schubert envisaged a notion of lied which skirted the dangers, as he saw them, of incoherent through-composed ‘tone-painting,’ on the one hand, and servility to the principles of strophic song on the other.”

The variety of accompaniments contained in Schubert’s songs illuminates the vital role that the piano plays in setting the tone for the literary text. Schubert did not simply write figuration to serve as harmonic support for the voice. Kristina Muxfeldt describes the pianist’s role as presenting an “inner experience through an analogy with some outward physical motion or sound” that appears in countless familiar examples. From the opening measures and continuing throughout, memorable and supportive accompaniments set the tone for the text and subsequently carry the action. For example, pervasive figurations that support both the melody and the text represent the spinning wheel in Gretchen am Spinnrade, the trout in the brook in Die Forelle, and the serenade of the guitar in Ständchen (D. 957). Imaginative accompaniments supported Schubert’s interpretation of the text.

Departing from the simple folk-song style of earlier generations in which the singer dominated the texture and the piano provided a simple accompaniment, often doubling the vocal melody with the right hand, Schubert employed lyrical and declamatory melodies to help

\footnote{24} Ibid. 
\footnote{25} Muxfeldt, “Schubert’s songs,” 131.
intensify images in the text and their incorporation into the texture of the accompaniment. As he elevated the role of the pianist by creating equal parts for the two performers, he necessarily positioned the voice within an already full texture and came up with unique roles for the vocal melody, including: treating it as a functional bass (*Der Wanderer*), placing the voice in the space between the two hands, and providing interaction between the voice and the pianist’s right hand that was more imaginative than simple doubling (*Nachtviolen*). In doing this, Schubert created three equal “voices”—the singer’s voice and that of each hand of the pianist.

Especially in modified strophic and through-composed songs, Schubert highlighted various images and nuances in the various stanzas of text through expressive changes in declamatory style, texture, figuration, or harmony. Every aspect of Schubert’s musical language in his songs contributed to the interpretation of the text. In addition, Marie-Agnes Dittrich suggests that “Schubert could, if he chose, exploit high and low sonorities, keys, and major and minor modes contrary to the above-mentioned conventions…where departures from the norm generate powerful effects.”

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**Liszt’s Transcription as Commentary on Both Texts and Songs**

Whereas a song composer’s setting interprets a literary text, an arrangement of the song interprets both the text and the original composer’s musical setting. Transcriptions by Leopold Godowsky in the late 1920s stretched Schubert’s works out of their original form and style and

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26 Ibid., 126.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid., 130.
29 Ibid., 123.
created “new” compositions. In the preface to his Schubert song transcriptions, Godowsky himself stated his purpose in creating transcriptions:

My aim in transcribing these twelve songs of Schubert was not merely to transplant them from the voice to the piano; it was to create piano compositions out of vocal material, to comment upon and interpret songs as a composer would treat a theme when writing free variations… The songs of Schubert will not cease to be sung, notwithstanding all transcriptions. A transcription, an arrangement, or a paraphrase, when conceived by a creative mind, is an entity, which in its own worth may prove a masterpiece.

Godowsky admittedly used compositions by other composers, including Schubert, as a springboard for his own commentary on them in much the same way that a composer fashions a set of variations from a theme.

Liszt’s renditions of Schubert’s songs are much closer to the original than those of Godowsky, since they keep the foundational elements of the song. Still, they are not exact transcriptions. Liszt did not strictly retain Schubert’s accompaniments note for note or his form measure for measure and simply weave the melody into the texture—either in the uppermost voice or in an inner voice. Rather, Liszt retained the basic melodic and harmonic structure of the songs and the general style of accompaniment and then added embellishments consisting primarily of virtuoso piano figuration. Although Liszt’s transcriptions more closely mirror the original than do the works of Godowsky, they also provide a commentary on Schubert and the text, albeit in more subtle ways.

In her study of the posthumous relationship between Schubert and Liszt, Cristina Capparelli Gerling suggests that “[t]hose still clinging to stereotypes of Liszt as a showy virtuoso may be puzzled over his enthusiasm for Schubert’s often simple and reserved music.” She then seeks to reconcile the aforementioned views of these two composers by pointing out that “[t]he

32 Quoted from Cloutier, 6.
superimposition of two styles, Liszt’s progressive and Schubert’s conservative, stands at the heart of Liszt’s transcriptions.”

**Liszt’s Transcriptions of Schubert’s Songs**

Liszt’s transcriptions of Schubert’s songs reflect an understanding that they exist equally as derivatives of song and as members of the nineteenth-century concert piano repertoire. Direct identification of the original song with the derivative through both title and text, as well as to a varied degree the retention of the basic melody, harmony, form, and style create an unmistakable association between the vocal song and the piano transcription. However, aspects of Liszt’s virtuoso piano style also play a part in the derivative works. The accompanimental figuration, embellishments and flourishes, as well as the overall “shape” of the songs—with intensification as the composition proceeds—justify the identification of this new genre of concert piano work.

**Title and Text**

Liszt and his publishers invariably retained the title of Schubert’s songs in publications; concert advertisements likewise emphasized the original. For instance, the title page of Diabelli’s edition of the second version of Liszt’s transcription of *Die Forelle* reads “Die Forelle / Lied von Fr. Schubert / Für das / Piano / Zweite Version / von / Fr. Liszt.” Likewise, the title page of Haslinger’s 1840 publication of *Schwanengesang* and *Winterreise* reads “Lieder / von / Franz Schubert / für das Piano-Forte übertragen / von / F. Liszt.”

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34 Ibid., 211.
referred to the title and composer of the original song before indicating that the publication actually consisted of a piano arrangement by Liszt.

Further, although suppressed in performance, Liszt did recognize the importance of the text. In some instances he insisted that the song texts be integrated into the publication and printed immediately above the staff; in other cases the complete text appeared at the beginning of a song. Regardless of its exact placement, the presence of text in the printed score demonstrates that Liszt did in fact envision his compositions to be Lieder ohne Worte, but unlike those by Mendelssohn because an explicit text did in fact exist.

**Melody and Vocal Line**

Although the text is suppressed in performance, Liszt’s retention of Schubert’s basic melodic lines provides a strong connection to the original. One of the greatest challenges faced by Liszt in his masterful recreations of song, included the joining together of the vocal melody and the accompaniment while retaining the clarity of both parts. Liszt accomplished this feat without either simplifying the original accompaniment or literally transferring it to the new composition and simply weaving the melody into the texture of the piano part; instead, the “accompaniments” have a tendency to increase in intensity and difficulty as the song progresses, while still maintaining the clarity of the melodic line wherever it happened to be placed in the texture. The melodies can still be clearly heard in the transcriptions and thereby create a direct connection with the original song.

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37 Numerous sources cite La Mara, *Franz Liszts Briefe*, II:212 for the assertion that Liszt insisted that texts be integrated into the scores of his transcriptions. However as indicated in the preface to *Schwanengesang* in the NLE, the printed sources of this cycle include the texts at the beginning of each individual song while the manuscript sources do not include the words of the song at all. See NLE, Ser. II, 21:xiii.
Liszt not only retained Schubert’s general vocal melodies but also their tone, whether lyrical or declamatory, and communicated their style to the pianist through the term *canto* in conjunction with other descriptive words. For instance, Liszt instructs that the vocal melody (*il canto*) in *Ave Maria* be played *sempre marcato ed expressivo*, whereas in *Gretchen am Spinnrade* he gives the instruction *un poco marcato il canto*. Other markings for the performance of vocal melodies include *declamato* for the performance of recitative, *sempre delicato con grazia*, *marcato*, *dolce espr.*, and *sempre sotto voce ma ben pronunciato la melodia*. In spite of having placed the melody in the piano rather than giving it to a human voice, Liszt still envisions the singing qualities of this line.

**Accompaniment**

As discussed earlier, Schubert created innovative piano parts. By elevating the piano to equal status with the voice and giving the pianist a key role in setting the tone of the text, Schubert provided the ideal starting point for Liszt’s adaptations of vocal songs for the concert pianist. Liszt employed the basic conception of Schubert’s accompaniments and then incorporated features of his own virtuoso style, including arpeggiation, extension of the range played by each hand, rearrangement of broken chords, and doublings.

To set the tone of the song, Liszt frequently retained introductory passages, from two measures up to eight to ten measures, sometimes even note for note, as conceived by Schubert. In addition, first stanzas generally closely mimic those of Schubert. Succeeding stanzas, however, often progressively reflect more of Liszt’s concert piano style than the style of the original song.
Because Liszt retains the accompaniments of Schubert’s songs, often a key identifying factor, listeners can readily associate a textless transcription with an original composition. Anyone who knows the songs and hears the pervasive triplets in *Erlkönig* or the “spinning wheel” motive in *Gretchen am Spinnrade* will immediately recognize the source material. The absence of a singing voice and text does not override the pervasive accompaniment; for any listener familiar with the original, there is no question as to the song being performed.

*Texture*

One of the challenges in playing Liszt’s song transcriptions stems from the fact that the vocal melody is not always the uppermost voice, often a direct reflection of Schubert’s original placement of the melody. Although the melody frequently roams around in the middle of the accompanimental embellishments added by Liszt, it can easily be heard in performance. He developed inventive ways to incorporate the vocal line into piano writing that he either retained from Schubert’s song or created himself with his characteristic virtuoso piano figuration.

Liszt occasionally used his famous three-hand technique to present the melodic line. Developed by Sigismond Thalberg, this piano texture required three staves, with the melodic line notated on the middle staff and played by either hand depending on the direction of the stem. The effect of this technique was acoustically deceptive in that, although alternating between the hands, the melody was heard naturally in the center of the texture with virtuoso flourishes both above and below. Liszt adopted this technique after 1837, most notably in his operatic paraphrases. Because of the intricate textures that Schubert also favored, some of the song
transcriptions likewise demonstrate the technique, and “its employment became assimilated into the core of Liszt’s piano technique and musical imagination.”

In Das Fischermädchen, Liszt retained Schubert’s compact piano accompaniment, which generally spans less than two octaves between the two hands. Whereas in this song Schubert generally placed the melodic line above the accompaniment, Liszt lowered the melody an octave, placed it between the two hands, and consequently employed the three-hand technique.

Liszt’s transcription of Ave Maria also includes passages that make use of the three-hand technique. From the beginning of the song, he worked with Schubert’s accompaniment, which consists of octaves in the left hand (on the beat) and sextuplet sixteenth-note chords in the right hand, turning the song into a considerably more difficult work for solo piano with the sixteenth-note movement in both hands (Ex. 4.1). At the outset of the melody, the pianist is instructed how to play the vocal melody between the two accompanimental parts: il canto sempre marcato ed espressivo. Liszt also tells the pianist that “notes with upward stem are to be played with the right hand, those with downward stem with the left hand.” Use of this technique in the song transcriptions connects this body of works and the virtuoso operatic paraphrases that also dazzled Liszt’s audiences on the concert stage.

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Ex. 4.1. Schubert/Liszt, *Ave Maria*, mm. 1-5.

Further, Liszt rarely maintained the melody in the same range for all verses of a song. Although the limitations of the voice necessitated confinement to a more narrow range, the range of the piano did not create such constraints. As a result, he could alter the placement of the
melody from verse to verse. For instance, in the lover’s serenade, *Ständchen* (D. 957), Liszt creates a true duet between the two lovers. The range of the piano allows him to place the melody of each of the first two verses, representing the two lovers, in different registers and then keeping with this theme, to bring them together in canon. Schubert set the first two verses strophically; Liszt, while following Schubert’s form, melodies, and harmonies, modified this setting and presented the first verse in the original register (Ex. 4.2., mm. 5-11) and the second verse an octave lower (Ex. 4.3., mm. 38-46). Liszt then develops and expounds on the musical elements from the first two verses and finally presents an elaboration of Schubert’s third strophe. Liszt’s transcription is almost twice as long as Schubert’s song.

Ex. 4.2. Schubert/Liszt, *Ständchen*, mm. 1-11.
After presenting, in a fairly strict style, Schubert’s first two strophes, Liszt brings into play echo effects wherein the vocal motives from the first verse serve as the basis for a series of imitations in close succession once described as “the double appoggiatura to the delicate echo of this ‘Serenade.’”\(^{40}\) (Ex. 4.4, mm. 71-76) Whereas in the song Schubert’s change in voices became obvious through the text, Liszt devised a way to use registral changes to convey the same meaning. He then takes the lover’s duet one step further and intimately intertwines the two voices in an elaboration of the opening verse.

\(^{40}\) Burger, *Franz Liszt*, 337.
The vast multi-octave range of the piano provided an advantage to Liszt in transcribing certain songs. In his transcription of *Erlkönig*, he for the most part retains the basic elements of the song, including melody, harmony, accompanimental patterns and figures, and dynamics. The changes that he makes reflect capabilities of the piano not possible for a singer. Schubert’s ballad included four distinct voices: the father, the son, the Erlking, and the narrator.\(^{41}\) Schubert necessarily presented the text sung by each of the four narrative voices within the relatively tight range of a single vocalist. The text, however, provides the listener with explicit clues with which to follow the narrative. Without the assistance of the text, Liszt used registral adjustments to

\(^{41}\) See Gibbs, “The Presence of Erlkönig,” 185-189 for a section entitled “The Issue of Genre in the Erlkönig Debate” that provides a historical overview of the genre of *Erlkönig*. 

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highlight the different characters. He placed each of the melodic lines that had been sung by the characters in different registers of the piano: the narrator and the son remain in the same register as the voice (Ex. 4.5, mm. 72-79), the melodic line representing the father moves an octave lower in the transcription (Ex. 4.5, mm. 80-85), and the presence of the Erlkönig is signaled by a melodic line performed an octave higher (Ex. 4.5, mm. 86-90). Thus, although the text is not present to guide the listener through the narrative, the registral changes of the melodic line in the piano arrangement help a listener familiar with Schubert’s song follow the narrative.

In addition, Liszt intensifies Schubert’s Erlkönig by including octave doubling in the ascending scale and descending chordal passages in the left hand accompaniment and occasionally in the presentation of the vocal melody. A report of Liszt accompanying Nourrit in a performance of Erlkönig suggests that he altered the accompaniment even when he performed the song in its original form. A critic writing in the Courrier de Lyon revealed Liszt’s changes in rendering the song: “Those scales, so numerous and so rapid, whose rolling, like that of the thunder, made the listeners tremble with terror, who else but Liszt, in order to increase their sonority, would have dared play them in octaves?” \(^{42}\) Christopher Gibbs wonders if this report can be taken so far as to suggest that “even as an accompanist Liszt may have altered the original music of Schubert’s Lieder in ways comparable to his reworkings.” \(^{43}\) If this is the case, the relationship between Liszt’s performance—in this instance as an accompanist—and his compositional style supports the classification of Liszt’s Erlkönig as a piano composition.

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Ex. 4.5. Schubert/Liszt, "Erlkönig", mm. 71-90.
Compositional Process: Form

Liszt’s innovations of Schubert’s formal schemes provide the most obvious evidence that he added something of his own to the songs. Schubert employed all basic approaches to setting texts. Liszt, however, rarely retained Schubert’s strophic forms, opting instead for something akin to variations on the original. A strophic setting obviously acquires its interest through the differing texts sung during each stanza. Since a piano transcription loses this aspect, the strict form retains little interest for an instrumental arrangement. Consequently, Liszt enlivens the setting by expanding Schubert’s form to include varied settings of each verse. For songs in which Schubert employed modified strophic or through-composed form, the form in Liszt’s transcriptions remained closer to the original.

Liszt’s song transcriptions often intensify as the composition proceeds. Whereas Schubert’s strophic and modified strophic songs retain a uniform tone throughout, Liszt’s expansion of the form generally builds to a climax between two-thirds and three-quarters of the way through the composition and sometimes even at the conclusion. As the composition progresses, Liszt adds virtuoso flourishes, embellishments and cadenzas—an obvious parallel to his dazzling showpieces for piano such as the operatic paraphrases.

The arrangement of “Das Wandern,” from Schubert’s Die schöne Müllerin, shows Liszt’s propensity toward avoiding strict imitation of strophic form. Referring to Liszt’s three different iterations of the vocal melody and its accompaniment, Gerling characterized the work as a transformation of “Schubert’s five strophes into a theme-and-variations of the tenderest sort.”

Within his conception, Liszt included sometimes lengthy and elaborate ritornellos as a

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replacement for Schubert’s static four-measure introductory/connector phrase. Liszt’s first “verse” most closely imitates Schubert’s setting, with its retention of the melody alone in the uppermost voice, its faithful transference of the accompaniment, and its sparse texture (Ex. 4.6, mm. 5-20). The next two “verses” develop the original, including embellishment in the upper range and elaboration of the melody (Ex. 4.6, mm. 25-40, 45-64). Although Liszt’s work begins as a literal transcription of Schubert’s song, features of his virtuoso piano style begin to creep in, and the simple strophic song becomes a piano composition with a life of its own. Strictly speaking Liszt’s transcription has shortened the song from five stanzas to three, but elaboration of the musical material in his rendering of stanzas two and three produces a fuller and more varied experience of the original.

Liszt sometimes elaborated on the form to the point of including a cadenza. Near the conclusion of Ständchen, he included a one-measure rising chromatic scale in thirty-second notes with an alternative eleven-measure cadenza that could be substituted by the performer (Ex. 4.7, mm. 106). A note in the score suggests that Liszt substituted the cadenza for the chromatic passage when performing Ständchen.46

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45 Interestingly, even though Liszt sets only three verses, the text of all five verses is printed at the beginning of the score. See Ex. 4.6.
Das Wandernt ist des Müllers Lust,
Das Wandernt!
Das muß ein schlechter Müller sein,
Dem niemals füll das Wandernt ein.
Das Wandernt.

Vom Wasser haben wir's gelernt,
Vom Wasser!
Das hat nicht Rast bei Tag und Nacht,
Es stets auf Wanderschaft bedacht,
Es Wasser.

Das seh'n wir auch den Rädern ab,
Den Rädern!
Die gut nicht getreue stillen stehen,
Für sich mein Tag nicht müde gehen,
Die Räder.

Die Steine selbst, so schwer sie sind,
Die Steine!
Sie tanzen mir den munteren Reigen
Und wollen ganz auch schneller sein,
Die Steine.

O Wandernt, Wandernt, meine Lust,
O Wandernt!
Herr Meister und Frau Meisterin,
Laßt mich im Frieden weiter ziehen.
Und wandern.

Wilhelm Müller

Mäßig geschwind

Dolce grazioso

Z. 1394

Mülle-lieder von Franz Schubert
Für das Pianoforte in leichterem Stil übertragen von Franz Liszt

6 Mélodies Favorites de la Belle Meunière de François Schubert
Transcr. für piano seul par F. Liszt
(2. Fassung — 2nd version) R 249, SW 369

1. Das Wandernt — Le Meunière voyageur
Ex. 4.7. Schubert/Liszt, *Ständchen*, mm. 102-115.
Liszt also rearranged Schubert’s large-scale formal schemes in his transcriptions of the song cycles, creating his own Schwanengesang, Winterreise, and Müller-Lieder that draw upon Schubert’s cycles of the same names.\(^7\) He did not faithfully recreate the entire cycles for piano; instead he selected a number of songs from the original and rearranged them to create his own closed cycles. Thus, his cycles are a subset of those created by Schubert.

For instance, Liszt’s Müller-Lieder consists of only six of Schubert’s original twenty songs arranged with a symmetrical key structure, including (in Liszt’s ordering) numbers 1 (“Das Wandern” in B flat major), 19 (“Der Müller und der Bach” in G minor-G major), 14 (“Der Jäger” in C minor), 17 (“Die böse Farbe” in C major-C minor transposed from Schubert’s B major (and B minor)), 2 (“Wohin?” in G major) and 7 (“Ungeduld” in B flat major transposed from Schubert’s A major).\(^8\)

**Conclusion**

In reducing the required performing forces from two—a singer and an “accompanist”—to a solo pianist, Liszt’s transcriptions of Schubert’s songs helped spread knowledge of them, limited even in Vienna, to considerably wider audiences across Europe. Identified as transcriptions because of their relatively faithful adherence to the original, they in fact show Liszt’s ability to interpret both a literary text and a composer’s setting of that text. They “are scarcely ‘light’ piano music for bored ladies’;\(^9\) rather, as Schumann suggested, “they are perhaps the most difficult pieces ever written for the pianoforte.”\(^9\) Thus Liszt’s transcriptions of

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\(^7\) Liszt’s cycle entitled Müller-Lieder von Franz Schubert is from Schubert’s cycle Die schöne Müllerin.

\(^8\) See Gerling, “Franz Schubert and Franz Liszt,” 213-229 for a detailed discussion of each song in Liszt’s cycle.


Schubert’s songs were of interest to both pianists of advanced skill and nineteenth-century audiences.

One cannot say authoritatively that Liszt’s song transcriptions are a subgenre of either song or the concert piano repertoire, because in fact they draw from both categories simultaneously and yet also constitute their own unique genre. Liszt’s devotion to the original work—through adherence to title, melody, harmony, accompanimental figuration, style, and tone—creates strong associations with Schubert’s original interpretation of the text as presented by the voice with piano accompaniment. On the other hand, Liszt’s interpretation of and elaboration on both the original text and Schubert’s musical setting align them with nineteenth-century virtuoso piano compositions. Liszt’s contributions to this repertoire consist of a new kind of composition that draw equally from song and virtuoso piano works such that the identification of a new but nameless “genre” is appropriate.

By way of example, Christopher Gibbs’s evaluation of Liszt’s *Erlkönig* vividly describes Liszt’s transformation of Schubert’s song for solo pianist:

Liszt’s transcription of *Erlkönig* is one of excess and extremes. From the increased power and weight of the opening motive (which Liszt allegedly played at an amazingly fast tempo) to the enriched texture of the final two chords, Liszt consistently heightens every effect: the Erlking is more sweetly seductive, the child more frightened, and the father more calm and authoritative. The additional interpretive markings, the richer chordal texture, the pedaling, the idiomatic pianistic virtuosity, and the ingenious incorporation of the vocal line into the piano accompaniment are all suggestive of Liszt’s vision of Schubert’s song. At the same time he created a concert showpiece of remarkable dynamic range, textural richness, brilliance, and technical difficulty.51

Although Liszt retains the basic outlines of Schubert’s ballad, he heightens the emotion of the original. Because the pianist is no longer only the accompanist (with the potential problem of overpowering the voice), and the piano’s resources are responsible for presenting all parts of the composition, Liszt can exploit its full expressive resources.

In fact, in a review of an orchestration of *Erlkönig*, Vladimir Stasov makes a bold statement regarding Liszt’s transcription of the song: “Indeed, it must be remarked that in general the *Erlkönig* sounds best not as a song, but as Liszt transcribed it for piano…It is only when the brief sustained phrases of the voice part and the rapidly moving piano part are combined that the song takes on a certain meaning.” Stasov recognizes Liszt’s interpretation of both the text and Schubert’s setting of the text in his praise for Liszt’s work.

Indeed, Liszt’s work with Schubert’s songs falls somewhere between free paraphrase and strict transcription. As Gerling concludes, the song transcriptions “represent Liszt’s own vision and understanding of Schubert’s music.”

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CHAPTER 5
SYMPHONIC TRANSCRIPTION: BERLIOZ’S SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE

Liszt’s piano transcriptions of symphonic works, most notably Berlioz’s Symphonie fantastique and the nine symphonies of Beethoven, raise different questions from those associated with the transcriptions of songs. The performing forces required for the performance of a song and a song transcription were not vastly different, a reduction of one performer, but performance of a symphonic transcription, in contrast, required far fewer performers than the original. Orchestras in the first half of the nineteenth century employed upwards of fifty musicians for the performance of contemporary symphonies while performances of the Symphonie fantastique consistently utilized up to one hundred performers. Consequently, Liszt’s task in his symphonic transcriptions was to take more than twenty instrumental parts intended for over fifty performers and condense them for performance by a single pianist.

Despite the obvious differences in the scope of the reduction, transcriptions of both symphonic works and songs raise the same questions about generic identity. The similarity between the two lies in the fact that they are generally considered to be fairly faithful representations of the original as opposed to freer paraphrases; however, there are some key distinctions. Despite its seemingly closer relationship to the original—in that a lied for solo voice and piano becomes a composition for solo piano, as has been shown, the song transcription, while conveying the essence of the original, contains substantial differences in form, accompaniment, and lacks uniform style and intensity throughout. On the other hand, Liszt himself calls his Symphonie fantastique a Partition de piano or “piano score” because of the literal rendering of the symphonic score—he imposed no additions or deletions on the form,
and furthermore attempted to provide a reader of the score with as much information about the original orchestration as possible.\footnote{Franz Liszt, \textit{An Artist’s Journey: Lettres d’un bachelier ès musique, 1835-1841}, trans. Charles Suttoni (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 46.}

Consequently, when looking at symphonic transcriptions, one naturally asks: were the adaptations for piano considered merely a convenient tool for the dissemination of these large-scale compositions or were they considered piano works in their own right? It is true that they helped to make orchestral works available to wider audiences, both through public performance and private performance in the home. However, they were transcribed idiomatically and thus were highly lauded when performed on the piano. Liszt successfully transferred the essence of the symphony to the piano and at the same time made rational adjustments in order to render the arrangement playable as a piano composition in its own right.

\textit{Liszt’s Symphonie fantastique}

In 1830, Hector Berlioz composed his first symphonic work, the \textit{Symphonie fantastique}. Both François-Joseph Fétis and Liszt were present at its premiere on 5 December 1830 in Paris. Subsequently, Liszt transcribed the work for piano in 1834, a version of the \textit{Symphonie fantastique} that for several years stood as the primary means of disseminating the work to the public, and on 1 February 1835 Fétis published a critical analysis of the work in the \textit{Revue musicale} based on Liszt’s transcription. In response to Fétis’s writing and with the aid of Liszt’s transcription, Robert Schumann’s famous analysis of the \textit{Symphonie fantastique} appeared in the \textit{Neue Zeitschrift für Musik} in the summer of 1835.\footnote{The articles appeared on 3 and 31 July, and 4, 7, 11 and 14 August 1835.} Thus, this work was evaluated by two prominent critics who had only Liszt’s transcription as a score.
The Orchestral Score and the Partition de piano

Before discussing Schumann’s analysis of the Symphonie fantastique, it will be useful to briefly examine the genesis of both Berlioz’s original work and Liszt’s transcription. Although not essential for understanding the role of transcriptions in the nineteenth century, these details illuminate the importance of Liszt’s transcription in the dissemination of the original work.

Berlioz had completed the entire score by April 1830, but he continued to revise it until December 1832. At three points during this period the composition was in a fixed state for planned and actual performances—during rehearsals in April 1830 for an unrealized first performance in May 1830 and for actual performances in Paris on 5 December 1830 and 30 December 1832.³ From 1832 through 1840, the orchestral work was performed nearly every year at the Paris Conservatoire with Berlioz conducting many of the performances. He also conducted performances of the work in Italy during 1831 and 1832 and throughout Germany during 1842 and 1843.⁴ The orchestral score was nonetheless not published until 1845 with the work first offered for sale to the public in May of that year.⁵

Completed in September 1833 and subsequently published in 1834, Liszt’s transcription of the Symphonie fantastique was the first published version of Berlioz’s symphony.⁶ In August 1834, Berlioz reported to his friend Humbert Ferrand that the Symphonie fantastique “in Liszt’s arrangement, has been engraved, but it won’t be printed and published until October, so I shan’t be able to send it to you till then”⁷ and subsequently notified Ferrand in November of that same

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⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid.
⁶ The complete title of the work reads Épisode de la Vie d’un Artiste Grande Symphonie Fantastique par Hector Berlioz: Partition de piano par François Liszt.
year that the transcription had been published.  Liszt himself bore the cost of publication, which
Berlioz appreciatively acknowledged: “since poor Liszt has spent such terrible amounts of
money to achieve [publication], we agreed with Schlesinger that he should not give away a
single copy, so even I haven’t had one.”  Although the orchestral composition continued to be
disseminated through public performances, Liszt’s transcription remained the only published
score until 1845.

Despite his willingness to let Liszt transcribe and then publish his symphony and his
appreciation of Liszt’s generosity, for the most part Hector Berlioz expressed disdain for the
piano’s attempt to replicate complex orchestration:

Does anyone seriously maintain that one can judge the true quality of an
orchestral work emasculated in this fashion? . . . Is it not self-evident that the
piano, by destroying all sense of instrumentation, by this fact alone places all
composers on the same level? . . . For orchestrators, the piano is really a guillotine
destined to cut off the heads of all the aristocrats, a guillotine from which only
commoners have nothing to fear.

In a discussion of virtuosity and the intersection between Berlioz and Liszt, Cécile Reynaud
summarizes Berlioz’s view about the inability of the piano to replicate an instrumental
composition because of its lack of tone color. “Just as [Berlioz] believes that the piano is little
apt to capture the essence of an orchestration, so too does he believe that cultivating the
individual tone color of each instrument is a necessary part of the compositional act.”
In
general, Berlioz did not hold the transcription in as high esteem as did Liszt.

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8 Ibid., 122.
9 Ibid.
(Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003), 105. Reynaud modified the translation of David Cairns from
chapter 22 of The Memoirs of Hector Berlioz, trans. and ed. David Cairns (New York: W.W. Norton & Company,
Inc., 1975), 111.
As was discussed earlier, Liszt’s aim here was to create a true representation of the original symphonic work. In a letter to Adolphe Pictet several years after its creation, Liszt specifically describes his intention in transcribing Berlioz’s work:

I applied myself as scrupulously as if I were translating a sacred text to transferring, not only the symphony’s musical framework, but also its detailed effects and the multiplicity of its instrumental and rhythmic combinations to the piano. The difficulty did not faze me, as my feeling for art and my love of it gave me double courage. I may not have succeeded completely, but that first attempt has at least demonstrated that the way is open and that it will no longer be acceptable to arrange the masters’ works as contemptibly as has been done to this point. I called my work a partition de piano [piano score] in order to make clear my intention of following the orchestra step by step and of giving it no special treatment beyond the mass and variety of its sound.12

Literally “piano score,” the term partition de piano suggests a close adherence to the original orchestral score. Indeed, Liszt’s transcription does mirror the symphony with respect to form, melody, supporting harmony, and articulation, as well as providing basic information regarding instrumentation. Despite the loss of orchestral timbres in the transcription, Liszt accurately renders Berlioz’s conception of the work.

Reaction to the Symphonie fantastique

A review of the Symphonie fantastique by Fétis, which appeared in the Revue musicale on 1 February 1835, continued a relationship that had begun more than a decade earlier at the Paris Conservatoire. As a member of the faculty, Fétis came to know Berlioz’s student compositions and early concerts: he makes this clear by giving a chronology of Berlioz’s studies in the first half of the review. Despite the fact that Fétis wrote only negative evaluations of Berlioz’s early compositions, he claims that he did not allow his negative reactions to those

works to prejudice him against Berlioz. Fétis, however, renewed his critical stance of Berlioz’s compositions in his general description of the *Symphonie fantastique* and its premiere:

The audience at that one was small, and there was scarcely anyone in the hall who was not either a friend or a guest. It was here that we heard for the first time the *Symphonie fantastique*. The audience thought it was having a nightmare during the whole performance; but they did notice the *Marche du supplice* for its novel effects and applauded it. From this moment I began to form my opinion of M. Berlioz: I saw that he had no taste for melody and but a feeble notion of rhythm; that his harmony, composed by piling up tones into heaps that were often monstrous, was nevertheless flat and monotonous. In a word, I saw that he lacked melodic and harmonic ideas, and I came to the conclusion that he would always write in a barbarous manner.  

In his brief summaries of each movement, Fétis also disparages the individual parts. He notes that in the first movement “there are nothing but harmonic monstrosities, devoid of charm or excitement.” The second movement is “less barbarous,” the third characterized by “unpleasing aimlessness,” and the fifth “mingles the trivial, the grotesque, and the barbarous.”

Despite his general denigration of Berlioz’s work, Fétis did offer several positive comments. Following the harsh criticism of harmony, melody, and rhythm as quoted above, he praised the orchestration:

> [B]ut I saw that he had an instinct for instrumentation, and I thought that he might perform a real service by discovering certain combinations that others could use better than he.

In describing the third movement, Fétis also commends its instrumental effects:

> In these passages, as everywhere else, there is a paucity of ideas, and the contrast of instrumental effects is the only recourse to which M. Berlioz always turns for rescue.

Fétis acknowledged that he possessed only the piano transcription, referring to the “twenty-two pages of piano score” of the first movement, but also mentions that he was present at the

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14 Ibid., 219.
15 Ibid., 219-220.
16 Ibid., 217.
17 Ibid., 220.
premiere of the composition.\textsuperscript{18} Fétis’s knowledge of Berlioz’s approach to orchestration from his days at the Conservatoire as well as his having heard the symphony performed some years earlier allowed him to comment formally on this aspect of the composition.

Musical elements that were easily transferred to a piano transcription could readily be studied by Fétis with the score that he possessed. Regarding the “March to the Scaffold,” Fétis noted the increased rhythm and the “number of new effects” and concludes that it is “the least faulty part of the \textit{Fantastic Symphony}.”\textsuperscript{19} However, before making this concession Fétis mentioned that in this movement “there are innumerable digressions, and the harmony is all the worse for exhibiting a certain pretentiousness.”\textsuperscript{20} Fétis’s published critique of the \textit{Symphonie fantastique} would serve as the impetus for Schumann’s even more detailed analysis, which appeared several months later.

Around the same time that Fétis penned his criticism, Heinrich Panofka, a correspondent for the \textit{Neue Zeitschrift für Musik} who lived in Paris, provided a completely opposite view of the \textit{Symphonie fantastique}, which appeared on 27 February and 3 March 1835 under the title “Ueber Berlioz und seine Compositionen.” Panofka’s writing piqued Schumann’s interest in this work. Subsequently, the \textit{Neue Zeitschrift für Musik} published a German translation of Fétis’s article in the 19 June and 23 June 1835 issues as a prelude to Schumann’s six-part analysis which appeared in July and August 1835.

\textsuperscript{18} “At last came the day when M. Berlioz gave a concert to let us hear his compositions; it was, I believe, about eight years ago that the concert took place—there have been many others of the same kind since then.” Ibid., 217. Cone suggests that Fétis was mistaken regarding the date and “[a]ctually it was less than five years before, since he is referring to the concert of Dec. 5, 1830.” See Ibid., fn 4. 5 December 1830 was the premiere of the symphony.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 220.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
In an “Editor’s Note” printed immediately before the German translation of Fétis’s article, Schumann explained the impetus for his own analysis and gave a preview of his evaluation of Berlioz’s composition:

We thought that Heinrich Panofka’s letters about the symphony stood in such interesting contrast to the derogatory tone of M. Fétis’s review that we straightway wrote to Paris for the symphony itself. It has been in our hands now for several weeks. We have gradually arrived at our own opinion; and it is by and large so strongly opposed to that of M. Fétis that we have decided to set before our readers a clear translation of his review.21

Indeed, Schumann did receive the requested score—Liszt’s transcription—published by Schlesinger in Paris, which he then used as a study aid for his analysis.

In December 1835, Berlioz reported to Humbert Ferrand on the positive reception of the symphony in Germany due to Liszt’s transcription: “I’ve had a great success in Germany, thanks to Liszt’s piano arrangement of my *Symphonie fantastique*. I’ve been sent a great wad of newspapers from Leipzig to Berlin in which Fétis has been given a good thrashing for his attitude to me.”22 One of these defenses of the symphony from the attacks of Fétis is Schumann’s analysis published during the previous summer.

**Schumann on the *Symphonie fantastique***

When he undertook this analytical exercise, Schumann had neither seen the full orchestral score of the *Symphonie fantastique* nor heard a live performance of it. Interestingly, Schumann dove right into his discussion and analysis of Berlioz’s composition without mentioning that he had only a piano transcription of the symphonic work and had never heard a performance. Not until it was absolutely necessary did Schumann finally reveal that he did not

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22 *Selected Letters of Berlioz*, 129.
have access to the complete score. The placement of this revelation within the analysis will be studied in detail later.

In his introduction to the translation of Fétis’s article in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Schumann professed his unfamiliarity with Berlioz and his symphony, thereby indicating that he had never heard the symphony performed by an orchestra: “at that time we were not familiar with the symphony or with Berlioz’s work in general.”23 Later in his discussion of the directness of Berlioz’s harmonic movement from G to D-flat, Schumann seemed to feel the need justify the validity of this passage and did so based on reports of those who had heard the work performed. “One may well shake one’s head over such doings! But musically intelligent people who heard the symphony in Paris affirmed that the passage could not be otherwise.”24 Schumann’s not having heard the orchestral version makes his analysis all the more remarkable.

Schumann’s essay on the *Symphonie fantastique* consists of two sections: (1) the opening remarks, which appeared on 3 July 1835 with attribution to Florestan; and (2) the remainder of the critique, which encompasses the remaining five installments. Together, the latter five articles offer an analysis of the composition. Schumann examined in detail aspects of the symphony that could be accurately translated by Liszt in the piano transcription, but some sections of the analysis were necessarily vague because he did not have access to the complete score. Each of these final five installments was signed by Schumann.

An edited version of the analysis appeared in Schumann’s *Gesammelte Schriften*, published in 1852-53, with the deletion of one major section and minor modifications of the analysis. Most significantly, the opening section—the first installment along with the opening of the second installment—was omitted. It is interesting that Schumann nonetheless deems his

23 Cone, “Introduction,” 221.
analysis worthy of reproduction and made only minor changes to it, since by this considerably later date he would have had access to the full score and presumably would have heard a live performance.

Schumann outlined his analysis of Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique* as follows: (1) the Form of the whole, of each movement, of the period and, of the phrase; (2) the Compositional Fabric, including harmony, melody, continuity, workmanship, and style; (3) the specific Idea that the artist wanted to present; and finally (4) the Spirit that rules over form, material, and idea\(^{25}\) (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1. Robert Schumann’s Analysis of Hector Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique* in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Contents</th>
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<tr>
<td>July 3</td>
<td>Florestan</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 31</td>
<td>R. Schumann</td>
<td>Overview of Analysis: Identification of 4 sections (form, compositional fabric, idea presented, and spirit) Current state of the symphony FORM (Detailed analysis of 1(^{st}) movement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 4</td>
<td>R. Schumann</td>
<td>FORM (Continuation of 1(^{st}) movement analysis; brief analysis of movements 2 through 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 7</td>
<td>R. Schumann</td>
<td>COMPOSITIONAL FABRIC</td>
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<td>August 11</td>
<td>R. Schumann</td>
<td>COMPOSITIONAL FABRIC (continued)</td>
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<td>August 14</td>
<td>R. Schumann</td>
<td>IDEA PRESENTED by Berlioz SPirit</td>
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Schumann for the most part discusses the work as an orchestral composition and comments on the transcription only when it has limited his ability to imagine and thus analyze the orchestral score. It is not until the section on compositional fabric (near the beginning of the fourth of six installments) that Schumann reveals that he does not possess a copy of the entire score. Until that point, his comments could convince an unknowing reader that he had in fact studied Berlioz’s complete score rather than merely a transcription for piano. The following remarks, all made before Schumann’s revelation that he possessed only a transcription, indirectly suggest that Schumann knew the symphony intimately and conceal the type of score that he possessed:

My first look at the symphony filled me with the strangest emotions. As a child I would often put music upside down on the stand, in order to enjoy the oddly interlaced patterns of notes (as later I came to enjoy the reflections of Venetian palaces inverted in the water). Right side up, this symphony resembled such inverted music. (In Part I)\textsuperscript{26}

After having gone through the Berlioz symphony countless times, at first dumbfounded, then shocked, and at last struck with wonderment, I shall try to make a quick sketch of it. I will depict the composer to you as I have come to know him, in his weaknesses and his virtues, in his vulgarity and his nobility, in his destructive anger and his love. For I know that what he has produced cannot be called a work of art, any more than Nature itself without human cultivation, or passion without the restraint of higher moral force. (In Part I)\textsuperscript{27}

I have read attentively both Florestan’s words about the symphony and the symphony itself, I may say, down to the tiniest note. (In Part II)\textsuperscript{28}

The manifold material that this symphony offers for consideration could so easily become entangled in the following discussion that I prefer to break my analysis into sections, even though any one of them may often depend on the others for clarification. (In Part II)\textsuperscript{29}

Despite not having heard a symphonic performance or studied the complete score, Schumann does not hesitate to offer generalizations about the symphony as though he knew it

\textsuperscript{26} Schumann, “A Symphony by Berlioz,” 222.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 222-223.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 226.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
intimately. Indeed, he continually refers to the composition that he is analyzing simply as the “symphony.” Within these general statements, he refers to “hav[ing] read…the symphony…down to the tiniest note” and “[t]he manifold material that this symphony offers for consideration.” Instead of making excuses for being able to provide only generalizations about the symphony, he suggests that he has everything he needs to study the score in detail.

When analyzing the form of Berlioz’s composition, Schumann looked beyond the piano score, drawing on his knowledge that this work was conceived as a symphony in the nineteenth-century tradition familiar to him. In this section on form, he discusses the composition as a symphony and completely ignores it as a composition for piano.

Form is the vessel of the spirit. Greater spaces require greater spirit to fill them. The word “symphony” has hitherto designated instrumental music of the greatest proportions.

We are wont to judge objects by the names they bear; we make certain demands of a “fantasy,” other of a “sonata.”

It is enough for second-class talents to master the received forms; those of the first rank are granted the right to enlarge them. Only the genius may range freely. (In Part II)

This is not surprising, since the focus of the analysis is Berlioz’s Symphonie fantastique: he used the piano transcription because it was the only score available. Still, Schumann’s omission at this juncture demonstrates that in some ways he views the two works as equals.

At the conclusion of the discussion on compositional fabric—which occurs after the revelation that he possesses only a piano transcription—Schumann makes “a few remarks about the symphony as an orchestral composition.” Although this passage is necessarily brief, he does not hesitate to express a few opinions regarding a symphonic work that he had never heard or examined in its full orchestral version:

30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., 243.
A born virtuoso of the orchestra, Berlioz naturally makes terrifying demands, both on individuals and on the ensemble—more than Beethoven does, more than all others do. But it is not greater mechanical dexterity that he requires of the instrumentalists; what he wants is sympathy, study, love. The individual player must withdraw in favor of the group, which in turn must submit to the will of its leaders. Nothing can be accomplished in only three or four rehearsals; in this respect one may think of the symphony as occupying the same place in orchestral music as the Chopin Concerto occupies in piano music, although I should not like to push the comparison further.32

Unlike Fétis who had the opportunity to hear the composition performed as an orchestral work and thus could make somewhat informed generalizations regarding the instrumentation, Schumann had not seen or heard the work as originally conceived by Berlioz. He therefore avoids detailed analysis of technical aspects of the orchestration.

Liszt had included references to instrumentation at points where a particular instrument (or several instruments) plays an important melody designated “solo” by Berlioz. Without having informed the reader that he only possessed a transcription, Schumann did not hesitate to point out some details of instrumentation, which might suggest that he was examining the full score. In his analysis of the slow introduction to Rêveries, Passions, he stated that “at least, I find in the horn solo the melodic figures of the theme, although only vaguely suggested.”33 Not too much later in this discussion of form, he pointed out the appearance of a horn with a simple statement: “Now a horn in the far distance.”34 At the point where he first alerted the reader to the fact that he had only a piano transcription, Schumann justified this transcription as “one that indicates the most important details of instrumentation.”35

Later in the analysis he repeats this, but then quickly points out that the total effect of the orchestration is lost: “I have already mentioned that one can figure out the solo instruments from the bare piano score. Nevertheless it would be difficult for even the liveliest imagination to form

32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., 229.
34 Ibid.
an adequate idea of the various combinations, contrasts, and striking effects.\textsuperscript{36} Because it would be impossible for any playable transcription to consistently point out every appearance of every instrument without cluttering the score to the point of inhibiting performance, Liszt has not clearly marked sections that do not feature a solo melody, but only a family (or families) of instruments. Hence the transcription does not reveal if the timbre in a particular section includes just strings or strings and woodwinds or strings, winds, and brass. For instance, the woodwind theme (flute, oboe, clarinet and bassoon) in measures 193 through 196 of the first movement, \textit{Rêveries, Passions} is immediately repeated in the same octave in measures 196 through 199 by the strings (Ex. 5.1). Although Liszt follows Berlioz’s voice leading, he adjusts the register so that the string presentation is an octave lower than written, giving no indication, however, of the timbral changes in the repetition of this theme (Ex. 5.2, mm. 193-199).


\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
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\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 243.
As Schumann himself suggests, he was at a great disadvantage in not knowing exactly how the melodies and harmonies fit together within the overall timbral fabric of the composition. Still, his writing reveals his own analytical ability as well as Liszt’s ability as an arranger.

Examining the analysis in greater detail reveals how Schumann could omit the important fact that he did not possess the orchestral score and yet could discuss the symphony in considerable detail and with seemingly great authority. When one considers the faithfulness of Liszt’s transcription to the original and the aspects of the symphony that Schumann examined before making his revelation, it is not difficult to see why he waited so long. The issue of form—of the whole, of each movement, and of the period—was not affected by a transformation of the full orchestral score to a *Partition de piano*. Yet the nature of compositional fabric would require an examination of the parts making up the whole—and one very important part of a symphony is the instrumentation and the appearance of various harmonies and strands of melodies with their distinctive timbral nuances. During the discussion of compositional fabric it finally became necessary for Schumann to reveal that he could not supply a complete analysis with only the transcription in hand.
Form: The Vessel

Schumann defines form as “the vessel of the spirit” and goes on to state that “[t]he word ‘symphony’ has hitherto designated instrumental music of the greatest proportions.”37 In his transcription, Liszt did not alter the form that Berlioz created. In fact, Schumann’s goal of examining the form “of the whole, of each movement, of period, of phrase”38 could easily be accomplished due to Liszt’s strict observance of Berlioz’s structure.

The two installments discussing form, which appeared in parts II and III, include several passages in which Schumann discussed this aspect authoritatively as if studying the original composition.

Now if I could also succeed in giving the reader, whom I should like to accompany upstairs and down through this wonderful building, a picture of its individual rooms! (In Part II)39

I had three aims in performing [the first movement]: First, to prove to those totally unfamiliar with the symphony that the illumination of the music available to them from an analytical critique is indeed slight; second, to indicate a few high points to those who have looked over the symphony superficially and have perhaps set it aside, being unable to find their way about in it; last, to demonstrate to those who know the work but fail to appreciate it that, despite its apparent formlessness, a symmetrically ordered pattern governs its larger proportions—not to mention the inner consistency of the movement. (In Part III)40

Besides, as I have already suggested, nothing arouses disagreement and opposition so quickly as a new form bearing an old name. For example, if someone decided to call a piece in 5/4 time a march, or twelve successive short movements a symphony, he would certainly prejudice his own case ahead of time—although one should always try to find out how matters really stand. (In Part III)41

38 Ibid.
39 Ibid., 228.
40 Ibid., 230.
41 Ibid.
As Schumann delves into the form of the first movement, the faithfulness of Liszt’s transcription allows for a detailed examination of questions of symmetry, proportions, and “inner consistency” in the key structure and appearances of themes.

It does seem that “a picture of [the symphony’s] individual rooms” would necessarily include substantial details that would not be accessible to Schumann in the piano transcription. Despite the fact that Schumann probably omitted certain details that he could have provided with knowledge and understanding of the composition gained from a complete orchestral score, the reduction of the harmonies and melodies from a orchestral score to one for solo piano still includes all the elements necessary for a solid analysis of form and numerous other aspects of the symphony.

Compositional Fabric

Berlioz originally defines compositional fabric as “harmony, melody, continuity, workmanship, style” and then later provides an analogy for his definition: “So far we have been dealing with the garment; now we must look at the cloth it is made of, at the compositional fabric.” The basic elements of the cloth, namely harmony and melody, remain intact in the derivative work, but more complex aspects of the composition are only partially revealed in the piano transcription; whereas some of the instrumentation is indicated, many of the finer details of timbre are obviously lacking.

At this point—in the fourth installment of the analysis— Schumann reveals that his analysis is based on Liszt’s transcription:

At the outset, I must point out that I have only a piano transcription as a basis for my judgment, albeit one that indicates the most important details of instrumentation.

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42 Ibid., 226.
43 Ibid., 233.
Even if this were not the case, everything seems to me conceived and worked out so completely in orchestral terms, with each instrument so exactly placed and exploited, so to speak, with regard for its basic sonorous quality, that a good musician could prepare a passable score from the arrangement—naturally excepting the new combinations and orchestral effects on which Berlioz is known to lavish his attention.44

The irony in Schumann’s statement “[a]t the outset” resides in the fact that this statement appears in the fourth printed installment of the complete analysis. To be sure, this is the beginning of the section on compositional fabric, but closer to the end of the series of published articles than the beginning.

Schumann claims that the style of the work is orchestral as opposed to pianistic; he also suggests that the quality of the transcription is “conceived and worked out so completely in orchestral terms, with each instrument so exactly placed and exploited, so to speak, with regard for its basic sonorous quality” that applying a reverse process—creating an orchestral score from the transcription—could yield the original.45 However, he immediately turns on this statement to say that a “passable score” would be difficult due to “the new combinations and orchestral effects on which Berlioz is known to lavish his attention.”46 This statement is proven true as there are places where Schumann does not “guess” correctly what the original holds. Indeed, he states that “[f]rom the transcription, it is impossible to judge those passages where imitations between bass (or tenor) and soprano produce ugly octaves and false relations (m. 371).” In response Edward Cone notes that “[f]or pianistic reasons the transcription does not always preserve Berlioz’s voice leading; sometimes Berlioz’s bass becomes Liszt’s tenor, etc.”47

Despite the limitations of the piano score, Schumann is still able to provide some specificity. Such comments regarding melody are not surprising, as melody is easily transferred

44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid., 236.
in transcription. When Schumann discusses themes, including squeezing “the last drop out of them,”48 “boring thematic development,”49 appearances and contrapuntal treatment of the “principal motif;”50 relationships between themes,51 and masterful working out of a theme and its countersubjects,52 the lack of a complete orchestral score does not necessarily inhibit his understanding. Further, his discussion of Berlioz’s attention to detail seems to be a bold statement considering the transformations inherent in the musical score from which he derives it. “Although Berlioz may tend to neglect individual parts and to sacrifice them for the sake of the whole, he is nevertheless a master of the ingeniously conceived and finely wrought detail.”53 Since the recitation of details following this statement has primarily to do with melody, Schumann’s confidence is justified. When he gives high praise for Berlioz’s attention to detail, he obviously means details of melody and harmony that remain apparent in a transcription and not the details of timbre that for the most part are suppressed.

Schumann’s discussion of harmony—which actually precedes the discussion of melody—includes several instances where he must take a step back and remind the reader that he has limited resources from which to work. Although many aspects of harmony do not get lost in transcription, he still reminds the reader of the limitations he faces and the consequent lack of detail in this section. He reiterates the key areas that he had already pointed out in the section on form, and he also provides extremely vague descriptions of each movement. Further, most references to specific passages occur in the footnotes as support for ambiguous descriptions of

48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid., 237.
51 Ibid., 238.
52 Ibid., 239.
53 Ibid., 236.
harmonies including “flat and ordinary,” “unclear and vague,” and “ugly in sound, tortured, twisted.”

As Schumann acknowledges might be the case, evaluation of the analysis with the complete orchestral score in hand reveals that several of his conjectures were indeed incorrect. One of his numerous footnotes admits the limitations: “I repeat that I am judging only by the piano transcription: much of this may seem different in the score.” For instance, as a reference to the “unclear and vague” harmony, Schumann suggests in a footnote that measure 11 of the fifth movement is “probably a joke of Liszt’s, who may have been trying to imitate the dying away of the cymbals.” In fact, the cymbals do not occur in this passage, and Liszt accurately transcribes the harmony. As he articulates several times, the piano transcription was not sufficient basis for a detailed and accurate analysis of all aspects of the symphony.

Finally, Schumann turns to orchestration: “[f]or the sake of completeness, let us now add a few remarks about the symphony as an orchestral composition and about Liszt’s piano transcription.” Out of necessity, this section is general and brief. Schumann throws out a few general comments regarding Berlioz as an orchestrator and the place of this symphony in the orchestral repertoire and then once again reminds the reader of his inability to discuss specific aspects of orchestration: “I have already mentioned that one can figure out the solo instruments from the bare piano score. Nevertheless it would be difficult for even the liveliest imagination to form an adequate idea of the various combinations, contrasts, and striking effects.” At this point, the transcription confounds Schumann’s attempts at analysis. He can only remark on the wide-ranging sounds that would be heard in an orchestral performance: [t]o be sure, [Berlioz]

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54 Ibid., 235.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid., 243.
58 Ibid.
shrinks from nothing that can be called tone, sound, noise, or clangor; thus he uses muffled drums, harps, muted horns, English horn, finally even bells.\textsuperscript{59}

As Schumann suggests, comparing the transcription to the original score reveals numerous instances throughout the transcription where the piano’s single sonority does not do justice to Berlioz’s compositional fabric. In the second movement, \textit{Un bal}, for instance, a distinctive melody heard in the original a number of times played by different instruments sounds the same each time it is presented in the piano transcription. The melody played by the first violins in measures 38 through 54 accompanied by the other strings (Ex. 5.3) is repeated in measures 94 through 106 (Ex. 5.4), again played by the first violins, but this time with full orchestral accompaniment. When this melodic passage reappears in measures 233 and following, the scoring is completely different: the flute, oboe, and clarinet carry the melody, accompanied by the strings (Ex. 5.5). In his transcription, all Liszt can do is note the varied instruments designated to play each passage (Exs. 5.6, 5.7, and 5.8).

Ex. 5.3. Berlioz, \textit{Symphonie fantastique, II: Un bal, mm. 38-58.}

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
Ex. 5.4. Berlioz, *Symphonie fantastique*, II: *Un bal*, mm. 87-108.
Ex. 5.6. Berlioz/Liszt, *Symphonie fantastique, II: Un bal*, mm. 38-56

Ex. 5.7. Berlioz/Liszt, *Symphonie fantastique, II: Un bal*, mm. 94-107.
As Schumann finally turns to a discussion of Liszt’s transcription to conclude the section on compositional fabric, he addresses the issue of the missing colors:

This kind of interpretive art, so different from the filigree work of the virtuoso—the various kinds of touch that it demands, the effective use of the pedal, the clear interlacing of individual voices, the grasp of the texture as a single block of sound; in short, the thorough knowledge of the medium and of the many secrets that the piano still hides—this can only be the work of a master and genius of performance such as Liszt above all others is well known to be.  

Perhaps Liszt intended the instrumental designations in the score to serve as cues to the performer to vary the tone color (as much as possible) and distinguish subtly between the various appearances of a single melody. Although the pianist would thus be aware of the differences in orchestration, listeners would not necessarily hear a difference between the three iterations of the melody.

Composers who transcribed orchestral works for piano frequently confronted this problem; the challenge was to highlight timbral differences through means other than those possible with an orchestra. Liszt employs register adjustments and textural variations to indicate the variance in the compositional fabric that cannot be heard when performed by a solo pianist.

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60 Ibid., 244.
At the beginning of the third movement, *Scène aux champs*, a dialogue occurs between the oboe and the English horn in which a two-measure melodic idea alternates between the two instruments (Ex. 5.9). Because the piano cannot mimic the difference in timbre, Liszt presents the oboe melody one octave higher than the English horn melody (Ex. 5.10). In measures 20 through 49, the melody is presented by the flutes and the violins in unison (Ex. 5.11). At the beginning of this passage, Liszt writes only a single melody line (Ex. 5.12). In measure 24, however, Liszt doubles the melody at the octave, which is more akin to the duet in the orchestral score. Within this passage, at measure 33, the clarinet plays dotted half notes for four measures that are marked “Solo” by Berlioz. In order for these notes to be heard against the flute/violin duet, Liszt assigns trills to them.


*Idea and Spirit*

The final two sections of the analysis as outlined by Schumann include the *besondere Idee*—the “specific idea that the artist wanted to present”—and *Geist*—the “spirit that rules over form, material, and idea.”

In this case, Schumann equates the “idea” of the symphony with the program provided by Berlioz and therefore summarizes the program for his readers. The program was not printed with the original version of the transcription; in fact, the fourth edition of the transcription published by F. Ernst Christoph Leuckart in Leipzig in 1876 was the first to include the program. Still,

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61 Ibid., 226.
Schumann knew about the program as evidenced by his detailed references to it in his review. Presumably, he had a copy of the pamphlet printed in 1834 that contained Berlioz’s program. We do not know if Liszt made a conscious decision to exclude the extramusical material from his publication, but presumably he believed that listeners and scholars alike would have access to this material.

As Schumann discusses the idea and the spirit, he reverts back to referring to the symphony as if he had a full score. He concludes his review expressing his desire that his words help promote Berlioz’s symphony:

> If these lines should help induce Berlioz once and for all to moderate his eccentric tendencies, if they should gain recognition for his symphony, not as an artist’s masterpiece but as a work unique in its originality; if, finally, they should excite more vigorous activity among German artists, to whom Berlioz has extended a firm hand in fellowship against untalented mediocrity, then their publication will have achieved its purpose.62

In the same way that Liszt worked to promote the *Symphonie fantastique* by transcribing the symphony for piano and then financially backing its publication, Schumann also backed the work of Berlioz with the limited resources available to him.

### Conclusion

In some ways, Schumann’s analysis of the *Symphonie fantastique* from Liszt’s *Partition de piano* is antithetical to the premises that have been and will continue to be established here. Saying that Liszt’s work is a version of the symphony such that Schumann could use it to conduct his analysis suggests that the transcription is considered to be equivalent to the original, and seems to go against the premise that the *Partitions de piano* should be considered a distinct genre.

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62 Ibid., 248.
As has been established, the *Partitions de piano* are not simple reductions of the orchestral score for piano. While they do faithfully render most elements of the original, at the same time Liszt has interpreted the symphony both to make it playable on the piano and to better reflect the symphonic sound. The fact that Schumann could pen such a detailed analysis solely from Liszt’s score and the fact that he did not reveal that he possessed only a piano score until a considerable way through the analysis legitimizes Liszt’s work as a faithful representation of the original.

Schumann’s eventual discussion of the transcription itself confirms his trust in it even though he does admit that his analysis will be blemished because he cannot see all the details of the composition. Although he does not hesitate to point out when his analysis is limited by the piano transcription, at no time does he denigrate the piano score. When he specifically discusses Liszt’s work he gives it high praise.

At the conclusion of the section on compositional fabric, Schumann turns to a brief discussion of Liszt’s transcription.

Liszt has applied so much industry and enthusiasm and genius that the result, like an original work summarizing his profound studies, must be considered as a complete manual of instruction in the art of playing the piano from score. This kind of interpretive art, so different from the filigree work of the virtuoso—the various kinds of touch that it demands, the effective use of the pedal, the clear interlacing of individual voices, the grasp of the texture as a single block of sound; in short, the thorough knowledge of the medium and of the many secrets that the piano still hides—this can only be the work of a master and genius of performance such as Liszt above all others is well known to be. But in such a case the piano arrangement need not fear being heard side by side with an orchestral performance; indeed, Liszt recently played it publicly in Paris as the introduction to a later symphony by Berlioz (the *Mélologue*, a sequel to the *Fantastic*).\(^\text{63}\)

Even though Schumann essentially hid the fact that he did not possess a symphonic score from his readers for a period of time, he was well aware both the limitations of his score as well as the consideration needed to present the symphony on the piano. He also knew and acknowledged

\(^{63}\) Ibid., 244.
Liszt’s genius in interpreting a symphonic score for the piano. Schumann concludes his discussion of the transcription as follows:

This piano arrangement is certainly unique and must be recommended as such to those who wish to learn the rare art of symphonic performance; we feel it is our duty to voice here our warmest recognition of the credit Liszt so well deserves.64

Public reaction to the performance of Liszt’s transcription also reveals how the transcription was thought of in relation to the original. Sir Charles Hallé reported on the audience reaction to Liszt’s performance of the “March to the Scaffold” at an 1836 concert in Paris.

At an orchestral concert given by [Liszt] and conducted by Berlioz, the “March to the scaffold” from the latter’s Fantastic Symphony, that most gorgeously instrumented piece, was performed, at the conclusion of which Liszt sat down and played his own arrangement, for the piano alone, of the same movement, with an effect even surpassing that of the full orchestra, and creating an indescribable furor.65

During the nineteenth century, piano transcriptions of large-scale orchestral works had the ability to elicit enthusiastic responses from audiences in much the same way that the original symphonic compositions did.

64 Ibid. This passage appears in the original analysis, but it was deleted from the Gesammelte Schriften reprint.
CHAPTER 6

SYMPHONIC TRANSCRIPTION: BEETHOVEN’S SYMPHONIES

Following his work with the *Symphonie fantastique*, Liszt created his *Partitions de piano* of the Beethoven symphonies, a task that occupied him in various stages over the next thirty years. Beginning in 1835 and continuing through April 1838, Liszt completed transcriptions of the Sixth, Fifth, and then Seventh symphonies. At this time he expressed to his publisher Breitkopf and Härtel his belief that these three symphonies as well as the *Eroica* were “the ones that have the greatest effect on the piano.”\(^1\) By the end of 1841, he had also transcribed the funeral march of the *Eroica*.

At the request of Breitkopf and Härtel, Liszt completed the entire Beethoven collection for solo piano, which included revisions of the earlier versions, between 1863 and 1865. Although Liszt’s correspondence indicates that he wanted to end this project with his composition of the third movement of the Ninth Symphony, it was eventually completed with the finale of the ninth. He had originally expressed his inability to successfully transcribe the massive orchestral and vocal texture of this movement for solo piano. However, at the insistence of the publisher, Liszt did complete the movement with modifications that included placing the complete vocal parts on a separate staff. Even though Liszt had successfully incorporated much of the vocal writing into the pianist’s texture, since this material also appeared in the instrumental lines, he insisted on this addition to the score for the sake of completeness.\(^2\)

Liszt’s expansive work with the Beethoven symphonies spanned a diverse thirty-year period. Through 1848, his career was dominated by the piano: performing on concert stages

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2 Originally Liszt declined to transcribe the finale of the ninth symphony for two hands as he thought it would be “impossible to make an arrangement of the fourth movement *for two hands* which would be satisfactory and efficacious even to some extent.” (NLE, Ser. II, 17-19:xvi) However, Liszt finally came up with the solution of adding an extra staff for the vocal parts and thereafter completed the project.
across Europe and as a composer of virtuoso piano music. From 1848 through 1861, Liszt engaged with the orchestra as a conductor and as a composer of numerous innovative works for that ensemble, namely his symphonic poems. The later transcriptions of Beethoven’s symphonies come on the heels of this orchestral period and therefore do not have the same compositional background, purpose, or function as the earlier symphonic transcriptions.

Along with his transcriptions of Schubert’s songs and the Symphonie fantastique, early versions of the transcriptions of the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh symphonies, as well as the single movement from the Eroica, were put to immediate use by Liszt in his concerts. He undertook transcriptions of the remaining symphonies when he was no longer touring; consequently, there would not have been immediate opportunities for him to perform them.

Despite the differences in compositional background and performance history between the early and the late versions, the basic premise of Liszt’s approach remained the same. In a preface originally published with his early Partitions de piano signed “Rome, 1839,” Liszt provided an explanation and a justification for his work with Beethoven’s symphonies. The 1865 edition of the Partitions de piano republished a very slightly revised version of the preface signed “Rome, 1865,” suggesting that Liszt penned these ideas specifically for the later versions. The fact that essentially the same preface graced both editions of the symphonies implies that Liszt did not significantly change his overall conception of this compositional process. Regardless of the different compositional time frames and circumstances for the early

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3 Throughout this chapter, this passage by Liszt will be referred to as the preface.
4 Even as late as the last twenty years, scholars without access to the early versions mistakenly suggest an 1865 publication date for the preface. For example, Walden Dale Hughes’ 1992 Doctor of Arts Dissertation “Liszt’s Solo Piano Transcriptions of Orchestral Literature,” cites this preface as being from the 1865 Breitkopf and Härtel publication. Walden Dale Hughes, “Liszt’s Solo Piano Transcriptions of Orchestral Literature” (DA diss., University of Northern Colorado, 1992), 8-9.
and late works, Liszt had a singular vision and purpose in composing his *Partitions de piano*; indeed, this entire corpus of works represents a unified genre.

Because of the importance of his introduction to the transcriptions for illuminating Liszt’s thoughts regarding this corpus of works, I am including it here in its entirety.

In the arts, the name of Beethoven is sacred. His symphonies are universally recognized today as masterpieces. For all those with a serious desire to gain knowledge or to be creative, they can never be too much meditated on and studied. Consequently, every means of publicizing and popularizing them has a degree of usefulness, and the piano arrangements of these symphonies, which have been made in fairly large numbers up to the present, do not lack a certain advantage, although intrinsically they are of mediocre quality. Even the worst lithograph or the most inaccurate translation gives a vague idea of the genius of a Michelangelo or a Shakespeare. In even the most incomplete reduction we find here and there half-effaced traces of the inspiration of the masters. But the extension of its capabilities acquired by the piano in recent times as a result of the progress made in execution and refinements introduced in the mechanism make it possible to do more, and better, than has been done up till now. Through the indefinite development of its harmonic power, the piano is tending to assimilate all orchestral compositions to itself. In the space of seven octaves it can produce, with few exceptions, all the characteristics, all the combinations, all the figures of the most scholarly composition, and leaves the orchestra with no other advantages (though they are indeed immense) but those of diversity of timbres and mass effects.

Such has been my aim in the work I am publishing today. I would have regarded it, I admit, as a rather useless way of occupying my time to publish a twentieth variant of the symphonies done in the manner customary up till now, but I shall consider these hours well spent if I have succeeded in transferring to the piano not only the broad outlines of Beethoven’s composition but also the multitude of details and minor features that contribute so powerfully to the perfection of the whole. I shall be satisfied if I have accomplished the task of the intelligent engraver and conscientious translator, who capture both the spirit and the letter of a work and thus help to propagate knowledge of the masters and a feeling for beauty.\(^5\)

Thus Liszt’s *Partitions de piano* are not exact replications of the symmetry for the piano, which simplistically reduce all melodic lines, harmonies, rhythms, and accompanimental patterns to a piano score. Nor are they virtuoso piano compositions in which the basic elements of Beethoven’s symphonies are being treated to all manner of piano figuration simply for the sake of the pianist. Rather, Liszt retained both the broad outlines of Beethoven’s compositions and

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\(^5\) Liszt’s Preface to the Beethoven Symphonies, 1st edition (Rome, 1839).
“the multitude of details and minor features that contribute so powerfully to the perfection of the whole” to create a pianistic representation of the orchestral sound. Working within the bounds of Beethoven’s melodic lines, harmonies, rhythms, and accompanimental patterns, Liszt transfers the essence of the details to the piano to create works that can achieve the goal of making Beethoven’s symphonies more widely known. Other writings by Liszt, as well as the symphonies themselves, support this as his model of composition.

Liszt’s Early Period of Symphonic Transcription

In the preface, Liszt generally referenced the usefulness of all kinds of piano arrangements of Beethoven’s symphonies to both publicize and popularize the works. In other writings, he expounded on his role in this arena. In the September 1837 letter to Pictet, Liszt set forth a basic reason for composing symphonic transcriptions, namely their performance and the resulting benefit of increased exposure: “The piano is a means of disseminating works that would otherwise remain unknown or unfamiliar to the general public because of the difficulty involved in assembling an orchestra.”

Several years later in a June 1839 letter to Breitkopf and Härtel, Liszt reiterated this motivation and his specific intentions to play the symphonies on his concert tours:

My intention being to visit Vienna, Munich, and perhaps Leipzig at the beginning of next year, I shall take advantage of this opportunity to let the symphonies be heard at my concerts, so as to give them a certain publicity.

Concert programs and concert reviews from Liszt’s virtuoso years of touring provide evidence of performances of the symphonic transcriptions.

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6 Franz Liszt, An Artist’s Journey, 45.
Commenting on an upcoming 1845 concert in Darmstadt, a critic identified as “D-M.” reports Liszt’s success in presenting symphonic works on the piano:

Beneath his hands an orchestra comes to life: his eye does not merely rest upon two times five lines of music, but his spirit roams through whole orchestral scores; he does not play but becomes a poet, living through sound. This keyboard, so often a feeble instrument of tedium, becomes a source of admiration beneath his masterly hands; even the blasé listener is filled with wonderment and ecstasy; and the thrill of beauty passes through his soul when Liszt’s genius speaks to him so powerfully, shatteringly, and enthrallingly through such an imperfect and everyday instrument.\(^8\)

As a witness of Liszt’s superb ability to perform symphonic works on the piano, this critic underscored his claims regarding the *Partitions de piano*. As he brought the orchestra to life as a sound poet, Liszt inspired critics to extol his ability to thrill audiences even on what the writer considered to be an imperfect and everyday instrument, the keyboard.

In his preface to the *Partitions de piano*, Liszt acknowledged that he was not the first composer to undertake the transcription of Beethoven’s symphonies, referring to the mediocre piano arrangements that “have been made in fairly large numbers up to the present.”\(^9\) In fact, he suggested that he would have regarded his work to be useless if it merely achieved the standards of less successful transcribers. Although numerous arrangements of the symphonies for various instrumental ensembles appeared in the years immediately following their composition, the list of piano transcriptions is relatively small.

In a mid-nineteenth-century review of Liszt’s transcription of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, Louis Köhler mentioned other transcriptions of the Ninth and specifically pointed out the downfall of Czerny’s work: namely, his attempts to transfer “from the score to the key-

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\(^9\) Preface to *Partitions*. 
board more than is good for a clear representation.” Köhler points out the difficulty faced by Czerny in undertaking a four-hand transcription.

Czerny packed both hands full, so that very often the possibility of making single tones and voices prominent ceases; indeed in the light-winged Scherzos he frequently leads on a dance of leaping hands full of chords, in a manner that is absolutely impracticable; for, even with the correct execution of a master hand, the inward and essential character of the music is not always presentable...Moreover, Czerny always brings in play the entire surface of the keyboard, from the lowest to the highest tones; hence there is an end to all alternation of coloring; a continual screaming discant tortures the nerve of hearing, besides falsely representing the orchestral effect; for Beethoven does not continually employ the high violin registers nor half a dozen of never resting piccolos.

The problem with many transcriptions is that the transcriber is too literal. A good transcription does not incorporate every note from every voice, but rather uses only the essential notes—whether of melody or harmony—in creating a likeness of the original.

Years later, Schoenberg commented that “[m]ost authors of modern piano reductions limit their achievement to transposing each of the voices in the score for piano, placing them one on top of the other. These arrangers are like a cook who, instead of a meal, has the ingredients served that are to go into it.” In contrast, Liszt had the ability to faithfully render the original work, yet still create a sensible—albeit virtuoso—composition in the language of the new medium.

Although Liszt did not single out any previous transcriber in the preface when he referred to composing a twentieth variant, his criticism of previous attempts at arrangement is clearly expressed. He did identify the work of a contemporary pianist and composer, Frédéric

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10 Dwight’s Journal of Music 4, no. 6 (12 November 1853): 41. Dwight’s Journal notes that this article was translated from the “Leipsic Neue Zeitschrift.” Köhler mentions that this symphony probably does not exist in a two-hand arrangement although the editor of Dwight’s Journal notes that Kalkbrenner did arrange it in that manner. Liszt eventually completed a two-hand transcription of this symphony in 1864. At the time this article appeared in Dwight’s Journal, Liszt had transcribed the first eight symphonies for two hands but he had only undertaken a two piano transcription of the Ninth symphony.  
11 Ibid.  
Kalkbrenner, in a letter to Breitkopf and Härtel dated 5 April 1838. While not specifically denigrating the publication of Beethoven transcriptions by Kalkbrenner, Liszt expressed a hope that his own would reach publication before long, as he considered his contributions to the pianist’s repertoire different because of their faithfulness to the original.

I have begun the arrangement of the piano score [of Beethoven’s symphonies]. To tell the truth this work has been rather tiring. I may be wrong but I consider it to be quite different from, not to say better than, works of the same kind that have appeared up to now. The recent publication of the same symphonies arranged by Mr. Kalkbrenner have made me hope that mine will not remain unpublished for long. I also think I will finger them very carefully and add the indications for the various instruments . . . and this will make the edition much more complete. . . . It will be a pleasure to conclude this small transaction with you for 8 francs a page.13

As William Michael Cory notes, works by Hummel and Kalkbrenner that simplified the original symphonies did not accurately reflect the power in the symphonies.14

Conversely, around this same time Liszt created highly successful compositions that could be evaluated as such by their adherence to the original, their own compositional style, and the enormous public acclaim they received.

The Late Period of Symphonic Transcription

Because he was no longer active as a concert pianist during the early 1860s, Liszt obviously did not compose his late symphonic transcriptions for his own public concert performances. Why then did he return to his work with the Beethoven symphonies and complete the massive undertaking almost thirty years after beginning it? One motivation for him to transcribe the final six symphonies of Beethoven was evidently his relationship with Breitkopf

and Härtel and his willingness to comply with their desire to publish the complete set of transcriptions.

Correspondence from the publisher to Liszt sheds some light on this issue. In 1850, he offered Breitkopf and Härtel “the complete series of Beethoven’s symphonies for piano two hands,” and although the publisher expressed interest, he did not complete the project at that time. In 1863 Breitkopf and Härtel followed up with a request for the whole series of transcriptions: “[i]n the first place we should like to express our desire to publish all symphonies transcribed for piano two hands by you …. Would you be so kind to let us know whether and under what conditions you are willing to comply with our request.” Liszt responded positively and then carried out the commission.

A short time later, Liszt expressed his desire to create precise replicas of the original symphonies, and therefore asked Breitkopf and Härtel for and subsequently received the latest editions of the symphonies: “I acknowledge with the sincerest thanks the receipts of your latest edition of the orchestral scores and I will take great pains not to fall short in my piano scores of the particular care, accuracy and perfection of the get-up of your edition.” One month later he asked for additional scores from which to revise his earlier transcriptions of the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh symphonies. “To meet the requirements of the overall title inscription which reads ‘critically revised edition’ I beg […] you to send me together with the new edition of the scores of the Pastoral, C minor and A major symphonies at the latest a copy of my already published transcriptions of these works. I shall probably change, facilitate and emend many a thing in [the

original transcriptions], and add a few fingerings.” This faithfulness to the original is also reiterated in correspondence that specifically referred to his use of the title *Partition de Piano*.

By the title *Partition de Piano* (which is to be retained and translated into German as ‘Clavier-Partitur’ or ‘Pianoforte-Partitur’?) I wish to indicate my intention to combine the performer’s wit with the effects of the orchestra and to make the different sonorities and nuances felt within the restricted possibilities of the piano.

Even with this designation, Liszt encapsulates the spirit of these compositions: scores that accurately reflect the original for performance on the piano.

Because Liszt created two versions of the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh symphonies and the funeral march of the *Eroica* more than twenty years apart, questions arise as to the differences between the two versions of these works. Only in the last few years has it become relatively effortless to compare the versions, due to the publication of a supplemental volume of the *Neue Liszt Ausgabe* that contains the first editions of his work with these four symphonies.

Comparison of the two versions of the *Funeral March* of the Third Symphony and the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Symphonies reveals that they are overwhelmingly similar; despite variances in certain passages, his conception of the works did not change significantly. For this reason, the preface for his Beethoven symphony transcriptions that first appeared with the publication of the 1830s versions does not seem out of place when reprinted in the 1860s publication.

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20 Liszt’s Preface to the Beethoven Symphonies, 1st edition (Rome, 1839). Prior to this publication, efforts to evaluate Liszt’s work in this regard were limited by lack of access to the early versions. For his 1981 Doctor of Musical Arts dissertation entitled “Franz Liszt’s *Symphonies de Beethoven: Partitions de Piano,*” William Michael Cory had limited access to the 1837 edition of the Sixth Symphony only. (See Cory, “Franz Liszt’s *Symphonies de Beethoven.*”) Without access to the early transcriptions, Walden Dale Hughes compared techniques in the *Symphonie fantastique* transcription, as a representative of Liszt’s early style, and Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, as a representative of Liszt’s late style, and concludes that for the most part the two transcriptions exhibit similar techniques. (See Walden Dale Hughes, “Liszt’s Solo Piano Transcriptions of Orchestral Literature” (DA, University of Northern Colorado, 1992), 131-132.) The later versions are in the early “complete works” edition from the early twentieth century and the main volumes of the NLE from the early 1990s.
In a letter to Breitkopf and Härtel dated 28 August 1863, Liszt commented on the usefulness of his transcriptions for musicians to understand the genius of Beethoven and for other pianists also to benefit from their performance and study.

By getting initiated more profoundly into the genius of Beethoven I hope to have made some progress in the way of adapting his inspirations to the piano as far as this instrument allows it, and I have attempted not to leave out of consideration that by adhering faithfully to the original one must make allowance for the relative ease of the performance too. The manner in which this arrangement of Beethoven’s symphonies appears makes it possible even to pupils of the first classes of the conservatories to play them passably *a prima vista* on condition that to succeed better they must practice, which is always advisable anyway. Which study would deserve more care and assiduity than that of these masterpieces? The more one devotes himself to them, the more benefit he will draw, first of all with regard to sense and aesthetic understanding and later also in respect of technical ease and of the improvement of virtuosity—which one should not disdain, only the wrong use we sometimes make of it.21

Although Liszt was not concertizing throughout Europe at this time, he saw the value of his symphonic transcriptions for others, even conservatory students.

He included indications in the score regarding instrumentation as he did in his transcription of the *Symphonie fantastique*, but these notations would have served different purposes in the two repertoires. Because the full score for the *Symphonie fantastique* was not published until 1845, more than fifteen years after its composition, both pianists and scholars employed Liszt’s transcription as an aid to learning the composition. The instrumental indications were one method of conveying as much information as possible about the original. Although the orchestral timbres were not heard, performers, critics, or scholars could in their own mind conjure up the sound of the original based upon their familiarity with the various orchestral instruments.

Since all of Beethoven’s symphonies were published before Liszt’s transcriptions, the transcriptions offered little to scholars studying the original works other than an interpretation by

Liszt of Beethoven and his famous compositions. In this case, the identification of specific instruments in the score serves instead as an aid to performers as they replicate the various instruments as faithfully as possible with only the capabilities of the piano.

**Transcription Practice: Literal, but Involves Interpretation**

Unlike his freer transcriptions of the Schubert songs but similar to his transcription of the *Symphonie fantastique*, Liszt intended his transcriptions of Beethoven’s symphonies to directly reflect all aspects of the original. Comparison of the two reveals that he did not simply condense the score as an intellectual exercise. While certain passages of the piano score consist of a literal reduction, Liszt necessarily alters one or more musical elements in others. In these passages, he appears to have significantly changed Beethoven’s work; however, to the ear, his adjustments turn the transcription into a close representation of the original.

The contemporary pianist Arthur Tollefson notes that Liszt’s transcriptions of these symphonies do not fall into one of the two usual classifications of this type of work: (1) works that reduce and simplify the score for performance by amateurs; or (2) works that elaborate on the original to the point of becoming virtuoso showpieces.\(^{22}\) Rather, they fall into a third category “which neither diminishes nor augments the orchestral score” but instead is an “exact representation, the faithful transference of a symphonic sound to the piano.”\(^{23}\) Liszt’s *Partitions de piano* replicate the aural essence of the symphony as opposed to literally reproducing the written score in the form of strict transcription.

A century later Donald Francis Tovey commented on the transcriptions and obviously viewed them as a fairly faithful rendition of the original, although he erred in suggesting that

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\(^{23}\) Ibid., 49.
transcriptions of all nine symphonies were completed in the 1840s. While pointing out their limitations, namely lack of orchestral mass and variety of timbre, he also observed their value:

In the ’forties Liszt published, or at all events played in public, arrangements of Beethoven’s nine symphonies, introducing them with a declaration to the effect that it was possible to produce on the pianoforte all the essentials of an orchestral score, except those of sheer mass and varieties of timbre. The arrangements are still in print, and prove conclusively (to any one who can read the originals without their aid) that Liszt was by far the most wonderful interpreter of orchestral scores on the pianoforte that the world is ever likely to see.24

The process of transferring the musical material for up to twelve different instruments to a composition that can be played by a single pianist of course required Liszt to understand both the original and the instrument to which it was being given. As Walden Dale Hughes observes, “Liszt exhibited exceptional creative powers in this medium, while remaining faithful to the intentions of the composers whose works he transcribed.”25 Rather than creating strict and at the same time unnatural reductions for piano, Liszt interpreted the orchestral scores, resulting in works that both replicated the original and sounded pianistic.

Although nineteenth-century Russian critic Valdimir Vasilevich Stasov considered Liszt’s original compositions for piano to be second-rate, he held his transcriptions, especially those of symphonic works, in high regard. Rather than comparing the scores note by note, Stasov was concerned with the aural effect of the overall work and consequently declared that Liszt’s made the right impression.

It might be said that there is a kind of acoustical deception in the way Liszt’s arrangements are made. What is written in the arrangement differs from what is to be found in the orchestral score, and yet the effect produced is exactly the one that is desired and required. Sometimes you can scarcely believe your own fingers: you cannot

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understand why it is that some figure with a certain disposition of notes sounds altogether different from the way it apparently should sound.\textsuperscript{26}

Pianistically Liszt could not retain each distinct pitch from the original score when a single note was frequently played by numerous instruments in several different octaves. Had a literal transcription that included every single pitch in the original even been possible to play, it would have been overpowering to the listener and ineffective in its presentation. Further, despite the seemingly close relationship between the original and a transcription, this would not necessarily be the best representation of the overall orchestral sound. Liszt’s interpretation, although not exact when compared with the written scores, produces a similar effect to that made by the symphony.

While retaining the essence of the symphony, Liszt adjusted details to make the piano rendition a more literal reflection of the sound of the orchestral version. In comparing an arrangement of the \textit{Freischütz} overture by Henselt with Liszt’s symphonic transcriptions, Stasov proclaimed that Henselt’s work is one “which [has] not kept pace with contemporary developments,” namely those propounded by Liszt.\textsuperscript{27} In his comparison of these two types of transcription, Stasov continued with a general theory of how to create an effective transcription:

Such is the difference between using the piano for trivial pianistic purposes and using it for its true purpose and exploiting its resources to the full. The orchestra cannot be fitted \textit{completely} into the space of the two piano staves. Consequently, omissions and alterations are necessary. This is the crux of the matter: to understand instinctively what must be left out and what must be reproduced. In short, one must have the ability of a portrait painter to capture, above all, the essential features of the face, those which define the whole physiognomy.\textsuperscript{28}

Stasov’s observations in conjunction with the compositions themselves suggest that Liszt attempted to replicate the overall orchestral effect of the original because he realized that neither

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 34.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
a strict reduction of the notes from the orchestral score onto two staves nor a simpler reduction of
just the essential elements of the original could do justice to Beethoven. A straightforward
reduction could be accomplished by any advanced musician with little aesthetic success; Liszt, in
contrast, necessarily deleted pitches in the original that he deemed superfluous to the overall
sound and effect of the orchestra. Further, he altered other pitches and rhythms when he desired
to create an “acoustical deception,” a piano score that included different placement and patterns
of notes to produce the same effect as the symphony.

Decisions regarding which instrumental parts (voicing), melodies, and accompanimental
patterns to retain and which to eliminate to create a playable composition provided a challenge
for any composer. Liszt’s understanding of Beethoven’s symphonies allowed him to make
informed decisions in this regard. The second step was to adapt these elements for the piano,
specifically re-voicing original instrumental lines as well as adjusting the rhythm of individual
notes. Whether or not Liszt could convince audiences that they were in fact listening to the
original, by retaining the most salient aspects of the symphony he was able to give a faithful
representation.

His interpretation of the symphony on paper was only one aspect of presenting
Beethoven’s works to audiences, for he expected pianists also to play a significant role in
communicating them. To this end, he imparted many details from the original to pianists so that
they would better understand the original, while at the same time continuing to recognize the
limitations of the piano to fully convey the orchestra.

For this aim I often indicated the name of the instruments: oboe, clarinet, timpani, etc. as
well as the contrasts of the string and wind instruments. It would undoubtedly be
strangely ridiculous to pretend that these designations are sufficient for transferring the
magic of the orchestra to the piano; nevertheless, I don’t regard them as superfluous.
Apart from their scarce utility as instructions the pianist of some intelligence can use
them for getting accustomed to accenting and grouping the motives, to making stand out
the main ones and suppressing the auxiliary ones, in one word, to adapting himself to the norm of the orchestra.\textsuperscript{29}

Instrumental designations appear conservatively in the \textit{Partitions de piano} and, although he could not designate every instrument employed in each passage, Liszt consistently pointed out the instrumental parts from which important melodic lines and accompanimental patterns were derived. He regarded these instrumental indications as important for a pianist to be able to present as much as possible the original orchestral sound.

Liszt retained the essence of the symphony and at the same time made changes to the written score that did not necessarily affect the sound of the symphony. As a result, these transcriptions are not virtuoso piano compositions of the type for which he is known, nor are they literal transcriptions. Rather, they reflect their given name—piano score—as they convey the original and at the same time make the symphony playable on the piano. The difficulty in these transcriptions comes from the original work, not Liszt’s own virtuoso piano style.

Transcription Practice: Compositional Process

As evidenced by performances of the final product, Liszt achieved his goal of faithful, yet musical, transcription of the symphonies. How then did he attempt to approximate the sound of up to twelve instruments and one hundred musicians on the piano? In addition, how did Liszt’s compositional solutions affect the identification of genre of the \textit{Partitions de piano}?

In his efforts to mirror the originals, Liszt retained Beethoven’s conception of form, harmonic structure, melodic lines, and rhythm. A cursory comparison of the symphonies and the \textit{Partitions de piano} reveals that he faithfully represented these core aspects of the symphony. He necessarily altered lesser components, including harmonies within individual chords, textures,

rhythmic details, accompanimental patterns, and idiomatic writing for the various orchestral instruments.

Obviously Liszt could not replicate the varied sonorities achieved through the range of instruments, but he was able to use other strengths of the piano to help differentiate variances in the original. Regardless of obvious drawbacks, he believed that the modern piano was capable of effectively representing a symphonic score. In the preface to the *Partitions de piano*, he touted improvements in the piano and his confidence in its ability to imitate symphonic composition:

> But the extension of its capabilities acquired by the piano in recent times as a result of the progress made in execution and refinements introduced in the mechanism make it possible to do more, and better, than has been done up till now.\(^{30}\)

At least by the late 1830s, Liszt recognized the improvements in the piano that made attempts at replicating orchestral sounds feasible. Notably, the early decades of the nineteenth century witnessed numerous transformations to the design of the piano, including those by his preferred piano maker in Paris, Sébastien Erard. The increase in the instrument’s range from five or five and a half octaves to seven octaves as well as the development of enhanced action, greater tension in the strings, and the reinforcement of the case to accommodate the more powerful instrument were noted by the composer as grounds for his being able to present symphonies on the piano.

In the September 1837 letter to Pictet, Liszt provided a brief evaluation of the capabilities of the piano to emulate orchestral effects as well as improvements forecast for the instrument.

Thanks to improvements that have already been made and those that the diligent efforts of pianists add every day, the piano is continuing to expand its assimilative capability. We play arpeggios like a harp, sustained notes like the wind instruments, and staccatos and a thousand other passages that one time seemed to be the special province of one instrument or another. The improvements forecast in piano making will

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\(^{30}\) Liszt’s Preface to the Beethoven Symphonies, 1st edition (Rome, 1839).
undoubtedly provide us before long with the variety of sonority we still lack. Pianos with a pedal bass, the polyplectron, the claviharp, and several other as yet tentative endeavors, all call attention to a widely felt need for the instrument’s further development.  

Even though we still lack the essential element of varied sonority, we have nonetheless managed to produce symphonic effects that are satisfactory and which were completely beyond the ken of our predecessors, because the arrangements made up to now of great vocal and instrumental compositions betray, in their poverty and uniform emptiness, the lack of confidence that they had in the instrument’s resources.  

To Pictet, Liszt enumerated some of the specific instrumental sounds that he could replicate on the piano. At the same time, he noted improvements forecast for the piano, which would allow pianists to add to the varied instrumental sonorities that could be produced.

Transcription Practice: Retention of Main Components

In contrast to other arrangements by Liszt such as the operatic paraphrases, in which he determined the form, and even some of the Schubert song transcriptions in which he occasionally expanded the number of measures through the addition of virtuoso flourishes and cadenzas, the overall form of the Partitions de piano consistently mirrored that of the original symphony. Therefore, analysis of the transcriptions necessarily requires a different approach than does analysis of a virtuoso arrangement.

Further, analysis of the transcriptions is necessarily different from analysis of the underlying composition. Although a study of Beethoven’s symphonies would include an examination of key structure, themes, motivic development, harmonies, and rhythm, Liszt’s retention of these basic features makes it pointless to examine them in the Partitions de piano. Analysis of the Partitions de piano consists of two different, yet related, facets: (1) a comparison of the notes in the original score with Liszt’s rendition for piano to determine the omissions and alterations made to effectively reduce the full score to something that could

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31 Liszt, An Artist’s Journey, 45-46.
effectively be performed by a single pianist; and (2) a consideration of Liszt’s treatment of the timbral qualities of the symphony when reducing it for a single instrument. Although the two issues of analysis could be undertaken independently, the nature of the orchestral sound obviously influences the means of reducing the score.

As discussed earlier, the effectiveness of Liszt’s *Partitions de piano* does not derive from his incorporating every note of the original in the piano score, but rather from his skill in interpreting the original, omitting non-essential elements and altering essential aspects of the instrumental lines to make them pianistic. He interpreted and evaluated the original in order to decide which notes to retain and which to omit, and made decisions based upon the overall texture, the primacy of various melodies, the desired dynamic level, and the effectiveness of a certain idiom on the piano. In contrast to the song transcriptions, where his interpretation included adding notes, his work with the symphonies primarily required him to delete superfluous notes.

Obviously, a rendering of a symphony by a single pianist cannot include every note in the score when that would involve doublings at multiple octaves. In passages where the orchestral texture was relatively thin—for instance, a straightforward presentation of the texture by a single family of instruments—literal transcription was possible. The melody can be presented in the range that is closest to that of the original and the harmonies worked logically around the melody.

In passages with thicker textures that include multiple families of instruments, every instrumental part cannot be replicated. Given the limited sonority of the piano, the deletion of certain parts is not detrimental to the whole, since both melodies and harmonies can still be rendered intact. For example, although the oboe may double the flute in a different octave, the
doubled notes are not necessary when played on the piano because the sonority is the same, and little is lost when less important parts are omitted. Liszt’s decision-making process regarding deleting notes results in alteration of the original, but not a fundamental change in nature. As Hughes notes about many passages, “[i]n the event that octave doublings can be reduced, little has been lost in terms of the intentions of the original composer.”32 Thus secondary melodic lines could be and were necessarily abandoned in favor of essential aspects of the texture.33

Hughes summarizes his thesis regarding these works as follows: “how Liszt solved the problems encountered in transcribing multifarious orchestral scores to the piano, whether his solutions were successful, and whether his transcriptional techniques were modified over time.”34 Hughes examines Liszt’s techniques in his transcriptions of the Symphonie fantastique, representing the early works, and the Ninth Symphony, representing the late works and determines that in fact Liszt’s techniques for symphonic transcription remained the same from the 1830s through the 1860s. His analytical process consists of the identification of individual passages in which Liszt (1) literally transcribes the symphony; (2) excludes pitches when transcribing thematic lines, accompanimental patterns, and ossia passages; and (3) alters pitches when transcribing thematic lines and accompanimental patterns. Although thorough, this process becomes tedious particularly as Hughes dwells on, for example, unnecessary pitches that are excluded in passages with octave doublings, unisons, secondary melodic lines, and sustained pitches. He eventually draws some useful conclusions regarding interpretation in certain passages, but many of the observations seem obvious and unworthy of being noted.

Because detailed analysis of many passages has already been undertaken, I will conduct a broad study of several passages with differing instrumental textures in order to ascertain various

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32 Hughes, “Liszt’s Solo Piano Transcriptions of Orchestral Literature,” 90.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., 18.
methods used by Liszt to reduce and transfer the many orchestral parts to the piano. Such analysis will demonstrate that Liszt was successful both in his transference of the symphony to the piano and the presentation of the symphonic material on the piano.

The opening measures of the Sixth and the Eighth symphonies consist of very different textures and consequently inspired Liszt to come up with two completely different compositional strategies in his Partitions de piano. Because the first eight measures in the Sixth Symphony consist solely of four-part string writing with the following fourteen measures adding only intermittent horn and bassoon parts that double the strings, he could faithfully transfer almost every note to his piano score. (Compare Exs. 6.1 and 6.2.) The few alterations that he made in this passage were called for because of either simultaneous doubling of notes or the repetition of notes on successive beats by different instruments. Furthermore, the deletion of one of the notes provides a more interesting texture on the piano and does not significantly change the pitch content of the transcription.

The primary alteration that Liszt made in this opening theme is the revoicing of quarter note chords in, for instance, measures 9 and 10 where Liszt omits the C played by the second violin on the downbeat of measure 9 and shifts it to the second beat of the measure where the entire F chord appears. This alteration provides some harmonic color in a fairly static chordal passage.
Ex. 6.1. Beethoven, Symphony No. 6, 1st Movement, mm. 1-25.

Symphony No. 6 in F Major (Pastorale),
Op. 68

Erwachen heiterer Empfindungen bei der Ankunft auf dem Lande.
Allegro ma non troppo. $\frac{3}{4}$.
Ex. 6.2. Beethoven/Liszt, Symphony No. 6, 1st Movement, mm. 1-32.
On the other hand, the opening of Beethoven’s Eighth Symphony has a significantly more dense texture in which the first beat includes three different notes (F, C, and A), each played in three or four different octaves by a total of twenty different instrumental parts (Ex. 6.3).

Ex. 6.3. Beethoven, Symphony No. 8, 1st movement, mm. 1-11.

Obviously a single pianist could not play a literal transcription; even if that were possible, so many iterations of each note are unnecessary. Of particular note in Liszt’s transcription is the
deletion of the uppermost line played by the flute (Ex. 6.4). Because this part is above the melody and unessential for the overall sound, leaving it in would overshadow the opening note of the melody played by the violins. Of necessity Liszt leaves out the flute line. Even while reducing the scope of the symphonic score, his interpretation still captures the harmony, the melody, the rhythm, the dynamics, and the texture of Beethoven’s opening gesture.

Ex. 6.4. Beethoven/Liszt, Symphony No. 8, 1st movement, mm. 1-18.
Although they are seemingly straightforward features of the original, sustained notes provide considerable difficulties for a conscientious transcriber. Limitations of the piano do not allow prolonging of a note as is possible with brass, woodwinds, or even strings. Consequently, instead of literally transcribing a passage in which notes in the symphony are held for an entire measure or even longer, Liszt often made adjustments to emulate the continuous sound of the original.35 Passages with complex textures surrounding sustained notes may require omission of the latter because of the impossibility of rendering them effectively while doing justice to the principal parts. Further, if the sustained notes comprise the principal part and consequently must be integrated into the piano texture, in all probability the transcriber must devise pianistic methods to give the impression of continuous sounding notes such as repeating the note or chord, making use of the pedal, or even inserting arpeggiation to prolong the sound.36 Although a comparison of the scores in such passages suggests that Liszt did not faithfully transcribe the symphony, his modifications in fact create the same sound effects and therefore more closely represent the original than would a literal transcription.

The replication of accompanimental patterns provided substantial opportunities for Liszt to translate the original for performance on the piano. As an orchestrator, Beethoven took advantage of the distinctive characteristics of the different instruments. In the same way that translation from one language to another cannot necessarily be word for word because of idioms unique to one of the languages, transcription from one instrument to another also requires adjustments. Idiomatic writing for one instrument, while it may be reproducible in a note-for-note transcription, may require alteration for effective performance on the piano. Tremolos are one example where adjustments may provide a better solution than a literal transcription.

35 Ibid., 161.
Tremolos are idiomatic to string writing and not found extensively in compositions written originally for piano. Although they can be replicated on the piano, this may not always be the most effective way to achieve an equivalent sound. Consequently, in rendering tremolos Liszt at times literally transferred them and at other times came up with other ways to convey their sound.

The storm scene in Beethoven’s Sixth Symphony includes tremolos in more than three quarters of its measures. Liszt replicated tremolos in many of the measures but was not a slave to Beethoven’s score in this regard. His substitutions in the piano score for tremolos include repeated notes or chords in slower rhythms, scales, or arpeggios; he also simply ignored the tremolos if they were the least important part of the texture. (See Ex. 6.5 for a variety of techniques for transferring tremolos to the piano.) The key to effectively transcribing tremolos is to produce an equivalent sound, whether by literal transcription or substitution, if it can effectively be included with the rest of the texture.

When examining accompanimental patterns, it becomes necessary to consider the nature of the instruments tasked with such performance in order to evaluate Liszt’s rendering. He was in general looser in transferring accompanimental patterns to the piano because he wanted to replicate the effect of the original on this very different instrument. An apparently non-literal reduction may in fact more closely replicate the sound of the original, as Liszt converts an instrumental idiom to something more suited for the piano.

37 Cory says that this movement contains tremolo figurations in 125 of its 155 measures. See Cory, “Franz Liszt’s Symphonies de Beethoven,” 49.
One of Liszt’s pupils during the mid-1880s, August Göllerich, recorded the contents of his master classes during this period as well as the master’s commentary on both the compositions themselves and his students’ performances. Göllerich noted that on 8 July 1885, Liszt “performed the whole first page unforgettable,” referring to his transcription of the Allegretto from Beethoven’s Symphony No. 7. In his comments about performing this
movement, Liszt specifically pointed out the instrumental designations in his piano score and why these indications are important.

At the ending [Liszt] said, “Here be guided exactly by the indicated instrument groups, for that is why they are indicated; this business is not done ineptly.” “A staccato from the horns naturally always sounds more sustained than from the other instruments; you must also play it that way.”

Because he believed that staccatos played in various manners on the piano could emulate different orchestral sounds, he specifically indicated that a certain staccato passage came from the horns. In pointing this out to his pupils, he provided further evidence that his *Partitions de piano* were something more than virtuoso piano compositions and that they were in fact intended to communicate the orchestral score.

Writing from a performer’s perspective in a 1976 article entitled “Turning the Piano into an Orchestra: Liszt’s Transcriptions and Paraphrases,” Alfred Brendel presents some ideas about how to render different orchestral sounds on the piano by imitating as much as possible the “sound” of the original.

In endeavoring to produce orchestral colours on the piano, our concern must not only be with the timbre of each individual instrument, but also with the manner in which it is played—with certain peculiarities that arise from the construction of the instrument and that are reflected in the technique required by it. Another consideration is the number of players employed in a certain context. An orchestral tutti will have to be treated differently from a passage for strings alone; a forte for strings will need more volume than one for woodwind.

Brendel continues with an inventory of orchestral instruments, including a characterization of their sound, and follows with suggestions for pianists about emulating the particular instrumental color. Although Liszt had to address the issue of orchestral performance on the piano from the other side of the coin, as a composer rather than a performer, his musical

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knowledge as well as his superb understanding of piano performance meant that he would have taken into consideration the same factors enumerated by Brendel.

The question is, what effect do Liszt’s adaptations of the orchestral score have on the listener? When the changes are idiomatic, the listener still hears the symphony and as Hughes suggests, “the result is usually that the listener is actually unaware that alterations have been made.” Goehr’s question as to whether an arrangement comes to be judged on its own merits or based on the fact that it is related to a pre-existing work receives some answers in the evaluations of nineteenth-century critics.

Reception History

Nineteenth-century critics weighed in on the effectiveness of the piano, specifically as played by Liszt, to present Beethoven’s symphonies. Although Schumann’s remarks about his transcription of the *Symphonie fantastique* were generally positive, he later expressed reservations about Liszt’s performance of Beethoven’s *Pastoral* Symphony as a concert piano work. Commenting on a specific concert that took place in March 1840 in Leipzig, Schumann stated:

[Liszt] began with the scherzo and finale of Beethoven’s *Pastoral* Symphony. The selection was capricious enough, and for many reasons unfortunate. At home, in a tête-à-tête, this extremely careful transcription might lead one almost to forget the orchestra. But in a large hall, in the place where we have been accustomed to hear the symphony itself performed frequently and perfectly by the orchestra, the weakness of the pianoforte was all the more striking; particularly since the transcription attempts to reproduce the masses in all their fullness.

A simpler arrangement, a mere indication, would perhaps have been much more effective here. Of course one could nevertheless recognize the master of the instrument. People were satisfied; they had at least seen him shake his mane. To sustain the figure, the lion presently began to show his power. This was in a fantasy on themes by Pacini, which he played in a most remarkable fashion.41

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40 Hughes, “Liszt’s Solo Piano Transcriptions of Orchestral Literature,” 111.
Schumann suggested that the performance of a symphony on the piano might be convincing and appropriate in the home, but he found it lacking on the concert stage. In opposition to these reservations expressed by Schumann, a contemporary review of the same symphony falls at the other end of the spectrum. Reporting on a concert in Hamburg in the fall of 1840, Johann Wilhelm Christern complimented Liszt’s performance.

The genius obeys the voice of genius. With this axiom in mind, Franz Liszt adapted Beethoven’s Symphonies for the piano, and performed a part of the “Pastoral” Symphony to open his evening’s concert. In the spirit of pure and noble art, there could indeed be no bolder undertaking than to strive for the palm of new artistic merit through independently mastering this ethereally rural painting! Whoever had any notion of the free effusion of Beethoven’s orchestra, or of his instrumental writing in general, must admit that to reproduce this – nay, even to indicate or hint at it – on the piano involves a gigantic task tantamount to piling Ossa on Pelion in order to reach the heavens themselves. But listen! The sounds of music and song, of babbling brooks and rolling thunder, the whole of nature’s springtime stirrings are audible here: as in that admirable painting by David whose basic idea is itself essentially imperial, the new hero tames his rearing stallion on the highest cloud-covered rocky promontory, gazing down calmly and self-assuredly upon the joyful world! Yes, you are the master of us all, Liszt! How splendidly, and with what soul and life, you have reproduced the fullness of the orchestration of a kindred spirit whose light is a beacon that guides your steps. It is Beethoven to the life, although Beethoven could not become so. How impoverished is our dear German tongue, how lacking in words to express the impression behind such forces; what use are such words as good, beautiful, and admirable which have been used and abused a thousand times over for less worthy objects! Only the language of a Tacitus, a Demosthenes, a Johannes von Müller would be worth coveting here. And yet the profoundest depths of poetry and art have revealed their effects upon the hearts and souls in the echoing hall. A peal of thunder was this cry of “Ah!”

These contrasting comments raise issues related to genre and specifically performance space. Because Schumann lived and worked in larger cities with superior orchestras performing in impressive concert spaces, his experience with Liszt’s transcription would have revealed faults not necessarily exposed in other settings. Schumann’s experience with Liszt’s performance in Leipzig solidified in his mind the limitations of the piano in representing the mass of symphonic

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42 Burger, Franz Liszt, 337.
sound on the piano. Conversely, Christern focused on Liszt’s virtuosity and its presentation on the concert stage in the form of symphonic transcriptions.

Brendel asserts boldly that with the advancements of the piano and Liszt’s virtuosity, “we can be sure that his performance surpassed the prevailing standard of orchestral playing.”

Although lacking instrumental color, Liszt’s standard of performance was probably considerably higher that that of many nineteenth-century orchestras. Even though he was replacing an entire orchestra on the piano, in some instances this may have been more desirable because of his excellence on the piano and his performance standards as compared to those of local orchestras.

Conclusion

Liszt faithfully transcribed important melodies, bass notes, rhythmic patterns, and harmonies in his work with Beethoven’s symphonies. He took more liberty with accompanimental patterns, the register of instrumental lines of secondary importance, the exact rhythm of every pitch, and orchestral idioms that do not transfer exactly to the piano to adapt them for the piano to better replicate the original. Further, his Partitions de piano include nuances from the original including instrumental designations, articulation, and expression.

The transformations made by Liszt fall under the role of intelligent engraver and conscientious translator of the most excellent kind. He did not create a simplified version of the original, but rather transformed the original: transcription of the most devout kind. Hughes concludes that the transference of full orchestral passages to the piano was successful because Liszt’s “careful consideration of the intricacies of each passage, combined with tenacious

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43 Brendel, “Turning the Piano into an Orchestra,” 92.
pianistic resourcefulness, generally produced satisfactory solutions which capture the essence of the orchestral score.”

It could be argued that the adjustment of instrumental idioms, rhythmic alterations and the deletion of non-essential harmonic notes do not constitute a change of genre. A change in medium from symphony to piano composition, however, and a change of performance space, in that the *Partitions de piano* could be performed in a wide variety of venues from the home to a large concert hall, are key factors in determining genre. Further, Liszt’s interpretation of the original does make his piano scores more than strict note-for-note transcriptions. Thus his arrangements of Beethoven’s symphonies are a distinct genre for piano.

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44 Hughes, “Liszt’s Solo Piano Transcriptions of Orchestral Literature,” 110-111.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The nineteenth century witnessed the explosion of all kinds of reworkings of musical compositions: some involved reducing a composition in size and scope, some involved enlarging a composition, and some consisted of a more literal transference with the same number of instruments of a different quality. Sometimes composers reworked their own compositions and in many cases they worked with the compositions of another composer. No music was left untouched. Consequently, in addition to the many excellent reworkings of musical compositions, many poor arrangements and transcriptions exist. As a result, arrangements and transcriptions are not always considered with the highest regard.

Due to the varied kinds and quality of reworkings, not all non-original compositions should be evaluated and categorized in the same way. High-quality works should be separated from inferior works and evaluated on their own merits rather than being subject to the prejudiced thought that all non-original compositions are substandard. Liszt was one composer who arranged compositions by some of the leading composers of his day with much skill and consequent success.

Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century definitions of “arrangement” and more specifically “Klavierauszug” tend to focus on the practical purpose of this repertoire and the consequent lack of artistic merit. Koch’s definition, published a quarter of a century before the beginning of Liszt’s years of touring as a virtuoso, explicitly states that piano reductions are not for performance. As has been discussed, Liszt did perform his song and symphony transcriptions for audiences across Europe to great acclaim.
Further, later definitions outline several practical purposes for piano arrangements that, again, do not accurately reflect Liszt’s work in this area. Liszt’s transcriptions were not of a level of difficulty that allowed performance by amateur pianists in the home, and, because they were an interpretation of the original, they were not simply reductions for piano. Liszt determined the primary parts of the original and then reduced or adjusted them for performance on the piano. His transference of orchestral and vocal lines to the piano relied on adjustments based on idioms distinctive to the various instruments. Thus, Liszt’s arrangements embody the basic definitions of “arrangement” and “Klavierauszug” and at the same time stretch them.

In later editions of Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Leonard Borwick’s discussion of “arrangement” in the section entitled “The Function of a Pianoforte Arrangement” more accurately describes Liszt’s work in this area. Borwick concludes by saying that “an arrangement is justified as it is creative and serves in some way to interpret and illumine the original.”¹ Liszt’s conversion of songs and symphonies for the piano was successful due to his mastery of the instrument; his ability to play the original scores at sight and then interpret the work of other master musicians for the piano led to excellent interpretations.

As a composer and performer and, to a lesser extent, an audience member and a critic, Liszt helped influence the estimation of arrangements in the nineteenth century. Not only did he compose numerous arrangements of his own and others’ works including songs, symphonies, operas, and chamber works, but he was also actively involved in their performance. His concert programs during his years of touring as a virtuoso pianist demonstrate that he performed all kinds of compositions: original works by himself and others as well as his own arrangements, transcriptions, and fantasies. He did not privilege original works over arrangements and

frequently performed both in a single concert. Further, as a critic he explained the reasoning behind his ground-breaking work with symphonic transcription.

Despite the apparent fidelity to the original, Liszt’s transcriptions of Schubert’s songs and the symphonies of Berlioz and Beethoven do represent considerable artistic effort. His transcriptions of song retained Schubert’s general framework, including melody, harmony, rhythm, and broad accompanimental ideas. However, he took considerable liberties in the manner in which he drew together the piano accompaniment and the vocal line. He necessarily altered the form in order to provide interest in the repetition of strophes not available in the transcription because of the absence of the text. Liszt’s work with this repertoire has been identified as a new genre for the pianist.

While remaining faithful to more details of the symphonies, Liszt’s transcriptions interpreted the original compositions in attempting to replicate the works as practically as possible for the piano. The *Partitions de piano* retained the form, melodies, and harmonies of the original compositions; accompanimental patterns, registral placement of notes, and rhythms, however, were adjusted in certain passages in order to better imitate the sound of the orchestra on the piano. Liszt’s work with the symphonies of Berlioz and Beethoven demonstrates that he understood the original works and desired to align closely his piano renditions with perceived orchestral performances. His knowledge of the piano resulted in appropriate adjustments in order to emulate distinctive instrumental sounds. Liszt was not a slave to the original compositions; rather, he took the originals and made them his own. In this regard, his work is an interpretation of the original.

Despite the strong case for classifying these two kinds of transcriptions as unique genres, they cannot be simply placed on the same plane as original compositions for piano. Although
the transformations result in works natural to the piano, their original existence in completely
different genres cannot be dismissed. Thus, Liszt’s transcriptions of songs and symphonies
constitute an alteration of the generic contract put into place by the composer of the original
composition, because all of the elements that defined its genre no longer exist. Instead, the
transcription introduces generic mixing, as the elements of the song or symphony are brought
together with techniques and characteristics of piano composition to create unique kinds of
works for piano. Further, although the song and the symphony transcriptions are considered to
be comparable, they in fact display different techniques and relationships to the original. These
distinctions necessitate the categorization of the two as distinct genres.

As Lydia Goehr suggests, an advantage to not judging a work as if situated on either end
of the spectrum of originality—either as an original composition without reference to the
underlying work or alternatively only based on its relationship with the original—is that it can
occupy a happy medium somewhere in the middle. In addition to being judged on the merits of
the original composition and on its merits as a work for the new medium of performance, it
should also be evaluated according to the method of transformation from the original to the
derivative work. Liszt’s transcriptions should be assessed in this way.

As good models of arrangement, his work with songs and symphonies provides a
justification for composers and performers alike who wish to transfer compositions from one
medium to another in order to enrich the repertoire of the new medium. During the nineteenth
century in the absence of accessible recordings and full scores of original compositions,
arrangements for both domestic and concert performance provided additional means for
disseminating a wide range of works to an increasing segment of the public. Today with
considerably easier access to scores and performances, both recorded and live, trivial
arrangements do not have much to add to the repertoire. In the absence of a live performance, we now have easy access, in many cases, to a plethora of good recordings that provide the full color of the symphonic work. Further, the process of learning this music is facilitated today by full scores and recordings and does not require performance and study in the home of a piano score.

Arrangements and transcriptions such as those by Liszt, however, do add something to the pianist’s repertoire. While still presenting the song or symphony, his adaptation of the orchestral idioms for the piano yields works that can comfortably be placed in the pianist’s repertoire.

The issue then becomes the best way to organize arrangements and transcriptions. Due to their multi-faceted nature, there is no cut-and-dry answer. In fact, numerous methods of organization over the last two centuries have addressed these works in various ways. One interesting source, although not specifically related to Liszt’s compositions, provides another perspective on the inclusion of derivative works in a thematic catalog. Gustav Nottebohm’s Thematisches Verzeichniss der in Druck erschienenen Werke von Franz Schubert, published in 1874, includes transcriptions (by all composers) for each of Schubert’s compositions with the entry for the composition.\(^2\) Thus, in addition to the usual information provided in a thematic catalog, including an incipit, compositional history, and editions, Nottebohm also provides a list of transcriptions of the composition at hand by other composers under the heading “Uebertragungen.” For example, the entry for Erlkönig (Op. 1) lists some thirty five “Uebertragungen” by composer, publisher, city, and price, including Liszt’s transcriptions of this song for voice with small orchestra and for piano two hands. The inclusion of compositions by

other composers in Schubert’s catalog suggests that Nottebohm considers the transcriptions to have some value in relation to the original songs.

Liszt’s transcriptions, however, must be organized in relation to his complete oeuvre of compositions. In the more than one hundred and twenty years since his death, numerous catalogs and lists of his compositions have appeared in print in a variety of written sources. While these catalogs exhibit many different styles of organization, three general approaches emerge: (1) the segregation of original works from arrangements (i.e. Searle’s catalog); (2) the integration of all compositions, regardless of originality, under the umbrella of a particular performing force (i.e. the most recent list of compositions in the New Grove 2); and (3) a hybrid which includes aspects of both segregation and integration (i.e. Liszt’s own organization of his compositions from the later nineteenth century).

In giving structure to the catalogs and lists, the various organizational configurations also suggest the relative value placed on originality and arrangement. Searle’s list, which dominated Liszt scholarship for thirty years, presents a much more disparaging view of non-original works with its total segregation of original and non-original compositions. While placing more value on arrangements and transcriptions, lists of compositions that leave original works and arrangements on an equal footing by integrating them in sections marked by performing forces, also provide a disservice to the distinct genres created by Liszt with his arrangements—particularly the Partitions de piano and the transcriptions of Schubert’s songs. Although the song and symphonic transcriptions for solo piano fit naturally into the “A” section of the works list created by Maria Eckhardt and Rena Charnin Mueller, which is appended to the Liszt entry in the New Grove 2, by virtue of the fact that this section contains all compositions for solo piano
regardless of originality, their unique characteristics are not brought to the fore when organized simply by performing force and date.

Because Liszt did create new genres with his song and symphony transcriptions—the song transcriptions identified as an unnamed genre by the Viennese critic “Carlo” and the symphonic transcriptions designated *Partitions de piano* by Liszt himself—in whatever method of organization is employed, they should be designated as such. When his virtuoso, and at the same time faithful, transcriptions are seen in this light, performers, scholars, and audiences will be better able to evaluate and understand Liszt’s compositional output.
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