THE LATE PIANO WORKS OF FRANZ LISZT, A LECTURE RECITAL,
TOGETHER WITH THREE RECITALS OF SELECTED WORKS

D I S S E R T A T I O N

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

D O C T O R O F M U S I C A L A R T S

By

Raymond Marchionni, B. Mus., M. Mus.
Denton, Texas
August, 1976

The lecture recital was given April 2, 1973. A discussion of Liszt's late piano works included information about specific compositional techniques and innovations which influenced twentieth-century composers. Five selections of the late works were performed by memory.

In addition to the lecture recital, three public solo recitals were performed.

The first solo recital, performed on April 9, 1972, consisted of works by Haydn, Beethoven, Ravel, and Chopin.

The second solo recital, performed on August 4, 1974, included works by Beethoven, Debussy, and Brahms.

The final solo recital, performed on April 5, 1976, consisted of works by Bach, Chopin, and Prokofiev.

All four programs were recorded on magnetic tape and are filed, along with the written version of the lecture recital, as part of the dissertation.
Tape recordings of all performances submitted as dissertation requirements are on deposit in the North Texas State University Library.
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North Texas State University
School of Music

presents

Remo Marchionni, Pianist

in a

Graduate Recital

Sunday, April 9, 1972  3:00 p.m.  Recital Hall

Variations in F Minor (Hob.XVII: 6) .......... Haydn

Sonata in Eb Major, Op. 31 No. 3 ........... Beethoven

Allegro
Scherzo: Allegretto vivace
Menuetto: Moderato e grazioso
Presto con fuoco

Intermission

Valses Nobles et Sentimentales ............. Ravel

Modéré - très franc
Assez lent
Modéré
Assez animé
Presque lent
Vif
Moins Vif
Epilogue - Lent

Berceuse, Op. 57

Barcarolle, Op. 60 ......................... Chopin

Presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Musical Arts
North Texas State University
School of Music
presents
Remo Marchionni, Pianist
in a
Lecture Recital
"The Late Piano Works of Franz Liszt"

Monday, April 2, 1975  5:00 p.m.  Recital Hall

Nuages Gris (Gray Clouds) .................. 1881
Unstern (False Star) ....................... 1880-1886
En Rêve (Dreaming) ....................... 1885-1886
La Lugubre Gondola I (The Funeral Gondola I) ... 1882
Third Mephisto Waltz ..................... 1891

Presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Musical Arts
NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

School of Music

presents

REMO MARCHIONNI

in

Graduate Piano Recital

Sunday, August 4, 1974 4:00 p.m. Recital Hall

Sonata, Opus 109.................Ludwig van Beethoven
   Vivace, ma non troppo
   Prestissimo
   Gesangvoll, mit innigster Empfindung

Images, Book I...........................Claude Debussy
   Reflets dans l'eau
   Hommage à Rameau
   Mouvement

INTERMISSION

Eight Piano Pieces, Opus 76.............Johannes Brahms
   Capriccio
   Capriccio
   Intermezzo
   Intermezzo
   Capriccio
   Intermezzo
   Intermezzo
   Capriccio

Presented in partial fulfillment of requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Musical Arts
North Texas State University
School of Music
presents
Remo Marchionni, Pianist
in a
Graduate Recital

Monday, April 5, 1976  5:00 p.m.  Recital Hall

Toccata in C Minor  .........................  J.S. Bach

Andante spianato and Grande Polonaise brillante, Opus 22
Frédéric Chopin

Intermission

Sonata No.6, Opus 82  ..........  Serge Prokofieff
  Allegro moderato
  Allegretto
  Tempo di valser lentissimo
  Vivace

Presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Musical Arts
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The artistic achievements of Franz Liszt have long been considered an outgrowth of his unique piano virtuosity, conducting, and orchestral experimentation. Acknowledged are the brilliant piano works, the tone poems with their innovative structure, and the essays on esthetics. The music of Liszt's final years, however, remains almost totally neglected and unknown.

Liszt's contemporaries have given us a picture of the aging composer as an eccentric who produced works embarrassing to his friends and pupils, and a source of amusement to his enemies. The music of Liszt's old age drew the remark from Edward Hanslick: "After Liszt, Mozart is like a soft spring breeze penetrating a room reeking with fumes."¹ Wagner's criticisms of Liszt's late works were apparently in the same view. Peter Raabe, one of the earliest reliable biographers of Liszt and Director of the Liszt Museum at Weimar, explains:

Like all other musicians of sound judgment, Wagner had come to recognize that Liszt's creative genius was on the down grade. He was horrified by the things he saw and heard. However, he felt it impossible to tell Liszt his real opinion of these senile compositions . . ."²

²Szabolcsi, Bence, The Twilight of Liszt, translated by Andras Deak (Budapest, 1959), pp. 22-23.
Several of Liszt's most intimate pupils rejected the late works with indignation, regarding them unworthy of the brilliant pianist and renowned composer. However, Liszt referred to his musical "after-life" with confidence. In a letter to Princess Wittgenstein he stated that "His only remaining ambition was to hurl a lance as far as possible into the boundless realm of the future." To August Stradal, a pupil, the seventy-four year old Liszt remarked: "The time will yet come when my works are appreciated. True, it will be late for me because then I shall no longer be with you."

His prediction was borne out when Béla Bartók, in his lecture at the Academy of Sciences in Budapest in 1934, pointed out the many novelties in the music of Liszt. He called Liszt the most powerful force in stimulating and enriching the imagination of the new generation of composers.

Bartók further states in his autobiography:

The great artist's true significance was revealed to me at last. I came to recognize that, for the continued development of musical art, Liszt's compositions were more important than either Wagner's or Strauss'... Courageous and prophetic gestures, things never said before, it was on account of these that Liszt rises to the height of the greatest composers..."

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4 Szabolcsi, The Twilight of Liszt, 5.
6 Szabolcsi, The Twilight of Liszt, 75-77.
In Rome in 1884, the young Debussy heard Liszt play several of his recently-published impressionistic pieces, among them, *Les jeux d’eaux à la Villa d’Este*. The dominant ninths at the outset of the piece (Fig. 1, p. 3), the descending chain of secondary sevenths occurring in the main body of the work (Fig. 2, p. 4), and an accompanimental figure (Fig. 3, p. 4), similar to one Debussy later used in *L’isle joyeuse* (Fig. 4, p. 5), made a tremendous impact on the younger composer.

In his very last compositions Liszt avoided clichés, virtuosity, and many other elements typical of his earlier style, and he often spoke of the "strange oscillations" of
Allegretto

Fig. 2—Liszt, Les Jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este, mm. 88-95.

Moderato

Fig. 3—Liszt, Les Jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este, mm. 40-43.
his musical settings. The piano pieces written between 1881 and 1886 do indeed show daring experiments. Extensive chromaticism, the Hungarian scale with its two augmented seconds, the whole tone scale, and declamatory or speech-like elements characterize much of the melodic writing. Melody is shortened, often to four notes or less, quite unlike those of many of the earlier works where thematic ideas create Classical four-bar and eight-bar phrase structures. Limited periodic structure, sequence and repetition of short motives (as in Debussy), short ostinatos, and large sections transposed literally are common. A rhythmic unit often remains an isolated end in itself. The juxtaposition of keys, tritone relations, and chords with added dissonances veil tonality. Augmented triads appear everywhere. Hints of chord chains and parallelism in several of the late works

anticipate Debussy's techniques. Functional cadences are frequently delayed or completely avoided. Very thin textures, single line melodies in extreme registers, and extended tremolos in the bass create austerity.

Liszt constantly experimented with the expansion of tonality. The whole tone scale, which by definition is without tonality, appears frequently in the late works. The climax of the *Sursum Corda* of 1877, which is in the third volume of *Annees de Pelerinage*, consists of a series of octaves outlining the whole tone scale:

![Musical notation](image)

*Fig. 5—Liszt Sursum Corda, mm. 66-71.*
The simultaneous sounding of major-minor thirds is another of Liszt's late experiments. Passages built on chords such as P# A#, C# F# A# are not uncommon in the late works. The Czardas Obstine of 1884, which uses the major-minor third, anticipates the music of Bartók:

Fig. 6--Liszt, Czardas Obstine, mm. 1-21.
The open fifths at the beginning of the *Czárdaś Macabre* (Fig. 7, p. 8), written with the expressed intent of irritating Hanslick, drew the criticism from one of Liszt's own pupils who exclaimed, "Is it allowed to write such a thing? Is it allowed to listen to it?" Bence Szabolsci, a Liszt scholar, suggests that a "conspiracy of silence" surrounded the composer's late works. To prevent any further hostile criticism, Liszt's supporters purposely held back many of these compositions from publication. The *Czárdaś Macabre*, composed in 1881, was finally published in 1951, along with several of the other late works.

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Fig. 7—Liszt, *Czárdaś Macabre*, mm. 49-62.

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9 Ibid., p. 353.
The nocturne, En Rêve, is one of the most conservative of Liszt's late piano pieces. This two-part miniature is Mozartian in its melodic simplicity and clarity of texture. Melodies are conceived in Classical four-bar phrase structures and are more flowing and lyrical than most of the other late compositions. Liszt never really obscures the tonality of B-Major, as the melodic material is accompanied by a pedal point on the dominant throughout most of the work. Noteworthy is a final cadence delayed through trills under which sound non-functional harmonies moving at a slow rhythmic pace (Fig. 8, p. 10).

Also classically conceived in phrase structure, Nuages Gris (1881), demonstrates several elements common to Liszt's late style: a structurally tight motive, intervallic metamorphoses, ostinatos and extended bass tremolos, tritone relations, chains of augmented triads, chords with added dissonances and thin textures. Written in G-minor, although the key is never clearly established, the work ends on chords which completely cloud the tonality (Fig. 9, p. 11). Both Debussy and Stravinsky described this work as beautiful and perfect.

Liszt used the augmented triad in many of his earlier works. The Petrarch Sonnet 104 exemplifies the device of substituting the augmented triad for the subdominant. An augmented chord on C is approached from and leads to an E-Major chord (Fig. 10, p. 11). In the late works, the use
of the augmented chord became a major style characteristic. Nuages Gris and Unstern contain whole sections based on chains of augmented chords supported by extended tremolos in the bass (Fig. 11, p. 12).
Written between 1880 and 1886, Unstern demonstrates still other aspects of Liszt's late style. The piece is cast into two large sections; the first is without a key center, the second is in B-Major. The tritone (the "diabolus in musica"), dissonant chord clashes, the whole tone scale, or intense chromaticism are used in every measure of the first section, eliminating a sense of tonality. A most striking feature of this section is a repeated dotted rhythm which remains a stark and isolated end in itself (Fig. 12, p. 13). The contrasting B-Major section, marked "sostenuto
quasi organo," begins without transition and alternates soft chords with chromatic unison passages. However, the key center of this section remains somewhat vague. Within the first two phrases, the B-Major chord is heard only twice, and in its second inversion. The B-Major chord never again appears for the remaining forty-seven measures of the piece.
Both the final chord, F#-Major with E in the bass (the last inversion of the dominant seventh), and the final note of the piece, E, approached from a descending whole tone scale outlining the tritone, creates tonal vagary. The note E both begins and ends the composition.

Liszt wrote four pieces honoring Richard Wagner.

Richard Wagner—Venezia and La Lugubre Gondola I and II were written for piano and composed in Venice in 1882. The fourth piece, entitled Am Grabe Richard Wagner, was written in Bayreuth in 1883 and scored for string quartet, harp and piano ad libitum. The two elegies La Lugubre Gondola represent the Venetian funeral processions which were conducted in gondolas and, in fact, anticipate Wagner's funeral procession which occurred some months later.

La Lugubre Gondola I employs bar form—A A B, or "Stollen" "Stollen" "Abgesang," the form favored by the medieval German Mastersingers. Liszt's choice of bar form
might in itself have been a tribute to Wagner. Wagner, in his opera *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, consistently used the form. The three acts of *Die Meistersinger* create a huge A A B design, the third act equalling in length the combination of the first two. The scenes of the second act also parallel those of the first, almost without exception. In addition, Wagner chooses bar form for many of the songs of the opera, including the *Preislied*. Liszt's piece, based on the barcarolle rhythm, consists of two equal "Stollen," the second of which is transposed one whole tone lower, and an "Abgesang" which develops previous thematic material. Transparency of texture, motivic structure, narrow melodic ranges, and augmented triads also characterize the work. It is not really clear whether Liszt intended a consecutive performance of the two Gondola pieces, or if the second remained an alternative to the first piece, being a variation of it.

It is not unusual for Liszt's late works to end with unaccompanied melodies. Both the beginning and ending of *La Lugubre Gondola II* are written without key signatures. The final seventeen measures of the work imply the key of G#-minor (Fig. 13, p. 15).

Building chords in intervals other than thirds is still another of Liszt's experiments. The seventeenth Hungarian Rhapsody of 1883 and the *Via Crucis* of 1879 demonstrate Liszt's attempt to construct chords in fourths. The third *Mephisto Waltz* of 1881 begins with successive tones on the
Fig. 13—Liszt, La Lugubre Gondola II, mm. 152-168.

last inversion of a chord built on fourths—C# E# A# and D# (Fig. 14, p. 16). The basic structure of the chord reads E# A# D# (G# omitted) and C#, foreshadowing a practice of Scriabin. The chord could be based on the dominant of F#-Major, yet, also on the tonic of A#-minor.

To the late period belong several of Liszt's finest dance compositions. Included among the works are the Czárdás Macabre and the Czárdás Obstiné, the four Valses Oubliées, and the second, third and fourth Mephisto Waltzes. With the exception of these dance pieces, virtuosity plays little or no part in Liszt's late piano works. The third Mephisto Waltz integrates many of Liszt's late experiments
with the utmost of piano virtuosity. Rather than complying with any given form, Liszt freely varies materials through thematic transformations. No key scheme is followed. Most of the waltz centers in and around F#-Major, but ends in the key of D#-minor. The rhythmic scheme of the opening fourth motive, a half-note followed by two sets of eighth-note triplets, serves as the germinal idea for all thematic materials, again demonstrating Liszt’s ability at thematic economy. The programmatic idea is the same as that of the earlier and more famous Mephisto Waltz—Mephistopholes enchanting his listeners with his violin playing.
Fig. 15—Liszt, Bagatelle sans Tonalité, mm. 1-21.
One of the most remarkable of all Liszt's late works is the Bagatelle sans Tonalité of 1885, originally conceived as a fourth Mephisto Waltz. Although Bagatelle sans Tonalité is Liszt's own title, the composition does not erase all feeling of tonality in the Schoenbergian sense. The tritone, juxtaposition of keys, and chromaticism are employed at the beginning of the work (Fig. 15, p. 17).

Liszt's critics declared that the composer, in his experimentation "betrayed and ruined pure music." However, in his search for new musical idioms, Liszt opened the door to the twentieth century. His late works point toward the music of Debussy, Ravel, Schoenberg, Bartók, and others. Liszt, whose music spanned practically the entire Romantic Era, was without a nineteenth century parallel.

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