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FRANZ LISZT: A STUDY OF HIS LIFE  
AND PIANO MUSIC

THESIS

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This study of Franz Liszt presents the Hungarian master as a figure of conflicting forces, a sort of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde of music. In other words, Liszt was a dual personality. He used to say he was half-Zigeuner, half-Franciscan. Others classified him as half-saint, half-charlatan, half-priest, half-circus rider. In a letter to Brendel, whose articles were published in the Neue Zeitschrift für Musik, Liszt wrote:

This much is certain, that few men have had to labor at the wearisome task of self-correction as I have, for the process of my intellectual development has been, if not impeded, at all events made considerably more difficult by reason of a multiplicity of occurrences. Some twenty years ago a gifted man said to me, not inaptly, "You really have to deal with three men in you who run counter to each other--the convivial man of the salons, the virtuoso, and the thoughtful creative artist. If you ever manage to come to terms with one of them, you will be able to congratulate yourself on your luck." (Letter of 7th September, 1863 in L. Z. B., II, 50, 51).<sup>1</sup>

His entire life and work reflect this situation.

In this study of his character and his work, tremendous admiration for his great genius should not cloud judgment of his art, which is not always free of faults. The sensationalism, the virtuosity for effect alone, the hollow

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<sup>1</sup>Ernest Neuman, The Man Liszt (New York, 1935), pp. 8-9.

filigree are often present. But there is also the living flame of inspiration, the remarkable innovations, the undeniable power and beauty which can only be the product of a brilliant, creative mind. To ignore this, is to fail to see the forest for the trees.

In this study of Liszt's major piano works, it will become evident that several factors were vital in the ultimate realization of these works. The succession of environments in which he lived, his constant contact with the other leading composers, performers, and writers of the nineteenth century, the spiritual forces which combined to affect deeply the character of many of his achievements, and the peculiar qualities of the Romantic Age which were reflected in the extraordinary circumstances of his personal life--these are the forces which molded the creative genius of Liszt and which are discussed in Chapter II.

Chapter III is devoted to an analysis of two of Liszt's definitive piano compositions--the Sonata in B minor and the Transcendental Etudes.

Chapter IV contains a short history of piano music preceding the time of Liszt.

The final chapter presents the general conclusions made evident by the information previously considered.

## CHAPTER II

### LISZT: THE PRIMARY FORCES THAT MOLDED HIS LIFE AND MUSIC

#### Liszt: The Prodigy

The conflicting forces prevalent in Liszt's career existed even in the place of his birth, Raiding, Hungary. This village was near to the culture and elegance of Vienna, yet on the borders of the dominions of the Turk, the exotic and savage land of the gypsies.

Liszt's father, Adam Liszt, was a land-steward for the Esterházy's, the famous patrons of the arts. A noble tradition surrounds this family, who had employed Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) as a court composer for thirty years. During his residence there, the court was flooded with music--daily concerts with either German or Italian operas on alternating nights. By 1811, the year of Franz Liszt's birth, the Esterházy's had become the patrons of Johann Hummel (1778-1837) and Maria Luigi Cherubini (1760-1842). Adam Liszt was a Magyar, and his own family were of noble origin. Adam's wife was Anna Lager or Laager, a native of Lower Austria, with some German blood.

Franz grew up in music. As a child he must have heard the native shepherd songs played on pipes and violins, and the gypsy Tziganes. His father played the violin and guitar,



and could remember Haydn at Eisenstadt, the location of one of the great Esterházy houses. Also, he knew Hummel and Cherubini.

Franz was most precocious as a child, and studied piano with his father. At the age of nine, he appeared in concerts, creating a sensation with his playing of a concerto by Ferdinand Ries (1784-1838), and improvisations on well-known themes. Adam lost no time in presenting his prodigy to the court at Eisenstadt. The princess was so impressed with the youngster that she gave him the great Haydn's "name-book" which contained the signatures of all the illustrious composers and musicians the master had met in his travels and at home. To receive such a gift was a great honor for the young Franz, who proceeded to lose the present almost immediately.

A concert was soon arranged at another Esterhazy palace, this one in Pressburg. It was so successful that a committee was set up and a subscription, headed by Counts Apponyi, Szopary, and Erdody, guaranteed to the young Liszt the sum of six hundred Austrian gulden a year for six years. Thus relieved of financial care, Adam moved his family to Vienna, the better to launch a career for his young son.

A review of the first decade of Franz Liszt's life (1811-1821) reveals the curious extremes which existed in his environment. His early childhood was peaceful amid pastoral, tranquil surroundings, yet all the world rocked with the chaos

of war. His musical experiences embraced both the undisciplined, exotic, native songs, and the elegant culture of Hummel and Cherubini. The glamour of the courts contrasted sharply with the drabness of his humble home just a short distance away from the palace. The superficial adulation he received at the royal concerts differed greatly from the sincere devotion of his parents. This constant shift of environment had an effect throughout his life, both on his personal history and on his music.

In his book, Liszt, Sacheverell Sitwell comments on these early years as follows:

Though he left Hungary in his tenth year, and did not return to it till he was thirty, his early environment had profound effects upon him. He was no Viennese. He had the fire and brilliance, the impetuosity and extravagance of his surroundings and of the persons whom he heard of, or knew in his infancy. He had the manners and fine bearing of a Court. If there was something a little unreal about him, we must lay it to the credit of his environment. Those parts of him that suggested chicanery, and the wiles of the charlatan, were no more than the true proof of the peculiar circumstances in which he was born. In everything he was rare and phenomenal and showed the strange surroundings, the charged atmosphere in which he was bred.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast to this, his native countryside was:

. . . an endless plain, low-lying, and broken with lakes and marshes. It had nothing, and left everything to the imagination. Its only colour was in the clothes of the people, in the Gypsies and their music, and in the ceremonies of the Church. Liszt never forgot any of these things and their effects lasted with him all through his life.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Sacheverell Sitwell, Liszt (New York, 1955), pp. 7-8.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

In Vienna (1821-1823), Liszt was taken to study with the famous pedagogue and pianist, Carl Czerny (1791-1857). At the first lesson Adam Liszt had expected Franz to do his usual virtuosic feats with the Ries Concerto. Instead, he chose to play the Beethoven A flat Sonata, Op. 26. He had grown to have an obsession for Beethoven; and, in Czerny, he found a master who shared his worship of the great composer. Czerny became so impressed by Liszt's obvious gifts that he did not accept pay.

Every evening Franz went to see his master who found it a joy to make Putzi (as he called him) practice, and often the lessons lasted for two or three hours. But things did not always go well. Able as he was to read anything at sight, Putzi grew impatient over the minutiae that were his master's passion. But Czerny was an admirable monitor and showed himself inflexible; nothing that concerned execution was detail for him. . . . Franz did not need to be taught as an artist-- a thing that cannot be taught; it was the humbler duty of shaping the prodigious little hand to the impossible. It was for the sake of the soul that Czerny was implacable.<sup>3</sup>

Liszt studied composition and harmony with Antonio Salieri (1750-1825), the last teacher of Beethoven. Salieri insisted on correct harmonizations and the reading, analysis, and playing from scores of instrumental music and operas. Liszt's already marvelous ability to invent variations on given themes was further developed. At the age of eleven, Liszt contributed an Etude in C flat which was published in a collection of fifty variations on Diabelli's Waltz by

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<sup>3</sup>Guy De Pourtalès, Franz Liszt (New York, 1926), p. 12.

various composers.<sup>4</sup> Liszt's was Waltz No. 24. After a year-and-a-half of study he was presented in concert in December, 1822. He played Hummel's Concerto in A minor and a Fantasia of his own on the Andante movement in Beethoven's Symphony in C minor. This concert was a triumph. One critic remarked in his paper, "Est deus in nobis."<sup>5</sup>

Liszt lived for two years in Vienna. Here he met Beethoven. Sitwell states that it is doubtful that Beethoven embraced Liszt in public concert as legend would have it. However, there is no doubt that he did know Beethoven.

On April 13, 1823, the boy Franz Liszt, who was studying with Carl Czerny and had made his first public appearance on the first day of the year, gave a concert in the small ridotto room. Together with his father, he had been presented to Beethoven by Schindler, but had not been received with any special marks of friendliness.<sup>6</sup>

Regardless of how the event occurred, this was the consummation of Liszt's career up to this point. At the age of twelve he was already a sensational pianist. Moreover,

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<sup>4</sup>"Anton Diabelli, head of the music-publishing house of Diabelli and Co., having composed a waltz, conceived the idea of having variations written on its melody by a large group of the popular composers of the day. Beethoven was among those who received the invitation, but mindful of his experiences in 1808, when he contributed a setting of 'In questa tombe' to a similar conglomeration, he declared that he would never do so again." Alexander Wheelock Thayer, Ludwig van Beethoven, III (New York, 1934), 127.

He did not like the tune, calling it a "Schusterfleck." A Schusterfleck is a cobble or cobbles patch, in German musical terminology a tune made up of repetitions on different degrees of the scale of a single figure or motive.

<sup>5</sup>De Pourtalès, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>6</sup>Thayer, op. cit., p. 124.

he also had the innate musicianship to appreciate the music of Beethoven.

The next step was Paris. Adam and Franz arrived at this city on December 11, 1823. The journey from Vienna had been a profitable one. Concerts in Munich, Stuttgart, and Strasbourg had been received with the usual applause and amazement. At Munich, the art capital of Bavaria, he was hailed as another Mozart. His playing was said to be the equal of that of Hummel and Moscheles.<sup>7</sup> He extemporized, as was then the custom, using a theme of Moliq<sup>8</sup> and combining it with "God Save the King." At Stuttgart, a critic praised his knowledge of counterpoint and fugue in his "Free Fantasia" (i.e., improvisation).

Adam had hoped that upon their arrival in Paris, Franz would be allowed to study at the Conservatory. This was not to be. Even though armed with a letter from Prince Metternich, Franz was denied admittance by Cherubini, who was determined to stand by the "regulation" that no foreigner could be admitted to the Conservatory. Despite this temporary setback, his musical studies continued. He was taught privately

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<sup>7</sup>Ignaz Moscheles (1794-1870) was a piano virtuoso, teacher, and composer. His own playing was regarded as unsurpassed in the classic school. "Ignaz Moscheles," The International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians (New York, 1949), p. 1177.

<sup>8</sup>Wilhelm Moliq<sup>8</sup> (1802-1869) was a violinist and composer who studied under Spohr. He toured Germany as a violinist with great success. Ibid., p. 1160.

by the famous musical theorist, Anton Reicha (1770-1836), a pupil of Michael Haydn (1737-1806), and by Ferdinando Paer (1771-1839), who was then a popular opera-composer. In Liszt's daily practice routine he was required to play after every meal twelve fugues of Bach, transposed into all the twenty-four keys. His career as virtuoso also continued unabated. Letters of introduction from the nobles of Hungary and Austria gained him admittance to the salons of the French nobility where he performed to tremendous acclaim. He became, at the age of thirteen, one of the musical stars of Paris, along with Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868), Moscheles, De Bériot,<sup>9</sup> and Herz.<sup>10</sup> He was known as the "Petit Litz" ["Sic"]. Finally, on March 8, 1824, he made a public appearance at the Italian Opera House with orchestra. He played the Hummel Concerto from memory. In order that the audience might see his hands, the piano was placed so that the keyboard was slanted obliquely toward the hall. These were innovations that have affected the presentation of piano concerts to this day.

The piano maker, Sebastien Erard, became extremely interested in the boy and took him to London. On June 21, 1824, Franz played a concert at the New Argyle Room before an audience that included Muzio Clementi (1752-1832) and

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<sup>9</sup>Charles Auguste De Bériot (1802-1870) was a celebrated violinist. Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>10</sup>Heinrich Herz (1806-1888) was a noted piano virtuoso of the classic school. "Heinrich Herz," Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians, II (New York, 1945), 620.

Johann Cramer (1771-1858). Liszt, as usual, extemporized on themes called out from the audience. One theme was "Zitti-Zitti" from Rossini's Cenerentola. Liszt immediately constructed a fugue on this theme. The Harmonicon of June, 1824, comments thus:

His extemporaneous performances are the most remarkable. He improvises with the fancy and method of a deliberating composer, and with the correctness of an experienced contrapuntalist.<sup>11</sup>

The young pianist was presented to the Court of George IV, and he earned the favour of the king. He toured England and the French Provinces.

On returning to Paris, an operetta he had composed, entitled Don Sanche, based on the libretto Le Chateau de l'Amour, was performed amid the usual éclat. The scores of this and other early works have disappeared. Among the products of these early Paris years which have survived but are now out of print are: (1) Impromptu on Themes by Rossini and Spontini, Op. 3 (1824), (2) Allegro di Bravoura, Op. 4 (printed 1824), and (3) Études (Op. 1), printed 1826. The Impromptu is a pot-pourri written in a lyrical style. The Études are the most important, for out of these small sketches grew the twelve Études d'Éxecution Transcendante, the culmination of all piano studies. Liszt continued to appear in numerous recitals and resumed his study of the various polyphonic forms under Reicha.

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<sup>11</sup>Herbert Westerby, Liszt, Composer, and His Piano Works (London, 1936), p. 13.

On a third tour to England he was heard in a concert by Moscheles, who wrote in his diary concerning this event as follows: ". . . as to his playing, it surpasses in power and mastery of difficulties everything I have heard."<sup>12</sup>

Liszt began to show the effects of this constant activity. He was ordered by physicians to retire to the sea baths at Boulogne to recover his health. While there, on August 27, 1827, his father died of typhoid fever. Adam's last words to Franz were: "I fear for you the women."<sup>13</sup> Franz was now only sixteen. With great composure he agreed to pay all his father's debts. He returned to Paris and sent for his mother to join him.

It had been six years since Liszt's arrival in Vienna. He had played innumerable concerts in England and on the Continent. He was the darling of the salons. His virtuosity was everywhere admired. In fact, it was this aspect of his art that was in greatest demand. Had Liszt ventured to play the Beethoven A flat Sonata for the dilettantes of the French Court, he would hardly have received the adulation that was forthcoming when he extemporized on given themes or flashed through the Hummel A minor Concerto. This was the kind of playing they demanded, and since his incredible natural gifts could present such virtuosity, it is little wonder that

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<sup>12</sup>Ignaz Moscheles, Recent Music and Musicians (New York, 1873), p. 94.

<sup>13</sup>"Je crains pour toi les femmes." Sitwell, op. cit., p. 14.



virtuosity became such a major factor in Liszt's artistic development. This virtuosity was to function as a dual agent in the music of Liszt, as so many other of the events and environments around his life also functioned. It would be both a help and a hindrance to the completion of his musical ideal, as will be seen in this study of his piano music. In these six years he had studied with Czerny, Reicha, and Paer, and had met the principal virtuosos and composers of the day.

#### Paris: Devil and Saint

Now at sixteen, a number of new forces began to shade Liszt's life. He passed through a religious phase, he was practicing ten hours a day, he was teaching, and he fell in love.

The object of his affection was Caroline de Saint-Cricq, a sixteen-year-old girl who was his pupil at the time. Soon after the affair had begun, her mother died. She gave their romance her blessing before passing away. However, Caroline's father (who was the minister of commerce and industry to Charles X), did not feel so gently toward the young Liszt, and, upon finding that the piano lessons were being prolonged past midnight, forbade Franz to see her again. Franz was completely crushed, and for many months was actually ill. He was not only a product of the Romantic Era, but was one of its most ardent adherents and participants. After exhausting himself at the keyboard, he would plunge passionately into the most romantic novels of the day. He responded, as a Goethe

hero might have, to the tragic end, as it seemed to him, of a paradise on earth. It is quite possible that during this period he had a cataleptic seizure. It is known that he had experienced such an attack in his childhood in Hungary. At any rate, it was reported that he had died. Etoile printed his obituary, and a print of him was on sale with the title: "Franz Liszt born, Raiding, 1811; died, Paris, 1828."<sup>14</sup>

Over-dramatic as this all may seem, Liszt never forgot this first love. Years later, in 1844, after breaking with Madame d'Agoult, he paid a visit to Pau to see Caroline, who was now Madame d'Artigaux. While there he wrote a melody for her, based on two folk-tunes of Bearn, her native province, Fari-bolo Pastour, and Chanson du Bearn. Still later, in 1860, while at Weimar, just before taking the Holy Orders, he wrote his will and left instructions that she was to receive a jewel mounted as a ring.

He now played few concerts, retiring into a life of monkish asceticism. He toyed with Saint-Simonism; thought of becoming a religious recluse.<sup>15</sup> He composed very little. The only work published in 1829 was a Fantasia upon the Tyrolienne in La Fiancée, an opera by Daniel Auber (1782-1871).

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>15</sup>"The school of Saint-Simon insists strongly on the claims of merit; they advocate a social hierarchy in which each man shall be placed according to his capacity and rewarded according to his works." "Saint-Simonism," Encyclopedia Britannica, 14th ed., S. V., XIX (Chicago, 1951), 858.

Gradually religion began to shrink in importance to Liszt, and the revolution (July, 1830) began to take over his thoughts. Beethoven was still his musical hero, but William Tell, the Swiss enemy of the oppressor, became his spiritual hero. At the same time he was especially impressed by the doctrine of the Abbé de Lamennais whose teaching was, "Art is in man what creative power is in God."<sup>16</sup> His belief in this creed saved him from utter negation in his revolt against society. Once again the character of Liszt was being molded by his environment. Another factor that tended to distract him from the revolution was his new friendship with three fabulous musical personalities: Berlioz, Chopin, and Paganini. Liszt heard the legendary Paganini at a concert in Paris in March, 1831. This weird figure, almost diabolical in his technical mastery, who deliberately shrouded himself in mystery, caught Liszt's fancy as no other performer had ever been able to do. As pianist, Liszt was already the acknowledged master. His technique was unsurpassed. But this fantastic wizard of the violin performed feats Liszt had never dreamed of. Now he determined to duplicate them on the piano. From this determination grew his six Grandes Études de Paganini, inspired by Paganini's Twenty-four Caprices.

There was another aspect of Paganini's genius other than sheer technique which profoundly influenced Liszt. This was

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<sup>16</sup>Westerby, op. cit., p. 19.

his ability to conjure an atmosphere of evil in his music. Sitwell says that this feeling can best be described by the Italian word terribilità implying an art of terror and melodrama. This aspect of Paganini's music is responsible for a very important part of Liszt's creative output. All of his "Mephisto"-inspired works may be put in this class: the Faust Symphony, the "Sonate: d'apres une lecture de Dante," the Totentanz, and the Mephisto-Waltzes.

In a letter to one of his pupils at this time, Franz Wolf, Liszt wrote:

My mind and my fingers are working like two lost souls: Homer, the Bible, Plato, Locke, Byron, Hugo, Lamartine, Chateaubriand, Beethoven, Bach, Hummel, Mozart, Weber, are all about me. I study them, meditate on them, devour them furiously. In addition, I work four or five hours at exercises (thirds, sixths, octaves, tremolos, repeated notes, cadenzas, etc.). Ah, if only I don't go mad you will find me an artist. Yes, the kind of artist you asked for, the kind of artist that is needed today. "I too am a painter!" exclaimed Michael Angelo the first time he saw a masterpiece. . . . Though small and poor your friend has never ceased to repeat those words of that great man since Paganini's last concert.<sup>17</sup>

This was the period immediately following Beethoven's death (1827). Franz came out of his relative retirement of two years to give three all-Beethoven recitals devoted to the sonatas and concertos. They were not very successful. He was criticized for programs that were "badly chosen." The musical connoisseurs of Paris called Beethoven a barbarian. Cherubini said, "He makes me sneeze."<sup>18</sup> Liszt's admiration

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<sup>17</sup>De Pourtales, op. cit., p. 34.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

of Beethoven never ceased. He was gradually preparing his piano scores of the nine symphonies (not completed until many years later). All the piano sonatas were in his repertoire by 1832. Liszt frequently played the Beethoven sonatas for Berlioz. Concerning the public reaction to Beethoven's music at this time, Sitwell writes,

. . . The inclusion of Beethoven's name on the programme of a recital was a dangerous act, for the public wished to be pleased or astonished, and the sonatas of Beethoven were altogether too serious for them.<sup>19</sup>

Liszt had the courage to live up to his convictions. There were very few at this time who possessed the insight of Liszt in regard to the true greatness of Beethoven. With his meeting of Berlioz in 1831, and their ensuing friendship, Liszt embarked on a new and important aspect of his career. This was the art of transcription for piano of operas and orchestral works. He was overwhelmed by Berlioz's Symphonie Fantastique, Episode from the Life of an Artist, and the Return to Life. These works revealed to him the possibilities of a "fixed idea" or leitmotiv, endlessly modulated. Also, it awakened his interest in descriptive music. Berlioz's flair for colour, his freedom of form, and passion for the grandiose all left a deep impression on Liszt.

In studying his transcriptions, it is important to realize that they are divided into two types: (1) the partitions

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<sup>19</sup>Sitwell, op. cit., p. 27.

de piano, which are practically straight transcriptions from one medium to another, and (2) the "fantasies," which are original works based on other composers' themes. The piano transcription of Berlioz's Symphonie Fantastique is a partition de piano. Liszt has not simply arranged the notes for piano, but has recast the texture in such a way as to make the piano give an orchestral effect. Liszt was twenty-two years old when he completed this extraordinary production of his skill. His technique was now phenomenal. When it is remembered that during the last century the Symphonie Fantastique was performed by orchestra perhaps once in five years, the importance of Liszt's transcription and the numerous times he performed it is clearly understood. Otherwise, this revolutionary music would have been virtually unheard. Liszt also wrote a short piano piece, L'Idée Fixe, Andante Amoroso on the main theme of the Symphony, and he transcribed Berlioz's overture, Les Francs-Jugues. In 1834 he wrote a Grande Fantasia Symphonique on themes from Lelio for piano and orchestra, and in 1836 he also transcribed Harold in Italy and the King Lear Overture.

Meanwhile, Liszt had met Chopin, George Sand, and the Countess d'Agoult. Chopin had arrived from Poland in 1831. He was a year older than Liszt. His quiet, refined, restrained personality was in direct contrast to that of the flamboyant virtuoso. Sitwell writes of Chopin,

This great artist had come from the same landscape as Liszt, for the difference between Poland and Hungary is only that Hungary lies more to the South. The inhabitants are Magyars and not Slavs, but both churches belong to the Church of Rome, and the conditions of life are the same. Both countries are alike also in that they have no middle class, so that it was impossible for Poland to produce burgher-musicians of the type of Bach or Brahms. Instead, they would be drawn naturally into the salons of the rich aristocrats.<sup>20</sup>

Both Liszt and Chopin were romantics, but there were great differences between them. Chopin was extremely withdrawn, his music personal almost without compare; he loved no composer but Mozart. Liszt, on the other hand, embraced with the greatest enthusiasm almost every artist with whom he came in contact. Despite Schumann's great admiration for Chopin, Chopin never showed any interest in Schumann's music. Liszt, however, immediately recognized the unusual gifts of Schumann: in fact, it was perhaps dangerous for him to be so receptive to the music of other men; his creative mind was sometimes smothered by so many new ideas, leaving little that could be expressed of his own inspiration. This, plus his phenomenal technique, threatened to make him nothing but a virtuoso pianist.

There can be no doubt that Liszt and Chopin, both geniuses, influenced each other very deeply in regard to their respective compositions. In his preface to the Schirmer edition of the Chopin Etudes, James Huneker writes:

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 23-24.

With the present edition an attempt has been made to establish a tradition at second-hand. True the man from whom this tradition is derived was not merely by far the most renowned pianist of the last century . . . but also enjoyed while a youth of nearly the same age as Chopin, such intimate intellectual intercourse with him that in Paris, in the early thirties, they were called the Dioscuri. The Etudes of Op. 10 are dedicated to Liszt, and the two friends discussed every detail most thoroughly before surrendering the booklet to the printer, as Liszt frequently related. Thus it is only natural that Liszt should have been the first to introduce Chopin's name to the European public on his concert tours.<sup>21</sup>

Chopin, in a letter to a friend, writes:

I write to you without knowing what my pen is scribbling, because at this moment Liszt is playing my études, and transporting me out of my respectable thoughts. I should like to steal from him the way to play my own études.<sup>22</sup>

Chopin definitely gained by his acquaintance with Liszt's bigger style. The F minor and C minor Etudes in the Op. 10 reflect the drama and heroic appeal of Liszt, and more especially the B minor (octave), the A minor and C minor Etudes in Op. 25. Also, the C sharp minor Etude from Op. 25 has the chromaticism and deep emotion of Liszt.

It was at this time that Liszt met Madame d'Agoult at a musical party in Paris. The guests included Berlioz, Chopin, Rossini, Meyerbeer, the poets Heine and Mickiewicz, and the painter Delacroix. From this first meeting developed

<sup>21</sup>James Huneker, "Preface," Chopin's Etudes, XXXIII (New York, 1916), 1.

<sup>22</sup>Henryk Opieski, Chopin's Letters (New York, 1931), p. 171.



an affair that lasted for ten years. Madame Marie d'Agoult (born Marie Catherine Sophie de Flavigny) was the wife of Count Charles d'Agoult, twenty years her senior. Despite her station in society (far above that of Liszt) and her two children, she fell deeply in love with Franz. She had a brilliant, active mind and was bored with the frills and chit-chat that was prevalent in her husband's circle. Liszt was very handsome, and she found him irresistible. The Liszt-d'Agoult relationship caused such a scandal and furor that it became necessary for them to leave Paris. Since the purpose of this paper is primarily to make a study of Liszt's music and the various environmental forces that were involved in its creation, it is impossible to elaborate on the romance of this pair, regardless of its importance. It is true that by causing Franz to leave Paris Madame d'Agoult gave him the peace and quiet that were necessary for his serious composition. Wagner wrote concerning Liszt's eternal dilemma:

Were he no famous man or rather, had not people made him famous, he could and would be a free artist, a little god, instead of being the slave of the most fatuous of publics, the public of the virtuoso. This public asks from him, at all costs, wonders and foolish tricks; he gives it what it wants.<sup>23</sup>

Madame d'Agoult (later known as the writer Daniel Stern) wanted a lover to release her from the monotony of her married life. Liszt was eager for the chance to give up virtuosity and embark on a career as a composer. Their love achieved

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<sup>23</sup>Richard Wagner, Prose Works, VIII (London, 1899), 137.

these aims, no matter how disillusioned they were to become in later years. Liszt was the father of three children by Madame d'Agoult: Blandine, Daniel, and Cosima. Cosima later became the wife of Von Bülow, and still later, the wife of Richard Wagner. Liszt and Madame d'Agoult made a final separation in 1844, largely because of his many escapades with other women.

### The Years of Pilgrimage

When Liszt and the Countess left Paris, their destination was Switzerland. In Geneva he found the incentive for his first really creative compositions, the Album d'un Voyageur (now out of print). The most important of these were later to appear in the Années de Pèlerinage. They are: (1) "Au Lac de Wallenstadt," (2) "Au Bord d'une Source," (3) "Les Cloches de Genève," (4) "Chapelle de Guillaume Tell," and (5) "Vallee d'Obermann."

Liszt's two-year sojourn in Switzerland was interrupted when he returned to Paris to answer the challenge of the pianist, Sigismond Thalberg (1812-1871), by giving a series of recitals that have become legendary. Liszt was still the champion. From Switzerland Liszt and Madame d'Agoult moved on to the Italian lakes. He commenced work on the "Italian Album," and began to revise the youthful exercises which he had first written in Paris, and which were now to become the Études d'exécution transcendante. He played at Rossini's

Soirees and transcribed the Overture to William Tell, and later on, the Stabat Mater and Charité.<sup>24</sup>

In 1838 Liszt journeyed to Vienna for the purpose of giving benefit concerts to aid flood-ridden Hungary. Besides the classics, Weber and Chopin, Liszt played some fourteen of his transcriptions and three original works--Etude No. 2 in A minor, Chromatic Galop, and the Hexameron.<sup>25</sup> As a result of Liszt's playing of Scarlatti's "Cat's Fugue," a movement was started to revive interest in the old master, and Czerny prepared an edition of Scarlatti's works. Also, while in Vienna, Liszt beautifully transcribed twelve of Schubert's songs, thus doing much to gain them popularity. Liszt transcriptions of twelve Schubert Lieder (1838) were: (1) "Sei mir gegrüsst," (2) "Auf dem Wasser zu singen," (3) "Du bist die Ruh," (4) "Erkönig," (5) "Meeresstille," (6) "Die junge Nonne," (7) "Frühlingsglaube," (8) "Gretchen am Spinnrade," (9) "Ständchen" (Hark! Hark!), (10) "Rastlose Liebe," (11) "Der Wanderer," and (12) "Ave Maria." Other Schubert compositions transcribed by Liszt were selected piano waltzes entitled Soirée de Vienne. Later transcription of Schubert songs included: Four Sacred Songs, Six Songs including "The

<sup>24</sup>"La Foi, l' Esperance, La Charite": A piece of sacred music written by Rossini in 1844. "Ignaz Moscheles," The International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians (New York, 1949), p. 1583.

<sup>25</sup>"The Hexameron was a set of variations by various composers upon the March from Bellini's Puritani. Liszt wrote the introduction, the connecting links and the finale." Sitwell, op. cit., p. 84.

Trout," The Millers Songs (six), Swan Songs (fourteen), and The Winter Journey (ten songs).

A visit to Rome caused Liszt to experiment with the blending together of the two arts, painting and music. He was influenced by the antique and art associations of the ancient world capitol. Two products of this influence were "Sposalizio," suggested by Raphael's picture of that title, and "Il Penseroso," inspired by the Michael Angelo statue in the Medici Chapel at Florence. Liszt attempted in these works to interpret the mood or emotion he experienced upon viewing these two works of art. These became the first two pieces in the second volume of the Années de Pèlerinage. The full set of compositions in this collection are: (1) "Sposalizio," (2) "Il Penseroso," (3) "Canzonetta di Salvator Rosa," (4, 5, 6) "Tre Sonetti di Petrarca," (7) "Fantaisie, quasi Sonate; d'après une lecture de Dante." Venezia e Napoli: (8) "Gondoliera," (9) "Canzone," and (10) "Taran-tella."

In October, 1839, Liszt left Madame d'Agoult in Italy and began a concert tour that was to carry him all over Europe, and was to cover a period of seven years. He needed the money to support their five children (two were by her marriage to the Count d'Agoult). Also, there can be little doubt that Liszt reveled in the fame and glamour of public performance.

In Germany, when performing in Leipzig, Liszt met Mendelssohn<sup>26</sup> and Schumann, and the three men became close friends. Liszt played Schumann's Carnaval in Leipzig. Schumann wrote to Clara Wieck to say that hearing Liszt play

. . . was the greatest artistic experience of his lifetime. Liszt would play Schumann's Sonata to him, or his Fantasies, or the Novelettes, and he was astonished and spellbound by his own music as if he had never heard it before.<sup>27</sup>

Liszt's concerts in England were not successful. The English were outraged by the d'Agoult affair, and refused to be swayed by his pianism. Liszt's tours on the continent were nothing short of triumphant. He played in Seville, in Lisbon, in Copenhagen, all over Russia and Poland, at Jassy in Moldavia, and at Constantinople. There was little time for composition during these hectic, breathtaking years. One of his finest achievements was the piano version of six organ preludes and fugues of Bach. These transcriptions were as

<sup>26</sup>" . . . Liszt, on the other hand, possesses a certain suppleness and differentiation in his fingering, as well as a thoroughly musical feeling that cannot be equaled. In a word, I have heard no performer whose musical perceptions extend to the very tips of his fingers and emanate directly from them as Liszt's do." From a letter to his mother dated March 30, 1840, Leipzig. Felix Mendelssohn, Letters (New York, 1945), p. 289.

" . . . What you say of Liszt's harmonies is depressing. I had seen the work before, and put it away with indifference because it simply seemed very stupid to me; but if that sort of stuff is noticed and even admired, it is really provoking. But is that the case? I cannot believe that impartial people can take pleasure in discords or be in any way interested in them." From a letter to Ignaz Moscheles dated March 25, 1835, Düsseldorf. Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>27</sup>Sitwell, op. cit., p. 92.

follows: (1) A minor, (2) C major (4-4), (3) C minor, (4) C major (9-8), (5) E minor, and (6) B minor. This brought about the beginning of the revival of Bach. The credit for the starting of the Bach-Gesellschaft belongs almost solely to Liszt and Mendelssohn. Liszt's pupil, Felix Weingartner, writes,

Bach and Beethoven were his idols. Sometimes, after some newer music had been heard, he would open a volume of Bach, ask one of his pupils to play from it, and with peculiarly radiant mien, say, "Now let's get washed!"<sup>28</sup>

Liszt also created during this period many fantasies dramaticques based on operas by Mozart (Don Juan), Bellini, Rossini, Donizetti, Meyerbeer, and Verdi.

Now, after seven years of ceaseless, exhausting travel, of countless energy-draining concerts, Franz was tired. At thirty-six he realized he had achieved the ultimate as a pianist. He wanted to turn his back on the past. He wanted to compose. He was offered a contract binding him to give his services every year for three months, as conductor and musical director to the Grand-Ducal Court in Weimar. He accepted at once. Due to certain concert commitments, he could not take over his new duties until 1844. This was also the year he made the final break with Madame d'Agoult. He continued to concertize until 1847, when he made his final tours in Russia. At Kiev he was heard by the wealthy Princess

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<sup>28</sup>Felix von Weingartner, "Franz Liszt, as Man and Artist," The Musical Quarterly, No. 3, XXII (July, 1936), 257.

Carolyn of Sayn-Wittgenstein. She was twenty-eight years old; the wife of Prince Nicolas of Sayn-Wittgenstein, adjutant to the Tsar. They had been separated for many years but the church refused to grant them a divorce.

The princess became enamored of Liszt and was completely devoted to him and his work. He had much in common with her: both admired the same literature (she was extremely cultivated), and both were deeply religious. It was agreed that she would come to Weimar and share with him his creative life in that center of culture. She finally arrived in February, 1849. Liszt abandoned his career as concert pianist and began a new life as conductor, composer, and teacher.

#### The Weimar Years (1849-1861)

While at Weimar Liszt produced four operas by Gluck: Orpheus, Iphigenia, Armida, and Alceste. These productions amounted to a revival of these works. He conducted Don Giovanni and The Magic Flute of Mozart and Euryanthe of Weber. Alphonse und Estrella by Schubert owed its first performance to Liszt. He produced Fidelio by Beethoven (an opera almost unknown at this time), the Benvenuto Cellini of Berlioz,<sup>29</sup> Ernani by Verdi, and numerous lesser operas.

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<sup>29</sup> . . . Late in autumn of 1852, Dr. Liszt, always chivalrous in coming to the rescue of genius neglected or unfairly treated, had brought about a representation, in the little theatre at Weimar, of this Benvenuto Cellini, which, on its production at Paris had been cruelly maltreated." Henry F. Chorley, Thirty Years' Musical Recollections (New York, 1926), pp. 327-328.

His orchestral concerts included all the Beethoven symphonies, also symphonies of Mozart, Haydn, Mendelssohn, and Schumann. He also conducted Handel oratorios. An entire week was devoted to the music of Berlioz, including performances of Benvenuto Cellini, Romeo and Juliet, the Damnation of Faust, the Symphonie Fantastique, Harold in Italy, and the Overtures to Waverly, King Lear, and the Corsair.

The most impressive events of the Weimar years were a result of his friendship with Richard Wagner. Liszt had met the revolutionary young composer in Paris in 1842. In the ensuing years he grew to admire Wagner's music and constantly championed his cause. He even saved him from imprisonment in 1849 when Wagner fled to Weimar from Dresden where he was wanted by the State Police for his activities against the king. Liszt spirited him away to Paris.

Wagner conducted the first performance of Lohengrin at Weimar (1850), and also presented Tannhauser and the Flying Dutchman. A strong Wagnerian influence was seen in the music of Liszt in the following years, but also Liszt had a corresponding influence on the music of Wagner. In a letter from Weimar, dated October 7, 1852, Liszt wrote to Wagner:

. . . your Faust Overture you will receive by today's post. A copy of it exists here, and I shall probably give it again in the course of this winter. The work is quite worthy of you; but if you will allow me to make a remark, I must confess that I should like either a second middle part (at letter E or F) or else a quieter and more agreeably coloured treatment of the present middle part: the brass is a little



too massive there, and forgive my opinion--the motive in F is not satisfactory; it wants grace in a certain sense, and is a kind of hybrid thing, neither fish nor flesh which stands in no proper relation or contrast to what has gone before and what follows, and the consequence impedes the interest. If instead of this you introduced a soft, tender, melodious part, modulated a la Gretchen, I think I can assure you that your work would gain very much. Think this over, and do not be angry in case I have said something stupid.<sup>30</sup>

Wagner's reply from Zurich, dated October 13, 1852, starts as follows:

My Dearest Best-Beloved Friend: For your last letter, and especially for your remark about the Faust Overture (which has delighted me!) I owe you a regular long letter.<sup>31</sup>

In a famous letter to von Bulow, Wagner writes:

There are many matters on which we are quite frank among ourselves (for instance, that since my acquaintance with Liszt's compositions my treatment of harmony has become very different from what it was formerly), but it is indiscreet, to say the least, of friend Pohl<sup>32</sup> to babble this secret to the whole world.<sup>33</sup>

These letters reveal the kind of close cooperation that existed between the two composers. Their friendship later became strained as a result of Wagner's relationship with

<sup>30</sup>Francis Hueffer, Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt, I (London, 1888), 227.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 231.

<sup>32</sup>Richard Pohl (1826-1896) was a German music critic and an editor of Neue Zeitschrift für Musik. He championed Wagner and had a close association with Liszt during the Weimar years. "Ignaz Moscheles," The International Encyclopedia of Music and Musicians (New York, 1949), p. 1160.

<sup>33</sup>Humphrey Searle, The Music of Liszt (London, 1954), p. 64.

Liszt's daughter, Cosima, but they were reconciled before Wagner's death.

During Liszt's twelve years at Weimar that city became the center of musical culture in Europe. Composers and students from all parts flocked to Weimar to learn at the feet of the master and to hear the production of the small but expert body of singers and instrumentalists under Liszt's direction. He was producing and interpreting the "Music of the Future." His center of culture was known as "The School of the Future." Liszt exerted great influence also through his many piano pupils. Over sixty pupils were to become really distinguished. Twenty-nine toured the United States as concert pianists. Among his famous pupils were Sophie Menter, D'Albert, von Bulow, Friedheim, Jaell, Joseffy, Sauer, Lamond, MacDowell, Rosenthal, Tausig, Saint-Saens, Siloti, and many others. Despite his heavy duties as conductor and teacher, Liszt also composed a vast amount of music during the Weimar years. The works completed here included the first twelve symphonic poems, the Faust and Dante symphonies, a number of major piano works (among which were the B minor Sonata and revisions of earlier piano pieces). He also composed songs, numerous transcriptions and large-scale vocal works.

The first of the important piano compositions on which he worked during the Weimar years was the collection entitled Harmonies Poétiques et Religieuses, written over a period

from 1847 to 1852. This collection consists of the following pieces: (1) "Invocation," (2) "Ave Maria," (3) "Benediction de Dieu dans la solitude," (4) "Pensée des morts," (5) "Pater noster," (6) "Hymne de l'enfant a son reveil," (7) "Funerailles," (8) "Miserere, d'après Palestrina," (9) "Andante lagrimoso," and (10) "Cantique d'amour."

This collection evidently had a strong personal significance for Liszt; it is dedicated to Princess Sayn-Wittgenstein, and it was the work which he took the greatest pleasure in playing to his friends in later years when he retired from public activity.<sup>34</sup>

The pieces are not all of equal worth: some are weak, but the "Benediction of God in Solitude" and "Funerailles" are among Liszt's masterpieces.

Perhaps his greatest work of this or any period is the Sonata in B minor. Its special qualities will be discussed in the third chapter of this thesis.

The effect of Chopin's style is shown in two Ballades, two Polonaises, a Berceuse, and a Mazurka Brilliante.

These were creative, enormously important years at Weimar, but they came to an unhappy end. As always, there was much gossip and scandal concerning Liszt's private life. This caused the Princess of Sayn-Wittgenstein to fall out of favor with the Weimar Court. One of Liszt's pet projects was the production of Cornelius' Barber of Bagdad, but at the first performance in 1858 the reception was so violent against

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

the work that Liszt offered his resignation to the Grand Duke. Later, in 1860, Brahms and Joachim signed a newspaper protest against the "New German School" as exemplified by Wagner and Liszt. Liszt was also deeply grieved by the death of his son, Daniel, at the age of twenty-one. All these events combined to make Liszt decide to leave Weimar. He finally resigned his post and sent the Princess Sayn-Wittgenstein to Rome in the hope that she would be able to receive a document from the Pope granting her a divorce from Prince Sayn-Wittgenstein. Liszt followed her to Rome in 1861.

#### Rome

The marriage of Liszt and Princess Sayn-Wittgenstein was scheduled to take place, but at the last moment the Pope refused to grant her a divorce from the Prince so the marriage never took place. In 1862 Liszt's eldest daughter, Blandine, died. These experiences, plus the memory of early spiritual experiences, were turning Liszt ever closer to religion. In 1863 he entered the Oratory of the Madonna del Rosario at Monte Mario. In 1865 he received the four minor orders and became an Abbé. His compositions now reflect the religious side of his life: the two legends--"St. Francis of Assisi preaching to the birds" and "St. Francis of Paola walking on the waves"; the set of variations on the theme of Bach which is the basso ostinato of the first movement of his

cantata, Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen. Also of this period are the marvelous concert studies, Waldesrauschen and Gnomens-reigen. Liszt was now living a quiet, tranquil existence, doing no concertizing, only teaching and composing.

The last fifteen years of Liszt's life, beginning in 1869, were divided among three cities, Rome, Weimar, and Budapest. His compositions were less virtuosic than before; more thoughtful, as though he were writing for himself rather than the public. Between 1867 and 1877 he wrote the third year of the Années de Pèlerinage. This consists of: (1) "Angelus-Priere aux anges gardiens," (2) "Cypres de la Villa d'Este, I," (3) "Cypres de la Villa d'Este, II," (4) "Les Jeux d'Eaux à la Villa d'Este," (5) "Sunt lacrymae rerum (en mode hongrois)," (6) "Marche Funèbre (to the memory of the Emperor Maximilian of Mexico)," and (7) "Sursum corda." Several of the late Hungarian rhapsodies are of this period: much more experimental and less brilliant than the early works. Some arrangements of five Hungarian folk-songs anticipate Bartók's work. Also anticipating this modern composer is a Csardas Macabre which is full of bare, parallel fifths. Many of Liszt's late piano works are mood pieces such as Romance Oubliée (1881) and the two Élegies (1870). Nostalgia seems to be prevalent in the Valses Oubliées, although he can still summon the old verve and fire in Mephisto Waltz. The complete catalogue of Liszt's piano pieces alone is enormous,

numbering over one hundred. His works for orchestra and the choral and organ pieces would require a completely separate study.

In the final years, 1880 to 1886, Liszt was at his peak as a teacher. He gathered the most gifted pianists in the world around him. In 1886 he again returned to the concert stage after an absence of forty-five years. A "Jubilee Tour" in celebration of his seventy-fifth birthday revealed his magnificent powers once more. He appeared in Paris and London. This tour so fatigued him, however, that he was unable to recover from an attack of pneumonia, and he died on July 31, 1886, at Bayreuth.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE B MINOR SONATA

The B minor Sonata of Liszt holds a unique position in the piano literature because of its remarkable form. This form consists of a single movement containing three themes that are presented, and then developed throughout the sonata by means of "thematic transformation." In the piano repertoire of the classic and romantic schools, including sonatas by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann, Schubert, Chopin, and Brahms, there is no other major work using a form similar to this one movement scheme of the Liszt B minor Sonata.

The following musical examples show the main themes and the various methods by which they are transformed throughout the sonata.



Fig. 1--Measures 1-3

INTRODUCTIONS

Fig. 2--Measures 83-88

Fig. 3--Measures 229-230

Fig. 4--Measures 563-565





Fig. 5--Measures 778-779



Fig. 6--Measures 8-10



Fig. 7--Measure 32



Fig. 8--Measures 55-57

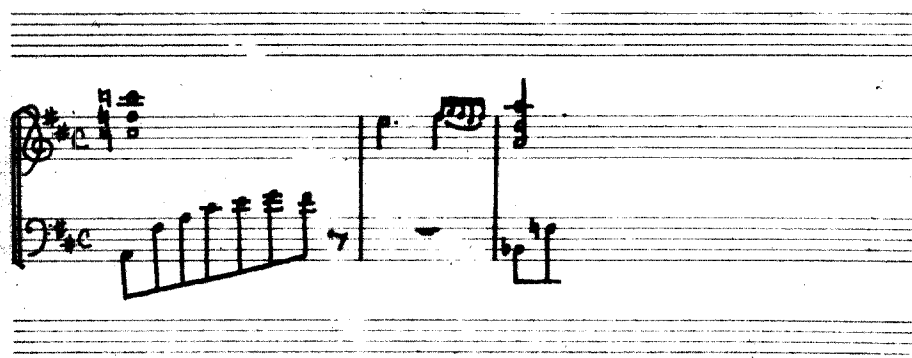


Fig. 9--Measures 126-128

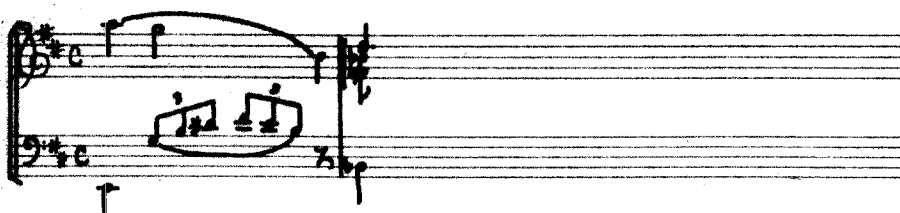


Fig. 10--Measures 162-163



Fig. 11--Measures 180-181

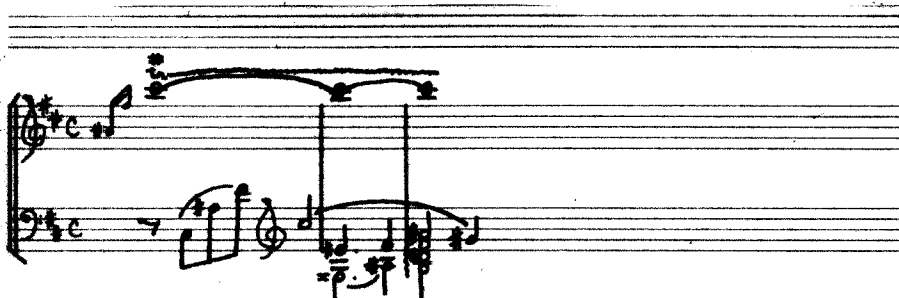
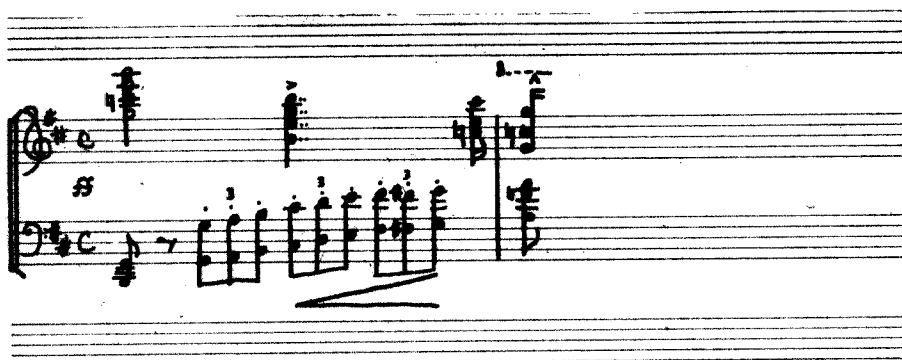


Fig. 12--Measures 198-200



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Fig. 13--Measures 206-207



Fig. 14--Measure 222



Fig. 15--Measure 240

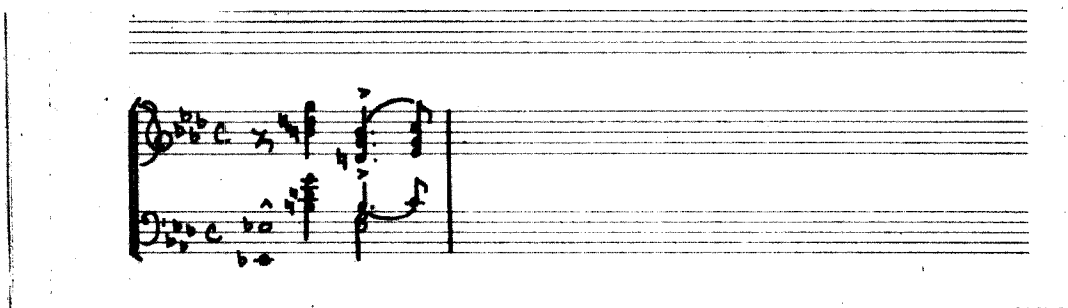


Fig. 16--Measure 317

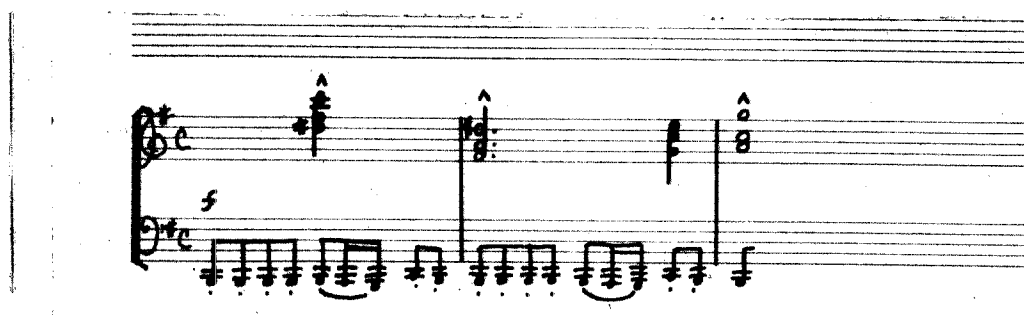


Fig. 17--Measures 321-323



Fig. 18--Measures 466-471



Fig. 19--Measure 787

PRINCIPAL THEME B

Fig. 20--Measures 13-15

Fig. 21--Measures 17-18

Fig. 22--Measure 33



Fig. 23--Measures 154-156

Handwritten musical notation for measures 172-174. The score is written on two staves (treble and bass clefs) in common time (C). The treble clef part features a complex, rhythmic melody with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The bass clef part provides a steady accompaniment with chords and single notes.

Fig. 24--Measures 172-174

Handwritten musical notation for measures 192-193. The score is written on two staves (treble and bass clefs) in common time (C). The treble clef part features a melody of eighth and sixteenth notes. The bass clef part features a complex, rhythmic accompaniment with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes.

Fig. 25--Measures 192-193



Fig. 26--Measures 256-257

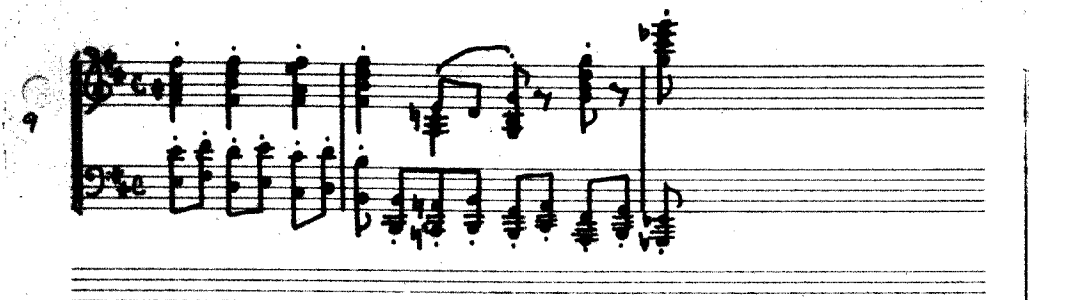


Fig. 27--Measures 264-266



Fig. 28--Measures 351-353



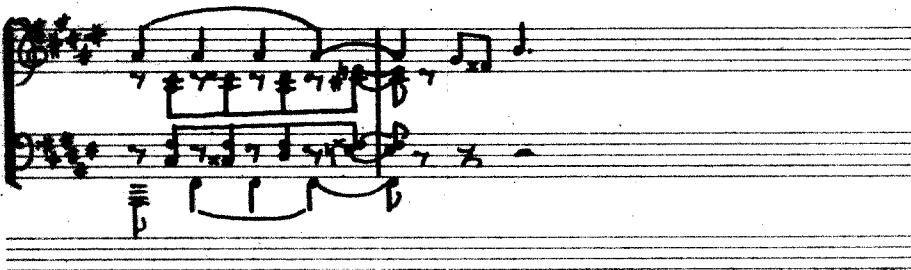


Fig. 29--Measures 439-440

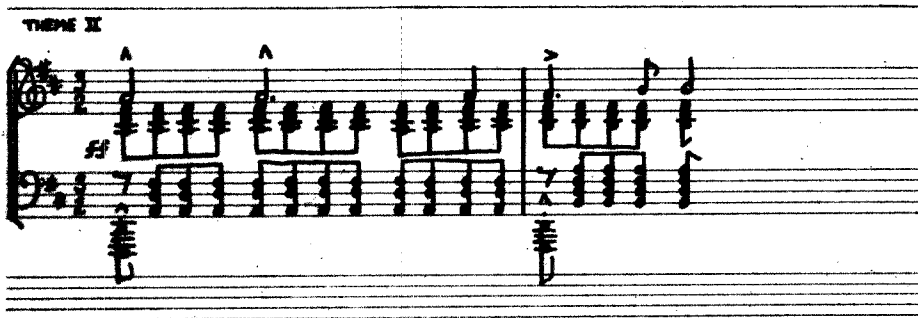


Fig. 30--Measures 106-107



Fig. 31--Measures 298-301



Fig. 32--Measures 382-383



Fig. 33--Measures 333-336

The form of the B minor Sonata can be analyzed by dividing it into four sections, as follows:

Introduction: Lento assai (measures 1-7)

1st Section: Allegro energico--exposition and development (measures 8-332)

2nd Section: Andante sostenuto (measures 333-465)

3rd Section: Further development of the first section and reprise. The third section opens with a fugue (measures 466-816).

4th Section: Coda, including a partial repeat of the second section (measures 817-866).

The first seven measures are marked Lento assai and form an introduction. This introduction contains a rhythmic motif --two repeated notes, in octaves, alternating with rests-- which happens to be the exact duplicate of the final two notes of the Prelude to Act I of Tristan. (See Figure 1, page 34.) This motif alternates with two descending scales. The first of these is a natural minor scale in the tonality of C minor. The second scale is G harmonic minor with the raised fourth. The introductory theme, hushed, mysterious, making dramatic use of the low register of the piano, is the source of Liszt's inspiration for the work as a whole.

The normal exposition in B minor suddenly opens with the Allegro energico in alla breve meter. The principal theme is in two parts. The first part is bold and heroic, broadly outlined in strongly rhythmic octaves. (See Figure 6, page 36.) Dotted rhythms and triplets give added tension to the harmonic device which is the interval of the diminished seventh. The second part of this principal theme is sinister and evil sounding in the manner of Paganini. (See Figure 20, page 41.) Liszt then returns to the lower regions of his instrument and with a repeated note figure (marcato) uses one of his most familiar devices, the rapid, ascending, chromatic triplet, which is the trademark of the Hungarian Rhapsodies,

the Spanish Rhapsodie, and Mephisto Waltz. This supports a simple chord motif of  $I_6$  resolving to a diminished chord by means of a suspension. There is one remaining element which is of prime importance in the analysis of the introduction and principal theme. That is Liszt's dramatic use of the rest. The first note of the sonata falls on the second beat of the measure. The first section of the Allegro energico begins with one quarter rest followed by a dotted-eighth rest, and the second part is preceded by two quarter rests and a dotted-eighth rest. This carefully devised rhythmic pattern works as a cohesive agent in that it serves to connect the three extremely contrasting moods which Liszt achieves in these first seventeen measures of the sonata. The remaining portion of the sonata is almost completely derived from the material of these opening measures. There is only one new theme in the entire work.

After the two principal themes of the Allegro energico are stated, an agitato episode of seven measures (which consists of a syncopated diminished seventh resolution alternating with minor triads, also in syncopation) reaches a climax which leads back into the principal theme of the Allegro energico. (See Figure 21, page 41.) A clearly defined development of the two main themes is now in progress. The future of this development is extremely complicated and involves the use of all the various materials of the exposition in diminution, augmentation and syncopation. From the

shifting modulations and convulsive rhythms of this polyphonic section, Liszt brings the principal theme out into the open where it is heroically treated in massive, electrifying octaves. Then he returns to the theme of the introduction, but not in the sotto voce, hushed atmosphere of the opening measures. Instead, it is pesante, and accompanied by relentless repeated notes which gradually become richer as the notes are piled one on another until first inversions and finally V<sub>7</sub>th chords are struck. (See Figure 2, page 35.) This section reaches a tremendous climax, growing ever broader as it leads into the new theme marked Grandioso.

This is a chorale-like section and is the only remaining piece of new material. (See Figure 30, page 44.) It is in D Major and in 3/2 meter. It gradually becomes quiet and modulates into the relative minor coming to a long stop on a diminished seventh chord. After an introductory four-measure recitative, the principal theme is presented in a dolce con grazia treatment. (See Figure 9, page 37.) The second part of the principal theme appears, but now sempre piano instead of marcato. Wagnerian harmonies with chromatic inner voices constantly modulate above this theme. In the ensuing section Liszt for the first time brings this sinister figure up into the treble clef. But here it is completely transformed. It is now cantanto espressivo, beautifully lyrical, accompanied by simple arpeggiated chords. (See Figure 23, page 42.) The key of D Major offers complete relief from the emotional

stresses of the previous modulation. Gradually the treatment becomes more elaborate and correspondingly more agitato, but the climax is interrupted by the sudden appearance of the first section of the principal theme, now dolce instead of Allegro energico. It is accompanied by a pianissimo trill which leads into a most delicate and ravishing cadenza. This short six-measure episode is extremely effective because it stands alone in the center of an emotional storm.

By means of a cadenza passage marked crescendo molto, Liszt returns to the heroic treatment of his principal theme, and brings out all the brilliant elements in the vast repertoire of his virtuosity. But here the treatment is valid. He is working with strong thematic material and the virtuosic elements are built in such a way as to be completely integrated with the basic themes. It is masterful, powerful, polyphonic writing. The principal theme is suddenly altered, now in a scherzo-like passage, vivamenta, with a non legato accompaniment. (See Figure 15, page 39.) Feathery arpeggios and chromatic scales form the background as the melody sings out in a lovely lyrical song. The mood again becomes agitato and the second part of the principal theme is announced in a nervous, erratic march-like section. (See Figure 26, page 43.) This becomes con strepito. Extremely dissonant intervals and leaps are strongly accented in the most modern-sounding passage in the entire work.

This marvelous section leads into the restatement of the grandiose chorale-like theme. But this time it is pesante, almost brutal. (See Figure 31, page 44.) This is treated in a recitativo alternating with cadenzas. The second part of the Allegro energico appears in its original form but is interrupted by a chain of diminished-seventh chords which create an impressionistic atmosphere. The first section ends on a quiet diminished-seventh chord over a tonic pedal.

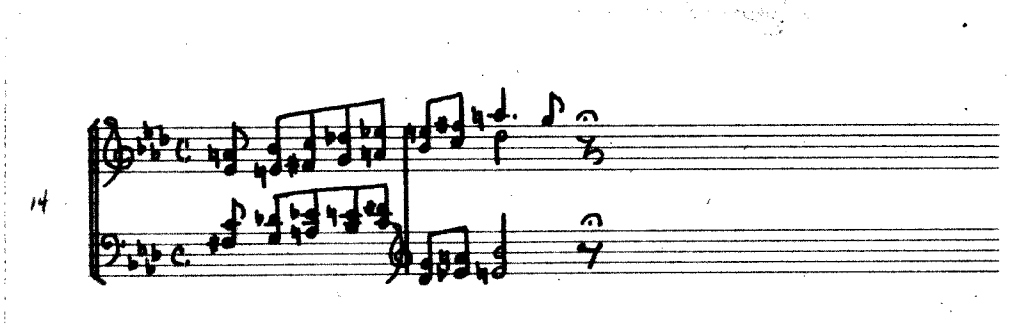


Fig. 34--Measures 311-312

The second section is labeled Andante sostenuto. It opens with a Tristan-like treatment of the chorale theme.

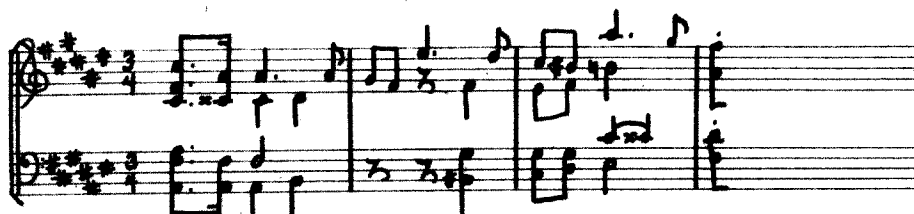


Fig. 35--Measures 343-346

A remarkable correlation exists between this Andante passage in the sonata and the "King Mark" monologue in the second act of Tristan.

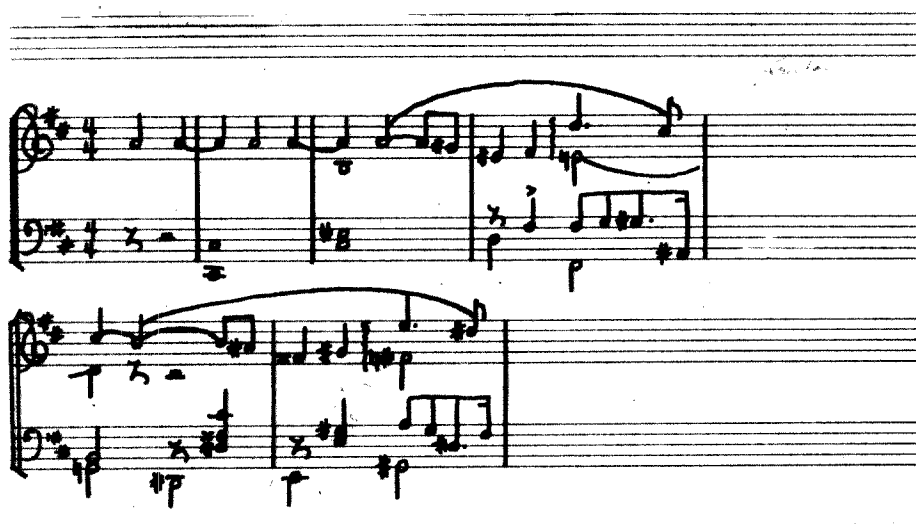


Fig. 36--Act II of Tristan and Isolde by Wagner

Suspensions, diminished-seventh chords, slow-moving ornaments such as are found in the Rienzi overture, combine to set the Wagnerian mood. This section is extremely chromatic, and is in the key of F sharp Major. The time signature is 3/4. But Liszt constantly metamorphoses his themes. He develops a new passage marked "dolcissimo con intimo sentimento." The chorale theme, now in A Major over a tonic pedal point, is "nocturnal" accompanied by a double-sixth figure which ascends chromatically. Then it reverts into its original form, gradually becoming more and more grandiose. The whole section finally becomes impressionistic by use of long chord-chains and modal scales to be played pianissimo. With truly



marvelous ingenuity Liszt returns to the introductory theme, this time in the dominant.

The key signature is changed enharmonically to G flat, and the principal theme is announced as a fugue subject. (See Figure 18, page 40.) Liszt constructs a brilliant fugue using both themes of the Allegro energico. This leads into a long development which is a reprise of the original development-section. The chorale theme appears this time in B Major, and establishes a definite tonality which continues for some time, eventually becoming the relative minor, G sharp. The real climax of the sonata is reached in a monumental statement of the chorale-like theme ending on an F-sharp chord, the dominant of B Major. The final measures consist of a Coda, which contains a partial repeat of the second section in Andante sostenuto, gradually becoming Lento as the introductory theme is finally stated once more, concluding on B Major.

As has been seen in this analysis, Liszt departs from the standard treatment of the classical form of the sonata to a degree that had never before been attempted even by Beethoven. He has replaced the rigid framework of the classical sonata with a remarkably cogent treatment of three main themes which are developed and transformed in a variety of rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic mutations.

This piece is multi-metric as the following chronological sequence illustrates:

C  $\phi$  3/2 C 3/4 C 3/4 C 3/4 C 3/2 C 3/2 3/4 C

This work is also multi-tonal. A chronological sequence of key signatures reads as follows: B minor, E flat, D, C sharp minor, D, F minor, E minor, F sharp, A, F sharp, G minor, E minor, F sharp, G flat, A minor, B minor, B. Within these key signatures are constant modulations.

Despite this frequent shift of tonality and meter, Liszt has created a unified and compact work of art which remains a landmark in the keyboard literature of the Romantic Era.

The B minor Sonata is perhaps the most important, and certainly the most controversial work written by Liszt for the piano. The opinions concerning this work run to violent extremes. Listeners and critics are always divided into two camps: either the sonata is praised for being one of the noblest and most beautiful of piano sonatas, or it is belittled as a curious example of bad taste containing nothing but hollow bombast.

It is not unusual for a critic to change his opinion of the work over the passage of years. In the 1934 edition of his book, Liszt, Sitwell wrote:

The Sonata in B Minor is not a favourite piece with the writer of this book, even if it is admitted to be a proud passage of Romanticism. In the hands of Busoni, or even Horowitz, it sounds magnificent; but in the opinion of the writer, always empty; and, unless it is played by such pianists as these, the awkwardness of the pauses and the jerky staccato

sentiments render the sonata painful and irritating to the nerves.<sup>1</sup>

However, in the appendix to his 1956 edition of this same book, Sitwell, having changed his mind completely, has this to say concerning the sonata:

But the greatest change of all in matters concerning this present book since it was first published is the increasing popularity of Liszt's B minor Sonata now an almost inevitable feature of the recital programme. At the time when Busoni gave an extraordinary and electrifying performance of it at the Wigmore Hall it was seldom, if ever, played. I have to admit, too, for what it is worth, that I have altered my own view of the sonata and would now put it among the supreme masterpieces, next to the "Appassionata" and the "Waldstein."<sup>2</sup>

Whatever the many opinions of this work may be, there is common agreement as to its uniqueness in the piano literature. In his book on the pianoforte sonata, Shedlock writes:

After Beethoven, the only work which, from an evolution point of view, really claims notice is one by Liszt. All other sonatas are written on classical lines with more or less of modern colouring.<sup>3</sup>

Liszt was strongly influenced by the late sonatas of Beethoven which appear to serve as a model for the B minor Sonata. In the Beethoven sonatas a situation sometimes exists in which several movements outwardly independent are inwardly connected. This situation is especially noticeable

<sup>1</sup>Sacheverell Sitwell, Liszt (New York, 1955), p. 192.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 370.

<sup>3</sup>J. S. Shedlock, The Pianoforte Sonata (London, 1895), p. 235.

in the D minor and F minor sonatas. In the "Appassionata" Sonata, Op. 57, there is no formal break between the second and third movements. In Op. 109 the third movement contains material derived from the first movement. There is no doubt that the heroic mold in which the late Beethoven sonatas are set is the model for the lofty and grandiose ideal of the Liszt Sonata. But it is not a copy. It is uniquely Liszt's own creation.

#### The Transcendental Etudes

It is especially useful to make a study of the Transcendental Etudes of Liszt for they represent a period of his creative life covering some thirty-five years. He first composed the set of twelve "exercises" when he was only sixteen, while living in Paris. The final version was published by Breitkopf and Hartel in Leipzig in 1852. He had reached his peak as a creator of music for the piano. The history of these etudes from the first Paris sketches to their final transcendental fruition may "be taken to represent the history of the pianoforte during the last half century, from the Viennese square to the concert grand, from Czerny's Etudes to Liszt's Dance Macabre."<sup>4</sup>

It was quite fitting that Liszt should dedicate these works to his first formal teacher, Czerny, who started Liszt

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<sup>4</sup>Herbert Westerby, Liszt, Composer, and His Piano Works (London, 1936), p. 118.

on the road to greatness. Nothing could more sharply focus the true artistic value of Liszt's Etudes than to compare them with the purely formal and pedantic studies of Czerny, beneficial as these may be for the development of technique. Liszt's Etudes are magnificiently evocative expressions of different moods and pictures. They contain a great variety of harmonies, rhythms, and melodic invention. The content of the music itself is of first importance in these works; the technical problems, great as they may seem, are nevertheless of secondary importance.

In his approach to the problem of the etude, Chopin is much closer to Czerny than is Liszt. The Chopin Etudes are masterpieces of musical expression and virtuosity, but each etude treats just a single technical problem. There is sometimes a middle section to give a change of mood, but it is usually of a purely lyrical nature and does not present any new technical problems. In other words, Chopin treats double-thirds, double-sixths, octaves, broken chords, or articulation separately in specific etudes, each one designed for a single technical problem. In the Liszt Etudes, any one piece can contain a great variety of technical and musical problems.

Only three of the Transcendental Etudes are without descriptive titles. They are Etude No. I, Preludio in C Major, Etude No. II, in A minor, and Etude No. X, in F minor. The

remaining nine etudes are identified by descriptive titles and are really tone poems for the piano.

No. I, Preludio in C Major, is closest to the Czerny type of study. It is not very difficult, yet it manages to treat several problems in its three short pages. The basic technical device used is the arpeggiated dominant-7th chord, but another running figure contains a double fourth and requires that the fourth finger be accented. A middle transitional section contains chords moving in contrary motion, and there is a small portion devoted to trills in the left hand. The whole etude is one long crescendo and is a concise velocity study.

Etude No. II in A minor is marked Molto vivace and is in 3/4 meter. It is mainly devoted to the problem of using the hands alternately. The interlocking chords are very dissonant. There are tone clusters here that closely resemble those of Bartok in his Sonata (1926). A useful stretching device is included for the left hand which causes it to play in succession an octave, minor ninth, major ninth, and a

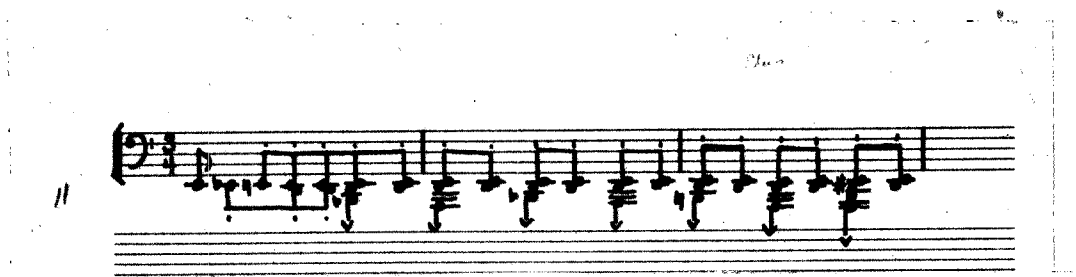


Fig. 37--Etude II, Measures 63-65

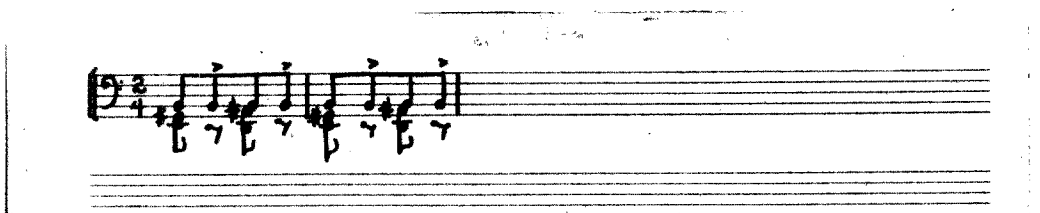


Fig. 38--Bartok Sonata (1926), Measures 4-5

tenth. The rhythmic accents are very strong and combine with the dissonant harmony to make this piece quite modern sounding. Major 2nds, minor 2nds, 7ths, 9th, and the tritone are used with abandon and to brilliant effect.

Etude No. III is entitled "Paysage" ("Landscape"). It is in F minor, 6/8 time, and marked Poco adagio. This is the first etude in the collection that can be called a tone-painting. It needs a fine legato touch, capable of delicate shadings, and strict control of the pedals due to the many passing-notes. The beginning resembles a Chopin "Nocturne," featuring a singing melody in the right hand accompanied by a triplet figure in the bass. Liszt does not hesitate to shift the treble melody to the bass, and vice-versa. A middle section becomes more animato, and develops the bass theme as both hands play it simultaneously in both staccato and legato chords. Gradually the opening mood is reestablished as the nocturnal melody of the right hand brings this work to a quiet end.

Etude No. IV, "Mazeppa," is a work of tremendous difficulty and belongs in the category of "programme music." This

tone-poem is inspired by Victor Hugo's poem relating the famous ride of a Cossack hero who was being punished for an escapade at the Polish Court. He was bound to a horse and sent riding across the steppes. The terror and drama of this legend is vividly captured by Liszt in this etude. The mood is set by a series of twelve arpeggiated chords--dominant and diminished-7ths, followed by a cadenza which spreads over a six-octave range, and reaches a great climax as it works into the main theme of the etude. This theme is in D minor and consists of a broad, heroic series of simple, widely-spaced chords. Within these chords Liszt tells his story with a galloping figure which is treated in five different ways throughout the etude. The original figure is a strongly accented couplet in double thirds, requiring quick alternation of the hands. The first variation keeps the alternating double thirds, but alters the rhythm to triplets. The second variation changes the streptito mood to an il canto. The melody is sung out majestically in the left hand under an accompanying figure in the treble that requires double thirds and fourths to skip, octave-wise, both ascending and descending. Variation three continues the il canto but brings the melody up into the treble, accompanied by a chromatic figure which moves in dissonance against a repeated ostinato, a device later used by Samuel Barber. The tension mounts as the theme returns to the bass and supports a long chromatic scale spelled out in major triads of the second inversion.



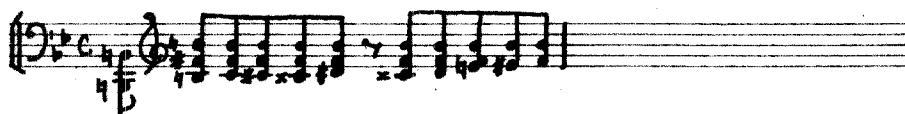


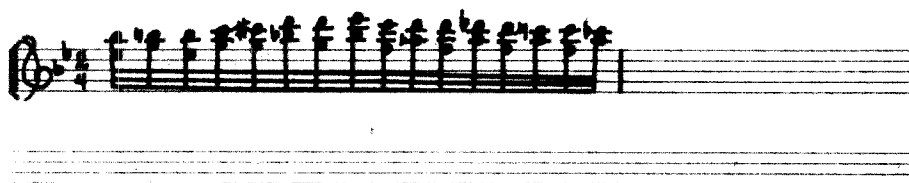
Fig. 39--Etude IV, Measure 90



Fig. 40--Barber Sonata Op. 26, Measure 33

Variation four returns to the galloping figure, this time lightly and with double third grace-notes in alternating hands. The final variation continues the grace-note device, but intensifies it by forcing both hands to play simultaneously, thus thickening the harmonic texture. Each of these five variations is linked by a bravura passage containing octave skips. Liszt achieves the ultimate of dramatic romanticism in this work. He utilizes every conceivable technical device and supplements the musical notation with descriptive terms such as, strepito, vibrato assai, a piacere, il canto espressivo ed appassionato assai. The work ends with a coda marked Trionfante. Beneath the last line, Liszt quotes Victor Hugo, "Il tombe enfin! . . . et se relève roi." Liszt later made this etude into an orchestral tone-poem of the same name.

Etude No. V, "Feux Follets" (Will-o'-the-Wisps) is extraordinarily advanced in its impressionistic devices. Ravel's Ondine is closely related to "Feux Follets" in its use of alternating double intervals in the right hand manipulated so as to create an aura of descriptive sound. Another work somewhat resembling "Feux Follets" in technical form is the Chopin Etude in C Major Op. 10, No. 7. This is also an alternating-interval study but is rather more like a toccata in its relentless emphasis on the problem at hand. The most interesting comparison to be found in these three works of Ravel, Chopin, and Liszt is in their tonality. Ravel makes use in Ondine of minor and modal scales. The Chopin etude is chiefly diatonic, while the Liszt "Feux Follets" uses chromaticism. The real problem in playing this work is one of articulation in the right hand. The fourth and fifth fingers



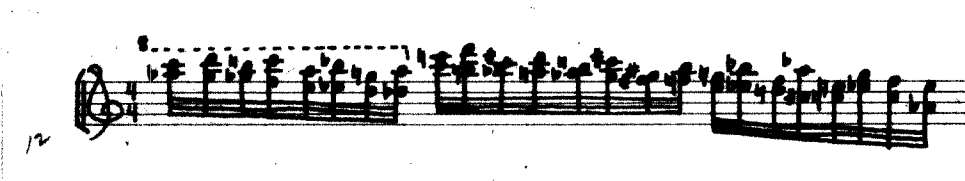


Fig. 43--"Ondine" by Ravel, Measure 65

are required to play legato while the other three fingers play non-legato. At other times the situation is reversed. At the same time, the utmost delicatissimo must be achieved. This work demands more finger control than any other of the Transcendental Etudes.

Etude No. VI, "Vision," is a poetic arpeggio study. It makes effective use of the lower register of the piano. A broad, sustaining melody in the soprano is accompanied by an alto arpeggio figure while a tonic pedal is played in the bass. These voices are interchangeable throughout the piece. Liszt constantly makes use of his favourite device, the transformation of themes. He manages in this one etude to present four technical problems for the pianist: arpeggios, octaves, chords, and tremolos. The harmonies constantly modulate as the arpeggios cover the full range of the keyboard.

Etude No. VII, the "Eroica" is one of the most typical products of Liszt's penchant for "the vibrating of the heroic string." This etude is the progenitor of two of the Hungarian Rhapsodies, No. 3 and No. 10. In those two works, he

allows himself to descend into the mundane, and a rather cheap form of virtuosity is allowed to dominate the work. The heroic subject merely serves as a frame for hollow display. In the Eroica Etude, however, he makes valid use of virtuosity. The greatest technical test in this work is the long passage of octave arpeggios. These are in triplets, and on the strong beats, the chord changes must be brought out with great force. The octave etude of Chopin also uses such a device but in chromatic octaves. Other problems

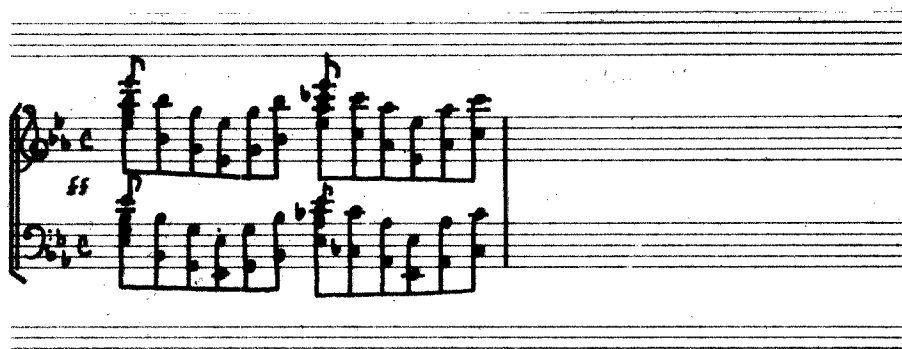


Fig. 44--Etude VII, Measure 88

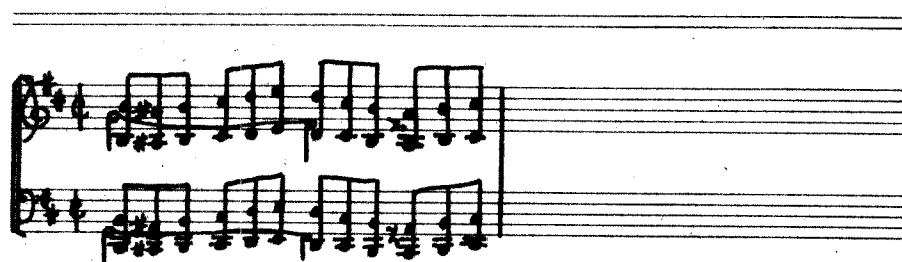


Fig. 45--Chopin Etude Op. 25, No. 10, Measure 109

throughout Eroica are arpeggios and syncopated chords. These chords are also of much harmonic interest for their use of the exposed tritone. Again, Liszt is the modern harmonist.

Etude No. VIII, "Wilde Jagd" (Wild Hunt) returns to the kind of dramatic idiom that was prevalent in Mazeppa. "Wild Hunt" is a daring and exciting study in rhythmic contrasts; the rhythmic accents are violent and sudden. In the key of C Major, and in 6/8 meter, it is marked Presto furioso. The two main elements in conflict with each other are short, rapid scale passages and massed chords in syncopation. Liszt constantly changes registers from high to low and from low to high. The dynamic scheme fluctuates rapidly from loud to soft. Some of the romantic effects he achieves have a decided Germanic flavor, he especially seems to have been influenced by Weber's Der Freischutz. A quiet middle section marked espressivo combines three different rhythms at once. The soprano voice is in long sustained notes. The bass consists of chords in syncopation (quasi timpani). The middle voice contains broken chords in couplets. The right hand must negotiate the two top rhythms without assistance. The top voice must be played legato and must sing out above the other voices. The octave leaps in "Wild Hunt" are especially treacherous as they leave the right hand exposed while the left hand plays a counter-melody.

Etude No. IX, "Ricordanza" (Remembrance) is perhaps the most personal of the Etudes. Busoni has likened it to a packet of old love-letters. In the key of A flat, this work has the rather unusual time signature of 6/4. A romantic, almost sentimental, theme of a cello-like nature opens this

work. In the opening three measures this theme is played by the left hand alone. Gradually, as the work unfolds, Liszt treats it in a variety of ways. This theme becomes the frame upon which Liszt builds a series of cadenzas. In fact, this work is sometimes known as the "Cadenza" etude. Every conceivable embellishment is devised: sequences of five-note phrases, contracting and expanding intervals in rapid motion, arpeggiated diminished-seventh chords in triplets, and trills. The calmato section marked cantando is similar to the andante sostenuto section of the B minor Sonata.

Etude No. X in F minor is without a descriptive title. It is marked Allegro agitato molto. Overlapping rhythms are treated in a manner that is similar to the coda of the final movement of Samuel Barber's Piano Sonata Op. 26. The main technical problems are: interlocking chords, contrasting rhythms, and very difficult, involved writing for the left hand. The interlocking chords descend diatonically in triplet rhythm. This passage alternates with a nervous, agitated figure in triplets in which a non-chord tone is accented, then resolves first to a minor chord, then to a major chord.

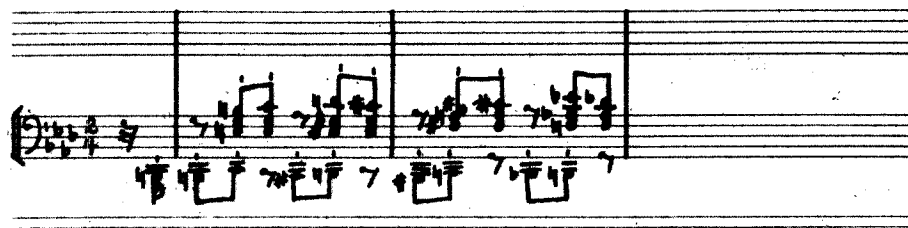


Fig. 46--Etude X, Measures 78-79

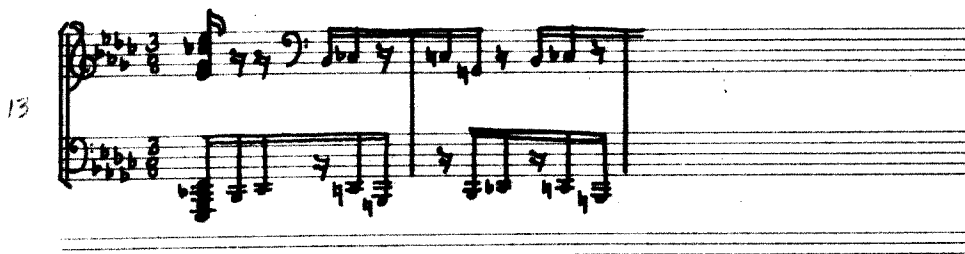


Fig. 47--Barber Sonata Op. 26, Measures 109-110

The left hand is extremely active as widely spaced broken chords in counter rhythms support the exposed melody in the right hand. The chief intervals in the bass are minor sevenths, and augmented fourths.

Etude No. XI, "Harmonies du Soir" (Evening Harmonies) is pure impressionism. La Cathedrale engloutie of Debussy owes much to this etude. The shifting tonalities, the chord successions, the veiled sonorities, those qualities so typical of the French composer are most evident in Liszt's Harmonies du Soir. The first five pages of this work could easily have been written by Debussy. However, the middle section is pure Liszt, romantic and emotional. A haunting melody, con intimo sentimento, is supported by an accompagnamento quasi Arpa. This gradually becomes turbulent and great masses of chords bring the work to a tremendous climax which slowly fades back into the mist-like impressionism of the opening.

The final Etude No. XII, "Chasse-Neige" (Impetuous winds which raise whirls of snow) is one continuous tremolo

supporting a melancholic melody. Aside from the problem of the tremolo, and the treacherous sudden leaps, the chief purpose of this etude is the development of careful tone-coloring. The tremolo itself must be absolutely even, like a vibration. The middle section contains a canon in octaves which reaches an overwhelming sonority, subsiding into a mezzo piano in which chromatic scales vividly create a picture of snow swirls. The long tremolo section in the Poeme, "Vers la flamme" Op. 72 by Scriabine, is strongly reminiscent of "Chasse-Neige."

In his Twelve Transcendental Etudes, Liszt explored every tonal and musical device known to be possible on the piano, and discovered many that have influenced piano music to the present time.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE IMPORTANT PREDECESSORS OF LISZT

Piano music may be said to have its roots in the harpsichord music of the 17th and 18th centuries with the music of Johann Kuhnau (1660-1722), Francois Couperin (1668-1733), J. S. Bach (1685-1750), and Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757).

Among Kuhnau's many compositions for the harpsichord were a set of six "Biblical Sonatas" which attempted to picture musically such subjects as, "The Fight Between David and Goliath," "David's Harp," and the "Burial of Israel." These were bold attempts at program music and made use of various expressive quavers, scales, arpeggios and other figures to achieve their affect.

Francois Couperin was the greatest of the French composers for the harpsichord. His compositions were written in the form of suites or ordres. These suites contained dance-forms in which each number was a little piece of program music--each with its own title. These portraits not only represented persons or concrete objects (such as windmills or waving banners), but moods and emotions as well. This music was embellished with an elaborate system of ornaments.

J. S. Bach wrote such masterpieces for the keyboard as the Forty-Eight Preludes and Fugues (known as the Well

Tempered Klavier), utilizing for the first time, all the tonalities of the octave. Other representative works were the French Suites, English Suites, Goldberg Variations, and the Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue. Bach had a commanding sense of architectural form and an inexhaustible contrapuntal and harmonic resourcefulness.

Scarlatti's keyboard works show great advances in developing the technique and style of keyboard writing. Scarlatti was a great virtuoso and as a result of this fact, his pieces, which consisted of sonatas, toccatas, preludes, and dances of all sorts made greater demands on the player than had any music previous to that time. They required the full and independent use of all the fingers, the crossing of hands, and brilliant runs in thirds, sixths, and octaves. His virtuosity and fertile imagination made Scarlatti an illustrious predecessor of Liszt.

The ensuing history of piano music was greatly influenced by the development of the instrument itself. The composers for the predecessors of the piano naturally were governed by the nature of their instrument, which was divided into two main classes, the harpsichord and the clavichord. The harpsichord achieved sound by means of a quill attached to a jack. When the key was struck, the quill plucked a string, producing a tone of rather short duration and could not be sustained. In the clavichord a metal tangent was made to press the string, permitting a slight sustaining of the tone

and producing a sound more sensitive than that of the harpsichord. The invention of the piano by Bartolommeo Cristofori (1665-1731) made possible the ability to sustain and color the tone by means of finger and pedal control. The action of the piano involves the striking of hammers on strings.

The early history of the literature for piano consists chiefly in the development of the sonata. The first great figure is Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809), who clarified what is now known as the sonata form; this contains three main parts: exposition, development, and recapitulation. This music was much less polyphonic than that of Bach, and a homophonic style was gradually gaining prominence.

The next great piano-composer was Mozart, who wrote with more freedom in the spirit of the Italian opera of his time, floridly and with grace of line. His sonatas and concertos are marked by plasticity, lyricism, and great spontaneity. He introduced the form of the "Theme and variations" into some of his sonatas, anticipating Beethoven in his use of this device.

With Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827), the door was opened to the Romantic movement. Beethoven enriched immeasurably the resources of modulation and harmonic development, and as the piano itself was constantly growing in range and volume, he fully utilized the new opportunities for expressive sonorities and pedal effects. Beethoven gradually

emancipated himself from the strict forms of Haydn and achieved a freedom of expression involving poetic and spiritual experiences that had great effect on Liszt.

Two important contemporaries of Beethoven who wrote in the early Romantic style but were not appreciated at the time were Franz Schubert (1797-1828) and Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826). Weber was especially important as an innovator. His "fantasies in sonata form" contained much picturesque colouring, poetry, and dramatic effect which deeply impressed Liszt.

Schubert, Weber, and especially Beethoven, were such towering geniuses and wrote with such daring insight into the future that much of their music was not understood by the public of their time.

When Liszt entered upon the scene, along with the other Romantics, Chopin, Berlioz, Wagner, and Schumann, the most popular musical figures were such lesser composers as Daniel Steibelt (1765-1823), Josef Woelfl (1773-1812), Herz, Moscheles, and Friedrich Kalkbrenner (1785-1849). These men were content to write music to suit the popular taste of the day, such as sonatas containing variations on national and favourite airs. They offered little that was plastic, dramatic, or of emotional content. The studies of Johann Cramer (1771-1858) are beneficial for educational purposes, but are musically uninteresting. Hummel's sonatas are mechanical and cold.

Of rather greater importance than these was the Italian composer, Muzio Clementi (1752-1832). He was overshadowed by Mozart, but his Gradus ad Parnassum is considered to be the foundation of modern piano technique. He was responsible for freeing piano technique from dependence on harpsichord methods.

Clementi's most gifted pupil was John Field (1782-1837), an Irish pianist and composer who wrote nocturnes that exerted a marked influence on Chopin and to some extent on Liszt.

In reviewing this long line of keyboard composers who preceded Liszt it appears that the principal contributors to his particular type of creative expression were the early composers of program music, Kuhnau, Couperin, the great virtuoso Scarlatti, and the heroic figure, Beethoven, who freed music from its restricting forms and opened the door to Romanticism.

## CHAPTER V

### THE FINAL EVALUATION

The problem of evaluating the full contribution of Liszt to the world of music is difficult and complex because his art embraced so many different creative channels.

As a concert pianist he stands as the original virtuoso, the founder of the kind of piano concert that is presented throughout the world at the present time. His interpretive powers were such that he could reveal new meanings not only to the critical audience but to the original composers of the music that was being played. In the second chapter of this thesis, it is observed that both Chopin and Schumann attested to this fact. Liszt vastly enriched the piano repertoire not only with his own compositions but also by performing works of composers that were as yet unknown or had been forgotten by the public. When Liszt first began his tours, Beethoven was seldom played. Of his thirty-two piano sonatas, only three were performed with any frequency: the A flat major sonata, Op. 26, the C sharp minor sonata, Op. 27, No. 2, and the F minor sonata, Op. 57. It was Liszt who brought the other sonatas to the attention of the public. Of Liszt's Beethoven interpretations Wagner writes:

He who has had frequent opportunities, particularly in a friendly circle, of hearing Liszt play,

for instance, Beethoven, must have understood that this was not mere reproduction, but production. The actual point of division between these two things is not so easily understood as most people believe, but so much I have ascertained without a doubt, that in order to reproduce Beethoven, one must produce with him.<sup>1</sup>

Liszt was a true friend to the other great musical figures of his day and championed the music of Chopin, Schumann, Berlioz, Wagner, and Weber, by playing this music and persuading others to perform it also.

Liszt's abilities as a conductor resulted in revivals of early operas and performances of new works by Wagner, Berlioz, and Schumann. Liszt was one of the most influential teachers of all time. The Liszt School of piano-playing is still having a great effect on the style of piano-performance as practiced today.

Finally, as composer, Liszt's great contribution was as an innovator, who, by his daring and powerful style of composition, provided a link with the late classicist, Beethoven, and such modern composers as Debussy, Ravel, Bartok, and Barber. Paul Henry Lang writes:

. . . Liszt emerges an independent innovator, the first real romanticist who clearly thought the new art which was lurking about the classical scene could not rise from the ruins of the old art; it had to break completely with the past and had to develop its own esthetic principles.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>George T. Ferris, The Great Violinists and Pianists (New York, 1888), p. 324.

<sup>2</sup>Paul Henry Lang, "Liszt and the Romantic Movement," The Musical Quarterly, XXII (July, 1936), 320.

The musical examples contained in the analyses of the B minor Sonata and the Twelve Transcendental Etudes clearly indicate Liszt's influence on Wagner, Debussy, Bartok, Scriabine, and Barber. It is pertinent in this final chapter to include two more examples that reveal graphically the contributions made to Wagner and Debussy. Both of these excerpts are from the Annees de Pelerinage, written in 1838. In "Il Penseroso," Liszt has written a passage that closely resembles an episode in the last act of Wagner's Parsifal, which was written in 1879. Debussy's Arabesque No. I (1888), is extremely similar in melodic content and treatment to Liszt's Sposalizio. Debussy heard Liszt play in Rome in 1884 and admired the master, both as pianist and composer.

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Il Penseroso" from Franz Liszt's "Annees de Pelerinage". The score is presented in four systems, each consisting of two staves (treble and bass clefs). The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The first system shows a series of chords in the upper register. The second system features a more active melodic line in the bass clef. The third system continues with complex harmonic textures. The fourth system concludes with a series of chords and a final cadence. The overall style is characteristic of the Romantic era, with rich harmonic language and expressive phrasing.

Fig. 48--"Il Penseroso," Measures 26-27, 34-40



10

22

This figure shows a musical score for Parsifal, Act III. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a bass clef staff with a complex accompaniment. The second system continues the same parts. Measure numbers 10 and 22 are indicated at the beginning and end of the first system, respectively.

Fig. 49--Parsifal, Act III

15

This figure shows a musical score for "Sposalizio", measures 75-76. It consists of a single system of staves with a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. Measure number 15 is indicated at the beginning of the system.

Fig. 50--"Sposalizio," Measures 75-76

This figure shows a musical score for Debussy, Arabesque No. I. It consists of a single system of staves with a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The score is partially obscured by a horizontal line.

Fig. 51--Debussy, Arabesque No. I

In the study of Liszt's music it becomes clear that the quality varies. His virtuosity sometimes leads him to write in a tawdry and superficial manner. This fault is not unusual in the prolific composer. The complete catalogue of his works numbers over twelve hundred. Out of this great total is to be found sufficient music notable for its color, stylistic flavour, and emotional power to rank Liszt with the major composers of his time.

. . . there must reside in Liszt's compositions some peculiar power, something which all the critics in the world could neither discover nor kill--sharp, intelligent, penetrating as that criticism may at times have been . . . this peculiar power exists as an active force which could not be kept down, even by the cleverest or bitterest critics.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Paul Bekker, "Liszt and His Critics," The Musical Quarterly, XXII (July, 1936), 283.

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