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A BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS OF SELECTED LIEDER  
AND OPERA TRANSCRIPTIONS OF FRANZ LISZT.  
A LECTURE RECITAL, TOGETHER WITH THREE  
RECITALS OF WORKS BY CHOPIN, SCHUBERT,  
BARTOK, FRANCK, AND OTHER COMPOSERS

DISSERTATION

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

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

By

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Denton, Texas

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JB

Gibbs, Dan P., A Background and Analysis of Selected Lieder and Opera Transcriptions of Franz Liszt. Doctor of Musical Arts (Piano Performance), August, 1980, 43 pp., 13 musical examples, bibliography, 50 titles.

An understanding of the piano transcription is basic to any proper comprehension of nineteenth-century piano music and performance practice. In this study, the transcription for solo piano is examined in relation to several musical milestones in the mid-nineteenth century, including far-reaching technical developments in the piano, the beginning and growth of the public concert, the birth of the solo piano recital, and the influence of virtuosity as a Romantic ideal. In addition, as Liszt was undoubtedly the greatest transcriber of the nineteenth century, several representative transcriptions of Liszt are analyzed and compared to their original models, including Schubert's Gretchen am Spinnrade and Auf dem Wasser zu singen, Chopin's Moja pieszczotka ("My Joys"), Wagner's Liebestod from Tristan und Isolde, and the quartet from the final act of Verdi's Rigoletto.

The problem of the clear definition of terms related to transcription is addressed, with the conclusion that "transcription" is used both as an "umbrella" term referring to varying transcriptional types such as the

arrangement or the paraphrase or more specifically as the strictest type of transcriptional procedure. The differences between the terms depend then on the degree to which the original model is altered in the musical translation. Liszt's use of the terms as cited by George is also mentioned.

In Paris in the 1830's and 1840's, during the early years of a growing Romantic ideal, various factors interacted at a particularly fertile place and time. The Industrial Revolution had stimulated the emergence of the middle class, who now provided a mass market for the musical instrument--the pianoforte--which best symbolized the mechanical and creative perfection of the age. The mass production of pianos and the resulting expansion of music publishing sought to meet the rising demand of the amateur musician.

At this pivotal time appeared the performer best equipped to meet all the requirements of the new Romantic virtuosity on the newly perfected piano: Franz Liszt. The common untrained concertgoer was just beginning to express his individuality by attending the public concert and Liszt himself became a public symbol of the new freedom of individual expression.

In Paris in 1831, Liszt encountered the three influences which proved strongest in shaping his career: Paganini, Chopin, and Berlioz. Liszt's transcriptions evidence

the bravura and technical prowess of Paganini, the sensitivity and poetry of Chopin, and the orchestral sound of Berlioz.

Paris was also the home of other major influences: the Paris Opera and the piano-building firm of Sebastien Erard. The Opera provided inspiration for much transcriptional material. Erard's incorporation of Pape's felt hammers into all pianos built by his firm aided in the shift of the tonal ideal by 1830 from a bright, brittle tone to a mellower, richer tone. Erard's double escapement action, initially completed in 1821 but perfected and in widespread use by 1830, allowed for more delicate stroke responsiveness and greater speed in the playing of repeated notes. Figures featuring rapid repeated notes became an attractive element of piano music of the time.

Liszt's admittedly ambivalent motives in transcriptions are discussed in relation to the works cited.

Tape recordings of all performances  
submitted as dissertation requirements  
are on deposit in the North Texas  
State University Library.

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North Texas State University  
School of Music

*presents*

## DAN GIBBS

*in a*

### GRADUATE PIANO RECITAL

February 14, 1977

8:15 p.m.

Recital Hall

BEETHOVEN

Sonata, Op. 54

Tempo d'un Menuetto  
Allegretto

MENDELSSOHN

Variations Sérieuses, Op. 54

*Intermission*

SCRIABIN

Preludes, Op. 11

No. 1 in C Major  
No. 2 in A Minor  
No. 3 in G Major  
No. 4 in E Minor  
No. 5 in D Major  
No. 6 in B Minor  
No. 9 in E Major  
No. 10 in C-sharp Minor  
No. 15 in D-flat Major  
No. 18 in F Minor

LISZT

Vallée d'Obermann

(from *Années de Pèlerinage*,  
Première Année)

*Presented in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements of the degree  
Doctor of Musical Arts*

North Texas State University  
School of Music

*presents*

**DAN GIBBS**

*in a*

**GRADUATE PIANO RECITAL**

**August 7, 1978**

**8:15 p.m.**

**Recital Hall**

SCARLATTI

Sonata in A Minor, K. 54

SCHUBERT

Sonata in A Minor, op. 42 (D.V. 845)

Moderato

Andante, poco mosso

Allegro vivace - Un poco più lento

Allegro vivace

*Intermission*

SCRIABIN

Sonata No. 9 ("Black Mass"), op. 68

DEBUSSY

*Les collines d'Anacapri*

(from Preludes, Book I)

DEBUSSY

*Feux d'artifice*

(from Preludes, Book II)

*Presented in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements of the degree  
Doctor of Musical Arts*



North Texas State University  
School of Music

*presents*

**DAN GIBBS**

*in a*

**GRADUATE PIANO RECITAL**

**March 24, 1980      5:00 p.m.      Concert Hall**

CHOPIN                      Nocturne in C-Sharp Minor, op. posth.

CHOPIN                      Ballade No. 2 in F Major, op. 38

CHOPIN                      Scherzo No. 3 in C-Sharp Minor, op. 39

BARTOK                      Sonate (1926)  
                                    Allegro moderato  
                                    Sostenuto e pesante  
                                    Allegro molto

*Intermission*

FRANCK                      Prelude, Choralc and Fugue

*Presented in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements of the degree  
Doctor of Musical Arts*

*For Chuck and Mary*

North Texas State University  
School of Music

*presents*

**DAN GIBBS**

*in a*

**DMA PIANO LECTURE RECITAL**

**July 9, 1980**

**8:00 p.m.**

**Recital Hall**

**A Sociological Background and  
Analysis of Selected Lieder and Opera  
Transcriptions of Franz Liszt**

**Intermission**

Gretchen am Spinnrade ..... SCHUBERT-LISZT  
Auf dem Wasser zu singen ..... SCHUBERT-LISZT  
Moja pieszczotka ..... CHOPIN-LISZT  
Isoldens Liebestod ..... WAGNER-LISZT  
Rigoletto Concert Paraphrase ..... VERDI-LISZT

*Presented in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements of the degree  
Doctor of Musical Arts*

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A BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS OF SELECTED LIEDER  
AND OPERA TRANSCRIPTIONS OF FRANZ LISZT

The understanding of any critical period in the development of an art form demands clear definition of artistic genres or types, of contributing sociological conditions, and of influential personalities. When this art form is the piano transcription and the genres are its hybrid forms, Paris in the 1830's its sociological setting, and Franz Liszt the major personality, the task of clarifying definitions and arriving at clear conclusions is at once a complex, challenging, and rewarding venture. In this presentation, "A Background and Analysis of Selected Lieder and Opera Transcriptions of Franz Liszt," the transcription for solo piano will be examined in relation to several musical milestones in the mid-nineteenth century, including far-reaching technical developments in the piano, the beginning and growth of the public concert, the birth of the solo piano recital, and the influence of virtuosity as a Romantic ideal. In addition, representative transcriptions of Franz Liszt will be analyzed, compared to their original models, and performed.

The term "transcription" may mean different things to different people. As James M. George states in his

unpublished Ph.D. dissertation: ". . . what is one man's transcription is another's arrangement, and vice versa."<sup>1</sup>

In several of the musicologist's most reliable research tools, including the Harvard Dictionary of Music, The Oxford Companion to Music, Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, and The New College Encyclopedia of Music, the entry under "transcription" reads: "See Arrangement."

C. Hubert Parry believes an arrangement is more literal than a transcription,<sup>2</sup> but Leonard B. Meyer in Music, the Arts, and Ideas believes a transcription to be more literal than an arrangement.<sup>3</sup>

The term "transcription" is commonly used rather loosely as a type of "umbrella" term, often appearing interchangeably with "arrangement" or even "paraphrase" within a single discussion. It is therefore difficult to differentiate between such related acts as transcribing, arranging, or paraphrasing. A definition applying to whichever "umbrella" term is used can thus apply to its related types: all of the terms can mean

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<sup>1</sup>James M. George, Jr., "Franz Liszt's Transcriptions of Schubert's Songs for Solo Pianoforte: A Study of Transcribing and Keyboard Techniques," unpublished doctoral dissertation, School of Music, The University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, 1976, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>C. Hubert Parry, "Arrangement," Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 5th ed., edited by Eric Blom (New York, 1959), I, 223.

<sup>3</sup>Leonard B. Meyer, Music, the Arts, and Ideas (Chicago, 1967), p. 195.

. . . the adaptation of a composition for a medium different from that for which it was originally written, so made that the musical substance remains essentially unchanged. . . .<sup>4</sup>

or,

. . . the musical counterpart of literary translation.<sup>5</sup>

Meyer attempts a clarification of sorts when he writes:

. . . the merit of a transcription or of an arrangement is measured by its ability to reproduce the character and 'tone' of the original; the merit of a paraphrase, on the other hand, depends not upon its faithfulness to a model, but upon its inherent interest as a work in its own right.<sup>6</sup>

Meyer further distinguishes the transcription from the arrangement with these definitions:

Transcription: . . . means [which are] different from those of the original work are used to represent it as accurately as possible.

And,

Arrangement: . . . generally involves significant additions to, or deletions from, or changes of order in the original.<sup>7</sup>

The differences between the terms are then a matter of the degree to which the original model is altered in the musical translation. Though a rigid application of definitions to the various types of transcriptions should be

<sup>4</sup>Willi Apel, editor, "Arrangement," Harvard Dictionary of Music, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1972), p. 56.

<sup>5</sup>Parry, p. 223.

<sup>6</sup>Meyer, pp. 195-197.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

avoided, it is safe and necessary for the purposes of discussion to state that a transcription as a type is closest to being a literal treatment of the original, the paraphrase the freest in its treatment of the original, and the arrangement (probably the most difficult to define) somewhere in between.

But how did Liszt himself apply the terms? In many of his one hundred and ninety-three transcriptions for solo piano and in his 1877 thematic catalog, Liszt used terminology similar to that of Parry and Meyer, but his use of the terms distinguishes the works on the basis of their original performance medium. For example, he uses the term "transcription" (or übertragen für, or transcrit pour) primarily for vocal song transcriptions, such as Schubert's Auf dem Wasser zu singen and Gretchen am Spinnrade, adapted for piano solo; the terms "paraphrase," "fantasie," "remiscences," or "illustrations" he uses to describe free works based on operatic melodies, such as the Reminiscences de Norma or the Rigoletto Concert Paraphrase; and the designations klavierauszug, klavierpartitur, or partition de piano he applies to the piano reductions of orchestral scores, such as the klavierauszug of the Beethoven Symphonies or the Liebestod scene from Wagner's Tristan und Isolde.<sup>8</sup> The partitions are the only type of "transcription"

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<sup>8</sup>George, pp. 2-3.



which evidence a consistent adaptative procedure, described by George as,

. . . a measure-by-measure reproduction of the original music presented as accurately as possible within the limits of the pianoforte medium.<sup>9</sup>

The concept of transcribing music from one medium for performance in another was not new in Paris of the 1830's and 40's. Numerous examples of the arrangement of vocal pieces for keyboard performance exist in the Reina and Faenza Codices of the early fifteenth century. However, in the early years of a growing Romantic ideal, various factors interacted at a particularly fertile place and time. The effects of the Industrial Revolution were being felt by the emerging middle class,<sup>10</sup> who provided a mass market for the musical instrument which best symbolized the mechanical perfection of the age--the pianoforte.<sup>11</sup> Previously, music in a public sense had served as more of a diversion for the aristocracy,<sup>12</sup> but now artistic and creative life was

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>10</sup>Robert Lynn Edwards, "A Study of Selected Song Transcriptions by Franz Liszt," unpublished doctoral dissertation, School of Music, The University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon, 1972, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup>Arthur Loesser, Men, Women, and Pianos (New York, 1954), p. 367.

<sup>12</sup>Barbara Allen Crockett, "Liszt's Opera Transcriptions for Piano," unpublished doctoral dissertation, School of Music, The University of Illinois, Champagne-Urbana, Illinois, 1976, p. 1.

becoming more and more freed from the confines of the patronage system<sup>13</sup> and more dependent upon public support. The mass production of pianos sought to satisfy the insatiable demand by amateur musicians in an ever-expanding market,<sup>14</sup> while creating another need: that of published music for home use. Satisfaction of this need led to the unbounded expansion of the publishing trade.

The middle class idea of the independent spirit of the individual was foreshadowed by Beethoven,<sup>15</sup> one of Liszt's idols, and came to full fruition with the arrival of Liszt upon the musical scene. To many, he represented the idea of uninhibited emotional expression, a concept understandably appealing to the majority of the public when revolution had become a fact of life.<sup>16</sup> As David Grover writes in his recent book, The Piano: Its Story from Zither to Grand:

The idea of revolution was being taken in its stride. . . . Emotional spontaneity was preferred to careful premeditation and the ego with its inner world became of primary importance. In the world at large, man aided by science and products of industrial growth was extending his control over his surroundings. In the virtuoso he glorified his own image.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>14</sup>Edwards, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup>Crockett, p. 4.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>17</sup>David S. Grover, The Piano: Its Story from Zither to Grand (New York, 1976), p. 123.

Against this backdrop of sociological conditions, perhaps the complex personality of a Liszt can be better understood. Here was an individual who favored the discarding of traditional forms and advocated a more improvisational style, both in performing and composing,<sup>18</sup> and who arrived upon the scene at the particular time that the common untrained listener and concertgoer was seeking an outlet, an expression of individuality, in the world of art. This outlet was the concert hall;<sup>19</sup> the instrument which had become a symbol of creative man was the newly perfected piano; and the performer best equipped to meet the demands of the rising Romantic virtuosity: Franz Liszt.

Liszt, the twelve-year-old boy wonder, first arrived in Paris during the 1823 season and was known as "le petit Litz" [sic].<sup>20</sup> Following several concert tours in England, he returned to settle in Paris in 1827. There, the year 1831 proved to be a pivotal one for both the impressionable young performer and for the course of pianism as well, for in that year, Liszt encountered the three influences which proved strongest in shaping his career.

On March 9, 1831, Liszt was present at the Parisian debut of the legendary violin virtuoso Niccolò Paganini,

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<sup>18</sup>Crockett, p. 19.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>20</sup>Grover, p. 123.

the consummate technician and showman.<sup>21</sup> It is generally accepted that Liszt had been searching for a direction in which to channel his artistic talents, and that, finding the violinist's genius to be compatible with his own, he decided to pattern his career after Paganini's.<sup>22</sup> However, though few musical historians doubt Paganini's influence in the shaping of Liszt's career, there are some varying opinions as to the extent of this influence.

In her study of Liszt: The Romantic Artist as Hero, Eleanor Perényi is quick to point out that Liszt had actually begun to develop what he later called transcendental execution as early as 1826, about four years prior to Paganini's Parisian debut, in his Études en douze exercices.<sup>23</sup> In addition, she asserts that Liszt's Paganini Studies by themselves do not indicate a Paganini fixation on Liszt's part any more than do the transcriptions of the Caprices by other composers, including Schumann, Brahms, Busoni, or Rachmaninoff.<sup>24</sup>

Regardless, one of the earliest of Liszt's attempts at transcribing music of another medium for the piano came as

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<sup>21</sup>Harold C. Schonberg, The Great Pianists from Mozart to the Present (New York, 1963), p. 157.

<sup>22</sup>Crockett, p. 20.

<sup>23</sup>Eleanor Perényi, Liszt: The Artist as Romantic Hero (Boston, 1974), p. 52.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

a result of his worship of Paganini and these transcriptions were of Paganini's Caprices for solo violin, in which the violinist had sought to exploit the technical capabilities of his instrument. In 1832-33 the first versions of the Liszt-Paganini Études were published.<sup>25</sup>

Sacheverell Sitwell believes another encounter with an important musical figure during the same year had an invaluable tempering effect upon Liszt's development as a performer and composer. As he says:

. . . perhaps the most valuable influence of all . . . was that of Chopin, for his example must have curbed some of Liszt's essays into extravagance.<sup>26</sup>

Harold Schonberg adequately sums up the contribution of Chopin to the development of the fiery Liszt:

From Chopin Liszt learned that the piano could be a means of delicate expression as well as a bravura instrument . . .<sup>27</sup>

. . . that there was poetry as well as bravura to piano playing, that the instrument was capable of subtle washes of color as well as of heroic storms, that decoration could be functional to the musical ground plan rather than flashy and vulgar . . .<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Harold C. Schonberg, The Lives of the Great Composers (New York, 1970), p. 181.

<sup>26</sup> Sacheverell Sitwell, Liszt, reprint of 1955 revised ed. of Cassell and Company (New York, 1967), p. 25.

<sup>27</sup> Schonberg, Pianists, p. 157.

<sup>28</sup> Schonberg, Composers, p. 181.

To the showmanship and virtuosity of Paganini and the sensitivity and poetry of Chopin was added another influence: that of the massive orchestral sound, through Liszt's meeting that same year with Berlioz. What Berlioz did with the orchestra, Liszt resolved to do on the piano, and even transcribed several of the major orchestral works of Berlioz.<sup>29</sup> The pianist Charles Hallé leaves this account of his hearing Liszt for the first time, at a concert conducted by Berlioz, on which was programmed the fourth movement of the conductor's Symphonie fantastique:

. . . at the conclusion of which, Liszt sat down and played his own arrangement, for the piano alone, of the same movement, with an effect even surpassing that of the full orchestra, and creating an indescribable furore.<sup>30</sup>

No more pointed example than this can be given to illustrate Liszt's newly found purpose: to orchestrate on the piano.

Liszt's piano transcriptions of orchestral works, such as the Berlioz Symphonie fantastique or Beethoven's Symphonies prove that he had an uncanny ability for recreating orchestral fabric at the keyboard.<sup>31</sup>

During the decade preceding the 1830's, numerous radical advances in piano design and construction occurred which made possible the attainment of this "orchestral fabric."

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Schonberg, Pianists, p. 159.

<sup>31</sup> John Gillespie, Five Centuries of Keyboard Music (New York, 1965), p. 238.

All of the developments led to a stronger, more powerful piano, one more capable of competing with the orchestra.

The one-piece cast iron frame, first introduced by Alpheus Babcock of Boston in 1825, permitted stronger blows and greater volume. The iron frame allowed the use of thicker strings which required stringing at higher tensions to maintain pitch. A special copper covering which was spun onto steel wire for bass strings increased string elasticity and aided in the production of a louder, purer tone.<sup>32</sup> It was this fuller-toned piano which made large concert gatherings possible.<sup>33</sup>

By 1830, a shift in the concept of the ideal tone was complete. This shift was largely due to the use of felt hammers, patented by Jean-Henri Pape in 1826. Prior to 1830, a sharp, clear, very bright tone was thought desirable.<sup>34</sup> This tone was produced with hammers covered by tanned deer leather which became hardened and brittle with age and hence produced the tone most commonly heard. The felt hammer, however, placed a softer striking surface at the end of the hammer and allowed the string to develop its vibration more slowly along its entire length and thereby produce stronger lower harmonics and a richer tone quality.<sup>35</sup> With the

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<sup>32</sup>Grover, p. 114.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>34</sup>Loesser, p. 340.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 339.

gradual acceptance of the felt hammer, the shift toward a mellower, richer tone was more pronounced.<sup>36</sup>

These two improvements were incorporated into the instruments built by the renowned Parisian firm established by Sebastien Erard, who built the best pianos of his day and influenced all other builders after him. Erard's pianos became the standard for piano construction because his instruments were the first to successfully combine the firmness of the English and the lightness of the Viennese actions with a significant invention of his own, which provided a reliable rapid repetition action. This invention, initially completed in 1821, but perfected and in widespread use by 1830, was the double escapement or "repetition" action. By adding a series of small levers and springs to the basic English action, Erard enabled the hammer to rebound not to its original point of rest, but to a point much closer to the string, where it stayed until the finger released the key completely or propelled the hammer against the string a second time.<sup>37</sup> This action therefore allowed for more delicate stroke responsiveness and greater speed by facilitating the playing of repeated notes, since the hammer had less distance to travel on repetitions than on the original stroke. Figures utilizing rapid repeated notes became an attractive feature of piano music of the

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 340.

<sup>37</sup>Grover, p. 112.



time,<sup>38</sup> examples of which can be found in many of Liszt's transcriptions.

The piano on which the fourteen-year-old Liszt played in England in 1825 was billed as "Erard's new Patent Grand Pianoforte of Seven Octaves."<sup>39</sup> By 1830, the seven-octave keyboard was standard. With the possible exception of cross-stringing, first introduced by Pape only two years earlier in 1828, and the sostenuto pedal, adapted by Steinway in 1874, the piano during Liszt's formative years as a virtuoso performer contained all the technical features of today's mature grand.

In the 1830's, musical events were still "concerts"; that is, they consisted of both vocal and instrumental performances by various performers on one program.<sup>40</sup> Since an increasing popularity of the Paris Opera coincided with the current rise of piano virtuosity and with the vast improvements in the piano,<sup>41</sup> it is not surprising that the virtuoso pianists' contributions to the concert programs relied heavily upon operatic fantasies and transcriptions, based on the more popular tunes which guaranteed wider appeal. Such music was inseparably linked to Erard's pianos,<sup>42</sup> just as the coining of the term "recital" is linked to Liszt.

<sup>38</sup>Loesser, p. 338.

<sup>39</sup>Crockett, p. 10.

<sup>40</sup>Grover, p. 127.

<sup>41</sup>Loesser, pp. 358-359.

<sup>42</sup>Edwards, p. 27.

In a letter of June, 1839, Liszt called his solo programs "musical soliloquies,"<sup>43</sup> but the following year, during a Liszt concert tour in London, an English musician, Frederick Beale, first referred to Liszt's unassisted performances as "his recitals on the pianoforte," the plural suggesting that various compositions were played.<sup>44</sup> At Liszt's first solo performance in Paris the following year, 1841, the "-s" was left off the term and the word "recital" passed into the English language.<sup>45</sup> It is revealing that on one of the "soliloquies" of 1839, Liszt's program consisted of his arrangement of the Overture to William Tell, his fantasy, Reminiscences of I Puritani, various studies and fragments, and an improvisation on a given theme.<sup>46</sup>

Liszt's transcriptions span fifty-six years of his career, from 1829, at age eighteen, until 1885, the year before his death.<sup>47</sup> Schonberg divides his prolific compositional output into three periods: (1) 1829-1834, a period which consisted primarily of transcriptions: Berlioz orchestral works, Beethoven symphonies, and operatic paraphrases; (2) 1835-1839, period of the Transcendental Études, the Paganini Études, the books of Années de

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<sup>43</sup>Loesser, p. 368.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 371.

<sup>45</sup>Grover, p. 127.

<sup>46</sup>Loesser, p. 368.

<sup>47</sup>David Wilde, "Transcriptions for Piano," Franz Liszt: The Man and His Music, edited by Alan Walker (London, 1970), p. 168.

Pèlerinage, and the majority of the Schubert Lieder transcriptions; and (3) 1840 and after, the period which saw the composition of the Bach organ transcriptions, the Hungarian Rhapsodies, and the larger-scale operatic paraphrases.<sup>48</sup> Other writers may draw the lines between the "periods" a little differently, but the conclusion is still the same: Liszt was involved in transcription throughout his long life (not just during his virtuoso period) and for varying reasons.

In our day of traveling orchestras, long-playing recordings, and radio and television broadcasts, it may be difficult to fully comprehend the nature of live performances in Liszt's day.<sup>49</sup> In that age when there was no practical means of introducing new music to the public, the practicality of piano transcriptions cannot be overlooked.<sup>50</sup> The home piano and the amateur musician were increasingly common. Liszt and other performer/transcribers knew this and used transcriptions to introduce the music of other composers to a ready audience. David Wilde points out that given the practical motivation behind many of the transcriptions, it is understandable that they fell into disrepute when they outgrew their original purpose. He feels the

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<sup>48</sup> Schonberg, Composers, p. 182.

<sup>49</sup> Wilde, p. 169.

<sup>50</sup> Denby Richards, Notes on Album ZK 9, Liszt Piano Music: Rhondda Gillespie (London, 1977), a.

transcriptions should now be reconsidered as musical creations in their own right.<sup>51</sup>

That at least one of Liszt's motives in transcription was not a self-serving one is clear from the Foreword of his first complete edition of the transcribed Beethoven Symphonies in 1865, in which Liszt translated the symphonies measure by measure into piano scores.<sup>52</sup> Liszt writes:

. . . Beethoven's name is sacred in art. His symphonies are universally recognized to be great works. . . . Every manner of disseminating and popularizing them has a definite usefulness . . . I shall be satisfied if I have accomplished the task of the earnest engraver, the conscientious translator, who seizes the spirit of the work along with its letter, and thus contributes to the propagation of the masters and the sense of the beautiful.<sup>53</sup>

Liszt often performed the transcriptions in localities such as Leipzig where performances of the original compositions were sufficiently common that the local audiences were already quite familiar with the music. In Philip Friedheim's essay, "The Piano Transcriptions of Franz Liszt," in Studies in Romanticism, the author asserts his conviction that orchestral transcriptions were primarily motivated by Liszt's desire to prove the piano a worthy competitor of the orchestra. As in the case of his performance of the Berlioz Symphonie fantastique movement, his performance was intended for an audience which already knew the orchestral

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<sup>51</sup>Wilde, p. 170.

<sup>52</sup>George, p. 24.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., pp. 23-24.

version, and could all the more readily appreciate his (and the piano's) achievement.<sup>54</sup>

More perhaps than any other genre of his piano composition, Liszt's transcriptions reveal the opposing sides of his nature and his motives.<sup>55</sup> The operatic fantasies and symphony transcriptions are at opposite ends of the spectrum of his transcriptional procedures<sup>56</sup> and clearly indicate his ambivalent purposes. While he did wish to champion the music of others, his desire to flaunt his technical prowess cannot be denied. He was, after all, a showman/musician/performer/technician in the Paganini vein, and, armed with his pianistic arsenal and seated at an Erard grand, playing virtuoso arrangements of the operatic tunes currently in vogue, he was totally aware of his position and of the beating hearts of his many female admirers as well.

This theatrical aspect of Liszt's personality has led to much undeserved criticism of his transcriptions. More often than not, this negative comment is not based on first-hand knowledge of the transcriptions but rather on an accepted, traditional prejudice against transcriptions of any kind.<sup>57</sup> An understanding of the piano transcription is basic to any proper comprehension of nineteenth-century

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<sup>54</sup> Edwards, pp. 49-50.

<sup>55</sup> Crockett, p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> Edwards, p. 50.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

piano music and performance practice,<sup>58</sup> and as Liszt was undoubtedly the greatest transcriber of the nineteenth century, his transcriptions demand examination.

Liszt's first acquaintance with some of the Lieder of Franz Schubert, which may have occurred as early as 1821-1823 when he was a student in Vienna,<sup>59</sup> ultimately developed into a lifelong admiration for Schubert's music. Of the many transcriptions of Liszt, approximately seventy are transcriptions of Schubert's songs.<sup>60</sup> It was during the early 1830's in Paris that Liszt acquired the familiarity with the Lieder which led to their transcription, for it was in 1833 that the Parisian publisher Richault began his publication of Schubert melodies with French texts. As the number of Lieder being published by Richault swelled to sixty during the period 1833-1837, Liszt was already performing piano solo arrangements of the Lieder in the Parisian salons, long before these transcriptions were published.<sup>61</sup> A set of twelve published in 1838 contains the two Lieder transcriptions analyzed in this presentation: Gretchen am Spinnrade and Auf dem Wasser zu singen.

Robert Schumann offered this comment about Liszt's Schubert transcriptions:

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> George, p. 44.

<sup>60</sup> Edwards, p. 61.

<sup>61</sup> George, pp. 44-45.

Liszt changed and added; the way he has done it testifies to the powerful nature of his conception, his playing.<sup>62</sup>

Liszt was undoubtedly drawn to the songs because of the textual depiction in their accompaniments:<sup>63</sup> the whirling of the spinning wheel in Gretchen am Spinnrade; the undulating of the boat in Auf dem Wasser zu singen; the sounds of the hurdy-gurdy in Der Leiermann; the leaping of the trout in Die Forelle; and the hooves of the galloping horse in Erlkönig, to cite only a few examples. Wilde believes the song transcriptions which are the most successful are those in which the original accompaniment is more florid, as are the accompaniments of both Gretchen am Spinnrade and Auf dem Wasser zu singen.<sup>64</sup>

It is clear that Liszt was also lured by the inventive melodies of Schubert and that he intended to preserve in several ways the integrity of these melodies in his transcriptions. By various accent marks and by unconventional scoring, as well as by the actual inclusion of the text above the melodic line,<sup>65</sup> Liszt revealed his intent to maintain the spirit, mood, and poetic imagery of the original songs.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Robert Schumann, On Music and Musicians, translated by Paul Rosenfeld, edited by Konrad Wolff (New York, 1946), p. 154.

<sup>63</sup>George, p. 84.

<sup>64</sup>Wilde, p. 179.

<sup>65</sup>George, p. 62.

<sup>66</sup>Crockett, p. 25.

In most of the transcriptions of the Lieder, including the two under discussion, Liszt adhered to the original keys, demonstrating his desire to preserve one of the most important factors of each original song.<sup>67</sup> In his study of the Lieder transcriptions, George loosely classifies them into four groups, based on the dominant transcriptional technique present. His classifications include: (1) literal, such as Erkönig; (2) accompaniment variation, in which the accompaniment is continuously varied, as in Die Forelle; (3) registral variation, or the shifting of the melodic line an octave higher in two or three succeeding strophes, as in Auf dem Wasser zu singen; and (4) accompaniment intensification, or the gradual thickening of texture and the intensification of volume and rhythmic movement, as in Gretchen am Spinnrade.<sup>68</sup>

Liszt's treatment of Schubert's tempi and descriptive indications with reference to mood and character at the beginning of the Lieder ranges from literal reproduction or substitutions of Italian or French equivalents for the original German to embellishment reflecting Liszt's interpretation of their significance.<sup>69</sup> The original harmonies are closely adhered to, with only occasional adjustments for reasons of sonority or facilitation.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>George, p. 73.

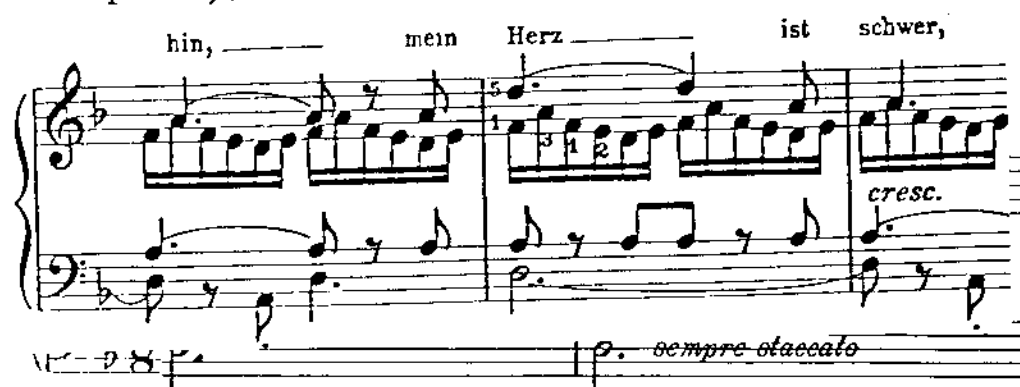
<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

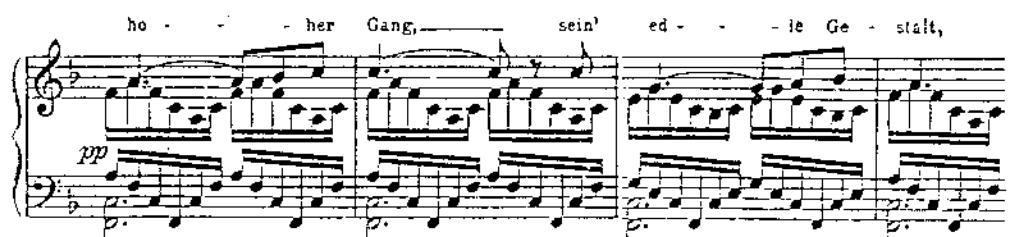


Schubert's Gretchen am Spinnrade dates from 1814; Liszt's transcription was published in 1838. Each contains 120 bars and all the original German text. The interludes between each of the three strophes and just after the climax of the Lied at the word Kuss are identical, as are the key, meter, and tempo indications. The melodic line and the figural accompaniment are closely intertwined; in order to maintain the constant rhythmic figuration of the spinning wheel in the right-hand accompaniment and yet still accommodate the same-hand melody, Liszt utilizes a notated "melodic rubato," delaying the melody note on corresponding downbeats until the second sixteenth note in the figure (see Example 1).



Ex. 1--Gretchen am Spinnrade, Schubert-Liszt, bars 2-6

The Gretchen am Spinnrade transcription contains a clear example of Liszt's manipulation of the original harmonies in order to expand the sonority capabilities of the work for the Erard grand. In measures 51-65, he transforms the perpetual motion figure in the accompaniment by having both hands execute the figure at the same time, but in canon at the rhythmic interval of one sixteenth note. In this way, by allowing the figuration to move imitatively at such close rhythmic proximity, Liszt preserves both the original melody and harmonies while creating a more pianistic effect (see Example 2). This effect illustrates the accompaniment



Ex. 2--Gretchen am Spinnrade, Schubert-Liszt, bars 51-54.

intensification technique mentioned by George as one of the primary transcriptional procedures of Liszt.<sup>71</sup>

Auf dem Wasser zu singen ("To Be Sung on the Waters") first appeared in 1823 and was included fifteen years later in Liszt's first set of Schubert transcriptions. Unlike

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

the Gretchen am Spinnrade transcription, Auf dem Wasser zu singen does not contain the same number of bars as the original; instead, Liszt has added to the original three-stanza song a fourth stanza with no text. As in the Gretchen am Spinnrade transcription, he has maintained the original key, meter, and introduction, but has changed the tempo marking from *allegro moderato* to merely *moderato*, with the smaller indications *con delicatezza* over the melodic line and *a piacere* over the original accompaniment.

One of the distinctive features of the original Lied has of course been kept intact since it is part of the picturesque accompaniment and is inseparably linked to the connotation of a boat's movement upon the water. Schubert achieved this effect with a descending repeated-note appoggiatura figure (see Example 3). The double escapement



Ex. 3--Auf dem Wasser zu singen, Schubert, bars 1-2

repetition action of the Erard piano certainly would have allowed a clear and convincing performance of this transcription, especially at the hands of Liszt.

The Auf dem Wasser zu singen transcription falls into George's "registral variation" category, for in each successive stanza, the melody appears an octave higher, with the resulting expansion of sonorities culminating in an orchestral final stanza (see Examples 4a-4d). The added

Mit - ten im Schim-mer der spie - geln - den Wel - - len

*pp grazioso*

*un poco marcato il canto*

Ex. 4a--Auf dem Wasser zu singen, Schubert-Liszt, stanza 1, bars 9-10.

Ü - ber den Wip - feln des west - li - chen Hai - mes

*animato poco a poco sin' al fine*

*marcato il canto*

Ex. 4b--Auf dem Wasser zu singen, Schubert-Liszt, stanza 2, bars 35-36.

Ach es ent-schwin-det mit tan-i-gem Flü-gel

*dolce delicato*  
*p*  
*leggiermente*

Ex. 4c--Auf dem Wasser zu singen, Schubert-Liszt, stanza 3, bars 61-62.

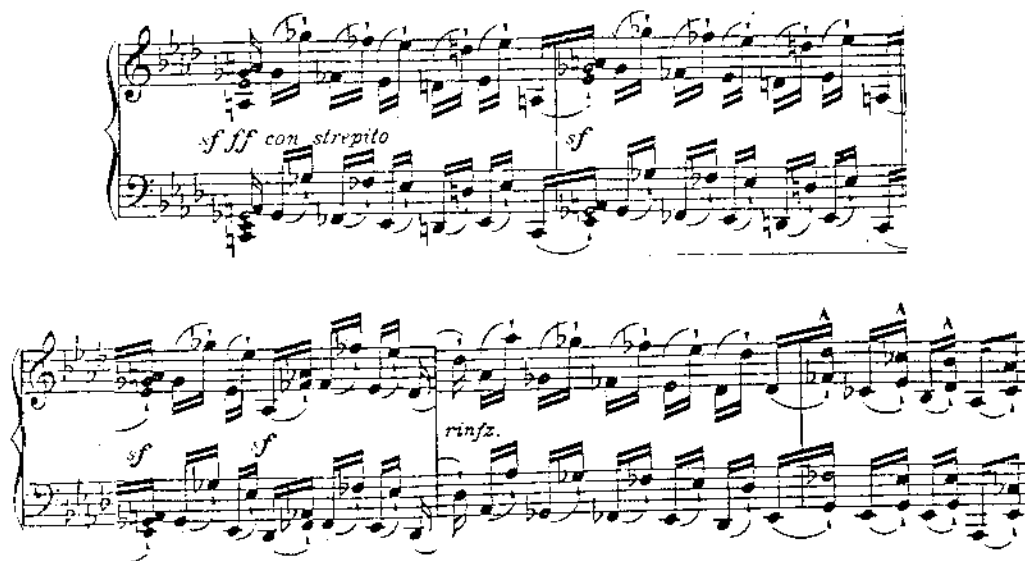
*molto agitato*

*sempre marcato il canto*  
*mf*  
*mp Col Pedale*

Ex. 4d--Auf dem Wasser zu singen, Schubert-Liszt, stanza 4, bars 86-87.

fourth stanza features an extended left-hand accompaniment and an interesting use of a broken octave technique. Between harmonic punctuation of strong beats of the measure in bars 98-102, broken octaves are used as filigree,<sup>72</sup> adding to the accumulative effect (see Example 5). As Wilde

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 130.



Ex. 5--Auf dem Wasser zu singen, Schubert-Liszt, bars 98-102.

suggests, this transcription is "not so much an arrangement as a piano study derived from the song."<sup>73</sup>

Moja pieśniczka, translated "My Joys" or "My Darling," is one of the nineteen surviving songs of Frederick Chopin and dates from 1837. It is the fifth of a set of six songs, the Chants polonaises, written between 1829 and 1844, but not published until after his death some five years later. The original song, a light-hearted waltz, consists of 69 vocal bars with an eight-bar introduction and an eight-bar postlude, for a total of 85 bars. In the arrangement which

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<sup>73</sup>Wilde, p. 180.

was published in 1860, Liszt slightly expands the song and extends the length to 96 bars, transforming the little waltz into an "impassioned nocturne."<sup>74</sup>

A comparison of the introduction of the original waltz with the initial eight bars of the arrangement clearly indicates that a transformation is indeed Liszt's intention (see Example 6). Though the original key of D-flat Major



Ex. 6--Moja pieszczotka, Chopin, bars 1-8

is intact, as is the original 3/4 meter, the tempo "allegretto" has become "quasi allegretto" in the arrangement. Even more obvious, however, is the replacement of the waltz accompaniment of the original by a flowing eighth-note

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<sup>74</sup>Edwards, p. 79.

figuration in which the downbeat is avoided altogether, weakening the waltz characteristic considerably and creating instead the mood of a nocturne (see Example 7).

The musical score for 'Moja pieszczotka' by Chopin-Liszt, bars 1-8, is presented in two systems. The first system (bars 1-4) features a melody in the upper staff marked 'rubato' and 'sotto voce', and a piano accompaniment in the lower staff marked 'una corda'. The second system (bars 5-8) continues the melody and accompaniment, with the lower staff marked 'dolciss.' and 'rit. smorz.'.

Ex. 7--Moja pieszczotka, Chopin-Liszt, bars 1-8

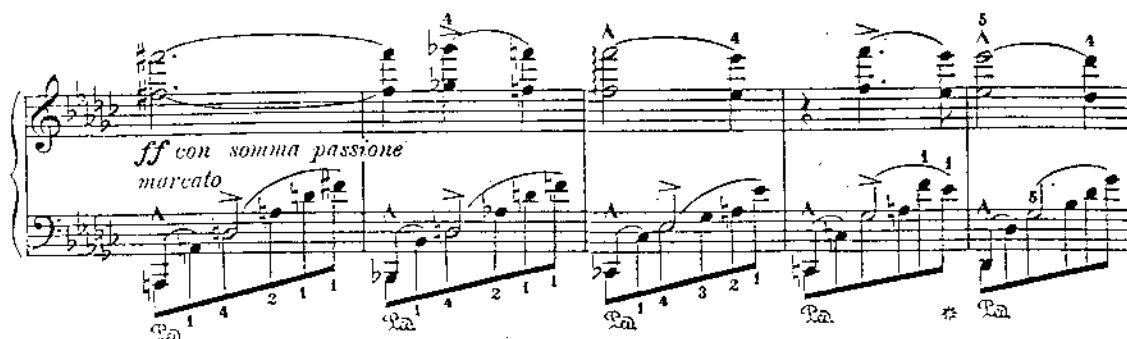
As Liszt was drawn to the piano accompaniments of Schubert for transcriptional material, he no doubt was influenced by the beautiful though inherently pianistic qualities of Chopin's melodies, which are vocally unidiomatic and therefore lend themselves readily to pianistic transcription.<sup>75</sup> It may be significant that no text appears

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 73.



above the vocal line in Liszt's arrangement of Chopin as it did in his transcriptions of Schubert.

Chopin's original song contains no interludes, but in the arrangement, Liszt has interspersed four short cadenzas which enhance the nocturnal flavor. With the exception of the eight bars leading to the climax at bar 70, the strong beat is consistently avoided in the accompaniment, but at the fortissimo climax, with marcato bass notes on the down-beat supporting octave doublings of the melody, coupled with the broadening effect of the abrupt change from a triple to a duple meter feeling, the climax is effectively heightened and intensified (see Example 8). The fourth cadenza follows this passionate outburst and leads to a final simple statement of the theme.



Ex. 8--Moją pieszczotką, Chopin-Liszt, bars 70-74

Though the original model has been significantly altered in Liszt's arrangement of "My Joys," there remains "an uncanny sensitivity to the style and spirit of Chopin."<sup>76</sup>

An examination of Liszt's song transcriptions or arrangements sheds light upon various transcriptional procedures, but it is when Liszt goes to the opera that the full gamut of these procedures can be realized. These types of transcriptions range from the literal pianoforte scores (the partition de piano), such as the Liebestod from Wagner's Tristan und Isolde, to the paraphrases or fantasias, such as the Rigoletto Concert Paraphrase, which reproduce the original music but with elaborate additions. In George's words, these latter types are "original compositions on other composers' themes."<sup>77</sup>

It was in Italy, where the love of opera and the vocal art was most firmly established, that Liszt played his first entirely solo piano recitals.<sup>78</sup> His choice of repertoire was influenced by the melodies the public wanted to hear. The results were improvisations upon familiar operatic themes which were performed in a highly virtuosic manner by the performer who could best bring the orchestral idiom to the now stronger piano.

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>77</sup>George, p. 28.

<sup>78</sup>Crockett, p. 23.

Operatic potpourris naturally existed before the 1830's and Liszt, but the new works so popular in Paris during the mid- to late nineteenth century were much more elegant, more pianistically demanding, and more pretentious, and all had the distinct advantage of being played on the more orchestral-sounding piano. Arthur Loesser goes so far as to state that to a large extent the piano music of the years 1825-1875 was dependent upon opera and that the largest fraction of all music published for the instrument during that period consisted of operatic transcriptions, potpourris, and variations.<sup>79</sup>

Liszt's opera fantasies, arrangements, and paraphrases not only utilize the opera's themes as subjects for development, but they often successfully attempt to capture the emotional character and dramatic development of entire scenes.<sup>80</sup>

In his transcriptions of certain operas, Liszt could do little to improve the artificial and stilted quality of the original opera, as in his transcriptions of Pacini's Niobe, Raff's King Alfred, and Auber's La Fiancée.<sup>81</sup> However, given an opera of merit, he could produce a work of equal quality for the orchestral piano.

<sup>79</sup>Loesser, p. 361.

<sup>80</sup>Edwards, p. 47.

<sup>81</sup>Gillespie, p. 238.

Crockett states that the most obvious attempts to make the improved grand sound like an orchestra are evident in the larger Wagner transcriptions, such as the Liebestod from Tristan und Isolde,

. . . where Liszt merely puts in as many of Wagner's notes as possible, with no thought of thinning the texture or of making any significant changes from the original.<sup>82</sup>

Liszt was one of the first major composers to recognize and encourage the genius of Richard Wagner. The two composers first met in 1840 when Liszt was already an international celebrity and Wagner was practically unknown. The two became good friends and were later related by the marriage of Wagner to Liszt's daughter Cosima. Liszt himself conducted the world premiere of Lohengrin and further introduced the works of Wagner to a wide public by including transcriptions from the operas and music dramas on his recital programs.<sup>83</sup>

Wagner conceived the idea of Tristan in 1854 and the score was completed in 1859, but the premiere did not take place until 1865, conducted by Hans von Bülow before Ludwig II of Bavaria at the Royal Court Theater in Munich. Liszt's partition of the Liebestod scene from the end of the opera was first published in 1867. It is a straightforward, practically note-for-note piano reduction of Isolde's love-death lament over the body of Tristan. The

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<sup>82</sup>Crockett, p. 111.

<sup>83</sup>Richards, b.

original score of the Liebestod contains 83 bars, as does Liszt's reduction; however, this identical length has been maintained by the omission of one four-bar phrase repetition contained in the original and by the addition of a four-bar theme from the love duet in Act II as an introduction to the partition (see Example 9). This theme is



Ex. 9--Isoldens Liebestod, Wagner-Liszt, Introduction

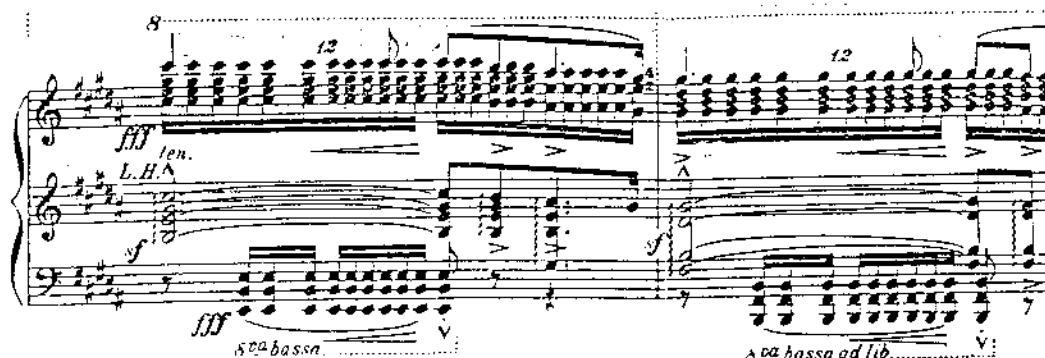
derived from Tristan's opening lines and may appear in the reduction for a dramatic purpose, that of indicating the hero's presence in the Liebestod even though he does not sing.<sup>84</sup>

Wagnerian music dramas are based on an aesthetic entirely different from that of Italian opera. Rather than containing clear-cut numbers featuring a solo voice or an ensemble supported by the orchestra, the voice itself becomes an orchestral instrument, woven into the massive, thick-textured, uninterrupted flow of sound.<sup>85</sup> In Liszt's

<sup>84</sup>Crockett, pp. 36-37.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

partition, this aesthetic is adhered to faithfully. Orchestral and vocal lines are all present but are alternately emphasized according to melodic prominence. A wave of orchestral sound will gradually overwhelm the vocal line, which will remain subservient only for a time, and then will itself well up and make itself heard, though still as a part of the orchestral texture. This texture reaches its thickest point at the fortississimo climax at bar 65 and following, with the rapid repetition of full chords in both hands in the extremities of the keyboard (see Example 10). The effect is intentionally orchestral and parallels the instrumental doublings in the orchestra score at this point.



Ex. 10--Isoldens Liebestod, Wagner-Liszt, bars 65-66

The entire partition is actually Wagner on the piano rather than a Liszt arrangement of someone else's work.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

Verdi's Rigoletto was premiered in 1851. One of the most famous ensemble numbers in all opera literature is the quartet from the final act, "Un di, se ben rammento mi," in which the conflicting sentiments of the four main characters are skillfully blended. The Duke of Mantua, the tenor, is wooing Maddelena, contralto, inside the tavern while Rigoletto, baritone, and his daughter, Gilda, soprano, express their rage and humiliation just outside the door. This dramatic moment in Verdi's masterpiece has been recaptured in Liszt's Concert Paraphrase, first published in 1859.

The paraphrase is written in a rather straightforward style. Since the original materials are superior to begin with, Liszt does not abuse them or try to compensate for them by an ostentatious display of virtuosity, as he often does in some of the Meyerbeer transcriptions.<sup>87</sup> Much of the piano writing is very delicate and almost impressionistic.<sup>88</sup>

Prior to the 1830's, opera variations such as those by Beethoven or Weber began rather naively with a simple statement of an operatic theme followed by variations, but during this period in which opera was becoming so popular, flourishing introductions were inserted prior to the appearance of the theme. As Loesser states:

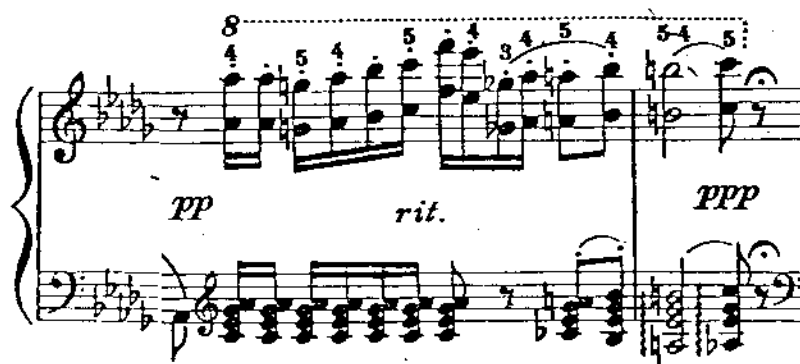
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<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>88</sup>Wilde, p. 194.

In other words, the tune was made to 'make an entrance' in the best theatrical or operatic manner.<sup>89</sup>

No better example of such a type of introduction can be found than in the Rigoletto Concert Paraphrase. The original quartet in the opera score contains 53 bars; Liszt's introduction alone is seventeen bars, almost one-third the length of the entire original model. This introduction is based on short motivic phrases interrupted by fermatas which toyingly delay the entrance of a tune everyone knows and anxiously awaits. There is then a short stretto section leading to a long cadenza in the high register which comes to rest on the dominant for some six measures and ending with an obvious announcement that the theme is about to appear (see Example 11). As at the opera, the entire



Ex. 11--Rigoletto Concert Paraphrase, Verdi-Liszt, bars 16-17.

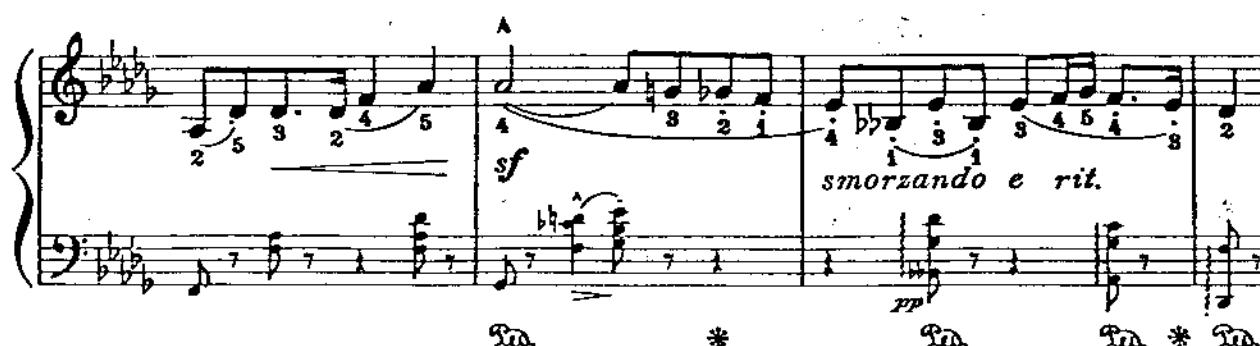
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<sup>89</sup>Loesser, p. 361.



introduction serves the purpose of prolonging the much-anticipated entrance of the popular theme of the Duke.

This thematic entrance is very simple, even understated, and retains the accompaniment of the original. There is one distinct alteration, however. Liszt changes one note in Verdi's theme, an A-flat to a B-double-flat, producing a tritone at that point and adding a touch of the dramatic (see Example 12). As Wilde comments, this one



Ex. 12--Rigoletto Concert Paraphrase, Verdi-Liszt, bars 22-25.

note "changes typical Verdi into typical Liszt in a single stroke."<sup>90</sup>

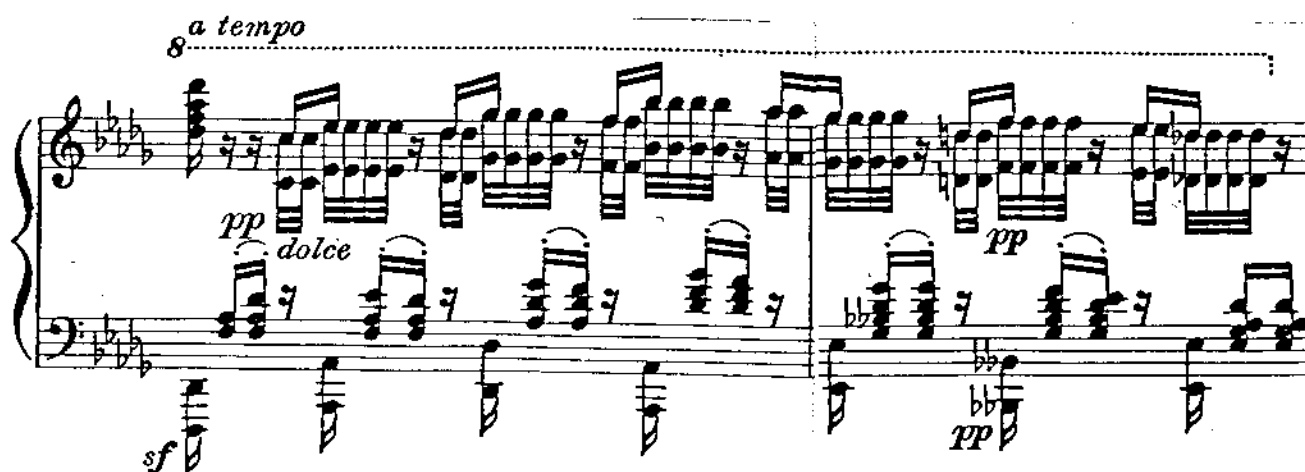
The paraphrase contains several cadenzas, but the feature of the work is the melody and it is always clearly marked. Light filigree passagework in the right hand accompanies the left-hand melody during the second statement of the opening theme, at bars 28 and following. Here, as

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<sup>90</sup>Wilde, pp. 194-195.

at the beginning, the placing of the melody in the middle register clearly identifies the Duke's tenor vocal line, though the texture has become thicker than at its original entrance.

A unique pianistic effect is created in bars 58 and following, with a reiteration of one of Gilda's vocal lines in a passage featuring rapidly repeated octaves (see Example 13). This example is another of the pianistic effects



Ex. 13--Rigoletto Concert Paraphrase, Verdi-Liszt, bars 75-76.

possible on the Erard grand, which by 1860 had become the standard for piano builders<sup>91</sup> and the chosen instrument of the vast majority of performers.

A presto coda in double octaves concludes the Concert Paraphrase, a title whose meaning has been made clear by its transcriber in this delightful work.

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<sup>91</sup>Grover, p. 113.

Franz Liszt was born October 11, 1811, about the time as the other early Romantics, but he far outlived them all. Mendelssohn died in 1847, Chopin in 1849, Schumann in 1856, and Berlioz in 1869, but Liszt not until July 31, 1886.<sup>92</sup> His last important piano student, the Portuguese Vianna da Motta, died in 1948 at the age of eighty.<sup>93</sup> A large portion of Liszt's output from this long career consists of transcriptions. An awareness of the early and middle nineteenth century as well as a recognition of the intrinsic artistic merits of these transcriptions should result in a greater appreciation of both Liszt and his works.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup>Schonberg, Composers, p. 179.

<sup>93</sup>Schonberg, Pianists, p. 171.

<sup>94</sup>Crockett, p. 112.

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