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LISZT

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LISZT



IN his essay on Wagner, included in this series, Mr. Frederick Corder writes of Franz Liszt: 'As time goes on, every fact concerning this man that comes to light exalts him higher and higher in our esteem, till he seems likely to assume the legendary proportions of a King Arthur of music.'

Since his death—over thirty-five years ago—the volumes of correspondence between himself and Wagner, the Princess Sayn-Wittgenstein, the letters of his son-in-law Hans von Bülow, and lastly Wagner's 'Mein Leben,' have all further contributed to reveal the unique influence on modern music and magnificent unselfishness of the artist and the man who held the attention of musical Europe uninterruptedly for nearly seventy years. At this distance of time, his extraordinary life—fully discussed in many biographies all more or less tinted with the predilections or prejudices of their authors—reads more like romance than reality. Exceptionally gifted in every respect, Liszt seems to have been sent into the world first to dazzle and astound, then to suffer for his fearless championship of all that has spelt progress in our art. Born in 1811 at Raiding, a village in Hungary, and making the first of a long series of public appearances at the age of nine (with the immediate result of securing a number of friends who provided for his future studies), the wonder-child passed into the care of Czerny, the famous teacher whose name is still before every student of the pianoforte.

Liszt always spoke of him with reverence as the best instructor he had known. Another master was Salieri, known to us, with a doubtful amount of truth, as the spiteful rival of Mozart. The boy was also taken to Schubert, and when in 1823 he made his first bow to a Viennese audience, Beethoven (who was with difficulty persuaded to go) stepped on the platform and kissed him.¹ Could the greatest of composers divine that this boy was to become the unapproachable exponent of his works, and practically erect, by his own exertions, the Beethoven monument at Bonn?

Another less well-known circumstance connects the two illustrious names. The first edition of 'Variations on a Waltz by Diabelli' (published



LISZT AS A BOY.

in the same year, 1823) contains contributions by fourteen composers, among others Hummel, Mozart's second son, Moscheles, Czerny, etc. Beethoven wrote two Variations, which are also to be found in his famous set of thirty-three on the same theme, and No. IX. is Liszt's first published composition. The regulation which prevented the boy's admission to the Paris Conservatoire because he was not of French parentage, can hardly be accounted an unreasonable one, and Director Cherubini—a foreigner himself—would probably be the last person from whom any proposal to override it could come.²

But the mortification which Liszt felt became a source of benefaction to others, since we know from himself that out of that disappointment grew the resolve to teach young musicians always without a fee—a resolution to which he adhered to the end. That his theoretical education was insufficient may be doubted. There is evidence that the boy had composed a good deal before he came to Paris, and that he had not spent his time entirely at the pianoforte. Reicha, his chief teacher, a man of progress and in advance of his time, who took exceptional interest in him, was not likely to be trifled with. Distracting

¹ There is no doubt of this fact, but Beethoven, being already deaf, could hardly have heard much of the boy's performance.

² Young Rubinstein met with the same rebuff seventeen years later.

and disturbing elements, however, were the boy's precocious powers and strangely attractive personality which at once opened the doors of Parisian society much too wide and too often for one of his years.¹ His father's needy pocket had to be kept supplied, hence these numerous artistic tours and public appearances to which Franz had to submit. Each of his eight visits to England has its peculiar interest. His first appearance in London (1824), when he was twelve years and seven months old, was an immediate success, and Adam Liszt seems to have realised that the

prodigy, who was not treated like a spoiled child as in Paris, was in a healthier atmosphere. While in London, as Liszt told Mr. Alfred Littleton in 1886, his father consulted a phrenologist as to what should be done with this 'stupid boy.' 'Not so stupid; try him with music,' was the answer. Father and son remained 'in retreat' in order that the partially composed operetta, *Don Sancho*, should be completed. Thus the remaining half of the score was written in London and played three times in the following year in Paris. Practically, then, Liszt began as an operatic composer, and although a hankering after the stage never quite left him, his admiration



LISZT AT THIRTEEN YEARS OF AGE
(FROM A LITHOGRAPH OF 1824 IN THE LIBRARY
OF THE PARIS OPERA-HOUSE).

for Wagner's superior gifts prevented the inclination from being indulged

Of the following couple of visits to our shores, at the ages of thirteen and sixteen, there would only be the same tale of enthusiasm to tell, were

¹ By way of fixing the period, it should be remembered that all this carries us back to the later days of Madame Recamier, Chateaubriand, Duc d'Orléans (Louis Philippe), etc.

it not for the fact that, as his musical gifts increased in brilliance, a rapidly growing distaste for the manner of life he was compelled to lead began to show itself. His boyish good humour vanished. A serious desire for knowledge and a better general education seized him; religious thoughts filled his mind, and he deliberately proposed to enter the Church. 'You belong to Art,' said the father; a sentence which Franz received in silence. When his father—to whom he was tenderly attached—died, the melancholy which preyed upon him became so intense that he withdrew from all society, and his prolonged disappearance caused a rumour of his death—the second occurrence of this kind, for a similar report circulated once before in Hungary when he was still a wonder-child. This time numerous obituary notices appeared in the French journals deploring the death of a genius. The state of moody depression continued until the Revolution of 1830, when he awoke to active life once more. 'The sound of the cannons cured him,' his mother was wont to say.

A revolutionary symphony, never published, dates from that year; but a revised fragment became afterwards the symphonic poem 'Héroïde funèbre,' in which a faint echo of the Marseillaise is to be found.

Paris was now his mother's home. Moving in the brilliant circles in which Lamartine, Balzac, Victor Hugo, and the rest of the leaders of the exuberant romanticism of the time lived, in accordance with the freedom they advocated, there exists no famous name with which Liszt cannot be in some way connected. This, the 'butterfly' period of his life, is full of strangely contrasted moods. The pianoforte had lost much of its charm for one whose mind was fairly equally divided between serious thought and the allurements of the salons. The coming of that weird genius Paganini marked the turning-point in the master's life. The spell which the Italian virtuoso contrived to cast over his hearers not only revived the young artist's enthusiasm, but fanned his ambition to transfer the hitherto unapproached brilliancy of execution from the violin to the pianoforte. What was the pianoforte literature of the moment? Beethoven's creations were still—and for a long time to come—unknown. So were Weber's. Chopin was just beginning, Schumann had not commenced to work, nor had Mendelssohn written very much. Kalkbrenner, Charles Mayer, Herz,

Doehler (later on Thalberg on a somewhat higher plane), provided the music heard in salon and concert-room. We may take it for granted that the lyrical charm and novel personal technique of Chopin attracted and had their influence on Liszt. Be that as it may, the new era in pianoforte-playing dates from the publication of the transcriptions of Paganini's *Capricci*, and from that day Liszt's incredible activity and fertility of invention becomes amazing. Operatic fantasias, the famous transcriptions of Beethoven and Berlioz's symphonies, of Schubert's songs, and a number of original works such as 'Années de Pèlerinage' (Swiss and Italian), the 'Grandes Etudes,' all of which are still, after sixty-five years, on every pianist's programmes, must have literally flown from his pen. Granted that many of the fantasias have gone out of vogue, with their subjects, I am of opinion that their astounding invention of passage-work, ingenious dove-tailing of themes and inexhaustible fancy, are efforts of genius. Most of them owe their existence to Liszt's amiable habit of offering musical homage to the prominent composers of the countries he happened to be in. Some were written with the deliberate intention of popularising the music of comparatively unknown composers. Wagner was glad, in the early stages of his career, to have that assistance. In this way Liszt called attention to the genius of Schubert in Austria. Thus with the almost forgotten Scarlatti (the Liszt of his day) in Italy. So with Rossini, Meyerbeer, Auber, and Verdi. It was his manner of paying a graceful compliment to the nations as he made their acquaintance in



FRANZ LISZT

(FROM AN ETCHING BY JEAN INGRES,
MADE IN 1839).

turn, or of paying tributes of thanks to musicians who had served him, or to help those in whom he was interested.

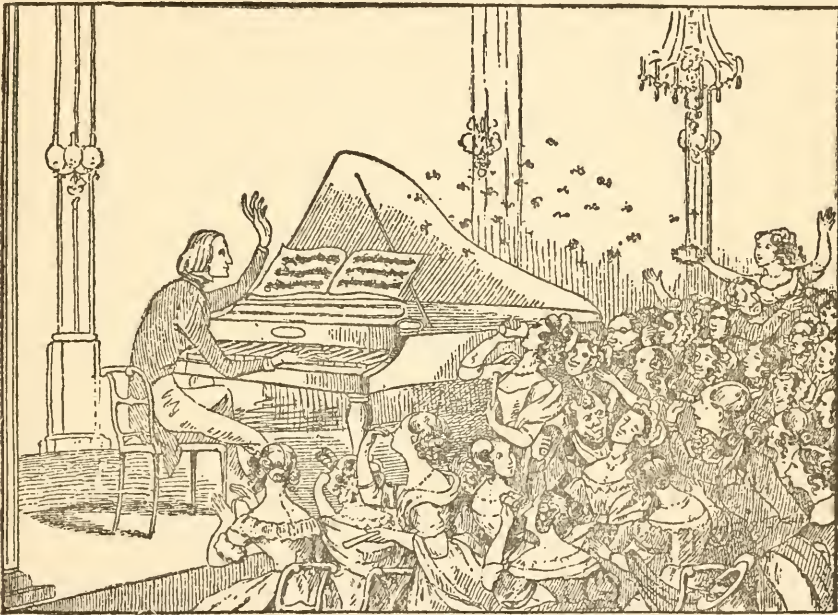
Although the great pianist confessed that public adulation had now and then beguiled him into the committal of unworthy *tours de force*, his programmes were by no means confined to these show-pieces. As a Beethoven player he was already famous. The names of Weber, Chopin, Schumann, etc., were all added to his repertoire, almost as soon as their works were published; and who but Liszt helped to hasten their fame?

For all that, the magnetic power and masterful sway he exercised over his audiences brought much splenetic and jealous opposition in their train. A glance at the outcome of his stay in London in 1840,¹ when a young man of world-wide experience at the height of his renown as a virtuoso, will serve to give a clear idea of the effects of his strong personality. Then began that fierce opposition, continued until quite recently, which raged around the very name of Liszt—a name which seems to have operated like the proverbial red rag upon bulls.

It should be remembered that the same bitter attacks were being made on him in Germany, particularly in Leipzig, from whence, without much doubt, the rancour had travelled. Liszt was generally condemned for ‘elaborate caricature,’ which ‘more frequently suggested the idea of a delirious posture-master than a refined artist,’ who ‘transforms elegance into ugliness: employing his acquirements on some of the ugliest and least artistic combinations of sound that ever found acceptance in a concert-room.’ These are some of the milder specimens of criticism. Only one writer seems to have had the courage of his opinions when he said, ‘The critics may not understand M. Liszt, but the musicians crowd to hear him.’ This with reference to his second *Recital*, a term he invented for his London concerts, and which has remained with us ever since. On his return in the following year the storm burst with increased vigour. Apart from the fact that, combined with a phenomenal technique, the music presented was entirely new and strange, there were now other combustibles ready to hand to throw into the fire. Thalberg, the successful and elegant pianist,

¹ It is generally forgotten that in 1840 Liszt made not one, but three separate visits to England. The intervals were filled by concert-trips to the Rhine and to Hamburg.

was popular both in Paris and London, and therefore an easily found figure to set up in opposition. Between the two men themselves there existed no such feeling. Add to that his predilection for fashionable life, his intimacy with the nobility of every court in Europe. Malicious Heinrich Heine says, 'Liszt takes a pleasure in having talented sovereigns for his protégés.' While in London he preferred that portion of society led by Lady Blessington, Count d'Orsay, and others, who were perhaps not in the best of odours with the rest of an aristocracy which was now



AN EARLY CARICATURE OF LISZT IN THE CONCERT-HALL.

inclined to hold aloof from him. There is no record of his playing at Windsor Castle in that year. The sudden appearance on the scene—much against his wish—of the Countess d'Agoult cannot have helped him. An extravagant generosity—which lasted to the end of his days—was sneered at, and highly coloured pictures of his vanity, hauteur, and posturings were therefore easily painted. But let it be said, in regard to his fondness for society, that he himself sprang from a noble, though impoverished, Hungarian family, and had lived from childhood in close contact with the cultured and well-bred. Anything mean or small offended him; and if he asked to be treated like a noble, he certainly

acted like one. A prince among artists, an artist among princes, *Génie oblige* was the motto which guided him. When in 1840 he sailed from Liverpool to Hamburg and realised the miserable conditions of the orchestral musicians there, the entire proceeds of the first concert (17,300 francs) were given to start that pension-fund which he kept in view all his life. From the takings of his English concerts, in the same year, 10,000 francs were sent to Bonn as a first contribution to the Beethoven monument. Taking into consideration all that he did later, it may be truthfully assumed that the monument was erected chiefly by his own exertions. At Frankfort also he helped to initiate the Mozart foundation. There is not much 'posing' in all this! No doubt Liszt was impetuous at times. He was capable of throwing an *étui*, brought to him by the attaché of a German prince, into the wings of the stage, and of ceasing to play when an emperor talked. Indeed, Liszt seems to have been somewhat hard on kings and queens! In Madrid he was informed that court etiquette forbade a personal introduction to the reigning monarch. 'Then I cannot play,' said he, and was received by Queen Isabella. This being the first occasion upon which the old custom had been broken, the public hailed him with shouts of '*Salve, Artista venturoso!*' Certainly the venturous fight for the recognition of art and artists broke the ice for all who have since followed him. *Per contra*, when an old gentleman, at one of the London Philharmonic concerts, enthusiastically cried, 'It was worth much more,' and pressed a five-pound note into his hand, Liszt quietly pocketed it because he 'did not want to offend the dear old fellow.' The season of 1841 saw a repetition of successes with London public and musicians; but a badly arranged provincial tour had to be curtailed, and declining to claim his legitimate fees from the manager, Liszt departed from England, not to return for forty years. So far from being angry at the failure, he actually accepted an engagement to conduct a German opera company in London in 1849. The scheme came to nothing, but the incident goes far to prove an increasing disgust at public playing, as well as his stageward leanings. The study of French and Italian art had already occupied his serious attention, and the impressions made during the years 1839-40, partly spent in Rome, by the

masterpieces of sculpture and painting, had an abiding influence upon the receptive mind of the highly cultured musician. In a letter to Berlioz we find these sentences: 'Art first appears to my astonished eyes in all its glory and unveils her universality. Every day I assure myself more and more of the hidden relationship between all the works of the creative spirit in man. Rafael and Michael Angelo help me to understand Mozart and Beethoven. The Coliseum and the Campo Santo are not so far removed from the "Eroica" and the "Requiem."' "

We find the results of these meditations at first in small musical



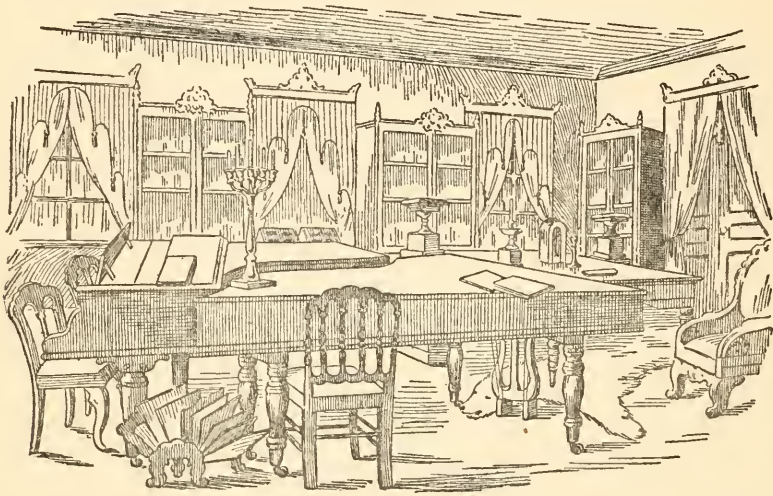
THE END OF A SIGNED MS. SONG BY LISZT, WRITTEN AT VILLA D'ESTE, TIVOLI, IN 1877.

pictures like the 'Penseroso' and 'Sposalizio,' and later on in the 'Dante' symphony.

Up to the moment of his disappearance as a virtuoso Liszt had written little else than pianoforte music, and some very beautiful songs: the novelty of their treatment was sufficient to ensure a cool reception, but a large number of them are now household words, while some, such as 'Lorelei,' 'Es muss ein wunderbares sein,' 'Du bist wie eine Blume,' are famous.

A new field for exploration was discovered when he invented the 'Rhapsodie.' As a child he is said to have only cared for the music of Beethoven and the gipsy tunes he constantly heard. Although we find among his earliest publications two sets of Hungarian melodies, it was

the music of the Russian and Spanish gipsies which awoke his serious interest. Always a believer in national music, he actually lived for a time in the tents of the Hungarian Zingari in order to saturate himself with the spirit of these wildly quaint tunes with which we are now so familiar. At the time (1840) when his mother-country proudly claimed him as her son, gipsy music was hardly on paper, but went from mouth to mouth; an enthusiast like Liszt could not fail to discover its hidden capabilities and acknowledge its right to become the basis of a national art. He listened, noted it down, and invented a medium for its idealisation.



LISZT'S MUSIC-ROOM AND LIBRARY AT WEIMAR.

It became a fixed idea with him to hand down these remnants of ancient Hungary in an artistic form, as a national treasure, and of these immensely popular Rhapsodies there exist twenty from his pen. Hungarian opera—in fact Hungarian musical art—owes its birth to this labour of love. In spite of all the medals struck, the freedom of cities, swords of honour, etc., and the large sums of money which came to him, he was fretting and inwardly chafing under the always distasteful life he had to lead. The necessity for the development of his gifts and of exercising them in nobler directions was persistently before the artist. Weimar was always in his mind as a suitable spot for the furtherance of his plans as a composer, conductor, and active patron of the new movement in music which was

struggling for recognition. While still the 'strolling player' he accepted, in 1842, the position of 'Maître de chapelle en services extraordinaires' at Weimar, but did not enter upon its duties until a couple of years later. With habitual consideration for others, the agreement was only signed on condition that the appointment should in no way interfere with the work or status of the permanent conductor. Another six years of travel completed the 'Wanderjahre,'¹ and, in the late summer of 1847, the last concert at which he ever played for money was given at Elizabethgrad in South Russia. Thus Liszt passed from opulence to comparative poverty

by his own act at the zenith of his popularity, and from that moment there was neither peace nor reward. His phenomenal career as a pianist, beginning when he was a mere child, lasted barely for twenty years, and ceased abruptly at the age of thirty-eight. While the



LISZT AT THE REHEARSAL OF THE PASTORAL SYMPHONY
AT GOTHA, JANUARY 17, 1844.

(Sketches from life by Paul Emil Jacobs.)

necessity of providing for his mother and his three legitimised children compelled him to continue his public performances as long as he did, he gave lavishly to charity, both public and private, when called upon either by his own generosity or the solicitations of others. An utter disregard for his own future, or the value of money for his personal needs, was one of his most prominent characteristics.

Before passing to a much more important period, be it remembered that Liszt had been carrying the music of the greatest dead and living composers from place to place. The spread of Beethoven's fame was his special mission. Liszt was the only artist who persistently brought the names of his contemporaries before the public during his meteoric flights. The reputations of some of them were as yet purely local—Berlioz and

¹ This is the itinerary of the last couple of years: Poland and Russia, South and North Germany, France, Spain and Portugal, from Gibraltar to Alsatia, Saxony, Hungary, Constantinople.

Chopin in Paris, Schumann in Leipzig, for instance. His heart was now set upon the continuation of this mission on a larger scale.

With the sudden change in the master's life (in 1848) began the battle of Weimar—a struggle to open new paths, to introduce new men and methods. So far from entirely identifying himself during his ten years of office with the so-called *Music of the future*, Liszt's orchestral and operatic programmes are unique in their liberality and for their eclecticism. He came to Weimar with a couple of personal projects in his mind: one being the completion of a symphony inspired by Dante, the other was the development of a new art-form, the 'Symphonic Poem,' for the first example of which he had already chosen his subject from Victor Hugo, 'Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne.'

Sneers at the idea of his wanting to compose at all, and doubts as to his ability either to score for, or to conduct, an orchestra were freely distributed. The fact that he could do all these things remarkably well was very soon established. But the hue and cry commenced with the production of *Tannhäuser*, which inaugurated a lifelong friendship. When Liszt wrote to Wagner in 1849, 'Once for all, count me among your most zealous and devoted admirers; far or near, count on me and dispose of me,' he probably did not foresee to what unlimited extent he was to be taken at his word. It is impossible to disconnect these two names: history has linked them together for all time. But this paper, being devoted to the elder master, requires only a brief reference to the younger. 'In 1848 Wagner was no more to Liszt than a number of other men toward whom he had amiable intentions.' So writes one of Liszt's biographers. He had no high opinion of *Rienzi*, nor had he felt personally drawn to its composer. Out of the mass of literature now available for reference, I shall only quote a couple of extracts which may be safely detached from their contexts without injustice to either correspondent.

The first was written by Wagner to a mutual friend in 1849.¹

'That wonderful man must also look after my poor wife.'

The other (to Wagner) I give because it contains a frank statement of Liszt's own monetary troubles:

¹ For quotations from letters, see Liszt and Wagner correspondence, translated by F. Hueffer.

‘ I have more than once explained to you my difficult pecuniary situation, which simply amounts to this, that my mother and my three children are decently provided for by my former savings, and that I have to manage on my salary (as Kapellmeister) of 1000 thalers and 300 thalers by way of a present for the court concerts (barely two hundred pounds). For many years, since I became firmly resolved to live up to my artistic



LISZT'S HOUSE, VILLA D'ESTE, NEAR TIVOLI, WHERE LISZT SPENT SOME
OF THE LATER YEARS OF HIS LIFE.

vocation, I have not been able to count on any additional money from the music-publishers. My Symphonic Poems do not bring me in a shilling, but, on the contrary, cost me a considerable sum, which I have to spend on the purchase of copies for distribution among my friends. My Mass and Faust Symphony are also entirely useless works, and for several years I have had no chance of making money. Fortunately I can just manage, but I have to pinch a good deal, and have to be careful not to get into any trouble which might affect my position very unpleasantly here ’ (1856).

In the fight for progress Liszt had practically the whole of Germany

against him. Two small ducal residences, Weimar and Sondershausen (the capital of Schwarzburg-Thuringia) were the centres of all that was new, and even as late as 1862 the works of Berlioz, Wagner, and Liszt were nowhere else to be heard. The present writer, then resident in Sondershausen, remembers that pilgrims interested in the new movement journeyed from all parts of Germany to hear the *musica prohibita*.

Excursions, alarms, and reprisals were the order of the day. The younger men, such as Brendel, Bülow, Bronsart, wrote with very sharp pens, and Wagner's provocative pamphlet, *Das Judenthum in der Musik*, effectually set the heather on fire. Sarcasm and abuse were shot from both camps. But 'the living first' always remained Liszt's motto. As each of the twelve Symphonic Poems appeared, hostile criticism was liberally poured upon it. But while their composer strongly resented any depreciation of Wagner's art, all that was levelled against his own was taken almost as a matter of course.

'Really, I often require the patience becoming a Confrater of the Franciscan order to bear so many intolerable things.' Even these mild words have as much reference to the treatment of men whom he was endeavouring to serve as to himself.

Regarding the cool reception of his compositions he wrote, 'I have to hear and read so much about them, that I have no opinion on the subject, and continue to work only from persistent inner conviction, and without any claims to recognition or approval. Several of my intimate friends, for example Joachim, and formerly Schumann and others, have shown themselves strange, doubtful, and unfavourable towards my musical creations. I owe them no grudge on that account, and cannot retaliate, because I take a sincere and comprehensive interest in their work.'

I once informed Liszt, when he was just leaving Florence for Rome in the very early hours of an exceedingly cold morning, of the projected performance of his fine Thirteenth Psalm in England. Reflecting upon the very slow acceptance his music found there, he replied, with a touch of gentle sarcasm, in the opening words of that psalm, 'O Lord, how long!'

Briefly, then, the situation at Weimar became more and more strained and disagreeable as fresh difficulties were placed in his way, and

criticism waxed more and more severe. His influence at the petty court gradually waned, the dream of a new art-period for Weimar ended amid the charivari of cat-calls and abuse which attended the production of his pupil Peter Cornelius's opera, *The Barber of Bagdad*. The strong man's patience was exhausted, and he left for Rome in 1861.

The refusal of Pope Pio Nono to permit his marriage with Princess



He appears with the smile of conscious superiority, tempered by the modesty of his garment (as abbé). Tremendous applause.



The first chord—R-r-r-rum!—Looking back, as if to say: 'Attention,—I now begin!'



With eyes closed, as if playing only to himself. Festive vibration of the strings.



Pianissimo. Saint Assisi Liszt speaks to the birds.—His face brightens with holy light.



Hamlet's broodings; Faust's struggles. Deep silence. The very whisper becomes a sigh.



Chopin, George Sand, Reminiscence, Sweet youth, Moonlight, Fragrance and Love.



Dante's Inferno. Wailings of the condemned—(among them those of the piano). Feverish excitement. The tempest closes the gates of hell.—*Boom!*



He has played; not only for us but *with* us. Retiring, he bows with lofty humility. Deafening applause. *Eviva!*

A SERIES OF CARICATURES FROM A HUNGARIAN COMIC PAPER.

Sayn-Wittgenstein, whose encouraging influence had been of the best, cast a deeper gloom over this the most depressing time in his life. The days of storm and stress were over; he entered the Church (taking minor orders), and, begging his friends to let him live in peaceful retirement, occupied himself almost exclusively with sacred music. This step, as usual, caused much unkind comment, but it was only the fulfilment of a frequently expressed wish. I saw him for the first time in the year before he quitted Weimar. There remains the impression of a beautiful, finely chiselled

face, full of dignity, even to severity, with firmly compressed lips. An exceptional quantity of wiry hair—already streaked with grey—was covered by a tall hat, which, to my boyish mind, seemed much too small for the size of his head. On that occasion he was accompanied by a train of friends and pupils, the value of whose names I was too young to appreciate.

Nearly all Liszt's greater works were written between 1841 and 1861. In this varied catalogue are comprised the two Pianoforte Concertos, fifteen Hungarian Rhapsodies, the twelve Symphonic Poems, the Symphonies 'Dante' and 'Faust,' the Graner Mass, the 13th and 18th Psalms, most of the songs, and a quantity of other important compositions.

The 'Faust' symphony ranks as his highest achievement in orchestral music; it is not a mere illustration of the drama, but a reproduction of the three types which Goethe embodies in his tragedy, and the method adopted in the symphonic poems is a similar one. Liszt cared less for the actual events of a poem or drama than for its inner meaning, and in his choice of subjects was careful not to ask music to express more than it should attempt, which is perhaps more than can be said of some composers who have followed the lines laid down by him. The preface to the symphonic poems is the best explanation of so-called programme-music: in it he adds, with characteristic independence (at a time when he could hardly secure a performance anywhere), a hint to conductors to the effect that if the necessary orchestral material be not at their disposal, or if they fail to understand the work, 'it would be better not to occupy themselves with works which in no way claim to an every-day popularity.'

The Faust legend had a lasting fascination for our master; besides the monumental symphony, he wrote two orchestral pieces on Lenau's *Faust* and three Mephisto waltzes. In these weirdly picturesque pieces he would almost seem to be giving vent to his irony, preferring as it were to blow off the steam in musical sarcasm in preference to the adoption of other relief to his feelings. Liszt, when he chose, could be very cutting; but remarks of this nature were always robbed of half their sting by the sly and witty way in which the irony was concealed. The 'Divina Commedia' is a religious instrumental epic, which remains, from its nature,

difficulties, and colossal proportions, the less frequently played and least understood of all his works. Its first sketch dates from 1847, the year in which he projected the combination of instrumental music and poetry; but the symphony was not completed until 1858 and must therefore have been his constant travelling-companion for at least ten years. The first two performances must be accounted failures.

It was not until 1868 that it began to meet with that tardy acceptance which was the fate of all these epoch-making compositions. At one time Liszt must have carried—so to speak—the works of Dante and Byron in his pocket. The dramas of the latter poet had a great attraction for him. An opera is thus alluded to in a letter dated 1849: ‘In the course of the summer my *Sardanapalus* (in Italian) will be completely finished.’ And he also contemplated setting the *Mystery*, ‘Heaven and Earth,’ to music as an oratorio. Wagner promised to arrange the book, but did not find time to oblige his friend.



A SILHOUETTE OF LISZT AT THE PIANO, MADE IN 1841.

We also have his own words with reference to the great Mass, composed for the consecration of the Dom in Gran, where, by the way, one of his forefathers was archbishop,¹ ‘I can say that I have prayed rather than composed it.’

In his declining years Liszt would reply to any reminder of the hostility to his music with a smile of resignation, ‘Well, at least the old Abbé has written the Graner Messe.’ The major portion of the compositions written between 1861 and 1870 was dictated and inspired by either religious or devotional feelings. Much of the pianoforte music even bears this stamp. Witness ‘St. Francesco preaching to the Birds,’ ‘Bénédiction de Dieu,’ for instance. The two oratorios, *St. Elizabeth* and *Christus*, are of large dimensions and design. The first-named, a sacred-dramatic legend glorifying Christian charity and patience, is well known. *Christus*.

¹ And yet another, Johann Liszt, was Bishop of Raab in the sixteenth century.

illustrating as it does the redemption of the world through Christ's love, is purely devotional. But the picturesque element, never absent in Liszt's works, is strongly represented in such scenes as the 'Mount of Olives' and the 'Storm at Sea'; in spite of the greater success of *St. Elizabeth*, this beautiful church work, demanding a like solemn and devout frame of mind on the part of its auditors as that in which it evidently was written, ought to receive the acknowledgment it deserves. Besides a quantity of smaller religious pieces, there are five masses, seven psalms, of which the 13th is the best known, the above-mentioned *St. Elizabeth*, *Christus*, and an unfinished oratorio, *St. Stanislaus*.

The Hungarian scale pervading the setting of the 137th Psalm (the first piece of work undertaken in Rome) gives an unmistakably personal touch to the Lamentation. In the great Mass written for the coronation of the present Emperor of Austria as apostolic King of Hungary, the introduction of the national element is entirely successful and fitted to the occasion.

During his seven years' seclusion much had happened: Berlioz and others whom he had championed had received due acknowledgment, Wagner had conquered: his own progressive tendencies, if not his music, were at last accepted; while, above all, his inspiring presence was genuinely missed. Hungary called him to the presidentship of an Academy of Music in Budapest before the institution actually existed. The Duke urgently requested a return to Weimar, saying, 'Everything awaits you here.' A little house in the Hofgärtnerei was prepared for him, and there he lived for some months in the year, the rest of the time being divided between Rome and Budapest.

'The last chapter,' as the aged master called it, was chiefly devoted to tuition; the encouragement of his too numerous pupils, by assisting them with advice and solid help to positions in life, made the days too short for all the work they brought. 'If I do anything for myself, it is in the early morning,' he once remarked to me; and as a matter of fact he was at his desk at four o'clock in the morning during the summer. When he travelled with his pupils, their expenses, hotel bills, and concert-tickets were invariably paid by himself. Probably his entire income at this time

could hardly have been more than four hundred pounds per annum, yet it seemed to suffice for his modest needs, since he allowed himself no luxuries.

There can be little doubt that Liszt's fabulous good-nature was taken advantage of to a ridiculous extent, or that, despite the fact that he remained (with the exception of Wagner) the most conspicuous figure in the world of music, these closing years were lonely enough. One so



LISZT AND HIS FRIENDS.

The figures (from the left) are Kriehuber, Berlioz, Czerny, Liszt, and Ernst. From a drawing by Kriehuber.

solicitous for the welfare of others must have felt the lack of care and protection which age and position entitled him to enjoy. While every field in which he had done the heavy spade-work was bearing other men's crops, many of his own compositions had to wait for posthumous recognition. Some of them he heard for the first time during his last years. The grimly brilliant 'Todten-tanz,' for instance, was published in 1865, but was not played in its composer's presence until 1881, at the Antwerp Musikfest. If other lands were slow enough to admit the value of all that

the pioneer-composer accomplished, England was the last country to recognise his merits, and at this distance of time our native appraisements of Liszt and Wagner's music make curious and instructive reading. It is well within the writer's knowledge that Liszt's name on a programme made every critical Moses seize his staff and cause an abundant stream of abuse to flow from his own particular rock. *Tempora mutantur.* The 'blatant, noisy instrumentation of discordant combinations of sounds,' which gave so much offence, is even as the cooing of doves when compared with much of the fashionable cacophony of to-day. But one native musician's name is so closely connected with the introduction of the then new movement that it may not be omitted here.

Walter Bache, whose devotion to Liszt was in itself a beautiful display of affectionate gratitude, carried on the fight against overpowering prejudice and under adverse conditions which in the present day seem almost incredible. Only one among many of Liszt's warnings and remonstrances in reference to his friend's personal sacrifices need be quoted here :

'Your programme is again a bold deed, particularly in London, where my compositions encounter all sorts of difficulties : even more than anywhere else ' (1878). The word 'even' is worthy of note.

Assisted at first by von Bülow, later by Dannreuther and Manns, this enthusiast kept steadily breaking the ice at his annual concerts (from 1871 to 1885) by producing most of the greater works (including 'Faust,' 'Dante,' 'St. Elizabeth,' etc.), and so cleared the fairway for these performances by Richter and others which have taken place under more encouraging and enlightened conditions since the death of the master and his pupil.¹

We now arrive at the fatal year 1886, and as the memorable visit to London was truly the last event in the master's life, I may be forgiven for offering some reminiscent remarks. Although Liszt had been subject to unusual fits of depression, even of tears, his genial spirits and good humour were unfailing during the fortnight which he passed in our midst. We learned that he had been warned against dropsy ; both a cure at

¹ My friend Bache died within two years after Liszt ; their names are bound together in the 'Liszt-Bache' Scholarship, which is in the keeping of the Royal Academy of Music.

Kissingen and a possible operation for cataract had been suggested, yet he put these personal considerations aside with the words, 'I have promised.' 'The accented point of my coming to London is to be present at the *St. Elizabeth* performance; it was this that decided my coming.' The honour fell to me, as conductor of the Novello Choir, to perform that work twice in his presence, viz. 6th April in St. James's Hall and at the Crystal Palace, Sydenham, on the 17th.

When his decision became known, a visit to Paris was added to the scheme, and the enthusiasm which greeted him, while evidently beneficial to his spirits, was a final blaze of triumph which made amends for much that can hardly be accounted to the credit of either capital. In London the veteran master was the guest of the late Mr. Henry Littleton (at 'Westwood,' Sydenham), whose most hospitable house became the centre of a series of fêtes given in his honour. Entering keenly into the spirit of this memorable Liszt Festival, he was with difficulty prevented from

overtaxing his strength. On the evening after his arrival, he attended a choir rehearsal of *St. Elizabeth*, and seating himself at the pianoforte continued the music from the point I had reached when he entered the hall. These were the first notes he played in London after an interval of forty years.

Age and waning strength had not dimmed an intellect as brilliantly clear as ever, and the unique combination of power and strength remained undiminished. Although the stipulation had been made that he was not



A FRENCH CARICATURE OF LISZT.

Upon the original appears a verse to the effect that 'Among all warriors Liszt alone is without reproach. For in spite of his great sabre one knows that this hero conquers only double-crotchets and kills only pianos.'

to be 'pushed' to the piano in public, he was frequently heard in private when his 'seventy-five-year-old fingers,' as he called them, and an unclouded memory astonished all.

Even in his fieriest virtuoso-days, Liszt never 'thumped.' 'They do not *play*, they *thrash* the piano nowadays,' he said.¹

One morning I happened to be alone with him in the large conservatory at Westwood House, where stood the famous Roubilliac statue of Handel. Liszt stopped before it, exclaiming, 'Ha! the old man!' as if recognising an acquaintance. 'I used to play a fugue of his—let me see, it began so,' and he finished the piece without effort. Fortunate were they who caught him in those moods, for sometimes when he saw a piano-forte he would, like Nelson, put the telescope to his blind eye! 'I am coming back next year,' were his parting words to us. Here, at least, every care was taken of him; but a return visit to Paris on his way home (if he could be said to have had a home), taken against the advice of his friends, was far too heavy a strain upon the vital powers of one of his years. 'I am already more than half blind: perhaps I shall not have to wait long for the rest. . . .' Travelling from Paris to Weimar, then to a festival at Sondershausen, and after a short visit to Colpach in Luxembourg, he finally arrived at Bayreuth. All this fatigue did its fell work. After being actually carried to a performance of *Parsifal*, he grew rapidly worse, and died peacefully in his modest rooms—close to Wagner's gates—on the 31st of July, barely three months after he had bade us good-bye.

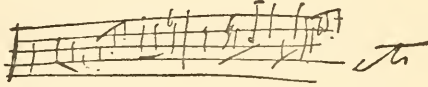
It is a deplorable fact that he who was a lifelong propagandist of the musical creations of others, who gave fortunes away, always thinking last and least of his own personality, had the smallest amount of encouragement meted out to himself. The Hungarian master's standard should not be taken with a German tape-measure. He belonged to a race endowed with different—almost opposite—characteristics. During the years of travel, when he so early in life was 'found guilty of success,' as Carlyle somewhere says, he acquired the widest outlook, and learned to appreciate

¹ All the great pianists unhesitatingly admitted his supremacy both as performer and interpreter. Anton Rubinstein did so in the present writer's hearing.

the essential qualities of the music of many lands. But that rare sympathetic and eclectic generosity was not recognised by the Chauvinists of his time.

How he laboured for the foremost German composers we know, but, rightly or wrongly, he seems to have expected nothing more from them after Schumann's death. A firm belief in nationalism in music urged him to give an initial start or an additional impetus to it in every country.

*J. von en Russie l'occasion, d'aller
 à la ^{au} charge de ^{une} complaisance
 admettant pour le Concerto Verdi.
 et de les lui que j'ai applaudi
 de tout cœur et de toute main
 à Madrid, Lisbonne, et Paris,
 Malines et Evreux — au point
 de faire recommencer le Finale*



il y a huit jours aux Italiens

*le Bientôt pour — et
 toujours et partout tout à vous*

Brunelles 25^e Juin 46 J. Liszt

A LETTER FROM LISZT ABOUT A 'FINALE' BY VERDI.

With prophetic finger he pointed to Russia's great future, and all the composers of that country, from Glinka to Tschaikowsky, enjoyed his help. But Grieg, Smetana, Saint-Saëns, besides many smaller men, had his personal aid and encouragement.

Whatever changes he wrought—and there are many—Liszt never sought to destroy anything. To think of him as a mere sapper or road-maker is to do injustice to a great mind. Faust, the Symphonic Poems, the Concertos, the great B minor Sonata, and much else, are not only accepted models, but very real achievements. Adding and building,

logically lengthening the identical lines which Beethoven was drawing in his latest creations, everything that Liszt did came to stay and to inspire others. Even now there are some great works, such as *Christus*, which have as yet been either inadequately presented or are still unknown to a large number of musicians.

It is impossible within the allotted space to venture on an analysis of his principal compositions ; there exist some seven hundred original works (large and small), not counting transcriptions and arrangements. These latter would probably swell the number to between twelve and thirteen hundred. Nor can I do more than mention Liszt's literary activity, which is represented by seven published volumes, and covers a wide and interesting range of subjects. Incomplete as these pages are, it is hoped that they may convey some idea of the vast extent of the life-labour, nature, nobility, and modesty of a genius, whom to know was to love.

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