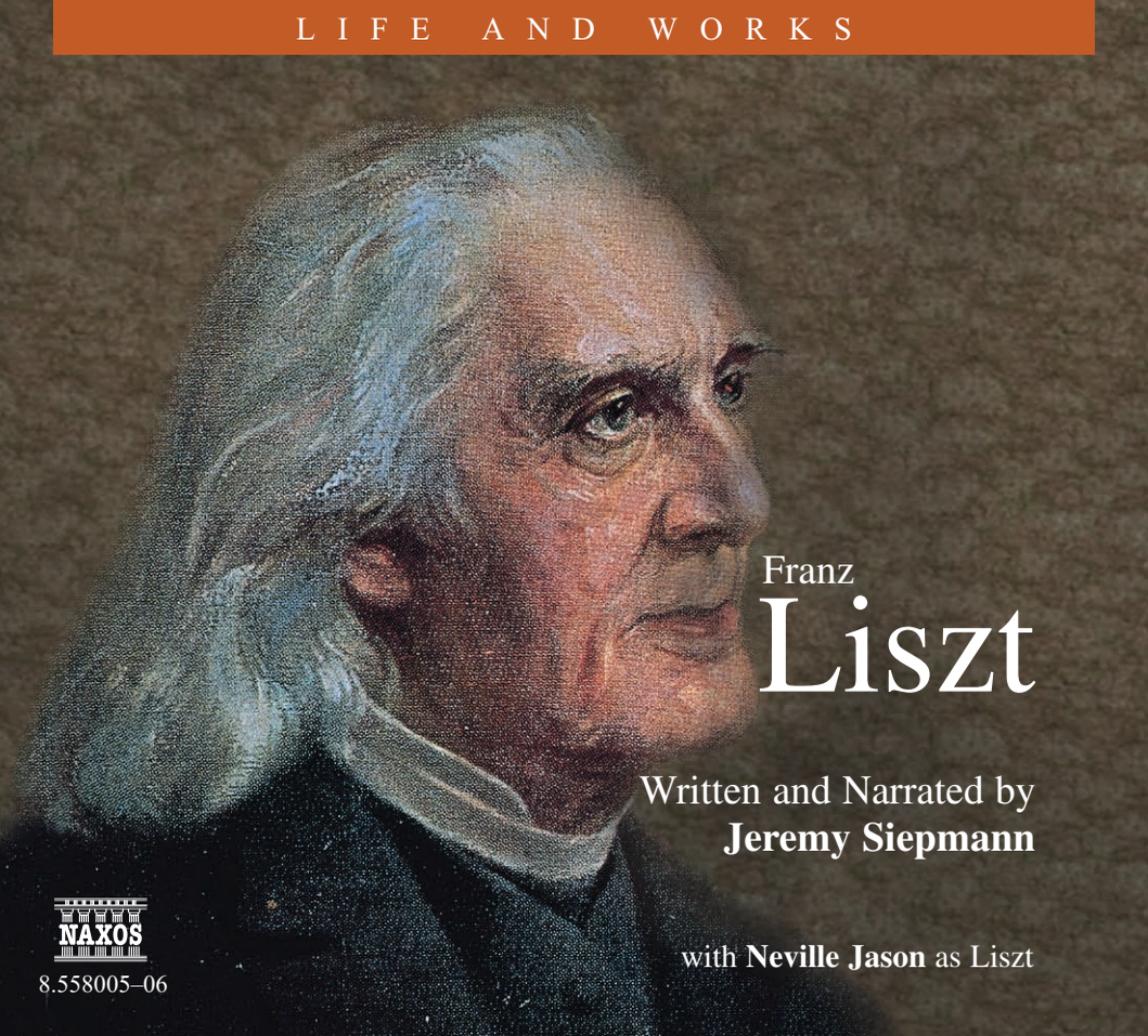


L I F E   A N D   W O R K S



Franz  
**Liszt**

Written and Narrated by  
**Jeremy Siepmann**

with **Neville Jason** as Liszt



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## Preface

If music is ‘about’ anything, it’s about life. No other medium can so quickly or more comprehensively lay bare the very soul of those who make or compose it. Biographies confined to the limitations of text are therefore at a serious disadvantage when it comes to the lives of composers. Only by combining verbal language with the music itself can one hope to achieve a fully rounded portrait. In the present series, the words of composers and their contemporaries are brought to life by distinguished actors in a narrative liberally spiced with musical illustrations.

The substantial booklet contains an assessment of the composer in relation to his era, an overview of his major works and their significance, a Graded Listening Plan, a summary of recommended books, a gallery of biographical entries on the most significant figures in his life and times, and a calendar of his life showing parallel developments in the arts, politics, philosophies, sciences and social developments of the day.

**Jeremy Siepmann**

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# *Franz Liszt*

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Cast

Jeremy Siepmann – Narrator  
Neville Jason – Liszt

Other parts read by  
David Timson  
Elaine Claxton  
Laura Paton  
Raphael Clarkson

## Jeremy Siepmann

Though long resident in England, Jeremy Siepmann was born and formally educated in the United States. Having completed his studies at the Mannes College of Music in New York, he moved to London at the suggestion of Sir Malcolm Sargent in 1964. After several years as a freelance lecturer he was invited to join the staff of London University. For most of the last 20 years he has confined his teaching activity to the piano, his pupils including pianists of worldwide repute.

As a writer he has contributed articles, reviews and interviews to numerous journals and reference works (including *New Statesman*, *The Musical Times*, *Gramophone*, *BBC Music Magazine*, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*), some of them being reprinted in book form (Oxford University Press, Robson Books). His books include a widely acclaimed biography of Chopin (*The Reluctant Romantic*, Gollancz/Northeastern University Press, 1995), two volumes on the history and literature of the piano, and a biography of Brahms (Everyman/EMI, 1997). In December 1997 he was appointed editor of *Piano* magazine.

His career as a broadcaster began in New York in 1963 with an East Coast radio series on the life and work of Mozart, described by Alistair Cooke as ‘the best music program on American radio’. On the strength of this, improbably, he was hired by the BBC as a humorist, in which capacity he furnished weekly satirical items on various aspects of American life.

After a long break he returned to broadcasting in 1977, since when he has devised, written and presented more than 1,000 programmes for the BBC, including the international-award-winning series ‘The Elements of Music’. In 1988 he was appointed Head of Music at the BBC World Service, broadcasting to an estimated audience of 135 million. He left the Corporation in Spring 1994 to form his own independent production company.

**Neville Jason** trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, where he was awarded the Diction Prize by Sir John Gielgud. He is a familiar voice on BBC Radio. For Naxos AudioBooks he has abridged and recorded Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* in 12 volumes.



**David Timson** trained at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, as both actor and singer. He has performed in modern and classic plays in the UK and abroad, and is a leading voice actor on radio and audiobook. For Naxos AudioBooks he has recorded volumes of Sherlock Holmes stories, and has directed *Twelfth Night* in which he also plays Feste.



**Elaine Claxton** has worked extensively in UK theatre, including London's Royal National Theatre. She has twice been a member of the BBC Radio Company, during which time she participated in over 200 broadcasts.



### **Karen Archer**

Karen Archer has worked for the Royal Shakespeare Company in *Nicholas Nickleby* and as Mrs Erlynne in *Lady Windermere's Fan*, as well as across the UK in plays such as *Ghosts*, *She Stoops to Conquer* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Her television appearances include *The Chief*, *Ruth Rendell Mysteries*, *Casualty* and *Chancer* and she has been seen in the films *The Secret Garden* and *Forever Young*.



Other parts played by **Laura Paton** and **Raphael Clarkson**.

# 1 Historical Background: The Nineteenth Century

## Overview

The nineteenth century, especially in Europe and North America, was an era of unprecedented change, peppered, inevitably, with wars and revolutions of almost every kind and at every level of society. The continuing advance of the Industrial Revolution, while far from abolishing poverty, brought new wealth to an ever-expanding middle class; factories proliferated throughout Europe, soon exceeding the supply of indigenous raw materials and thereby intensifying the impulse towards colonization. The British Empire increased its dominions dramatically, Africa was carved up by Britain and other European colonists, and despite increasing unease, the slave trade continued, though its days were numbered. It was outlawed throughout the British Empire in 1807, but it was not until 1870 that the last slave was shipped to the Americas.

Alarmed by European expansionism, China and Japan attempted to shut out the West altogether. But empire-building went on apace within Europe itself, never more dramatically than during the Napoleonic Wars (1799–1815), which had the incidental effect of igniting in countries from Italy to Russia a fervent nationalism which became a running feature of the century as a whole. In 1848 revolutions broke out all over Europe, and Marx and Engels published their epoch-making *Communist Manifesto*.

Revolutions in Latin America resulted in a spate of new countries whose territorial disputes

led to wars with each other. Of more lasting significance, in world terms, were the Crimean War (1853–56), in which Russia, Turkey, France, Austria and Piedmont Sardinia scrambled for territory as the Ottoman empire began to collapse, the American Civil War (1861–65), which brought slavery to an end in the United States, the Austro-Prussian War (1866) following Bismarck's dissolution of the German Confederation and leading to the creation of the modern German state and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the series of conflicts which led to the establishment of modern Italy in 1871, the Franco-Prussian War over European leadership (1870–71), and the Russo-Turkish War over control of the Balkans in 1877. In 1837 Queen Victoria began her 64-year reign in Britain, presiding over the most far-flung empire ever known (encompassing more than a quarter of the world's lands and people) while seeing the monarchy itself steadily reduced to a merely symbolic significance as increasing numbers became educated and acquired the right to vote.

By the time of Victoria's death in 1901, the world had changed more dramatically than in any previous century. Absolute monarchies had become the rare exception rather than the rule, workers in many countries had achieved conditions and rights beyond the dreams of their grandparents, literacy rates had quadrupled, trades unions were established and recognized in Germany, Britain and France, the Civil Rights Act had made citizens of all American blacks, socialist parties had been formed and recognized in many countries, child labour had been largely eradicated, women's rights had become a front-line issue, and more than 28 million people had cut their links with Europe and emigrated to America, contributing to the emergence of the United States as one of the world's greatest industrial and political powers.

Science and technology, as in the previous century, had expanded human knowledge to an unprecedented degree. When Joseph Lalande published his catalogue of 47,390 stars in 1801, he heralded a century of astronomical discovery both literal and figurative, not least on the medical front. The single greatest advance in medicine was undoubtedly the discovery by Pasteur and Koch that bacteria and viruses lead to infection, and the consequent mass immunizations against

more than 20 diseases, including such rapacious killers as smallpox, tuberculosis and cholera (the last having claimed more than 16,000 people in London alone in 1849). Other landmarks included the discovery of quinine as a cure for malaria, the introduction of ether as an anaesthetic in 1847, which with increased use of antiseptics resulted in unprecedented advances in surgery, and the invention of the X-ray in 1895, which revolutionized the diagnosis of illnesses and injuries, thereby saving and prolonging millions of lives.

Also belonging to the nineteenth century are the invention of steel; the birth and development of railways, both above and below ground, with incalculable effects on almost every branch of civilization (and warfare); the discovery and widespread dissemination of electricity as a major power source; the advent of the telephone, the bicycle, the washing machine, the typewriter; the gramophone, the transmission of radio waves, the oil drill. Indeed, towards the end of the century, electricity and oil were challenging the supremacy of coal and steam as the principal power sources of machines, leading to the internal combustion engine (hence also the motor car and the manufacture of plastics and artificial rubber).

Arms, as ever, played a key part in most economies. By the mid-century, the Krupp works at Essen in Germany had become the world's leading arms manufacturers, producing the first all-steel gun as early as 1850. In 1853, Samuel Colt, inventor of the single-barrelled pistol, revolutionized the small-arms business in the USA, working also on submarine mines and telegraphy; Richard Gatling, a trained physician, contributed to death and destruction in the American Civil War with his monstrous ten-barreled gun, firing 1200 shots a minute (a precursor of the Maxim machine gun of 1882).

But ploughshares flourished too. Agriculture, easily sidelined by the achievements of the Industrial Revolution, experienced revolutions of its own, with breeding experiments leading to ever bigger crops and fatter animals. Cyrus McCormick invented his reaping machine in America in 1831, heralding a new age of mechanized harvesting. Justus von Liebig's *Chemistry in its Application to Agriculture* inaugurated the age of scientific farming and the use of artificial

fertilizers in 1855. Agricultural colleges began to proliferate around the middle of the century, and by the last quarter of the century refrigerated ships began plying the Atlantic, leading to worldwide food markets (long before the establishment of domestic refrigerators).

### Trade

In the 1840s, Britain's adoption of a free trade policy (no customs duties) helped to establish London as the centre of world trade, with the pound sterling as the dominant currency. By the 1870s, many other countries introduced import levies as a means of protecting their own industries from economic imperialism. Regular steamship services were established between California and the Far East, and gun-running became a worldwide industry. On the domestic front, the invention of tinned foods and the advent of department stores in the second half of the century transformed the daily lives of countless housewives and domestics.

### Ideas

As might be expected in a time of such ferment, the century was rich in philosophers, though the ideas which had, and continue to have, the most impact came from other quarters.

Philosophically, the high ground was held by the Germans, much as the French had held it in the previous century. The great names are Hegel (1770–1831), Schopenhauer (1788–1860) and Nietzsche (1844–1900), all of whom were much concerned with music in one way or another. Nor should one forget the Danish Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855). Hegel argued that consciousness and the world of external objects were inseparable aspects of a single whole, and that truth is discoverable only through a dialectic process of contradiction and resolution – a thoroughly rationalist idea with clear parallels in the concept of sonata form. Schopenhauer took a more pessimistic view (and one more in keeping with the preoccupations of the romantics), in which the irrational will is seen as the governing principle of our perception, dominated by an endless cycle of desire and frustration from which the only escape is aesthetic contemplation. His thinking

had a powerful effect on both Wagner and Nietzsche, who rejected established concepts of Christian morality, Nietzsche proclaiming that ‘God is dead’ and postulating the ideal of the Übermensch, or ‘Superman’, who would impose his self-created will on the weak and the worthless – a view fully in keeping with the gargantuan nature of the Romantic ego, with its roots in the controlling powers of the Industrial Revolution and the spate of scientific discoveries which granted Man an ever greater mastery of his environment.

Kierkegaard, the founder of ‘existential’ philosophy, was fundamentally out of step with these ideas, taking what was in many ways a specifically Christian stance and arguing that no amount of rational thought could explain the uniqueness of individual experience or account for the existence of God, which could be understood only through a ‘leap of faith’. His suggestion that not only God but exceptional individuals stood outside the laws of morality, however, did not endear him to the established church.

The man who did more than anyone else, however, to undermine the basic tenets not only of Christianity but of all ‘creationist’ religions was neither a philosopher nor a theologian but a scientist. Charles Darwin’s theories of evolution, first set out in 1859 in *The Origin of Species*, have never lost their explosive power. Less revolutionary, but also explosive, were the ideas of Sigmund Freud (1865–1939), widely known as ‘the father of psychoanalysis’. Although his greatest influence and fame belong to the twentieth century, the essence of his approach was defined in the nineteenth, when he first developed his theories of the unconscious and infantile sexuality. His basically anti-religious stance, treated in his book *The Future of an Illusion*, was distinctly a product of nineteenth-century trends. The third most far-reaching idea of non-philosophical nineteenth-century thought (non-philosophical in a strictly academic sense) arose from an increasingly widespread concern with natural justice. The Quakers were the first European community which formally espoused the notion of sexual equality, but it was such pioneering individuals as Mary Wollstonecraft, Emmeline Pankhurst and Susan B. Anthony who really put the issue of women’s rights on the political agenda.

## The Arts

In the realm of literature it was the century of the novel, in which such writers as Dickens, Zola, Hugo, Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky managed both to absorb and entertain and to lay bare the realities of life for the mass of society who suffered rather than benefited from the effects of the Industrial Revolution. Others, like Thackeray, Austen, Stendahl, George Eliot and Flaubert, dealt in various ways with the lives, fantasies and pretensions of the upwardly-mobile middle class.

Timeless issues of love, death, disappointment and adventure were memorably explored by Sir Walter Scott, the fantastical E.T.A. Hoffmann, the three Brontë sisters, Joseph Conrad, Mark Twain, Thomas Hardy and Robert Louis Stevenson. Hoffmann, Conrad, Chekhov, Andersen and Maupassant proved themselves masters of the short story, and Wilkie Collins introduced a new genre, the detective novel. Meanwhile, dramatists like Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov and Shaw brought a new realism to the theatre. It was also the century of the great Romantic poets: Goethe, Wordsworth, Heine, Byron, Keats, Shelley, Coleridge and Pushkin. Of these, Goethe, Byron, Heine and Pushkin had the greatest impact on composers, prominent amongst them Schubert, Schumann, Liszt, Berlioz and Tchaikovsky. Later poets of importance include Baudelaire, Verlaine, Tennyson and Hopkins. In the world of painting and sculpture, the greatest figures in the earlier part of the century included Goya, Constable (heralding a new wave of landscape painters), Ingres (a natural classicist born into a century of Romanticism, he had much in common with Chopin, though not friendship), the arch-Romantics Géricault and Delacroix, whose obsession with the distant past arose from a characteristically Romantic distaste for the present, and the staggeringly original J.M.W. Turner, whose work foreshadowed the development of the French Impressionist school in the latter half of the century: Monet, Degas, Manet, Renoir, all of whom strove to represent nature, and to capture the changing effects of light and movement, mixing their colours on the canvas rather than on the palette. They were succeeded by the so-called Post-Impressionists (Cézanne, van Gogh, Gauguin, Seurat), who subscribed to no particular school or technique but sought a more objective, less spontaneous and evanescent style

than the Impressionists. Among sculptors, Auguste Rodin (1840–1917) stood in a class of his own – a romantic, a realist and a master of his craft with few rivals. At the end of the century came a new family of styles known as Art Nouveau, of which Aubrey Beardsley, Toulouse-Lautrec and Gustav Klimt were prominent though very different exponents. Equally influential in the realm of architecture, it largely rejected traditional western notions of symmetry, drawing much of its inspiration from the prints and buildings of Japan and reflecting a widespread hunger among western artists for a fundamental regeneration of the creative impulse. It ranged from the highly decorative to the boldly simple. In the realm of dance, ballet underwent some important transformations, including the introduction of tights, calf-length white dresses and toe-shoes. The technique of female dancers was developed at the expense of the male, who was reduced to a largely supporting role. In the modern repertoire, the most typical examples of Romantic ballet at its best are *La Sylphide* (1832) and *Giselle* (1841).

### Architecture

Nineteenth-century architecture in Europe and America reflected both the Romantic obsession with the past and industrialists' concerns with practicality and economy.

Public buildings tended for most of the century toward an ever more massive grandiosity, drawing on a wide variety of styles ranging from the distant to the recent past, often within a single building. A famous example, from 1835, are the neo-Gothic Houses of Parliament in London. Housing for the working class, however, bore many of the hallmarks of present-day factory-farming, consisting in the main of terraced brick houses – small, crowded, lacking in facilities which today we take for granted, and of a soul-numbing sameness. With the advent of steel, property developers discovered that a high density of housing, offices and work space could be achieved by building upwards instead of outwards, thereby economising on land and cost to themselves. Thus the skyscraper began its dominance of the urban landscape. The most famous of all, however, the Eiffel Tower in Paris (built for the great Paris Exhibition of 1889), had no

practical function whatever, beyond being a tourist attraction and a demonstration of modern building technology.

### Music

Never has an art known greater changes in so relatively short a time than music in the nineteenth century. When the century began, Beethoven was only 30, Schubert only three. Haydn (68) was still at the height of his powers. When it ended, Debussy's revolutionary *Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un Faune*, often cited, even today, as 'the beginning of modern music', was already seven years old, and Schoenberg (26), Ives (also 26), Bartok (19) and Stravinsky (18) were all fully active. In between, the end of the Classical era and the dawning of Romanticism could be seen in the maturest works of Beethoven and Schubert (whose symphonies, sonatas and chamber music reached previously undreamt-of proportions and expanded classical forms to their outermost limits). Harmony underwent unprecedented transformations, including the progressive dissolution of traditional tonality by Liszt, Wagner, Debussy, Mahler and Ives. The piano attained its full maturity and became the world's most popular and commercially successful instrument, while the art of orchestration became a front-line issue, thanks to the pioneering work of Berlioz, Liszt and Wagner. Nationalism became a driving force, especially in Russia (Glinka, Mussorgsky, Borodin, Balakirev), Bohemia (Dvorak, Smetana), Spain (Albeniz, Granados), Scandinavia (Grieg, Sibelius), Poland (Chopin), Hungary (Liszt), Italy (Verdi) and America (Gottschalk, Ives). There was a major shift from the relative 'objectivity' of the Classical era to the intensely emotional and formally self-generating outpourings of the Romantics. Illustrative 'programme' music achieved a popularity never approached before or since, and the cult of virtuosity became a dominant feature, thanks largely to Paganini and Liszt. The specialist (i.e. non-composing) performer became the rule rather than the exception (such figures were scarcely to be found in the previous century), and musical schools and conservatories became commonplace. Despite this, the discipline of counterpoint, hitherto amongst the most highly prized of musical attributes, fell

into widespread disuse, though it plays an important part in the music of Liszt, Wagner, Brahms and Richard Strauss. In the works of Schubert, Lanner, Weber and the Strauss family, the waltz became the most popular form of the century, closely followed by the Victorian after-dinner ballad. Forms in general polarized, from the millions of piano ‘miniatures’ and ‘character pieces’ to the gargantuan music dramas of Wagner, the sprawling symphonies of Bruckner and Mahler and the extravagantly coloured symphonic works of Richard Strauss. And quite apart from Wagner, it was the century of Grand Opera, whose most prominent exponents included Meyerbeer, Auber, Halévy and Massenet. Their works were long (five acts) and spectacularly staged, complete with ballet and special effects. It was also the century of comic operetta, exemplified by the entertainments of Gilbert and Sullivan, Offenbach and Johann Strauss. Late in the century came the sometimes grimly realistic *verismo* school of opera, foreshadowed by Bizet’s *Carmen* but most famously manifested in the works of Puccini, Mascagni and Leoncavallo.

## Liszt and the Romantic Century 2

I consider Liszt the greatest man I have ever met. By this I mean that I have never met, in any other walk of life, a man of such mental grasp, splendid disposition and glorious genius. I have met many, many great men, rulers, jurists, authors, scientists, teachers, merchants and warriors, but never have I met a man, in any position, whom I have not thought would have proved the inferior of Franz Liszt, had Liszt chosen to follow the career of the man in question. Liszt's personality can only be expressed by one word, 'colossal'.

Alfred Reisenauer (1863–1907)  
Pianist, composer and pupil of Liszt

In many ways, Liszt was the ultimate Romantic. By comparison, even Schumann seems conservative today, and Chopin, while writing, like Schumann, extraordinarily Romantic music, felt himself out of sympathy with almost every aspect of the Romantic movement (the only two composers he loved unreservedly being Mozart and Bach). What they all had in common was the time in which they lived.

At the time of Liszt's birth, the world was changing rapidly, and not only in Europe. The United States was growing fast, the British Empire was expanding eastwards and into the Indian subcontinent, the Industrial Revolution, born in the England of the 1780s, was transforming

society at a rate without precedent. As machinery increasingly helped to subjugate the earth, as men acquired powers hitherto regarded as the province of the Almighty, religion itself began to be called into question. With the advent of the Machine Age came increased prosperity. With increased prosperity came an increasing population. Parallel to the Industrial Revolution was a new, commercial revolution. Trade between Europe and Africa, Asia and the Americas expanded dramatically. Communications spiralled outwards and upwards, new roads, the growth of railways, the invention of telegraphy, all introduced a new variety into everyday life, particularly in Europe, the epicentre of commercial expansion. In every corner of the world mankind was in the ascendant. The clear-cut stratifications of eighteenth-century European society, well-suited to the prevailing logic and principled objectivity of the Enlightenment, with its reverence for design and order, were increasingly supplanted by a new fluidity. Social control was passing inexorably from a long-dominant aristocracy to a rapidly increasing and prosperous middle class. And as music had been an adornment of the ruling classes, so it now became cultivated as a symbol of genteel prosperity by the inexorably rising bourgeoisie. Decreasingly the emblem of a controlling power, it became a potent source of individual expression. As the nineteenth century advanced, so the cult of the hero gained ground. The Romantic ego became colossal. As humanity increasingly usurped the prerogatives of God, the concept of the one against the many emboldened the previously oppressed. A natural by-product of this was a surge of nationalism which rocked the world through most of the nineteenth century. Subject nations threw off their shackles, or suffered grievously in the attempt, hence the wave of political revolutions prevailing in Europe at the time of Liszt's birth and through most of his life.

Music in the Classical era, that is to say most of the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth, was based on preconceived notions of order, proportion and grace. Beauty and symmetry of form were objects of worship in themselves and combined to create a Utopian image, an idealisation of universal experience. In the Romantic Age, which lasted from the death of Beethoven to the outbreak of the First World War, this was largely replaced by a cult of

individual expression, the crystalization of the experience of the moment, the unfettered confession of powerful emotions and primal urges, the glorification of sensuality, a flirtation with the supernatural, an emphasis on spontaneity and improvisation, and the cultivation of extremes – emotional, sensual, spiritual and structural. Where a near-reverence for symmetry had characterized the classical era, Romanticism delighted in asymmetry. And if there was a rebellion against the tenets of the recent past, there was an almost ritualized nostalgia for the distant past and in many cases an obsession with literature and descriptive imagery. Form was no longer seen as a receptacle but as a by-product of emotion, to be generated from within. While the great Romantic painters covered their canvases with grandiose landscapes, lavish depictions of atmospheric ruins, historical scenes, portraits of legendary heroes and so on, the great Romantic composers, Liszt, Berlioz and Wagner most of all, attempted similar representations – in sound, but not by sound alone. Notes, rhythms, tone colours and melodic fragments were consciously related to specific ideas, to characters and their development. Music took on an illustrative function to a degree never previously attempted. In its cultivation and transformations of folk music (or that which was mistakenly perceived as folk music), it became an agent of the nationalism that fired the souls not only of Wagner and Liszt, but of Chopin, Glinka, Mussorgsky, Borodin, Balakirev, Rimsky-Korsakov, Verdi, Grieg, Brahms, Richard Strauss, Smetana, Dvorak, Albeniz, Granados, Falla, Saint-Saëns, Debussy, Bartok, Vaughan Williams, Sibelius, Charles Ives, George Gershwin, Aaron Copland – all of whom can be considered as Romantics, irrespective of their dates. In the music dramas of Wagner, all arts become part of a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

A further feature of the Romantic imagination was a taste for extravagance. Grand opera, particularly in Paris, anticipated the Biblical spectaculars of Hollywood in its heyday, and many of Liszt's more flamboyant operatic 'paraphrases' honoured it in kind. In the symphonic works of Berlioz, Strauss, Mahler, Bruckner and the pre-revolutionary Schoenberg, orchestras assumed gargantuan proportions, while the nineteenth-century oratorio tradition in England and Germany

resulted in choruses not only of hundreds (300 was commonplace) but even of thousands. At a concert in Boston, Massachusetts in 1872, Johann Strauss the Younger conducted an orchestra of 2,000 and a chorus ten times that size (presumably equipped with telescopes). Nor was the humble piano excluded from such excesses. The French composer-pianist Henri Herz was a pioneer of the multipiano jamboree, but was outclassed by the American Louis Moreau Gottschalk, who mounted in Havana, Cuba, a concert featuring no fewer than 40 pianos. This, then, was the world in which Liszt flourished (though he stood apart from the cult of musical elephantiasis), and in which he ultimately failed, writing beyond the understanding of all but a few of his contemporaries. In his final phase as a composer he was quite consciously writing for generations yet unborn.

## The Major Works and their Significance 3

The sheer quantity of Liszt's work is mind-boggling in itself. Between his 1822 Variation on a Waltz by Diabelli, composed when he was twelve, and the last prophetic piano works of 1885, lie well over a thousand pieces: piano works, songs, choral and orchestral works, pieces for organ, chamber music (though not much of that) and an opera, *Don Sanche*, composed when he was fourteen. He remains best known for his solo piano music, but what most of us will hear in a lifetime represents only a fraction of his total output. Next in popularity comes a generous handful of orchestral works, dominated by the concertos and the Hungarian Rhapsodies (originally for solo piano), and after that almost everything is relatively unfamiliar, even to most musicians. Few of the choral works are performed at all (or ever have been), the organ music has never approached popularity, though there are musicians who rate some of it very highly, the songs are familiar, by and large, only to confirmed devotees, and the chamber music is neglected so thoroughly that few musicians even know of its existence. Since the name of Liszt is almost synonymous with the piano, it is there that the following survey begins.

### 'Paganini' Etudes

These are the earliest of Liszt's works to find and maintain a central place in the repertoire. They consist of brilliant, highly pianistic arrangements of works by Paganini himself. Five are based

on some of the demon fiddler's fiendishly taxing Caprices for Unaccompanied Violin, but it is the third, *La Campanella* (based on the finale of Paganini's Concerto in B minor), which has won the most hearts, and it can be heard in its entirety on CD 1, Track 2 of the present set. These studies were the first to which Liszt attached the name 'transcendental', and they aim to do for the piano what Paganini did for the violin, namely to combine musical substance (these are definitely concert works, not 'practice pieces') with a significant expansion of instrumental technique. Like so many of Liszt's works, they display his extraordinary skill in transferring music of one medium into the idiom of another.

### Transcendental Etudes

As their name implies, these twelve pieces were designed to stretch the player's capacities to a point beyond the reach of any previous etudes. And so they do, with the exception of Chopin's two sets of Etudes, Opp. 10 and 25, which had a formative influence on Liszt. Liszt's obsession with technical virtuosity predates even his first hearing of Paganini (but then his only important teacher was Carl Czerny, who is known today almost entirely for his exercises and studies, so this may not be so surprising!). His first published piece, written when he was only twelve, is a virtuoso study in all but name, and when he was only fourteen he composed a set of twelve studies and exercises and his first version of the 'Transcendentals', which was so chock-a-block with fiendish difficulties that most pianists have given them a wide berth. As with the *Années de Pèlerinage*, the 'Transcendentals' are more familiar individually than as a set, especially the wild *Mazepa*, the shimmering *Feux follets* (Will o' the Wisp), and the subtle, poetical and evocatively named *Harmonies de soir* (Evening Harmonies). The second, untitled study of the set can be heard complete on CD 1, Track 9. Typically for Liszt, most of the pieces have some external reference, if not an actual 'programme' behind them. The galloping hoofs of No. 8, *Wilde Jagd* (Furious Chase) are unmistakable, and the swirling eddies and blanketing snow in No. 12, *Chasse-neige*, are almost visible. In its programmatic content, *Mazepa*, drawing on poems by

Victor Hugo and Lord Byron, looks forward to the symphonic poems of Liszt's Weimar years.

### Concert Studies

This term was used by Liszt for two sets of Etudes smaller than those discussed above, but it hardly implies that the earlier studies were not intended for the concert hall. Of these later examples, the most popular are the fantastical *Gnomensreigen* (Dance of the Gnomes) from the first set, the deeply lyrical *Il Sospiro* (The Sigh), and *La Leggerezza* (Lightness), a beautiful exercise in poetic virtuosity which is almost entirely without bravura.

### Années de Pèlerinage

Literally translated as 'Years of Pilgrimage', the name denotes the three collections of pieces in which Liszt recalls his years of travel in Switzerland and Italy in the company of the Countess Marie d'Agoult (the years which also saw the birth of their three children). Although they were published in sets, several of the pieces have flourished on their own and are more often played separately than together. The first book, covering Liszt's Swiss years, is based on an earlier set, the *Album d'un voyageur*, and is essentially a series of nature studies, containing some of Liszt's most inspired and evocative tone-painting. One of the hallmarks of Liszt's music is a certain pictorial element, blended with a clearly established mood to evoke the place, object or state of mind being 'described'. In the Swiss book, for instance, we find 'The Chapel of William Tell' evoked with atmospheric echo effects, we can practically hear the lapping waters of the Lake at Wallenstadt in the continuous, gently undulating accompaniment (CD 1, Track 4), and 'The Clocks of Geneva' are depicted with a variety of vivid bell effects. The other pieces in the first book include the evocation of a mountain spring (the beautiful and famous *Au bord d'une source*, a spectacular Alpine storm (*l'Orage*), and towering over them all, despite its title, is the lengthy and highly dramatic *Vallée d'Obermann*, this one inspired by a literary source – a novel by the French writer Etienne Pivert de Senancour which is set in Switzerland. In addition to its artistic

merit, this is a relatively early example of Liszt's famous 'transformation of themes'. Almost everything in this broad (15-minute) canvas is derived from the very opening. Its use of harmony, too, was very bold and adventurous for its time.

The Second Year draws on Liszt's experiences in Italy, and derives its inspiration from the world of art in virtually every sense. All the pieces in it date from his years as a travelling virtuoso, yet only two give any hint of this (the *Sonnetto del Petrarca No. 104* and the so-called *Dante Sonata*). Even in this relatively early part of his life, Liszt the composer was already anticipating many of the most important 'innovations' of Wagner, Debussy and Mahler.

The first piece, *Sposalizio*, was inspired by the Raphael painting of the same name and is one of Liszt's loveliest lyrical meditations. Characteristically built out of the two ideas juxtaposed at the very beginning (and later interwoven to wonderful effect), the piece is prophetic of Debussy. At several points the piece is so close to Debussy's first *Arabesque* that the similarity is unlikely to have been coincidental. But, ironically, the Liszt is actually more 'impressionistic' than the Debussy.

In his short but intense reflection on Michelangelo's famous sculpture *Il Penseroso* (The Thinker), Liszt the prophet now anticipates Wagner. The chromaticism of the harmonies at the end seems to point straight to Wagner's *Tristan*. More helpful than any analytical observations here is Liszt's heading of the score with a quote from Michelangelo: 'I am thankful to sleep, and more thankful to be made of stone. So long as injustice and shame remain on earth, I count it a blessing not to see or feel; so do not wake me – speak softly!'

If *Il Penseroso* is 'un-Lisztian' in its terseness and pianistic economy, the delightful *Canzonetta del Salvator Rosa* is equally surprising in its carefree charm and simplicity (and if the tune really is by the celebrated seventeenth-century painter, poet and bandit of the title, then he too was ahead of his time).

The three 'Petrarch Sonnets' are arrangements by Liszt of three of his early songs, though characteristically they never sound like transcriptions and are in some senses wholesale recompositions. The restless, syncopated unease in the first Sonnet, for instance, has no

counterpart in the original song, and the resplendent, sometimes extravagant pianistics of the second are hardly the kind of thing the average tenor would welcome in an accompanist.

Towering over its companions in this second book, as ‘Obermann’ did in the First, is the so-called *Dante Sonata* (officially entitled *Après une lecture du Dante*, after a poem by Victor Hugo). Essentially a depiction of hell, it begins with an ominous, disturbingly suspenseful introduction, which provides the germ of most of the thematic devices that follow and leads us from the dread portals to the Inferno itself, with its flickering shadows and increasing din. The second main theme, a chorale-like subject with cascading double octaves emphasising the theme of ‘descent’, is the only main part of the design not derived from the introduction. After a repetition of the introductory material, the chorale is unexpectedly transformed into a rapt love duet, which is then violently interrupted, and we are conveyed to the central development section, in which the material of the introduction reaches its apotheosis. In the final section we are given a glimpse of Paradise (in which Liszt’s intended transcendence of the piano’s limitations doesn’t quite come off) and the piece ends with a coda of intense theatricality.

The third and final book is also based on Liszt’s Italian impressions but was written many years after the previous volumes, and consists almost entirely of ‘religious’, ‘contemplative’, ‘prophetic’ music, almost entirely shorn of pianistic bravura, and inhabiting a predominantly stark, harmonically bold and stringently economical compositional world. Only one of its seven pieces could really be said to have won popular favour: *Les jeux d’eau à la Villa d’Este* provided the model for most of the musical ‘fountains’ evoked by later composers (not least Ravel’s *Jeux d’eau*) and is the only piece in the set to recall the younger Liszt of the first two books.

### The Sonata in B minor

This is generally agreed to be the greatest of all Liszt’s keyboard works, and many would go further and claim it as the crowning masterpiece of his entire output. Like so many of his works, its guiding compositional principle is the so-called ‘transformation of themes’. Although the term

itself is identified with Liszt above all others, the idea of a particular theme being continually altered according to its changing context was not, in fact, Liszt's own (Beethoven, Schubert and Berlioz had got there first); but he carried it to previously unexplored lengths and in the process laid the foundation-stone of the Wagnerian Leitmotiv. Cast in one enormous movement, it uses the 'three for the price of one' principle which was one of the hallmarks of Liszt's approach to form. Within the tight-knit integrity of its overall structure it contains the equivalent of the several individual movements associated with the sonatas and symphonies of the Classical period (strictly speaking, that of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven). Its expressive range and power have all the impact of a major opera condensed into a single act, yet the entire work is based on thematic material given out in its opening bars.

#### Operatic paraphrases

Few forms of music-making were more popular in the mid-nineteenth century than the pot-pourris and free-wheeling keyboard fantasies on fashionable opera tunes which were standard fare for virtually every performing pianist. Liszt wrote and improvised a great many such pieces, some of which are little better than accomplished pot-boilers, but there are some which have real musical substance and are still played today entirely on grounds of merit. Of these, the most successful are those based on Bellini's *Norma* (in which Liszt summarizes the musical plot of the entire opera in highly concentrated form), Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (where the focus is on three particular aspects of the opera as a whole), Verdi's *Rigoletto* (based on a single scene) and the Waltz from Gounod's *Faust* (drawing mainly on the waltz scene in Act I but with transfusions from the love duet in Act II for the lyrical middle section).

#### Arrangements and transcriptions

Liszt was perhaps the greatest arranger of all time, and it was through his transcriptions and performances that many people first came to know the Beethoven symphonies, many of

Schubert's songs, generous chunks of Wagner's operas, Bach organ works and many other pieces. In some ways the most remarkable of all is his amazing recasting of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* (perhaps the most brilliantly idiomatic orchestral work yet composed at the time) in purely pianistic terms: the second movement can be heard complete on CD 2, Track 3. That he did it when he was only 22 makes it almost miraculous. While some of his arrangements sound almost like wholesale takeover bids in which the original composer is all but smothered, others, like his superb and deeply respectful Bach transcriptions, are so faithful that they don't sound like arrangements at all – a tribute to the extraordinary skill of the transcriber.

### Hungarian Rhapsodies

For a long time these were among Liszt's most popular pieces. There are nineteen in all, written over a period of some 40 years (1846–86), and they exist in both pianistic and orchestral forms. In their extreme flexibility, their slightly middle-eastern exoticism and their shamelessly manipulative style, they reflect not the indigenous Hungarian folk tradition but the more commercialised music of the Hungarian gypsies, whose music, temperament and traditions acted on Liszt, in his own words, 'like a drug' (in fact, not even the gypsies' material was original; most of it had been embezzled from music composed by sophisticated middle-class Hungarians in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries). The *Hungarian Rhapsodies* bring us face to face with Liszt the unabashed entertainer, the dazzling virtuoso whose feats at the keyboard so often drove his audiences into a frenzy of excitement. Like Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, their form in general is highly sectional, and in several cases extended passages can be left out or re-ordered without any serious loss to the music's effectiveness.

### Miscellaneous miniatures

The idea that all of Liszt's piano pieces are forbiddingly difficult, or at any rate beyond the reach of the average amateur, is easily disposed of in the *Six Consolations* (of which the third

can be heard complete on CD 1, Track 12) and the second and third of the *Liebesträume* (again the favourite here is No. 3, which, historically speaking, may well qualify as his single most popular piece). The famous *Mephisto Waltz No. 1* is perhaps a little long to be classed as a miniature, but no survey of Liszt's piano music would be complete without it. This, however, is an out-and-out virtuoso vehicle, immensely taxing for most players – and every bit as devilish as its title suggests.

### Religious piano works

Religion played a central part in Liszt's life from childhood onwards, and many of his piano works have a religious basis. His first 'mature' composition, a single piece with the title *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*, signalled not only his spiritual bent but his already emerging revolutionary tendencies: major portions of it have no key or time signature, and almost everything in it is based on a single theme (the 'transformational' principle was already at work). Far more famous than this isolated piece, however, is the later set of ten to which he gave the same name. Three pieces in particular stand out here: No. 3, the *Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude*, one of Liszt's most contemplative, even mystical works; No. 4, *Pensées de mort*, which is actually a revised version of the original one-piece *harmonie*; and the monumental *Funérailles*, commemorating the execution by Austria in 1849 of thirteen Hungarian generals who had allied themselves with the cause of Hungarian independence. In addition to its Hungarian connections, the piece is widely believed to be an elegy, too, for Chopin who had recently died at the age of 39, and whose famous A flat Polonaise finds clear echoes in the memorable octave passage of *Funérailles*. Also important are the two 'Legends' of 1863: *St Francis of Assisi Preaching to the Birds* and *St Francis of Paola Walking on the Water*, both of which contain some extraordinarily original and effective tone-painting, though these are always subordinated to the spiritual and emotional character of the pieces as a whole.

### Late piano works

In his later years, Liszt's piano writing underwent an extraordinary transformation. The fourteen-notes-to-a-dozen associated with the younger, virtuoso Liszt gave way to an austere, inward-looking, prophetic stream of pieces whose economy of means and 'modern' harmonies seem to anticipate many of the 'innovations' of such progressive masters as Debussy and Bartok, even Schoenberg. Outstanding in this respect are the *Bagatelle sans tonalité*, *Nuages gris*, *La lugubre gondola*, and *Unstern* (which can be heard complete in the final track of CD 2).

### Organ works

There are not many of these, but two in particular call for comment: the *Fantasy and Fugue on 'Ad nos, ad salutarem undam'* (from Meyerbeer's opera *Le Prophète*) and the *Prelude and Fugue on BACH* [in German-speaking countries the letter B stands for 'B flat' and the letter H for 'B']. Like the great B minor Sonata for piano, the first of these is a huge work, generally lasting more than half an hour in performance, and is in three sections to be played without a break. The second is less than half as long but no less striking. Both works are intensely chromatic, and the opening of the fugue in the latter anticipates the atonality (keylessness) pioneered by Arnold Schoenberg in the early twentieth century. No such dramatic and expressive works had been written for the organ since the death of Bach, and both have had a significant influence on later composers. Both works were also arranged for the piano by Liszt himself.

### Orchestral works

Apart from his two Piano Concertos and the *Totentanz*, all still at the centre of the repertoire, Liszt's most important orchestral works are the programmatic '*Dante*' and '*Faust*' *Symphonies* (surprisingly seldom performed despite the great esteem in which they are held by many musicians) and the symphonic poems, almost all of which are products of his Weimar period (1848–58). Unlike the more spacious, even epic symphonies, the symphonic poems are all one-

movement works, characteristically written to a specific ‘programme’ (though not often a strictly narrative one), and are principally concerned with the expression of mood through the now almost standardized ‘transformation of themes’. Among the most famous of the symphonic poems are *Les Préludes* (still the most popular, despite the tut-tutting of many musicians), *Tasso*, *Prometheus*, *Orpheus* and *Hamlet*, all of which actually began life as theatrical overtures. Others have their inspiration in particular poems (most notably by Hugo, Schiller and Byron), or were reworkings of earlier pieces (*Mazeppa*, for instance, which has its origin in the *Transcendental Étude* of the same name). Some were inspired by specific works of art, like the blatantly descriptive *Hunnenschlacht* (prompted by Kaulbach’s fresco ‘The Battle of the Huns’), while others, like *Hamlet*, are primarily character studies. The symphonic poems had a great influence on such later composers as Richard Strauss, Dvorak, Smetana and Sibelius, but they nevertheless fail to establish anything which can be recognised as ‘symphonic poem form’. Structurally speaking, each is a law unto itself.

Liszt’s two large-scale symphonies are both inspired by literature. The ‘*Faust*’ *Symphony*, however, does not set out to illustrate the story of Goethe’s most famous play, but presents instead deeply considered portraits of the three main characters, Faust, Gretchen and Mephistopheles. Typically, Liszt draws on his transformational powers and builds the whole immense ‘Faust’ portrait (roughly half an hour) out of a mere five short phrases. The second movement, ‘Gretchen’, displays among other things Liszt’s hard-won mastery of orchestration. The instrumentation is wonderfully light and beautifully ‘lit’ – more so, by far, than in most of the orchestral landscapes penned by his contemporaries. And the final movement, ‘Mephistopheles’, shows a dramatic mastery which would be a credit to the finest opera composer (yet strangely, *Don Sanche*, composed when he was fourteen, was the only opera Liszt himself ever wrote).

In the ‘*Dante*’ *Symphony*, Liszt originally set out to devote a movement each to the three books of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* (*Inferno*, *Purgatory* and *Paradise*), but Wagner persuaded him that the joys of heaven were beyond adequate expression by earthly man, so the symphony ends with a

choral Magnificat for which Liszt specified that the chorus should be unseen.

It's no surprise that the three most frequently performed of Liszt's orchestral works all feature the piano. The two Piano Concertos date from the 1830s, the *Totentanz* from the 1850s, though its first version was completed in 1849. Like Schubert's *Wanderer Fantasy* (which Liszt actually arranged for piano and orchestra), both concertos are characteristically four-in-one affairs. Their movements, or movement-equivalents, are to be played without a break, and as with the Schubert they are thematically linked. Many musicians have turned up their noses at the First Concerto, in E flat major, finding it vulgar and superficial, but it steadfastly holds its place in the repertoire and continues to win many very distinguished champions – amongst pianists and conductors alike. Once derided for such touches as the inclusion of a triangle in the instrumentation, it has many instances of beautiful, even chamber-like orchestration. The Second Concerto, in A major, is less showy and more obviously poetical, and its chamber-like qualities have endeared it to many who find its predecessor a trifle bombastic. Superior to both, however, in almost every respect, is the later *Totentanz* – an often grim but spectacularly effective Dance of Death in the form of variations on the medieval plainchant *Dies irae*. No work by Liszt surpasses the vividness and aptness of its orchestration, or the ingenuity and power of its dramatic plotting.

### Choral works

Liszt began early here. His first sacred choral work was composed when he was eleven years old. His aim from the start was to express and to engender in his listeners' 'religious absorption, and Catholic devotion and exaltation'. The biggest, and from that point of view the most important, of his choral works are the two oratorios *Christus* and *St Elizabeth*. On hearing the former, the philosopher Nietzsche wrote that in it Liszt had 'found the character of the Indian Nirvana excellently' (so much for 'Catholic exaltation!'). Both oratorios contain some outstanding, ingenious and powerful music but are extremely uneven in quality. Other choral works with a claim on any music lover's attention are the *Gran* and *Hungarian Coronation Masses*, the setting

of Psalm XIII for tenor, chorus and orchestra, and most interestingly of all (not least for its extremely modernistic harmonies), the *Via Crucis* for soloists, chorus and organ (or piano).

## A Graded Listening Plan 4

Liszt's music runs the full gamut from the instantly entertaining and attractive to the weird, intense and forbidding. The following list progresses from the most accessible to the most elusive and is no more than a suggested itinerary.

#### Consolation No. 3 in D flat

One could almost safely say that if you don't like this you won't like Liszt, except that nothing is that black and white. In any case you can hear it complete on CD 1, Track 12, and so can judge for yourself. The piece is strongly influenced by Chopin and gives us Liszt at his most naturally lyrical and poetic. (See also Naxos 8.553516.)

#### Liebstraum No. 3

This work (to be found on Naxos 8.550052) is a similarly tender, song-like piece which for a long time was Liszt's most popular single work.

#### La Campanella

This (complete on CD 1, Track 2) is the most popular of the *Six Paganini Etudes* (Naxos 8.550510). It combines a graceful lyricism with dramatic interludes and its dazzling virtuosity only really comes off if the pianist can make it all sound easy. Less flamboyant are the two

beautiful Concert Études *Un Sospiro* and *La Leggerezza*, which gives us Liszt at his most Chopinesque and effortlessly poetical.

### The Hungarian Rhapsodies

The Hungarian Rhapsodies (Naxos 8.550142) are unashamed crowd-pleasers, but a few of the more bombastic give us Liszt well below his best and in some of them you could drive a truck through the seams. The most substantial and musically cohesive (and therefore the favourite of many musicians) is No. 13 in A minor, but the most popular are Nos 2, 6 and 12, which offer pure entertainment with bushels of glitz and pianistic pyrotechnics. In a similar vein, with a flamenco accent, is the *Rhapsodie espagnole*.

### Années de pèlerinage

Of the three books or ‘years’, the first, Switzerland (Naxos 8.550548), is perhaps the most immediately gratifying. The high drama of *Orage* and the *Vallée d’Obermann* may take some getting used to, but the gentle lyricism and delicate tone-painting of the more pastoral pieces, especially *Au lac du Wallenstadt* and *Au bord d’une source*, are among Liszt’s most unselfconscious and atmospheric evocations.

The second book, Italy (Naxos 8.550549), is in some ways more sophisticated. Again there’s something for almost every mood, the most light-hearted being the delightful *Canzonetta del Salvatore Rosa*. The most dramatic is undoubtedly the so-called ‘Dante Sonata’ (formal name: *Après une lecture du Dante*). For many listeners, however, this may be the hardest nut to crack. Speaking for myself, it took me years to come round to it, but come around I certainly did. You can sample a substantial chunk of it on CD 1, Track 7.

In the last book (Naxos 8.550550), the most immediately absorbing and engaging piece is *Les jeux d’eau à la Villa d’Este*, a truly impressionistic study in tone-painting which influenced both Debussy and Ravel.

A splendid way of discovering Liszt is to approach him through his many transcriptions, arrangements and paraphrases. In some of the straight transcriptions, however, Liszt is so faithful to the original (especially in the Bach organ works and Beethoven Symphonies) that his own personality is basically undiscernible. Of the freer and more easy-going arrangements, none is more captivating than the bouquet of Schubert arrangements known as the *Soirée de Vienne No. 6*, and none more compelling and dramatic than his terrifying (and colossally difficult) arrangement of Schubert's *Erl King* (Naxos 8.553062). From here, go on to some of his many other and highly varied treatments of Schubert's songs, then try the arrangement of the *Liebestod* from Wagner's *Tristan* and the Paraphrase of Verdi's *Rigoletto* before risking your sensibilities with the *Reminiscences de Don Juan*, a (to some almost sacrilegious) transformation of themes from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.

Few works from Liszt's middle years have achieved the tremendous popularity of the spine-tingling *Mephisto Waltz No. 1*, while Nos 2 and 3, written some 20 years later, are more elusive and remain virtually unknown to all but confirmed Lisztophiles.

Of the works for piano and orchestra, the best to start with would be the Piano Concerto No. 2 in A major. Then try the somewhat flashier Concerto No. 1 before moving on to the demonic *Totentanz*, which is in many ways the best of the lot (all on Naxos 8.550187).

Liszt's many avowedly religious piano pieces are couched for the most part in a very personal idiom and whether they touch you or not is almost entirely a matter of temperamental affinity rather than musical sophistication. If they don't reach you at first, give it time and then come back to them now and again. It's a taste which, once acquired, seldom lapses. Among the most moving, for many people, are the two *St Francis Legends* and the *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* (Naxos 8.553073 and 8.553516) (especially the *Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude* and the anguished, mighty *Funérailles*).

The *Sonata in B minor* (Naxos 8.550510) – one of the great monuments of nineteenth-century piano music – is in the repertoire of most pianists with the technique to play it, but if you're

reasonably new to Liszt, work your way up to it through some of the works discussed above. At half-an-hour plus, it requires great concentration from the listener as well as the performer and it has to be said that there are a sizeable number of music-lovers who find it overlong and excessively ‘intellectual’. Seasoned Lisztians know better. It is, however, essentially a symphony for the piano, and players who try and turn it into a bravura virtuoso vehicle generally do both it and the listener a disservice. Virtuosity there is in abundance, but here (unlike an awful lot of Liszt) it is at all times a means to strictly musical ends, never an end in itself.

Some, perhaps even most, of Liszt’s late piano works seem almost like something from another world. Spare, austere, bleak, elusive, daring, some of it astonishingly original – almost all of it fascinating. Volume I of the Naxos Complete Edition (8.553852) makes an excellent introduction, including the futuristic *Nuages gris*, the two pieces entitled *La lugubre gondola* and *Unstern* (played complete on CD 2, Track 10).

Liszt’s purely orchestral music, for the most part, remains relatively unfamiliar to many music lovers and is probably best approached through the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* (all arrangements of the piano originals), before going on to explore some of the symphonic poems. Of the latter, try *Orpheus* and *Hamlet* for starters (Naxos 8.553355). *From the Cradle to the Grave* is among the most beautiful of all (also on Naxos 8.553355; the opening section is here on CD 2, Track 6.) Only after this would I recommend approaching the big ‘*Faust*’ and ‘*Dante*’ *Symphonies*, but these things are always extraordinarily subjective and personal.

From this point on, the Lisztian world is your oyster. For many listeners, the organ works are among Liszt’s more unapproachable and forbidding pieces. Of the keyboard works, they should perhaps come last if you aren’t already a confirmed Liszt lover. And if you aren’t much enamoured of the organ itself, try the piano transcriptions made by Liszt himself. The choral music, while much of it has been greatly admired by musicians, is probably still unfamiliar to most music lovers, and much of it is extremely long and uneven. Best, perhaps, to save this realm for the last, though you can get a taste of it in the *Ave Maria* on CD 2, Track 8 (from Naxos 8.553786).

## Recommended Reading 5

The number of books about Liszt is enormous, as is his published correspondence. However, there are five which are likely to tell you as much about the man, his music and his time as you'll ever want to know. Start with Derek Watson's *Liszt* in the well-known Master Musicians series. It's in one volume (c. 400 pages), is available in paperback, and comes warmly recommended by two of the most distinguished Lisztians of our time, the pianist Alfred Brendel, who hails it as 'one of the best books on Liszt in any language', and Professor Alan Walker, whose own three-volume biography is likely to remain the definitive work on the subject: exceptionally well written, unequalled in the breadth and depth of its research and penetrating in its insights, both musical and psychological – it has no rivals. It is published in Britain by Faber & Faber and in America by Alfred A. Knopf. Also highly absorbing is Adrian Williams's *Portrait of Liszt, by Himself and his Contemporaries*, published by Oxford University Press. Commendable, too, are the perceptive and informative programme notes contributed by Victor and Marina Ledin to the individual volumes of the Naxos Complete Edition of Liszt's piano music. And with those, of course, you get the music too.

## 6 Personalities

**d'Agoult, Countess Marie** (1805–76), Liszt's first mistress and the mother of his three children, Blandine, Cosima and Daniel. Intelligent, idealistic, highly cultured and wealthy, she caused a scandal when she left her husband and eloped to Switzerland with Liszt, six years her junior. Their break-up in 1844 was embittered on both sides, and their children were brought up by Liszt's mother. In 1846, under the pseudonym of Daniel Stern, she published a novel, *Nélida*, whose central character was transparently a portrayal of Liszt and whose effect was to bring his name into serious disrepute.

**Alkan, Charles** (real name: Charles Henri Valentin Morhange) (1813–88), French composer and virtuoso pianist who wrote many Etudes and other works rivalling Liszt's both in originality and in their colossal difficulty. An astounding prodigy, he was admitted to the Paris Conservatoire when he was only six years old. In adulthood, his temperament proved unsuitable for the life of a performer, and he spent the last 40 years of his life as a virtual hermit. Liszt counted him among his most respected friends and colleagues, though there seems to have been little in the way of mutual influence.

**Belgiojoso, Princess Cristina** (1808–71), eccentric expatriate Italian aristocrat and patroness of

the arts. It was she who engineered the ‘duel’ between Liszt and Thalberg at her fashionable salon in Paris in 1837 (and she who reputedly kept a mummified former lover in a cupboard at her home).

**Berlioz, Hector** (1803–69). It was through the 22-year-old Liszt’s piano arrangement that the now famous *Symphonie fantastique* by this flamboyantly brilliant and original composer became widely known (for years this was the only form in which the work was published and performances of the original were almost non-existent). Staunch defenders of each other’s art, the two men’s names were further linked in the Berlioz festivals which Liszt organised during his years in Weimar. One of the first great conductors, it was Berlioz who directed the first performance of Liszt’s First Piano Concerto in 1855, with Liszt himself as soloist.

**Brahms, Johannes** (1833–97). For all the cordiality of their public exchanges, Brahms and Liszt could rarely see eye to eye. The 20-year-old Brahms allegedly fell asleep during Liszt’s performance of the great B minor Sonata (still in manuscript in 1853), though he was always unstinting in his praise of Liszt’s playing. Brahms refused to associate himself with the ‘New German School’ spearheaded by Liszt, and misguidedly drafted a belligerent manifesto directed against Liszt’s ‘music of the future’, which redounded more to his own discredit than to Liszt’s. In later years, Liszt found Brahms’s Second Piano Concerto ‘rather grey’ (an astonishing judgement), while Brahms dismissed Liszt’s oratorio *Christus* as ‘a colossal bore’.

**Bülow, Hans von** (1830–94), German virtuoso pianist and conductor. One of Liszt’s greatest pupils, he married the master’s daughter Cosima in 1857 but lost her to Wagner, whose second wife she became in 1870. Long an ardent champion of Liszt and Wagner, he was later an arch-apostle of Brahms. As pianist and conductor he possessed a repertoire rivalled in range and immensity only by Liszt’s own. He had a brilliant mind and caustic tongue, writing proudly to his

mother at one point, 'My unpopularity here is unbounded and I rejoice in it!' As a conductor he was a founding father of the martinet school of direction which culminated in the twentieth century with the watch-stomping, score-throwing, coat-ripping Arturo Toscanini and the withering Fritz Reiner.

**Chopin, Frédéric François** (1810–49). Though they were widely regarded as personal friends, Chopin and Liszt were in many ways incompatible, and the friendship was always warmer on Liszt's part than on Chopin's. As both composer and pianist, Liszt was significantly influenced by Chopin, whose greatness and originality he was among the first to perceive. Chopin was not drawn to Liszt's music, however (indeed he felt out of sympathy with Romanticism in general), and deplored his habit of effectively 'recomposing' the music of other composers in performance. Seldom has Liszt's debt to Chopin been more evident than in his *Consolation No. 3 in D flat* (CD 1, Track 12) which seems to have been born straight out of Chopin's famous Nocturne in the same key, while not for a moment copying it. Chopin's admiration of Liszt's pianistic accomplishments was unbounded. 'I wish,' he once wrote, 'that I could steal from him the way to play my own Etudes!' Liszt's first published prose work was a 'biography' of Chopin, undertaken in the immediate aftermath of Chopin's death at the age of 39, but it was based on little more than four years' acquaintance and was mostly written, in any case, by Liszt's mistress, the Princess Sayn-Wittgenstein, who hadn't known Chopin at all.

**Czerny, Carl** (1791–1857), best known today for his apparently unlimited number of studies and exercises, was in fact a very creditable composer, an outstanding pianist and one of Beethoven's most admired pupils. He became Liszt's teacher in 1822, when Liszt was eleven, and in 1851 was honoured with the dedication of Liszt's *Transcendental Etudes*. Astoundingly prolific, he had several writing desks in his study, each supporting a different work in progress. While the ink dried on one, he advanced to the next, becoming music's first one-man assembly line.

**Diabelli, Anton** (1781–1858), Austrian music publisher and minor composer (also a pupil of Haydn). Liszt's *Variation on a Waltz by Diabelli*, his first published piece, composed when he was eleven, was one of 50 commissioned by Diabelli from every Austrian composer of note as a publicity stunt for his publishing company (another contributor was Schubert). The stunt would have died with Diabelli, if not long before, but for the fact that Beethoven, who had originally scorned the theme as a mere 'cobbler's patch', had second thoughts and produced not one but 33 variations – the greatest ever written for the piano.

**Fétis, François Joseph** (1784–1871), a brilliant Belgian musicologist, teacher, composer and critic who had a formative influence on Liszt, who attended his lectures in Paris in 1832 and was intrigued by his harmonic theories, which were far ahead of their time. Liszt's late experiments in the realm of keylessness (the *Bagatelle sans tonalité*, for instance) were directly related to ideas set out by Fétis more than half a century earlier.

**Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von** (1749–1832), the German poet, dramatist, scientist and courtier who remains the most renowned of all German writers. His works had an incalculable effect on the birth and early development of the Romantic movement, and his masterpiece *Faust* in particular held an undying fascination for Liszt, whose own masterpiece, the *'Faust' Symphony*, is based directly on it.

**Grieg, Edvard** (1843–1907), Norway's foremost composer (and no bad pianist), who though not strictly speaking a pupil of Liszt, was one of the very many musicians from Europe and the Americas who profited from Liszt's encouragement and championship. When visiting Liszt at Weimar, Grieg brought the manuscript of his now famous A minor Piano Concerto, which Liszt sat down and read off perfectly at first sight, singing the salient orchestral parts as he went, and making various verbal comments and suggestions as he played.

**Hallé, Sir Charles** (1819–95), German-English conductor and pianist, and founder of the famous Hallé Orchestra. He once heard Liszt play his own piano arrangement of the *Marche au supplice* from Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* immediately after Berlioz had conducted the original orchestral version. 'Such marvels of executive skill and power,' he wrote, 'I could never have imagined. One of the transcendent merits of his playing was the crystal-like clearness, which never failed for a moment, even in the most complicated and to anybody else impossible passages; it was as if he had photographed them in the minutest detail upon the ear of the listener.'

**Hanslick, Eduard** (1825–1904). No-one showed a more deep-rooted distaste for Liszt's music than this influential, intelligent and erudite Viennese critic (later pilloried by Wagner as Beckmesser in *Die Meistersinger*). 'After Liszt,' Hanslick wrote, 'Mozart is like a soft spring breeze penetrating a room reeking with fumes.'

**Heine, Heinrich** (1797–1856), the celebrated German poet, essayist, journalist, politician and lawyer who chose to live as a self-styled exile in Paris, where he became a friend and admirer of Liszt, though he sometimes deprecated what he saw as Liszt's excessive Romantic liberties. Much of his poetry found musical immortality in the songs of Robert Schumann.

**Hohenlohe, Gustav von, Cardinal** (1823–96), a close friend to Liszt in his late years, it was he who received him into the priesthood and who arranged for him to spend several months each year at the beautiful Villa d'Este, musically immortalised by Liszt in the third book of his *Années de pèlerinage*.

**Hummel, Johann Nepomuk** (1778–1837), German-Hungarian pianist and composer. He studied with Mozart and Clementi, taught Czerny and Thalberg, and was ranked in his day only just below Mozart and Beethoven. As a pianist he was considered supreme between the death of

Mozart and the emergence of Liszt, Chopin and Thalberg.

**Janina, Olga** (precise dates unknown), the so-called ‘Cossack Countess’ who briefly but sensationally attached herself to Liszt (as related on CD 2, Track 9), was neither Cossack, nor Countess, nor Janina. According to her own account she married at fifteen, horse-whipped her husband on their wedding night, rode naked on wild horses across the Russian steppes, and kept tigers as pets (one of which is alleged to have attacked the Director at the Kiev Conservatory, who consequently contracted gangrene and died). Her lurid ‘memoirs’ helped to blacken Liszt’s name for generations.

**Joachim, Joseph** (1831–1907), Hungarian-born violinist and esteemed composer, regarded by many as the greatest violinist of his time. Best remembered today for his friendship with Brahms, he served for a time as the leader of Liszt’s orchestra at Weimar, but resigned as the gulf between his ideals and Liszt’s steadily widened. In 1861 he was one of the signatories to Brahms’s now notorious manifesto against the ‘New German School’.

**Kalkbrenner, Friedrich** (1788–1849), an immensely accomplished German pianist and very minor composer, who spent much of his life in Paris where he was more admired by the public than by his peers. In almost every respect he was the polar opposite of Liszt, who saw him as an old-fashioned anachronism. Chopin, however, greatly admired him and even considered having lessons with him.

**Lamartine, Alphonse de** (1790–1869), French poet, immortalised in music by Liszt’s symphonic poem *Les Préludes* (subtitled ‘after a reading from Lamartine’) and the piano piece *Bénédiction de Dieu dans la Solitude*, inspired by Lamartine’s poem of the same name.

**Lammenais, Félicité Robert de, Abbé** (1782–1854), controversial priest, religious philosopher and teacher who became the young Liszt's spiritual mentor during the years of his adolescent breakdown.

**Liszt's pupils.** With the sole possible exception of Theodor Leschetizky, Liszt was the most influential piano teacher of the nineteenth century. Among his vast number of pupils were many of the greatest pianists of their day, including Eugen d'Albert, Bülow, Arthur Friedheim, Rafael Joseffy, Frederick Lamond, Sophie Menter, Alfred Reisenauer, Moritz Rosenthal (who lived well into the age of recording, dying in 1946) Emil von Sauer (ditto, d. 1942), Alexander Siloti, Carl Tausig and Jose Vianna da Motta.

**Meyendorff, Baroness Olga** (b. 1841), born Princess Gortschakoff, was beautiful, intelligent, highly cultured and by all accounts a very fine pianist. After the death of her husband (the Russian ambassador to Weimar) in 1871 she became one of Liszt's most valued friends. Almost to the end of his life they exchanged an enormous number of letters which offer the reader a treasure-trove of information and insights.

**Montez, Lola** (real name Eliza Gilbert) (1818–61), Hispanic/Irish adventuress whose (still highly conjectural) relationship with Liszt in the 1840s did his reputation no good. At the celebration of the unveiling in Bonn of the Beethoven Monument, she arrived unexpectedly, climbed up onto one of the tables and gave an impromptu demonstration of her apparently limited skills as a dancer. On being locked in her hotel room by the hall porter (to give Liszt time to escape through a back door) she demolished all the furniture and terrorised the hotel staff who eventually effected her release.

**Moscheles, Ignaz** (1794–1870), Bohemian composer and pianist of exceptional distinction, who

was among the first of the travelling concert virtuosos, and as a pianist was commonly ranked with Hummel. He taught the young Mendelssohn, and was too conservative in outlook to like or admire the works of Liszt, or his sensational manner as a performer.

**New German School.** Not in fact an institution, but the collective name given to the composers who clustered around Liszt, and later Wagner, in Weimar in the mid-nineteenth century. Seen as the avant-garde of their day, they pledged themselves to new kinds of freedom and experiment, exploring fresh, often improvisational forms and 'daring' harmonies, and distancing themselves from the 'old' German school as represented by the relative conservatism of such classically-minded composers as Mendelssohn, Brahms and, to a somewhat lesser degree, Schumann. Both schools, however, were united in their veneration of Beethoven, who represented both the highpoint of musical 'classicism', with its emphasis on form, symmetry and structure, and the gateway to the future (Beethoven's own forms in his last works were as unconventional, bold and questing as anything of lasting significance by the so-called 'romantics'). As with most fashionable movements, the gulf of quality separating the leaders from the led was often extreme. Lesser but then-fashionable members of the school were Peter Cornelius (who served for a time as Liszt's secretary) and Joseph Joachim Raff (who made his most lasting contribution by instructing Liszt in the art of orchestration). Liszt mounted a production of Raff's opera *King Alfred* at Weimar in 1851, but his staging of Cornelius's *Barber of Baghdad* seven years later was such a flop with the public that it helped precipitate Liszt's resignation as Weimar's musical overlord.

**Nicholas I, Czar of Russia** (1796–1855). Liszt dared publicly to rebuke the monarch, who made a late and exceptionally noisy entrance at one of Liszt's Russian concerts. 'But why have you stopped playing?' quoth the Czar. 'Music herself,' Liszt replied, 'must fall silent when Nicholas speaks.' The incident may have some bearing on the Czar's later determination to prevent the annulment of the Princess Sayn-Wittgenstein's marriage.

**Paganini, Niccolò** (1782–1840), the most famous (and very probably the greatest) violinist the world has ever known. So incredible were his feats that he was widely rumoured to have made a bargain with the Devil. Some even suspected him of being the Devil himself. This combining of the sublime with the Satanic can only have added to Liszt's fascination with him. Liszt himself later in life was famously dubbed 'Mephistopheles disguised as an Abbé'. Paganini's influence had a formative effect on Liszt's development as both composer and pianist, but also extended to such essentially un-Lisztian composers as Schubert, Chopin and Brahms. At the time of his death, he was also the richest musical performer in history, though it brought him little solace.

**Rubinstein, Anton** (1829–94), perhaps the only other nineteenth-century virtuoso to rival Liszt in power and influence. The young Rubinstein had lessons from Liszt himself and went on to become the arch apostle of the 'thunder and lightning' school of pianism, making up in sheer volume what he sometimes lacked in accuracy; his repertoire matched Liszt's own. His then unusual veneration of Bach was a factor in Liszt's dedication to him of his major *Variations on Bach's 'Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen'*. Liszt was often blamed for encouraging Rubinstein's barnstorming approach to the keyboard.

**Rossini, Gioacchino** (1792–1868), the Lion King of the operatic world in Liszt's early manhood, who provided the source for some of Liszt's most popular operatic fantasies, paraphrases and transcriptions, of which the crowning glory is his brilliant arrangement of the *William Tell* Overture.

**Saint-Cricq, Carolyne de** (1812–72), Liszt's first great love. The nervous breakdown which led to his premature obituary in one of the Parisian newspapers was triggered by her father's brutal suppression of their relationship. On hearing of her death more than half a century later, Liszt showed more emotion than when learning of Marie d'Agoult's.

**Saint-Simon, Comte de** (1760–1825), in many ways the founding father of French socialism. This ultimately tragic figure (he fought in the American Revolution and later blinded one eye in a suicide attempt) was appalled by the destructive legacy of the French Revolution and advocated both state control of property and produce, and the transfer of spiritual influence from the church to men of science. Many artists were deeply attracted by his teachings, which coloured Liszt's social and political outlook throughout his life.

**Salieri, Antonio** (1750–1825), Italian composer, who has been reviled in book, play, opera and film as the poisoner of Mozart – a completely unsubstantiated charge. He was a prolific opera composer and an esteemed teacher, spending most of his life in Vienna, where his pupils included not only Liszt (who studied theory with him for 18 months), but Hummel, Schubert and Beethoven.

**Sand, George** (pseudonym of Amandine Aurore Dupin) (1804–76), in her day a celebrated and prolific author and social reformer, who is best known today for her long and stormy liaison with Chopin. Wearing men's clothing and smoking cigars, she was an early advocate of women's rights and scandalised Parisian society with her flamboyant love affairs and her frankly erotic novels. It seems likely that she and Liszt were sexually attracted but no evidence suggests that they were ever lovers. Writing of a summer spent at her country home in Nohant with Marie d'Agoult, Liszt declared, 'We had three months of intellectual life the memory of whose moments I have kept religiously in my heart.'

**Sayn-Wittgenstein, Princess Carolyne** (1819–87), the third great love of Liszt's life, and the most enduring, she was the daughter of a rich Polish landowner, and was independently wealthy for most of her life. At the age of seventeen, she married a Russian millionaire and close associate of the Czar, Prince Nicholas Sayn-Wittgenstein. A tragic mismatch, it resulted in their unofficial separation after only a short time, but not before the conception of their only child, a daughter, Marie, to whom Liszt

became closely attached during their years together in Weimar (more so, indeed, than to his own daughters). Strenuously literate and aggressively intellectual, she was an industrious writer and several of the prose works later attributed to Liszt were ‘ghost-written’ by her.

**Schumann, Clara** (née Wieck) (1819–96). One of the foremost pianists of her day, and a gifted composer, she married Robert Schumann in 1840 and was the first in Germany to champion the music of Chopin in performance, winning his wholehearted approval. Although initially overwhelmed by Liszt (as who wasn’t?), she took increasing exception to his playing and music alike and ultimately saw his influence as disastrous. ‘Liszt,’ she wrote, ‘has the decline of piano-playing on his conscience.’

**Schumann, Robert** (1810–56). When Schumann and Liszt first met in 1840, Schumann declared ‘it was as though we’d known each other for twenty years’. The mutual sympathy which led Schumann to dedicate his great Fantasia in C major to Liszt soon showed signs of strain, however, and in the later years of Schumann’s life (he died, insane, at 46) their friendship cooled dramatically. When the musical world of Germany was divided by the emergence of the New German School in the 1850s (see above), the two men were in opposing camps. Nevertheless, Liszt continued to perform Schumann’s works (though never, interestingly, the one which was dedicated to him), and extended an olive branch in the form of the dedication to Schumann of his great Sonata in B minor. Sadly, Schumann by then was in sharp decline and the gesture proved fruitless.

**Tausig, Carl** (1841–71), the astounding Polish-born pianist who was Liszt’s favourite pupil: ‘technically, alone,’ said Liszt, ‘he was infallible.’ He was one of the few great musicians who enjoyed equal favour with Liszt and Brahms and took no part in the factionalism which then divided them. Typhus claimed him before he was 30.

**Thalberg, Sigismond** (1812–71), Swiss-German pianist and composer. A pupil of the classically oriented Hummel, he was one of the most famous virtuosos of the day and specialised in a style of keyboard composition designed to give the illusion of three hands (the melody, in the middle register of the piano, being shared between the thumbs). For a time he was considered Liszt's most serious rival as a pianist, though his compositions, while clever and accomplished, were of no lasting significance. He was noted for the unflinching beauty of his sound and his quiet, unshowy demeanour at the piano. While he never aroused the hysteria in women that Liszt did, Schumann wrote of him in 1841, 'If anybody were to criticise Thalberg, all the girls in Germany, France and the other European countries would rise up in arms.'

**Viardot, Pauline** (1821–1910), one of the greatest mezzo-sopranos of the nineteenth century. She was also an accomplished pianist (a pupil of Liszt) and a fluent composer of operettas and songs. She was the sister of the famous soprano Maria Malibran.

**Wagner, Richard** (1813–83). There was perhaps no musician who so powerfully influenced Liszt, nor any great musician who was so influenced by him. Particularly in the realm of harmony, there are a number of ways in which Liszt seems to have anticipated Wagner, but he never dreamt of taking credit for it. Well before any other important musician, he came to regard Wagner as the beacon to 'the music of the future', and wrote of him, with a generosity unknown to Wagner himself, 'There is in the art of our day a name already glorious, and which will be more and more glorious still: Richard Wagner. His genius has been a lighted torch to me; I have followed in his footsteps, and my friendship with him has all the character of a noble passion.' The one great crisis in their friendship arose when Wagner took Liszt's daughter Cosima, then the wife of Hans von Bülow, as his mistress. Divorce followed, though not quickly, and she became the second Mrs Wagner, five years after the birth of their first child, Isolde.

## 7 A Calendar of Liszt's Life

Year	Age	Arts and Culture
1811		Beethoven composes his 'Emperor Concerto'; Weber's opera <i>Abu Hassan</i> produced in Munich; Rossini composes his opera <i>Cambiale</i> ; Jane Austen writes <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> ; English novelist William Makepeace Thackeray born
1812	1	Beethoven completes Symphonies 7 & 8; Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde founded in Vienna; Elgin marbles brought from Greece to England; German philosopher Hegel publishes <i>Die objektive Logik</i> ; births of authors Charles Dickens, Zygmunt Krasinski and J.I. Kraszewski; English poet Robert Browning born; Lord Byron writes <i>Childe Harold's Pilgrimage</i>

## Historical Events

Napoleon annexes Oldenburg; Russians capture Belgrade; Paraguay gains independence from Spain; British forces occupy Java; George III of England pronounced insane; Regency begins; Luddites sabotage machinery in North of England

Napoleon retreats from Moscow and returns to Paris, his troops depleted by 550,000; USA declares war on Britain; Wellington takes Madrid; Louisiana becomes part of the USA; Madison elected President; J.L. Burckhardt discovers the Great Temple of Abu Simbel; Philippe invents machine for spinning flax

## Liszt's Life

Franz Liszt born in Raiding, Hungary.  
 Contemporary Musicians: Beethoven (age 41); Bellini (10); Berlioz (8); Chopin (1); Clementi (59); Czerny (20); Donizetti (14); Mendelssohn (2); Meyerbeer (20); Paganini (29); Rossini (19); Schubert (14); Schumann (1); Weber (25).

Year	Age	Arts and Culture
1813	2	Births of Richard Wagner and Giuseppe Verdi; London Philharmonic Society founded; Rossini's <i>L'Italiana in Algeri</i> produced in Venice; waltz craze spreads throughout Europe; J.M.W. Turner paints <i>Frosty Morning</i> ; birth of the French composer Charles-Valentin Alkan
1814	3	Beethoven completes final version of his opera <i>Fidelio</i> ; Schubert (17) initiates his incomparable series of great Lieder with <i>Gretchen am Spinnrade</i> ; Irish composer John Field publishes his first <i>Nocturnes</i> ; Mälzel invents the metronome; Jane Austen publishes <i>Mansfield Park</i> ; Byron writes <i>The Corsair</i> ; birth of Russian poet Mikhail Lermontov
1815	4	Beethoven writes his Op. 102 Cello Sonatas and the cantata <i>Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt</i> , dedicated to Goethe; Schubert (18) composes two symphonies (2 & 3), four operas, two masses and roughly 150 songs; advent of the 'Biedermeier' period in Vienna
1816	5	Beethoven completes Piano Sonata, Op. 101, and song-cycle <i>An die ferne Geliebte</i> ; Schubert (19) writes Symphonies 4 & 5, another mass, a string quartet, most of his first opera and over 100 songs; Rossini (24) completes <i>Il Barbiere di Siviglia</i>

## Historical Events

## Liszt's Life

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Austria and Prussia declare war on France; 'Battle of Nations' at Leipzig; Wellington victorious at Vittoria; Simon Bolivar becomes absolute ruler of Venezuela; Mexico declares its independence; Anglo-American war continues in USA and Canada

Napoleon banished to Elba; Louis XVIII assumes French throne; Congress of Vienna opened; Anglo-American war ends with the Treaty of Ghent; advent of gas lighting in Westminster, London; first practical steam locomotive constructed in England; Pope Pius VII restores the Inquisition

Louis XVIII flees; Napoleon returns to France, initiating the 'Hundred Days', which end with his banishment to St Helena after losing the Battle of Waterloo to Blücher and Wellington; England suffers post-war economic crisis

First German constitution granted by grand duke of Saxe-Weimar; Argentina declares independence from Spain; Metternich opens Diet of German Federation; Java restored to Dutch Empire; Indiana becomes state of the USA; invention of the stethoscope

Year	Age	Arts and Culture
1817	6	Rossini completes <i>La Gazza Ladra</i> and <i>La Cenerentola</i> ; Clementi publishes his influential book of piano studies <i>Gradus ad Parnassum</i> ; Schubert (20) writes many important songs, six piano sonatas, one symphony and two ‘Italian’ overtures; Lord Byron writes <i>Manfred</i> ; Jane Austen publishes <i>Emma</i>
1818	7	Beethoven begins work on ‘Hammerklavier’ Sonata, Op. 106 and the <i>Missa Solemnis</i> ; Schubert completes Symphony No. 6; Rossini’s <i>Mose in Egitto</i> produced in Naples; Donizetti’s <i>Enrico, Conte di Borgogna</i> produced in Venice; Jane Austen’s <i>Persuasion</i> and <i>Northanger Abbey</i> published; Byron writes <i>Don Juan</i> ; John Keats writes <i>Endymion</i> ; Mary Shelley publishes <i>Frankenstein</i> ; Russian author Ivan Turgenev born
1819	8	Schubert composes his ‘Trout’ Quintet; Beethoven begins work on his Ninth Symphony; births of Offenbach and Clara Schumann (née Wieck) in Germany; first Sanskrit–English dictionary published; Byron writes <i>Mazeppa</i> , which is later to have a profound influence on Liszt; Keats writes <i>Hyperion</i> , Shelley <i>The Cenci</i>

## Historical Events

## Liszt's Life

Riots in England against low wages; construction of the Erie Canal begins in USA; Simon Bolivar establishes independent government in Venezuela; Mississippi becomes a state of the USA; Turkish government grants partial autonomy to Serbia; Evangelical Union formed by Lutheran and Evangelical Churches in Prussia

Chile declares independence; first professional horse-racing in the USA; Karl Marx born; constitutions proclaimed in Bavaria and Baden; border agreed between the USA and Canada; first Atlantic crossing by steamship; Bessel's *Fundamenta Astronomiae* catalogues 3,222 stars; Berzelius catalogues molecular weights of 2,000 chemical compounds

East India Company establishes British settlement in Singapore; constitutions granted in Württemberg and Hanover; USA purchases Florida from Spain; Alabama becomes state of the USA; 11 killed, 400 injured in 'Peterloo' Massacre in Britain; freedom of the press established in France

Begins piano lessons with his father, making extraordinarily rapid progress

Within a year of his first lesson, is already a fluent sight-reader, an exceptional improviser, a confident player, and shows a keen interest in composition. When confronted with chords too big for his little hands to grasp is known to have used his nose as a surrogate finger. Already shows a pronounced religious sense. Is taken to play for Czerny, who proclaims him a genius

Year	Age	Arts and Culture
1820	9	Beethoven completes his Piano Sonata in E major, Op. 109; Schubert composes his opera <i>Die Zauberharfe</i> ; his several unfinished works of this year include <i>Lazarus</i> and the <i>Quartettsatz</i> ; Keats writes <i>Ode to a Nightingale</i> , Shelley <i>Prometheus Unbound</i> , Pushkin <i>Ruslan and Ludmilla</i> ; Venus di Milo discovered
1821	10	Weber's <i>Der Freischütz</i> staged in Berlin; Beethoven completes Piano Sonata in A flat major, Op. 110; Schubert composes many Goethe settings; Goethe publishes <i>Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre</i> ; Constable paints <i>The Haywain</i> ; Keats dies at 26; births of Baudelaire, Dostoevsky and Flaubert
1822	11	Schubert composes ' <i>Unfinished</i> ' <i>Symphony</i> , ' <i>Wanderer</i> ' <i>Fantasy</i> , <i>Mass in A flat</i> and many songs; Royal Academy of Music founded in London; deaths of Shelley and E.T.A. Hoffmann; Pushkin writes <i>Eugene Onegin</i>
1823	12	Beethoven completes <i>Missa Solemnis</i> and Ninth Symphony; Schubert writes incidental music to <i>Rosamunde</i> , song cycle <i>Die Schöne Müllerin</i> and Piano Sonata in A minor, D. 784; Weber's <i>Euryanthe</i> staged in Vienna; Erard builds the first 'double-escapement' piano, allowing increased rapidity of repeated notes; Oxford Union Society founded in England

## Historical Events

Revolutions in Spain and Portugal; Duc de Berry assassinated; in the 'Missouri Compromise', Maine enters USA as a free state, Missouri as a slave state; platinum discovered in Russia's Ural Mountains; Ampère establishes Laws of Electrodynamical Action

Napoleon dies; revolution in Piedmont; Victor Emmanuel abdicates Italian throne; first demonstration of sound reproduction; Faraday discovers and experiments with electromagnetic rotation

War between Greece and Turkey; Brazil gains independence from Portugal; first iron railroad bridge built in England; gas lighting installed in Boston, Massachusetts; Congress of Verona opened

Mexico becomes a republic; Switzerland refuses political asylum to refugees; Monroe Doctrine brings curtain down on further colonisation of North America by European powers; death penalty for more than 100 crimes abolished in England; Babbage attempts to build a calculating machine; Mackintosh invents waterproof fabric; rugby football invented in England

## Liszt's Life

Continues study with his father; gives his first concerts and receives a grant enabling him to study in Vienna for the next six years

Continues lessons with his father, who seeks permission to leave Hungary; begins study with Czerny (piano) and Salieri (theory and composition) in Vienna

Makes Viennese debut in Hummel's B minor Concerto; composes Variation on a waltz by Diabelli

Gives further concerts in Vienna and meets Beethoven; moves to Paris in December with his family; Cherubini blocks his admission to the Paris Conservatoire on the interesting grounds that he is a foreigner – like Cherubini himself

Year	Age	Arts and Culture
1824	13	Beethoven completes his String Quartet, Op. 127; Schubert writes <i>Death and the Maiden</i> , A minor String Quartets, <i>Octet in F major</i> and <i>Grand Duo</i> ; births of Bruckner, Cornelius and Smetana; National Gallery founded in London; Byron dies in Greco–Turkish war
1825	14	Beethoven composes his A minor quartet, Op. 132; Schubert writes ‘Unfinished’ Piano Sonata in C; birth of Johann Strauss II and death of Salieri in Vienna; Pushkin writes <i>Boris Godunov</i> ; death of the highly influential Romantic writer ‘Jean-Paul’ (Johann Paul Friedrich Richter)
1826	15	First performance of Beethoven’s String Quartet in B flat, Op. 130, with <i>Grosse Fuge</i> as finale; composition of his last quartets, Opp. 131 & 135; Schubert: G major String Quartet and G major Piano Sonata; Mendelssohn (17) writes his <i>Midsummer Night’s Dream</i> Overture; Weber dies
1827	16	Beethoven dies at 56; Schubert writes his two Piano Trios, his two books of Impromptus and his greatest song-cycle, <i>Winterreise</i> ; Bellini’s <i>Il Pirata</i> staged in Milan; Chopin writes Variations on Mozart’s <i>La ci darem la mano</i> (reviewed by Schumann with the famous phrase ‘Hat’s off, gentlemen! A genius’); death of William Blake; Nash designs Carlton House Terrace, Westminster, London

## Historical Events

Outbreak of First Burmese War; British capture Rangoon; Russia and USA sign frontier treaty; Simon Bolivar declared Emperor of Peru; British workers granted the right to form unions; RSPCA founded in London

Crushing of Decembrist revolt in Russia; sacrilege becomes a capital offence in France; first passenger railway inaugurated in England; Trades Union movement gains strength in England

Russia declares war on Persia; Burmese war ends; Thomas Jefferson dies; first railway tunnel in England; University College, London, and University of Munich founded; London Zoo established

Turks enter Athens in Greco-Turkish war; Russia, France and Britain agree in Treaty of London to force truce on the Sultan of Turkey; Sultan rejects Allied moves; sulphur-tipped matches invented; screw-propeller for steamships invented in Austria; Ohm's Law of electrical currents formulated

## Liszt's Life

Makes sensational debut in Paris and composes a number of bravura piano works; Erard arranges a tour of England, where Liszt plays for George IV at Windsor Castle. On his return, undertakes composition lessons with Ferdinando Paer

Tours France and England and sees his opera *Don Sanche* produced in Paris

More touring in France; first tour of Switzerland; publishes his *Etudes en douze exercices*

Adam Liszt dies in Boulogne, France, while on tour with his son; Liszt rejoins his mother in Paris and starts teaching

Year	Age	Arts and Culture
1828	17	Schubert composes his last three piano sonatas, C major String Quintet, Mass in E flat and <i>Schwanengesang</i> ; dies at 31; Auber: <i>La Muette de Portici</i> ; Marschner: <i>Der Vampyr</i> ; Rossini: <i>Le Comte Ory</i> ; Alexandre Dumas ( <i>père</i> ) writes <i>The Three Musketeers</i> ; death of Francisco Goya; Webster's American Dictionary published
1829	18	Chopin (19) composes most of his trail-blazing Etudes and makes his Viennese debut; Schumann (19) writes his <i>Papillons</i> ; Berlioz: <i>Symphonie fantastique</i> ; Rossini: <i>William Tell</i> ; Mendelssohn (20) revives Bach's <i>St Matthew Passion</i> for the first time in 100 years; concertina patented; Lamartine elected to Académie Française; births of Louis Moreau Gottschalk and Anton Rubinstein
1830	19	Chopin composes and performs his two piano concertos; Schumann (20) writes <i>Abegg Variations</i> and <i>Toccata in C</i> ; Mendelssohn (21) writes 'Reformation' Symphony, begins work on <i>Hebrides Overture</i> ; Bellini: <i>I Capuleti ed I Montecchi</i> ; Donizetti: <i>Anna Bolena</i> ; Balzac inaugurates his <i>Comédie humaine</i> ; Hugo: <i>Hernani</i> ; Lamartine: <i>Harmonies poétiques et religieuses</i> ; Stendahl: <i>Le Rouge et le Noir</i>

## Historical Events

Wellington becomes Prime Minister of England; Russia declares war on Turkey; liberal revolt in Mexico; Andrew Jackson elected President of the USA; Working Men's Party founded in New York; Baltimore and Ohio railway built in USA; Uruguay becomes independent republic

Turkish–Russian war ends with the Peace of Adrianople; Turkey recognises independence of Greece; slavery abolished in Mexico; Venezuela secedes from Gran Colombia; Britain bans *suttee* (the traditional immolation of a widow with her dead husband) in India; first typewriter patented in USA; first electromagnetic clock constructed; haemophilia identified; hydrotherapy invented

French conquer Algeria; July Revolution in Paris; Louis Philippe proclaimed 'Citizen King'; Ecuador secedes from Gran Colombia; military insurrection in Warsaw; Britain adds Mysore to its Indian empire; first sewing machine built in France; steam cars appear in London; Liverpool–Manchester railway opens in England; Joseph Smith founds Mormons in New York; stiff collars for men become widespread

## Liszt's Life

Falls in love with his pupil Caroline de Saint-Cricq, whose father brutally separates them; Liszt suffers nervous breakdown and consoles himself with religion and Romantic literature

Depression persists, but he finds interest in reading and manages to give lessons

Shocked out of his malaise by the July Revolution, begins work on a Revolutionary Symphony and befriends Berlioz, Lamartine, Victor Hugo and Heinrich Heine; flirtation with Saint-Simonians

Year	Age	Arts and Culture
1831	20	Chopin arrives in Paris; Mendelssohn, in Italy, writes G minor Piano Concerto, begins work on 'Italian' and 'Scottish' symphonies and completes <i>Hebrides Overture</i> ; Bellini's <i>La Sonnambula</i> and <i>Norma</i> staged at La Scala, Milan; Meyerbeer's <i>Robert le Diable</i> scores huge hit at Paris Opéra; Victor Hugo writes <i>Notre Dame de Paris</i>
1832	21	Mendelssohn writes first book of his <i>Songs Without Words</i> ; Donizetti's <i>L'Elisir d'Amore</i> staged in Milan; death of Clementi; Japanese artist Andro Hiroshige publishes his series <i>53 Stages of the Tokaido</i> ; deaths of Goethe and Sir Walter Scott; Part II of Goethe's <i>Faust</i> published posthumously; births of French painters Gustave Doré and Edouard Manet
1833	22	Mendelssohn's 'Italian' Symphony given in London; Brahms born; Heinrich Marschner's Romantic opera <i>Hans Heiling</i> staged in Berlin; first Venetian pictures by Turner go on exhibition at the Royal Academy in London; Balzac publishes <i>Eugénie Grandet</i> ; completion of the great German translation of Shakespeare, begun in 1794

## Historical Events

Cholera epidemic ravages Europe; Russians crush Polish insurrection; slave revolt in Virginia, USA; James Garfield elected President of the USA; mass demonstrations in Switzerland; uprising in Lyon, France; Egypt conquers Syria; invention of telegraphy, electromagnetic induction, chloroform and mechanical reaper; exact position of magnetic North Pole established

Egypt defeats Turks in Syria; Mazzini founds 'Giovine Italia' to support the cause of Italian independence; advent of the Democratic Party in USA; Mass demonstrations in Germany; Gladstone enters British politics; Britain occupies Falkland Islands; first usage of the word 'socialism'; New England Anti-Slavery society established in Boston; opening of first French passenger railway; first widespread use of friction matches

William IV grants new liberal constitution to Hannover; slavery abolished throughout the British Empire; Whig party established in USA; General Trades Union formed in New York; growth of charity bazaars in Britain; the term 'scientist' coined in England; first magnetic observatory built in Germany; major meteor showers in America

## Liszt's Life

Befriends Hiller (20) and Mendelssohn (22), who are visiting Paris

Befriends the newly arrived Chopin and attends his Parisian debut; hears Paganini and vows to become the Paganini of the piano; attends and is much influenced by lectures on 'the philosophy of music' by Fétis

Falls in love with Countess Marie d'Agoult; witnesses Berlioz's marriage to Harriet Smithson and transcribes the former's *Symphonie fantastique* for the piano; makes his first Schubert song transcriptions

Year	Age	Arts and Culture
1834	23	Schumann becomes editor of <i>Neue Zeitschrift für Musik</i> , creates the imaginary League of David to wage war against latterday Philistines, and composes much of <i>Carnaval</i> and the <i>Symphonic Études</i> ; Berlioz composes <i>Harold en Italie</i> , based on Byron's <i>Childe Harold</i> ; Mendelssohn starts work on his oratorio <i>St Paul</i> ; Balzac publishes <i>Le Père Goriot</i> ; Victor Hugo's <i>Hunchback of Notre Dame</i> scores runaway success; Pushkin writes <i>The Queen of Spades</i> ; death of Samuel Taylor Coleridge
1835	24	Schumann's <i>Carnaval</i> and Sonata in F sharp minor completed; Chopin writes <i>Andante spianato</i> and <i>Grande Polonaise</i> ; Mendelssohn appointed conductor of Leipzig Gewandhaus concerts; Donizetti's <i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i> staged; birth of Saint-Saëns; death of Bellini at 34; Heine's poetry banned in Germany; first stories of Hans Christian Andersen
1836	25	Mendelssohn completes <i>St Paul</i> ; Glinka writes trail-blazing nationalist opera <i>A Life for the Tsar</i> ; Meyerbeer composes <i>Les Huguenots</i> ; Dickens publishes <i>Pickwick Papers</i> ; Gogol publishes <i>The Government Inspector</i> ; Alfred de Musset's autobiographical novel <i>Confession d'un enfant du siècle</i> completed

## Historical Events

Spanish Inquisition officially ended after 500 years; Palmerston effects alliance of Britain with France, Spain and Portugal; Abraham Lincoln enters politics in USA; East India Company's monopoly of Chinese trade abolished; increasing discord between China and Britain; one-horse, two-wheeled hansom cabs appear in London; fire devastates British Houses of Parliament; amalgam of mercury alloy first used as fillings for teeth; Herschel begins first major survey of the southern stars

Sam Colt takes out patent for his single-barrelled pistol and rifle in USA; Charles Chubb patents burglar-proof safe; first German railway opens; Melbourne, Australia founded; first 'negative' photograph taken; Halley's comet makes second predicted return; Texas asserts its right to secede from Mexico; Second Seminole war begins

People's charter initiates national working-class movement in Britain; Texas becomes a republic; Arkansas becomes state of the USA; Davy Crockett killed at Alamo; in South Africa, Boer farmers inaugurate the 'Great Trek'; Natal, Transvaal and Orange Free State founded; pepsin discovered

## Liszt's Life

Growing friendship with Lammenais; composes *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* (single piece); writes essay *On the Future of Church Music*; Alfred de Musset introduces him to George Sand

Elopes to Switzerland with Marie d'Agoult; their daughter Blandine born in December; is inspired by his surroundings to compose his *Album d'un voyageur*; does some teaching at Geneva Conservatory and writes a further essay

Makes many piano arrangements and gives concerts in Lyon, Lausanne and Dijon; rejoins Marie in Geneva before they return to Paris in the company of George Sand; introduces Sand to Chopin, with whom she forms nine-year liaison

Year	Age	Arts and Culture
1837	26	Birth of Balakirev; deaths of Hummel and John Field; Berlioz: <i>Grand Messe des Morts</i> ; Mendelssohn: D minor Piano Concerto, E minor String Quartet; Schumann: <i>Davidsbündlertänze</i> , Op. 6 and <i>Fantasiestücke</i> , Op. 12; Liszt (26) writes his <i>12 Grandes Etudes</i> .
1838	27	Schumann completes <i>Kinderszenen</i> , <i>Fantasia in C major</i> , Op. 17, and <i>Kreisleriana</i> , which he writes in three days; discovers Schubert's Ninth Symphony, which he sends to Mendelssohn; Berlioz: <i>Benvenuto Cellini</i> ; births of Bizet and Bruch; Dickens publishes <i>Oliver Twist</i> and <i>Nicholas Nickleby</i>
1839	28	Chopin: <i>24 Préludes</i> , Op. 28, Second Ballade and Third Scherzo composed; Schumann composes <i>Humoreske</i> , Op. 20, <i>Faschingsschwank aus Wien</i> , Op. 26; Mendelssohn conducts world premiere of Schubert's Ninth Symphony; composes <i>Ruy Blas</i> Overture and D minor Piano Trio; Liszt begins <i>Années de pèlerinage</i> ; births of Cézanne and Mussorgsky; Poe writes <i>The Fall of the House of Usher</i> ; Stendahl publishes the <i>Charterhouse of Parma</i>

## Historical Events

## Liszt's Life

Victoria becomes Queen; constitutional revolt in Canada; Ernst Augustus becomes King of Hannover; Morse Code invented; Michigan joins the USA; Martin van Buren elected eighth President of the USA; constitutional revolts in Canada; first Canadian railways opened

Boers defeat Zulus in Natal; death of Talleyrand; Richard Cobden establishes Anti-Corn Law League in England; 1440-ton steamship 'Great Western' crosses Atlantic in 15 days; Audubon completes *The Birds of America*; the term 'sociology' coined in France

First British–Chinese Opium War; Boers found Republic of Natal; first bicycle constructed; Uruguay declares war on Argentina; Prussia restricts child labour to 10 hours a day; baseball invented in USA; Cunard Line founded; Louis Blanc publishes *L'Organisation du Travail*; Goodyear's discovery of 'vulcanization' inaugurates commercial use of rubber; Louis Daguerre reveals photographic invention named after him

Meets Thalberg in pianistic 'duel' at the home of Princess Belgiojoso; transcribes Schubert songs and Beethoven's symphonies; composes first version of the 12 Transcendental Etudes; second daughter, Cosima, born in December

Hears of flood disaster in Hungary and plays Viennese benefit concert to raise funds for victims; works include the *Etudes d'après Paganini*

Learns in Italy of threatened monument to Beethoven and undertakes to make up the financial shortfall with the proceeds of unprecedented concert tours; his son Daniel is born in May; returns to Hungary for the first time since his boyhood; makes sketches for the Italian book of his *Années de pèlerinage*

Year	Age	Arts and Culture
1840	29	Schumann's miraculous 'year of song'; receives honorary doctorate from the University of Jena and marries Clara Wieck despite strenuous objections from her father; Mendelssohn composes and conducts his <i>Lobgesang</i> (Hymn of Praise); birth of Tchaikovsky in Russia; Donizetti's <i>La Fille du Régiment</i> staged in Paris; first harmonium constructed; births of Monet, Renoir and Rodin in France; Lermontov writes <i>The Demon</i> and <i>A Hero of our Times</i>
1841	30	Schumann completes his First Symphony ('Spring'); Chopin composes his Fantasia in F minor, Op. 49; Mendelssohn writes <i>Variations Sérieuses</i> ; Wagner composes <i>The Flying Dutchman</i> ; Rossini's <i>Stabat Mater</i> premiered in Paris; saxophone invented; births of Chabrier and Dvorak; Dickens publishes <i>The Old Curiosity Shop</i> ; first edition of the humorous periodical <i>Punch</i> published in London
1842	31	Glinka follows success of <i>A Life for the Tsar</i> with second nationalist opera <i>Ruslan and Ludmilla</i> ; Schumann writes Piano Quintet and the lesser-known Piano Quartet; Mendelssohn completes 'Scottish' Symphony and founds Leipzig Conservatory; Wagner's <i>Rienzi</i> staged in Dresden; births of Boito and Massenet; New York Philharmonic founded

## Historical Events

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert are married; Afghan War ends with surrender to Britain; Lower and Upper Canada united by Act of Parliament; end of transportation of English criminals to New South Wales; moves to limit hours of child labour in England and USA; Darwin publishes his *Voyage of the Beagle*; invention of artificial agricultural fertilizers; first surviving photograph taken; Nelson's Column built in Trafalgar Square

Britain proclaims sovereignty over Hong Kong; New Zealand becomes British colony; American slaves revolt en route to Louisiana and sail to Nassau and freedom; founding of the *New York Tribune*; first university degrees granted to women in USA; discovery of hypnosis

Riots and strikes in northern England; Boers establish Orange Free State; Opium War between Britain and China ends with Treaty of Nanking; rail link built between Boston and Albany in USA; Queen Victoria makes her first rail journey from Windsor to Paddington; first use of ether for surgical anaesthesia; the term 'dinosaur' coined in England

## Liszt's Life

On his return to Hungary conducts for the first time and renews his contacts with the music of the gypsies, which has a fundamental effect on his life and music

Marathon touring continues, but finds time to write songs and to make many arrangements and transcriptions, including those on Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Bellini's *Norma* and Meyerbeer's *Robert le diable*

Unprecedented acclaim culminates in Liszt's departure from Berlin, 'not like a king but as a king'; visits Russia for the first time, and on his return is appointed Honorary Kapellmeister at the court of Weimar

Year	Age	Arts and Culture
1843	32	Donizetti's <i>Don Pasquale</i> produced in Paris; Schumann writes incidental music for Shakespeare's <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> ; Schumann's secular oratorio <i>Das Paradies und die Peri</i> performed in Leipzig; Dickens writes <i>Martin Chuzzlewit</i> and <i>A Christmas Carol</i> ; William Wordsworth appointed Poet Laureate
1844	33	Schumann: <i>Scenes from Goethe's Faust</i> ; Mendelssohn: Violin Concerto in E minor; Chopin: Sonata in B minor, Op. 58; Berlioz publishes his treatise on orchestration; Verdi: <i>Ernani</i> ; births of Rimsky-Korsakov and Sarasate; Dumas ( <i>père</i> ): <i>The Count of Monte Cristo</i>
1845	34	Wagner's <i>Tannhäuser</i> performed at Dresden; Mendelssohn composes C minor Piano Trio; Schumann completes Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 54; first artistic photographic portraits taken; births of Gabriel Fauré and Charles Marie Widor; Prosper Mérimée writes <i>Carmen</i> (on which Bizet's opera was to be based); Balzac begins <i>Les Paysans</i> (–1855); Poe: <i>The Raven, and Other Poems</i>

## Historical Events

Military revolt in Spain; Maori revolt against Britain; Morse builds first telegraph system from Washington to Baltimore; first propeller-driven crossing of the Atlantic; world's first nightclub, Le Bal des Anglais, opened in Paris; advent of skiing as a sport; first tunnel under the Thames built

Treaty of Tangier ends French war in Morocco; military revolts in Mexico; birth of Nietzsche; US–China peace treaty; weavers revolt in Silesia; YMCA founded in England; James Knox Polk elected President of the USA

Anglo–Sikh war; second Maori uprising against British rule in New Zealand; Swiss Sonderbund formed for the protection of Catholic cantons; new Spanish Constitution drafted; first trans-Atlantic sub-marine cable; power loom invented in USA; first hydraulic crane constructed; rules of baseball codified; Engels publishes *The Condition of the Working Class in England*

## Liszt's Life

After concerts in Breslau, where he makes his debut conducting opera (Mozart's *The Magic Flute*), visits Russia; at Nonnenworth spends what proves to be his last summer with Marie d'Agoult before resuming his tours in Germany; first songs published

Spends winter in Weimar; sees Wagner's *Rienzi* in Dresden; his liaison with Lola Montez brings him unwanted notoriety and contributes to final break with Marie

Tours Spain and Portugal; writes cantata to celebrate the unveiling of the Beethoven monument in Bonn; continues to tour in Germany and France

Year	Age	Arts and Culture
1846	35	Mendelssohn's <i>Elijah</i> premiered in England; Berlioz composes <i>La Damnation de Faust</i> ; Schumann completes his Symphony No. 2 in C major; Lortzing's opera <i>Der Waffenschmied</i> produced; electric arc lighting introduced at Paris Opéra; Balzac publishes <i>La Cousine Bette</i> ; Edward Lear produces his <i>Book of Nonsense</i>
1847	36	Mendelssohn dies at 38; Verdi's <i>Macbeth</i> produced in Florence; Schumann begins opera <i>Genoveva</i> and composes his Piano Trios; Flotow's opera <i>Martha</i> opens in Vienna; Charlotte Brontë writes <i>Jane Eyre</i> , Emily Brontë: <i>Wuthering Heights</i> ; William Makepeace Thackeray: <i>Vanity Fair</i> ; Heinrich Hoffmann, a doctor from Frankfurt, publishes his classic cautionary tale <i>Struwwelpeter</i>
1848	37	Schumann completes <i>Genoveva</i> , begins incidental music for Byron's <i>Manfred</i> , and the <i>Album for the Young</i> ; Wagner composes <i>Lohengrin</i> ; Donizetti dies insane at 51; births of Duparc, Parry and Gauguin; founding of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood; Grimm publishes his <i>History of the German Language</i> ; Alexandre Dumas ( <i> fils</i> ): <i>La dame aux Camélias</i>

## Historical Events

First Sikh war ends with Treaty of Lahore; revolts in Poland; Austrian and Russian troops invade Cracow; USA declares war on Mexico; first sewing machine patented; Irish famine follows failure of potato crop; lock-stitch sewing machine patented; Evangelical alliance formed in London; first laboratory of psychology founded in USA; Zeiss optical factory founded

USA captures Mexico City; Sonderbund war breaks out in Switzerland as Catholic cantons defend their union; Swiss railway opened between Zurich and Baden; first Roman Catholic working man's club established in Germany; British Factory Act sets 10-hour maximum for working day of women and children; Mormons found Salt Lake City in USA; discovery of evaporated milk

Revolts in Paris, Vienna, Berlin, Milan, Venice, Rome, Parma, Prague; serfdom abolished in Austria; Marx and Engels write *The Communist Manifesto*; Switzerland becomes federal union; Gold Rush in California; first convention for women's rights; first successful appendectomy performed; safety matches invented

## Liszt's Life

Continues touring, but spends increasing time in Hungary where his childhood interest in gypsy music is rekindled; writes the first of his *Hungarian Rhapsodies*; Marie d'Agoult, under the pen-name of Daniel Stern, publishes her novel *Nelida*, clearly based on her relationship with Liszt and casting him in a deeply unfavourable light

First meeting with Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein; renounces the life of the virtuoso, leaving musical Europe in a state of shock; begins work on *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*

Takes up residence in Weimar, where lives openly, and sumptuously, with the princess at the Villa Altenburg; composes his Consolations and drafts the first two of his symphonic poems (*Les Préludes* and *Ce qu'en entend sur la montagne*)

Year	Age	Arts and Culture
1849	38	Chopin dies at 39; Meyerbeer's <i>Le Prophète</i> produced at Paris Opéra; Otto Nicolai's opera <i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i> premiered in Vienna; Johann Strauss I dies at 45; Dickens publishes <i>David Copperfield</i> ; Edgar Allen Poe dies at 40
1850	39	Foundation of Bach-Gesellschaft to publish the complete works of J.S. Bach in 46 volumes (a project not completed until 1900); Schumann's <i>Genoveva</i> produced in Leipzig and poorly received; composes <i>Cello Concerto</i> and many songs; death of Wordsworth, who is succeeded as Poet Laureate by Alfred, Lord Tennyson; Turgenev writes <i>A Month in the Country</i>
1851	40	Schumann completes Fourth Symphony and many songs; Verdi's <i>Rigoletto</i> staged in Venice; Gounod's <i>Sappho</i> produced in Paris; death of J.M.W. Turner; Herman Melville publishes <i>Moby Dick</i> ; Nathaniel Hawthorne: <i>House of the Seven Gables</i> ; John Ruskin: <i>The Stones of Venice</i>
1852	41	Schumann's <i>Manfred</i> performed in Leipzig; Irish composer-conductor Charles Villiers Stanford born; Dickens publishes <i>Bleak House</i> ; Alexandre Dumas (fils) bases play on his earlier <i>La Dame aux Camélias</i> ; Harriet Beecher Stowe writes American classic <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> ; Thackeray publishes his <i>History of Henry Esmond</i> ; Paddington Station in London designed by Brunel and Wyatt

## Historical Events

British defeat Sikhs in India; Venice surrenders to Austria; Britain annexes Punjab; Livingstone crosses Kalahari Desert; Fizeau measures speed of light; Amelia Bloomer revolutionises women's dress

Liberal constitution drafted in Prussia; Anglo-Kaffir War erupts; Taiping Rebellion in China; insurance for the aged established in France; Royal Meteorological Society founded in London; University of Sydney established in Australia; invention of the bunsen burner; first cast-iron railway bridge built in England

Cuba declares independence; coup d'état of Louis Napoleon; Great International Exhibition held in London; first double-decker bus; Singer patents his continuous-stitch sewing machine; first appearance of the *New York Times*; gold discovered in New South Wales, Australia

Second Empire begins in France (to 1870); Louis-Napoleon pronounces himself Emperor Napoleon III; Second Anglo-Burmese War breaks out; foundation of South African Republic; new constitution drafted for New Zealand; Duke of Wellington dies; Wells Fargo Company founded in USA

## Liszt's Life

Tsar Nicholas I refuses permission for Princess's divorce. Liszt conducts Wagner's *Tannhäuser* in Weimar (and his own symphonic poem *Tasso*); completes Book II (Italy) of his *Années de pèlerinage*

Conducts first performance of Wagner's *Lohengrin*, and first version of his own symphonic poem *Prometheus*; major works completed: Fantasy and Fugue '*Ad nos, ad salutarem undam*' for organ, and symphonic poem *Heroïde funèbre* (first version); Joachim becomes leader of Weimar orchestra

Revises *Transcendental Etudes*, premières orchestral versions of Schubert's *Wanderer Fantasy* and Weber's *Polonaise Brillante*; writes various prose works (with the assistance of the princess), including a book on Chopin; completes first version of his symphonic poem *Mazeppa*

Conducts Schumann's *Manfred*, based on Byron, and premières Berlioz's *Benvenuto Cellini*; organizes a special Berlioz week in Weimar and composes his *Hungarian Fantasy* for piano and orchestra; Joachim resigns as leader of the Weimar orchestra

Year	Age	Arts and Culture
1853	42	Brahms (20) publishes his three piano sonatas; Wagner (40) completes the text for his great tetralogy <i>The Ring of the Nibelungs</i> ; Verdi's <i>Il Trovatore</i> and <i>La Traviata</i> staged in Venice; founding of Steinway's piano firm in New York; Matthew Arnold publishes <i>The Scholar Gypsy</i> , Charlotte Brontë, <i>Villette</i> , and Nathaniel Hawthorne, <i>Tanglewood Tales</i>
1854	43	Schumann attempts suicide and is thereafter confined in Enderich mental asylum; Brahms composes his <i>Four Ballades, Op. 10</i> ; and the first version of his Piano Trio in B minor, Op. 8; Berlioz's <i>L'Enfance du Christ</i> performed in Paris; birth of German composer Engelbert Humperdinck; Tennyson writes <i>The Charge of the Light Brigade</i> ; Henry David Thoreau: <i>Walden</i>
1855	44	Berlioz's <i>Te deum</i> and Verdi's <i>Sicilian Vespers</i> performed in Paris; Wagner makes his mark as conductor in a series of London concerts; Dickens publishes <i>Little Dorrit</i> , Dumas (fils) <i>Le Demi-monde</i> ; Tennyson: 'Maud' and other poems; Anthony Trollope: <i>The Warden</i> ; Walt Whitman publishes <i>Leaves of Grass</i> , Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, <i>The Song of Hiawatha</i>

## Historical Events

Crimean War begins; Anglo-Burmese War ends; Britain annexes Mahratta State of Nagpur in India; first railroad through the Alps; invention of hypodermic syringe; German family magazine *Die Gartenlaube* founded in Leipzig; Samuel Colt revolutionizes the small arms business; largest tree in the world discovered in California

Siege of Sebastopol begins in Crimean War; first American-Japanese treaty; founding of Republican Party in USA; Pope Pius IX declares dogma of immaculate conception an article of faith; *Le Figaro* begins publication in Paris; Turin–Genoa railway opened; Heinrich Goebel invents first form of domestic electric light bulb

Accession of Czar Nicholas II in Russia; Russians surrender at Sebastopol; end of Taiping rebellion in China; cholera outbreak leads to modernisation of London sewers; bubonic plague breaks out in China; invention of printing telegraph; first iron steamer crosses Atlantic; tungsten steel developed; World Fair held in Paris; *Daily Telegraph* begins publication in London

## Liszt's Life

Completes his great *Sonata in B minor* for the piano, also *Ballade No. 2* (again in B minor); visit from the young Brahms (20) who allegedly falls asleep while Liszt plays B minor sonata (though the evidence for this is highly suspect); meetings with the exiled Wagner in Switzerland; makes short visit to Paris where sees his children

Writes '*Faust*' *Symphony* and completes symphonic poems *Orpheus*, *Festklänge*, *Les Préludes*, *Mazeppa*, *Tasso* and *Hungaria*; conducts première of Schubert's opera *Alfonso und Estrella*; meets Mary Anne Evans (George Eliot) and writes further prose works with the Princess; begins discreet affair with a pupil, Agnes Street (née Klindworth)

Begins work on '*Dante*' *Symphony* and premières his first Piano Concerto with Berlioz conducting; composes *Missa Solemnis*, Psalm 13, the *Prelude and Fugue on BACH*; and many songs; first book of *Années de pèlerinage* published

Year	Age	Arts and Culture
1856	45	Schumann dies insane at 46; Alexander Dargomijsky's opera <i>Rusalka</i> produced in St Petersburg; Flaubert writes <i>Madame Bovary</i> ; births of George Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde and Norwegian composer Christian Sinding; Carl Bechstein founds his piano factory; death of Heinrich Heine
1857	46	Charles Hallé founds the Hallé concerts in Manchester, England; birth of Edward Elgar; Victoria and Albert Museum founded in London; death of Glinka at 54; Trollope publishes <i>Barchester Towers</i> ; Charles Baudelaire: <i>Les fleurs du mal</i> ; George Borrow: <i>Romany Rye</i> ; Joseph Conrad born
1858	47	Berlioz completes his epic opera <i>The Trojans</i> ; Offenbach's <i>Orpheus in the Underworld</i> produced in Paris; Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, opened in London; New York Symphony Orchestra gives its first concert; Puccini born; Wilhelm Busch creates <i>Max und Moritz</i>

## Historical Events

Austrian amnesty for Hungarian rebels of 1848; Britain establishes Natal as Crown Colony; Anglo-Chinese and Anglo-Persian wars begin; Britain grants self-government to Tasmania; invention of cocaine; Neanderthal skull found in cave near Düsseldorf; 'Big Ben' cast in London; Black Forest railway opens with 40 tunnels; longest bare-knuckle boxing match in history (6 hours 15 minutes)

End of Anglo-Persian war; Indian mutiny against British rule; siege of Delhi; Garibaldi forms National Association for the unification of Italy; Czar Alexander II begins emancipation of serfs in Russia; foundation of Irish Republican Brotherhood; transatlantic cable laid; speculation in American railroad shares triggers economic crisis in Europe

Prince William of Prussia becomes regent for insane Frederick William IV; Anglo-Chinese War ends; Britain declares peace in India; Ottawa becomes Canadian capital; Suez Canal Company formed; first electrical lighthouses built; Minnesota becomes American state

## Liszt's Life

'*Dante*' *Symphony* completed; Liszt mounts another Berlioz week at Weimar; Hans von Bülow becomes engaged to Liszt's daughter Cosima; visit to Wagner in Zurich

A glut of first performances, including the '*Faust*' and '*Dante*' *Symphonies*, the Second Piano Concerto, the B minor Sonata (Bülow playing), the final version of *Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne* and two other symphonic poems; Cosima and Bülow are married; Liszt comes under increasing fire from critics and musicians alike

As opposition to his aims and music mounts, resigns his post at Weimar; composes his symphonic poem *Hamlet*

Year	Age	Arts and Culture
1859	48	Verdi's <i>Un Ballo in Maschera</i> produced in Rome; Gounod's <i>Faust</i> staged in Paris; Brahms completes Piano Concerto No. 1 in D minor; Dickens publishes <i>A Tale of Two Cities</i> ; Tennyson writes <i>The Idylls of the King</i> ; George Eliot: <i>Adam Bede</i> ; Edward Fitzgerald translates <i>Rubáiyat of Omar Khayyám</i> ; births of Seurat and Arthur Conan Doyle (creator of Sherlock Holmes)
1860	49	Brahms writes String Sextet in B flat; Franz von Suppé writes first-ever Viennese operetta, <i>Das Pensionat</i> ; first modern Eisteddfod held in Wales; George Eliot writes <i>The Mill on the Floss</i> , Alexander Ostrovski, <i>The Storm</i> ; Wilkie Collins, <i>The Woman in White</i> ; <i>Cornhill Magazine</i> founded in England under editorship of W.M. Thackeray; births of Mahler, Wolf, Paderewski, Chekhov and James M. Barrie (author of <i>Peter Pan</i> )
1861	50	Wagner's <i>Tannhäuser</i> causes a scandal in Paris; Brahms writes <i>Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Handel</i> , Op. 24; Dickens publishes <i>Great Expectations</i> , Dostoevsky <i>The House of the Dead</i> , George Eliot, <i>Silas Marner</i> , Vladimir Dahl, <i>Dictionary of the Living Russian Tongue</i> ; births of Nellie Melba and Indian philosopher-poet Rabindranath Tagore; death of Elizabeth Barrett Browning

## Historical Events

Franco-Austrian War in Italy; German National Association formed, aimed at uniting Germany under Prussia; Bismarck becomes Prussian Ambassador to St Petersburg; Suez Canal begun; Charles Darwin publishes *On the Origin of Species*; Anthropological Society founded in Paris; steamroller invented; Charles Blondin crosses Niagara falls on a tightrope

Garibaldi takes Palermo and Naples and proclaims Victor Emmanuel II King of Italy; Abraham Lincoln elected President of the United States; South Carolina secedes from Union; second Maori War breaks out in New Zealand; Lenoir constructs first practical internal combustion engine; first horse-drawn trams; British Open Golf Championships founded; advent of skiing as competitive sport

Frederick William of Prussia succeeded by William I; emancipation of Russian serfs; start of American Civil War; Garibaldi triumphs at Gaeta; Italy declared a kingdom, with Victor Emanuel II at its head; Polish demonstrators massacred by Russian forces in Warsaw; USA introduces passport system; linoleum invented; daily weather forecasts established in Britain

## Liszt's Life

His son Daniel dies at 20; relations with Wagner deteriorate; writes an article on John Field and the nocturne, a book about gypsies, and composes or completes Psalms 23 & 137, *Venezia e Napoli* (an appendix to the Italian book of the *Années de pèlerinage*) and three Verdi paraphrases (*Ernani*, *Il Trovatore* and *Rigoletto*)

Princess Carolyne leaves Weimar for Rome, where she hopes to expedite the annulment of her marriage; Liszt is attacked by Brahms (27) and Joachim (29) in a Manifesto directed against the 'New German School'; makes his will and becomes a grandfather with the birth of Daniela von Bülow; compositions include Psalm 18 and *Two Episodes from Lenau's 'Faust'* (including *Mephisto Waltz No. 1*)

Liszt leaves Weimar, joining the Princess in Rome, where final objections to her divorce appear to have been resolved and their marriage is set to take place on his 50th birthday; last-minute intervention prevents it; Liszt remains in Rome, but he and the Princess live apart from now on; composes mainly religious works (*Christus*, *The Legend of St Elisabeth*, etc.)

Year	Age	Arts and Culture
1862	51	Berlioz's <i>Béatrice et Bénédicte</i> staged in Baden-Baden; Verdi's <i>La Forza del Destino</i> premiered in St Petersburg; Ludwig Köchel begins his monumental Catalogue of Mozart's Works; Turgenev: <i>Fathers and Sons</i> ; Flaubert publishes <i>Salammó</i>
1863	51	Berlioz's <i>The Trojans at Carthage</i> and Bizet's <i>The Pearl Fishers</i> staged in Paris; Brahms appointed conductor of the Singakademie in Vienna; births of Pietro Mascagni ( <i>Cavalleria Rusticana</i> ) and the painter Lucien Pissarro; Manet paints <i>Déjeuner sur l'herbe</i> and <i>Olympia</i> ; deaths of Eugène Delacroix and W.M. Thackeray
1864	53	Brahms composes Piano Quintet in F minor, Op. 34; Bruckner writes his Symphony No. 0; Offenbach's <i>La belle Hélène</i> mounted in Paris; birth of Richard Strauss; Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft founded in Weimar; Dickens publishes <i>Our Mutual Friend</i> ; Tolstoy begins <i>War and Peace</i>

## Historical Events

Bismarck becomes Prime Minister of Prussia; Abraham Lincoln issues Emancipation Proclamation, freeing all American slaves; military revolt in Greece topples Otto I; Foucault measures speed of light; 10-barrel Gatling gun invented

French capture Mexico City and declare Archduke Maximilian of Austria emperor; Lincoln delivers Gettysburg Address; first railroad in New Zealand opens; roller-skating introduced in America; Football Association established in London; construction of London Underground railway begun

Ludwig II crowned King of Bavaria; Karl Marx founds first International Working Man's association; Denmark cedes Schleswig, Holstein and Lauenberg in Peace of Vienna; Geneva Convention establishes neutrality of battlefield medical facilities; Lincoln re-elected; Nevada becomes a state; *Neue Freie Presse* founded in Vienna

## Liszt's Life

Liszt's first daughter Blandine dies at 27; completes his oratorio *St Elisabeth* and composes the piano variations on Bach's *Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen* and the *Cantico del sol di S. Francesco d'Assisi*

Withdraws in semi-religious retirement, entering the monastery of the Madonna del Rosario, where he is visited by the Pope, who hears him play

Makes the first of many visits as guest of Cardinal Hohenlohe at the Villa d'Este, Tivoli; sees Marie d'Agoult; their daughter Cosima (27) begins adulterous relationship with Wagner

Year	Age	Arts and Culture
1865	54	Wagner's <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> staged in Munich; Schubert's <i>Unfinished Symphony</i> premiered 43 year after it was written; Meyerbeer's <i>L'Africaine</i> produced in Paris; Suppé's <i>Die Schöne Galathée</i> staged in Vienna; Brahms composes Horn Trio, Op. 40; <i>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</i> published; births of Dukas, Glazunov, Sibelius, Kipling, W.B. Yeats
1866	55	Smetana's opera <i>The Bartered Bride</i> staged in Prague; Offenbach's <i>La Vie Parisienne</i> and Ambroise Thomas's <i>Mignon</i> produced in Paris; Brahms composes Variations on a Theme of Paganini; Tchaikovsky writes his First Symphony; Dostoevsky publishes <i>Crime and Punishment</i> ; Degas begins painting his ballet scenes
1867	56	Verdi's <i>Don Carlos</i> , Bizet's <i>La Jolie Fille de Perth</i> and Offenbach's <i>La Grande-duchesse de Gérolstein</i> staged in Paris; Johann Strauss II writes <i>Blue Danube</i> Waltz; World's Fair in Paris introduces Japanese art to the West; Reclams Universal Bibliothek, first of all paperback book series, begins publication; Ibsen writes <i>Peer Gynt</i> ; Zola publishes <i>Thérèse Raquin</i>

## Historical Events

Lincoln assassinated; American Civil War ends; Bismarck and Napoleon III meet in Biarritz; first carpet sweeper comes into use; first railway sleeping cars; laying of transatlantic cable completed; founding of the Salvation Army; Mendel enunciates Law of Heredity; Massachusetts Institute of Technology founded in USA

Austro-Prussian War; Treaty of Vienna ends Austro-Italian War; Cretan rebellion against Turkish rule; ‘Black Friday’ on London stock exchange; dynamite and underwater torpedo invented; telegraph messages first sent over radio waves; Pierre Larousse publishes *Grand dictionnaire universel*

Karl Marx publishes Volume 1 of *Das Kapital*; Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy; Garibaldi begins march on Rome; USA purchases Alaska from Russia; Nebraska becomes a state of the USA; gold discovered in South Africa; first bicycles manufactured; completion of railroad through Brenner Pass; invention of clinical thermometer

## Liszt’s Life

Receives minor orders of the priesthood and becomes known thereafter as the Abbé Liszt; Wagner becomes a father as Cosima gives birth to their first (illegitimate) child, Isolde; Liszt travels to Pest for the première of his *St Elisabeth* and plays his *Deux Légendes* for the first time; in the autumn composes his *Missa Choralis*

His mother dies in Paris, where he visits her grave and hears his *Missa Solemnis*, which is poorly received; meets Marie d’Agoult for the last time and hears Franck and Saint-Saëns give a four-hand rendition of his Dante Symphony; continues work on his oratorio *Christus*

Travels to Hungary to hear his *Hungarian Coronation Mass*, written for the coronation of Franz Joseph as King of Hungary; *Christus* completed, and partially performed in Rome; *St Elisabeth* performed in Weimar; visits Wagner at Tribschen, near Lucerne

Year	Age	Arts and Culture
1868	57	Wagner's <i>Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg</i> ; Brahms's <i>German Requiem</i> receives its first full performance; Mussorgsky begins <i>Boris Godunov</i> ; death of Rossini; French 'Impressionism' becomes a recognisable force in European art; Dostoevsky publishes <i>The Idiot</i> , Wilkie Collins, <i>The Moonstone</i> , Louisa May Alcott, <i>Little Women</i> ; birth of Maxim Gorky
1869	58	Wagner's <i>Das Rheingold</i> performed in Munich; Brahms publishes his <i>Liebeslieder Waltzes</i> ; death of Berlioz; Tchaikovsky's first opera <i>Voyevoda</i> staged in Moscow; Bruckner's <i>Mass in E minor</i> first performed; Flaubert publishes <i>L'éducation sentimentale</i> , R.D. Blackmore, <i>Lorna Doone</i> , Mark Twain, <i>Innocents Abroad</i> , Verlaine, <i>Fêtes galantes</i> , Matthew Arnold, <i>Culture and Anarchy</i>
1870	59	Wagner writes the <i>Siegfried Idyll</i> ; his <i>Die Walküre</i> produced in Munich; Tchaikovsky's Fantasy-overture <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> performed in Moscow; Delibes' <i>Coppélia</i> produced in Paris; Brahms's <i>Alto Rhapsody</i> published; <i>Société Nationale de Musiques</i> founded in France; death of Dickens

## Historical Events

Prussia confiscates territory of King of Hannover; Disraeli becomes Prime Minister of Britain, resigns and is succeeded by Gladstone; Shogunate abolished in Japan; impeachment of President Andrew Johnson in USA; skeleton of Cro-Magnon man found in France; invention of air brakes for steam locomotives

Ulysses S. Grant elected President of the USA; National Prohibition Party founded in Chicago; parliamentary system returns in France; Greece withdraws from Crete; Suez Canal opened; abolition of debtor's prisons in Britain; first postcards appear in Austria; Francis Galton publishes pioneering work on eugenics (the source of 'genetic engineering'); First Nihilist Convention organized in Switzerland

Franco-Prussian War breaks out; revolt in Paris; proclamation there of Third Republic; Lenin born; Schliemann begins excavation of Troy; John D. Rockefeller founds Standard Oil Company in USA; Thomas Huxley publishes *Theory of Biogenesis*; doctrine of papal infallibility adopted at First Vatican Council

## Liszt's Life

To Grottamare, near Ancona, for theological studies; moves temporarily to the Villa d'Este and completes his *Requiem*; relations with Cosima strained as she jettisons Bülow for good and moves in with Wagner

Comes out of near-retirement and begins his 'Vie Trifurquée', dividing his time between Rome, Weimar and Budapest; first enjoys but soon becomes embarrassed by the unwelcome attentions of Olga Janina, the self-styled 'Cossack Countess'; composes further sacred choral music and hears Wagner's *Das Rheingold* rehearsal in Munich

Bülow finally divorces Cosima, who now marries Wagner; Liszt receives Grieg in Rome and travels to Weimar for which he has written a second Beethoven Cantata; in Munich hears the première of Wagner's *Die Walküre* before travelling to Hungary, where he writes his *Funeral Music for Mosonyi*

Year	Age	Arts and Culture
1871	60	Verd's <i>Aida</i> staged in Cairo; Brahms's <i>Schicksalslied</i> published; Saint-Saëns publishes his symphonic poem <i>Le Rouet d'Omphale</i> ; Royal Albert Hall opened in London; George Eliot publishes <i>Middlemarch</i> , Lewis Carroll, <i>Through the Looking Glass</i>
1872	61	Bizet writes incidental music to Alphonse Daudet's play <i>L'Arlésienne</i> ; Brahms appointed Artistic Director of Vienna's Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde; Franck publishes <i>Les Béatitudes</i> ; Nietzsche writes <i>The Birth of Tragedy</i> , Jules Verne, <i>Around the World in 80 Days</i>
1873	62	Brahms publishes <i>Variations on a Theme of Haydn</i> ; Bruckner's <i>Symphony No. 2</i> performed in Vienna; Rimsky-Korsakov's opera <i>Ivan the Terrible</i> staged in St Petersburg; Carl Rosa Opera Company founded in England; births of Caruso, Chaliapin, Rachmaninov, Reger; John Stuart Mill's <i>Autobiography</i> published; Tolstoy begins <i>Anna Karenina</i>

## Historical Events

German Empire established under Wilhelm I; Paris Commune established; Jehovah's Witnesses founded; Pope granted possession of the Vatican by Italian Law of Guarantees; bank holidays established in Britain; Darwin publishes *The Descent of Man*; invention of the pneumatic drill; first large luxury liner launched; Great Fire of Chicago; Stanley meets Livingstone in Africa

League of Three Emperors established in Berlin; civil war in Spain; Jesuits expelled from Germany; Three-Emperors' League forms alliance of Germany, Russia and Hungary; former Confederates in American Civil War granted amnesty; Brooklyn Bridge opened in USA

Death of Napoleon III; Germans evacuate France after Franco-Prussian War; Germany adopts mark as unit of currency; financial panic in Vienna and New York; World Exhibition mounted in Vienna; the cities of Buda and Pest merged to form capital of Hungary; famine in Bengal ; first typewriters manufactured; early form of colour photography invented

## Liszt's Life

In Budapest is elected Royal Hungarian Councillor; the 'Cossack Countess' threatens to kill him and then makes a show of attempting suicide; enters his final phase as a song-writer and embarks on a close friendship with Baroness Olga von Meyendorff, with whom he has voluminous correspondence

Friendly relations with the Wagners are at least partially restored as they visit him in Weimar; he accepts their hospitality at Bayreuth before going on to Hungary, where he revisits his birthplace

In Hungary, celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of his career as a pianist; gives charity concerts in Pest; conducts première of *Christus* in Weimar; *Five Hungarian Folksongs* published

Year	Age	Arts and Culture
1874	63	Verdi's Requiem performed in Milan; Mussorgsky's <i>Boris Godunov</i> produced in St Petersburg; Johann Strauss II writes <i>Die Fledermaus</i> ; Smetana completes his cycle of symphonic poems <i>Ma Vlast</i> ; Brahms's <i>Hungarian Dances</i> published; Paris Opéra completed; births of Schoenberg, Holst, Gertrude Stein and Robert Frost
1875	64	Birth of Ravel; death of Bizet at 36, not long after disastrous première of <i>Carmen</i> ; Bruckner composes his Symphony No. 3; Gilbert and Sullivan's first operetta produced in London, <i>Trial by Jury</i> ; Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 receives world première in Boston, Massachusetts; Mark Twain publishes <i>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</i> ; births of Albert Schweitzer, Thomas Mann, Rainer Maria Rilke, John Buchan
1876	65	Opening of Festspielhaus at Bayreuth with first performance of Wagner's Ring cycle; Brahms's First Symphony premiered at Karlsruhe; Tchaikovsky: <i>Francesca da Rimini</i> , <i>Rococo Variations</i> ; births of Falla, Ruggles, Casals and Bruno Walter; Mallarmé writes <i>L'Après-Midi d'un Faune</i> ; Henry James: <i>Roderick Hudson</i>

## Historical Events

Fiji Islands added to British Empire; first Postal Union established in Switzerland; pressure-cooking used for canning foods; first American zoo founded in Philadelphia; excavation of Olympia begun; civil marriage made compulsory in Germany; births of Churchill, Herbert Hoover, Weizmann, Marconi

Bosnia and Herzegovina rebel against Turkish rule; rebellion in Cuba; Prince of Wales visits India; Public Health Act passed in Britain; religious orders abolished in Prussia; first swimming of English Channel; first roller-skating rink opened in London; Kwang Hsu becomes Emperor of China; Japanese law courts reformed; birth of C. G. Jung

Serbia and Montenegro declare war on Turkey; new Ottoman constitution proclaimed; Korea becomes independent; invention of the telephone; World Exposition in Philadelphia, USA; founding of Deutsche Reichsbank in Germany; Schliemann excavates Mycenae; Johns Hopkins University established in Baltimore, USA; first Chinese railway completed

## Liszt's Life

Further charity concerts; renewed creative energy finds him composing *The Legend of St Cecilia*, the *Hymne de l'enfant à son réveil*, *The Bells of Strasburg Cathedral*, *Elegy No. 1* and part of a new oratorio, *St Stanislaus*; revises many transcriptions and makes arrangements of several symphonic poems for piano duet

Joins Wagner in joint concert in Budapest; is appointed President of the Budapest Academy of Music; performs Beethoven's 'Emperor' Concerto; travels to Bayreuth and hears preliminary rehearsals for the forthcoming complete performance of Wagner's Ring cycle

More charity concerts; his symphonic poem *Hamlet* premiered in July; completes his *Christmas Tree Suite* and makes transcription of the *Danse Macabre* by Saint-Saëns; attends the first Wagner festival in the newly opened Festpielhaus at Bayreuth, where he runs into Tchaikovsky; deaths of Marie d'Agoult and George Sand

Year	Age	Arts and Culture
1877	66	Brahms's Second Symphony composed; first publication of Mozart's complete works begun; birth of Ernst von Dohnanyi; Saint-Saëns' <i>Samson et Dalila</i> composed; Tchaikovsky's <i>Swan Lake</i> produced in Moscow; Rijksmuseum built in Amsterdam; Third Impressionist Exhibition mounted in Paris; birth of Raoul Dufy; Emile Zola publishes his <i>L'Assommoir</i> , Henry James, <i>The American</i>
1878	67	George Grove begins his mammoth <i>Dictionary of Music and Musicians</i> ; Gilbert and Sullivan: <i>H.M.S. Pinafore</i> ; Dvorak: <i>Slavonic Dances</i> ; Tchaikovsky: Violin Concerto, Symphony No. 4 and the opera <i>Eugene Onegin</i> ; William Morris publishes <i>The Decorative Arts</i> , Thomas Hardy <i>The Return of the Native</i> ; births of John Masefield, Carl Sandburg, Upton Sinclair
1879	68	Brahms's Violin Concerto première in Leipzig; Tchaikovsky's opera <i>Eugene Onegin</i> staged in Moscow; Bruckner composes his String Quintet; Franck Piano Quintet; Suppé: <i>Boccaccio</i> ; births of Bridge, Ireland, Respighi and Karg-Elert; Henry James publishes <i>Daisy Miller</i> , Robert Louis Stevenson, <i>Travels with a Donkey</i>

## Historical Events

Russia declares war on Turkey and invades Romania; crosses Danube and storms Kars; Bismarck refuses to intervene; Victoria proclaimed Empress of India; suppression of Satsuma rebellion in Japan; invention of the gramophone; first public telephones appear in USA; first All-England Tennis Championships held at Wimbledon; first observation of ‘canals’ on Mars

Attempt to assassinate Emperor Wilhelm I of Germany; Anti-Socialist law enacted in Germany; beginning of Irredentist agitation in Italy to obtain Trieste and South Tyrol from Austria; anti-Semitic movement formalized in Germany; invention of the microphone; first electric street lighting; World Exhibition mounted in Paris; repeater rifle invented

British-Zulu War in South Africa; British forces occupy Khyber Pass; Alsace-Lorraine declared an integral part of Germany; Anti-Jesuit laws introduced in France; first telephone exchange opened in London; public allowed unrestricted entry to British Museum; births of Stalin, Trotsky and Albert Einstein

## Liszt’s Life

Fauré, Saint-Saëns and Borodin visit him in Weimar; in Italy completes the third book of the *Années de pèlerinage* with *Angelus, Aux cyprès de la Villa d’Este, Les jeux d’eaux à la Villa d’Este* and *Sursum Corda*. Also: *Elegy No. 2*, ‘In Memory of Petöfi’ and *Recueillement*

A generally quiet year; teaches in Budapest, visits Paris and Erfurt; composes *Septem Sacramenta*, *Chorales* and starts work on the *Via Crucis*

Becomes honorary canon of Albano, and is now entitled to wear a cassock; attends concerts of his works in Vienna, Frankfurt and Wiesbaden; gives a number of charity concerts in Budapest, Klausenburg and Vienna; composes *Missa Organo* and *Ossa Arida* and transcribes works by Handel and Tchaikovsky

Year	Age	Arts and Culture
1880	69	Brahms: <i>Academic Festival</i> and <i>Tragic Overtures</i> ; Bruckner: Fourth Symphony; Tchaikovsky: <i>Capriccio Italien</i> , 1812 Overture and <i>Serenade for Strings</i> ; Gilbert and Sullivan: <i>The Pirates of Penzance</i> ; Guildhall School of Music established in London; Philip Spitta publishes his monumental biography of Bach; Dostoevsky: <i>The Brother Karamazov</i> ; Zola: <i>Nana</i>
1881	70	Brahms: Piano Concerto No. 2; Bruckner: Symphony No. 6; Tchaikovsky: <i>The Maid of Orleans</i> ; Offenbach's <i>Tales of Hoffmann</i> produced in Paris; Fauré <i>Ballade</i> ; birth of Bartok; death of Mussorgsky; Flaubert: <i>Bouvet et Pécuchet</i> ; Henry James: <i>Portrait of a Lady</i> ; D'Oyle Carte opera company builds the Savoy Theatre in London; birth of P.G. Wodehouse
1882	71	Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra founded; Debussy: <i>Le Printemps</i> ; Wagner: <i>Parsifal</i> ; Rimsky-Korsakov's <i>The Snow Maiden</i> staged in St Petersburg; Gilbert and Sullivan: <i>Iolanthe</i> ; births of Stravinsky, Kodaly, Szymanowski, Grainger; Robert Louis Stevenson: <i>Treasure Island</i> ; Ibsen: <i>An Enemy of the People</i> ; births of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf

## Historical Events

Cape Parliament blocks moves toward federation in South Africa; Transvaal declares independence from Britain; France annexes Tahiti; Pasteur discovers cholera vaccine; electric lighting of New York's streets; advent of commercial tinned foods; World Exhibition in Melbourne, Australia

Britain recognizes independent Transvaal Republic; Austro-Serbian treaty of alliance; President James A. Garfield of the USA assassinated; political parties established in Japan; Canadian Pacific Railway Co. founded; flogging abolished in British armed forces; Chat Noir, first of all cabarets, founded in Paris

British occupy Cairo; hypnosis first used to treat hysteria; Edison designs first hydroelectric plant; triple alliance between Austria, Germany and Italy; three-mile limit for territorial waters agreed at Hague Convention; Bank of Japan founded; invention of the recoil-operated machine gun; World Exhibition held in Moscow

## Liszt's Life

More travels, through Italy, Austria, Germany and Hungary; continues work on *St Stanislaus* and probably writes a variation on 'Chopsticks'

In honour of his 70th birthday, concerts of his works are given throughout Europe; writes many of his most daring and prophetic works, including *Nuages gris*, the *Csárdás macabre*, the *Mephisto Waltz No. 2* and the *Valse oubliée No. 1*; in Weimar suffers a serious fall from which he never fully recovers

Visits to Brussels, Antwerp, Freiburg, Baden, Zurich, Venice and Bayreuth, where attends première of Wagner's *Parsifal*; composes his last symphonic poem *From the Cradle to the Grave*, the sixteenth *Hungarian Rhapsody*, the disturbing *Lugubre gondola* and his last Verdi transcription, from *Simon Boccanegra*

Year	Age	Arts and Culture
1883	72	Death of Wagner; births of Webern, Varèse and Bax; Bruckner completes his Seventh Symphony; Delibes' <i>Lakmé</i> produced in Paris; Chabrier composes <i>España</i> ; Metropolitan Opera House opened in New York; Royal College of Music founded in London; Nietzsche writes <i>Also sprach Zarathustra</i>
1884	73	Tchaikovsky's opera <i>Mazeppa</i> produced in Moscow and St Petersburg; Bruckner: <i>Te Deum</i> ; Massenet's <i>Manon</i> staged in Paris; Mahler composes <i>Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen</i> ; first edition of Oxford English Dictionary; Mark Twain publishes <i>Huckleberry Finn</i> , Alphonse Daudet, <i>Sappho</i> ; Ibsen, <i>The Wild Duck</i> ; birth of Sean O'Casey
1885	74	Brahms's Fourth Symphony performed at Meiningen; Tchaikovsky's 'Manfred' Symphony completed; Dvorak composes his D minor Symphony, Op. 70; Johann Strauss's <i>The Gypsy Baron</i> produced in Vienna; Gilbert and Sullivan write <i>The Mikado</i> ; Franck: <i>Symphonic Variations</i> ; Richard Burton translates <i>Arabian Nights</i> ; Maupassant writes <i>Bel Ami</i> , Zola, <i>Germinal</i> ; births of D.H. Lawrence, Ezra Pound, Sinclair Lewis

## Historical Events

French capture Tunis; Britain withdraws from Sudan; reform of Civil Service in USA; Bismarck introduces sickness benefit in Germany; first skyscraper built in Chicago; World Exhibition in Amsterdam; maiden run of the Orient Express; death of Karl Marx

Germans occupy South-West Africa; Berlin Conference of 14 nations on African affairs; London Convention on Transvaal; divorce re-established in France; first *Oxford English Dictionary* published; first practical steam turbine engine invented; tetanus bacillus discovered in Germany

Britain withdraws from Sudan; Germany annexes Tanganyika and Zanzibar; Britain establishes protectorate over North Bechuanaland, Niger River region and New Guinea; Benz builds single-cylinder engine for motor car; individuality of fingerprints established; Eastman manufactures coated photographic paper

## Liszt's Life

Conducts memorial concert for Wagner and further marks his death with two piano works, *Am Grabe Richard Wagners* and *R.W. – Venezia*; other works include *Schlaflos!*, the *Mephisto Polka*, the third *Mephisto Waltz* and the *Valse oubliée* No.3

Another quiet year, with little travelling; visits Bayreuth again for *Parsifal*, writes various religious pieces, and hears his *Salve Poloni* performed

Taking to the road again, attends concerts in Mannheim, Karlsruhe, Strasbourg, Antwerp, Aachen and Rome, and composes his last pieces, including the *Hungarian Rhapsodies Nos 18 & 19*, the *Mephisto Waltz No. 4*, the *Valse oubliée No. 4*, *En rêve* and the prophetic *Bagatelle Without Tonality*

Year	Age	Arts and Culture
1886	75	Richard Strauss composes <i>Aus Italien</i> ; Dvorak completes his oratorio <i>St Ludmilla</i> for performance at Leeds Festival in England; invention of the celeste; Henry James: <i>The Bostonians</i> ; Rimbaud: <i>Les Illuminations</i> ; Stevenson: <i>Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde</i> ; Ibsen: <i>Rosmersholm</i> ; Frances Hodgson Burnett: <i>Little Lord Fauntleroy</i>

## Historical Events

Death of Ludwig II of Bavaria; Gladstone introduces bill for Home Rule in Ireland; Bonaparte and Orléans families banished from France; First Indian National Congress held; British School of Archaeology founded in Athens; hydro-electric installation begun at Niagara Falls; American Federation of Labor formed; game of golf introduced in America

## Liszt's Life

More travels, taking in Budapest, where he gives his farewell concert, Paris, Antwerp, Liège, where hears his *Missa Solemnis*, and London, where he meets Queen Victoria; plays further concerts, but health declining; suffers from dropsy and partial blindness and in Luxembourg gives his last concert; goes to Bayreuth, where he hears *Parsifal* and *Tristan* again; develops pneumonia, dies on 31st July and is buried at Bayreuth; Bruckner plays the organ at the requiem service; eight months later, Princess Carolyne dies, having finally completed her 24-volume analysis *The Interior Causes of the External Weaknesses of the Roman Catholic Church*

## 8 Glossary

accelerando	getting faster
accidental	a flat, sharp or 'natural' not present in the prevailing scale
adagio	slow
agitato	turbulent, agitated
Alberti bass	a stylized accompaniment popular in the later eighteenth century, it is based on the triad, 'spelled out' in the order bottom-top-middle-top (as in C-G-E-G etc.)
allegretto	moderately fast, generally rather slower than allegro
allegro	fast, but not excessively
allemande	traditionally the first movement of a Baroque suite – a dignified dance in 4/4 time, generally at a moderate tempo
alto	the second highest voice in a choir
andante	slowish, at a moderate walking pace
aria	solo song (also called 'air'), generally as part of an opera or oratorio
arpeggio	a chord spelled out, one note at a time, either from bottom to top or vice versa (C-E-G-C ; F-A-C-F etc.)
articulation	the joining together or separation of notes, to form specific groups of notes; when notes are separated, that is to say when slivers of silence

	appear between them, the effect is often of the intake of breath, and like the intake of breath before speech it heightens anticipation of what is to follow; when they are joined together, the effect is of words spoken in the expenditure of a single breath; see also 'legato' and 'staccato'
augmentation	the expansion of note-values, generally to twice their original length
bar, measure	the visual division of metre into successive units, marked off on the page by vertical lines; thus in a triple metre (the grouping of music into units of three, as in 3/4, 3/8 etc.), the three main beats will always be accommodated in the space between two vertical lines
bass	the lowest, deepest part of the musical texture
beat	the unit of pulse (the underlying 'throb' of the music)
binary	a simple 2-part form (A:B), Part 1 generally moving from the tonic (home key) to the dominant (secondary key), Part 2 moving from the dominant back to the tonic
cadence	a coming to rest on a particular note or key, as in the standard 'Amen' at the end of a hymn
cadenza	a relatively brief, often showy solo of improvisatory character in the context of a concerto, operatic aria or other orchestral form. In concertos, it usually heralds the orchestral close to a movement, generally the first
canon	an imitative device like the common round ( <i>Frère Jacques</i> , <i>Three Blind Mice</i> , <i>London's Burning</i> ) in which the same tune comes in at staggered intervals of time
cantabile	song-like, singingly
cantata	a work in several movements for accompanied voice or voices (from the Latin <i>cantare</i> , to sing)
chorale	a generally simple (and usually Protestant) congregational hymn; almost

	all of Bach's many cantatas end with a chorale; chorales are also frequently used as a basis for instrumental variations
chord	any simultaneous combination of three or more notes; chords are analogous to words, just as the notes which make them up are analogous to letters
chromatic	notes (and the using of notes) which are not contained in the standard 'diatonic' scales which form the basis of most western music; in the scale of C major (which uses only the white keys of the piano), every black key is 'chromatic'
clef	a symbol which indicates the positioning of notes on the staff; thus the C-clef shows the placement of Middle C, the G clef (better known as 'treble clef') the location of G above middle C, and the F-clef (bass) the positioning of F below middle C
coda	an extra section following the expected close of a work or movement by way of a final flourish
codetta	a small coda
concerto grosso	a popular Baroque form based on the alternation of orchestra (known in this context as the <i>ripieno</i> or <i>concerto</i> ) and a small group of 'soloists' ( <i>concertino</i> ); the most famous examples are Bach's six <i>Brandenburg Concertos</i>
concerto	a work for solo instrument and orchestra, generally in three movements (fast-slow-fast)
continuo	a form of accompaniment in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in which a keyboard instrument, usually a harpsichord, harmonizes the bass line played by the cello
contrapuntal	see 'counterpoint'

counterpoint	the interweaving of separate ‘horizontal’ melodic lines, as opposed to the accompaniment of a top-line (‘horizontal’) melody by a series of ‘vertical’ chords
counter-tenor	a male alto, using a falsetto voice, which seldom bears any resemblance to the singer’s speaking voice
crescendo	getting louder
cross-rhythms	see ‘polyrhythm’
decrescendo	see ‘diminuendo’
diminuendo	getting softer
development section	the middle section in a sonata form, normally characterized by movement through several keys
diatonic	using only the scale-steps of the prevailing key notes of the regular scale
diminution	the contraction of note-values, normally to half their original length
dotted rhythm	a ‘jagged’ pattern of sharply distinguished longer and shorter notes, the long, accented note being followed by a short, unaccented one, or the other way around. Examples are the openings of the <i>Marseillaise</i> and <i>The Star-Spangled Banner</i> ; better still, <i>The Battle Hymn of the Republic</i> : ‘Mine eyes have seen the glo-ry of the coming of the Lord’
double-stopping	the playing of two notes simultaneously on a stringed instrument
duple rhythm	any rhythm based on units of two beats, or multiples thereof
dynamics	the gradations of softness and loudness, and the terms which indicate them (pianissimo, fortissimo etc.)
exposition	the first section in sonata form, in which the main themes and their relationships are first presented
fantasy, fantasia	a free form, often of an improvisatory nature, following the composer’s fancy rather than any pre-ordained structures. But there are some

	Fantasies, like Schubert's <i>Wanderer Fantasy</i> and Schumann's <i>Fantasia in C</i> for the piano, which are tightly integrated works incorporating fully-fledged sonata forms, scherzos, fugues etc.
finale	a generic term for 'last movement'.
flat	a note lowered by a semitone from its 'natural' position, i.e. the nearest lower neighbour of any note
forte, fortissimo	loud, very loud
glissando	literally, 'gliding'; a sliding between any two notes, producing something of a 'siren' effect
Gregorian chant	see 'plainchant'
ground bass	a short bass pattern repeated throughout a section or entire piece; a famous example is 'Dido's Lament' from Purcell's <i>Dido and Aeneas</i>
harmony, harmonic	the simultaneous sounding of notes to make a chord; harmonies (chords) often serve as expressive or atmospheric 'adjectives', describing or giving added meaning to the notes of a melody, which, in turn, might be likened to nouns and verbs
harmonics	comparable to the falsetto voice of the male alto, or counter-tenor, the term refers to the production on an instrument, generally a stringed instrument, of pitches far above its natural compass. Thus the naturally baritone cello can play in the same register as a violin, though the character of the sound is very different
homophony	when all parts move at once, giving the effect of a melody (the successive top notes) accompanied by chords
interval	the distance in pitch between two notes, heard either simultaneously or successively; the sounding of the first two notes of a scale is therefore described as a major or minor 'second', the sounding of the first and third

	notes a major or minor third, etc.
largo	slow, broad, serious
legato	smooth, connected, the sound of one note ‘touching’ the sound of the next; as though in one breath
major	see ‘modes’
measure	see ‘bar’
metre, metrical	the grouping together of beats in recurrent units of two, three, four, six, etc.; metre is the pulse of music
minor	see ‘modes’
modes	the names given to the particular arrangement of notes within a scale; every key in western classical music has two versions, the major and the minor mode; the decisive factor is the size of the interval between the key note (the tonic, the foundation on which scales are built) and the third degree of the scale; if it is compounded of two whole tones (as in C–E [C–D / D–E]), the mode is major; if the third tone is made up of one and a half tones (C to E flat), the mode is minor; in general, the minor mode is darker, more ‘serious’, more moody, more obviously dramatic than the major; the so-called Church modes prevalent in the Middle Ages are made up of various combinations of major and minor and are less dynamically ‘directed’ in character; these appear only rarely in music since the Baroque (c. 1600–1750) and have generally been used by composers to create some kind of archaic effect
modulate, modulation	the movement from one key to another, generally involving at least one pivotal chord common to both keys.
motif, motive	a kind of musical acorn; a melodic/rhythmical figure too brief to constitute a proper theme, but one on which themes are built; a perfect

	example is the beginning of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony: ta-ta-ta <i>dah</i> ; ta-ta-ta <i>dah</i>
natural	not a sharp or flat
nocturne	'invented' by the Irish composer John Field and exalted by Chopin; a simple ternary (A-B-A) form, its outer sections consist of a long-spun melody of a generally 'dreamy' sort, supported by a flowing, arpeggio-based accompaniment; the middle section, in some ways analogous to the development in a sonata form,) is normally more turbulent and harmonically unstable
octave	the simultaneous sounding of any note with its nearest namesake, up or down (C to C, F to F etc.); the effect is an enrichment, through increased mass and variety of pitch, of either note as sounded by itself
oratorio	an extended choral/orchestral setting of religious texts in a dramatic and semi-operatic fashion; the most famous example is Handel's <i>Messiah</i>
ostinato	an obsessively repeated rhythm or other musical figure
pedal point	the sustaining of a single note (normally the bass) while other parts move above and around it
pentatonic	based on a five-note, whole-tone scale, as in the music of the Orient (analogous to the black keys of the piano)
phrase	a smallish group of notes (generally accommodated by the exhalation of a single breath) which form a unit of melody, as in 'God save our Gracious Queen,' and 'My Country, 'tis of thee'
phrasing	the apportionment of the above
piano, pianissimo	soft, very soft
pizzicato	plucked strings
plainchant, plainsong	also known as Gregorian chant; a type of unaccompanied singing using

	one of the Church modes and sung in a ‘free’ rhythm dictated by the natural rhythm of the words
polyphony	music with interweaving parts
polyrhythm	a combination comprising strikingly different rhythms, often of two or more different metres
prelude	literally, a piece which precedes and introduces another piece (as in the standard prelude and fugue); however, the name has been applied (most famously by Bach, Chopin and Debussy) to describe free-standing short pieces, often of a semi-improvisatory nature
presto	very fast
recapitulation	the third and final section in sonata form, where the ideas of the exposition return, but in a different key
recitative	especially characteristic of the Baroque era, in an oratorio or opera; it is a short narrative section normally sung by a solo voice accompanied by continuo chords, usually preceding an aria; the rhythm is in a free style, by the words
resolution	when a suspension or dissonance comes to rest
rest	a measured ‘silence’ (or to be more accurate, a suspension of sound) in an instrumental or vocal part
rhapsody	the name given to a number of highly disparate works in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries comprising a single movement of a generally Romantic and mostly virtuosic character; the best-known examples are Liszt’s Hungarian Rhapsodies and Gershwin’s <i>Rhapsody in Blue</i>
rhythm	that aspect of music concerned with duration and accent; notes may be of many contrasting lengths and derive much of their character and definition from patterns of accentuation and emphasis determined by the

	composer
ripieno (concerto)	the orchestral part in a concerto grosso
ritardando, ritenuto	getting slower
ritornello	a theme or section for orchestra recurring in different keys between solo passages in an aria or concerto
scale	from the Italian word <i>scala</i> ('ladder'). A series of adjacent, 'stepwise' notes (A-B-C-D-E-F etc.), moving up or down; these 'ladders' provide the basic cast of characters from which melodies are made and keys established
sharp	a note raised by a semitone from its 'natural' position, i.e. the nearest upper neighbour of any note
sotto voce	quiet, as though in a whisper
staccato	separated, the opposite of legato
syncopation	accents falling on irregular beats, generally giving a 'swinging' feel as in much of jazz
tempo	the speed of the music
tone colour, timbre	that property of sound which distinguishes a horn from a piano, a violin from a xylophone, etc.
tremolo	Italian term for 'trembling', 'shaking'; a rapid reiteration of a single note through back-and-forth movements of the bow; equally, the rapid and repeated alternation of two notes
triad	a three-note chord, especially those including the root, third and fifth of a scale (C-E-G, A-C-E etc.) in any order
triplets	in duple metre, a grouping (or groupings) of three notes in the space of two (as in 'One-two / Buckle-my-shoe')
una corda	literally, 'one string'; using the soft pedal on the piano

unison	the simultaneous sounding of a single note by more than one singer or player, as in the congregational singing of a hymn
vibrato	a rapid, regular fluctuation in pitch, giving the note a ‘throbbing’ effect
variation	any decorative or otherwise purposeful alteration of a note, rhythm, timbre, etc.
vivace, vivacissimo	fast and lively, extremely fast and lively
vocalise	a wordless piece for solo voice; the most famous example is Rachmaninov’s
whole-tone	an interval comprising two semitones, as in C–D on the piano; much of the music of the Orient, as well as of numerous folk cultures around the world, is built on whole-tone scales (see ‘pentatonic’ above)

## 9 Discography

Music excerpts are taken from the following discs, available from Naxos.

### **Hungarian Festival**

**Berlioz: Rákóczy March**

**Hubay: Hejre Kati – Scenes**  
from the *Csárda* Op. 32, No. 4

**Kodály: Hány János Suite Op. 15**

**Liszt: Hungarian Rhapsodies**

(No. 1 in F minor / No. 2 in D minor /  
No. 6 in D major)

Hungarian State Orchestra / Mátyás Antál  
*Naxos 8.550142*

### **Liszt**

**Symphonic Poems: Tasso; Prometheus;  
Mazeppa; Les Préludes**

Polish NRSO / Michael Halász  
*Naxos 8.550487*

### **Liszt**

**Sacred Choral Music:**

**Ave Maria • Die Seligpreisungen  
Pater Noster • Vater unser • Via Crucis**  
Choir of Radio Svizzera, Lugano /  
Diego Fasolis  
*Naxos 8.553786*

**Romantic Piano Favourites, Vol. 8**

**Beethoven: Minuet in G**

**Brahms: Hungarian Dance No. 1 (arr.  
Nagy)**

**Chopin: Waltz, BI 56**

**Ellenberg: Die Mühle im Schwarzwald**

**Gluck: Orfeo ed Euridice (Ballet)**

**Godard: Jocelyn (Berceuse)**

**Godowsky: Night in Tanger**

**Kreisler: Liebesfreud**

**Liszt: Sonetto 123 del Petrarca**

**Mendelssohn: Song Without Words No. 20**

**Rachmaninov: Etude Tableau in E flat  
minor**

**Rosas: Waltz ‘Sobre los olas’**

**Schubert: Moment musical; The Trout**

Péter Nagy  
*Naxos 8.550217*

## **Liszt**

**Années de Pèlerinage First Year:**

### **Switzerland**

Jenő Jandó, Piano  
*Naxos 8.550548*

## **Liszt**

**Années de Pèlerinage Second Year: Italy**

Jenő Jandó, Piano  
*Naxos 8.550549*

## **Liszt**

**Symphonie fantastique (Berlioz, arr. Liszt)**

Idil Biret, Piano  
*Naxos 8.550725*

## **Hummel**

**Piano Concertos Opp. 85 & 89**

Hae-won Chang / Budapest Chamber  
Orchestra / Tamás Pál  
*Naxos 8.550837*

## **Monti**

**Csárdás (hungarian gypsy music)**

Ferenc Sánta and his Gypsy Band  
*Naxos 8.550954*

## **Liszt**

**Complete Piano Music, Vol. 2**

**Études d'exécution transcendante (1851)**

Jenő Jandó, Piano  
*Naxos 8.553119*

## **Liszt**

**Symphonic Poems:**

**From the Cradle to the Grave**

**Orpheus • The Ideals • Hamlet**

New Zealand Symphony Orchestra /  
Michael Halász  
*Naxos 8.553355*

## **Liszt**

**Complete Piano Music, Vol. 4**

**Harmonies Poétiques et Religieuses, Nos 7  
–10**

**Ave Maria (D flat major; G major; E  
major)**

**Ave Maria d'Arcadelt • 6 Consolations  
Ungarns Gott, 'A magyarok istene'  
(Left-hand version)**

Philip Thomson  
*Naxos 8.553516*

**Liszt**

**Complete Piano Music, Vol. 1**

**Danse macabre • Nuages gris**

**Unstern: sinistre, disastro**

**Réminiscences des Huguenots, Grande  
fantaisie dramatique sur des thèmes de  
l'opéra**

*Les Huguenots de*

**Meyerbeer**

**La lugubre gondola I & II**

**Impromptu • Totentanz, 'Danse macabre'**

Arnaldo Cohen

*Naxos 8.553852*

**Liszt**

**Sonata in B minor • La Campanella**

**Vallée d'Obermann • Jeux d'eau**

Jenő Jandó, Piano

*Naxos 8.550510*

## Spoken Text 10

□ The sounds of warfare are nothing new, and in the year 1811 they were to be heard all over Europe. It was a time of gargantuan upheaval, sparked off by the American and French Revolutions towards the end of the previous century, and further inflamed by the Napoleonic Wars which reached their climax in that year with Napoleon's ill-fated attempt to conquer Russia. Two other momentous events took place that year. The first was the discovery of a new and spectacular comet which at its height illuminated much of Central Europe and whose tail alone was estimated to be more than a hundred million miles long. The second was the birth of Franz Liszt in Hungary. The circumstances at the time of his birth could hardly have been more appropriate. His career as a pianist was uniquely comparable to the unprecedented brilliance of the Great Comet, and as a composer he was among the most revolutionary who ever lived. In the realms of harmony and form he blazed trails that led straight to the twentieth century. All in all, he was one of the most prolific and influential composers in the whole history of music.

Like most of the great composer-pianists, he was a child prodigy, and in 1822, he moved with his father to Vienna where he became a pupil of the famous Carl Czerny. Not long after that, at the age of eleven, he made his debut in Vienna, playing a concerto by the now almost forgotten but then spectacularly successful Johann Nepomuk Hummel.

## Music: Hummel: Piano Concerto in B minor

Liszt's Viennese debut, of course, became an imperishable memory for him, but in terms of significance it was eclipsed by an event which had taken place a couple of days earlier. Against all the odds, and after a lot of persuasion on Czerny's part, a meeting had been arranged with Beethoven – not only the greatest composer of his time (perhaps of all time) but a confirmed hater of child prodigies. Many years later, Liszt remembered the occasion as though it were yesterday.

It was ten o'clock in the morning when we entered Beethoven's rooms, I somewhat shyly, Czerny amiably encouraging me. Beethoven was working at a long, narrow table by the window. He looked gloomily at us for a time, and remained silent while my teacher beckoned me to the piano. I first played a piece by Ries. When I had finished, Beethoven asked me whether I could play a Bach fugue, and whether I could then transpose it at once into another key. Fortunately I was able to do so. When I had concluded, Beethoven caught hold of me with both hands, kissed me on the forehead and said 'Go! You are one of the fortunate ones! For you will give joy and happiness to many people. There is nothing finer or better than that!' This event in my life remained always my greatest pride – the palladium of my whole career as an artist.

A career which was already well under way. It was during this period in Vienna that Liszt published his first known composition, a variation on the same waltz by Diabelli which Beethoven himself was to transform, in his own set of 33 variations, into one of the great masterworks of human history.

After 18 months of lessons, Czerny acknowledged that there was nothing more he could teach Liszt, who was already being compared to Moscheles and Hummel, perhaps the two greatest pianists then active. It seemed obvious to everyone that the boy should now go on to Paris, which was then the undisputed capital of the musical world. On the 8th March 1824, Liszt made his Paris

debut and was pronounced by more than one critic to be ‘the finest pianist in Europe’ – which was to say, in 1824, the finest pianist in the world. Like the child Mozart before him, Liszt now embarked, in the company of his father, on the first of his legendary concert tours. In June he made his debut in London, and in July was received by King George the Fourth at Windsor Castle. He also found time to compose, and tried his hand, for the first time, at writing a business letter:

Dear Sir,

I would be greatly obliged to you if you would take the trouble of coming to see me at a quarter past three, having finished a few pieces and as I want to have them engraved I am appealing you to ask you to kindly hear them so that you don't buy the pig in the poke.

Just which pigs in which pokes they might have been we can only guess, though there are at least four bravura keyboard works which we know he'd completed by then. His most ambitious project, though, was an opera, *Don Sanche*, which was staged in Paris shortly after his return there the following year. And all the while, of course, Liszt was growing up. In his middle teens a thwarted love-affair led to a severe nervous breakdown which for many months effectively removed him from public view and led to a bout of religious mania which almost resulted in his becoming a monk. Out of sight, in this case, however, was not out of mind. In the autumn of 1828 Paris was fairly buzzing with rumours of Liszt's death, and shortly after his seventeenth birthday he had the unusual experience of reading his own obituary in a noted Parisian newspaper.

Snapped out of his depression by the events of the July Revolution of 1830, Liszt plunged once again into the musical life of Paris, and became a cherished fixture in the salons of the rich, where he met and mingled with most of the leading cultural lights of the time. It was in the early spring of 1832, though, that there occurred an event which was to change the whole course of his artistic development. For the first time in his life, he heard Paganini. And everything he'd been told about the demon fiddler turned out to be true. Here was a man who didn't just play the violin

better than anyone else; he played it in a fashion which no-one before had even dreamt was possible. He seemed to have extracted from his instrument every shade of its character, every drop of its potential. To the 21-year-old Liszt, it was the revelation of his own destiny. From that moment, he resolved that he himself would do no less for the piano.

Now if we're to get this hardly modest ambition into perspective, it's important to remember that this youth, only just over the threshold of official manhood, was almost certainly already the greatest pianist of his time. But that wasn't the point. And anyone doubting the seriousness of Liszt's intentions need look no further than a letter written to a friend shortly after Paganini's concert:

For a whole fortnight my mind and my fingers have been working like two lost souls. Homer, the Bible, Plato, Locke, Byron, Hugo, Lamartine, Chateaubriand, Beethoven, Bach, Hummel, Mozart, Weber are all around me. I study them, meditate on them, devour them with fury; besides this, I practise four to five hours of exercises (thirds, sixths, octaves, tremolos, repeated notes, cadenzas, and so on.) Ah! provided I don't go mad you will find in me an artist!

Well, his artistry was never in question, of course, and he didn't go mad. Nor did those four or five hours of exercises account for even half of his daily practice time. Fourteen hours at the keyboard became normal for Liszt. Considering his pianistic supremacy at the start of this punishing regimen, it's small wonder that he developed a technique which has rightly been called, ever since, 'transcendental'.

② Music: *La Campanella*

③ Liszt's preoccupations at this point in his life were hardly confined to music, or to literature, which with typical Romantic fervour he devoured almost indiscriminately. Like many young

men, he was enjoying the exhilaration of new friendships (with Chopin, Mendelssohn, Berlioz, George Sand, Delacroix and Heine among others), and it was in this exalted company, in 1833, that he first encountered the woman who was very shortly to become the second great love of his life. Six years his senior, she was the Countess Marie d'Agoult – married to an older man, and the mother of two children. She was beautiful, greatly cultivated, and wealthy. She took one look at the 22-year-old Liszt – himself an Adonis – and felt her life change.

Here was altogether the most extraordinary person I had ever seen. A tall figure, thin to excess; a pale face, with large sea-green eyes; an ailing and powerful expression. An indecisive walk that seemed rather to glide than touch the ground. A distracted air, unquiet and like that of a phantom about to be summoned back to the shades. This is how I saw the young genius before me.

And how did the young genius see her? Well, not long after their first meeting he was asked that very question.

You want my opinion of Madame d'Agoult? If she were to tell me to fling myself out of that window, I should do so at once. That is my opinion of Madame d'Agoult.

Fortunately, she did no such thing and Liszt was spared. Within two years, the pair eloped to Switzerland, and caused a scandal which rocked socialite Paris to its foundations. In June, Liszt wrote matter-of-factly to his mother, making open and unapologetic reference to the Countess.

Beyond all expectations, we arrived in Basel at ten o'clock this morning. I don't know anything definite yet, but we will probably leave here in four or five days' time, taking her femme de chambre with us. We are both in good spirits and have no intention of being unhappy. I am well, and the Swiss air strengthens my appetite. Adieu for the moment. I will write again soon.

Six months later, he had some more important news: shortly after the couple's arrival in Geneva, Marie had given birth to their first child – a daughter, Blandine, who was left almost at once with a local wet-nurse, allowing the lovers to pursue their happy-go-lucky existence. In the summer of 1837, they decided to explore Italy, and arrived by the shores of Lake Maggiore in mid-August. At this point, Marie was well into her second pregnancy, and they now wisely decided to call a temporary halt to their travels. For the next six months or so they remained in the area, though Liszt made several journeys to Milan, where he got to know Rossini. Barring those excursions, it was a generally quiet and uneventful time, far removed from the flamboyant spectacle of Liszt's public life. Marie had her lover to herself, and she relished it.

[4] Music: *Au Lac du Wallenstadt*

[5] Afternoons during this outwardly blissful time were spent reading and composing, and in the evening the two lovers often went out on the lake in a gondola, fishing by the light of the moon, when there was one, and by torchlight when there wasn't. Well, it all sounds idyllic and wonderful but there's no question that it suited Marie far better than it suited Liszt. Whatever she may have had to say, Liszt had given up nothing, and certainly not 'the excitement of battle'. Indeed he was in fighting form – which under the circumstances was just as well.

While he was dallying with his Countess in Switzerland, Paris was thrilling to the pianistic exploits of a young Austrian, one Sigismond Thalberg, who quickly established himself as Liszt's most serious rival – certainly as far as the press was concerned. The advent of this new star in the pianistic firmament rankled with Liszt, who returned to Paris, which Thalberg had conveniently vacated, and set about re-establishing his supremacy. Paris had now not heard him for more than a year, but with two concerts in the Salle Erard, he quickly made up for that. Among the works he played was Beethoven's fearsomely difficult Hammerklavier Sonata – and it was the first time,

as far as we know, that the work had been heard in Paris. Now this is interesting on several fronts. For a start, it was then unusual for virtuosos to play music other than their own. For another, Liszt could hardly have chosen a less ingratiating piece. It's immensely long, immensely great, and almost as difficult to listen to as it is to play; even today many people find it baffling. But the most interesting thing about Liszt's playing of it on this occasion was his scrupulous fidelity to Beethoven's text – interesting because he was renowned for taking such liberties with other people's music that he almost recomposed it. As the great pianist Clara Schumann put it, 'Liszt can't keep his hands off anything.' Well, in the audience for Liszt's performance of the Hammerklavier was Hector Berlioz, and he told a very different story.

A new Oedipus, Liszt, has solved this 'riddle of the Sphinx' in such a way that had the composer himself returned from the grave, a paroxysm of joy and pride would have swept over him. Not a note was left out, not one added. No inflection was effaced, no change of tempo permitted. Liszt, in thus making comprehensible a work not yet comprehended, has proved that he is the pianist of the future.

Well, Thalberg's supporters were having none of this. One prominent critic wrote insultingly to Liszt:

You are a product of a school that has outlived itself and has nothing to look forward to. You are not the creator of a new school. That man is Thalberg! This is the whole difference between you.

Liszt at this stage had never actually heard Thalberg. When he did, he was uncharacteristically mean about him:

I have now heard Thalberg. Really, all this about him is absolute humbug.

Things came to a head when an expatriate Italian princess, Cristina Belgiojoso, scored the social coup of the decade in arranging a special concert at her home for the benefit of her beloved Italian refugees. As the *Gazette Musicale* put it:

The greatest interest will be without question the simultaneous appearance of two talents whose rivalry at this time agitates the musical world, and is like the indecisive balance between Rome and Carthage. Messrs Liszt and Thalberg will take turns at the piano.

And so they did. When it was all over, the princess came out with one of the great cop-out lines in musical history:

Thalberg proved that he is the first pianist in all Europe – Liszt, that he is the only one.

We get a fuller and impressively balanced account from the critic Jules Janin, writing in the *Journal des Debats*:

Never was Liszt more controlled, more thoughtful, more energetic, more passionate; never has Thalberg played with greater verve and tenderness. Each of them prudently stayed within his harmonic domain, but each used every one of his resources. It was an admirable joust. The most profound silence fell over that noble arena. And finally Liszt and Thalberg were both proclaimed victors by this glittering and intelligent assembly. Thus two victors and no vanquished.

In the autumn of that year, after a summer spent with George Sand in France, Liszt and Marie returned to Italy. On Christmas Eve the runaway countess gave birth to their second daughter, Cosima, who was duly registered as the illegitimate offspring of Franz Liszt and then abandoned, like her sister, to the care of a local wet-nurse.

It has to be said that Liszt took a lot more trouble over his legitimate, artistic offspring. And much of the music he wrote during this period was motivated by a generosity of spirit which he rarely if ever showed to his children. His crusading zeal on behalf of other composers had been evident ever since his extraordinary transcription of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* in 1833. In the days before radio and recordings, that great majority of people who didn't live in big cities, and didn't have the luxury of nearby opera houses and large concert halls, had access to orchestral and operatic music only through the medium of the piano transcription. It was largely for this reason that Liszt now turned his attention to the Beethoven symphonies, recasting them in pianistic terms while remaining astonishingly faithful to the original scores. Most of his many transcriptions of Schubert's songs also belong to this period. Here too, his original aim was supposedly to popularise music which was then little-known, but in this case he often ended up taking the song over lock, stock and barrel – and in any case, many of his Schubert arrangements, like all of the Beethoven symphony arrangements, are far too difficult for the average amateur to play.

5 Music: Schubert, arr. Liszt: *Die Forelle*

7 In January of 1838, Liszt and Marie bade the first of many farewells to their latest love-child and took to the road again, this time bound for Venice. Like many other people, before and since, Liszt was completely entranced by the sheer, intoxicating romance of the place, and half a century later its spell was undiminished for him. Part of its attraction – and this really applies to his love of Italy as a whole – was the emotionally unbuttoned, the un-selfconsciously pleasure-loving temperament of the Italians themselves, which corresponded closely to his own. And he felt closer to many of his musical roots. Italy, after all, was the homeland of Paganini, and of the great opera composers whose works Liszt had grown up with – Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti. But the physical Italy, too, played a major part in his musical life. Wherever he went, he was enraptured by his surroundings, and nourished as an artist beyond his highest expectations.

Beauty in this privileged country appeared to me in its purest and sublimest forms. Art revealed itself before my eyes in all its splendour; its universality and unity were disclosed to me for the first time. Raphael and Michelangelo gave me a better understanding of Mozart and Beethoven. The Colosseum and the Campo Santo are not so different as one might think from the Eroica Symphony and the Requiem. Dante has found his pictorial expression in Orcagna and Michelangelo. One day, no doubt, he will find his musical expression in the Beethoven of the future.

And who might that be? The temptation to think that Liszt saw himself in that role is hard to resist but it's probably not fair. He later ceded that mantle to Wagner in no uncertain terms. In any case, his own musical preoccupation with Dante dates from this first Italian visit and bore rich fruit, most notably in the Dante and Faust Symphonies and the so-called Dante Sonata for the piano.

Music: Sonata *Après une lecture du Dante*

☐ Liszt's rapturous immersion in Italy's cultural past was rudely interrupted within days of his arrival in Venice in 1838. As he sat in a café on the Piazza San Marco, enjoying a cup of coffee in the warm Italian sun, he read something in a German newspaper which made his blood run cold. After an exceptionally severe winter, the melting River Danube had overflowed its banks. In the space of three days, the water level had risen to a record 29 feet above normal. In the flood that followed, whole villages were swept away, crops were ruined, and the city of Pest (not yet united with Buda) was almost entirely destroyed. Many had drowned and upwards of 50,000 were suddenly homeless. Liszt, who'd spared hardly a thought for his native land in the 15-odd years since he'd left it, was transfused with a powerful and unfamiliar feeling.

I was suddenly transported back to the past, and in my heart I found a treasury of memories from my

childhood intact. A magnificent landscape appeared before my eyes; it was the Danube flowing over the reefs! It was the broad plain where tame herds freely grazed. It was my homeland!

Unexpectedly he found himself a patriot. Leaving Marie in Venice (and unlike him, she hated the place), Liszt headed straightaway for Vienna. There, with a series of eight fund-raising concerts, he brought in some 24,000 gulden – the largest single donation received by the Hungarians from any private source. Back in Italy, Marie was unimpressed. As so often during their periodic separations, she was consumed by jealous fantasies, to the point of physical ill-health. The relief of several thousand Hungarians cut no ice with her. Let the rest of Europe celebrate Liszt as a proud Hungarian and compassionate humanitarian – Marie was having none of it. As far as she was concerned, he had abandoned her, with no higher motive than the quest for newspaper publicity and the conquest of princesses. Well, unsurprisingly, when Liszt returned to Italy two months or so later, he walked straight into a quarrel. Marie referred to him contemptuously as ‘a Don Juan parvenu’, and the image has clung to his reputation ever since. A century and more after his death, though, the charge has yet to be supported with a single shred of evidence.

Much of that summer was spent more or less quietly by the shores of Lake Lugano. With the coming of winter, the couple moved on to Florence. Their increasingly difficult life together can't have been helped by the fact that Marie was again pregnant, with their third child in less than four years. In the spring they exchanged Florence for Rome, where their son Daniel was born on the ninth of May. Liszt, a composer of genius, already acclaimed as the greatest pianist who ever lived, had spent most of the past five years as a semi-recluse, not out of natural inclination but because it suited Marie's romantic notions and her possessive nature. As his 28th birthday hove into view, he was clearly beginning to feel the strain.

There is thunder in the air, my nerves are irritable, horribly irritable. I need a prey. I feel the talons of the eagle tearing at me. Two opposing forces are fighting within me: one thrusts me towards the

immensity of space, higher, ever higher, beyond all suns, up to the heavens; the other pulls me down towards the lowest, the darkest regions of calm, of death, of nothingness. And I stay, nailed to my chair, equally miserable in my strength and my weakness, not knowing what is to become of me.

Fate soon decided that for him. In Pisa, on his way to the Italian coast, he came across a newspaper article which was to change his life. The Beethoven Memorial Committee in Bonn, he read, had announced the collapse, through lack of support, of their international scheme to raise funds for a Beethoven Monument in Bonn, the great composer's birthplace. Liszt was enraged by this implicit insult to his greatest mentor, and after a few preliminary investigations, he wrote a letter to the Memorial Committee:

Gentlemen ... As the subscription for Beethoven's monument is only getting on slowly, I venture to make a proposal to you, the acceptance of which would make me very happy. I offer myself to make up, from my own means, the sum still wanting for the erection of the monument, and ask no other privilege than that of naming the artist who shall execute the work.

There was one hitch, though. Liszt had pledged money which he simply didn't have. The only way to remedy the situation was to embrace a career as a full-time concert pianist. Well, embrace it he did, with a vengeance. He began his unprecedented marathon of fund-raising appearances with ten concerts in Vienna. In the midst of this opening flourish, he was approached by a delegation of Hungarians with an invitation to return to the land of his birth for the first time since he'd left it, 18 years before. He accepted, and arrived there, on Christmas Eve 1839, to find himself already a national hero. In a letter to a friend he chronicled the events that followed:

On January 4th I played in the Hungarian Theatre the Andante from *Lucia*, the Galop, and, as they would not stop applauding, the Rákóczy March (a kind of Hungarian Marseillaise). Just as I was about

to leave the platform, in came Count Leo Festetics, Baron Bánffy, Count Teleki (all magnates), Eckstein, Augusz, and a sixth whose name I forget – all in full Hungarian costumes, Festetics carrying in his hand a magnificent sabre (worth 80 to 100 louis d’or) adorned with turquoises, rubies and several other gems. He addressed a little speech to me in Hungarian before the whole audience, who applauded frantically, and then he buckled the sword on me in the name of the nation. I asked permission, through Augusz, to speak to the audience.

And permission, of course, was granted. But Liszt the Hungarian – whose very Hungarianness was the point of the whole celebration – returned to the land of his birth a virtual foreigner, and was forced to address his compatriots not in their own language but in French. Fortunately a large number of those listening were able to understand him, but for the benefit of those who couldn’t, Augusz, when Liszt had finished, read out a translation of the speech in Hungarian. Both speakers were repeatedly interrupted by bursts of applause, which in the circumstances is hardly surprising. Liszt didn’t mince his words:

The sabre that is offered to me by the representatives of a nation whose bravery and chivalry are so universally admired I shall keep all my life, as the dearest and most precious thing to my heart. This sabre, which has been so vigorously brandished in former times in the defence of our country, is placed at this moment in weak and pacific hands. Is that not a symbol? But if ever anyone dares unjustly, and with violence, to disturb us in the accomplishment of our destiny, well! gentlemen, if it must be, let our swords be drawn again from the scabbard (they are not tarnished, and their strokes will still be as terrible as in former times), and let our blood be shed to the last drop for freedom, king and country!

Strong stuff, especially for a man who couldn’t even speak the language.

Hardly less memorable than the ceremony itself was its immediate aftermath, as Liszt explained in a letter to Marie d’Agoult – a letter, it should be remembered, never intended for the

eyes of the public:

When it was all over, and we got into our carriage, there was an immense crowd filling the square, and two hundred young people, with lighted torches and the military band at their head, shouted '*Éljen! Éljen!* (the Hungarian for *Vivat!*). We had scarcely gone 50 yards when a score of young people rushed forward to unharness our horse. 'No! No!' shouted the others, 'that's been done for wretched dancers, but for this one we must celebrate differently.'

The house of Festetics, where Liszt was staying, was some distance from the theatre, and they were only about a third of the way back when Liszt proposed to his host that they get out of the carriage and walk, like everybody else.

I opened the door, and the shouts, which had not ceased for ten minutes, redoubled with a sort of fury. They immediately drew back, and we all three walked – Festetics, Augustus, and I, in the middle, in Hungarian costume. It is impossible to give an idea of the enthusiasm, the respect and the love of this population! At eleven o'clock in the evening all the streets were full. The shouts went on unceasingly. It was a triumphal march such as only Lafayette and a few men of the Revolution have experienced. The military band stopped at the door of my house, but thirty-odd young people conducted me with their torches to the entrance of my apartment.

And all this was for a piano player.

⑨ Music: Transcendental Etude No. 2 in A minor

⑩ Liszt's first return to the land of his birth was remarkable for two other encounters which could hardly have been more different, either from the celebration in Budapest or from each

other. One was an extended visit to the Franciscan monastery at which his father had once been a novice. Liszt spent a long evening with the Father Superior, who'd made a deep impression on him as a child, and he found to his surprise that he could remember all the monks by name. It was a meeting rich in nostalgia and it brought childhood memories rushing back to him in bewildering profusion. In striking contrast to the benign austerity of the Father Superior was Liszt's recollection of the Gypsy fiddler Bihari.

I was just beginning to grow up when I heard this great man in 1822. He used to play for hours on end, without giving the slightest thought to the passage of time. His musical cascades fell in rainbow profusion or glided along in a soft murmur. His performances must have distilled into my soul the essence of some generous and exhilarating wine, like one of those mysterious elixirs concocted in the secret laboratories of those alchemists in the Middle Ages.

### Music: Gypsy music

On his return to the haunts of his childhood, it was only natural that Liszt should want to seek out the Gypsies again, in his maturity. He did. And it was an encounter which he never forgot.

They had built their fire under a colonnade of ash trees and were sitting round it, violins in hand, on the piled sheepskins that were their only furniture. The women were crashing their tambourines and uttering little cries of mimicry while they danced. In the intervals of this, there was the noise from the wooden axles of the wagons, creaking loudly as they were drawn back to make more room for the dancers. Meat and wild honey were being eaten. The children cut capers, turned somersaults and uttered wild cries while they fought over a bag of peas, or cracked nuts upon the stones. The Gypsy hags sat with inflamed eyes, warming themselves and listening to the music. The men resembled each other like the sons of one mother. Their tawny skins and faces were framed in locks of hair which fell

like snakes of a bluish-black tint upon their lively orange necks. Their eyes shone like sparks which seemed to be illuminated and extinguished by some interior contrivance.

They got up from the ground to look at some horses which had recently been given them in exchange. This pleased them, and they put on a heavenly smile, showing off their teeth, which were as white as snow. After this, they started imitating castanets by cracking the joints of their fingers, which are always long and seem charged with electricity. They began throwing their caps in the air and strutting about like peacocks. Then, they looked at the horses again, and, as if suddenly given the power to express their pleasure at the bargain, they flew to their violins and cymbals and began playing in a perfect fury of excitement. The *friska* (or quick Gypsy dance) rose into a frenzy of delirium till the dancers were breathless and fell to the ground.

This renewed encounter with the Gypsies' music was one of the most significant moments of Liszt's life, personal and artistic, and he wasn't about to let a few breathless bodies put an end to it so soon. He dipped into his pocket, threw the players several handfuls of coins, and they began again.

### Music: Gypsy music

This time it was the gentle and melancholy *lassan*, the slow measure of the Gypsies, but as it quickened they grew more excited and led forward the prettiest of the girls for me to dance with. The orgy went on far into the night, while the clearing was lit by a dozen barrels of pitch, the flames of which rose up into the air like cylinders of fire.

Liszt's adult response to the music of the Gypsies was both intense and addictive – he himself referred to it as 'a kind of opium' – and it bore creative fruit in the fifteen Hungarian Rhapsodies which for a long time were his most popular works.

## Music: Hungarian Rhapsody No. 6 in D major

Liszt's fascination with the Gypsies went deep. Quite apart from their music, he admired their independence and resilience, their proven capacity to retain their own proud identity through centuries of persecution. And their combination of illiteracy and high musical attainment seemed to confirm his conviction that music is an innate and universal language of the human spirit, not something invented by so-called civilisation. Like many another Romantic before and since, Liszt (not to put too fine a point on it) was a sucker for the concept of the 'noble savage'. Despite his own extreme sophistication, there was a part of him which regarded literate 'culture' with deep suspicion. Before leaving Hungary he was heard musing aloud about the challenge of imposing a formal education on a Gypsy musician. Unexpectedly, he was soon asked to put his theories to the test. Some time later, Count Sándor Teleki arrived on Liszt's doorstep in Paris to deliver what he described to Liszt as 'a present': a 12-year-old Gypsy violinist named Josi, whom the Count, in the best aristocratic tradition, had bought from the boy's family in order to give him to Liszt. The wheels of education were set in motion at once – with disastrous consequences which Liszt must secretly have found very pleasing. The boy stole whatever he fancied, broke whatever he couldn't understand and squandered the money which Liszt gave him on flashy clothes and elaborate hairstyles clearly aimed at the eyes of young ladies. Only when he had been universally condemned as uncontrollable and impossible was he sent back to Hungary, where he rejoined his family and returned to the life of a poor itinerant fiddler. Some years later, as a grown man with a family of his own, he received a letter from Liszt, which thanks to his former benefactor, he was able to read for himself.

I could almost envy you, Josi, for having escaped from the civilised art of music-making, with its limitations and constrictions. No prattle and jargon from pedants, cavillers, critics, and all the nameless brood of such can reach you; with your fiddle bow you raise yourself above everything miserable in

the world and play away defiantly. You have done well, my dear Josi, not to engage in concert room torture, and to disdain the empty, painful reputation of a trained violinist.

Liszt himself, on the other hand, with a masochism worthy of his Romantic nature, demonstrated an appetite for ‘concert room torture’ which seemingly knew no bounds. Having indulged it, with spectacular results, in Paris, Vienna and Budapest, he now embarked on a series of gruelling concert tours which took him, in the course of a mere eight years, to Spain, Portugal, Germany, England, Poland, Romania, Turkey and Russia – and to more than 320 cities – this before the advent of widespread railways, let alone the aeroplane.

¶ With Liszt more or less constantly on the road, Marie d’Agoult had returned to Paris in the autumn of 1839 to face a difficult period of social rehabilitation. In accordance with the wishes of her family, her three illegitimate offspring were never mentioned and seldom seen, even by their mother. The girls were entrusted to the care of Liszt’s mother, the boy, Daniel, was left languishing in Italy for another two years before being fetched to join his sisters in 1841. To Mama Liszt’s horror, he was delivered to her door quite literally starving.

For his part, Marie’s husband was prepared to forgive and forget, as it were, if she would consent to return to him. When she reported this to Liszt, with the suggestion that she might take up the offer, he was appalled.

No, no and no again! If your husband wishes to go to extremes, I shall come to Paris immediately and we will put a stop to it once and for all. Come what may, I am absolutely determined on it, and even you will not make me change my mind. Without doubt, in the eyes of the law you belong to him body and soul, but matters do not always turn out like that in the world below. One temporizes, one arranges things, one agrees as one has to when each detests the other. Let us be confident, as in the past. The hardest part is over, without doubt.

On the contrary. It had hardly begun. In addition to their fundamental incompatibility (and it should be noted here that Marie took not the slightest interest in Liszt's artistic life), their relationship was poisoned early on by Marie's chronic jealousy. The suggestion that she might return to her husband was no more than an attempt to fan the flames of Liszt's ardour by inciting that cancerous emotion in him. When that ploy failed, she tried again. In one extraordinary letter, she purported to seek Liszt's blessing for 'a little infidelity', as she plainly put it. His answer dumbfounded her.

You ask for permission to be unfaithful! Dear Marie, you know my way of looking at that kind of thing. I want and I wish you always to have complete freedom, because I am convinced that you would always use it nobly, tactfully.

He even invited her to talk freely to him about her prospective lover with no fear of reproach.

Part of her problem was the simple fact that she got precious little chance to talk to Liszt about anything. He was hardly ever there. Her hopes that he would sooner or later return to Paris to resume their life together grew steadily more threadbare. With every passing year more rumours reached her of his flagrant dalliance with other women. She became increasingly embittered. Like posterity after her, she chose to believe the rumours rather than Liszt's repeated disclaimers, let alone the evidence which supported him. The most celebrated of his fabled affairs was with the flamboyant, the notorious Spanish dancer Lola Montez, who went on to become the mistress of the King of Bavaria. Liszt's public association with this scarlet woman seems to have been the last straw for his abandoned Countess, and it's not hard to see why. The very name of Lola Montez was a byword for scandal, which she clearly enjoyed to the hilt. The fact is, though, that her name wasn't Lola Montez but Eliza Gilbert, she was not Spanish but Irish, she was a dancer ( a very poor one, by all accounts) and there isn't a shred of evidence that she and Liszt were ever lovers. Anyway, it hardly mattered. Things between him and Marie had reached an all-time low,

and in the Spring of 1844 she proposed that from then onwards they should only communicate through a go-between. Liszt's response was brief, melancholy and strange – hovering somewhere between apology and blame:

I am deeply sad and profoundly distressed. I count one by one all the sorrows I have put into your heart, and nothing and no-one can save me from myself. I do not want to speak to you, or to see you, even less to write to you.

But there was worse to come. Hardly for the first time in human history, love fermented into hatred, and Marie seems to have lost few opportunities to blacken Liszt's name. In 1845, news of her slanders reached him in Marseilles. If he now wrote to her more in sorrow than in anger, it wasn't by much.

About a year ago, madame, I was able to think that the incredible opinion you hold of me, and expressed in several letters, remained a secret between us. I was even obliged to conclude from your past, full of ardent devotion to me, that you would keep the same reserve towards others as I had imposed on myself with regard to you. Now this illusion is no longer tenable, for I can no longer remain in ignorance of the fact that you are going about telling all comers the craziest and most foolish things about me. If it suited you to reflect for a minute, you would easily realise that it is absolutely impossible for anyone to discover the slightest foundation for the accusations that you make against me.

Nevertheless, the thought of his own children being turned against him by such accusations was more than Liszt could tolerate. It was now his turn for jealous fantasies. As things stood at present, he felt reasonably secure. Blandine was safely immured at a boarding school, away from her mother's clutches; Daniel and Cosima were in the care of Liszt's mother. But as he wrote to

Massart, the couple's unenviable go-between, he was tormented by the thought that Marie might try and take the children home with her by force. If that were to happen,

I should not consent to it! and would come to Paris to put an end to all these struggles some way or another. I would have no scruples either in taking all three of them away from her without considering anyone or anything. The children simply cannot be raised at her home as long as we two are on the present terms with each other.

To both parents at this sorry point, the well-being of the children seems to have been a minor consideration. Liszt now went to considerable lengths to prove that in law the children were Hungarian. As they were also born abroad, and illegitimate into the bargain, their mother, under French and Hungarian law alike, had no parental rights whatsoever. Liszt was entitled, if he chose, to deny her all access to them. One can hardly be surprised, then, that when Marie learned of this, relations between the erstwhile lovers reached an all-time low.

A year ago, sir, you said to me: 'Be careful, you don't know what I'm capable of.' Now I know. You are capable of trampling an honourable agreement underfoot, of imposing on a woman to whom you owe every respect humiliating conditions when she wants to exercise her sacred rights, recognised by you. You are capable of the worst sort of cowardice; of threatening from a distance, and on grounds of legality, a mother who claims the fruit of her womb!

Never mind the fruit. Liszt's refusal to come to Paris, now that he knew he had the law on his side, only aggravated the matter. But Marie was not one to give up easily.

I admit, sir, that I have lost a desperate skirmish in which I had nothing to invoke except your heart,

your reason and your conscience. But I protest before God and all mankind, I protest before every mother against the brutality that has been meted out to me. From now on, sir, your daughters no longer have a mother. That is what you wanted.

This understandably impassioned invoking of motherhood would be more moving if Marie had thought of it a little sooner. Her interest in the children up to this point had been minimal, to put it charitably. Nor did either parent ever seem to put the children first. The effect on these hapless, semi-discarded progeny was predictably dire, but they managed somehow to preserve the illusion that they loved the parents they never saw, and that they were somehow loved by them, despite the lack of any convincing evidence. That illusion became harder than ever to maintain after an exchange of letters in 1850, sparked off by a touching and pathetic letter to Liszt from his first-born daughter Blandine.

I write, my dear Papa, to tell you how happy we are and to tell you how we achieved this happiness which has been denied us for so long. We have seen Mama, and this great joy has made us forget the pain of our long separation. Each day I was feeling more and more grieved at not being able to see her and was never happier than when I heard someone pronounce her name. During the holidays someone mentioned her address, in our presence. Next day we were completely preoccupied by what we had heard and in the middle of our walk we had the sudden inspiration to go and see her, and that is how we met her again. We only stayed for a few moments with her. She was very moved and very surprised when she saw us, and she was especially happy to find that our feelings for her were as strong and as tender as ever.

The depth of Liszt's fatherly instincts may be gauged by his reply:

I have not only to scold you but to blame you severely, for you have done wrong. You must know that

if your grandmother did not take you to visit your mother, she was following my orders, and that in deceiving her you have deceived me. Precious as your affection is to me I must tell you sincerely that I value it only insofar as you remain truly daughters after my own heart, whose upright will, sound reason, cultivated talents, lofty and steadfast characters are such as to bring honour to my name and ensure me some consolation in my old age.

Clearly this was not something he could rely on, so he turned, as ever, to the piano and wrote some consolations of his own.

#### 12 Music: Consolation in D flat

13 Marie d'Agoult can be faulted in many ways – not least as a mother – but in certain respects it's hard not to sympathise with her. For a lady naturally prone to jealousy she could hardly have picked a more unsettling lover. Liszt may not have been the 'Don Juan parvenu' she described, but how was she to know? The fact is that Liszt's effect on women was the stuff of which many men's dreams are made. Wherever he played, they threw their jewellery on to the stage, they shrieked in ecstasy (something which seems now to have become almost routine at pop concerts), they fought, they scratched, they bit and kicked each other over the gloves he contrived to leave on the piano or the snuff-boxes which he just happened to have mislaid. They made bracelets out of piano strings broken by him, they gathered up the dregs of his coffee and preserved them in bottles. One lady, no longer in the flush of youth, managed to retrieve the butt of one of his discarded cigars and sequestered it in her bosom to her dying day (let's not ask in what condition).

Liszt's effect on women was plainly phenomenal, but his power over people – as a performer, as a musician and as a man – transcended matters of sex. His recitals in Berlin in the early 1840s are a case in point – quite apart from the fact that they entailed 21 concerts and 80 works in the

space of 10 weeks. When he left the city, it was, in the words of one critic, ‘not like a king, but as a king’.

A carriage pulled up, drawn by six white horses. Amid the shouting and cheering, I was practically carried down the steps and into the carriage, where I took my place beside the dignitaries of the university. Thirty coaches-and-four packed with students, and a number of riders on horseback, wearing their academic finery, accompanied my departure, and many other coaches also joined the cavalcade, while thousands swarmed around the scene on foot. The procession moved off in the direction of Unter den Linden Avenue, traversed the square where the statue of Frederick the Great was due to be erected, then turned back past the royal palace in the direction of the Frankfurt Gate. Not only were the streets and squares crowded with people, but all the windows along the way were filled with spectators.

By this time, though, Liszt was beginning to take such things in his stride.

From Berlin, he moved on to Russia. Here he faced a number of distinguished and eminent listeners whose curiosity was tempered with a certain natural scepticism. Among them was the critic Vladimir Stasov, who attended Liszt’s debut in St Petersburg in the company of the composer Alexander Serov.

Liszt made his entry into the great Assembly Hall of the Nobility strolling arm in arm through the gallery with Count Vielgorsky. Like the Count, he was wearing a white cravat, and over it the Order of the Golden Spur, recently bestowed on him by the Pope. Various other orders dangled from the lapels of his frock coat. I at once strongly disliked this mania for decorations and later on had as little liking for the saccharine, courtly manner Liszt affected with everyone he met. But most startling of all was his enormous mane of fair hair. In those days no-one in Russia would have dared to wear his hair like that.

Liszt's habit of wearing his many decorations on the concert platform has been widely construed as an example of his undoubted vanity. In fact, he had a higher purpose: to help raise the status of musicians everywhere, who at that time were commonly regarded by the aristocracy as a distinctly lower form of life. Indeed Liszt did more than anyone before him to break down the barriers that traditionally separated performers from those who were pleased to regard themselves as socially superior. But let's get back to Stasov, who made no such mistake:

Liszt, suddenly noting the time, walked down from the gallery, elbowed his way through the crowd and moved quickly toward the stage. Instead of using the steps, however, he leapt onto the platform. He tore off his white kid gloves and tossed them on the floor, under the piano. Then, after bowing low in all directions to a tumult of applause such as had probably not been heard in Petersburg since 1703, he seated himself at the piano. Instantly the hall became deadly silent. Without any preliminaries, Liszt began playing. As soon as he finished, and while the hall was still rocking with applause, he moved swiftly to a second piano, facing in the opposite direction. Throughout the concert he used the pianos alternately for each piece, facing first one, then the other half of the hall.

Any lingering scepticism was swept away with Liszt's first few bars. Stasov, who was by no means a pushover as a critic, could scarcely believe his ears.

We had never in our lives heard anything like this; we had never been in the presence of such brilliant, passionate, demonic temperament, at one moment rushing like a whirlwind, at another pouring forth cascades of tender beauty and grace. Liszt's playing was absolutely overwhelming. After the concert, Serov and I were like two madmen. We exchanged only a few words and then rushed home to write down, as quickly as possible, our impressions, our dreams, our ecstasies. Then and there we took a vow that thenceforth and for ever, that day, 8th April 1842, would be sacred to us, and we would never forget a single second of it till our dying day.

## Music: Transcendental Etude No. 8

[14] In 1845, the Beethoven Monument in Bonn was finally unveiled. Liszt had been as good as his word. But though he now relaxed his pace a little, he continued to tour. He visited Russia twice more. On the second occasion he made an excursion to the Ukraine at the invitation of a vastly wealthy lady who'd heard him in Kiev, and whose name slips almost incidentally into his correspondence.

At Jassy I found awaiting me a letter from Berlioz, delivered by the hand of Princess Wittgenstein, who is my new discovery in princesses, as Madame Allart would say, with the important difference that we don't dream of being in love with each other.

Perhaps because there was no need to dream. As the Princess made abundantly clear to him, she was hooked from the start:

I cannot take any step except towards you and with you. All my faith, all my hope, and all my love are concentrated and summed up in you, through you and for you. May the Angel of the Lord guide you, you who are my radiant morning star.

And Liszt came to take a similar view. For him, in only a little time, every hour apart from his beloved Carolyne was a bittersweet torment of frustration.

Farewell till tomorrow, my strength, my grandeur, my approbation, reason of my being and my existence. My first prayer, the first breath of my soul is for you. Farewell, my beautiful eyes, my eagle's clutch!

Liszt could afford that rather odd term of endearment, at this point. The Princess, like the Countess, was safely if unhappily married. And like Liszt she was a devout Roman Catholic. However illicit their union might be in the eyes of the Church, they pledged themselves to one another in the name of a still higher authority.

Let us love each other, my unique and glorious beloved, in God and in our Lord Jesus Christ, and let no man put asunder those whom God has joined together for eternity.

They, in the meantime, set about trying to put asunder as fast as possible those whom God had previously joined together – namely the Princess and her husband. Well, that turned out to be a great deal easier said than done. A more immediate consequence of this passionate meeting of minds, though, was a decision which fundamentally altered the course of Liszt's life, and left the musical world of three continents in a state of shock. As he put it to a friend:

The moment has come for me, at thirty-five, to break my chrysalis as a virtuoso and allow free flight to my thought. The aim that is above and beyond everything for me at present is to conquer the theatre by my thought as I have conquered it during the past six years by my personality as an artist.

At the very peak of his powers, having in many ways revolutionised the whole nature and character of concert-giving, he was turning his back on the stage.

Liszt's virtuoso years – enshrining a career without precedent – are important not only or even mainly because they established his still unrivalled reputation as the greatest pianist who ever lived, but because they established the model on which the life of the concert pianist is based to this day. Liszt was the inventor of the solo piano recital – and of its curious name (how, people asked at the time, can one recite on the piano?). He was the first to play whole programmes from memory, the first to embrace the entire keyboard literature, as then known, from Bach to Chopin,

and the first consistently to place the piano at right angles to the platform, so that its open lid projected the sound outward towards the audience. From now on it would be left to others to build on the foundations laid by Liszt, but it shouldn't be thought that in giving up the virtuoso life Liszt was turning his back on the piano. How could he?

My piano is for me what his frigate is to a sailor, or his horse to an Arab – more indeed: it is my very self, my mother tongue, my life. Within its seven octaves it encloses the whole range of an orchestra, and a man's ten fingers have the power to reproduce the harmonies which are created by hundreds of performers.

15 Music: Berlioz, arr. Liszt: *Un bal (Symphonie fantastique)*

16 From the time of his official retirement to his death just under 40 years later, Liszt devoted himself to composing, conducting and teaching. He did, in fact, play in public now and again, but never for money. Nor did he ever accept a penny from his many students, who flocked to him from all over the western world. In some ways, he was simply being true to an artistic creed first enunciated, a little pompously, when he was twenty-eight:

May the artist of the future gladly and readily decline to play the conceited and egotistical role which we hope has had in Paganini its last brilliant representative. May he set his goal from within, and not outside, himself, and be the means of virtuosity not its end. May he constantly keep in mind that though the saying is 'noblesse oblige', in a far higher degree than nobility, 'Génie oblige!'

Genius, in short, has obligations. Well now, having, as he felt, discharged his obligations to the public, Liszt prepared to meet his responsibilities to the art of music itself, and at the highest level of aspiration. He accepted a long-offered invitation to become Kapellmeister at the court of

Weimar in Germany, where an already-established orchestra and opera house were ready and waiting. He now stood on the threshold of the second great phase of his life as a musician. The time was right. He knew it. And it felt good.

Here I breathe! I feel something in the very air that proclaims Weimar a cultivated, an artistic town. It looks just as I imagined: calm, luminous, contemplative, full of air and light, and set in a landscape of streams, wooded hills and charming valleys. How my heart beats as I walk through it.

And it beat still faster with the imminent arrival of the Princess, who was to play a key part in Liszt's Weimar years, and beyond. Naturally, there was some curiosity to see this latest of Liszt's amorous conquests, but the reality caused an equal sense of puzzlement and disappointment. Among the most articulate eyewitnesses to this was the travelling English novelist Mary Anne Evans, better known as George Eliot.

The appearance of the Princess rather startled me. I had expected to see a tall distinguished woman, if not a beautiful one. But she is short and unbecomingly plump; at first glance the face is not pleasing, and the profile especially is harsh and barbarian. Her teeth, unhappily, are blackish too.

The result, in part, of too many cigars.

With the Princess's unwavering support, Liszt set about transforming an already cultured city into the musical capital of Europe. Above all, it was to be a bastion of the avant-garde, the crucible in which the much-touted 'music of the future' was to be forged. The fervour, the unbridled passion of Liszt's crusade was very much a child of his time. His arrival as the musical general of Weimar coincided with a wave of political unrest throughout Europe. Well, unrest is putting it mildly. The continent was fairly ablaze with armed revolution. Heavy fighting broke out in Paris, Vienna, Berlin, Milan, Venice, Rome, Parma and Prague – among other places. There

were vicious crackdowns in Poland. Hungary rumbled ominously on the brink of catastrophic upheavals. Thousands were dying, many more being imprisoned or worse. Like many other liberally-minded people, Liszt observed the smouldering scene with an uneasy mixture of horror and excitement. From his position on the sidelines, it was easy to pretend that he actually envied those who were in the thick of the fray. His former secretary, for one.

Belloni is more fortunate than I. As a lieutenant of the National Guard he dated his last letter from the Paris town hall! But I am forgetting that I hate politics, and indeed during the last fifteen years this is the first enthusiasm which has gripped me.

Unlike the more politicised Wagner, who took part in the uprising in Dresden, Liszt himself made little or no attempt to participate in any of these great events, though he did lend his moral support, in the way of a ‘Worker’s Chorus’ (which his publisher thought too inflammatory to release), and on a visit to Vienna, where revolutionaries had successfully ousted the hated Prince Metternich, he provided his young pupil Janos Dunkl with an imperishable boyhood memory.

In the stormy days of the year 1848 I visited the barricades with Liszt, which were commanded by the well-known bass singer Karl Formes. Liszt presented the workers posted there with cigars and gold. Instead of all his medals he wore a cockade of the Hungarian national colours in the buttonhole of his jacket.

Hungary at that time being a subject nation in the Austrian, Habsburg Empire. Inspired by the apparent success of the French and Viennese uprising, Hungarian revolutionaries, too, took to the streets, and Hungary’s greatest poet Sandor Petöfi outlined their demands in an emotional speech on the steps of the National Museum in Pest. When news of these events reached Liszt, he was much stirred, of course, but he expressed his support in curiously muted terms.

My compatriots have just taken a step that is so decisive, so Hungarian and so unanimous that it is impossible to withhold a tribute of legitimate sympathy.

Many people at the time felt that Liszt should have been doing rather more than issuing tributes of sympathy and handing out cigars. His friends and many distinguished artists, Petöfi among them, were suffering death, execution and torture. Liszt's defence of his apparent passivity was brief and to the point.

I would be the first to answer the call to arms, to give my blood and not tremble before the guillotine, if it were the guillotine that could give this world peace and mankind happiness. But who believes that? We are concerned with bringing peace to the world in which the individual is justly treated by society.

Well, the dividing line between idealism and fantasy is sometimes very hard to find. Liszt was perhaps a little naive, he may have lacked a certain kind of courage, but there can hardly be any doubt that he contributed far more to civilisation as a living composer than he would have as a dead martyr. As an artist he was as daring and revolutionary as any composer before or since. And the plain fact is that most of the military and political revolutions which shook the world in his lifetime turned out to be abject failures in the long run. Liszt's revolutions, on the other hand (and those he sponsored), fundamentally affected the course of Western music. Within a remarkably short time of his arrival in Weimar, he transformed it into the Mecca of modern music. Among those who were drawn to the city as by a magnet were such disparate musicians as Brahms, Berlioz, Verdi, Borodin, Smetana, Grieg and Schumann. Another was the young, brilliant, fire-breathing Hans von Bülow, who declared to the world with characteristic venom and passion:

We Weimarists are going to win, you'll see; we shall rule and our opponents will dissolve in gall and be poured away down the closet of the past! And our art – the true, the noble, the high – will thrive

greatly; and Liszt will be hailed as the founder of interpretative art, with all its implications, and the initiator of a new era.

Music: symphonic poem *Prometheus*

Part of the so-called symphonic poem, *Prometheus*.

Liszt invented both the concept and the name of the symphonic poem. Basically, it's a one-movement work whose shape and tone are based, fairly literally, on a particular non-musical idea – poetic, descriptive, historical or whatever. It's deliberately illustrative music – music that tells a story. 'Programme music', as it's called, as opposed to 'absolute' music, which makes no external references. Liszt's example was seized on by many other composers, most notably Smetana, Tchaikovsky, Richard Strauss and Sibelius.

☐ For all the strength of his own convictions, Liszt was able to appreciate a very wide range of music, and as a teacher he turned out not a generation of clones at all, but a great diversity of musicians, many of whom were noted for their pronounced individuality. Throughout his Weimar years, and with characteristic generosity, Liszt put himself and his resources at the service of all who craved or needed his help. But there was one who stood out like a colossus from all the others. No important musician recognised the true stature of Wagner sooner than Liszt, or did more to champion his cause. As he wrote to the composer himself:

You may have complete confidence that I shall allow no circumstance to prevent me from doing everything that it is possible to do in the interest of your reputation or your glory, in your personal interest.

And he was as good as his word. Nor did he confine his efforts to the strictly musical. When

Wagner was outlawed throughout Germany for his part in the Dresden uprising of 1849, it was Liszt who sheltered him in Weimar. It was Liszt who arranged his escape route to Switzerland, and Liszt, among many others, who gave him large sums of money whenever he needed it, which seems to have been most of the time. It was also Liszt who gave Wagner his second wife, Cosima, but that's another story.

For all his generous championing of others, Liszt didn't by any means neglect himself. Having previously devoted most of his composition to piano works, he now turned his attention to the orchestra as well, studying the subtle art of orchestration and finding his feet, so to speak, as a conductor. The piano, needless to say, still played a central role, and it was at Weimar that he composed or completed most of the piano works by which he's best known today: the Transcendental Etudes, the three books of pieces which he entitled *Années de Pèlerinage* ('Years of Pilgrimage'), the so-called 'Paganini Studies', and above all, the Sonata in B minor, regarded by many people, and most musicians, as his greatest achievement.

With the partial exception of Schubert's Wanderer Fantasy, which had a big influence on Liszt, there'd never been anything quite like this before. For a start, it was the first large-scale sonata ever to be cast in one huge movement – it lasts a little over half-an-hour in most performances; and within this single gigantic span it manages to encompass both the overall design of so-called 'sonata form', as inherited from Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven, and the equivalent of the four separate movements which tend to make up the standard orchestral symphony. In fact it can really be seen as a kind of Symphony for Piano. The piano-writing is both supremely idiomatic and orchestral in character, but the most epoch-making feature of the work is the fact that virtually everything in it derives from the opening seventeen bars.

Music: Sonata in B minor

Part of the epic Sonata in B minor. The so-called 'transformation of themes', which is in many

ways the life's blood of this extraordinary work, came to be a hallmark of Liszt's music, and it had a very significant influence on his future son-in-law Wagner. The fact is that Wagner owed many debts to Liszt, artistic as well as financial, and characteristically he repaid none of them, not even in simple acknowledgement.

In addition to his most important piano and orchestral works, the Weimar years also saw Liszt expanding his tonal palette to include the organ, for which he composed a few important works, and the chorus, which was to play an ever greater part in his later life. It was also at Weimar that he became one of the founding fathers of modern conducting. Where earlier conductors had concentrated mainly on keeping time and building up the efficiency of their troops, Liszt was one of the first conductors to indicate phrasing and dynamics and so on through gestures and facial expression. He was among the first of the great interpretative conductors – and certainly no conductor before him had ever lavished such time, care and passion on the works of other composers. Beethoven, Schumann, Berlioz and Wagner were only a few out of many.

Ⓘ Throughout his Weimar years, Liszt was devotedly encouraged in all his efforts by the Princess, whose divorce remained as elusive as ever. Quite apart from her personal unpopularity, her continuing and conspicuous presence in the city as Liszt's mistress was a thorn in the flesh of all concerned. In Weimar at that time, adultery was a criminal offence. Add to this his revolutionary musical experiments and his determined advocacy of the outlawed Wagner and it's not hard to see why Liszt's position at Weimar became increasingly difficult. His support of the Princess, though, was steadfast and uncompromising. When he came to write his will in 1860, he left no doubt about his debt to her.

Whatever good I have done and thought for twelve years, I owe to Her whom I have so ardently desired to call by the sweet name of wife ... I cannot even write her name without an ineffable thrill. All my joys have come from her, and my sufferings will always go to her to find their appeasement. She has

not only associated herself completely and without respite with my existence, my work, my cares, my career – aiding me with her advice, sustaining me with her encouragement, reviving me by her enthusiasm with an unimaginable prodigality of pains, previsions, wise and gentle words, ingenious and persistent efforts; more than this, she has still more often renounced herself, sacrificed what was legitimately imperative in her own nature in order better to carry my burden, which she has made her wealth and her sole luxury.

And in the formal dedication of his symphonic poems, which record the musical journeys of his Weimar years, he acknowledged his debt to her in public too.

To her who remains the companion of my life, the firmament of my mind, the living prayer and heaven of my soul – to Jeanne Elisabeth Carolyne.

Music: symphonic poem *From the Cradle to the Grave*

By 1858, Liszt's crusade in Weimar had effectively been sabotaged by an alliance of musical and political conservatism. After more than a decade of tireless service in the cause of art, he resigned his post. To the great relief of court and city alike, the Princess now moved on to Rome, where she hoped to win final approval for her divorce. Then, in 1859, Liszt's only son Daniel died in Vienna at the age of nineteen. All in all, this was not a happy time. Liszt the invincible, the one-time conqueror of the musical world, looked about him and saw only failure. And that was only emphasised by a brief and predictably uncomfortable reunion with Marie d'Agoult.

I kissed her on the forehead for the first time in many long years, and said to her, 'Come, Marie, let me speak to you in peasant's language. God bless you. Wish me no evil!' She could not reply, but her tears flowed ever faster. Olivier had told me that when he was travelling with her in Italy he had often seen

her crying bitterly in places that recalled our youth to her. I told her I had been moved by this. She said, almost stammering, 'I shall always be true to Italy – and to Hungary!' Thereupon I left her quietly.

And he was never to see her again.

In 1861, he prepared to leave the Villa Altenburg in Weimar to join his ever-patient Princess in Rome. As he wrote to her, it was a more than poignant occasion:

It's impossible for me to collect in a single focus the emotions of my last hours at the Altenburg. Each room, each piece of furniture, to the very steps of the staircase and the turf of the garden is illumined with your love, without which I should feel reduced to nothingness. I cannot contain my tears. But in leaving this house, I remember that I am going to you, and I draw a loftier breath. These are the last lines I shall write to you. My long exile is near its end. In five days I shall find once more in you my fatherland, my home, my altar.

Emotional words. And well they might be. The truth is that Liszt, like the Gypsies he so admired, was a man without a home: a traveller in every land, a citizen of none.

[19] In Rome, at last, the Vatican disposed of its final objections, and a date was set for the couple's long-awaited wedding: the twenty-second of October, Liszt's birthday. It was the culmination of a fifteen-year battle. Or it would have been. But on the very eve of the ceremony, an emissary arrived from the Vatican to announce that fresh objections had been raised and that the wedding, therefore, was off. Well, from that point onwards, the Princess seems to have turned her back on the outside world. She shut herself away in a darkened room whose curtains she never drew aside, whose windows she never opened. Surrounded by theological tomes, she became obsessed with canon law and embarked on what was to be her literary magnum opus – an unreadable twenty-four volume treatise on (to quote its title) 'The

Interior Causes of the External Weaknesses of the Roman Catholic Church'. Apart from the religious tomes, the room was furnished with a printing press, fourteen busts of Liszt, and hundreds of strong cigars which she chain-smoked while pacing the floor and getting her own back at the Vatican. The writer Richard Voss was one of the few to gain admission to her inner sanctum.

She lived in these selfsame rooms for more than twenty years, without feeling the need to introduce into them any beauty or charm. In all frankness it must be said that she lacked both these qualities herself. But even over her own charmlessness and want of beauty her mind ruled triumphant. She lay constantly on an ottoman, her dress old-fashioned and her strikingly large head encased in an enormous bonnet, which quite disfigured her, its laces being tied under her chin and causing her naturally sharp features to appear still sharper. Throughout the many years of her sojourn in Rome, this remarkable woman possessed no kitchen of her own, all her food being brought to her from a nearby restaurant.

The change in Liszt's life was hardly less dramatic. He became darkly introspective, his hair changed colour, and his once beautiful features became disfigured by warts of a grotesque size. As described by an eye-witness in 1862, he was 'tall, thin, with long grey hair – and visibly burnt out'. In September of that year, his first-born daughter Blandine died in childbirth, aged twenty-six, and in 1863, the man whose romantic escapades had once been the talk of Europe entered a Roman monastery and prepared himself for one of the most momentous decisions of his life. In 1865 he took minor orders of the priesthood and was known from then on as the Abbé Liszt. He was not, however, despite our Roman eye-witness, a burnt-out case – not by a long chalk. Nor, in taking holy orders, was he in retreat – at least not generally speaking.

I was only following, in all simplicity and honesty of heart, the old Catholic tendency of my youth. If I had not been opposed in my earliest fervour by my mother and my confessor, Abbé Bardin, it would

have led me to the seminary in 1830 and later to the priesthood. Would I have been worthy of such a vocation? Divine grace alone could have made it possible.

And what would the history of music have been like without him? Divine grace, it seems, had other plans.

In the two decades left to him, Liszt gave himself to music with no less ardour than in his youth. He wrote many highly original piano works, there were innumerable songs, organ pieces, secular choral works – and a large quantity of religious music which is only now beginning to be widely known.

#### 20 Music: Ave Maria

21 If Liszt thought that by taking holy orders he could keep the clamouring world outside at bay, he was very much mistaken. Whether he liked it or not, he was now, to some extent, reaping the harvest of seeds sown long ago.

In spite of my seclusion and retirement I am still very much disturbed by visitors, social obligations, musical protégés and wearisome, mostly unnecessary correspondence and duties. Among other things the St Petersburg Philharmonic Society has invited me to conduct two concerts of my works. These good people cannot refrain from prattling on about my ‘former triumphal tours, unrivalled mastery of the piano’ and so on – and this is as utterly sickening to me as flat, lukewarm champagne.

But no amount of contemplative soul-searching could extinguish the gypsy in Liszt, and for all his occasional world-weary gestures, he thrived on these invitations as a horse thrives on oats. For the rest of his life he continued to live like a nomad, dividing his time, for the most part, between Rome, Weimar and Budapest, where he devoted himself not only to composition but to teaching,

conducting, and the continuous encouragement of others. Among the hundreds of musicians who benefited from his guidance and support during these years were Albeniz, Borodin, Bruckner, Debussy, Delibes, Fauré, Glazunov, Granados, Grieg, Massenet, Saint-Saëns and Tchaikovsky. And his personal magic remained undimmed. Almost to his dying day, his very presence remained electrifying, and at the coronation of Franz Josef I as King of Hungary in 1867, he stole the thunder of the King himself, as Janka Wohl reported:

An immense crowd of eager sightseers was waiting – on stands, in windows, on the roofs, and in flag-bedecked boats – to see the royal procession which was soon to cross the bridge. When the feverish suspense grew intense, the tall figure of a priest, in a long black cassock studded with decorations, was seen to descend the broad white road leading to the Danube, which had been kept clear for the royal procession. As he walked bareheaded, his snow-white hair floated on the breeze, and his features seemed cast in brass. At his appearance a murmur arose, which swelled and deepened as he advanced and was recognised by the people. The name of Liszt flew down the serried ranks from mouth to mouth, swift as a flash of lightning. Soon a hundred thousand men and women were frantically applauding him, wild with the excitement of this whirlwind of voices. The crowd on the other side of the river naturally thought it must be the king. It was not the king, but it was a king, to whom were addressed the sympathies of a grateful nation proud of the possession of such a son.

Nor did the white hair, the cassock and the great wens on his face diminish his appeal to the ladies, or his deep-seated pleasure in them. One in particular, though, the so-called ‘Cossack Countess’, loomed unpleasantly large in this final chapter of his life – indeed she came close to ending it.

Like Lola Montez, Olga Janina was in many ways a flamboyant fake: she was neither a countess nor a cossack, and her name was not Janina. She was the often-suicidal drug-addicted daughter of a boot-polish manufacturer, and according to her own accounts she kept a tiger as a pet, rode wild horses bareback across the Russian steppes, was a fearsome wolf-hunter and

travelled everywhere armed with a dagger and a phial of poison. Unfortunately for Liszt, she was also a very accomplished pianist, which gained her access to his inner circle in 1869, when she became a pupil of his in Rome. In the course of the next year or so she followed him everywhere he went and often appeared with him in concert. Like many women, she fell obsessively in love with him, and in November of 1851 she burst into his apartment in Pest, brandishing a revolver and threatening to kill him if he continued to reject her. After being apprehended and disarmed by some of Liszt's friends she managed to swallow her phial of poison and fell to the floor in convulsions. The dose proved not to be fatal, and she spent the next few years writing and publishing a sequence of lurid, sensational and best-selling books detailing every aspect of her supposedly torrid affair with Liszt.

Meanwhile, from her darkened, smoke-filled cell in Rome, the Princess Carolyne followed his activities and smothered him, as ever, with selfless understanding.

Your soul is too tender, too artistic, too full of feeling to remain without feminine society. You need women around you, and of every sort, just as an orchestra requires different instruments and varieties of tone. Unfortunately, there are few women who are as they should be – good, and sincere, and responsive to your intelligence. I am often sad to think how you will always be misunderstood.

Well, she was right there. As he advanced into old age, Liszt felt increasingly alienated from the world around him. His celebrity continued more or less unabated, he was much in demand as a teacher and performer, and his views on a wide range of matters were still taken seriously by a great many people. As a composer, on the other hand, he felt not only isolated but embattled:

Everyone is against me. Catholics because they find my church music profane, Protestants because to them my music is Catholic, Freemasons because they think my music too clerical; to conservatives I am a revolutionary, to the 'Futurists' an old Jacobin. As for the Italians, if they support Garibaldi they

detest me as a hypocrite; if they are on the Vatican side, I am accused of bringing Venus's grotto into the Church. Germans reject my music as French, the French as German, to the Austrians I write Gypsy music, to the Hungarians foreign music. And the Jews loathe me, my music and myself, for no reason at all.

But Liszt was long past trying to please. In the originality and boldness of his musical experimentation, he made no concessions to public taste. Particularly as a composer, Liszt was as pure an artist as they come. His output was almost inconceivably vast, his reputation as the greatest and most lionised pianist in history was secure, his influence as a teacher was unparalleled, but like many spectacularly successful people, he looked back over his life in old age and felt an abiding sense of failure. Yet in a curious way, he largely absolved himself from blame.

My entire life has been nothing but an odyssey of love, I was fitted only for loving – and so far, alas, I have only succeeded in loving badly. There are many vices which, if I am not mistaken, are completely foreign to my nature. I cannot recall the slightest trace of pride or envy, still less of meanness or hatred. My besetting hazard is the need for a certain emotional intensity, which quickly leads me to a state of paradox in intellectual matters.

Intellectual matters? Well, maybe that's how it seemed to him. It's unlikely to have seemed that way to most of the women in his life, to say nothing of his children. But the paradox nobody would deny. He was compounded of it to a degree rare even in the history of art. Vain and truly humble; self-seeking and prodigiously generous; powerfully sexual and morally strict – he was the classic example of saint and sinner rolled into one. Some went further. To one writer he was positively Satanic: 'Mephistopheles disguised as an Abbé' was his now famous description. To Janka Wohl, on the other hand, he was almost Christ-like:

I cannot attempt to enumerate the sufferings which were alleviated by the foresight of his good heart. His hand was truly that blessed hand in which the five loaves of the Gospel fed five thousand!

And there was no shortage of people, both famous and obscure, for whom he was quite simply the greatest human being they'd ever known – in genius, in accomplishment and in spirit. To still more, he was the man who had everything, the very object of their hopes and fantasies. And yet he was not, even to the multitude, a conspicuously happy man. He radiated inspiration, but not serenity. As the years wore on, the tall, handsome, upright figure grew craggy, heavier and stooped, and the photographs from his last years show him scowling and defiant, but almost always surrounded by admirers. Towards the end, his fabled energy began to wane, his hearing and his sight became impaired, and he felt that his music, being largely misunderstood, should be withdrawn from public performance. But he continued to shine like a beacon, and his mailbag, as he increasingly complained, exacted a heavy toll.

For the last couple of weeks I have been gloomily writing quantities of letters. I get nearly fifty a week, not counting shipments of manuscripts, pamphlets, books, dedications, and all kinds of music. The time required to peruse them, even casually, deprives me of the time needed to answer them. Some ask for concerts, for advice, for recommendations; others for money, for jobs, for decorations and so and so forth. I really don't know what will become of me in such a purgatory.

He wasn't always so gloomy, but his last years were dogged by fits of deep depression, which he surmounted with characteristic resilience. And the flow of compositions, like his endless travelling, continued almost to the last. As ever, places, outside as well as in the heart, pulled him constantly in different directions. In one sense he was the ultimate traveller: forever restless, always on the way to somewhere else – some other realm, even the most elusive of them all.

My sole ambition as a musician has been, and will be, to hurl a lance into the indefinite reaches of the future.

And hurl it he did – indeed several. Quite early on, he anticipated the chromaticism of Wagner’s *Tristan*, as he later anticipated the impressionism of Debussy and Ravel, the rhythmic complexity of Bartok and Stravinsky, even the so-called ‘atonality’ of Arnold Schoenberg – that guru of 20th-century modernity. Today we’re beginning to understand what Liszt knew all along: that his travels didn’t end with his death – indeed that they’d scarcely begun.

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