

2020

A study on performing the Hungarian Rhapsodies in the Liszt tradition

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A study on performing the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* in the Liszt Tradition

This dissertation is presented for the degree of
Master of Arts (Performing Arts)

Nicholas Mark Williams

Edith Cowan University
Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts
2020

Abstract

Franz Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies* (1851, 1853) have long been among the most popular collections of piano music. They have also long garnered a reputation for “superficial brilliance and effect,”ⁱ which seems to have influenced the way that famous pianists play the works in public. But would a performer immersed in the Liszt tradition have approached them differently? This dissertation aims to promote a re-evaluation of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* from this perspective: considering Liszt's own ideas on music and performance, the writings and recordings of his pupils, and Liszt's book *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie* (1859).

ⁱ Humphrey Searle, *The Music of Liszt* 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1966), 42.

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Signed:  _____

Date: 12/10/2020

Acknowledgements

Thanks must be awarded to my research supervisors, Associate Professor Jonathan Paget and Associate Professor Stewart Smith for their assistance and guidance in over-seeing the completion of this dissertation. I am indebted to Matthew Testa of the Friedheim Archives at the Peabody Institute (Johns Hopkins University) for providing access to the numerous published articles of Friedheim that made this research possible. Gratitude also to Ton van de Laar at the OBA Oosterdok (Amsterdam) for kindly supplying scans of the edition of two *Hungarian Rhapsodies* edited by Richard Burmeister. Most importantly, I must acknowledge my family for their inexhaustible support over the course of my years of study.

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Introduction

I. The *Hungarian Rhapsodies*

a. Preamble

When, in his book on Liszt, James Gibbons Huneker came to the subject of Liszt's ever-popular *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, this once notorious critic for *The New York Times* had this to say:

I am sure when the empty operatic paraphrases and rhapsodies are forgotten the true Liszt will shine brighter. How tinkling are the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*—now become café entertainment. And how the old bones do rattle. [...] The next generation will wonder at us for having so long tolerated this drunken gipsy, who dances to fiddle and cymbalom accompaniment. He is too loud for polite nerves. Technically, the Liszt arrangements are brilliant and effective for dinner music. One may show off with them, make much noise and a reputation for virtuosity that would be quickly shattered if a Bach fugue were selected as a text. One Chopin Mazurka contains more music than all of the *Rhapsodies*, which I firmly contend are but overdressed pretenders to Magyar blood.¹

From the humblest arm-chair critic, to such esteemed pens as Richard Taruskin: the question of Liszt, and his relationship with “taste” has long been a hot topic for debate. Never too far from such discussions are, of course, Liszt's most famous brand name: The *Hungarian Rhapsodies*.

While Huneker's wit reminds us of another age, his sentiment remains familiar. The venerable title itself, *Hungarian Rhapsody*, still carries a sense of awe, and a tinge of dread; calling to mind notions of showmanship and spectacle, rapturous encores and sensational applause—the perennial crowd-favourite. Party-tricks, cultivated to please and impress. But while nobody will dispute their capacity for display, many will doubt their depth. To those latter, showmanship spells shallowness; and a *Hungarian Rhapsody*, the quintessential show-stopper, implies the antithesis to all things taste and art.

How, then, might one explain the opinion of Eugen d'Albert (1864-1932)? Here was one great pianist and composer, famed for his “spiritual” interpretations of the classical masterworks, and his serious post-Wagnerian operas; the kind of musician one might expect to deride or simply just ignore works like the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*.² Yet in the preface to his edition of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* (1906), d'Albert waxes about the charm and lyrical good taste of Liszt's Gypsy-style works:

¹ James Huneker, *Franz Liszt* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1911), 65.

² See Harold C. Schonberg, *The Great Pianists from Mozart to the Present* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), 292-295. Schonberg quotes Oscar Bie: “The crown of piano playing in our time has been won by Eugene d'Albert. [...] On him the mantle of Liszt has fallen in our generation. The seriousness of Brahms's concertos, the murmuring of Chopin's *Berceuse*, the titanic power of his A minor Étude, the grace of Liszt's *Soirées de Vienne*, the solemnity of Bach move under his hand, without one taking the least from the other. It is objectivity, but we do not cry out for subjectivity: it is personality, but we do not miss the rapport with eternity.”

On looking through a good book which we have not seen for years, we experience a similar pleasure as when suddenly meeting a dear old friend, whom we have not seen for a long while. This, I suppose, is the best test of the inherent worth of a book. Such a feeling of delight the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* by Liszt awakened in me, I had not set eyes on them for many a year although I had a good deal of them in my fingers. What abundance of spirit, what magic richness of imagination does not dwell in these works! The primordial, weird strains of the Magyars of wild descent, could not have found a more intense nor a more brilliant exponent of their characteristics than Franz Liszt. Born and bred a true Hungarian, he above anyone else understood how to weld these lays into an interesting and artistic whole, preserving in an inimitable manner so enchanting as to provide a lasting artistic treat of the highest order to all music-lovers.³

Was this a lapse in poor d'Albert's taste? A mere guilty pleasure? Or plain salesmanship to sell his new edition? Perhaps not. Eugen d'Albert was one of Liszt's pupils. Could d'Albert have learnt from Liszt, an appreciation for the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*? Is it possible that the musician who looks upon these works with an understanding of Liszt's intentions, sees them differently?⁴

b. *Vox Populi*

The critical opinion generally, then as now, would seem to side with Huneker rather than d'Albert: the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* are often seen as trivial showpieces, defined by nothing more than their difficulty.⁵ Huneker's passage (1911), just quoted, may well be the bluntest written example of such criticism (if, one hopes, slightly ironical); but a number of writers, such as Charles Rosen, find cause for value judgments:

The least respectable side of Liszt is to be found in the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*; even more than the opera fantasies, this is what has given him a bad reputation, and it is from the fame of these works that his most earnest admirers feel that he must be rescued.⁶

³ *Franz Liszt: Ungarische Rhapsodien* ed. Eugen d'Albert (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne, 1906), preface.

⁴ By Intentions, in this context, I refer to the broad set of attitudes that Liszt seems to have had in mind with regard to the "meaning" of his *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. That he did in fact have such intentions is proven by the existence and the contents of his book, *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie* (Paris: Librairie Nouvelle, 1859). See also, 2nd rev. ed. *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1881).

⁵ Discussions of critical reception can be found in the following works: Hyun Joo Kim, "Interpretive Fidelity to Gypsy Creativity: Liszt's Representations of Hungarian-Gypsy Cimbalom Playing," *Journal of the American Liszt Society* 67 (2016): 27. See also Alfred Brendel, "Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies*" in *Alfred Brendel on Music* (Chicago, Illinois: A Cappella Books, 2001), 269. Arthur Friedheim, "Reflections and Remarks on Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies*," *Musical Courier* LXXXII, no. 18, (1921): 7. Louis Kentner, "Solo Piano Music (1827-61): Fifteen *Hungarian Rhapsodies* (1846-52)" in *Franz Liszt; the Man and His Music*, ed. Alan Walker (New York: Taplinger Pub. Co., 1970), 131-33. Humphrey Searle, *The Music of Liszt*. 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1966), 42. Béla Bartók, Benjamin Suchoff, *Béla Bartók Essays*. (London: Faber & Faber, 1976), 506-7. The preface to the *Rhapsodies* in the *Neue Liszt Ausgabe* refers to this kind of view as "erroneous": Isván Szelényi, *Neue Liszt Ausgabe*, Series I, vol. 1: *Ungarische Rhapsodien*, trans. Peter Branscombe, ed. Imre Sulyok et al. (Budapest: Editio Musica, 1970), xiii. See also Shay Loya, *Liszt's Transcultural Modernism and the Hungarian-Gypsy Tradition* (Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press, 2011).

⁶ Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 491.

But who should rescue the *Rhapsodies* themselves? Might Humphrey Searle, who compiled the standard catalogue of Liszt's music, be able to find a defence, or a pleasant word, for these works so central to Liszt's *oeuvre*? Alas, he decrees:

But on the whole the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* do not rank among Liszt's best works—the thought is often too limited and conventional, and there is too much striving for superficial brilliance and effect.⁷

What of Béla Bartók? Here was a famous champion of Hungarian music. Could he help us to understand Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies*? Well, as it turns out, Liszt was at fault for even having an interest in the Hungarian-Gypsy music that inspired his compositions:

Liszt, like so many of his contemporaries, was fascinated rather by frills and decorations, show and glittering ornamentation, than by perfectly plain, objective simplicity. This explains why he placed the extravagant, over-loaded and rhapsodic gipsy music-making higher than the [Magyar] peasant performances.⁸

It might all come down to a simple matter of taste. In his article "Liszt and Bad Taste" (2013), Richard Taruskin invokes Edmund Burke, who defined Taste as a form of Judgment—the ability to discern differences, it is hence derived from knowledge.⁹ For example, someone with the musical knowledge of a Franz Liszt might consider a particular Peter Cornelius opera to be of sufficient taste to be worth staging; while the theatre-going pundits of an 1850s Weimar might just as well hiss and boo both from the building.¹⁰ Who was right? A post-modernist would likely decree both of these positions to be equally valid—but according to Burke's definition, as surmised by Taruskin, it would seem to follow that insofar as taste and judgment are allied with knowledge, an improvement in knowledge implies an improvement in taste: "he who knows most judges best," as Taruskin puts it.¹¹

⁷ Humphrey Searle, *The Music of Liszt*, 42. Searle's catalogue casts the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* as "works on Hungarian national themes." Compare with August Spanuth: "Fortunately his heart was in the task, and Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies* not only rank among his most powerful and convincing works, but must also be counted as superior specimens of national music in general. It does not involve an injustice towards Haydn, Beethoven and Schubert, who occasionally affected Hungarian peculiarities in their compositions, to state that it was Liszt who with his rhapsodies and kindred compositions started a new era of Hungarian music. 'Tunes' which heretofore served to amuse a motley crowd at the czardas on the "Pusztas" have through Liszt been successfully introduced into legitimate music. And most wonderful of all, he has not hesitated to preserve all the drastic and coarse effects of the gipsy band without ever leaning towards vulgarity. [...] Liszt did not conceive the Hungarian music with his outer ear alone, as most of his numerous imitators did. They caught the outline, some rhythmical features and some stereotyped ornaments; but Liszt was able to penetrate the very source of it, he carried the key to its secret in his Hungarian temperament." In preface to *Franz Liszt: Ten Hungarian Rhapsodies* ed. August Spanuth and John Orth, (Philadelphia: Oliver Ditson Company, 1904).

⁸ Béla Bartók, *Essays*, 506-7. One would like to suggest that Bartók's position was, at least in part, political; he was of course the great champion of Hungarian folk (i.e. Magyar peasant) music, of which Hungarian-Gypsy music was, in his mind, the artistic enemy. Bartók would express a slightly different view in later years. See Note 55 below.

⁹ Richard Taruskin, "Liszt and Bad Taste" *Studia Musicologica* vol. 54, iss. 1, (Mar 2013), 87-103.

¹⁰ See Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: The Weimar Years* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 494-500.

¹¹ "At the end of his discussion, Burke winningly notes "that the taste ... is improved exactly as we improve our judgment, by extending our knowledge, by a steady attention to our object, and by frequent exercise." To boil it down to a formula, Burke proposes that *taste=judgment=knowledge*, and he who knows most judges best."

It is the faintly aspirational tint to this notion that Taruskin sees as leading the charge in the rise of the “quintessentially bourgeois” aesthetic snobbery that wields its societally agreed-upon “good taste” like a lance, dealing blows to those of lesser refinement and erudition.¹² Indeed, the notion of a sharpened sense of taste, honed by knowledge and experience, would seem to be the implicit in the societal role of the Critic, who uses his mighty pen to fend off the spirits of crudeness, which gnaw at the purse-strings of the tastefully-clueless masses.

“Good taste” in this sense refers not to the kind of naïve preferences that we might consider beyond dispute—like “chocolate or vanilla?”—but is rather a societally-dependent construct that rests upon the privileging of expertise and erudition. The Critic’s opinion is valued because he is erudite and an expert. Taruskin notes that when it comes to the music of Liszt, it is this question of taste—or tastefulness—that is used by some critics to define it. Quoting Rosen’s quip that “to comprehend Liszt’s greatness one needs a suspension of distaste, a momentary renunciation of musical scruples,” Taruskin compares Alfred Brendel’s rebuttal, who wrote that, “In contrast to Charles Rosen [...], I consider it a principal task of the Liszt player to cultivate such scruples, and distil the essence of Liszt’s nobility.”¹³ As Taruskin points out, “despite their feigned disagreement over Liszt,” Rosen and Brendel appear to operate upon a common set of presumptions, in their implication that Liszt objectively *lacks* scruples, and this needs to be dealt with; that Liszt *is* tasteless, objectively and by default.¹⁴ That question is moot; the interesting point to us is that, for one reason or another, the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* usually end up as the central point in these discussions.¹⁵

One notes, however, that according to such a definition of taste, as a form of judgment based upon knowledge, the Critic too is at the mercy of his education. If we are to listen to the opinion of the Critic, it is because we trust that his judgment and taste is superior to our own—that their knowledge and experience *has* been honed by quantities of time and thought that we lesser mortals haven’t the stock to spare. One does tend to presume that the critics, such as the three just cited (Rosen, Searle, Bartók), all unequivocal experts in their various fields of music, would have rested upon their expertise when they made such frank pronouncements—and might in some way differ from the

Taruskin, 94-95. Burke quote taken from Edmund Burke, *On Taste; On the Sublime & Beautiful; Reflections on the French Revolution; A Letter to a Noble Lord*, ed. Charles W. Eliot (New York: P. F. Collier and Son, 1909).

¹² See Taruskin, 94.

¹³ Rosen’s remarks are made in “The New Sound of Liszt”, *The New York Review of Books* (12 April 1984). Brendel’s remarks are made in “The Noble Liszt” in *Alfred Brendel on Music* (Chicago, Illinois: A Cappella Books, 2001), 247-8. Originally published in *New York Review of Books* (20 November 1986). See also Kenneth Hamilton, “Still Wondering If Liszt Was Any Good,” *The New York Times* (Oct 21, 2011).

¹⁴ Taruskin, 100-101.

¹⁵ Rosen writes: “It is a mistaken strategy to make Liszt acceptable today by concentrating on those works in which the musical substance is interesting, original, and in good taste. Such works exist, of course, like the three settings of Petrarch’s sonnets, which he rewrote in so many different ways throughout his life, but even here the variety of realizations is more impressive than the underlying melody. In any case, good taste is a barrier to an understanding and appreciation of the nineteenth century. I am willing to abandon *Liebestraum* to anybody who wants it, but only a view of Liszt that places the Second Hungarian Rhapsody in the center of his work will do him justice.” “The New Sound of Liszt”, *The New York Review of Books* (12 April 1984), [accessed online].

uncultured masses. Yet, as it happens, in this particular case, our three experts apparently *share* the opinion of the average armchair critic, that “one small voice” who we might represent by Hunecker, quoted at the beginning. So a verdict is reached then—are the Rhapsodies, actually, just bad? Why are these works, so everlastingly popular with audiences, the bane of erudite judgment?

Could the critics simply be missing the point? Or is there some other factor at play here? The matter is confounded when one considers that, in one way or another, all three of these experts were champions of Liszt. At a time when Liszt’s music was systematically treated with scorn, they apparently understood it better; they were able to see past the usual complaints and find admirable qualities in Liszt’s music, and were willing step up to the mount and defend him. But why did it stop with the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*? If they were willing to accept that Liszt *was* occasionally a good composer, why did they palm off his most cherished compositions as if they were not worthy of serious consideration?¹⁶

c. **Vox Dei**

Liszt himself, on a number of occasions, writes of the burden that lies on the interpreter in the dissemination and appreciation of musical works. In an early letter to George Sand (April 30, 1837), for instance, Liszt laments the critical faculty of the generally non-technical public:

The musician, in this respect, has certainly got the worst of it. The poet, the painter or the sculptor completes his work in the silence of his studio, and when it is finished finds libraries to circulate or museums to exhibit it. There is no need of a medium between a work of art and its judges, whereas the composer is compelled to have recourse to an interpreter, who, incapable or indifferent, makes him suffer under the trial of a rendering which, often true to the letter, yet but imperfectly reveals the thought of the work, the genius of the author. Or if the composer be at the same time the executant, how seldom is he understood, how often does it happen that he exposes the inmost emotions of his heart to a cold uninterested public. [...]

I have often been told that I, of all artists, have the least right to make such complaints, because from childhood success has perpetually surpassed my merits and my expectations. Just so; but the noisy applause has painfully convinced me that it is much more

¹⁶ Some might consider that the popular adoration of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* to be misplaced, positing that Liszt himself did not consider them among his most important works, and that they are therefore unrepresentative of his character or output (and should thereby not be taken *too* seriously). In response, I would argue that it should not be forgotten that even by 1852 Liszt had spent quote “several” years occupied in the “national studies” that would culminate in the publication of these works the following year. (See the letter to Louis Köhler dated April 16, 1852, letter 79 in *Letters of Franz Liszt*, ed. La Mara, trans. Constance Bache (London: H. Grevel, 1894).). These studies included the not inconsiderable productions of the *Magyar Dalok* (1840) and *Magyar Rapszódia* (1846); which were revised to become the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* (1851, 1853). These works he not only played frequently for many a guest at Weimar (See Adrian Williams, *Portrait of Liszt* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) 345-46, 348-49, 350, 390, etc.) but also sought to explain with a long treatise (*Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie*, 1859). One should observe that Liszt did not usually extend his defensive writings to his own works: most of his writings of this period were championing the works of others (See vol. 4 of *Franz Liszt: Gesammelte Schriften* ed. Lina Ramann (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1882).). The contents of his book, too, is surely evidence that these pieces were important to Liszt.

the inexplicable chance of the mode, the deference due to a great name, and a certain power of execution, rather than genuine feeling for truth and beauty.¹⁷

Similar thoughts must have been going through Liszt's mind when, in the early 1850s, he came to revise a set of Hungarian-style works that he had published just a few short years previously.¹⁸ Like many of the daring works of Liszt's *Glanzzeit*, his glory days as a travelling Virtuoso, these Hungarian works were replete with terrifyingly difficult passages and ornaments, that from within the whirlwind of his non-stop tours and success, must have seemed perfectly self-justified. Yet, as he sat down to the process of revision, carefully comparing and experimenting, stripping away the frills to the bare essentials; he must soon have realised that what was to him self-evident about these works—their basis in a strange music familiar to all residents of Hungary—would in fact not be so self-evident to his cosmopolitan audience of piano-players.¹⁹ He began to sense, too, a trace of some distant poetical unity that pulsed through this strange music, as if “a vanished race of heroes” had long ago recounted these musical tales to their children and countrymen.²⁰ If such ideas were left to chance, Liszt anticipated, then his *Rhapsodies Hongroises* (as he titled them in French) might prove “somewhat inaccessible” to the larger European market.²¹ So, he figured it might be well to attach some kind of explanatory preface to his collection of rhapsodies, and began sketching a few paragraphs... which simply continued to expand.²² Meanwhile, the music itself had to be published, apparently for economic reasons—the collection of fifteen *Hungarian Rhapsodies* were on the shelves by 1853, with no preface or explanation whatsoever.²³

¹⁷ As quoted in Federick Corder, *Ferencz (François) Liszt* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, 1925), 79-80. The full letter in *The Collected Writings of Franz Liszt* vol.2, ed. and trans. Janita R. Hall-Swadley (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2012), chapter 3. Also in Franz Liszt, *An Artist's Journey*, trans. Charles Suttoni (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1989).

¹⁸ The *Hungarian Rhapsodies* or *Rhapsodies Hongroises* (1853) were revisions of the *Magyar Rapszódíák* (1846), which were in-turn loosely based on the earlier *Magyar Dalok* (1840). See Humphrey Searle, *The Music of Liszt*, 42. See also Zoltán Gárdonyi and Isván Szelényi, in the preface to *Neue Liszt Ausgabe, Ungarische Rhapsodien*, x-xiii.

¹⁹ See Franz Liszt, *The Gipsy in Music* trans. Edwin Evans (London: W. Reeves, 1926), 335-336.

²⁰ From a letter to Marie d'Agoult, October 8, 1846: “During my sojourn in Hungary I have collected a number of fragments with the help of which one might fairly well recompose the musical epic of this strange country, whose rhapsode I want to become. The six new volumes, about a hundred pages in all, which I have just published in Vienna under the collective title Hungarian Melodies—there was enough material on hand for four books six years ago—form an almost complete cycle of this fantastic *epopoeia*: half Ossianic (for there pulses in these songs the feeling of a vanished race of heroes) and half Gypsy. As I go along, I shall write two or three such books, to complete the whole thing.” Quoted in Walker, *The Weimar Years*, 380, n40.

²¹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 335-336.

²² Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 335.

²³ See Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 336. One gets the sense of a rushed publication by the fact that the first edition of the collection was spread over four different publishing houses. While they all appear to have been engraved by Roder of Leipzig, with identical styles across the collection, they naturally carried different title pages and plate/catalogue numbers according to individual practices of the different publishing houses. Rhapsody No.1 (Leipzig: Senff pl. no. 23, 1851). Rhapsody No.2 (Leipzig: Senff pl. no. 26, 1851). Rhapsodies Nos. 3-7 (Vienna: Haslinger pl. nos. 11555-11559, 1853). Rhapsodies Nos. 8-10 (Leipzig: Schott pl. nos. 12486-12488, 1853). Rhapsodies No. 11-15: (Berlin: Schlesinger pl. nos. 4088-4092, 1853).

The belated preface eventually found its way to the press in 1859, as a full-length monograph entitled *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie*.²⁴ While Liszt's motives might have been innocent enough, the book itself managed to step on toes: famously sparking a great political controversy in Hungary, Liszt was eventually to publish a second, expanded and revised edition in 1881.²⁵ Despite having gone to this great effort, Liszt's book seems to have been largely ignored and soon forgotten by musicians; the net result being that many pianists, teachers and critics undoubtedly pick up the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* without knowledge that Liszt had ever even penned a volume to explain them. Many would therefore be liable to take the works merely on face value, if not guided by the ubiquitous preconceptions that have come to surround the works.²⁶ And while this has been enough to ensure the popularity of the one or two rhapsodies that could survive on the strength of their melodies alone, it has "left the artistic question precisely where it was," as Edwin Evans points out in the preface to his 1926 English translation of Liszt's book.²⁷ American critic Henry T. Finck once exclaimed that if a pianist wants to be successful in playing the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, he or she must have read Liszt's book—but why should the *Rhapsodies* hinge on an explanation?²⁸ As Liszt himself tells us, he was concerned that his rhapsodies might not be understood, although he acknowledged that they had nevertheless found "success" on their own, published as they were without his didactic commentary:

Fearing that this [Hungarian-Gypsy] music, though so immensely popular in its own country, might otherwise remain somewhat inaccessible to the habits both of mind and ear of the other nations, we thought it might be well to cause our [work] to be accompanied by a few words of explanation *sui generis*; and, accordingly, we set about providing it with a preface. But the

²⁴ English translation as: Franz Liszt, *The Gipsy in Music*. trans. Edwin Evans. (London: W. Reeves, 1926). Authorship of parts of the book remain contested due to collaborations Liszt made with Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein. See Walker, vol. 2: *The Weimar Years*, 368-379. Also Jonathan Bellman, *The Style Hongrois in the Music of Western Europe* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 181.

²⁵ For detail on this controversy, see Walker, vol. 2: *The Weimar Years*, 380-390. See also Bellman, *Style Hongrois*, 175-184. Also Klára Hamburger, "Understanding the Hungarian Reception History of Liszt's '*Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie*' (1859/1881)," *Journal of the American Liszt Society* multi vol. iss. 54-56 (2003): 75-84. Also Zoltán Gárdonyi, "A Chronicle of Franz Liszt's '*Hungarian Rhapsodies*'," *Liszt Society Journal* 20 (1995): 38-61. Also Hyun Joo Kim, "Interpretive Fidelity to Gypsy Creativity," 27.

²⁶ For more on this multi-faceted reception history, see Shay Loya, "The *Verbunkos* Idiom in Liszt's Music of the Future," (PhD diss., King's College, London, 2006), 14. Bálint Sárosi writes: "We would not have to continue analysing the *Rhapsodies* for very long to show in them every stylistic feature of the verbunkos worth mentioning and also the principle characteristics still valid today in the gypsy style of playing. But perhaps enough has already been said here to indicate the close connection between the *Rhapsodies* and the book about the gypsies. The two can be understood perfectly only when considered together." in *Gypsy Music* trans. Fred Macnicol (Budapest: Corvina Press, 1978), 116.

²⁷ Edwin Evans in preface to Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, xiv.

²⁸ Henry T. Finck, *Success in music and how it is won* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1909) 280-81. The same Henry T. Finck also did not think it was inappropriate to compare the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* with Beethoven's sonatas: "More than once I have read the statement that Liszt, Paganini-like, wrote these dazzling rhapsodies to show off his brilliant pianism. As a matter of fact he wrote all of them after he had ceased to play in public. He wrote them for the glorification of his native country. In them, and in those of his compositions (including the symphonic poem *Hungaria*), which are tinged with national colors, he gave Hungarian music artistic rank, as Chopin did to Polish, Grieg to Norwegian, Dvorak to Bohemian music. Liszt's rhapsodies are as important art works as Beethoven's sonatas. Personally I enjoy them more." *Etude Magazine*, August 1916 <https://etudemagazine.com/etude/1916/08/was-liszt-the-paganini-of-the-piano.html>

latter very soon outran the limits within which we had designed it should be complete, and could not, in fact, be finished straight off.

That was six years ago; and whilst matters so stood we were obliged to issue our volume of music entitled “Rhapsodies Hongroises”; which, therefore, was called upon to hazard its fate without the letter of recommendation we had intended. Contrary to all expectation, and due to that *je ne sais quoi* which crops up in all things just when there is no reason to look for it, the public appeared to understand this odd poetry. They seemed taken by a general desire to listen to these various themes; notwithstanding that, on our part, there had been quite a scrupulous abstention from providing any facility. To use the trade-jargon, these “Rhapsodies Hongroises” were a success. [...] And it was whilst this musical victory was at its height, having been attained without any assistance from the written word, that our preface was at last finished.²⁹

So Liszt wrote in 1859. In the course of the present dissertation, we shall attempt to understand why Liszt might have considered such an effort to be nearly indispensable for players of his music. We can see already, from the above letter to George Sand, that from as early as 1837 Liszt was aware of the role that interpretation could play in the reception of a musical composition. A performance might well be “true to the letter,” but just so, it might at the same time obscure “the thought of the work;” listeners left cold by the seemingly thoughtless music. Hence, if one wished to publish some especially unusual composition, it would likely seem expedient to offer an explanation of its meaning to both performers and listeners, as a kind of guard against the feared literal interpretation. Especially when, as Lina Ramann (Liszt’s “official biographer”) once quipped, one considers that a concert audience is all too often “inclined to declare the composer as whipping-boy for the sins of the performer.”³⁰ These thoughts were evidently still circling Liszt’s mind in the 1850s, judging by his book—in fact, he used a similar logic to passionately defend the broader concept of Virtuosity, understood here as the art of musical performance. He wished to assert it firmly as its *own* art-form, of especial distinction from the art of musical composition: the one does not merely serve the other.³¹

What is a virtuoso? Is he really no more than an intelligent machine, whose two hands are a couple of levers doing the business of a barrel-organ? Is his task so mechanical as to render it unnecessary for him to think or feel in satisfactorily performing it? Is his duty confined to producing for the ear, as it were, a photograph of notes he is looking at? Alas! We know only too well how many so-called virtuosos there are who are not even able to translate the thought contained in the originals they place upon their desk, or to deliver it integrally without mutilation of the sense. How many amongst them there are whose knowledge of art is confined to the mere trade—how many, indeed, who do not even know the trade!³²

²⁹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 335-336.

³⁰ “...die Liszt’schen Kompositionen nach der vielfachen Erfahrung scheitern, daß das Gros des Konzertpublikums stets geneigt ist, den kompositen zum Prügelknaben für die Sünden seines Vertreters zu erklären.” Lina Ramann, *Liszt-Pädagogium* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1986), 6. Translation mine.

³¹ This usage of Virtuosity (as the art of performance) might be understood as the gerund form of Virtuoso (like “virtuoso-ing”); rather than as a noun in its own right, when Virtuosity is synonymous with skilfulness or excellence. The latter, more usual definition will be explored in Part 2 of the present dissertation.

³² Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 264.

That the art of the Virtuoso, the musical performer, can and should be considered on its own terms, of course, leads to a number of implications. In relation to the composition that he brings to life in a new medium, the Virtuoso's is a work of representation, according to Liszt, no different from the painter who represents nature. Would one criticise the work of the Creator because some painter has drawn a misshapen proportion?³³ Such was the sort of language that Liszt used; the relation between painter and subject as that between performer and composition. While the work of the composer would rarely reach such perfection as that of the divine Creator—he should ne'er be blamed for the inadequacies of the performer.

Yet, conversely, the composer and the performer can hardly survive without one another—they mutually enrich and enliven the other's art. In this sense, their relationship is comparable to that between poet and orator, playwright and actor. In this place, Liszt compares the *rôle* of the Virtuoso to that of the dramatic artist—that actor of genius, who *creates* his character. Such an actor is not only essential to establishing the popular image of a particular character in the public imagination, but whatever genius may be written by a playwright is at the mercy of his actors. Liszt assumed that the Virtuoso should realise the same burden:

Now the virtuoso or musical artist does for music exactly what the actor or dramatic artist does for the stage; or, in other words, for the poem, whether tragic or comic, of an author. The virtuoso possesses the same right of life and death over the works the interpretation of which is entrusted to him with their thoughts, sentiments and emotions; for the expression of all these, being part of interpretation, is for this glorious moment committed to his care. He can endow them with a glorious life, similar to that enjoyed by the heroes in Elysian fields; or he can allow them, or even cause them, to die a death equally ignominious and ridiculous.³⁴

Was this ignoble fate to be the destiny of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*?

d. Life and Death

In 1921, one of Liszt's eminent pupils published an article in the *Musical Courier*.³⁵ Arthur Friedheim (1859-1932) was known and respected in his day as being a careful custodian of the Lisztian tradition, having been a diligent student for the six years between 1880 and 1886.³⁶ According to his own

³³ This comparison is made in Liszt's article on Clara Schumann in *Franz Liszt: Gesammelte Schriften* vol. 4 ed. Lina Ramann (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1882), 191-196.

³⁴ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 267.

³⁵ Arthur Friedheim, "Reflections and Remarks on Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies*," *Musical Courier* LXXXII, no. 18, (1921): 7.

³⁶ C. F. Weitzmann writes that Friedheim "in regard to brilliancy and precision of technique has few rivals. He is in the main a *Liszt* player, and with reference to the latter's work is a reliable maintainer of the direct tradition." Quoted in Arne Jo Steinberg, "Franz Liszt's Approach to Piano Playing" (D.M.A. diss., University of Maryland, 1971), "Liszt's Piano Playing," 66. Friedheim himself argues that there was no real Liszt tradition: "It is a great disadvantage that on the whole there is no Liszt tradition. The Liszt pupils certainly show some family resemblance, but they sometimes widely differ in the conception of the same work. Therefore one cannot be surprised that there is no Liszt edition comparable even to H. von Bülow's Beethoven edition, which, at least, in the footnotes, offers intelligent, enlightening literary remarks. Tradition, being nothing else than crystallized style, is the chart designing the way to the promised land, the teacher is the pilot, and the good edition should

testimony, Friedheim spent a “a great deal of time” in Liszt’s company, receiving “hundreds of lessons” in Weimar and Rome.³⁷ In 1921, he felt the need to publish an article, in which he criticizes the “rough handling” that the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* tended to receive at the hands of many a “prominent artist,” who apparently ought to have known better.³⁸ Friedheim writes of the fictitious pianist John Smith, a common or garden virtuoso:

John Smith, famous as a brilliant virtuoso, plays a rarely heard rhapsody in a town where he has not previously performed it, and a great part of the audience awaits the work with anticipation. Possibly he introduces the first bars by doubling the theme in octaves, contrary to the wishes of the composer; he exaggerates cymbalum effects, which Liszt uses with discrimination and finesse [...] and shocks the initiated listener by introducing these effects where they are not even implied. He omits entire sections, alters the succession of others, nay, he borrows some from a different number of the series. So finally the output represents a crude compilation, which is an etymologically correct translation of the word “rhapsody.”³⁹

An example of the kind of playing that Friedheim seems to be rallying against here might be found in Mark Hambourg’s recordings of the *Rhapsodies* (1926-35).⁴⁰ He throws in all manner of octaves, chords, tremolos, arpeggios and the like, with a seemingly complete lack of care, not at least for Liszt’s text. Hambourg’s was the first recording of the complete cycle of *Hungarian Rhapsodies* (Nos.1-15), and the fact that somebody was willing to invest in the production of this set might give some indication of the general propensity for this kind of interpretation in that period.⁴¹ But, of course, it didn’t stop there: Pianophiles who are no doubt familiar with the famous “transcriptions” of these pieces by the likes of Horowitz or Volodos will not find Hambourg’s playing particularly shocking by the standard of those later players, in regards to the extent of his “hot-dogging,” to use Richard Kastle’s terminology.⁴² Yet the fact that such a tradition seems to live on around these works, would apparently verify Friedheim’s suspicion that when such famous artists *exhibit* the Rhapsodies in this way, an effect is had upon the popular opinion of the works themselves:

furnish the lighthouse, if nothing more. Above all there remains the lucky star.” In “We Do Not Know Liszt,” *Musical Observer* (c.1925): 34.

³⁷ The phrase “A great deal of time” used in Arthur Friedheim, *Life and Liszt* ed. Theodore Bullock in *Remembering Franz Liszt* (New York: Limelight, 1986), 92. The phrase “Hundreds of lessons” used in the preface to *Chopin: Etudes for the Piano* ed. Arthur Friedheim (New York: G. Schirmer, inc., 1916), 1.

³⁸ See Friedheim, “Reflections and Remarks,” 7.

³⁹ Friedheim, “Reflections and Remarks,” 7.

⁴⁰ See *Mark Hambourg: Liszt: The Hungarian Rhapsodies* (2005: APR 7040). Although Friedheim is not afraid to name names, he singles out Sophie Menter and Teresa Carreño as culprits of “rhapsody sinning.” The particular gripe mentioned by Friedheim of these two pianists, relating to cutting a particular section of Rhapsody No.6, does not appear on Carreño’s piano roll of the work. See *The Caswell Collection Vol.6: Teresa Carreño* (2010: Pierian Records 0022), track 3.

⁴¹ See listing for *Mark Hambourg: Liszt: The Hungarian Rhapsodies*, APR Recordings, accessed February 2020, <http://www.aprrecordings.co.uk/apr2/currentcatalogue.php>

⁴² Kastle defines his term thus, saying: “Now, Horowitz: his solution to the unplayable passage [in Hungarian Rhapsody No.2] was to chop it in half. He made an arrangement where he took the level of difficulty [at] the end and he reduced it, but he took the level of difficulty of the easier passages and made them harder, kind of “hot-dogging” the easy parts, but simplifying the hard parts.” See Richard Kastle, “Richard Kastle Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 interview about faking Liszt,” published on Nov 3, 2010, video, 2:26, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-vwBkg3TbHg>

Those of the audience who possess the instinct of the style dislike the piece, owing to its grotesque lack of balance. Others, impressed by the clever technical display, purchase the music which does not contain what they heard; disappointed, they lay it aside. But the majority retains nothing excepting a dim recollection that this rhapsody does not amount to much, and thus the *vox populi* has asserted itself once again.⁴³

Thus, in effect—if they are played in such a manner as Friedheim describes, it is the compositions themselves that receive disapprobation. If such performances were the standard fare with these works, as Friedheim seems to imply, so frequently coming across as “crude compilations” with a “grotesque lack of balance,” one would perhaps not be surprised to read criticisms like that of Hunecker, quoted at the beginning, which place such unequivocal condemnation upon the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*.

Such a criticism as Hunecker’s may be contrasted with the following, rather different, review by Henry T. Finck, who wrote of a recital by Friedheim in New York, 1912:

After the concert, he added several encores, among them...Liszt’s thrilling 2nd Rhapsody. Mr. Friedheim understands full well that the Liszt *Rhapsodies* were never intended as mere showpieces, and he does not play them as such. By treating them in the deeply poetic and emotional spirit in which they were conceived, he reveals them in their true light. Hackneyed as the second *Rhapsody* may be, it aroused the most spontaneous applause of anything on the entire programme yesterday. It must be remembered that what seems hackneyed to professionals, does not seem so to the public, which never tires of works of genius like the Liszt *Rhapsodies*.⁴⁴

Arthur Friedheim made two recordings of the *Second Rhapsody*. The first was an apparently desperate commercial effort—a heavily abridged 4-minute disc recording, released on the pop music label Emerson during the war years, in a moment of financial frustration (1915).⁴⁵ He later recorded the complete work on the Duo-Art piano roll system for the Aeolian company in May, 1919.⁴⁶ While both recordings are of less-than-ideal quality (the commercially available piano roll playback-recordings don’t do *much* for the recording itself), they give us an adequate sense of the general sweep of Friedheim’s interpretation.

Let us, for a moment, toy with our expectations. If all that the *vox populi* of armchair and professional critics would have us to believe were true, regarding the figure of Liszt and his *Hungarian Rhapsodies*—then how would one explain Arthur Friedheim’s *Hungarian Rhapsody* No.2? If the *pièce de résistance* of the great barn-storming travelling-circus rock-star virtuoso; that is,

⁴³ Friedheim, “Reflections and Remarks,” 7.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Friedheim, *Life and Liszt*, 319. Hunecker reviewed the same recital, and writes glowingly about the revelation and the “uncommon significance” of Friedheim’s playing of Liszt, though he does not mention the *Rhapsody* specifically. See *ibid.*, 315-317.

⁴⁵ Friedheim had been riding the wave of success as a concert artist before the outbreak of war caused him to flee Europe for North America, where his German name meant his booked Canadian tour had to be cancelled at the last minute, plunging him in into sudden financial distress. See introduction to Friedheim, *Life and Liszt*, 19-23. On the recording itself, see Russel L. Caplan, liner notes to *Legends of the Piano – Acoustic Recordings 1901-1924* (2010: Naxos Historical 8.112054).

⁴⁶ The disc recording from *Legends of the Piano – Acoustic Recordings 1901-1924* (2010: Naxos Historical 8.112054), track 24. The roll available on *Friedheim; Early Recordings by the Pianist, The Condon Collection* (1993: Bellaphon 690-07-017), track 12.

none other than the *Second Hungarian Rhapsody* of the fabled and fabulous Franz Liszt, were to be recorded by the composer's most eminent *protégé* at the height of the golden-era of subjective, “do-as-you-like” piano playing, on a pop-music label, in a moment of financial frustration—what exactly would we expect? (**Sound Example 1 – Friedheim Rhapsody 2, 1**)

Let us compare it to Mark Hambourg's recording of the same work. (**Sound Example 2 – Hambourg Rhapsody 2, 1**) While Hambourg is plainly more extroverted at the beginning, it's surely nothing to write an angry article about. Later on in the piece, however, when the same material returns in variation, Hambourg decides to spice things up. (**Sound Example 3 – Hambourg Rhapsody 2, 2**). While Friedheim has cut this section on his abridged 4-minute disc recording, we can hear how he delivered the same section on the piano roll recording. (**Sound Example 4 – Friedheim Rhapsody 2, 2**)

So what did we hear? Is it not Hambourg who spares no opportunity for exaggeration, with his thunderous bass notes, lightning passagework and bold declamatory phrasing? Is it not Hambourg, rather than Friedheim, who is in line with how the public seems ever to imagine Liszt's playing?⁴⁷

Friedheim's playing, in striking comparison, is calm, collected and eloquent, even modest. Friedheim, the great pupil of Liszt, seems to *exaggerate* nothing; preferring instead for well-proportion. His tempos are on the whole slightly slower in the slow sections, and slightly faster in the fast sections, his rhythm is less overtly “free”; every phrase seems to be carefully controlled, with an ear towards the larger “arch” of the work. He makes few, if any, explicit or obvious textual alterations (not counting the cuts on the 4-minute disc)—but as we shall see later, he was not opposed to that idea *per se*.⁴⁸ Hearing Friedheim's recordings, one might be reminded of some of the accounts of Liszt's playing in later years, such as the following review by J. A. Fuller-Maitland (1856-1936), who heard Liszt in London in 1886:

His playing was a thing never to be forgotten, or approached by later artists. The peculiar quiet brilliance of his rapid passages, the noble proportion kept between the parts, and the meaning and effect which he put into the music, were the most striking points.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Dana Gooley writes: “Musicians and writers have often had a difficult time taking the virtuoso Liszt seriously. If he famously rode the line between the sublime and the ridiculous, we tend to opt for the ridiculous. We seem to be more convinced by the rollicking caricatures than by the proud, ennobling portraits, and we balk at the extreme virtuosity or inflated rhetoric of those interminable opera fantasies. Audiences who heard Liszt during his concert career were evidently of a different frame of mind. They not only accepted but vociferously affirmed his seriousness and idealism. There exists, then, a basic historical disconnection between how Liszt appears to us today and how he appeared to his contemporaries.” In *The Virtuoso Liszt* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 76.

⁴⁸ “With the exception of the petty pedant, none would censure the performer who occasionally appropriates passages, reinforces a bass, a chord, or extends a cadenza over the few keys that lie beyond the range of the Lisztian piano, and other trifles of this kind.” Friedheim, “Reflections and Remarks,” 7.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Adrian Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, 667-68

This could serve well as a description of Friedheim's playing, speaking in general terms.⁵⁰ Even in the context of a pop-label, Friedheim seems to preserve the "deeply poetic and emotional spirit" that Finck observed in Friedheim's Carnegie Hall recital only a few years previously.⁵¹ While we today would seem to expect this rhapsody in particular to be fast and loud, a mere display for technique and nothing else, in Friedheim's estimation, this *Hungarian Rhapsody* seems to be just like any other piece in his repertoire, in the very specific sense that it has been delicately and thoughtfully crafted by its composer and should be played to respect that. While one may very well prefer Hambourg's extroverted style, it is certainly intriguing to hear that the pianist of the "authentic tradition" treats the work with much more restraint and sobriety—we remember that Friedheim wrote that he thought these pieces demanded a "respectful treatment" from interpreters.⁵² Could the performances of famous pianists have influenced the critical reception of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*?

Taruskin, for one, concludes his article on "Liszt and Bad Taste," with a few comments on the Second Rhapsody, questioning why it tended as the default example of Liszt's inelegant showmanship in the "dispute" between Rosen and Brendel on the question of taste and "musical scruples."⁵³ Crucially, he implies that the work's success hinges on successful performance:

In closing, a few words about the Second Hungarian Rhapsody. Yes, of course it is a central work for Liszt; without it, he would not be what he is in our imaginations. But what is objectionable about it to those who object? [...] **When I hear it well played**, I am amazed at the originality with which Liszt imitated the cimbalom, I marvel at the beautifully realized (and "finished") form and pacing of the piece, and cannot see where it is deficient either in control or in dignity.⁵⁴ [emphasis added]

If we trace back to the authors who prompted Taruskin's essay, we find precisely the same caveat hidden away in the criticisms of Rosen. In *The Romantic Generation* (1995), Rosen treats the tenth

⁵⁰ It is important not to jump to conclusions as regards any perceived links between such accounts and the playing we hear on early recordings. These descriptions were of course written within the context of their time, and it is easy for us to read them with modern ears and a modern bias, perhaps leading to misunderstanding or misinterpretation. This "gap" between written sources and sound will be explored extensively in Parts 2 and 3 of the present dissertation.

⁵¹ One should note that Friedheim felt strongly that one should not "play down" to less-educated audiences, writing "...it is my judgment that artists of the highest dignity should welcome the opportunity not only to present works of the masters but to exhibit their own best powers before those who would otherwise never hear them. [...] a real artist should take a great deal more pride in playing before what is called 'ordinary people' than playing or singing before blasé people such as you will find [...] at the Metropolitan..." See Friedheim, *Life and Liszt*, 20-21.

⁵² See Friedheim, "Reflections and Remarks," 7.

⁵³ Judging by Taruskin's conclusion, while he appreciates its popularity and effectiveness, he nevertheless seems to equate it (by implication) with the "musical scruples" that were the commonality between Rosen and Brendel. Noting its position in the world of popular culture, Taruskin asks "Is this [its position in popular culture] something to condemn, something to resist? Or is this interpenetration of the artistic and the vulgar worlds an ineluctable mark, perhaps the defining mark, of Liszt's greatness? To attempt, like Brendel, to purge Liszt of these impolite associations is indeed to misunderstand his place in our world; but Rosen, too, beholds the vulgar Liszt with distaste. Far better, in the words of Ken Hamilton, "embrace our own inner Second Hungarian Rhapsody." Taruskin, 103. Kenneth Hamilton's line comes from "Still Wondering If Liszt Was Any Good," *The New York Times* (Oct 21, 2011).

⁵⁴ Taruskin, 102.

Rhapsody to harsh criticism for its apparent lack of musical invention; but when played well, he acknowledges, it *does* produce a fine effect:

Let us choose a passage from the central part of the tenth Rhapsody in which one cannot speak of thematic mastery or of daring harmonic innovation. The harmonies are banal, the melodies almost nonexistent. [...] It is the zero degree of musical invention if we insist that invention must consist of melody, rhythm, harmony, and counterpoint. Nevertheless, *played with a certain elegance*, these pages are both dazzling and enchanting.⁵⁵ [emphasis added]

In the course of Brendel's essays, while he does not seem to find much cause for concern in the Rhapsodies themselves, he does acknowledge their low esteem, pointing blame towards "the piano maniacs who abuse them as showpieces," writing that "It is above all the Rhapsodies that come to life through the improvisatory spirit and fire of the interpreter; they are wax in his hands like few other pieces in existence."⁵⁶

Klára Hamburger, a Hungarian biographer of Liszt, writes that "regarding their musical and artistic worth, these pieces [the Hungarian Rhapsodies]—like the opera fantasias, or other arrangements and paraphrases born of a desire to win the public, and which were meant first of all to demonstrate the unrivalled virtuosity and improvising ability of the travelling performer—did not match the standard of [Liszt's] best original works created in this period."⁵⁷ After quoting several harsh criticisms from Bartók, Hamburger goes on to say that these works can still be very effective when given in a good performance.⁵⁸

Even amateurs can play a classical quartet—and even if they cannot bring out all that is in the music, they still do not harm the composition, and the listener can perhaps take pleasure in the music. However, the Liszt works of the virtuoso period—above all the much played *Rhapsodies*—cannot be enjoyed even in an average performance. But with spectacular virtuosity, in a colourful, tasteful and evocative interpretation they are still very effective today, and captivate the listener.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 491-2.

⁵⁶ Brendel, "Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies", 269. "Wax in the hands" seems to mean that they can be moulded.

⁵⁷ Klára Hamburger, *Liszt* trans. Gyula Gulyas and Paul Merrick (Budapest: Kultura, 1986), 64.

⁵⁸ Bartók writes in the article: "The Hungarian Rhapsodies, which should stand nearest to us, are his least successful works (which is perhaps just why they are so widely known and admired)," "Besides many strokes of genius, these are for the most part merely conventional ideas—gipsy music, sometimes even mixed with Italianisms (No.6), sometimes in a veritable formal conglomeration (No.12)." Twenty-five years later, Bartók remarks in his lecture: "Naturally, in his arrangements, and similar works, such as the rhapsodies, he had less opportunity to give expression to his own innermost individuality (...). But for the sake of truth, I must stress that the rhapsodies—particularly the Hungarian ones—are perfect creations of their own kind. The material that Liszt uses in them could not be treated with greater artistry and beauty. That the material that Liszt uses is not always a value is quite another matter, and is obviously one reason why the general importance of the works is slight, and their popularity great." These quotations come from "Liszt's Music and Today's Public" and the "Academy Inauguration Lecture." See Béla Bartók, Benjamin Suchoff. *Béla Bartók Essays*. (London: Faber & Faber, 1976).

⁵⁹ Klára Hamburger, *Liszt*, 65.

It is this notion that serves as the impetus for the present dissertation. That the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* could draw such polarizing view-points from one and the same author, seemingly based purely on the factor of how they are played; and that Liszt himself was evidently much concerned about these matters—was there, perhaps, some missing piece of the puzzle, relating to the question of performance, that was lost amidst the sands of time?

The dissertation unfolds along two lines of inquiry. The first question is what, exactly, were the contents of Liszt's book, that he apparently wrote to explain the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*? And secondly, what did Liszt expect performers to *do* with the information and ideas he put forth in his book? The second question, as it turns out, is not a simple matter—it will be the subject of Parts 2 and 3 of the dissertation, in which we shall attempt to clarify Liszt's ideas on musical performance, before establishing a broad suggestion for how one *might* approach the performance of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* from the point of view of a Lisztian tradition.

The book itself should play an important part in understanding these pieces from a Lisztian perspective, and thus we will consider the book first—as, to the poetically-minded musician, the book in itself should almost certainly be “enough” to set their imagination racing. But to those perhaps less inclined to flowery description, who would rather read about performance itself, the first part of this dissertation will probably appear like a tediously long and confusing tangent—hence I must make the disclaimer that the “unusual” style of language (in the context of an academic dissertation) employed in the coming pages is very much the nature of the beast. This was the kind of language that Liszt employed, and it turns out to be utterly essential to the content itself—“when you say something differently, you say something different,” as it were.⁶⁰ It is for the same reason that the first part of the dissertation will rely heavily on long quotations, rather than attempting a true *précis* by summarising the text in my own words. I have attempted to create a “guided tour” to what I consider to be the most important passages of the book, re-structuring and re-conceptualising much of it, sometimes taking an uncritical stance, in addition to offering asides and observations to contextualise the writing alongside the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. I believe Liszt's poetical descriptions and use of continual literary variation to be utterly essential to understanding his point of view, and to merely attempt to summarise it (or not represent some part of it here), would be to miss that point entirely.⁶¹

⁶⁰ To quote Bruce Haynes, in *The End of Early Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 19.

⁶¹ To somebody unfamiliar with the book itself, this stance may appear unusual. Hence I should offer some justification. There is a considerable amount of information (approximately two-thirds of the book's chapters) that was deemed irrelevant and thus cut from this discussion, and similarly some ideas are spread across opposite ends of the work that were better brought together to make a cohesive argument. This process has therefore involved re-structuring the work, cutting the irrelevant chapters and re-ordering the others, so that the “running order” no longer resembles the original at all. It also required re-conceptualising Liszt's thesis (the Bohemian sentiment) to make it more easily comprehensible and relevant to the music. In my view, to attempt any other kind of review would be failing to adequately engage with the nature of the book, including its inherent problems and inconsistencies. One notes that Arthur Friedheim took a very similar approach, using

From first glance, Liszt's writing seems like a convoluted mess of poetical description set alongside a strange mixture of unequal parts philosophy, psychology, anthropology and musicology. And this may well be a fair estimation. These latter "quasi-scientific" parts, of course, were the cause of considerable political friction in the nineteenth century—and the touchiness of some of the ideas remain problematic.⁶² While it has for a long time been well-established that *some* parts of the book were not in fact written by Liszt, but by his companion the Princess Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein—this in itself does not make the task of discussing the work any simpler.⁶³ For although we may have strong suspicions about who might have added which paragraphs, it would be impossible to prove anything, and in reality much of the central premise (most probably the work of Liszt) is in itself no longer tasteful by modern standards.⁶⁴ And, for that reason alone, the book had better be left on the dusty shelves of the past.

But, perhaps we should not be too hasty—for there is much in the book that should be of interest to players of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. The autobiographical passages about Liszt's experiences in Hungary, his poetical descriptions of the music that he heard, and the discussion of the process of composing the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*—not to mention his expressed intentions behind the meaning of those works—all of this is surely of prime fascination to any music-lover. And some of the poetry *is* of striking beauty. Should these be left behind with the rest of it?

As it turns out, however, Liszt himself was apparently regretful that his harmless memories and descriptions had been overshadowed by the overly-ambitious academic direction that ultimately swallowed up a considerable portion of the book. As he wrote, tellingly, in a letter to Eduard Hanslick of all people (the two were not always on the best of terms), written to thank the famous critic for having written a balanced and considered review of the book amidst the flurry of political uproar that had occasioned the book's release.⁶⁵ Liszt was being attacked, mainly, for his misguided conclusions about the origins of Hungarian-Gypsy music.⁶⁶ Yet, as Liszt explained to Hanslick, his interest was not, really, in these "scientific" questions *per se*; the conclusions he had drawn came rather from "poetical" suppositions stemming from his idea that the Gypsy music performed across Hungary gave

long quotes, in his review of the book, to be found in Friedheim, *Life and Liszt*, Appendix I: "Liszt the Writer", 261-282.

⁶² See note 25 above.

⁶³ This was even known to Friedheim, see *Life and Liszt*, 281. See Walker, vol. 2: *The Weimar Years*, 368-379. Also Bellman, *Style Hongrois*, 181.

⁶⁴ I refer to the sections of the work that make comparisons between "the two wandering races" (most probably the work of the Princess), as well as those that deal with cultural position and project stereotypes about the Roma people (likely the work of Liszt). For reasons of political correctness, it has been decided not to go into any further detail on these topics in the present dissertation. Readers interested in these stereotypes from a historical perspective may refer to Bellman, *Style Hongrois*, chapter 4.

⁶⁵ For detail see note 25 above. In particular, see Klára Hamburger, "Understanding the Hungarian Reception History of Liszt's '*Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie*' (1859/1881)," *Journal of the American Liszt Society* multi-vol. iss. 54-56 (2003): 75-84.

⁶⁶ For detail about this issue see Bálint Sárosi, *Gypsy Music*, 149-150.

the impression of being the scattered fragments of a kind of “musical” national-epic, akin to Homer or Ossian.⁶⁷ It was with this idea firmly in place that Liszt had drawn the dots between various more-or-less spurious sources to say that the origin of the music stretched back into a mysterious prehistorical age, brought to Europe by the Roma people who, according to Liszt, “rose up quite suddenly one day, without anyone being able to say exactly where [they] had sprung from.”⁶⁸ In reality, it was quite demonstrable that this music likely had its origins in the eighteenth century, and thus many of Liszt’s suppositions in this regard immediately fall flat.⁶⁹ But the internal logic of Liszt’s book is nonetheless convincing, and if merely considered as a work of prose-poetry, in the way that Liszt apparently intended (according to this letter), it does provide a charming backdrop for his *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, lending them a kind of shining, shimmering grandeur.⁷⁰ It is with these thoughts in mind that Part 1 of the present dissertation will proceed, seeking to “prune” the book around the outline sketched here by Liszt, perhaps returning the work to a form closer to his original intention, as an introduction to the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*.

Still, the point which I notice first, in consequence of the very violent and premature attacks of which I have been the object, is not the one which I regard as the most important in my volume. As a matter of fact, it would signify little to me as *artist* to know whether this music is originally from India or Tartary. That which appeared to me worthy the study of an artist is the music itself, its meaning, and the feelings it is destined to reproduce.—It is in trying clearly to account for these latter that I have only found it possible to connect them with people placed in the exceptional conditions of the Bohemians; and it is through asking myself what the poetry of this wandering life would be (a question so often raised), that I have become convinced that it must be identical with that which breathes in the Art of the Bohemians. This identity once made evident to my mind, I have naturally sought to make it felt by and evident to my readers. The better to succeed in this I have corroborated my opinion by grouping together as a sort of complement various suppositions about the question of these sources. But the scientific side of this question has never been, in my eyes, anything but accessory; I should probably not have taken up the pen to discuss it. If I have raised it, that has been the consequence, not the aim of my work. Artist, and poet if you like, I am only interested in seeing and describing the poetical and psychological side of my thesis. I have sought in speech the power of depicting, with less fire and allurements possibly, but with more precision than music has done, some impressions which are not derived from science or polemics—which come from the heart and appeal to the imagination.⁷¹

⁶⁷ See Liszt, *The Gipsy in Music*, chapters 1-2. These ideas will be discussed in detail in the present dissertation.

⁶⁸ Liszt, *The Gipsy in Music*, 8.

⁶⁹ For a thorough modern academic history of Gypsy music in Hungary, see Bálint Sárosi, *Gypsy Music* (Budapest: Corvina Press, 1978).

⁷⁰ On the work as “prose-poetry,” Liszt has explained: “Poetical and descriptive prose being little used in Germany, I can easily conceive that, on the announcement of the title of my book, a set of lectures, rather than a kind of poem in prose, will be expected. I own that I would never have attempted to lecture on a subject the materials of which did not appear to me sufficient for this purpose. How small a number of people, moreover, would have been interested in learning the *little* which it would be allowable to *affirm* in this case? Whilst the expression of the innermost and deep feelings, whatever they be, from the moment that they have been powerful enough to inspire an art, is never entirely unattractive, even to the more extended circle which includes not alone musicians, but all those who feel and wish to understand music.” Letter to Dr Eduard Hanslick, September 24th, 1859, letter 399 in La Mara and Bache, *Letters of Franz Liszt* vol 2, 507-509.

⁷¹ Letter to Dr Eduard Hanslick, September 24th, 1859, letter 399 in La Mara and Bache, *Letters of Franz Liszt* vol 2, 507-509. According to a footnote in the same, Hanslick’s review appeared in the “old” Vienna *Presse*.

Part 1: Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie

I. Definitions

The first part of the dissertation is a detailed summary-review of Liszt's book *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie* (1859, 1881), based on the English translation by Edwin Evans published in 1926.⁷² Following the clarification-apology offered by Liszt above, we shall make an effort to shift the focus of the writing *away* from the troublesome “scientific” questions, re-working the “poetical and psychological side” of the book into a more cohesive argument—this being, regardless of other considerations, the material that is of importance to the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*.⁷³

As Liszt tells us in its conclusion, the book was originally begun as a preface to the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, to outline his intentions and introduce the cosmopolitan world of piano-players to the strange and unusual effects of the Hungarian-Gypsy music that had inspired his compositions.⁷⁴ The intention behind the Rhapsodies themselves was also made clear in the course of the book—namely that the term “rhapsody” was used quite in the old-fashioned sense, that concerning the epic poetry of Homer and the Rhapsodes, those travelling bards of Ancient Greece who remembered and recited episodes of the *Illiad* and *Odyssey* in an improvisatory fashion, long before the poems were ever written down.⁷⁵ The music played everywhere by the travelling Roma musicians in Hungary, sounding as if “emanating from another planet,” its highly strung outpourings “like the pleading of the imprisoned bird”—its melodies resurfacing in a thousand guises, in a thousand improvised performances—Liszt came to imagine that this music told the story of an entire people,

Liszt did nonetheless stand by the book in its published form, in the heat of the criticism, made clear in a letter to Gusztav Heckenast, putting forward various counter-arguments: “If they had read it, they would know: (1) How it was written first of all with the purpose of serving as a commentary on a musical work published several years ago to which I gave the title *Rhapsodies hongroises* and which had no small success in Hungary ... (2) ... the sincerity of patriotism does not include blindness in matters of science and art ...” quoted in Bálint Sárosi, *Gypsy Music*, 143.

⁷² Franz Liszt, *The Gipsy in Music* trans. Edwin Evans (London: W. Reeves, 1926).

⁷³ See note 65 above. Those interested in the other side of Liszt's writing should refer to Hamburger, “Understanding the Hungarian Reception History of Liszt's ‘*Des Bohémiens*’: ” 75–84. See also Sárosi, *Gypsy Music*, 149–150. Friedheim, *Life and Liszt*, 261–282. Walker, vol. 2: *The Weimar Years*, 368–379. Also Bellman, *Style Hongrois*, 181.

⁷⁴ The relevant passage was quoted already. See Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 335–336.

⁷⁵ At least according to the understanding of the matter in Liszt's day. For an outline of the more modern scholarship surrounding the Homeric poems, see Bernard Knox in the introduction to *The Iliad* trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 3–64. In music, the term “Rhapsody” carries more meanings today, as noted by Sárosi: “The description “rhapsody” used for the music therefore means not only the national minstrel—“*rhapsodos*”—role proudly undertaken by the composer but also the same musical intention which the earlier verbunkos composers described with the names “reverie” or “fantasia”—the virtuosic improvisation intention. Here, too, the main purpose of the theme arranged is—within the intensifying framework of the traditional *lassú-friss* (slow-quick) principle of the *verbunkos*—to give the composer and performer the opportunity to make the likewise traditionally obligatory stylistic elements sparkle in as virtuosic a way as possible.” *Gypsy Music*, 114.

representing their very nature in a manner peculiar to themselves.⁷⁶ It was an epic poetry: told not in words, but in music.⁷⁷ He formed the idea of penning this epic, like the Greek scholiasts who assembled the Homeric poems as we know them—contributing the cycle to the pantheon of world-literature, after the ideal put forth by Goethe.⁷⁸ It was *this* idea that led to the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*.⁷⁹

These present pages constitute the form in which the belated preface is now presented to the sympathetic audience of the new Epic, who, if they read it, will see that, if we have entertained our readers at some length upon “The Gipsies and their Music in Hungary,” it was originally in the hope of facilitating the adoption, within the most elevated sphere of art, of this music so dear to our country. That elevated sphere is no less than the one common to all humanity, within which all nations drink their fill at the vivifying fountains of sublime poetry; that sphere which the progress of time seems continually to extend by introducing to it every day some new proficient, and the universal character of which was recognised by Goethe in his title of “Welt-literatur.”⁸⁰

That the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* might have been originally intended to form a cycle dedicated to the vivifying fountain of the elevated sphere of sublime poetry—probably seems like a colossal joke to those who have only ever known the collection through Tom and Jerry or as the quintessential encore-ready showpiece. Yet, here we have it, in Liszt’s own writing (albeit in translation from the original French). He continues, outlining the specific meaning of the title of the collection:

By the word “Rhapsody” the intention has been to designate the fantastically *epic* element which we deem this music to contain. Each one of these productions has always seemed to us to form part of a poetic cycle, remarkable by the unity of its inspiration, eminently national. The conditions of this unity are fulfilled by the music belonging exclusively to the one people whose soul and intimate sentiments it accurately depicts; sentiments moreover which are nowhere else so well expressed and which are cast in a form proper to this one nation; having been invented and practised exclusively by them.⁸¹

What the book demonstrates quite assuredly is that the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* were meant to symbolise something of incredible depth and nobility, although that something is admittedly tangled up in a web of verbose language and endless poetic metaphor; not to mention the innumerable

⁷⁶ This will be covered in detail below. See Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 131.

⁷⁷ See Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 12-13.

⁷⁸ “If it be admitted that our proceeding is similar, we may safely crave pardon for the ambitious comparison of our undertaking with that of the Greek scholiasts; who undertook amongst innumerable versions, apocryphal and of doubtful value, to choose the most pure and worthy of their author; to weed out grammatical errors, provincialisms or common locutions which had made their appearance, and thus to leave for us the inimitable poems which, for three thousand years, have formed the admiration of the world.” Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 335-336.

⁷⁹ One is reminded of Liszt’s own calls for the establishing of a pantheon of music in the 1830s. See the sixth part of “On the Situation of Artists” in ed. Hall-Swadley, *Liszt: Collected Writings* vol.2, 131-133.

⁸⁰ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 336-337.

⁸¹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 336-337. See also, the following paragraph: “The fact of publishing a part of the considerable materials we had had occasion to amass during our long relations with Bohemians in Hungary as well as with collectors of their principal themes, combined with the position taken up by those transcribing these materials for the piano as the instrument best capable of rendering the form and spirit of Bohemian art in its entity, necessitated our giving a generic title to the collection—a title clearly to indicate the doubly national character which we considered it to possess. The title thus selected was ‘Rhapsodies Hongroises.’” Ibid, 336.

passages of a politically troublesome nature.⁸² Keeping in mind Liszt's letter, we can attempt to soften how we interpret some of what he writes. We will spend a number of the coming pages defining what has been termed the "Bohemian sentiment," which, essentially, is to be understood as the collection of "feelings," that the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* broadly "represent." Liszt searched for a kind of poetical framework in which to situate the Gypsy music he heard in Hungary—that is, the conception of the Bohemian sentiment arose from how Liszt interpreted *the music* and what it might mean.⁸³ He saw these feelings as essential and that their uniqueness must have been intrinsic to the people who created such a music—he therefore assumed that the musicians themselves must live in a manner consistent with these feelings (and perhaps those Roma musicians that he knew, did in fact identify with his ideas). This is, of course, where things become troublesome from a modern perspective. As this music is strongly associated with the Hungarian Roma people, and because Liszt is equating his interpretation of the feelings of the music directly with the people who made it—there seems to arise an element of stereotype in Liszt's portrayal, which is difficult to avoid.⁸⁴ I hope to carefully make clear that these ideas should be seen to proceed directly *from the music itself*, rather than from any broader cultural associations, which would be inappropriate—I have hence termed Liszt's collection of ideas as the "Bohemian sentiment," which I believe to be a relatively "neutral" term (at least in English), thereby attempting to politely refrain from using certain other terms in what would be an inappropriate context.⁸⁵ I present Liszt's writings merely as an introduction to the world of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, a loose collection of the ideas that were the context of these pieces of music in Liszt's mind.⁸⁶

⁸² See note 62 above.

⁸³ "That which appeared to me worthy the study of an artist is the music itself, its meaning, and the feelings it is destined to reproduce.—It is in trying clearly to account for these latter that I have only found it possible to connect them with people placed in the exceptional conditions of the Bohemians; and it is through asking myself what the poetry of this wandering life would be (a question so often raised), that I have become convinced that it must be identical with that which breathes in the Art of the Bohemians." La Mara and Bache, *Letters of Franz Liszt* vol. 2, 508. The use of "Bohemian" here should not be confused with the more generic sense of the term, familiar from the likes of Puccini's *La Bohème*, Murger's *Bohemians of the Latin Quarter*, or indeed Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody*. Although there is nevertheless some vague overlap between the two notions, Liszt writes of this type, the Paris Bohemian as he calls it, as a kind of diluted proponent of the Bohemian sentiment. See Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 211-213.

⁸⁴ One should note that Liszt was apparently aware of the danger in carelessly perpetuating such stereotypes. See Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 226-233.

⁸⁵ In Liszt's book some of these cultural associations are indeed discussed, but these are one of the elements that I believe are better left apart from the present discussion. If some sense of this does sneak through the cracks—I strongly urge the reader to understand that Liszt's position was, generally, made in good faith—he was very much aiming to pen a defence of this people, who then as now, and for too much of history, have suffered the most unfortunate treatment largely by result of such stereotyping. Had Liszt the benefit of the subsequent years of debate on political correctness (amongst other related issues), I believe he would have phrased some arguments in a very different way; we must hence take all of this firmly within its historical context.

⁸⁶ In short, these stereotypes should only be pondered in a purely abstract sense, as if to imagine a person or people who would, in a fictional universe, live by them—this was *not* a scientific book and should not be considered as such. While the Romani people may or may not identify with Liszt's ideas, as the case may be; it is not appropriate for anybody to decide how another individual or community thinks or feels—and I am not intending to do that now, as I proceed to discuss Liszt's ideas.

In the context of the music, in order to avoid confusion, we will use the term Hungarian-Gypsy music, when referring to the style itself, this seeming to be the generally used term in such a context.⁸⁷ Liszt's imaginary artist, who might have created such music, we shall term the Bohemian artist or musician. Romani (Roma) is today the preferred term for the group of people referred to, and I shall respectfully use this term when appropriate.

To my knowledge there only exists one full English translation of the book: that by Edwin Evans (London: William Reeves, 1926), which appears to be wholly based upon the second (1881) edition of Liszt's original French text. The translation is not quite perfect, although Evans' preface demonstrates he understood it well enough. I have made some slight alterations to the grammar in passages where the translation makes little or no sense, and I have cross-checked with the original French where necessary.⁸⁸ Liszt's writing style is flowery by modern standards, and takes some getting used to, but it is delightful and rewarding in the end—and it's really no worse than some of his contemporaries.⁸⁹ If anyone were to attempt a modern English translation, I would strongly advise *against* a complete literal translation as Evans has done; a highly edited or abridged version would be necessary to make it even remotely palatable to modern standards. Such an idea is the intention behind the chapters that follow—to rescue the treasures in order that we may finally leave Liszt's book on the dusty shelves of the past, where it assuredly belongs.

II. Background

a. Liszt's Return to Hungary

In 1838, Hungary was devastated by a treacherous flood. Entire villages were swept away, crops destroyed and thousands of people left homeless. Hearing of the tragedy, Franz Liszt, who had left his native Hungary as a boy of ten to conquer the musical world, was suddenly roused with great feelings of patriotism. He wrote, in May of 1838:

I was badly shaken by that disaster [...] and the surge of emotions revealed to me the meaning of the word *homeland*. I was suddenly transported back to the past, and in my heart I found the 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 Hungary, the powerful, fertile land that has brought forth so many noble sons! It was my homeland [...] O my wild and distant homeland, my unknown friends, my

⁸⁷ See, for instance, the Budapest Gypsy Symphony Orchestra, <https://www.100tagu.hu/en/budapest-gypsy-symphony-orchestra/>

⁸⁸ Note I have generally not overloaded the text with square brackets in cases where sentence structure has been altered, in order to maintain readability.

⁸⁹ If any interested readers happen to want to follow up and dig out Evans' translation, I humbly beg thee to tread carefully, and consider the arguments I have just set forth, and be willing to skip or ignore passages that don't seem in keeping with the "flow."

great family! Your painful cry calls me back to you, and deeply moved I bow my head, ashamed that I could forget you for such a long time.⁹⁰

Staying in Venice at the time, Liszt promptly rushed to Vienna to arrange a series of charity concerts in aid of the flood-relief cause.⁹¹ It wasn't until December of the following year, 1839, that he finally returned to his homeland—it was his first return since leaving in 1823. His arrival was celebrated on a national scale, as the people cried “Éljen! Liszt Ferenc!” (“Hail! Franz Liszt!”).⁹²

It was during this trip that Liszt was reunited with one of the passions of his youth—the wild and fantastic Hungarian-Gypsy music, strongly associated as it was with the wayside Roma people.⁹³ As a child, growing up in a rural Hungarian village, Liszt had longed to unravel the mysterious charm of this music, that seemed so very far removed from the “learned principles” of the Western European tradition in which he was taught:

At that time, we were merely the frail pupil of an austere master; and, as for our opinion of any artistic charm, it need only be said that the only outlet to the world of fantasy of which we had any idea was that of which a slight glimpse is obtained through the architectural scaffolding of notes, carefully adjusted according to learned principles. But that poor view only made us more curious to find out how it was that such attraction should be exercised by horny hands; either passing rough bows over the strings of worthless instruments, or striking the brass with apparently thoughtless abruptness.⁹⁴

Liszt, who had left Hungary as a frail boy, returned a man of the world. As he would later recall, in his years as a soul-searching virtuoso Liszt journeyed from one end of the world to the other offering his music as a stranger, much like the travelling Roma musicians for whom he came to feel a personal affinity:

As if to cultivate the sympathetic feeling, it happened also that, later on, we led the life of a wandering virtuoso, precisely as they do. The great difference was that, whereas they, with their tent life, had taken centuries to traverse the various countries of Europe, we abridged the age-long destiny by covering the same ground in a very few years. It may perhaps be counted as an advantage that our journey was more commodious. So, undoubtedly, it was; but, on the other hand, it was by no means so picturesque.⁹⁵

Prior to leading this touring existence, Liszt had spent his most impressionable years frequenting the artistic and literary salons of the Parisian *élite*, learning the ways of society in its highest circles. He had heard, known and played with many of the great virtuosos and esteemed masters of the day—and through his intellectual and personal rigour, had pushed his own artistic talents to unforeseen heights. Yet, returning to Hungary as mature man and artist, understanding so much more about the world and

⁹⁰ Quoted in Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt*. vol.1: *The Virtuoso Years* (New York: Knopf, 1983), 253-54.

⁹¹ Walker, *The Virtuoso Years*, 253-54

⁹² See Walker, *The Virtuoso Years*, 319-20.

⁹³ “We may, in fact, describe remembrance of the gipsies as one intertwines with those of our earliest childhood, and identified with some of the keenest impressions of our existence.” Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 129.

⁹⁴ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 130.

⁹⁵ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 129-130.

how it cultivated music—Liszt still found himself ravished by the charged intensity of this music, deemed *uncultivated* by the establishment he had come to know:

We longed all the more to hear those rhythms and harmonies again on account of their appearing to us as emanating from another planet—they were so completely different from anything which European art permits, or even countenances, in any way, in music. But, however intolerable in the sight of European art, this *was* music. It was most unquestionably music; for it could speak, it could narrate, it could even sing. And how it sang! How sad were the accents which greeted us! They seemed like the voices of men in exile; like the pleading of the imprisoned bird; like the sigh of the orphaned soul; or the plaint of bereaved affection. We understood it well—this music; for it seemed to us like a native language.⁹⁶

On his return, not content with the mere urban brand of Gypsy music known so well to tourists, Liszt went in search of the source; to *feel* and *experience* the music as it was practiced in its natural habitat, as it were, the Roma camp:

We went in order to see them as they really are; to be amongst them all; to sleep, as they do, under the blue sky; to play with their children; to make presents to the little girls; to speak to their chiefs; and, finally, to hear them play for their own pleasure and public by the light of their own fires, the situation of which depends entirely upon chance.⁹⁷

Liszt describes the wonderful scenery of the ad-hoc village, and the spirited performance with which he was greeted:

Accordingly, on the occasion of which we now speak, we had the honour of reclining upon *bunda* skins, with several of which a kind of seat of honour had been built. The base of this was composed of plants; which, being freshly separated from their roots, still preserved their fragrance. It was in the middle of a colonnade of ash-trees; and these, being of considerable height, seemed with their long arms to be sustaining the blue satin of the sky. [...]

Such was the scene in which we passed hours in listening to the best Bohemian orchestras, playing with indescribable animation. It was an animation of the best kind; for it was inspired by the beauty of the day and assisted by the dancing of the women, who supplemented the effect with their tambourines and little cues of various kinds of mimicry. There was no lack of brandy; and the glinting metal of little coins was in startling evidence from every finger.

In the intervals of repose we could hear the exasperating noise of the wooden axles, badly greased, of the wagons; which were being drawn back to make more room for the dancers. This was soon mixed with some frantic cries which the youngsters set up in their language, and which the musicians courteously translated as “Éljen! Liszt Ferenc!” [...] The men, after examining some horses which had recently been given to them [...] started imitating castanets by cracking the joints of their fingers. [...] Flying to their violins and cimbaloms, they began a real fury of excitement. The Friska was not long in rising to a frenzy of exaltation; and, then, almost to delirium. In its final stage it could only be compared to that vertiginous and convulsive wheeling motion which is the culminating point in the Dervish ecstasy.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 131.

⁹⁷ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 132.

⁹⁸ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 132-133.

Evidently inspired by these joyous scenes, it was during this period that Liszt first resolved to notate some of the music he was hearing. The immediate result, following his first return to Hungary in 1839, was the four volumes of *Magyar dalok* (Hungarian Melodies), published by Haslinger in 1840.⁹⁹ In 1846, Liszt returned to Hungary once more, visiting Raiding, the place of his birth.¹⁰⁰ Seeking out the local band of musicians, Liszt was once again treated to an extraordinary festival, this time lasting several days.¹⁰¹ In order to describe the overwhelming Dionysian intensity of this occasion, Liszt invokes the sublime style:

Having uncased the instruments and placed themselves in a semi-circle, the symphony began; *con estro poetico*. But the brandy which circulated, and the wine which had already circulated since the day before, soon brought about a *rinforzando con rabbia*. In a few moments came the distant roll of thunder, sounding like a deep organ-point, whilst the timber work of the roof, being very high, and the dilapidated walls of very thin wood, we had the full benefit of an echo which gave us every note again producing the most chaotic confusion. The passionate passages, the ornamentations, the virtuosity and all feats of technique continued, unaffected; all being rolled up together in one formidable *tutti*. The roar went on increasing; being varied occasionally by sounds more acute and piercing, as well as by the lightning which came at short intervals to enliven the scene. Sometimes the latter threw a pale greenish light and sometimes a transparent brilliancy of roseate tint, enveloping the performers in an apotheosis like Bengal fire shows up the demi-gods at a theatre.

During the tempestuous *finale* of this performance it was as if every possible sound or tone was crushing down together like mountain crests which fall with a frightful uproar in sheets of sand mixed with blocks of rock and stone. We felt uncertain whether the edifice, which seemed to rock with these sudden displacements of sonorous currents and vibrations, would not really fall upon our heads; such was the crushing nature of the instrumentation of this concerto which all the conservatoires of the world would certainly have condemned and even we found to be just a trifle risky.¹⁰²

In these descriptions, we already get a sense of those tremendous effects that would characterise the “tempestuous *finale*” of a number of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. And alas, it was during this trip to Hungary, that Liszt’s ideas for that collection, with its grandiose and epical effusions, began to take shape, as he wrote to Marie d’Agoult in 1846:

During my sojourn in Hungary I have collected a number of fragments with the help of which one might fairly well recompose the musical epic of this strange country, whose rhapsode I want to become. The six new volumes, about a hundred pages in all, which I have just published in Vienna under the collective title Hungarian Melodies—there was enough material on hand for four books six years ago—form an almost complete cycle of this fantastic *epopoeia*: half Ossianic (for there pulses in these songs the feeling of a vanished race of heroes) and half Gypsy. As I go along, I shall write two or three such books, to complete the whole thing.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ See Humphrey Searle, *The Music of Liszt*, 42. See also Zoltán Gárdonyi and Isván Szelényi, in the preface to *Neue Liszt Ausgabe, Ungarische Rhapsodien*, x-xiii. Also Zoltán Gárdonyi. “A Chronicle of Franz Liszt’s ‘Hungarian Rhapsodies’,” *Liszt Society Journal* 20 (1995): 38-61.

¹⁰⁰ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 136.

¹⁰¹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 136-139.

¹⁰² Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 138-139.

¹⁰³ Quoted in Walker, vol. 2: The Weimar Years, 380, n40.

The six new volumes mentioned here were published by Haslinger (1846-47) with the title *Magyar rapszódíák* (Hungarian Rhapsodies). Between the total ten volumes of *Magyar* works, there were twenty-two numbered pieces.¹⁰⁴ Liszt would never technically complete the “two or three such books” that he planned in this letter, but instead, a few years later he was to renounce these early works, severely revising their contents to form the cycle of fifteen *Rhapsodies Hongroises* in the form that we are familiar with today, the bulk of which were published in 1853 by various publishers.¹⁰⁵ The *Hungarian Rhapsodies* Nos. 1 and 2, published already in 1851, were not based on the earlier *Magyar* works.¹⁰⁶ Four more rhapsodies, Nos. 16-19, would much later be added to the collection, written and published in the 1880s.¹⁰⁷

III. Hungarian-Gypsy Music

From the above descriptions, we get a sense of the overwhelming impression that this music produced—but what were its characteristics? What was so unusual about it, and why did it appeal to Liszt? In this chapter we will examine Liszt’s descriptions of the style—its history, instrumentation, character, and expression.

In the most general sense, Hungarian-Gypsy music is defined by its alluring sense of freedom—its luxurious, improvisatory ornamentation, its unrestrained rhythms, its bold changes of tempo. To Liszt, this meant above all else, complete, shameless expression.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ These have been only republished in their entirety recently in *Neue Liszt Ausgabe* Supplement Vol. 8. For a more detailed discussion of the relationship between these two sets of pieces, see Zoltán Gárdonyi and Isván Szelényi, *Neue Liszt Ausgabe*, Series I, vol. 1: *Ungarische Rhapsodien*, trans. Peter Branscombe, ed. Imre Sulyok et al. (Budapest: Editio Musica, 1970), xiv-xvi. See also Zoltán Gárdonyi, “A Chronicle of Franz Liszt’s ‘Hungarian Rhapsodies’,” *Liszt Society Journal* 20 (1995): 38-61. Also Dana Francey, “A Study of Franz Liszt’s Hungarian Rhapsodies” (M.A. diss., The University of British Columbia, 1990).

¹⁰⁵ After publication of the *Rhapsodies Hongroises* (1851, 1853), Liszt recalled the earlier works, buying up the plates and remaining copies from the publisher. There is evidence he was working towards what may have been a second collection of Rhapsodies but for whatever reason this never came to complete fruition—these remained merely rough sketches called the *Ungarische Romanzero* (S241a).

¹⁰⁶ Humphrey Searle, *The Music of Liszt*, 42. See also Zoltán Gárdonyi and Isván Szelényi, in the preface to *Neue Liszt Ausgabe*, *Ungarische Rhapsodien*, x-xiii. Rhapsody No. 1 did exist in several earlier versions, originally as part of the first version of the Consolations (S.171b) and later called *Rêves et fantaisies* (S.243b). For the story behind the genesis of Rhapsody No. 2, see: Adrian Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, 390-91.

¹⁰⁷ Several of the Rhapsodies also exist in arrangements for different instruments: Nos. 2, 5, 6, 9, 12, and 14 for orchestra (arrangements by Doppler/Liszt); No. 9 for piano trio (Liszt); No. 12 for violin and piano (Joachim/Liszt); and No. 14 for piano and orchestra as the *Hungarian Fantasy* (Liszt). An interesting aside is that some of the tunes from the Rhapsodies pop up in different places within these arrangements and Liszt’s other works: for instance, the last section from Rhapsody No. 8 comes at the end of the Symphonic poem *Hungaria*—and a tune from the coda of Rhapsody No. 14 turns up at the end of the piano trio version of Rhapsody No. 9.

¹⁰⁸ For those interested in hearing what this music actually *sounds like* I have included a list of “recommended listening” recordings in the Discography. This is a selection of various Gypsy bands that seem to me to resemble the kind of tradition described by Liszt. It is not difficult to imagine Liszt being absolutely enthralled by such music, truly unlike anything else.

a. History

Liszt imagined that Hungarian-Gypsy music, which seemed to him of ancient character, must have come from some remote place and time, beyond recollection and historical accounts.¹⁰⁹ He imagined that the Roma people, who were the chief performers of this music, had brought the style with them when they wandered from India, at some point in the distant past.¹¹⁰ Liszt cites sources from the thirteen century that make reference to Romani musicians, and supposes that the scattering of sources from the sixteenth century onwards as proof of a prehistoric tradition of this music, resembling the kind practiced in the early nineteenth century.¹¹¹

More recent scholarship has disputed Liszt's conclusion in this regard, positing that the style began to emerge in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a form of music used for army recruiting ceremonies, drawing in a multitude of stylistic influences, although very commonly played by Romani musicians in Hungary—the style itself was sometimes called *verbunkos*, the term coming from the German *werbung*, meaning recruitment.¹¹² By the mid-nineteenth century the style had become associated with the broader Hungarian patriotist movement, and became a favourite among Hungarian aristocrats, and could even be heard as *café* entertainment in Budapest and Vienna, as Liszt related.¹¹³ The popularity of this among the Viennese public may be evidenced by the tradition of “Hungarian style” *Hausmusik*—a genre of light, domestic music that made prominent use on certain tropes associated with Hungarian-Gypsy music. Examples include Hummel's *Ungarische Tänze*, Op.23 (c.1807), Schubert's *Divertissement à la hongroise*, Op.54 (1826), and later Brahms' two books of Hungarian Dances (1869, 1880).¹¹⁴ More recently, Jonathan Bellman has codified the various musical figures associated with this genre, which has become known as the *Style hongrois*.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 8-10.

¹¹⁰ “So far as we know no one has yet seriously enquired into any resemblances which may exist between the music of the Bohemians and that of the inhabitants of Hindustan. No one has ever compared their principles—those relating to grammar, inflexions, derivations, declensions, endings, metres and rhythms—as they have done with respect to corresponding features of the two languages. If men could be found willing, for the benefit of art, to apply the same tenacious will and indefatigable perseverance as the pioneers of science have displayed, they would probably discover that as much relation exists between their respective treatments of sounds tonal as of sounds articulate.” Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 286-287.

¹¹¹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 255-264.

¹¹² See Bálint Sárosi, *Gypsy Music* trans. Fred Macnicol (Budapest: Corvina Press, 1978). Also Ian Pace, “Performing Liszt in the Style Hongrois,” *Liszt Society Journal* 32 (2007): 55-65.

¹¹³ Liszt writes about how some of the musicians who played in these venues, who had become “commercial travellers,” were of a significantly lower standard than the famous names such as Bihari, who could be compared with the greatest of Western artists. See Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 360-369.

¹¹⁴ See Jonathan Bellman, *The Style Hongrois in the Music of Western Europe* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 63-68.

¹¹⁵ See note 114.

The fashionable allure of the style in the first half of the nineteenth century arguably had much to do with its great celebrity, the violinist virtuoso János Bihari (1764-1827), whom Liszt heard as a child. He later wrote about Bihari at length:

We were just beginning to grow up when, in 1822, we heard this great man amongst other Bohemian virtuosi; and we were even then not too young to be struck and impressed by him. We have not only retained an impression of his inspirations, but they have distilled into our soul like the essence of some generous and exhilarating wine [...]. Accordingly, the notes, like drops of a spirit essence, were transfused into our ear from Bihari's violin—as from the enchanter to the enchanted. Had our memory been of ductile clay and every note a nail, it could not have become more firmly fixed...¹¹⁶

As Liszt explains, Bihari “carried Gypsy music to its greatest height,” though it had long been an object of admiration among the Hungarian aristocracy, “now it became an integral part of national representation.”¹¹⁷ At the height of his fame, Bihari was in demand at official ceremonies, coronation balls, festivals for foreign ambassadors, and gained the attention of the imperial family—his band was “considered as a precious jewel and an object of patriotic pride.”¹¹⁸ With his band of four violins and cimbalom, Bihari set the convention for the typical Gypsy *troupe*, as well as the distinctive costume that became a common uniform for “great occasions.”¹¹⁹ Liszt describes the style of playing:

Bihari was particularly distinguished by the virtuosity with which he executed the national music, which was always so freshly delivered that it produced the effect of being improvised. His style, although full of that “go” without which no Hungarian audience can be (as it is called) “carried away,” was not heavily charged with show passages and side-display. There were certain melodies the beautiful and expressive rendering of which used to touch all hearts. His *Friska* was full of an intoxicating enthusiasm, but his *Lassan* of a heart-broken and elegiac melancholy which used to impress even those who came to hear him for no other reason than to estimate his value for business purposes.¹²⁰

Bihari had a manner of playing so characteristic and individual that “whatever theme he had to play, he at once gave it an accentuation which changed its nature; in the sense of bringing it around to his own manner of feeling.” And although the great virtuoso never became proficient in musical notation, it was only “sufficient for him once to have heard a motive in order to reproduce it, and he would do this at once, modifying it in the strange fashion to which we have just alluded.”¹²¹ Liszt continues:

He seemed then to infuse into it another soul, which clothed it with a physiognomy and imparted to it an expression altogether new [...]. When an orchestra alternating with his played at a ball such pieces as *françaises* or *allemandes* he used almost as soon as they had finished to take up the same themes, but with a new vigour. Those were the occasions which yielded full opportunity to observe that wonderful talent in him of completely metamorphosing every theme he handled. However short it was, or however evident the German or Italian stamp it bore, it no sooner came to his hand than it became Bohemian (so to

¹¹⁶ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 339-340.

¹¹⁷ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 340.

¹¹⁸ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 340.

¹¹⁹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 341, 346.

¹²⁰ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 346. The two styles, *Friska* and *Lassan*, are discussed below.

¹²¹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 346-347.

speak) its sentiment possibly exaggerated but always sublime. If it were a lively dance melody he would make it mad with joy and drunk with pleasure; if it were a sentimental operatic air he converted it into a passionate scene calculated to draw tears from his listeners; and if it were already a melancholy theme it became at once with him a burial scene.¹²²

It seems to have been Bihari, along with a comparable contemporary named Czermak, who set the standard for this music; to Liszt they represented “a mountain crest” that marked “the end of a long ascent”—and likewise paved the way for the style’s the fashionable age in the middle part of the nineteenth century. To Liszt, this age of prosperity quickly became an age of decadence, spawning “fanatical admirers and imitators” and *dilettante* composers “in Gypsy style,” “the caprice of the mode and the vogue it had attained was sure to inspire mediocrities of inferior talent with this idea; those who have no real individuality still often having a certain skill in imitating, especially when the general infatuation in favour of a style compels their admiration.”¹²³ As a certain science evolved around the creation of the music, particularly attempting to recapture the lost traditions of Bihari and Czermak, Liszt notes that “it may not be altogether incorrect to note that, since their time, great artists have become the more rare as the scientific rage has become the more interested in this branch of music: In every art vitality subsides at the approach of the pen and the scalpel.”¹²⁴ He continues:

The idea was to collect traditions and to follow them up to their origin; a particularly unpromising enterprise and one which, as we have indicated, met with very little success. For want of any real source of information, archaeology was brought into play; and unearthing ancient instruments and retracing their history [...]. But, as it is impossible to judge of any art by hearsay, and as we possess not the slightest fact to go by in order to form an idea of what Bohemian music was before our time, existing as it did only for its auditors and not having been transmitted by writing, but orally, we should not be able to say whether, however probable, this is not really another case in which theory arrived when practice departed.¹²⁵

It is clear from this chapter of Liszt’s book that he held much sentimental esteem for the older generation of musicians, and looked disdainfully upon the younger upstarts who had capitalised upon the greater commercial interest in the art-form—in Liszt’s opinion selling away the very spirit of the art.¹²⁶ But Liszt even throws scorn upon the likes of Schubert and Beethoven, both of whom adapted Hungarian-Gypsy music to a cosmopolitan style, without preserving its most important characteristics. He writes of the former’s *Divertissement à la hongroise*:

In examining it [...] it is easy to perceive that he did not look upon these productions as exotic plants [...]. He did not give himself the trouble to penetrate sufficiently its spirit and intimate sense. He seemed, for instance, to regard an abrupt modulation as *lapsus lingue*; intentional repetitions as pleonasm; strange chords as barbarisms; and all unusual augmentations and diminutions as incorrect—all of these being features which constitute the Bohemian style. [...] It is, in short, quite evident from the manner in which he treated Bohemian motives, that he did not recognise them as belonging to an art different from every

¹²² Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 347.

¹²³ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 361.

¹²⁴ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 362.

¹²⁵ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 361.

¹²⁶ See Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 363-369.

other; constructed on another foundation and built on different principles. He estimated the fragments which reached him to be mere off-shoots, disfigured and disseminated haphazard by coarse, rough players; and fondly imagined he was giving them some value by trimming them up according to our rules and methods.¹²⁷

We can see from this that it is the “complete picture” of the style that Liszt thought as important, one had to preserve its characteristics intact—an attitude that was to influence his own *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. This passage offers an interesting comparison to Friedheim’s article discussed in the introduction, in which he reprimanded the ubiquitous concert pianist for similar injustices with regard to Liszt’s compositions—treating the characteristic style like parody or pretence.¹²⁸

b. Hungarian-Gypsy Music: Basis in Improvisation

The crux of Liszt’s argument concerning the significance of Gypsy music, was that because it was based almost entirely in improvisation upon existing melodies and themes, its value came from the way it was performed—it was a performance art, rather than a compositional one. “Bohemian art more than any other belongs to the domain of improvisation, without which it does not exist,” writes Liszt.¹²⁹ In a modern context, one could compare this position to the relative “value” of a jazz standard to the total *performance* of a great jazz musician. To Liszt’s mind, this reliance on performance *did not* imply a lesser amount of creativity or artistic ability—a point which he had to defend.¹³⁰ Of Bihari, for instance:

Bihari cannot now be judged as a composer; as, during his life, it was his improvisations which acquired the value and reputation of composition. He had neither the time nor the patience to reflect and note down the inspirations of his fantasy. To preserve them at all it would have been necessary to adopt some kind of shorthand without his knowledge; for how many spirits lose all grace of spontaneity at the bare thought of reducing the fruit of their impulse to writing like a lawyer’s brief?¹³¹

Its characteristic florid ornamentation, for instance, could not be taken away without altering the very substance of the thing—and as this ornamentation was to arise *only* in performance (rather than as a pre-planned composition in whatever sense), the performance as a total should be considered as artistic production in its own right. Liszt sees this totality, with all of the elements that go together to create it, as something almost sacred; for it is this that *defines* the art.¹³² Liszt observed the decline that seemed to come from the decadent circumstances of the middle nineteenth century, as proof of the fact that his imaginary ancient tradition (i.e. the music as epic poetry, called the *epopoeia*) must have grown up in isolation, which accounted for much of its intrinsic value as an art-form:

¹²⁷ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 364.

¹²⁸ See Friedheim, “Reflections and Remarks,” 7.

¹²⁹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 319.

¹³⁰ This was a position for which Liszt had to resort to making strong arguments, which will be covered in detail in Part 2 of this dissertation.

¹³¹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 348.

¹³² See also Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 329-333.

During the ages which transpired whilst their *epopoeia* was gradually forming by the agglomeration of a multitude of fragments, the Bohemians had the happy good-fortune to be completely ignorant of the fact that any music but their own was in existence. There was, therefore, no temptation to mix or unite, to approach or avoid sounds on any other principles than their own. This must be held to have been a lucky chance; for they would certainly have experienced an immense difficulty in preserving their verve intact and their passion without alloy if they had all the time been face to face with another form of the beautiful.¹³³

A living oral tradition meant that there was no need for notation or composition. The essential themes would have been easily memorable, and the rest left to the art of the improvising rhapsode-musician:

It follows that they had no acquaintance with the theoretical department of their art; nor did they experience the want of any notation; having no taste for anything but either playing from memory or permitting the imagination to trot with a loose rein over the endless savannahs of improvisation. That, however, does not prevent them from adhering to the first thought adopted by them as basis.

They bestride their theme as they would a courser, to ride over hill and valley; they recline with it as in a gilded barque which is to carry them over waves of harmony; or they fly away upon it, as if it were a balloon to carry them to regions of imagination.

It is therefore to be noted that their tendency to yield to the inspiration of the moment does not cause them to forget the formula or the melody with which they started. Far from that; for those ideas are absolutely essential to them. They contain the typical expression of the sentiment which carries them forward, and are conceived in such a way as to allow room for individual liberty of interpretation and fanciful expansion. Thus they can always be relied upon to observe scrupulously the authentic version as well as the mode of delivery, and to preserve with care the purity of the text in the midst of the most superabundant ornamentation—or even the longest digressions.¹³⁴

Liszt recalls that several of the Romani musicians he had known “would have shuddered at the idea of modifying, altering or corrupting” the melodies that they had learnt, received as they were from “masters equally scrupulous”—proof, “if any proof were needed,” he writes, “that they have always been mindful of the sense of their music and made it a point of honour to retain its integrity.”¹³⁵ Liszt compares this directly to the rhapsode-like “story-tellers of old Russia” who were “unable to read or write,” but recited ancient poems with “a superstitious respect for every word, syllable or accent—also for each pause, comma and inflexion of voice; the tradition of all of which, having once been received by them, was henceforth zealously guarded.”¹³⁶ Yet the Bohemian musician’s art remains centred upon improvisation over the melodies and motives they treasured—it was thus as much a language as anything else, that “One musician teaches another as mothers do their children, to express themselves in their own language; after which they leave them to speak, out of the abundance of their own heart.”¹³⁷

¹³³ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 322.

¹³⁴ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 322-323.

¹³⁵ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 323.

¹³⁶ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 323.

¹³⁷ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 324.

Liszt notes that some Bohemian musicians had, during the course of the nineteenth century, attempted to notate some of their improvisations, with “the desire of collecting the most beautiful of the melodies which had been traditionally preserved.”¹³⁸ Others had resorted to dictating their ideas to “musical editors” who, according to Liszt, “felt impelled by their scientific training to consider as faults the peculiar intervals, modulations and discords which, though they might happen to disagree with our harmonic system, nevertheless formed precisely the distinctive character of that of the Bohemians.” Liszt notes:

When we examine the dead-letter of these improvisations (which in our country are to be met with at every step, or perhaps we should say at every music-shop) we find many a *Lassan* or *Friska*, originally taken from a piece of Bohemian music, which has not only lost its name, but could never convey to any reader the least idea of the *brio* of execution of the Bohemian virtuosi, the incessant mutation of their rhythms, the burning eloquence of their phrasing, or the expressive accent of their declamation.¹³⁹

Often such publications would preserve just the melody and the rudiments of accompaniment, much like Liszt’s own early *Magyar dalok* of 1840, without a glimmer of how it might be performed by the Bohemian musicians. In his later versions, the *Magyar rapszódia*k of 1846, and the more refined *Hungarian Rhapsodies* of 1853, Liszt clearly realised the error of his earlier effort, and delivered the melodies ornamented in his own inimitable fashion, yet plainly reminiscent of the Bohemian performance style. He might well have been referring to his younger self when he wrote:

Did they not all well know that the value of the melody was little in itself, compared with what it is capable of becoming, as rendered with the accentuation given to it by the virtuoso; who declaims it and sets it off with his own original ornamentation. It may, in fact, be compared to an ingot of gold; which remains in the condition of a mere piece of metal, until the art of the chaser has converted it into a jewel of inestimable price; forming it according to his fancy, colouring it with the various tints of a rich enamel, and setting within it pearls and diamonds. [...] As long as a Bohemian melody has not been thus set off it is like a pretty naked infant, not yet prepared to exercise a real influence upon hearts. In order to dominate them like an absolute sovereign it must be royally draped by declamation; and assume all the jewels showered upon it by the magic wand of the conjurer—the bow of the violinist. For this reason it would be superfluous to regret the absence of Bohemian *composers*; in view of the innumerable company of their virtuosi.¹⁴⁰

Liszt had realised that this performance style *is* the art—it is not merely a decoration placed atop the work of another, but the whole is essentially created afresh, morphed around the pre-determined melodies and ideas, belonging to age-old tradition:

It was Bohemian virtuosi who festooned Bohemian melody with their florid ornaments seeming to throw upon each, as it were, the prism of a rainbow or the scintillation of a multi-coloured sash. It was Bohemian virtuosi who brought out the various rhythms, whether sharply-cut or softly cadenced; whether lightly detached or gracefully linked together; which

¹³⁸ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 325.

¹³⁹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 325.

¹⁴⁰ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 260-261.

give to their music its profile and its attitude. They alone have interpreted this art, as alone could artists who understand its language; including all its secret murmurings and asides.¹⁴¹

c. Hungarian-Gypsy Music: Instruments

This florid ornamental style is the natural product of the peculiar formation of the Gypsy band. The main instrument has always been the violin, the lead player usually a virtuoso of phenomenal technical skill and improvisational ability, such as Liszt described of Bihari above. He describes the violinist in relation to the band:

So far as orchestration is concerned, there is, in Bohemian music, as complete an absence of it as there is of thorough-bass. The first violin is everything in the Gipsy band; where the others only serve to darken his shadows and lighten his flight of gaiety. The violin by itself, of course, whatever might be the genius or technique of the artist, would never be able to produce the same effect as the combination; but none of the other musicians has any special part assigned to him. [...] All that these musicians aspire to do is support the motive, increase the sonority, accentuate the rhythm and seize with alacrity the thought of the virtuose soloist when he returns from his sidereal excursions.¹⁴²

Gathered around the leading violinist, the rest of the instruments are “associated quite *ad libitum*”:

The whole group of instruments forming a Bohemian orchestra generally serves only to double the harmony, mark the rhythm, and form the accompaniment. They consist, for the most part, of flutes, clarinets, a little brass, a violoncello, a double-bass, and as many second violins as can be obtained. The first violin and cimbalom attract the principal interest; filling the great rôle of the musical drama about to be played; absolutely after the manner of the *prima uomo* and *prima donna* of the old Italian opera. They may be called the *soloists* of the band...¹⁴³

The first violin’s role is to be ornate and eloquent; executing the melody in a highly decorative style, while the rest of the band serves “to shadow or colour the efflorescence of his improvisation,” as he continues:

The habit of ornamentation [...] elevates the first violin to the position of principal personage in the orchestra. [...] It is the first violin who decides the degree of movement; and, as soon as he has embarked upon any special feature, the orchestra waits in silence for the emotion to subside. The extent of its expression depends entirely upon the inspiration of the moment; which also decides the precise form to be given to the cloud of notes. These roll forth in figure after figure, remindful of the entangled tendrils, the tear drops from which in autumn are as the notes of melody falling one by one.¹⁴⁴

While the band generally only serves as accompaniment, the players are still liable to become involved in the emotional intensity of the music being unfolded:

The orchestra is so electrified by the fire, or, it may be, by the melancholy, of its chief, that, when the latter has come to the end of his explorations—when, having allowed himself sufficiently long to float in air, he gives sign of being about to fall, they never fail to share his

¹⁴¹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 270.

¹⁴² Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 303.

¹⁴³ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 313.

¹⁴⁴ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 303.

emotion. When, therefore, the moment arrives for receiving him into their arms they do not allow him to reach the earth, but sustain him, aid him to rebound, and so identify themselves with his passion and frenzy that in Hungary there is no listener who is not equally moved, the entire audience being subject to one wave of excitement.¹⁴⁵

Liszt writes that the second in command is the Cimbalom, Hungary's national instrument, a form of dulcimer played with two light hammers.¹⁴⁶ Liszt describes the Cimbalom as "a sort of square tablet furnished with strings ranged similarly to those of square pianos and struck by sticks; causing them to give out a sound, hotly coloured and highly resounding, even when the result of but little force."¹⁴⁷ The smaller cimbaloms that were common at the time of Liszt's writing in 1859, could be suspended "by a strap round the neck, which enables them to play without resting it upon a table."¹⁴⁸ Later Cimbaloms would become much larger, with a construction much resembling the late-century square piano, complete with iron frame and damper pedal mechanism—the system for which was patented in 1874.¹⁴⁹ Up until then, the player would have to pause and drape their arms over the strings if they wished to dampen the sound—thus the instrument was (and still is) distinctive for the glow of overtones it produces, and its use of resonance to create marvellous washes of sound:

Like the violin, the cimbalom lends itself to the ornamentations of little notes, trills and runs at every organ-point. The first violin (whose technique sometimes differs materially from ours) unfolds all the wonders suggested by his imagination, whilst the cimbalom supplies the rhythm, indicates the acceleration or slackening of time, as also the degree of movement. He manipulates with singular agility and as if it were a sleight-of-hand performance the little wooden hammers with which he travels over the strings, and which in this primitive piano perform the duty we assign to the ivory keys.¹⁵⁰

Being second in command, the cimbalom plays a part in leading the ensemble, and will occasionally emerge with ornamental passages and cadenzas of its own:

The cimbalom shares with the first violin the right to develop certain passages and to prolong certain variations indefinitely according to the good pleasure of the moment. He is necessarily one of those who conduct the musical poem; having either created it at leisure, or being about to improvise it at the moment; and he imposes upon the duty of surrounding him, sustaining him, even guessing him in order to sing the same funeral hymn or give himself up to the same mad freak of joy.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁵ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 303.

¹⁴⁶ A few great examples of the fantastic range of colours available to the cimbalom are on record: Patricia Kopatchinskaja, *Rhapsodia* (2009: Deutschlandradio Kammermusiksaal). Also János Hosszú & Ensemble, *Cymbalom!* (Request Records 10089, 1973). For more on the Cimbalom and a detailed examination of Liszt's representations of it, see Hyun Joo Kim, "Interpretive Fidelity to Gypsy Creativity: Liszt's Representations of Hungarian-Gypsy Cimbalom Playing", *Journal of the American Liszt Society* 67 (2016). Also Hyun Joo Kim, "The Dynamics of Fidelity and Creativity: Liszt's Reworkings of Orchestral and Gypsy-Band Music." (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2015), 401-452.

¹⁴⁷ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 312.

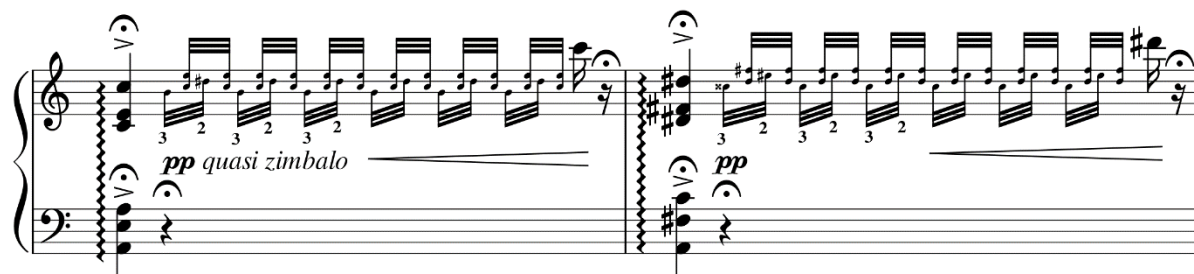
¹⁴⁸ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 312.

¹⁴⁹ Béla Bartók, *Essays*, 287. See also Kim, "Interpretive Fidelity," 33.

¹⁵⁰ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 312-313.

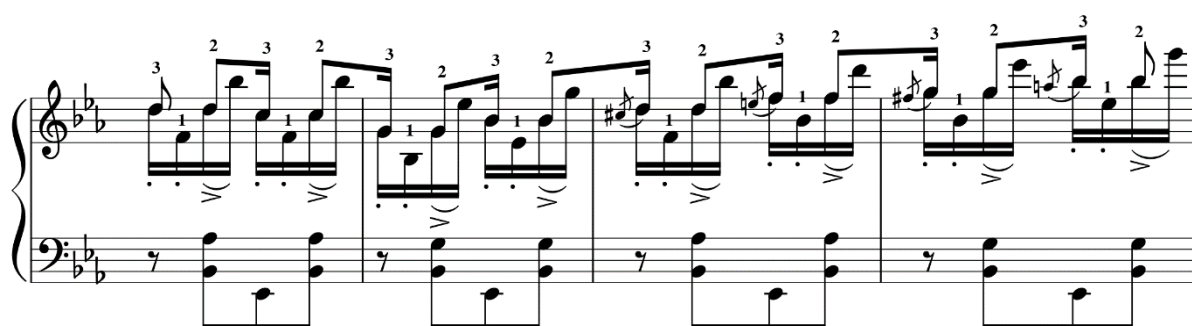
¹⁵¹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 313.

Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies* famously contain a number of passages that imitate the cimbalom, occasionally marked *quasi zimbalo*, such as the example here from Rhapsody No.10 (Example.1). This marking probably implies the use of pedal effects, noting that the cimbalom did not have its damper mechanism until a number of years after Liszt's pieces were written.¹⁵²



Example 1: Excerpt from Rhapsody No.10, mm. 82-83

Among Liszt's collection we also frequently see textures that resemble virtuosic violin figuration, such as this example from Rhapsody No.9, a clear evocation of rapid string-crossing (Example 2). If the cimbalom textures carry implications of pedal effects, then the violin textures might well carry implications of a certain rhythmic freedom, considering what Liszt writes about the violinist's soloistic role, playing according to his wits and fancy.



Example 2: Excerpt from Rhapsody No.9, "Pesther Carneval", mm.145-148

d. Style: Scales, Harmony and Modulations

There are two elements relating to pitch that Liszt sees as characteristic of Hungarian-Gypsy music: namely, the use of a peculiar scale with various augmented intervals, sometimes called the "Gypsy scale;" and the use of various liberal harmonic effects, including the "habit of passing suddenly to a remote key" without preparation, and "the use of semitones and quarter-tones," which "generally strike us as wrong notes."¹⁵³ One might gather from Liszt's writings that, while appearing to be in

¹⁵² The first editions of the Rhapsodies (see Note 23 above) do not explicitly notate pedal marks in any of the sections marked *quasi zimbalo* (Nos.10, 11, 14), but many later editors have added them in, including the editors of the *Neue Liszt Ausgabe*.

¹⁵³ See Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 297. While one cannot "hear" them, one might point to Liszt's use of enharmonic keys as hinting at the use of subtle quarter-tones, such as in Rhapsody No.6, that moves from D-flat major to C-

flagrant disregard for conventional systems of harmony, these elements should rather be seen as a natural, intrinsic part of *this* musical language, which simply operates on its own set of principles. Liszt writes that the “civilised musician” is usually quick to explain away the “strangeness,” but he can usually “find no other way of settling the matter in his own mind than that of concluding the dissonances to be accidental; that they are mere inexactitudes; or, to be quite frank, faults of execution.”¹⁵⁴ As Liszt would have it, it would be quite an error to make such an assumption, for if these are taken to be the very elements that define it, and it is these elements also that make it challenging to our ears, this cannot be said to be a fault of the music:

It is certain that their scale contains intervals altogether different from ours, that their unexpected modulations are not due to ignorance of any better method, and that their taste for ornamentation is not a mere chance fancy. All those features form essential ingredients of a style which exists for itself; which is *what* it is because of its ingrained nature to be *as* it is. That which surprises and shocks us so painfully is all intentional; because these intervals and diminutions into scarcely perceptible tints lend all the richness of colouring and all the variety of expression to the episodes [...]. The propensity to divide the scale into unequal proportions; as well as that in favour of the use of quarter and semi-quarter tones, are proofs of a perception extremely delicate; but such features are nuances of a more or less painful character to our less acute sense, notwithstanding their being moderated through various causes.¹⁵⁵

It would appear that these devices are employed in a kind of ornamental fashion to colour the improvisations, fundamentally serving a decorative purpose.¹⁵⁶ This much one can also glean from Liszt’s *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. For instance, as he describes it, the “Gypsy scale” lends the music its strange and exotic quality:

Bohemian music with few exceptions adopts, for its minor scale, the augmented fourth, diminished sixth and augmented seventh. By the augmentation of the fourth, especially, the harmony acquires a strangely dazzling character—a brilliancy resulting only in obscurity. Every musician recognises at once how decidedly and to what an extent this practically constant triple modification of the intervals caused by the harmony of Gipsy music to differ from that in use by us.¹⁵⁷

Yet, given the importance Liszt seems to give to the scale in these paragraphs, one might be surprised to find that, casually leafing through the collection of *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, few of the melodies or themes seem to make a feature of the augmented intervals. On closer inspection, however, one finds that the “Gypsy scale” is used frequently, in just about every number of the collection—but in a subtle and ornamental fashion. That is to say, Liszt rarely gives the augmented intervals an accented

sharp major; and the “unmeasured” prelude to Rhapsody No.8, that enharmonically shifts from F-sharp minor to B-flat minor.

¹⁵⁴ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 299.

¹⁵⁵ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 287.

¹⁵⁶ See Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 303: “It is very difficult to separate Bohemian motives in which the intervals unused by us produce such a powerful effect from the two elements which, so to speak, are of the same birth: [free ornamentation and free rhythm].” One might compare these elements broadly to the use of extended chords in jazz—similarly fundamental to the character of the style, but ultimately a decorative element.

¹⁵⁷ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 301.

prominence; but in many passages of ornamental character, augmentations are used to add a delicate spice. The following examples (Example 3 and 4), from Rhapsodies Nos.3 and 6, make use of the scale in such a manner, lending an unusual colouring without self-conscious exaggeration. Rhapsody No.13 (Example 5), on the other hand, offers an example of how the augmented intervals can be made a feature of the work.



Example 3: Excerpt from Rhapsody No.3, mm.17-18



Example 4: Excerpt from Rhapsody No.6, mm.111-118.



Example 5: Excerpt from *Rhapsody No.13*, mm.1-7.

One might be tempted to praise Liszt's temperance in his use of augmented intervals—it is a device that might easily be overused to the point of caricature. A similar remark might be made about his use of the kind of wild, unexpected modulations (without intermediate preparations between remote keys) that he writes about with such excitement, as betraying the mark of true Bohemian music:

Intermediate modulations seem to them to be so optional that we may describe their appearance as excessively rare; and [we] regard their introduction, in the few instances in which they are to be met, rather as a modern corruption than as appertaining to the original type. Chords of transition, so essential with us, are, with very few exceptions, completely left out in the bold attack of one key after another which occurs in all genuine Bohemian music.¹⁵⁸

Like his use of the “Gypsy scale,” Liszt does not make a show of unusual modulations in the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, at least in the way that might have been expected. One might again cite *Rhapsody No.13* as providing a noteworthy example (Example 6), when, after a cadence in E major, the theme (see Example 5) returns in the surprising key of B-flat major, still rooted to its original key of A minor by a cadence; before using an enharmonic to give the impression of a modulation to F-sharp major, before drifting off towards A major a few moments later.

¹⁵⁸ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 298.

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Example 6: Excerpt from Rhapsody No.13, mm.37-45.

Rhapsody No.11 might offer another example of wild key schemes, beginning as it does in A minor and ending up in F-sharp major by the finale. However, while it seems shocking on paper, to a listener the modulations are not made explicit or sudden, rather the piece moves gradually between various intermediary keys, and there are no bold leaps comparable to Example 6 from Rhapsody No.13. One might have expected bolder uses of the effect, reading for example the following paragraph, in which Liszt finds some amusement in the idea that the use of sudden modulations in Hungarian-Gypsy music acts as “a sort of *salto mortale* which, when heard by our ordinary musicians for the first time, turns them completely aghast.” He writes:

They are not only always thunder-struck and embarrassed but very often even intimidated; as may be observed by their generally having, for a time, nothing to say. At last, when they do speak, the temptation is ever to cry: “This would be fine if it were only correct,” quite oblivious of the fact that in certain cases the beautiful is only beautiful at the price of freeing itself from certain prohibitory decrees; which, not having existed always and everywhere, cannot without exaggeration, lay claim to universal obedience.¹⁵⁹

In fact, one may find many more daring modulations in other works by Liszt. Alas, one might be tempted to praise the composer for not abusing these ideas in his *Hungarian Rhapsodies*—far from embarrassing or ghastly, Liszt adopts these exotic intervals and harmonic devices with measure and

¹⁵⁹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 298-299.

finesse. Liszt's language in the following paragraph seems to offer a fitting description of his approach—the devices are used as a means of expression:

The entire possessions of the Bohemian consisted of a language and a scale—these together forming their palladium. It was in this way that they also regarded them; and the only religiously sincere respect they have ever shown has been for the preservation of these treasures, neither in their speech nor their music ever having been submitted to the operation of any of our precepts; especially not to any rule affecting the relations of musical sounds. [...] It is a mystic song—a language which, though sublimated, is clear to the initiated; being that which they employ according to the exigencies of what they have to say; and in which they have no intention of allowing outside considerations of any kind to influence their manner of speaking.

The Bohemians do not recognise in music [...] the force of any principle, law, rule or discipline whatever. Everything is good, and everything permitted, provided that it pleases them—provided that their inner feeling coincides, or even goes beyond; for, in common with the innate desire of every artist, they have a continual striving to express more. Therefore, they do not hesitate before any stroke, however bold, provided it corresponds with the hardy instincts of their heart—provided they are able to realise in it the reproduction of their being.¹⁶⁰

e. **Style: Rhythm and Ornamentation**

Liszt writes that “It is very difficult to separate Bohemian motives in which the intervals unused by us produce such a powerful effect from the two elements which, so to speak, are of the same birth.”

These are:

- 1) “Their extremely flexible rhythms.”
- 2) “The ornamentation of the improviser.”¹⁶¹

Both of these aspects, much like the peculiar scales and modulations, arise naturally as part of the improvised free expression that defines this music. Without the ornately decorative plumage, it would not be the same bird:

It never happens that a Bohemian melody is delivered by one of their virtuosi in its original simplicity; in a style, as we may describe it, of sober literalism; for the reason that, besides the passages which he inserts between each of the notes and at every organ-point, the endings of the period under his bow naturally assume a character derived from *appoggiature*, *mordente* or *grupetti* [...]. But, even after one of these melodies has been stripped of the sparkling effect due to the diamond-gear [...], it is always to see that it emanates from a profound feeling; being saturated with passion and bearing the unfailing imprint of nobleness in its

¹⁶⁰ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 297-8. Though this passage seems to imply “language” to mean ordinary speech, this is inconsistent with the arguments that Liszt makes regarding the Bohemian's love of music—being that the people lacked their own language for poetry and so turned to music instead (discussed below). If he rather meant here a *musical* language, one must presume that he refers to the various motifs and tropes that occur frequently in Gypsy music, such as the cadence patterns that make a definite feature in the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. These devices have been codified by Jonathan Bellman in *The Style Hongrois*.

¹⁶¹ See Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 303.

expression of suffering and dignity—a nobleness which it never loses, even in the wildest outburst of excitement.¹⁶²

The rhythm is as free as the ornamentation, the two elements appearing to live side-by-side, each as the natural result of the other, bringing to life the most varied poetical impressions:

That which, more than anything else, tends to increase the admiration in which Gipsy music is held is the liberty and richness of its rhythms; distinguished both by a multiplicity and a flexibility nowhere else to be met with in the same degree. Their variety is really infinite: they double and divide, then they double again and become superposed. Then, they break and join, giving out on each occasion of change a quantity of shades of expression, from the most ferocious violence to the most despondent *morbidezza* or genial *smorzando*; from the most warlike *alla marcia* to the lightest dance measure; from the triumphant pageant to the funeral procession; or from the mad round-dances of the phantom willis [sic] on the Bohemian meadows at moonlight to the bacchanalian songs which encroach upon the morrow.¹⁶³

The possibilities of expression afforded by this rhythmic variety seem endless, like Liszt's capacity for metaphor:

The succession, combination and enlacement of these rhythms render them marvellously apt to awaken poetical images in the mind—characteristic as they are either of fire, flexibility, dash, undulation, verve or fantastic caprice. Either irritating like an amorous provocation; mournful like the telling of some painful secret; mad as the gallop of a race horse, or finicking and frisky like the hops of a little bird in the sunshine. Sometimes distracted and breathless like a wounded stag trying to escape the pack; sometimes deeply grumbling, as a wild boar driven back into the thicket; it may be, affectionate as a lover; or proud as a conqueror advancing to give fresh battle; busily gossiping like a pack of young girls, or all spurred and panting as for a cavalry assault upon a redoubt.¹⁶⁴

But what it is this rhythm like in reality? This question lends itself to yet more poetical description, that continues for page after page. We quote much of this section, as it would appear to bear some importance to performing the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*:

Nevertheless, these rhythms assume a gait which is not only free in itself but freely treated. There are no trepidations to be met with, no hesitations similar to those of the waltz or the mazurka. On the other hand, their diversity is infinite. Their rule is to have no rule. Flexible as the branches of the weeping willow bending under the sway of the evening breeze, they pass from duple to triple movement according to the requirement of impression, tumultuous or resigned, as the case may be; according to whether they are painting the rebound of passions and their turbulent reawakening, or the yielding lassitude of the soul which allows them to slumber, covering itself with poppies and water-lilies.

These rhythms, by their variety, sometimes recall the leaps and inflexions of the asclepiads; which, proceeding by unequal steps, often imitate the slow reputation of the serpent, or, by throwing themselves forward in a bold curve, quickly reaching some far-off support. The way is bestrewn as it were with drops of blood to which certain notes in the Bohemian rhythms bear a metaphorical resemblance.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 304.

¹⁶³ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 304.

¹⁶⁴ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 304.

¹⁶⁵ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 304.

The asclepiad, referenced here, is explained in a footnote by Liszt as a poetic metre used in the first Ode of Horace, characterised by a “leaping and skipping” movement.¹⁶⁶ Liszt makes use of a similar pattern in the Rhapsody No.6, in the section in C-sharp major, marked *Presto* (Example 7):



Example 7: Excerpt from Rhapsody No.6, mm. 41-48

Liszt continues, describing how it is the sheer variety that separates the rhythm of Hungarian-Gypsy music, from that of all others:

It would scarcely be possible to urge sufficiently the rare beauties which result from the richness of rhythms, and therefore the importance to be assigned to it in the proper appreciation of this music. We know of no other direction in which European music is able to turn profitably for the promotion of its rhythmic invention and for increased aptitude in its application. The abundance of rhythmic variety upon which to draw is incalculable. Each new fragment seems as if it contained another form within itself; either allowing of some ingenious and unexpected application, or suggesting some sudden development of its most picturesque effect, hitherto absolutely unknown. This feature is rendered all the more remarkable by the fact that in the folk-music of other nations it is uniformity of rhythm which constitutes the originality and defines the sentiment to be expressed.¹⁶⁷

As Liszt puts it, “The multiform luxuriance of the rhythm finds its pendant in the exuberance of beautifications with which the artist-virtuoso or improvising poet ornaments and brightens up his theme.”¹⁶⁸ In other words, the freedom of rhythm is matched only by the freedom of ornamentation. Liszt compares these decorations to the elaborate rococo embellishments of eighteenth century jewellery, or the fresco paintings that ordain the Vatican—these greatly enhance the value of the objects in question.¹⁶⁹ This is true too of the improvised embellishments that characterise Gypsy music:

The masters of Bohemian art, eminently inspired, will not submit to any laws of reflection or restraint; proceeding spontaneously and until now inseparably from improvisation. They give free course to every caprice and turn of fancy; gallop across country whilst indulging in endless transformations of the same material; or they saunter along a meandering path, giving

¹⁶⁶ The rhythm of the asclepiad as given by Liszt is as follows (dash=long/accented syllable, u=short/unaccented syllable): | - - | - u u - | - u u - | u - |. The Rhapsody No.6 uses a different barring and misses the first group, but otherwise bears resemblance.

¹⁶⁷ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 305-306.

¹⁶⁸ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 306.

¹⁶⁹ See Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 306.

to the zig-zags an unexpected movement and allowing their imagination freely to suggest the many forms of embellishment known collectively as arabesque.¹⁷⁰

In the following passage, Liszt seems to anticipate the fragmentary, paratactic nature of some of his own *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, that present a series of bold contrasted ideas, flickering back and forth between themes and moods—such as Rhapsody No.12 (Example 8), in which a kind of assertive despair alternates with music of nostalgia and warmth:

Here, as there, a small space is sufficient for much in the way of design, the final meaning of which only emerges from the many and diverse mutual relationships between fragments. Sometimes the sonorities are graduated, sometimes they appear to be opposed; whilst sometimes they are distributed almost equally upon the several notes of a theme, like drops of dew shining from a flower-bed till the sun, peeping curiously above the horizon, throws a ray into each transparent pearl. But, whatever may be the images suggested by such an assembly of musical tone, the ensemble is so decidedly fascinating that we could stay dreaming under its influence for hours.¹⁷¹



Example 8: Excerpt from Rhapsody No.12, mm. 17-24

The following description reminds one of a section from Rhapsody No.14 (Examples 9 and 10), which Liszt seems to unfold this plan exactly:¹⁷²

The true Bohemian masters are those who, having syncopated their theme so as to give it a light swinging effect, restore it to the normal measure as if preparing to lead a dance; after which it appears, as it were, casting sparks in every direction by clusters of small shakes. The effect of this upon the theme is sometimes grave and uncouth, but sometimes sweet and charming. As a treatment it is somewhat similar to accentuated gesture; thus instantly causing the melody to suggest a sprightly hobgoblin, tickling the ear with his little pointed notes.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 306-307.

¹⁷¹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 306.

¹⁷² Credit to Jonathan Bellman for highlighting this similarity. See Bellman, *Style Hongrois*, 95.

¹⁷³ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 306

The light swinging effect (Example 9) straightens into a normal measure, as it were, casting sparks in every direction with clusters of little trills (Example 10):

150 **Allegretto a la Zingarese**



Example 9: Excerpt from Rhapsody No. 14, mm. 121-123



Example 10: Excerpt from Rhapsody No. 14, mm. 161

Yet even amidst a cascade of figuration, or the web-like embroidery of extended *fioratura*, the melody will not be lost:

The master most to be admired is he who enriches his theme with such a profusion of traits (appoggiaturas, tremolos, scales, arpeggios and diatonic or chromatic passages) that under this luxuriant embroidery the primitive thought appears no more prominently than the fabric of his garment appears upon his sleeve, peeping through the lacework which artistically hides it by its closeness of design. But, like the fabric, the melody dare not disappear; for it is the stuff or material which sustains the form.¹⁷⁴

We hear such entangling effects in Rhapsodies Nos. 4 and 13, the simple melody dressed up in luxuriously rich ornamentation, seemingly disguised, yet smiling happily beneath the veil. In the example, from Rhapsody No. 4 (Example 11), the melody is plain in the left hand, the right hand as if inspired by darting of a little bird, competing with the wind, as in this description:

These inventions of the moment are nearly always of a most surprising description. They unfold themselves during the most unexpected organ-points and pauses, upsetting all our cherished habits; but not for that reason producing any less powerful effect. Having absolutely no motivation, rule or preparation of any kind, they remind us occasionally of the beating of the little wings of the humming-bird; which flies this way and that—its only object being to try its young strength and revel for a while in life and movement.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 306-307.

¹⁷⁵ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 307.



Example 11: Excerpt from *Rhapsody No. 4*, mm. 20-24

Liszt's inimitable descriptions continue to conclusion, that could be compared with various moments among the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. The reader should note Liszt's penchant for poetical descriptions, quoted at length in these chapters, for it provides a very important glimpse into how this famous composer thought about music:

Then, there are the silences. These happen quite suddenly; and, taking us unawares, are forcibly remindful of the pauses which separate the capricious bounds of fawn and deer when startled. Through the brushwood a noise, too slight for our perception, is heard by them. It gives them a sudden fright, causing their every sense to stand upon the alert; upon which they immediately spring forward with the swiftness of an arrow.

This flowery ornamentation disports itself as promiscuously as if it were a flight of butterflies; sometimes lively and joyous, rapid and rebounding like a dancer who rhythmically outlines a melody while seeming scarcely to touch the ground; yet sometimes slow and monotonous as if depressed. The bunches of notes fall in abundance as if running over the brim of a horn of plenty. At each organ-point they are like myriads of sparkling atoms, as if an odorous rain had converted itself into a vaporous drapery by which we had become enveloped; or like the snowy foam of a wave which rises like the amorous water-nymph.

Yes! it is all that. But it is also the rustle of dead leaves trodden under foot in the cemetery by an All-Souls'-Day procession; the crackling of devouring fire as it consumes a roof of thatch [...]. In short, everything that imagination can picture can be called up at the artist's will. It may be lugubrious or charming, grandiose or delicious; that depends upon whether the master makes his appeal to the laughing or weeping faculties of his listener, whether he wishes to darken his soul by enveloping it in sombre shrouds through which terrifying visions are to be discerned, or whether he chooses to inundate it with light and

cradle it in azure bands fringed with transparent droplets; for the soul is capable of being transported into an atmosphere of sensations nearly approaching a state of rapture—sensations which inject into the veins some unknown beneficial influence, the pulsations of which render the body lighter, communicating to all its articulations an elasticity thought to be the attribute of only demi-gods.¹⁷⁶

f. **Style: Form and Structure**

According to Liszt, “The Bohemian musician sought an artistic form to express his most desolate sadness as well as his most unrestrainable gaiety,” this becoming most plainly reflected in the structure of the standard dance-music format, called by Liszt a “Hongraise.”¹⁷⁷ Liszt was unsure whether the dance-form or the music-form came first, but, regardless, they share the same structural elements—namely its division into two parts: “the first corresponding to the slow dance and the second to the animated dance which follows.”¹⁷⁸ Liszt describes:

Of these two movements the first has now for some time, however, not been danced; and, although its value from the musician’s point of view has been constantly increasing, the dancers have regarded it merely as a sort of intensive introduction. This exordium rarely fails to acquire an importance, if not predominant, at all events more than equal to that of the other movement. This peculiarity is due to the melancholy strain in the poetic genius of the Bohemian, which prevents him from giving way to any burst of humorous fancy until he has first freely and without interruption wept all the tears accumulated, breathed all the sighs withheld, and dreamed his dreams in full.¹⁷⁹

The slow movement, “generally suggestive of a mourning procession,” is called the *Lassan* “from a word signifying the particular kind of slowness more closely indicated by *maestoso*, *pomposo*, or *dolente*.”¹⁸⁰

The innumerable slow movements called *Lassan* which are to be heard in Hungary from one end of the country to the other are also invariably in duple time; either of four, or, as is more frequent, of two beats. The triple measure is completely foreign to the Bohemian genius; just as is also the sentiment which has inspired such forms as those of the polonaise, valse and mazurka; all of them dances in triple time. The *Lassan* is generally in the minor, followed by the *Friska* in the major. It frequently happens that the act of transition is brought about by combining the two rhythms for a short time, which always produces an exciting but solemn effect.¹⁸¹

The term *Friska*, which according to Liszt is “corrupted from *Friznù* or *Frisza*, meaning *allegro*,” refers to the faster section:

...the second section of the Hongraise presents us with a rapid movement, the accelerations of which, both sudden and gradual, lead up to rhythms too furious and excited ever to be applied to any of the dances used in civilised society. About a *Friska* there is something brusque,

¹⁷⁶ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 308-309.

¹⁷⁷ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 313. In later years the term *Csárdás* seems to have become associated with the same form that is described here.

¹⁷⁸ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 313-314.

¹⁷⁹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 314.

¹⁸⁰ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 314.

¹⁸¹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 315.

abrupt, irregular and intermittent; it is interrupted by sudden starts, stops suddenly and then rushes off again with redoubled fury. It is never met with in triple time and its constant retention of the duple 2/4 or C ensures a firmness of accentuation with which it sometimes rises to the terrible.¹⁸²

Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, as is well known, generally follow the same format of proceeding from sombre slow to furious fast, but many of them feature asides or other fragments that prolong one movement or the other, after the fashion described here:

The pieces called "Hongrasies" which have appeared in the condition of consisting of only one movement [...] may nearly always be assumed to be the movement which has survived, notwithstanding the inferiority of the other. It was customary, when a beautiful *adagio* was followed by a second-rate *allegro*, to leave the latter out; and, when the *allegro* was superior, to omit the *andante* in the same way. This became all the more easy as the custom grew of playing several of the *Lassan* movements one after the other in order to prolong the time of remaining under the influence of a sombre sentiment; after which, of course, several of the *Friska* kind were similarly united; the prolongation in this case leading to joy, laughter and animation carried out to the very highest degree.¹⁸³

Liszt gives an impression of the effect caused by the extended *Lassan* when played by the great Bihari:

In the time of Bihari this habit of repetition was quite established; for this great artist, the pride of Bohemian art, was accustomed to keep the ball waiting whilst he gave a sort of sombre and majestic concert, exclusively composed of the most beautiful of these slow movements. These he played with an emotion and grave solemnity that would have seemed to the eyes of a European, entirely out of keeping with the time and place; but, whilst it was proceeding, there was not so much as the *frou-frou* of a silk dress to be heard; and no sword would move as long as it pleased this renowned artist to forbid it. In short, he held his audience so completely under the ban of a silent emotion that, while the *prosopopoeia* lasted, not a soul would move and a pin might have been heard to drop.¹⁸⁴

Linking back to his own ideas, Liszt saw each Hongraise as equivalent to a canto of the great Bohemian national epic (the collective "*epopoeia*" as it is termed by Liszt). As we shall see later, this was exactly the same view-point from which Liszt wanted his readers to consider his *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, each rhapsody like a self-contained canto or episode, quite suited to being performed apart from the cycle.¹⁸⁵ Hence, the following passage proves to be of importance, Liszt begins to tie this form together with the ideas that make up his "Bohemian sentiment," discussed in detail in the next section:

To speak of a "Hongraise" is equivalent to alluding to an ode forming one "canto" of the great Bohemian *epopoeia*. The stanzas are of disjointed character and the colouring has retained a sort of primitive harshness. Contrary impressions succeed one another with an abruptness similar to that of chasm to mountain-top. It could not be otherwise. The poetic fragments of a people entirely given over to sentiments so bitter and interchangeable, cannot rise to the

¹⁸² Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 314-315.

¹⁸³ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 315.

¹⁸⁴ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 315.

¹⁸⁵ See Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 334.

surface of the waves of life without lighting them up by flashes constantly set going by the passion of sensation, the frequent vertigo of mad excitements, and the fantastic series of images due to a chronic somnambulism. They could not possibly produce works of art similar to those which have blossomed under the influence of calmer inspirations.¹⁸⁶

So Liszt's poeticising continues, comparing the contrasting sentiments found among these pieces with often sublime metaphor.¹⁸⁷ In general, it is the contrasts, the "perpetual oppositions" that defines Liszt's interpretation. These ideas, linked here with the idea of the Bohemian national epic, outline an important context for the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*.¹⁸⁸

But, amidst the most demonstrative outburst of mad joy, the listener may expect at any moment to be struck by some sigh, hardly restrained, causing him to realise that in all this an infinite grief is only masked by spasmodic pleasure; that underneath it all there is a moving ground, out of which there may issue from one moment of another some expressions of inconsolable sadness, like subterranean flames escaping through imperceptible cracks in the surface of the earth. [...] Who is there able to measure the entire grandeur of sufferings which disdains recourse to ordinary lamentations, are superior to all outward complaint, and allow no trace to appear to other eyes—except under disguises hiding the scars which permanently remain?¹⁸⁹

IV. Expression

a. Defining Liszt's "Bohemian Sentiment"

Liszt had definite views about music. In essence, Liszt thought of music as representative of feelings, in the same way that a painting represents nature. This will be explored in detail in Part 2 of the dissertation—but such a view is a predicate to the present chapter. Here we will attempt to define what has been termed the Bohemian sentiment, which is to be understood as the collection of feelings that Liszt saw as being represented by this music, as much the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, as Hungarian-Gypsy music itself.

We have already seen examples of Liszt's use of poetic metaphor to describe his music impressions—he really did seem to enjoy relating music to these images and feelings. The "Bohemian sentiment" should be seen as an expanded, and more-or-less definite version of such a poetic metaphor, upon which "Bohemian music" generally has its basis. The following two sections should

¹⁸⁶ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 315-316.

¹⁸⁷ "All their works, therefore, resemble one another by the vigour of their impulse; but they all differ in point of subject, because they all depict their own momentary state of soul, which cannot be either the same as that which precedes, or as that which follows. Some are filled with the graceful joyousness of a roundelay out of which one expects to see some Galatea escape; whilst some are martial, being resplendent with fanfares and full of bravery—sometimes a little swaggering. In some, a dull depression extends—like a deafening and stifling all within reach, and hiding its works of destruction under an impenetrable veil; in others, there is an expression of joy so overflowing that it escapes at every crevice—like an effervescent wine from the goblet; echoes of an extravagant jubilation and laughter to excess—such as we might imagine by the inhabitants of the doomed world when contemplating the pristine marvels of antediluvian nature in their first splendours." Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 315-316.

¹⁸⁸ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 317.

¹⁸⁹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 317-318.

be read from such a point of view: here Liszt defines the emotional basis upon which the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* stand. While seemingly out of place in a dissertation on music, these ideas are invaluable for understanding, in the broadest sense, Liszt's intention as to the meaning of these compositions.

Liszt defines the Bohemian sentiment rather upon psychological and philosophical lines, as he considered that the kind of extreme emotions depicted by the Bohemian musician must be the result of the musician expressing their own personal joys and sufferings:

When the style [...] is not the immediate expression of the artist's soul it never can bear any special imprint. But it is admitted that the Bohemian music has a style with so remarkable a special imprint that it is nowhere else to be met with. Its expression of Bohemian sentiment is too manifest and its adaptation to the Bohemian type too close for it to be anything else than a pure Bohemian art. Moreover, it claims this character alike by its origin and by the renown which it exclusively owes to Bohemian virtuosity.¹⁹⁰

It is from this passage that we take the term Bohemian sentiment, using it as an umbrella under which to discuss the three elements that Liszt described at length in the first few chapters of his book. These are: a noble kind of pride (Liszt calls "poetic egoism"), an insatiable love for nature, and a strong feeling for liberty (in the sense of absolute freedom) that binds these together. The broad extremes of contrasting emotions, touched on in the preceding section, *proceed from* these three tenets. Yet the Bohemian sentiment as kind of an overall feeling, seems best related by the Italian term that Liszt attached to two of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, Nos.4 and 11: "altieramente," translating roughly as lofty, noble or high-spirited.

b. The Love of Nature and the Proud Primordial Egoism

Liszt defines the Bohemian sentiment as centred upon a special love of Nature. This is pursued with such dedication that the Bohemian will go so far as to reject the comforts of towns and cities, in order to live in nature; to sleep "under the canopy of far-off skies" and be "awakened by the rays of the rising sun." Liszt paints a seductive picture of Nature, as the Bohemian might see it, describing the morning dew that "falls upon the sleeper's eyelids like little fiery tongues," and the slow languor that results from having "idled the long day through, lying at length amongst the high growth of fields where the scythe has never been."¹⁹¹

To have, time and time again, studied the irregular melodies of the hurricane, richly orchestrated as they are by the fir-trees with their thousand needle-points and by the reeds with their myriad of pipes. [...] To have learned to recognise each tree by the aroma of its sap, to know something about the mysterious language of the birds, and to understand alike the gay finch and the chattering grasshopper. [...] To have often gone astraddle at night-fall over the open country when the setting sun gives the atmosphere such a glow as to make it seem like going through a damp fire, because it warms the eyes whilst it cools the body, and to have done this until a pale obscurity follows in which the stars of heaven appear to frolic

¹⁹⁰ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 271.

¹⁹¹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 80.

and blink their eyes, becoming every moment more in number, more smiling and loving, more coquettish and teasing, than before.¹⁹²

Only “when one has done each and all of these things, in other words, when one has led the Bohemian life,” only then “does it become clear how impossible it is for the Bohemian to exist deprived of the various exhilarations with which such life is replete.”¹⁹³ This exhilarating life is so intoxicating that “the pleasures invented by man can never prove other than sickly and insipid to the man accustomed to drink from the cup which Nature offers him.”¹⁹⁴

But what enables the Bohemian to pursue this love of his? Many a person may have, as it were, a passive love of Nature, but few would be willing to throw it all in and permanently *elope* with Nature like Liszt’s Bohemian. It is, however, important at the outset to avoid “the error of accepting Bohemian sentiment as a negation,” or in other words, to avoid making the mistake of “supposing it merely to indicate rebellion—a denial of certain benefits by sheer obstinacy in refusing them: Nothing could be more false or more unlikely.”¹⁹⁵ “The real type of Bohemian, incarnating Bohemian sentiment, which is expressed in Bohemian art,” writes Liszt, “is essentially affirmative and eminently positive.”¹⁹⁶

Without this positive element, “the group would easily and long ago have melted away, little by little,” as the Bohemians, through their wanderings, came into contact with more comfortable options for living out their days.¹⁹⁷ “Gradually they would have quitted their tents in order to accept the beliefs and laws, the houses and securities, which they all offer in the first place against the terrors and misdeeds of Dame Nature:”

But all that is precisely what the Bohemian will not have at any price. By refusing it he does not mean to deny the soft well-being of the societies. He is not like the blind who will not see; the idiot who will not understand; nor is he too insensible to be able to feel the nature of the offer which is made to him.¹⁹⁸

If this love of nature is the positive element, what is it that gives him the courage to reject the “soft well-being” of societies, in order to pursue this other end? According to Liszt, it is the quality of what he calls “poetic Egoism,” a kind of deep self-respect (self-esteem) of the most noble kind. This is not to be confused with the prosaic *egotism*, that dry and irritating self-interestedness that Liszt calls “nothing but the selfish preference accorded to one’s own person.”¹⁹⁹

¹⁹² Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 80-81.

¹⁹³ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 81.

¹⁹⁴ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 82.

¹⁹⁵ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 221.

¹⁹⁶ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 221.

¹⁹⁷ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 222.

¹⁹⁸ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 222.

¹⁹⁹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 72. It is difficult to draw out Liszt’s specific influences here. The distinction between the two concepts can perhaps be traced through Rousseau and Hobbes (as *amour de soi* and *amour-propre*), those terms became something of a “meme” in the nineteenth century, Liszt himself uses these terms for

Egoism, as the sentiment of self, is not so sterile [as egotism]; and even abounds in fruitful principles. Whatever may be the sphere in which it displays its action, it is the source, more or less direct and more or less perceived and avowed, which inspires man with the courage of his convictions; even that of heroism.²⁰⁰

This means that, without Egoism, or, without respecting one's self and one's own opinions, if one were faced with a choice between differing viewpoints, one would lack the courage to trust one's own judgment, and hence must either proceed blindly (at risk of peril) or be stuck at an impasse. It is Egoism that allows personal growth in whatever direction:

The activity of genius and even that of goodness would not exist but for the esteem (either tacit or expressed) which one has of one's self. Is it not that esteem [of the self,] which engenders and promotes the desire of developing our faculties, to whatever order they may belong, to their utmost limit, and sometimes beyond—of using them [our faculties], in short, as means of action and enjoyment?²⁰¹

The prosaic egotism, on the other hand, implies that one *only* respects one's own opinions for no other reason than that they are one's own; thus if one were faced with two choices, and both options differed from one's own view point, one would never be able to proceed. Hence personal growth in this sense would be difficult if not impossible.²⁰²

This propensity for engendering strong personal growth is both the pro and the con of Egoism. Rightly tempted, Egoism can be a noble quality leading to Heroism and other shining ideals:

From this proud primordial egoism all the personal value of man is derived, according to the twofold acceptance of the term [Man, in a biblical sense]; for he was created for happiness, and suffering is not the final end. When, therefore, he desires to be happy, he is simply acting in accordance with his nature; for he is destined to be happy for eternity, however little he may believe or hope in it.²⁰³

This is of course to place Egoism within a Christian framework; that is, within an ethical system that values the good of others as much as the self. One can all too easily pursue one's own eternal

instance in his letters to Marie d'Agoult. Liszt may be rather reading Egotism as Christianity's sinful pride, and Egoism in the traditional philosophical sense of ethical self-interest. The terms themselves cause more issues, as while some dictionaries from the period (French and English alike) list both terms, the definitions are not always given in the same way. For instance, the *Dictionnaire universel de la langue française* of 1835 (Charles Nodier, Paris: Belin-Mandar, 1835) defines Egoism as habit of talking about one's self, whereas Egotism is said to be "a most unusual term", whereas by 1858, the *Dictionnaire général français-anglais* (Alexander Spiers, Paris: Ve. Baudry, 1858) gives Egotism the former definition, and Egoism as a philosophical term. The same distinction is made in the *Royal Dictionary English and French* of 1854 (J. Tibbins, London: Firmin-Didot and Company, 1854), positing that Egotism was a generic French term for selfishness. I hazard that this is the distinction Liszt is drawing: defining Egotism as a general term for selfishness, in order to draw clear distinction from the philosophical term Egoism that he wishes to discuss. He may well have come across Egoism in conversations with Wagner (see the letter on Schopenhauer), or possibly in Max Stirner, a precursor to Nietzsche whose *The Ego and Its Own* (*Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* published in Leipzig, 1844) was apparently known to Hans von Bülow (see James Gibbons Huneker, "Ideas of Max Stirner", *New York Times* Saturday April 20, 1907). What a strange coincidence to find the writings of Huneker turning up here!

²⁰⁰ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 73.

²⁰¹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 73.

²⁰² See Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 75-76.

²⁰³ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 74.

happiness at the mass expense of others. Thus, if not bounded by an ethic that would prevent it, Egoism can easily lead to arrogance and “the energy of evil-doing,” which would be sought with as much perseverance as good actions might have been pursued.²⁰⁴ One should note that the Egoism that furthers *only* itself at the cost of all others is really egotism in careful disguise. Here lies the difference. Egoism is a love of self—egotism is when that love becomes all-consuming.

So, for Egoism *not* to tend towards egotism, it must have some other love, placed above the self in order of importance and priority. And, as Liszt has been loudly proclaiming, the Bohemian has no shortage of love beyond himself: it is the love for Nature that gives his entire life meaning, and gives his Egoism its necessary positive direction:

The Bohemians know how to love. But, if asked what they love, each one would reply differently. There is one love however which is everything to all of them—the love, profound, sincere and insatiable, of Nature. [...] The true Bohemian character could not be more removed than it is from that of the nihilist. On the contrary, his is the type of a distracted lover; who adores, and who knows the impossibility of mastering the object of his inextinguishable flame. Yet he can never cease to be enraptured by it; and to be its slave, even at the risk of being one day its victim.²⁰⁵

Thus Liszt asserts that the Bohemian sentiment is perched on the branch of *Poetic* Egoism. It is the Bohemian’s strong self-respect and pride that allows him to pursue his love at all costs: Nature is the love of his life. And it is this Egoism, inspired by Nature, that is the source of the Bohemian’s art:

If this poetic egoism, that is to say, egoism without cloak or disguise, without attenuation or compromise—egoism, frank and absolute, is the unique motive power of the Bohemian’s life, at all events we must allow that he has carried it back to its purest source in making it unfold to art its inspirations. The pride of egoism breathes in those inspirations; but they express consciousness possessed by man in his own intrinsic value, in his own right to his own individuality, and to be by himself and for himself; his estimation of the value of his will, as the emanation of his own soul, his effective superiority over all creation.²⁰⁶

To summarise: The art of the Bohemian is the result of their Egoism (self-esteem), that exists happily because it is dedicated to their love of Nature. He wants to do what he wants, respects that fact, and his own opinions, tastes and feelings; this allows him to create an art that is individual and expresses genuine sentiment that he feels he has the right to express. It is this poetical sense of pride that underpins the noble side of this music:

It makes man feel that he is, first of all, master of himself; by right of birth. That he is also possessor of Nature, her chief, her king; but her lover more than all. And that he is her enthusiastic and whole-hearted lover, who knows that only by loving her can she be ever thoroughly understood. Bohemian music is, as it were, penetrated through and through by that

²⁰⁴ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 73.

²⁰⁵ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 220-221.

²⁰⁶ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 76.

constant and superb affirmation which constitutes its sympathetic element; and to which may be traced the origin of more than one of our own most beautiful impulses.²⁰⁷

c. Joy and Suffering

However, the extreme vicissitudes of “natural” living can reduce sensitivity to the effect of the subtle emotions and feelings. As “the extreme becomes his normal element,” so it happens that “he finds no pleasure in interior movements which fall short of their maximum intensity.”²⁰⁸ As the Bohemian becomes accustomed to extremes, the moderate loses its effect entirely—and thus if Dullness beckons, or any suitable stimulus fails to appear, Impatience will begin to rear its unsightly head, in the form of yearning but indistinct aspirations:

His desire is for enjoyment of his passions; entirely complete, always and every time. To calm, to moderate, to mitigate, or to make them wait; to soften, bend, combat or conquer them, are to him unknown efforts; for his travelling existence gives him an excitability which, by making change his constant pleasure, leaves him little time for the brooding of any desire. He is always aspiring; but the aspirations are as indefinite as hopes must necessarily be which have no object but sensation.²⁰⁹

The Bohemian’s emotions, as his music, are accordingly more extreme than might be otherwise—both in joy and suffering, there is sublime intensity to match the mood-swings of Nature herself. Of course, it is from Nature that the Bohemian receives his joy.

He finds joy in life when, at ease, he sees the rising sun cast its glow over the whole of Nature; and when, on perceiving the young willow trees covered with a frost causing them to resemble the enormous specimens of the Indian adjutant-bird, he shakes them in sport restoring them to their native ugliness. He will take pleasure, at one time, in seeing the cow or goat apathetically happy in a rich pasturage; at another, take ironic delight in spying the tortoise or in teasing the squirrel.²¹⁰

But bubbling away beneath this joyful cloud, is the noxious brew of something dark and insidious.²¹¹ A stinging Ennui—the sudden and desperate longing for some other, golden pasture—is apparently a common trait among the proudly independent characters like the Bohemian:

In all energetic natures [...], dilemmas of the description here alluded are bound to produce an effect; particularly when liable to return to the mind like the tick-tack of some clockwork in the brain. Passionate uneasiness and depression, feverish negation and affirmation, and constantly recurring difficulties of every kind, throw over all a lugubrious light. Like festival torches which have suddenly to be used for funeral purposes, their light is acclaimed all the while joy continues to sparkle up and laughter flows on abundantly; while excitement buoys

²⁰⁷ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 76.

²⁰⁸ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 94.

²⁰⁹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 94.

²¹⁰ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 96.

²¹¹ “One can easily imagine a Bohemian, after playing about like a fawn on the meadow of his domain—a domain which he holds possession by the simple fact of enjoying it—peeping through the foliage of the trees at the site of an existence altogether different from his own. When tired of enjoying the languor of his reveries and somnolence of his excesses one can imagine him suddenly awakened from his mute ecstasy; and, turning away from the scenes which have just enchanted him, to look in the direction of that other life so gentle, so full of peaceful security and refinements so seductive.” Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 97.

up the senses in a whirl of dance, or while bacchanalian songs obscure the vision. But, scarcely have lassitude and exhaustion enabled the mind to regain its own; scarcely is the voice of excitement silent—scarcely has the melancholy glance caught sight of the funeral torches at their task, then sickly phantoms rise before the eyes and the song which has begun in such joy becomes sad with a sadness unto death.²¹²

Once begotten by these thoughts, the Bohemian can all too easily tread into the still darker realisation of the inescapable futility of human experience—that there is no greener pasture; as in that profound nihilism, when one asks: “Is that all there is?”:

The implacable pride of an egoism which is unlimited because it possesses no knowledge of itself, united to a mad and unrestrained liberty, is, when reduced to its own isolated resources, very soon brought to realise its impotence—by contact with the precarious conditions of nature and human existence. At the cold hours of hunger, infirmity, ennui or lassitude, pride recoils and liberty assumes a morose immobility. The feelings of the soul at such times are like the great shadows thrown on ripe harvest fields by passing clouds; and, if an effort is made to collect them, there would certainly (though perhaps unconsciously) arise that great spectre of Pain which haunts the waking hours of every human being.²¹³

According to Liszt, this “spectre of Pain” is a commonality between all human beings. Since everyone knows it, Pain is “the one condition of the soul which has always imposed respect, arrested every sarcasm, and silenced all the outrage of a sacrilegious division.”²¹⁴ This brings one of the most distinctive elements expressed by Bohemian music, demanding the attention and sympathy of all listeners:

As soon as Pain makes her appearance in art (whether furtive or solemn, simple and insinuating, or sudden and strenuous), her influence upon the heart changes character. She now becomes more calm and imposing, by investing her approach with trepidation, imagination and an unction quite irresistible. She is now delivered from the tinsel by which she was so often disfigured; and, shows herself as she is, calm or vehement, in a state of exasperation or passivity, but inevitably possessed of the communicative quality.²¹⁵

If one were to live by pursuing the thrill and excitement of Nature, with its constantly rapid shifts and sublime contrasts, one might find any more moderate modes of expression tired and wearisome. If one were daily witness to the perfectly calm plains that erupt, suddenly and violently into unrelenting tempests, only to subside bashfully, as if taunted by the hand of God; one would scarce be bemused by the effect of any painting or drama, or other human attempts at art:

When the imagination has once arrived at the point just described, and the intelligence is disengaged from all sense of symmetry, the senses fail to appreciate the more intimate relations and closer harmony of social life; on account of being constantly troubled by violent contrasts. Ignorant of the way in which impressions combine in order to double their intensity, those who have, on the contrary, always wildly dispersed them cannot suddenly

²¹² Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 98.

²¹³ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 98-99.

²¹⁴ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 99.

²¹⁵ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 102-103.

apply themselves to follow the hidden thought of works of art; which design to speak only *to the spirit by the spirit*.²¹⁶

To the Bohemian, who has witnessed the immediate forms of expressions offered by nature, it is hence that his taste for the subtle in art comes to diminish, just “as the material enjoyments of luxury and elegance are irksome and unwelcome to him.” But, like Nature, “Music alone awakens emotion by sensation, without requiring the intervention of any idea.” Thus Music becomes the Bohemian’s preferred form of Art.²¹⁷ Music, like Nature herself, expresses grand, potent sentiments *directly*, without needing recourse to metaphors and similes: “Music, again, was the only art the exercise of which coincided with his way of feeling.”²¹⁸ Nature and Art refer both to sentiments “which always *transport* the soul above the lowest regions to which it might descend—sentiments which take it *out of itself* and elevate it [...] to the highest regions to which it is capable of attaining.”²¹⁹ Thus the Bohemian, who “draws inspiration from the violent excitements of Nature” has “instinctively discovered the secret of how to render in art the mode and intensity of his deepest feelings.”²²⁰ It was in such a line that Liszt connected the Bohemian music with epic poetry, as we shall see in the next chapter. Music becomes something of the language for the Bohemian to communicate his feelings and experiences to others. Liszt goes into more detail, discussing how music can have such an effect, comparing it to the *sigh*:

There is but one kind of movement proceeding directly from one soul to the other, one perfect mutuality of sentiment needing no sacrifice of an entire frankness and no assistance from any cold explanation. That mutual movement is the *sigh*; for, though brute animals may moan, it is man alone who sighs. But even the sigh remains enigmatical in its first and informal expression. It can only become intelligible, narrative—nay, eloquent when it acquires from art a form, and borrows from art a language, that most sublime of all tongues. For, of all the arts, music is the only one capable of distilling, as it were, the emotions which are subjected to its marvellous testing process; and of causing them to pearl forth resonant and bright, to appreciation of mind and heart, in all their original purity cleansed of every repulsive excess.

Of all the languages which it has been given to man to understand and make use of, music is the only one which the Bohemian has loved; and of all the sentiments which the Bohemian has sought to express in it *pain* and *pride* are the most remarkable.²²¹

Pride, understood in Liszt’s sense of poetic Egoism, offsets the element of pain so prevalent in this music—representing the joy of living freely, and giving strength in the face of strife:

This tacit pride is inspired in them by the consciousness of conquering their full liberty from day to day. Though carried to excess, that liberty is necessary; in order to realise the resolve never to be indebted, either for favour received or tax imposed. Its necessity proceeds naturally from an unreasoning love of Nature, and from the frenzy with which the Bohemian pursues the pleasures he has received from her; as well as from the victories constantly gained

²¹⁶ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 90.

²¹⁷ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 90-91.

²¹⁸ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 91.

²¹⁹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 92.

²²⁰ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 92.

²²¹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 107.

over the ever recurring and terrible, but still fascinating, dangers which she, his goddess, raises in his path.²²²

In fulfilment, the Bohemian lives out his days on his own terms, simply *passing by* society, without being stung by its curses, or being drawn to its cold fires; it is thus, with his art, his music-making of pride and pain, reflecting his carefree love of nature and liberty, that the Bohemian sentiment manages to survive, in spite of all:

That which we call “Bohemian sentiment” has accordingly escaped the shocks and disturbances to which an admixture of animosity would have exposed it. The result is that it has retained a character of vague inspiration, proceeding from an ardent love of liberty, entirely free of all cares; either undertaken for itself or thrust upon it by others; and entirely indifferent either to sympathy for itself or vengeance against others. It is an infancy of the soul; convincing nothing durable or pre-arranged, and accepting all the untoward incidents of life on condition of remaining without restraint and without duty.²²³

By way of summary, Liszt reproduces a poem by Nikolaus Lenau (1802-1850). According to Liszt, “when once the power has been acquired of reading Bohemian sentiment in the Bohemian type [...] it would be impossible to express more admirably the dreamy, idle and careless disdain of the Bohemian’s philosophy than Lenau has done in his little poem entitled ‘The Three Bohemians.’” As Liszt explains, “Lenau has chosen to sketch the Bohemians at repose; and has done it so well that the group exhibits all the eloquence of a poetic incident snap-shotted; for it involuntarily unveils the dispositions of the soul by the means of attitude and expression alone.”²²⁴

Liszt eventually set this poem to music, as the song *Die Drei Zigeuner*. I refer the reader to the recording of Liszt’s song by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Jörg Demus, in order to simply encapsulate the idea of the Bohemian sentiment.²²⁵ This recording, with exquisite grace and charged passion, seems to capture the effect marvellously—with its alluring bursts of noble Pride that shine forth like hot sunshine.

Die Drei Zigeuner (Nikolaus Lenau)	The Three Bohemians (trans. Edwin Evans)
<i>Drei Zigeuner fand ich einmal Liegen an einer Weide, Als mein Fuhrwerk mit müder Qual Schlich durch die sandige Heide.</i>	<i>Three Gipsies whom I met one day Were in a meadow lying, As my chariot hard to find its way Through the sandy plain was trying.</i>
<i>Hielt der eine für sich allein In den Händen die Fiedel Spielte, umglüht vom Abendschein Sich ein feuriges Liedel</i>	<i>One was a song for himself alone Upon his fiddle bowing, While the evening sun around him shone, And like his song was glowing.</i>

²²² Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 107.

²²³ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 109.

²²⁴ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 223.

²²⁵ Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Jörg Demus (and Daniel Barenboim), *Liszt: Lieder* (2008: Deutsche Grammophon), track 6.

<i>Hielt der Zweite die Pfeif' im Mund, Blickte nach seinem Rauche, Froh, als ob er vom Erdenrund Nichts zum Glücke mehr brauche.</i>	<i>Pipe in mouth the next remained Watching the smoke uprising, Happy as if the earth contained Nothing else worth prizing.</i>
<i>Und der Dritte behaglich schlief, Und sein Cimal am Baum hing, Über die Saiten der Windhauch lief Über sein Herz ein Traum ging.</i>	<i>The third I saw reposeful slept, His lute from tree suspended, And across its strings the breezes kept His dreams with music blended.</i>
<i>An den Kleidern trugen die Drei Löcher und bunte Flicker, Aber sie boten trotzig frei Spott den Erdengeschicken.</i>	<i>Their clothes were old and they had all three Used many a tint to mend them, They scoff'd aloud with joy more free Than the townish world could send them.</i>
<i>Dreifach haben sie mir gezeigt, Wenn das Leben uns nachtet Wie man's verraucht, verschläft und vergeigt Und es dreimal verachtet.</i>	<i>So I found it prov'd in threefold way That when life is once benighted, It is lost in song and smoke and play, And is thereby triply sighted.</i>

V. Composing the Hungarian Rhapsodies

a. The Bohemian National-Epic

Liszt begins his book, in a manner certainly befitting of a Romantic-era prose-poem, with a Byron-esque declamation upon “The Poetry of Mankind” and “The Birth of the Epic,” grasping the great, dusty expanse of human-history in a single muscular fist—seeming to echo the famous preface to Victor Hugo’s *Cromwell*, that thrust open the door to French Romanticism itself.²²⁶ Liszt introduces:

In the infancy of nations, at a time when they have not yet entirely lost the remembrance of their pastoral habit in favour of those of agricultural life interspersed by warlike episodes, their imagination readily feeds (during the leisure provided by a simple but easy existence) on poems; which awaken their taste for heroic emotions. Such poems introduce them to types of striking and marvellous character, which either recount events of national glory or bring to mind catastrophes which have filled them with terror. They thus give body, in a form already provided by art, to the sentiment by which they are themselves moved; and which they love to see reproduced in harmonious strains.²²⁷

As Liszt tells us, these poems “rank among their first necessities,” affording the young nation with “the satisfaction of creating an ideal representing the grandest of that which they deem to be exceedingly beautiful.” Beginning with a recital, “short and simple, but in rhythm; and set off by images and metaphors,” it is soon “taken up by every heart and voice.” Then comes enlargement and embellishment to the first idea, the leading facts associated with others—little by little, the interpretation becomes varied, tradition takes it up, presenting it in different ways, now ennobled, now embroidered upon. This is the birth of the national epic, “the truest expression” of the nation itself, it

²²⁶ First published 1827. See Victor Hugo, *Cromwell* trans. George Burnham Ives (London: Little, Brown & Co., 1909): https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Preface_to_Cromwell

²²⁷ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 3.

eventually becomes crystallised into “a form at once splendid and definitive; and thus created, out of desultory material, a complete unity.”²²⁸ To the Greeks, with their wandering rhapsodists, their “detached songs were united into one homogeneous work by ancient Homer, they became a monument of inimitable perfection”—“The Iliad remains the immortal pantheon of human virtues.”²²⁹ India, Persia, Arabia, Scandinavia—the Christians, the Slavs and the Iberians: “National poetry has everywhere taken the sentiments which hold the popular sympathy; and, having united them under the symbolism of facts, reproduced them in its own form.”²³⁰ As Liszt tells us:

Under the veil of myth, it held out to the people, in a style of language easy to be remembered, a graphic description of the particular passion with which it was most natural for them to identify themselves—generally some object of ambition or pride; of fancy or love; of regret or common suffering; to which, in this way, tradition gradually imparted a plastic figure. In addition to the nourishment thus afforded to the imagination, came the lively attraction of rhythm; which, by fascinating the ear, assisted the memory to retain the text. This natural music of verse was associated either with declamation, modulated and cadenced as a sort of recitative, or with a somewhat nearer approach to our melody; both of these elements of enjoyment becoming so intimately joined that they finally took the same name. Thus it was that the poem came to be divided by the canto or song.²³¹

When, “among the peoples of Europe,” a group “rose up quite suddenly one day, without anyone being able to say exactly where [they] had sprung from,” as Liszt imagines, they descended upon the continent “without evincing the slightest desire of conquest; without even demanding any right of permanent residence.”²³² This was a nation who, too, brought with them a poetry, the “poems and cantos capable of forming, when united, the national *Epopoeia* [epic poetry] of the Bohemians.”²³³

We say “Epopoeia,” although their poems and songs contain no recital, refer to no event and recall no souvenir. What they really do is to repeat sentiments applying to all individuals of the same nation—sentiments which go to form their interior type, the physiognomy of their soul, the expression of their entire sentient being. There is not a fragment, long or short, of this collective work which tells of any personal emotion or of one not common to all—any impression so far subjective as to appear strange to any one of the nation. Each page, or stanza, detached from their poem (which depends upon this unity for its right to such a title) expresses only what everyone feels, sings and poetises; only impressions which are common to all, without one single exception; and the effect of which, in every case, reaches to the very marrow of their bones.²³⁴

This, presumably, was the bold evocation that was once intended to precede Liszt’s *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. The *Epopoeia*, that is, the national epic of the Bohemians, was, according to Liszt, represented by their music. That their epic was told not in words, but in music, was to Liszt made

²²⁸ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 3-4.

²²⁹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 4-5.

²³⁰ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 6.

²³¹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 6-7.

²³² Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 8.

²³³ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 9.

²³⁴ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 9-10.

plain by the nature of the Bohemian sentiment as it was reflected *by* the music—its extreme contrasts of pride and pain could simply find no adequate expression in conventional poetry:

It was inevitable that burning aspirations, passionate dreams, remembrances impossible to disclose and disappointments beyond their power to explain, should appear in flaming vision and traverse the soul of such a people. But, should the day arrive when it might desire to sing to itself its own poetry, it would have to seek for that purpose some other medium than articulate speech.²³⁵

It was *instrumental* music that emerged to fill this need:

It must be observed that, amongst all the arts, instrumental music is precisely that which expresses sentiment without proceeding to any direct application of it. It does not attempt to clothe the feeling it expresses with any allegory of facts, as narrated by the poem; nor does it seek to illustrate it by conflicts, as represented on the theatre stage, by actual persons of the drama and their action. It brightens and charms the passions in their very essence, without endeavouring to represent them by real or imaginary personifications.²³⁶

Once discovered, this music came naturally to the Bohemian poet-musician, wishing to communicate his feeling:

In the very act of passing the bow across the violin-strings a natural inspiration suggested itself; and, without any search for them, there came rhythms, cadences, modulations, melodies and tonal discourses. This was therefore the discreet form of art in which the Bohemian confided [...]. In his music he revealed that golden ray of interior light proper to himself, which otherwise the world would never have known or suspected. He made it dance and glitter in the fascination of a wild harmony, fantastic and full of discords, sudden change and quick transformation, endowed it with its many seductive features.²³⁷

Later in the book, Liszt paints a picture of such an artist at repose, as it were; musical couplets falling from his violin, transfixed and impassioned:

When once he rests his violin upon his chest as if he would outpour into it his heart's feeling and make it the echo of its beatings, he concerns himself so little with the outer world that he finishes by being quite unaware of any audience. We sometimes, for instance, meet players who go on for a long time in a sort of concentrated fury whilst their features remain impassable. But by and by swollen tears will escape from their eyes, descend their cheeks slowly at first, but finally inundate the strings of their instrument. Yet, even this will happen without any never betraying in any other way the profound emotion going on within them. Even after fatigue has put an end to the confidences exchanged with his instrument and after he has placed his bow aside—that sceptre for evoking lugubrious phantoms or pleasures at will—it is with difficulty that he is recalled to reality.²³⁸

²³⁵ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 11.

²³⁶ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 12.

²³⁷ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 13.

²³⁸ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 320. "But, in the case of the Bohemian artist individually, his song reveals that there exists in him a holy flame, the brilliancy of which his necessarily uncommunicative intelligence would never have caused to transpire except through the medium of the tonal language. He is dominated by the simple charm of pouring forth in the form of elegant stanzas the elevated sentiments which he hides even from himself, and are easily concealed beneath his other instincts, half proud and half brutal. When once he takes his instrument in hand he becomes indifferent to everything which from that moment might obstruct or prevent his entire absorption in the art which he creates—that is to say, his absorption in the poetry which he calls into being, unconscious of all else that may be going on around him."

How far is such language from the manner in which the world tends to speak of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*? Yet it was in these thoughts, exactly, that the idea was born for Liszt's version of the Bohemian National Epic:

If the scattered fragments of Bohemian instrumental music were once collected with reference to meaning, and arranged with proper respect to the succession necessary to exhibit their mutual influence, they would, by providing an expression of collective sentiments inherent to an entire people, enable us to determine their national character and culture. When that fact is properly kept in view, it will scarcely seem an exaggeration to give such a collection the name "National Epopoeia."²³⁹

b. *Rhapsodies Hongroises*

For, of course, it was with these ideas in mind that Liszt penned his *Hungarian Rhapsodies*:

Profoundly moved as since childhood we have always been by Bohemian music—being even then already familiar with its incomparable attractions and initiated in the secret of its life-giving sentiment; besides gradually penetrating the sense of its form and the need for protecting its eccentricities in order to preserve its character and personality, it was natural that we should have been very early induced to transfer some of its pieces to the piano. [...] After having submitted a fair number of these pieces to the process of transcription, it began to dawn upon us that we should never finish. [...] The more we advanced the more we had still to do, and finally we could perceive no limit to it at all. A mountain of material was before us; we had to compare, select, eliminate and elucidate. By dint of these occupations we acquired the conviction that in reality these detached pieces were parts of one great whole. Parts disseminated, scattered and broken up; but lending themselves perfectly to construction of one harmonious ensemble. [...]

The task was therefore to collect these into one homogeneous body. Though forming a complete work, it might be divided in such a way as to allow each "canto" to be self-sufficient, as well as forming part of the grand total. It might be made susceptible to being separated from the rest; enjoyed apart and quite independently of the rest; whilst, all the while, remaining one with the rest by identity of style, analogy of inspiration, and unity of form. [...] We believe that, thus consolidated, it results in [a work] fairly corresponding to what we have ventured to consider a Bohemian Epic.²⁴⁰

In such a context, the meaning of the title "Hungarian Rhapsodies" become clear, insofar as one defines *Rhapsody* as "an epic poem of a suitable length for recitation at one time:"²⁴¹

By the word "Rhapsody" the intention has been to designate the fantastically *epic* element which we deem this music to contain. Each one of these productions has always seemed to us

²³⁹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 14.

²⁴⁰ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 333-34.

²⁴¹ "Rhapsody," Dictionary.com, <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/rhapsody>. Compare with the first definition here, which tends to be used in musical discourse and appears in most music dictionaries: "an instrumental composition irregular in form and suggestive of improvisation." While this is perhaps a more etymologically correct definition of the term, and indeed describes most such-named compositions, it seems to miss the epic and poetic elements that were clearly very important to Liszt.

to form part of a poetical cycle, remarkable by the unity of its inspiration, eminently national.²⁴²

Liszt observed that among the episodes of this great compendium, the various pieces may fall into a few broad poetic genres, which could perhaps be identified among the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*:

From this new point of view we had no trouble in perceiving that the poetry which abounds in Bohemian music may easily be marked off into separate items, corresponding to the: Ode, Dithyramb, Elegy, Ballade, Idyll, Distich . . . Martial, Funereal, Bacchanalian.²⁴³

Apart from attempting to reproduce the kaleidoscopic spectrum of sentiments that can be realised with this musical-poetic language, Liszt was more broadly concerned with preserving the various elements and characteristics that *define* the musical language itself.

If we desire to preserve this music called Hungarian in all its integrity, so as to be able to transmit it in a genuine condition to our descendants, we must not interfere with its atmosphere [...]. We must not attempt to deprive it of its three principal elements:

Its intervals (with all their incoherencies).

Its rhythms (with their many vacillations).

Its florid character (to whatever extent it may develop).

It is these three elements combined which carry the melody upon their back. Seated there, like a siren drawn along by three dolphins, coursers of the sea, the melody acquires an aspect altogether different from when it is perched upon a plinth which has not been made for it, and on which it cannot even hold itself comfortably upright.²⁴⁴

Liszt held that “to preserve for it out of these three elements only this one or that, would be about equivalent to the mistake of putting the façade of a Renaissance palace before a Byzantine monument; or of placing a Greek colonnade in front of the temple of an Indian god.”²⁴⁵ One should take note of this attitude and the use of architectural comparisons, for Liszt used this elsewhere, in other writings that will be discussed in Part 2:

It is no more possible to take away the augmented fourth and the diminished seventh of the minor scale in Bohemian music without obliterating its supreme character, without mutilating it in the same sense as the amputation of a limb mutilates the body, then to imagine a Gothic edifice after removing its pointed arches, of a Moorish building without the arch in crescent

²⁴² Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 337. Regarding the specific connotations of the term “epic” for Liszt, one might refer to Hegel’s lectures on aesthetics, from which Liszt quotes a considerable portion in his book. See Liszt, 15. The relevant section can be found in Volume II of G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 1040-1100. Liszt also discusses the reasoning behind them being “Hungarian” rather than “Bohemian” Rhapsodies: “The qualification “Hungarian” which we have applied to these Rhapsodies is due to our feeling that it would not have been just to separate in the future what has never been separated in the past. It was the Magyars who adopted the Bohemians as national musicians; it was they who identified themselves as much with their proudly fierce enthusiasms as with the poignant sorrows they know so well how to express.”

²⁴³ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 333.

²⁴⁴ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 329-330.

²⁴⁵ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 330.

form. There would be scarcely any more common sense in making the Egyptian talus vertical, in flattening the torus of a Roman doorway, or in correcting the upturned points of a Chinese roof. If such things were not decried as vandalism, what would become of style in art?²⁴⁶

If one took these defining elements away, the music “would only remain a trunk comparable to a statue which has lost its head; to a stalk without a flower,” Liszt implores: “Bohemian art cannot maintain a place or a name in the coming time except on the condition of remaining as intact as a Roman *cippus*—as a triumphal column—or as a funeral urn which had been curiously worked.”

But, after all, it would be by no means an easy matter to deprive Bohemian art of its unusual intervals, its sudden modulations, its continually changing rhythms, and the florid ornamentation by which those rhythms are overcharged, in the attempt to transport it to the common domain of our everyday music. The greatest difficulty would arise from the importance which it attaches to virtuosity, and the almost total impossibility of finding virtuosi among those we have, sufficiently animated by the Bohemian sentiment.²⁴⁷

“The sonority of our orchestras,” writes Liszt, “would have to be most appreciably differentiated” in order “to reproduce the peculiar character of the Gypsy band.” The many intermediary elements, neutral tints and modes of transition that characterise our orchestras would simply lead to the “effacement of certain crudities inherent the poetry of the Bohemian.” The piano, on the other hand, might not be entirely unsuited to the task of imitating this music:

The regal instrument in Bohemian music is the violin the second of importance the cimbalom. By itself the violin remains poor; and even if we multiplied it twenty times, it would remain insufficient to govern a force of harmony greatly beyond that yielded by the little army of which it is naturally the head—the dictator. The cimbalom is known by its special traits of indiscipline to be totally unfit for the aristocratic society of our orchestras. The piano, on the other hand, which might be used for it (though unable to replace its incisive sonority) possesses certain features which might permit it to simulate the orchestra of the nomads; at all events less unfavourably than any other. It lends itself to the most luxuriant orchestration and is capable of delivering its rhythms simultaneously. It is also able to support the latter with a fair richness of harmony and a sufficiently massive sonority to give shadow where required and ensure the desired contrast between situations of opposite character. It can also in the meantime sing its melody with liberty; the more so as the intervals and other features of Bohemian music lend themselves perfectly to its effects and give not the slightest trouble.²⁴⁸

And thus Liszt’s *Hungarian Rhapsodies* were born, a version of the Bohemian national epic, that “simulates” the Gypsy band with the piano, aiming to recall its essential character and features without distorting it to conventional tastes. In such a form, as we saw previously, Liszt considered it might form a humble contribution to the pantheon of world-literature:

It would certainly be a great presumption on our part if we were to compare this work with that which took place under the order Pisistratus, when inter-calculations had been foisted upon the poetry of Homer by the rhapsodists of his time; thus disfiguring the art work, just as our musicians disfigure the exotic works, fragments of which they reproduce. But are not small things fashioned upon great ones? On a pin—on the *fibula* of a Roman toga, are there

²⁴⁶ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 330-331.

²⁴⁷ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 331.

²⁴⁸ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 332.

not found the same lines—the same acanthine ornamentation which decorates the beautiful frieze in temple or other edifice? If it be admitted that our proceeding is similar, we may safely crave pardon for the ambitious comparison of our undertaking with that of the Greek scholiasts; who undertook amongst innumerable versions, apocryphal and of doubtful value, to choose the most pure and worthy of their author; to weed out grammatical errors, provincialisms or common locutions which had made their appearance, and thus to leave for us the inimitable poems which, for three thousand years, have formed the admiration of the world.

But, when we had finished our work, it was impossible to hide from ourselves that a Bohemian “Epic” would stand very little chance of being understood or appreciated in the world to which we were about to introduce it; the more so as we had endeavoured to impart to our work the consistency indispensable for all appearances in the great arena, but without allowing fulfilment of that condition to involve any loss of the Bohemian character. [...]

But, for ourselves, personally, the more conscientiously we acted towards art in differing from our predecessors the less we looked for any success from the public. It is well, however, to remember of the real artist who, in art as in everyday life, loves the true because it is true and the beautiful because it is beautiful—is he ever sure of having succeeded? He is too full of his sentiment and his ideal to be ever content with the form which he has given it; which never equals that which he has in his dreams.²⁴⁹

And with that, we conclude our thorough examination of Liszt’s book *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie*. It is hopefully clear to the reader that the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* shined atop ideals of the highest order. A book that might have been left behind, scattered in a desk drawer, was brought to light even after his compositions *had* become famous and successful—surely this alone begs us to take *another* look at his music, and to finally reconsider it in the light of his ideals.

Whether or not we deem Liszt to have ultimately been successful in his task, remains a question for another time. Instead, in the second and third parts of this dissertation we will broach the question of what players of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, and particularly public performers, Virtuosi, were meant to do with all of this information. How would one immersed in the Liszt tradition have approached these works?

²⁴⁹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 334-335.

Part 2: Performing in the Liszt Tradition

I. Studying Performance

Before we undertake our study of playing the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* in the Liszt tradition, we must first define what it means to play “in the Liszt tradition” at all. What was the approach to performance that Liszt himself advocated and taught to his many pupils? This will be the subject of Part 2. Once we have established these principles (and indeed, there do seem to be principles to establish), we will examine how they were applied to the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* by the Liszt pupils—those being *actual* members of the “Liszt tradition”—exploring both the sound recordings, and the writings about these works; which will be the subject of Part 3. Both of these aspects (writing and recording) provide important evidence as to the nature of the tradition. The preservation of such a tradition was, it seems, of concern to a number of the pupils of Liszt.

Yet, the true application of these ideas, to one’s own performances, is a question shyly avoided in the coming pages—one must be careful about considering the evidence. Luckily for us, much of the question of “what to do” with this system of ideas will be in some sense addressed by the “Lisztian system” itself. That is, while the Lisztian view of performance rested on accepting the inescapable creativity and individuality involved in interpreting compositions, this seems to have existed *alongside* the notion of a preserved tradition. Understanding these two aspects, and learning to navigate them in the practice room, indeed becomes a central issue. Similarly, in the following pages, by piecing together the various sources, I have attempted to lay out a persuasive argument as to the nature of this that I have humbly termed the “Liszt tradition”—however, I must confess that much of what is discussed seems to *evade* simple expression in plain English, and thus our discussion frequently engages in a philosophical sort of language. In the end, however, I have found that the application of these ideas to be less a philosophical problem than a psychological one: for, as Liszt’s biographer Lina Ramann wrote of one of the central concepts, “To perform according to this principle requires a complete re-birth.”²⁵⁰ Or, as Liszt warns us, in his own inimitable style:

It would even be vain for the archaeologist to try to galvanise into life musical works of a past age; for, when acoustical means and habits have become profoundly modified—when even manners of feeling are not the same, having become more gentle or more imperious, broader or more refined—how can hearts of the present day identify themselves with those of a former generation?²⁵¹

For, much of what is hinted at in the following pages requires, in its application, an alternative way of thinking as well as playing, of listening as well as looking at a score—in short, of understanding music itself.

²⁵⁰ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 4.

²⁵¹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 269.

While in Liszt's day it must have seemed something of a novelty; at the present point in history, the idea of trying to "galvanise into life musical works of a past age" is thoroughly well established. The doctrine of Early Music, and Historical Performance—even played on ancient instruments—is now ubiquitous. But is it all vanity?

Anyone who has spent time pursuing such a quest will likely sympathise with Liszt's point. It does not take long for us to realise that "acoustical means and habits" do indeed become "profoundly modified," in even the space of a few short decades, as easily evidenced by the brief history of sound recording.²⁵² As one patiently learns to hear some species of music from a time and place infinitely remote, slowly and with effort penetrating the incumbent "manners of feeling;" one very soon becomes aware of the challenge of yet relaying these onto the humble 21st century concert-goer. As Richard Taruskin once wrote:

For our intuitions are not the fine, free, feral things we may think they are. They are thoroughly domesticated beasts, trained to run along narrow paths by long years of unconscious conditioning, endowed with vast reserves of cliché, naïve posture, and nonsense. If you are a trained musician, what you will find if you scratch your intuition will be the unexamined mainstream, your most ingrained responses, treacherously masquerading as imagination.²⁵³

What is true here for the trained musician, is much as true for the "trained" listener.

One seems to forget that we, as listeners, attend with each our own prejudices and preferences, indelibly etched by the culture in which we have been brought up. We would like to think that we, as open-minded products of a post-modern society, would be perfectly able to accept and appreciate a concert of ancient music on its own terms, should it be played convincingly and movingly. But, sooner or later, we come to realise the apparent futility of such expectations. Liszt remembered a favourite maxim of Chopin, that very much gets to the heart of the matter: "You will one day be persuaded, as I am," he would say, "that it is hardly possible to talk to anyone about anything."²⁵⁴ That is to say, we all read things in our own special way.

Such pessimism, applied to music, is of course based on a certain position with regard to what music *is*. It would seem to be based upon the premise that music is something that can be "understood"—that it can communicate anything it all. That music was not, as it were, mere ear-tickling. But, while this may seem like a mundane question; in some sense, before one undertakes a study of performance practice, it is a question that must be asked.

²⁵² See for instance Robert Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style: Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance, 1900-1950* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

²⁵³ Richard Taruskin, "The Limits of Authenticity" in *Text and Act* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 78. Originally published in *Early Music* 12 (February, 1984), 10.

²⁵⁴ Liszt, *Life of Chopin*, 137.

a. Performing Music in the Nineteenth Century

We may define Performance Practices as the broad set of techniques (including conventions and cultural knowledge etc.) employed by musicians in the process of performing music.²⁵⁵ If we ponder the limitless subtleties that are evident in any performance of music—such as those that Liszt was attempting to describe in the preceding pages—we would be pondering something of incalculable complexity. But if we then turn our attention to a score, we find a musical notation system with a comparatively limited set of lines and symbols. A few questions might arise immediately: How does one get from *this* to *that*? How does a score become sound?²⁵⁶

It was only with some hesitancy that the so-called “Early Music” approach (the idea of studying historical performance practices as a key to playing older music) came to be applied to nineteenth-century music.²⁵⁷ If we follow carefully some of the cultural analyses that came close behind the Early Music movement itself—such as those of John Butt, Richard Taruskin or Bruce Haynes—it is perhaps unsurprising to note.²⁵⁸ If we take the argument that the Early Music approach was a branch of Modernism, it would almost by definition be polarized against the incorporeal traditions of the Romanticism that came before it, to which Modernism itself was a reaction, as Andrew Snedden has so persuasively argued.²⁵⁹ Thankfully, the tides do seem to be turning.

Early Music studies have traditionally relied on written sources—treatises, tutors, theoretical writings. And this is by necessity—as, for most periods of history, this would be the only option for studying musical performance practices, outside of scores themselves.²⁶⁰ It wasn’t until the 1990s that the most important resource for historical performance practices began to get serious scholarly

²⁵⁵ See Taruskin, “Pastness of the Present and the Presence of the Past” in *Text and Act* (originally in *Authenticity and Early Music*, ed. Nicholas Kenyon Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 91. Taruskin quotes the *New Harvard Dictionary of Music* of 1986.

²⁵⁶ The converse is equally compelling—how does *sound* become a score?

²⁵⁷ Clive Brown’s 1999 monograph remains the most detailed technical manual on playing styles in nineteenth-century music, though it makes scarce reference to Liszt: Clive Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750-1900* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). Important reference works relating to piano performance include Kenneth Hamilton, “The Virtuoso Tradition” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Piano*, ed. David Rowland (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 57-74. Also Robert Philip, “Pianists on Record in the Early Twentieth Century” in *ibid*, 75-95.

²⁵⁸ John Butt, *Playing with History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Bruce Haynes, *The End of Early Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). See also Peter Kivy, *Authenticities: Philosophical Reflections on Musical Performance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

²⁵⁹ See Andrew Snedden, “Vital performance: Culture, worldview, and romanticist performance practice with application in Franz Liszt’s *Consolations* and *Années de Pèlerinage Première Année*” (PhD diss., Edith Cowan University, 2018).

²⁶⁰ Although there were, of course, mechanical reproducing instruments made of music by famous eighteenth-century composers. See Emily Baines, “The Ghost in the Machine: The role of mechanical musical instruments as primary sources for eighteenth-century performance practice in England, and an examination of the style(s) contained therein,” (DMus diss., Guildhall School of Music & Drama, 2017).

attention—that being early sound recordings (and reproducing-piano rolls).²⁶¹ Today, the use of sound recordings in this area of study is established and commonplace.²⁶²

We can perhaps attribute some part of this growth to the widespread availability of early recordings themselves, through the likes of YouTube and Spotify. What was once the domain of ivory-tower collectors or ivy-league university libraries, is now accessible to anybody with the internet. The general consensus, so far, from the literature on early recordings, is that there are many aspects of performance that appear to have been common practice among nineteenth-century musicians, which do not seem to have been expressly written in notation—sometimes these practices are even in flagrant disregard of what the notation appears to say.²⁶³ More than that, the evidence of recordings show that there often exists a considerable gap between the theoretical writing of musicians, and how they actually play themselves.²⁶⁴

While it is very easy to make general statements about early recordings, it turns out to be far more difficult to know how to draw concrete conclusions from them. Some have adopted computerised approaches for graphing tempo modifications and fluctuations, others have developed more subjective systems of annotation, and others still have spent time copying or imitating recordings as exactly as possible with the idea that through “embodiment” of the playing style (as a first step to learning to play in the style), we may learn things that would have otherwise been missed.²⁶⁵

The aim of the present dissertation is to address the question of how a member of the Liszt tradition would approach the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* in performance. To this end, merely copying the performance of one or another of the pupils did not seem satisfactory. For one thing, there are two Liszt-pupil recordings of Rhapsody No.10, which seem entirely contradictory in terms of approach—

²⁶¹ An earlier example of this research in this field is Artis Wodehouse, “Evidence of Nineteenth-Century Piano Performance Practice Found in Recordings of Chopin’s Nocturne, Op.15, No.2, Made By Pianists Born Before 1900” (D.M.A. diss., Stanford University, 1977). The more recent works of importance are Robert Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style: Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance, 1900-1950* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), Robert Philip, *Performing Music in the Age of Recording* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) and Neal Peres Da Costa, *Off the Record: Performing Practices in Romantic Piano Playing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

²⁶² As evidenced by two highly-successful conferences on nineteenth century performance called “Correct but not Beautiful Performance,” run by the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, University of Sydney in 2018 and 2019 as part of Neal Peres Da Costa’s and Clive Brown’s Australian Research Council Discovery Project grant DP170101976.

²⁶³ Robert Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style*, 207-240.

²⁶⁴ See Peres Da Costa, *Off the Record*, 309-310.

²⁶⁵ For more on methods of analysis see Nicholas Cook, “Methods for analysing recordings” in *Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Studies that have advocated an “all-in” copying approach include Emlyn Stam “In Search of a Lost Language: Performing in Early-Recorded Style in Viola and String Quartet Repertoires” (PhD diss., University of Leiden, 2019). Anna Scott, “Romanticizing Brahms: Early Recordings and the Reconstruction of Brahmsian Identity” (PhD diss., University of Leiden, 2014). Sigurd Slåttembrekk and Tony Harrison, *Chasing the Butterfly*, 2008, <http://www.chasingthebutterfly.no>

how should we decide who to follow? For the second thing, to this writer, the idea of merely copying the recorded style of some ancient pianist would be to completely avoid the question of *why* the pianist may have played in the way that they did.²⁶⁶ It is for this reason that the present study will put considerably more emphasis on the written sources. When we come to examine the recordings, it will only be after having attempted to thoroughly explore the “why” question first—in effect, to draw a hypothesis before we “test” it against the recordings, in order to evaluate the strength of the ideas from various view-points. I believe that by such a method we will be able to better understand the Liszt pupil recordings than if we had merely attempted to copy them; and also allow us some solid ground to stand on, if we did attempt to follow their example. Of course, such a task is only made possible because, luckily for us, Liszt and his pupils seem to have been quite rigorous thinkers and passionate people who actively wrote about their ideas and practices—allowing us, with the help of a little logic, to attempt to connect the dots to suggest a picture of how the Liszt tradition might have operated.

In terms of performance practice, a study of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* seems to pose a particularly complex question. We are speaking of how Liszt interpreted, compositionally as well as in performance, the Gypsy music he heard in Hungary, as evidenced by his book. That music surely carried its own performance traditions, which Liszt presumably tried to capture in his compositions with more or less precision, and likely too in his performances.²⁶⁷ Following from the general implications of the book, it would certainly appear that the player of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* should, ideally, be familiar with the “authentic” sound of the Hungarian-Gypsy band.²⁶⁸ While it is illuminating to hear recordings of those players, a more in-depth comparison of these in relation to Liszt, is beyond the scope of the present dissertation, which focuses only on the Liszt tradition of piano-playing.

While, the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* have garnered considerable scholarly attention relating to various aspects of their composition, these writings give little if any attention to questions of

²⁶⁶ Daniel Leech-Wilkinson writes: “The work of CHARM has focused attention on performance style, a phenomenon whose importance rests on two facts in particular. First, anything one might wish to claim that involves the sound of music at any stage in the argument - regardless of whether the argument concerns production or perception - depends on assumptions about how the music is performed, and this is true regardless of whether the performance is imagined or real. Secondly, performance changes: people do not perform scores, nor unwritten ‘standards’, in the same way across the generations. To the (very large) extent that music is perceptible only via performance, therefore, music changes over time. We cannot rely on scores being understood in the same way from generation to generation.” In “Performance style in Elena Gerhardt’s Schubert song recordings,” *Musica Scientia* Vol XIV No. 2, (Fall 2010): 57-84.

²⁶⁷ Liszt also implied that the style of the Bohemian virtuoso is utterly vital to the character of the music: “Moreover, it claims this character alike by its origin and by the renown which it exclusively owes to Bohemian virtuosity.” Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 271.

²⁶⁸ This suggestion is made by Ian Pace in “Performing Liszt in the Style Hongrois,” *Liszt Society Journal* 32 (2007): 67-8. And also by Jonathan Bellman, “Performing Brahms in the Style hongrois,” in *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style*, ed. Michael Musgrave and Bernard D Sherman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 327-348.

performance practice.²⁶⁹ More broadly, Liszt's approach to musical performance has been the subject of numerous studies to date.²⁷⁰ It has been noted, in a number of such studies, that Liszt's teaching was characterised by trying to develop the student's own individuality and personality.²⁷¹ Thus, while some consider it troublesome to distil Liszt's own ideals from those of any single student, as Kenneth Hamilton pointed out in the *Cambridge Companion to Liszt*, when taken as a group the Liszt pupils can offer a valuable primary resource:

Although all Liszt's students had their own individuality, it is impossible to believe that, taken together, they cannot show the stylistic parameters within which his music should be played, and they certainly give us a good idea of how he actually heard it played towards the end of his life.²⁷²

Ian Pace's "Conventions, Genres, Practice in the Performance of Liszt's Piano Music" touches on various issues relating to Lisztian performance practice as a general field of interest, making a few detailed points based on sources such as the *Liszt-Pädagogium*.²⁷³ In the second part of the article, "Performing Liszt in the Style Hongrois," Pace focused on the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*—beginning with a short history of music in Hungary and how Liszt fits into this context; before translating and contextualising the passages relating to the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* found in the *Liszt-Pädagogium* and a small number of other primary sources. Pace makes no mention of the possibility of studying the recordings of Liszt's pupils.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁹ Hyun Joo Kim, "Interpretive Fidelity to Gypsy Creativity: Liszt's Representations of Hungarian-Gypsy Cimbalom Playing," *Journal of the American Liszt Society* 67 (2016): 27. Dana Francey, "A Study of Franz Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies*" (M.A. diss., The University of British Columbia, 1990), 118. Silviye Vidovic, "Transformation of Themes, Controlled Pianistic Textures, and Coloristic Effects in Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies* Nos. 6, 10, and 12" (D.M.A. diss., University of North Texas, 2012), 4-10. Zoltán Gárdonyi, "A Chronicle of Franz Liszt's '*Hungarian Rhapsodies*'," *Liszt Society Journal* 20 (1995): 38-61. Shay Goya, "The *Verbunkos* Idiom in Liszt's Music of the Future," (PhD diss., King's College, London, 2006), and *ibid.*, *Liszt's Transcultural Modernism and The Hungarian-Gypsy Tradition* (University of Rochester Press, 2011). István Szelényi, *Neue Liszt Ausgabe*, Series I, vol. 1: *Ungarische Rhapsodien*, trans. Peter Branscombe, ed. Imre Sulyok et al. (Budapest: Editio Musica, 1970), xiii.

²⁷⁰ An early study was Arne Jo Steinberg, "Franz Liszt's Approach to Piano Playing" (D.M.A. diss., University of Maryland, 1971). Significant contribution has been made by the following works: Kenneth Hamilton, *After the Golden Age: Romantic Pianism and Modern Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). Andrew Snedden, "Vital performance: Culture, worldview, and romanticist performance practice with application in Franz Liszt's *Consolations* and *Années de Pèlerinage Première Année*" (PhD diss., Edith Cowan University, 2018). Gerard Carter, *Rediscovering the Liszt tradition* (Ashfield, NSW.: Wensleydale Press, 2006). Gerard Carter, *Arthur Friedheim's Recently Discovered Roll Recording* (Ashfield, NSW.: Wensleydale Press, 2011). Runolfur Thordarson, "Recordings of Works of Liszt Played by his Pupils – A Discography and Evaluation," *Journal of the American Liszt Society* vol. 47 (Spring 2000): 7-67. Fan Wei-Tsu, "Variant performances of Franz Liszt's piano music in early recordings: A historical perspective on textual alterations" (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1991).

²⁷¹ See Friedheim, *Life and Liszt*, 45-52. See also Alan Walker, *Reflections on Liszt* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2005), 51-59.

²⁷² Kenneth Hamilton, "Performing Liszt's Piano Music," in *The Cambridge Companion to Liszt* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 178. A similar assessment is made in Steinberg, "Franz Liszt's Approach to Piano Playing", 19.

²⁷³ Ian Pace, "Conventions, Genres, Practices in the Performance of Liszt's Piano Music," *Liszt Society Journal* 31 (2006): 70-103. Lina Ramann, *Liszt-Pädagogium* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1986).

²⁷⁴ Ian Pace, "Performing Liszt in the Style Hongrois," *Liszt Society Journal* 32 (2007): 55-90.

In my own Honours dissertation, completed in 2017, I made a short survey Liszt's book and produced a comparative analysis of seven Liszt-pupil recordings of *Hungarian Rhapsody* No.12, with a particular focus on textual alteration and tempo flexibility. The findings showed that these pianists took considerable textual liberties in many regards, and this I attempted to contextualise with comparison to some primary written sources.²⁷⁵ Those findings have been entirely superseded by the present study.

II. Liszt and Performance

a. The Virtuoso and Virtuosity

Let us begin with some definitions. One of the words that is never too far from any discussion of Liszt is the word Virtuoso, and the related concept of Virtuosity. There have even been several full length studies that have proposed to evaluate Liszt's position as the quintessential piano virtuoso, along with the various merits of his "virtuosic" works—but what did Liszt himself mean when he used the term?²⁷⁶

In its common usage, today, Virtuosity seems usually to denote "skill" in some particular domain.²⁷⁷ It would certainly appear to be such a definition that Liszt had in mind when he wrote of the great soprano Pauline Viardot-Garcia in 1859:

As it is with all great performers who are inflamed with the sacred poetic fire, Madame Viardot uses virtuosity only as a means to express the Idea—the Thought and character of a work or role. Virtuosity exists only so that the artist is able to reproduce everything that is expressive in art. For this purpose, it is indispensable, and for this purpose only; I cannot stress this enough. Once you learn this, you will appreciate these types of works, especially when you see them performed by artists who do not use virtuosity as a spectacle, but rather as an expression of Feeling. Virtuosity allows the artist to express the fullness and richness of the [musical] language.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁵ Nicholas Williams, "Performance practice in Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies*: A comparison of the Liszt-Pupil recordings of *Hungarian Rhapsody* No.12" (Hons. diss., Edith Cowan University, 2018). https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses_hons/1510/

²⁷⁶ Notable studies include Dana Gooley, *The Virtuoso Liszt* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Žarko Cvejić, *The Virtuoso as Subject: The Reception of Instrumental Virtuosity, C. 1815-C. 1850* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016). David Larkin, "Dancing to the Devil's Tune: Liszt's *Mephisto Waltz* and the Encounter with Virtuosity" *19th-Century Music*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (Spring 2015): 193-218. Jim Samson, *Virtuosity and the Musical Work* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Presumably the forthcoming *Liszt and Virtuosity*. ed. Robert Doran. (University of Rochester Press), will provide further insight into this area.

²⁷⁷ Most online dictionaries give such a definition, with some slight variation upon "high level of skill" <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/virtuosity>, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/virtuosity>, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/virtuosity>, <https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/virtuosity>, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/virtuosity>.

²⁷⁸ Hall-Swadley trans., *Liszt Collected Writings* vol. 3, 195.

In a similar sense, in his eulogy to Paganini of 1840, Liszt called for the use of Virtuosity “as a means and never the end.”²⁷⁹ In such usage, Virtuosity certainly seems synonymous with skill, particularly technical skill. And one would likely presume therefore, that “Virtuoso” as a term comes *from* Virtuosity, simply denoting one who possess such technical skill. It is one small step from here to “virtuosic display,” and the “fetishization” of difficulty.²⁸⁰

But why, then, did Liszt feel the need to “defend” the concept of Virtuosity in the course of his book, *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie*? What’s so contentious about technical skill? Somewhat glossed over in Part 1, Liszt’s defence of Virtuosity was raised in connection with a defence of the value of Gypsy music—with its basis in improvisation, that to Liszt so plainly proved its reliance upon performance—which thereby defined its position among the various art-forms. It was not a form of composition, but this did not mean it was of lesser value, as some of his contemporaries might apparently have suggested.²⁸¹ It was here that Liszt raised, almost synonymously, the mantle of the Virtuoso:

What is a virtuoso? Is he really no more than an intelligent machine, whose two hands are a couple of levers doing the business of a barrel-organ? Is his task so mechanical as to render it unnecessary for him to think or feel in satisfactorily performing it? Is his duty confined to producing for the ear, as it were, a photograph of notes he is looking at? Alas! We know only too well how many so-called virtuosi there are who are not even able to translate the thought contained in the originals they place upon their desk, or to deliver it integrally without mutilation of the sense. How many amongst them there are whose knowledge of art is confined to the mere trade—how many, indeed, who do not even know the trade!²⁸²

Here, Liszt seems to assert that the Virtuoso should have responsibilities beyond mere technical ability, at least in the limited sense—he would not be a virtuoso who could not “translate the thought” of a work, or “deliver it integrally without mutilation of the sense.” This would appear to be a rather strange assertion if one had the term Virtuoso merely denoted skill... how could the possession of technical skill imply responsibility? Although we do remember that this *was* the crux of Liszt’s eulogy to Paganini, when he hoped that with that greatest of violinists died the technocratic showman among virtuosi: *Génie oblige!*, genius has obligations—responsibility—Liszt famously cried.²⁸³

In his eulogy of 1840, Liszt observed that there were already “Paganinis of the piano, the contrabass and the guitar,” virtuosi who presumably paraded their technical skill like charlatans.²⁸⁴ But by the time he was publishing *Des Bohémiens* in 1859, Liszt was slightly more scathing; making

²⁷⁹ Hall-Swadley trans., *Liszt Collected Writings* vol.2, 292.

²⁸⁰ It would seem to be this, and the notion of Virtuosic display that led to D’Arcy-Wood’s *Virtuosophobia* that apparently caused much trouble for Liszt in his unsuccessful tour of Britain. Gillen D’Arcy Wood, *Romanticism and Music Culture in Britain, 1770–1840: Virtue and Virtuosity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

²⁸¹ See chapter “Hungarian-Gypsy Music: Basis in Improvisation” above.

²⁸² Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 264.

²⁸³ Hall-Swadley trans., *Liszt Collected Writings* vol. 2, 292.

²⁸⁴ Hall-Swadley trans., *Liszt Collected Writings* vol. 2, 290.

a mockery of that other kind of virtuoso “who do not even know the trade.” They were no longer parading *like* charlatans, but they proved that they were, in fact, just charlatans—it was the public who could no longer tell the difference. Less “another kind” of virtuoso, they were really no virtuoso at all... One suspects that despite Liszt’s cries in 1840, the Paganinis of the world had not yet disappeared—he now called it out as a class akin to fraud:

It must be confessed that their number is legion. But usurpation, however victorious in the material sense of possession, has no effect upon the rights of a just owner. Those who make a mere business out of virtuosity are far more plentiful than it would be natural to suspect; especially by a public already depraved by these illegitimate and worse than ignorant would-be sovereigns. As matters stand, the public is no longer in a position to judge; which is no more than might be expected after their taking pleasure in being led astray by the vulgar feats of these mountebanks, with their mechanical wonders upon the violin, piano, guitar and (most horrible of all) the cornet.²⁸⁵

It is plain that it cannot *merely* be the possession of technical skill, then, that defines the Virtuoso for Liszt. So how would he define it? In another passage, Virtuosity is explained more broadly in terms of its Latin roots:²⁸⁶

The words virtuosity and virtue have both their origin in the Latin *vir*; the exercise of one as much as the other being an act of masculine power. Whoever has not the faculty of engendering an ideal type, fruit of the transports of his love for ideal beauty, can neither be virtuose or virtuous. He must know how to impose respect and admiration for the beautiful; and should be the author of good works or actions—whether these belong to art or morality makes no difference; as these are but two aspects of the same thing, two sexes of the ones species.²⁸⁷

Now it appears that Virtuosity was not really about skill *per se*, but rather a more wholesome goodness related to Virtue—one imagines a fine Greek statue, displaying a kind of effortless strength and confidence. While it appears difficult to discern the difference between these two apparently distinct species of Virtuosity, one false and one true, in that they both essentially pertain to excellence (one merely technical, one more wholesome); we might note that it is not in fact “Virtuosity” itself that is at issue here—rather the figure of the Virtuoso. Yes, the Virtuoso possesses Virtuosity, skill, excellence—the question is, what does he do with it?

But we saw it already. In opposition to Paganini, while in sympathy with Viardot-Garcia: Liszt would have us use our Virtuosity as a *means to an end*. Virtuosity is *not* an end in itself: but a means. It is the possession of the technical ability to bring about some definite end, beyond the mere

²⁸⁵ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 263-64.

²⁸⁶ See also La Mara and Bache, *Letters of Franz Liszt* vol.1, 169. To Franz Brendel: “The brothers Wieniawski have been here some days. The violinist is a virtuoso of importance—that is to say, in the ordinary, but not quite correct, sense of the word; for *Virtuoso* comes from *Virtu*, and should neither be falsified nor misapplied.” Also, *Ibid*, 218, to Wilhelm von Lenz: “Don’t let us forget the etymology of the word “Virtuoso,” how it comes from the “Cicerone” in Rome—and let us reascend to Chopin, the enchanting aristocrat, the most refined in his magic.”

²⁸⁷ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 265.

doing. It is knowing what you want to do, and having the skills to bring it about. It is not something that one can display for its own sake, it is the thing that enables creation—Art. This notion cannot be emphasised strongly enough—as we shall come to see, it appears to be *the* crucial, specific, defining idea behind not only Liszt’s Virtuoso, but his very conception of music itself. For, if the end is to make *music*, however we wish to define it, and Virtuosity is the ability to bring about that end—then it follows plainly that the Virtuoso is the competent maker of music. So the question then becomes, of course: What is music?

b. The Virtuoso and the Composer

Without the Virtuoso, that is, without an able-bodied and competent music-maker, writes Liszt, the composer would lead a very sad existence, indeed.²⁸⁸

In short, without the virtuoso, the composer’s existence would be a perpetual hell; his creative genius being unable by itself either to actuate what it conceived or to objectify that by which it is filled. It cannot make its presence evident, or show what animates its pulse, lights up its imagination, occupies its thought, or absorbs its being. Unless all this is displayed before him either by the human voice, by an instrument, or by an orchestra, the musician would be in an eternal state of travail, without hope of deliverance. He would be in the unfortunate position of experiencing a love, while being condemned never to know the object of his inspiration—the most terrible punishment of the damned.²⁸⁹

This view, right away, seems to be predicated on the assumption that musical compositions are artistic *sounds*, which therefore must be *heard* in order to be properly judged and experienced. Obviously, in order to be heard, a notated musical composition must be brought to life through performance—interpretation—the competent professional performer in this sense is called the Virtuoso.

Liszt relates how dramatic and poetic literary works, insofar as they embody more-or-less determinate ideas and concepts, are able to be enjoyed without recourse to a performer (interpreter) such as an actor or orator.²⁹⁰ It is for this reason that poetry can command a “control over the human heart” that is “capable of continuing into far-off ages,” so long as there are people around willing to

²⁸⁸ See also Liszt’s essay on Clara Schumann of 1855. “Virtuosity is not an outgrowth, but a necessary element of music. To those that would like to contest this position, we would remind you of the old fable of Menenius Agrippa about the stomach and the indignant limbs of the body.” In the fable the limbs accuse the stomach of getting a free ride in the body, so they stop providing nutrition to the stomach. Without the stomach, the body soon stops working entirely. Ramann ed., *Liszt Gesammelte Schriften* vol. 4, 192. Translation mine.

²⁸⁹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 269.

²⁹⁰ “If we consider the matter from the point of view of self-sufficiency and independence, the virtuoso has every advantage over the actor; whom the painter, sculptor and mimic can alike afford to ignore and forget. And not only these; for even the dramatic poet is not confined to drama and has the power, whenever he chooses, of quitting his imaginary world and of immortalising himself in that of poetry, unassisted by dramatic action. Moreover, such poetry, even though it may be less luminous and less emotional, is, on the other hand, less ephemeral and less subject to vicissitudes of the moment.” Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 268.

learn the language, the meaning of the words.²⁹¹ But such is not the case with musical works, as he continues:

But the musical composer is far from being in the enjoyment of this position; for he cannot live, and therefore there can be no question of his survival without the help of the executant. Libraries are no resting-places for musical art-works, however well they may serve that purpose for thought, silent but fruitful. The special tabernacle for the musical composer's productions is the human soul, where they exist only while the soul retains their impression; for, as soon as memory allows that impression to escape, they are gone.²⁹²

As quoted already, along these same lines, Liszt warns us about the potential troubles that would come with attempting to revive ancient music:

It would even be vain for the archaeologist to try to galvanise into life musical works of a past age; for, when acoustical means and habits have become profoundly modified—when even manners of feeling are not the same, having become more gentle or more imperious, broader or more refined—how can hearts of the present day identify themselves with those of a former generation?²⁹³

We can observe two things about Liszt's position here. Firstly, as stated, he equates music with sound—it must be *heard* to be experienced properly. Secondly, he equates both of these directly with *feeling*, seeming to refer to sound and feeling interchangeably—as when he says music makes its impression upon the soul in the first (previous) paragraph.²⁹⁴ Of course we saw a similar position argued elsewhere in *Des Bohémiens*, discussed already in Part 1.²⁹⁵ For those familiar with the aesthetical debates that were happening in the music world in this period (the mid-late 1850s), Liszt was quite assuredly placing himself in one camp, rather than the other.²⁹⁶

Liszt's opponents in this sense were arguing that music was a purely abstract, formalistic art—to be pondered rather than heard. In the same way that Liszt writes about poetry, one need only know the language. Performers in this sense are something of a necessary evil, more likely to distract

²⁹¹ “Thus, in time to come, even when its language has long ceased to be that of the people, and is only understood by men of superior refinement and education, they will require no interpreters to enable them to enjoy its genius, verve or sentiment.” Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 269.

²⁹² Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 269.

²⁹³ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 269.

²⁹⁴ “Let it not be forgotten that all art in general as well as each work of art taken separately is but the glorified abode of a sentiment; sometimes embodied in a thought, or sometimes acting without it by the force of its own immediate irradiation. In the latter case it gains its effect more rapidly; by showing itself more intense and always more immanent in those particular features which resemble nothing else; and in those forms the general disposition of which is stronger, and the effect more typical, because comparable to nothing else.” Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 329.

²⁹⁵ See particularly the chapter “The Bohemian National-Epic” above.

²⁹⁶ I refer to the arguments surrounding program music and absolute music, the most important texts being Eduard Hanslick's *On the Musically Beautiful* (Leipzig, 1854) and A. B. Marx's *Nineteenth Century Music and its Culture* (Leipzig, 1855). For a thorough study of this debate in how it particularly relates to instrumental virtuosity, see Žarko Cvejić, *The Virtuoso as Subject: The Reception of Instrumental Virtuosity, C. 1815-C. 1850* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016).

than enlighten, with their mere sensuous ear-tickling. As one English critic actually wrote, in this astonishing criticism of “Liszt’s Pianoforte Recitals” in London, June 1840:

While playing cannot exist without music of some sort, music may be created and remain in being without the help of playing of any kind. The symphonies of Beethoven and Mozart are written creations of genius—which no one can un-write or annihilate;—to those who know music *as a language*, their beauties are as evident on the pages of their scores, as the best effort of the Philharmonic or any other band would make them. To the general public, or what may be termed the mass of *unassisted ear*, performance is requisite for musical impression; but to the artist’s mind, its importance is but equivalent to the service rendered by means of the stage to the plays of Shakespeare; by it, ideal beauties are not *created*, but merely offered to the senses through widened and altered channels. [...] The music of which Plato speaks in the motto of our journal, as “something viewless and incorporeal, an all gracious and a god-like thing,” is not the *sound* of instruments or voices;—it is that system of ideality which, as a pure emanation of mind, is rendered generally demonstrable by the appliances of mechanism, it matters not whether vocal or instrumental.²⁹⁷

It is easy to see the stark contrast of this to Liszt’s view, as it is expressed above. In context, our English critic seems to be expressing his concern for the futility of the whole business of piano-playing itself. He acknowledges Liszt’s miraculous technical facility at the instrument—but “the influence of such exhibitions on musical art is wholly another question.”²⁹⁸ He continues:

To undervalue the industry and talent of such performers of M. Liszt, and to express discontent with that which is, abstractedly, perfect, may seem harsh and hypercritical, but we nevertheless avow our conviction that, on *music* [as defined above, the abstract “ideality”], the cultivation and encouragement of this kind of semi-miraculous handicraft exerts a most baneful effect. To lay our objection at the root of the evil;—it envelopes the essentials of art in a string of false positions; it enslaves the understanding to the ear—it draws attention from the composer to the player—from music to its performance: it places the last first, and the first, last.²⁹⁹

To this, Liszt may have responded, as from his essay on Clara Schumann of 1855:

Music without execution is only an exercise of the mind, which we musicians, through the habit of comparing and guessing the sound from looking at its signs, can judge even before listening, but before it is brought to life by the execution remains meaningless and insignificant. [...] But it would hardly be possible for a musician to continue to write his scores as a so-called “eye music” with the complete waiver of any performance for the mere prestige of the few who know how to appreciate the theoretical or scholastic value of such works.³⁰⁰

Or equally the following, from his *Des Bohémiens* of 1859:

²⁹⁷ Quoted in Cvejić, *The Virtuoso as Subject*, 42-43. Cvejić attributes the article, which was unsigned, to J.W. Davison (1813-1885), the editor of the journal. Originally published as “Liszt’s Pianoforte Recitals”, *The Musical World*, (London: June 11, 1840), 361-364. The reference to Shakespeare lends a distant connection to a famous essay by Charles Lamb, “On the Tragedies of Shakespeare Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation” (1810), <https://www.bartleby.com/27/21.html>

²⁹⁸ [J. W. Davison], “Liszt’s Pianoforte Recitals”, 362.

²⁹⁹ [J. W. Davison], “Liszt’s Pianoforte Recitals”, 362-363.

³⁰⁰ Translation mine. Liszt’s essay on Clara Schumann of 1855: Ramann ed., *Liszt Gesammelte Schriften* vol. 4, 192.

Those who are not composers are totally unable to realise what it is for a musician of genius to have no executants—in other words, not to be able to hear himself. It would be necessary to ask Berlioz or Wagner in their younger years (or equally any other composers before them) what it was to have felt and thought in music and to have no opportunity of judging the work evolved by their sentiment or formulated by their thought.³⁰¹

Liszt's argument is that compositions cannot exist without executants: i.e. music is sound, it lives through performance. This is not to say that music contains no "system of ideality" or that it is not some kind of language—but rather that these ideas relate ultimately to our perception of the *sound* of music, and the conclusions and understandings we draw should be in relation to that. It is the inverse of our English critic's premise; for Liszt, understanding *is* enslaved to the ear, for this is an auditory art-form. When we hear a virtuoso perform a work by Beethoven, we may *think* we are hearing Beethoven—and in some sense we are—but we are really only hearing Beethoven *as performed* by this particular virtuoso. *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*.

c. The Virtuoso: Automaton or Autonomous?

To say as Liszt does that the composer cannot exist without the virtuoso, without executants, seems to imply a relationship of master to slave—architect to brick-layer.³⁰² So what did Liszt mean when he wrote:

The virtuoso is not a mason; who, taking blocks of stone and with square, level and trowel in hand, (a conscientious and exact proceeding), constructs the poem which the architect has already designed upon paper. He is not a passive instrument, reproducing the thoughts and feelings of others, whilst adding nothing of his own. He is not a reader, more or less expert, delivering a text; without marginal notes or glossary, and requiring no interlinear commentary.³⁰³

The question here is whether the Virtuoso's (musical performer's) art-form can be considered autonomous (defined as being it's "own" art-form, with its own rules, conventions, languages etc., i.e. performance as distinguished from composition, not merely subservient to it).³⁰⁴

³⁰¹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 269-270. Compare with Wagner: "I have never met a single German *Kapellmeister* or musical conductor who could really *sing* a melody, let his voice be good or bad; no, music to them is an abstraction, a cross between syntax, arithmetic, and gymnastics; so that one may well conceive its votaries making capital teachers at a conservatoire or musical gymnasium, but never imagine them breathing life and soul into a musical performance." Richard Wagner, *Prose Works* vol.4 trans. William Ashton Ellis (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., 1895), 304.

³⁰² In the line of "Stravinskian" thinking, see Taruskin, *Text and Act*, 129. Executant being the key term in this comparison.

³⁰³ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 265.

³⁰⁴ See Cvejić, *The Virtuoso as Subject*, 50. There seems to be a modern resurgence of this idea, for instance in Lydia Goehr, "The Perfect Performance of Music and the Perfect Musical Performance" *New Formations: Performance Matters* vol. 27 (Winter 1995): 1-22. Also introduction to *Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1: "The appearance of this Companion is a symptom of – and, we hope, will further contribute to – the increasing interest of musicologists in music as performance. To someone outside musicology it might be odd to think of it as anything else, but the traditional focus on scores as the repositories of compositional creativity has led musicologists to think of

As we saw in the introduction, Liszt compares the work of the Virtuoso (the professional performer), to the work of the dramatic artist (the professional actor) who possesses the right of life and death over the work he interprets.³⁰⁵ He becomes—*creates*—the character he portrays. Or, as Liszt would put it:

He [the Dramatic Artist] pours into the dead letter that vivifying spirit which is also that which the Creator poured into the clay of Adam's body—the soul made in his own image and resemblance. Surely, then, what he does is well worthy of being called an art. [...] Is not the life he gives to a work conceived after his own image and resemblance? [...] Could he be said to have “created” a dramatic role unless he had conceived it in a manner so peculiar to himself that, although another might imitate it, he could never appropriate it entirely? [...] How can the origin of his Art in a Muse be doubted when inspiration is so evidently essential to it?³⁰⁶

“That Dramatic Art is an art apart, no person of discretion any longer denies,” writes Liszt.³⁰⁷ The dramatic art borrows from many other arts—from “music by its use of the voice,” from “sculpture by that of gesture and attitude”—but it uses these in its own fashion to create a new art-form.³⁰⁸ And of course, it borrows from the poet, whose words the dramatic artist brings to life. “To judge by the pitch at which the science of aesthetics has arrived nowadays,” asserts Liszt:

there cannot be any thinker or any cultivated mind familiar with the arts, either by long and intimate practice or by theoretical speculation, who would not consider it amount to a frightful barbarism to omit Dramatic Art from the list of those entitled autonomous; which is what would practically happen in denying the comedian or tragedian the privilege of *creation*. This privilege consists in the introduction of graces by the artist quite independently, *as by right of birth and conquest*, concomitantly with his innate gift and his enthusiastic labour.³⁰⁹

Liszt is implying that the dramatic artist does not *merely* interpret or deliver the work, but by bringing it to life, by *creating* it in a new form, he is thus just as much of an artist as the poet, who merely penned the original text. It is this that defines artistic autonomy, according to Liszt. And if this argument can be accepted—one simply has to swap the terms from “dramatic artist” and “poet,” to “virtuoso” and “composer.”³¹⁰

performance as something that happens after the event, so to speak, rather than being a creative practice in its own right.”

³⁰⁵ “The dramatic art possesses no less than the right of life and death over those works which have only to be touched by the breath of his lips to become either eloquent and inflamed, or pale and declining, as his action may dictate. It is he also who possesses the exorbitant power of either allowing the thoughts entrusted him to perish, or of infusing into them a life incomparably more intense than that which he is [to 267] himself animated.” Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 266-267.

³⁰⁶ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 267.

³⁰⁷ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 267.

³⁰⁸ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 267.

³⁰⁹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 266.

³¹⁰ “These reflections amply bear out our statement and show that it is rigorously true to say that both tragedy and comedy are infinitely *less* dependent upon the artists which represent them than music must ever be upon the executants who give it life. The virtuoso engenders the music anew in his turn. He gives it a palpable and perceptible existence, and by that act he established the claim of his art to be ranked with those called autonomous.” Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 265-270.

Now the virtuoso or musical artist does for music exactly what the actor or dramatic artist does for the stage; or, in other words, for the poem, whether tragic or comic, of an author. The virtuoso possesses the same right of life and death over the works the interpretation of which is entrusted to him, with their thoughts, sentiments and emotions; for the expression of all these, being part of interpretation, is for the moment committed to his care. He can endow them with a glorious life, similar to that enjoyed by the heroes in the Elysian fields; or he can allow them, or even cause them, to die a death equally ignominious and ridiculous.³¹¹

It is hence that the Virtuoso's art can be deemed autonomous:

How could it possibly be maintained that the virtuoso is not the representative of an art so evidently his own; because so different from that of the author, who dictated the mere words by writing what the performing artist reproduces? The virtuoso, when addressing himself simply to the sense of hearing of his audience, does for his author precisely the same as the actor who addresses himself to both sight and hearing.³¹²

Taken in context with the kind of invective of the English critic cited above, one understands the need for Liszt to spell out such an argument. Taking it together: Music is sound, and the Virtuoso is an Artist, whose domain is something different to that of the composer. But Music is not *merely* sound, it is sound as representative of *feeling*, that makes an impression upon the soul:

Musical works which have been dictated by inspiration are, fundamentally, only the touching or tragic *scenario* of feeling, which it appertains to the executant by cause, by turns, to disclaim, sing, weep, sigh or adore; as also to pride himself and take pleasure in the accomplishment. The virtuoso is therefore just as much a creator as the writer; for he must virtually possess, in all their brilliancy and flagrant phosphorescence, the written passions to which he has undertaken to give life.

To him it also falls to give life and animation to the inert body of his text, as well as to vary the tints of its glances and turn the whole presentment into that of a goddess of grace. To him, again, it falls to change a mute and motionless form into a living being, a seductive Galatea; and to endow the still lifeless form with an adamantine nature into which he may infuse life at his own given moment. It follows that, of all artists, the virtuoso is not only directly called upon, but perhaps more directly than any other, to reveal the subjugating strength of the gods; and from whom it is expected that the inspiring muse can never have any secrets.³¹³

d. The Impalpable Flame

That dramatic art could be considered an autonomous art-form was predicated on "individuality" being essential to it, as Liszt wrote: "Could he be said to have 'created' a dramatic role unless he had conceived it in a manner so peculiar to himself that, although another might imitate it, he could never appropriate it entirely?"³¹⁴ Each artist is a different person in themselves, and the image that they create on stage is inextricably bound up with their portrayal of a character. But not only this. The

³¹¹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 267.

³¹² Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 267.

³¹³ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 266.

³¹⁴ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 267.

artistic choices—the intimate tone of voice, the delicate hand gesture—are not only peculiar and individual to each artist, but they are the very essence of the art-form. Take away these kinds of choices, and the art-form ceases to be.

If this kind of interpretation is its own creative art form, and individuality is essential to that; it might seem to be implied that *anything* would be possible in the art-form—that there would be no limits on artistic possibility in terms of means and ends, such as “taste” or “respectability.” However, according to Liszt, there are indeed such limits.

We have witnessed that the Dramatic art-form selectively borrows its tools from other art-forms, while retaining its status as autonomous by its use of these in its own fashion. “It is related to music by its use of the voice; to sculpture by that of gesture and attitude; to painting by employing the assistance of colour; and to pantomime by depending upon movement,” writes Liszt.³¹⁵ Moving slightly from the dramatic artist as the actor, to the broader sense of the dramatic art as the theatre, Liszt continues that, “In return, the theatre is fatal to each of the arts just mentioned.”

It is, for example, fatal to painting, because it employs the coarsest and loudest tints as well as the most violent contrasts; besides being obliged to have recourse to illuminations which are unnatural. And it is fatal to sculpture, by the very fact of movement involving change of attitude.

The fact is that dramatic art being obliged, like all plastic art, to take Nature for its model, is nevertheless obliged to transfigure it according to its means of expression. Its own resources must be used as far as they will extend, in order to compensate for the lack of what in Nature is inimitable.

But it is a matter of common consent that any plastic arts which, instead of aspiring to draw its inspiration directly from Nature, should seek to do so from the stage, would inevitably thereby become (to whatever extent this might be practised) adulterate and degenerate; and would thereby lose all legitimate title to noble rank. The truth of this becomes evident at once if we reflect that the worst criticism which can be passed upon art—a criticism implying that it has already entered upon a period of decline is to say:

“It has become *theatrical*.”³¹⁶

A scene painting, in itself, requires an exaggerated palette in order to successfully communicate in the theatre—alas, one should probably not exhibit a scene painting.

A scene painting should serve a purpose in transporting us to some other time and place—from our workaday lives to the cobbled streets of Verona. It should *appear* to represent its scenes with fidelity and naturalness, whether it employs its paints prosaically or poetically, to make up for the “lack of what in Nature is inimitable.” In other words, it may require a different palate, depending on the mood of a particular scene—and according to Liszt, one should not shy away from the use of

³¹⁵ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 267.

³¹⁶ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 268.

one's resources for this purpose. One must find the appropriate means to bring about the dramatic end.

But it is easy to imagine how a scene painting could step beyond its place as humble backdrop and attempt to steal the spotlight, if self-consciously laden with loud colours and contrasts in order to gain attention, beyond the requirements of a particular scene or emotion. This would be not only fatal to the painting itself, but to the drama as a total artwork—we cease to believe its false characters, it soon becomes its own mockery. It has become *theatrical*. The means has become an end in itself.

Indeed, it seems that this mysterious boundary—we might call it taste—is at the line between truth and falsity. Although the drama draws inspiration from nature, it is understood that it must aim to represent things not so much as they really are, but rather how they might be in the context of some Shakespearean drama. Or more particularly, how it might feel to *be* in such a situation—for this is what the drama must communicate to the audience. But as soon as the actor over-does his gesture so that we know he's pretending, or delivers his line so that we know he didn't mean it—the whole charade collapses in on itself. Indeed, the whole transaction between drama and audience is that we *are* sucked in, that there is no *façade*, that we have left our workaday lives, and really *are* on the cobbled streets of Verona, if only for a brief moment.³¹⁷ *This* is the dramatic art.

Where, then, is this boundary in music?

If the dramatic art aims for action that represents the experience of nature (in some sense of “dramatic truth”), it is clear that in the theatre, the artistic burden falls on more than just the actor. If music, however, aims for *sound* representative of *feeling*—it is clear that in the concert hall, it is the Virtuoso alone who is chief. It is the Virtuoso who must navigate the one to find the other, to conjure up the form that would depict a given sentiment:³¹⁸

Between Sentiment and Form there is some impalpable flame, some principle of mysterious equilibrium, the presence of which is the final authority in deciding the rank or value of any artistic production. It is that which determines whether the transparency of a sentiment is met

³¹⁷ There is a nuance in these paragraphs that might be unclear. Liszt's point seems to be about the communication of “what in Nature is inimitable,” and the use of the available means to reach that end. It is not to say that the actor should *not* act, that the total artwork should *not* represent emotion. It is precisely the opposite, that the audience should receive these impressions, and the drama should use all available means to bring this about. The things that are “inimitable” in Nature we must presume to be such things as these feelings (that one would feel if one *were* in the situation depicted by the drama), which it is the purpose of the drama to communicate to the audience. If instead the available means transgress to become an end in themselves, this is when it becomes merely “theatrical.”

³¹⁸ Form here is defined as the total of the technical or tangible (i.e. objective) aspects that go together to create the art-work, in a very general sense. In the present context, the form of the music is the sound as it is created and controlled by the musician (virtuoso), in every aspect relating to it as sound in its “tangible” sense. This is in opposition to the intangible aspects (the feelings, sentiments, meanings) that are *represented* by the sound-form, according to Liszt's ideas. This should not be confused with Form in the sense of musical structure, as in “Sonata form” or “binary form.” Form in our sense is more of a philosophical category, including both the moment to moment notes, phrases and rhythms; as well as the larger-scale structural and compositional elements.

with in a form to a sufficient degree for the sentiment to become translucent; or in other words for the sentiment to shine out in all brilliancy.

The existence of this identification between Sentiment, which is the soul of every work of art, and Form, which is the clothing of its body, constitutes the supreme reason of its existence; and is a complete and invincible reply to any objection.

But this impalpable flame—this mysterious identification—does not lend itself to any verbal description; its test being that of making itself immediately perceived.³¹⁹

This “impalpable flame,” it seems, might be the kind of true Virtuosity that Liszt described in terms of its Latin roots—related to the “fruits of ideal beauty.”³²⁰ Much like with the dramatic art, it is a question of means and ends. Although Liszt stops short of verbal description here, it seems he was probably correct to do so. According to this logic, it would seem, the end justifies the means, and the means justify the end. Or rather, when the “mysterious equilibrium” is in perfect balance, the distinction between ends and means becomes impossible to draw. One might imagine this equilibrium not in the numerical way of a ratio, fifty-fifty, but rather like a camera lens coming into focus—the technical execution met exactly with the creative demands. In this sense verbal description is impossible because each case (each art work) is particular and is its own justification, verbal description would be to find some justification *other than* itself (i.e. a justification according to some abstract theory). It is the way it is because the artist has made it that way.

It would seem to follow that while Liszt apparently sees that objective standards do exist (“there is some impalpable flame [...] the presence of which is the final authority in deciding the rank or value of any artistic production”), these standards do not come from theoretical models outside the work itself, as Liszt makes clear in the paragraph immediately preceding the one quoted, in which he writes in reference to Beethoven, that “the mere mention of that last great name places us upon sure ground in advancing that all rules and laws in art have been made *a posteriori*, and that all principles and methods, all the reasoning and arguments, will never succeed in proving that a thing is either good or bad in itself.”³²¹ Liszt seems to see the “objective” standards defined by the subjective whims

³¹⁹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 302. Liszt’s friend, the Hungarian writer Janka Wohl recalled Liszt once in saying: “While showing me, one day, the work of one of his Russian pupils, he said to me: ‘Properly speaking, there is as yet no Russian music, but there are some first-rate composers. The Russian mind, which is in continual activity on the one side and comatose on the other, will have to do an immense amount of work in order to properly direct its natural tendencies; and this is the result of the climate of the country and of the Slav character in general. Just as the long months of their winters are followed by short summers full of rapid expansion, so Russian music has long monotonous intervals in between bursts of melody; but these melodies ought to be brimful of the sap of their short summer.... Besides, there is yet too much of the vague, of the undecided, too much of dreaminess in this music, destined nevertheless, I believe, to have a great future. One feels that the Russian composers go to work under a more or less sentimental inspiration, and not under the all-powerful impression of a master-idea. The idea is the sentiment, the body, the impalpable.’” Janka Wohl, *François Liszt: recollections of a compatriot* (London: Ward & Downey, 1887), 196.

³²⁰ See Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 265.

³²¹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 301-302.

of the *artist* (taste/judgement), or else the *expressive purpose* of their work itself—how successfully does it meet its own demands.

It is this last point that becomes the crux of the matter—there *should* exist some expressive purpose, some central idea or artistic demand *beyond* the mere work itself. While means and ends (read: sound/feeling, form/sentiment) might seem mutually justifiable, and may become virtually indistinguishable—they are *not* the same thing. There is a clear hierarchy between the two, as stipulated by the very terms *means* and *ends*. Sentiment (feeling) is the end, “the soul of every work of art”—in music, *Sound* is its form, its means of existence, yet it is merely “the clothing of its body.”³²² The Virtuoso’s task, therefore, is to identify *feeling* and find the *sound* that represents it, as Liszt wrote in his essay on Clara Schumann:

Accordingly, just like that of a composition, [Virtuosity’s] value depends on the artist’s emotional development and the gift he is given to find the corresponding form that is communicable to the intensity of a feeling. Without this life-breathing force of feeling, which dictates solely the forms of the beautiful and gives the will to produce them exclusively, both composition and virtuosity are only sensuous head- or finger mechanisms, mindless skill or calculation.³²³

e. **Virtuosity and Representation**

In summation, the Lisztian Virtuoso is a musical artist who uses sound to represent feeling. These artistic sounds are crafted in his own individual manner, according to his personal tastes and judgments—for he is, after all, an artist.

His role is different to that of the composer, who sets down on paper musical works which are, “fundamentally, only the touching or tragic *scenario* of feeling.”³²⁴ The composition, on paper, being but an intimation of the musical *form* that, when brought to life in sound, will be reflective of some particular sentiment, the two components being intimately bound up with each other:

How could it possibly be maintained that the virtuoso is not the representative of an art so evidently his own; because so different from that of the author, who dictated the mere words by writing what the performing artist reproduces?³²⁵

As above, “without the virtuoso, the composer’s existence would be a perpetual hell,” insofar as music is sound, a composition on paper is not (in itself) music.³²⁶ So what, then, does the virtuoso *do*,

³²² Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 302.

³²³ Ramann ed., *Liszt Gesammelte Schriften* vol. 4, 194-195.

³²⁴ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 266.

³²⁵ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 267.

³²⁶ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 269.

when he takes this piece of paper and turns it into sound? How does notation become music? While this is similarly a question of representation, which Liszt compares to the way that a painter represents nature—we will leave the specifics of this argument to one side for the moment.³²⁷

As we've already heard, however, the Virtuoso is no mere reader: "He is not a passive instrument, reproducing the thoughts and feelings of others, whilst adding nothing of his own."³²⁸ Rather, his job is to "virtually possess [...] the written passions which he has undertaken to give life"; he must "give life and animation to the inert body of his text" as well as "vary the tints of its glances" to render his musical Galatea as a "goddess of grace"—all the while (and perhaps most importantly) to "pride himself and take pleasure in the accomplishment."³²⁹ In other words, the virtuoso takes the written composition, learns to understand it and the feelings it can express, and uses his instrument to render those feelings in sound; *perhaps* using the "words" of the text (score), but always telling them in his own peculiar fashion through the infinite subtleties of musical delivery—but not afraid to alter the text if necessary, should there occur to him a better means to express the feeling. One imagines the Rhapsode of Ancient Greece with his lyre, telling the tales of Homer as if he had lived them, those tales having been so long understood and absorbed.

If *this* is the Lisztian conception of the Virtuoso, and we understand Virtuosity as the ability to use one's art as a means to an end, as a means to express the Idea—whether that be a Feeling, Thought, Character or Sentiment, as we remember from the essay on Viardot-Garcia, quoted above—we can thus make something of a supposition concerning the broad aesthetic-conceptual framework through which a disciple of the Liszt tradition might have viewed the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*.³³⁰

We learned in the first part of the dissertation that the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* were broadly intended to express what we termed the Bohemian sentiment. In the context of the present argument, then, the expression or representation of the Bohemian sentiment is clearly the "end" goal of playing the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. We understand that through our playing of the piano, or rather through the sounds that come out of the piano when we play it, the Bohemian sentiment is somehow revealed to the listener in the ideal performance of a *Hungarian Rhapsody*. We represent this sentiment through means of sound—with the piano. At least, that is the goal, or what happens in the ideal performance.

³²⁷ These arguments are made in Liszt essay on Clara Schumann, see Ramann ed., *Liszt Gesammelte Schriften* vol. 4, 192-196.

³²⁸ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 265.

³²⁹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 266. Galatea "is a name popularly applied to the statue carved of ivory by Pygmalion of Cyprus, which then came to life in Greek mythology... Pygmalion is made into a sculptor who fell in love with an ivory statue he had crafted with his own hands. In answer to his prayers, the goddess Aphrodite brought it to life and united the couple in marriage." [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galatea_\(mythology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galatea_(mythology)). One recalls Amy Fay, *Music-Study in Germany* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1880), 213-214: "There is such a vividness about everything he plays that it does not seem as if it were mere music you were listening to, but it is as if he had called up a real, living *form*, and you saw it breathing before your face and eyes. It gives *me* almost a ghostly feeling to hear him, and it seems as if the air were peopled with spirits. Oh, he is a perfect wizard!"

³³⁰ See Hall-Swadley trans., *Liszt Collected Writings* vol 3, 195.

Our goal, then, is *not* the mere reading of the score—or even the accurate representation of the score in sound—but the expression of the Bohemian sentiment. This is the stick with which we should measure the success of a performance—did we feel the sentiment? Was it clearly expressed?³³¹

But what would such a philosophy look (or sound) like in practice? This is what we will explore in the coming pages by examining the practice of Liszt and his pupils. Primarily, we will take a look at some of the writings of the pupils, in order to attempt to verify that these views were indeed prevalent among these artists, presumably shared via their lessons and interactions with Liszt. As part of this we will examine more specifically how this kind of philosophy might have been reflected in Liszt's own practice. Following this, we will then attempt to ascertain whether or how these ideas might have influenced the performances of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* by the disciples of the Liszt tradition, according to the evidence of both recordings and writings.

III. The Liszt School: Theory and Practice

a. The Pianist as Artist

As piano teacher, Liszt championed individuality.³³² What does this mean? Carl Lachmund (1853-1928), who studied with Liszt in Weimar from 1882-1884, explains:

From a pianistic standpoint, as also from the musical, Liszt was the greatest teacher history can name. It has been said, and this not only by the jealous, that Liszt was not a teacher. And he was not—in the ordinary sense. He himself wished this understood. In truth, he was infinitely more than a teacher. With his wonderful glow of genius, he inspired his pupils in a way that their talents, to the extent of their individual abilities, seemed to radiate with contagious enthusiasm.³³³

Amy Fay (1844-1928) writes similarly, with gushing style, describing the impression of her first lesson with Liszt in 1873:

Nothing could exceed Liszt's amiability, or the trouble he gave himself, and instead of frightening me, he inspired me. Never was there such a delightful teacher! And he is the first sympathetic one I've had. You feel so *free* with him, and he develops the very spirit of music in you. He doesn't keep nagging at you all the time, but he leaves you your own conception. Now and then he will make a criticism, or play a passage, and with a few words give you enough to think of all the rest of your life. There is a delicate *point* to everything he says, as

³³¹ Lina Ramann writes: "By Paganini's playing the veil had been torn away which lay between him and his artistic will. The ideas which the St. Simonians had excited within him won a form. "Thus expressed," he said to himself, "a work of art can become the *language* of culture, and reproducing art can fulfil its task. The work of art must dive into the spirit of the reproducing artist to be born anew from the glow of spontaneous feeling. The form should not sound, but the spirit speak! Then is the virtuoso the high priest of art, in whose mouth the dead letter wins life, whose lips reveal the secrets of art." Lina Ramann, *Franz Liszt: artist and man 1811-1840* (vol. 1) trans. E. Cowdery (London : W.H. Allen & Co., 1882), 259.

³³² See Friedheim, *Life and Liszt*, 281. Also Walker, vol. 2: *The Weimar Years*, 368-379. Also Bellman, *Style Hongrois*, 181.

³³³ Carl Lachmund, *Living with Liszt* ed. Alan Walker (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1995), 47.

subtle as he is himself. He doesn't tell you anything about the technique. That you must work out for yourself.³³⁴

This approach could even be taken with the most mundane technical questions, such as hand position, as related by Adele aus der Ohe (1861-1923), who studied with Liszt as a child prodigy from the age of 12:

In regard to hand position, I endeavour not to be narrow and pedantic. If pupils play with good tone and can make reasonably good effects, I take them at the point where they are and try to bring them forward, even if the hand position is not just what I would like. [...] To take a pupil at his present point, and carry him along was also Liszt's idea. He did not like to change a hand position to which the player has grown accustomed for one which seems unnatural, and which the pianist has to work a long time to acquire. He felt that one's time could be spent to more advantage. There are so many legitimate positions, each hand is a separate study, and is apt to take the position most natural to itself.³³⁵

The famous Russian chemist and composer, Alexander Borodin (1833-1887), visited Liszt in 1877 and 1883, and reported the following of Liszt's approach:

He pays very little attention to technique itself in the strict sense, but concentrates in the main on the true exposition of the character of the piece and on expression [...]. all his pupils have completely perfected techniques although they have learned and perform according to varying systems. Liszt moreover never imposes his own mannerisms on anybody and never dictates his own views regarding finger technique, since he fully understands that individuality is of great importance in these matters. On the other hand he never refuses to show and explain his method when he sees that a pupil experiences difficulty in execution.³³⁶

But one should not presume that Liszt was happy with just *anything*, as Bettina Walker (1837-1893) warned, after she visited Liszt in 1883:

Liszt was unvaryingly just in appreciating and encouraging all those who had really any 'talent'; but towards one or two who really had neither school nor talent he would, if their personality had pleased him, be so indulgent as to let the very worst faults, the greatest shortcomings, pass without any adverse criticism. On the other hand, woe betide either an incorrect and badly drilled player, or one who merely played the notes, and gave no musical reading of the piece [...]. In the case of a badly drilled player, he would show his anger without disguise, and send the performer from the piano in a most summary manner; while in the latter case he would either get up from his seat, and walk up and down the entire length of the room, looking the very picture of an individual who is profoundly bored [...] or else he would stand a minute or two beside the player, seeming to listen to the performance, and then, quietly observing, 'That is very nice, but I think we shall turn to something else,' he would take the piece off the music-deck, move away from the piano, and call on another pianist to come forward.³³⁷

Liszt's system seems to have been built upon the idea of mutual stimulation. He held regular classes three times a week, from 4 until 6pm, on alternative days at his Weimar home, the Hofgärtnerei. It

³³⁴ Amy Fay, *Music-study in Germany*, 212-213.

³³⁵ In Harriette Brower, *Piano Mastery* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1915), 144.

³³⁶ David Lloyd-Jones, "Borodin on Liszt" *Music & Letters*, Vol. 42, No.2 (April 1961): 124. Quoted in William S. Newman "Liszt's interpretation of Beethoven's piano sonatas," *The Musical Quarterly* vol. 58 no.2 (1972), 206.

³³⁷ Bettina Walker, *My Musical Experiences* (London: R. Bentley & Son, 1892), 102.

was very much a prototype of the modern “master-class”; the group of pupils (and many hangers-on) would gather in the small salon, placing their music on a small round table by the piano. Soon, Liszt would enter and casually leaf through the scores, deciding what he wanted to hear.³³⁸ Such was Liszt’s kind-heartedness, that he would tend to invite anyone who had the courage to ask (he did not charge a fee)—and so the class inevitably filled up with many who were probably not worthy of Liszt’s pianistic guidance, though Liszt was quick to spot those who were merely there for personal gain in other respects.³³⁹

When Liszt had chosen what he wanted to hear, the student would be seated at the piano, and play for the class. Liszt would wander up and down the room, or stand behind the pupil and follow the score, offering wisdom and commentary on the work and the performance. As we saw from the testimonies above, Liszt’s instruction rarely focused on pure technical matters, unless the student specifically asked; in this environment it was simply expected that the student was competent—this was a class for higher artistic pursuits.³⁴⁰ If a student happened to be unprepared or played in an undignified manner, Liszt was known to lose his temper, telling the hapless individual to kindly “wash their dirty linen at home”—this was *not* a conservatory (and all this surely a lesson in and of itself).³⁴¹ The most cherished moments, however, were when Liszt would gently nudge the pupil aside, seat himself at the piano and demonstrate—usually leaving an indelible impression on the memory of a young artist.³⁴²

Such was life in Weimar, as it was known to most.³⁴³ The lush, romantic atmosphere, combined with the numerous students of a *dilettante* deportment, gave some visitors the impression that Liszt’s Weimar was wholly a place of pretention and masquerade.³⁴⁴ And to the casual observer, this was most probably a fair estimation. But if one happened to be among the select few, who

³³⁸ See Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: The Final Years* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), 228-231.

³³⁹ As Friedheim describes: “In Liszt’s later years, particularly from 1884 onward, Weimar was overrun. The Hofgärtnerei suffered from a number of frivolous women, many of whom were unable to play well. Bülow had these particularly in mind when, on taking over the class during Liszt’s illness in 1880, he remarked that ‘at the best pianist’s house one could hear the worst playing.’” *Life and Liszt*, 50.

³⁴⁰ See Friedheim, *Life and Liszt*, 46-52.

³⁴¹ See Bettina Walker, *Musical Experiences*, 101-106.

³⁴² Lachmund recalls one occasion: “Chopin’s E major Prelude, marked “Largo,” an elegy that was evidently a favourite [of Liszt’s], and touched deep chords in his heart. The pupil who was playing the series had come to this one, the ninth. He placed his hand on her shoulder, saying: ‘I will play this one.’ When he came to the end he did not close, but [...] he went on, extemporizing for several minutes. Such were exceptional, hallowed occasions.” *Living with Liszt*, 334.

³⁴³ Tales of the town became something of a literary fad for a time, most famously Amy Fay, *Music-Study in Germany* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1880). Bettina Walker’s *My Musical Experiences* (London: R. Bentley & Son, 1892), seems have been influenced by the success of Fay’s memoir. Albert Morris Bagby even re-worked his memories into a charming romantic novel entitled *Liszt’s Weimar*, ed. Kathleen Hoover (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1961). A more factual account of Bagby’s time in Weimar was published earlier as Albert Morris Bagby, “A Summer with Liszt in Weimar,” in *The Century Magazine* vol.32 no.5 (September 1886): 655-669.

³⁴⁴ See prologue to Carl Lachmund, *Living with Liszt* ed. Alan Walker (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1995), xxviii-xxxiv.

possessed the rare combination of musical talent, ambition and perseverance, Liszt would soon take note, and one would be given the opportunity of *private* lessons with the master. As Alexander Siloti (1863-1945) describes:

Liszt's lessons were of a totally different order to the common run. As a rule, he sat beside, or stood opposite to, the pupil who was playing, and indicated by the expression of his face the nuances he wished to have brought out in the music. It was only for the first two months that he taught me in front of all the other pupils; after that I went to him in the morning when I was working at any especially big thing, and he taught me by myself. I always knew so thoroughly what I wanted to express in each piece of music that I was able to look at Liszt's face all the time I was playing. No one else in the world could show musical phrasing as he did, merely by the expression of his face. If a pupil understood these fine shades, so much the better for him; if not, so much the worse! Liszt told me that he could explain nothing to pupils who did not understand him in the first.³⁴⁵

In this case of Arthur Friedheim (1859-1932), being numbered among these lucky few from his earliest days in Weimar, he was not only given private lessons, but was allowed to follow Liszt to Rome in 1881, having weekly lessons with the master.³⁴⁶ He spent the following summer in Weimar, and followed Liszt again to Rome in the winter of 1882/1883, during which time Friedheim "began to spend a great deal of time in his company."³⁴⁷ Friedheim recalled meeting up with Liszt in Vienna in 1883:

Our time together was necessarily brief. Liszt was only passing through. He asked me to play for him, and I performed his B minor Sonata as well as several other numbers which I had formed the plan of introducing to the press and public of Vienna. He made very few suggestions, saying: "We understand each other."³⁴⁸

This mysterious "understanding" appears something of a trope among *some* of these accounts—a few students had it, but most did not. For instance, Janka Wohl reports Liszt saying that Sophie Menter was "the only one 'I was able to teach what cannot be learnt,'"³⁴⁹ clearly in line with Siloti's report above that "Liszt told me that he could explain nothing to pupils who did not understand him in the first."³⁵⁰ Wohl continued:

'She has a singing hand,' he used to say when speaking of her. He went to see her regularly at her fine castle in the Tyrol, and he followed her career, which became more and more brilliant, with a quite paternal satisfaction. He loved to see the beautiful fruit of his own artistic grafting grow ripe. This new school of pianists, which he had created, absorbed and seriously occupied all his attention. He did not fail to notice that the majority of his pupils understood the 'letter' of his teaching without grasping the 'spirit' of it. Whenever he found a

³⁴⁵ Alexander Siloti, *My Memories of Liszt*, in *Remembering Franz Liszt* (New York: Limelight, 1986), 345-346.

³⁴⁶ Friedheim, *Life and Liszt*, 91.

³⁴⁷ Friedheim, *Life and Liszt*, 92.

³⁴⁸ Friedheim, *Life and Liszt*, 136.

³⁴⁹ Janka Wohl, *François Liszt*, 42.

³⁵⁰ Siloti, *My Memories of Liszt*, 346.

soil favourable for the immaterial and divine seed, how lovingly he followed and watched its growth and development.³⁵¹

For the young Friedheim, when he first went to Weimar as an uncouth but exuberant *protégé* of Anton Rubinstein, Liszt sent him away saying “At seventeen one has not yet cut one’s wisdom teeth.”³⁵² It wasn’t until two years later, when he had the opportunity to play for Liszt again in 1880, that the master was suitably impressed.³⁵³ Friedheim had spent the intervening years involved in broader musical activities like conducting, evidently gaining much experience—but what had changed? Had he simply outgrown youthful virility? Or had something “clicked,” that Liszt felt he couldn’t have taught?³⁵⁴

One can really only speculate as to what this mysterious something might’ve been. Could it have been along the lines of the Virtuoso-Virtuosity ideas that we have just unpacked? These ideas are difficult enough to explain in writing, let alone in lessons to an impetuous youth. Some might think in this way as if by instinct, while others will come to it with time—but would it be worth Liszt’s time, to teach in his manner every student who had not yet intuitively grasped these precepts? If an enthusiastic young pianist, with grand aspirations to an international Virtuoso career, came to Liszt without an understanding of these fundamental tenants of performance (presumably obvious to him from how they played); what could he do? He did not have time to explain it to them—perhaps he would invite them to the class, where they may “pick it up” in time. They would get their cherished instruction from Liszt, and all the other pupils likewise benefit—it’s a nice solution.³⁵⁵

³⁵¹ Wohl, *François Liszt*, 42-43. Wohl later on recalls Liszt: “With regard to Wagner’s influence on modern music, he said: ‘Wagner has spoiled the ground terribly for composers of the future, just as Rubinstein is spoiling it for pianists. You must be a poet and composer of Wagner’s calibre to be able to create a world of your own; and you must be a composer and artist like Rubinstein to be able to interpret the works of others as he does. That is the principal difference between Rubinstein and Bülow. [...] Bülow is prodigious—amazing; but Rubinstein has the rare gift of creation.’” Ibid, 172-173.

³⁵² Friedheim, *Life and Liszt*, 43.

³⁵³ Friedheim, *Life and Liszt*, 44.

³⁵⁴ A year later, in 1881, Liszt wrote in a letter to his friend, the Baroness von Meyendorff: “My young pianists (six in all) come regularly twice a week. Friedheim clearly stands out. He doesn’t look like someone who’s happy, quite the contrary, and I would like to help him in his career, but it is not often easy for talents to succeed and this depends on capricious good luck. However, I hope that if Friedheim is patient and perseveres he’ll succeed in carving out a place for himself. He is assured of my sincere recommendation.” In *The Letters of Franz Liszt to Olga von Meyendorff 1871-1886*, trans. William R. Tyler (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), 411.

³⁵⁵ See also José Vianna da Motta: “Much has been said of Liszt’s disastrous spirit of toleration. He had a system that only the initiated understood and that was definitely detrimental to the naïve. His system consisted of this: when he saw that a student had no talent, he offered no criticism. ‘Why?’ he said, ‘because it is of no use.’ He would listen quietly and, as the more insightful observers realized, with obvious boredom; he would then speak in French—a very serious sign at which the inner circle immediately smiled with deep understanding. When seemingly satisfied, he would say with great indifference to the young lady ‘*Très bien*’ and she would ardently lean toward him to receive the kiss. The others translated the ‘*Très bien*’ into ‘How awful!’” In Appendix B to August Göllerich, *The Piano Master Classes of Franz Liszt, 1884-1886*, ed. William Jerger, trans. Richard Louis Zimdars (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 167. Originally from an article in *Der Merker* (Vienna), October 1911.

We do find traces of the philosophy in the writings of the pupils. Friedheim for instance, explicitly concerned about tradition, wrote in an article “We Do Not Know Liszt” in a way that seems to *assume* the points that Liszt made about composition being dependent on performance, and an inadequate performance often being the cause of troublesome reception, an issue not found with other arts, seeming to echo some of Liszt’s points above:³⁵⁶

Recently a professor of philosophy in England wrote that the mighty Immanuel Kant would have been universally acknowledged soon after the publication of the Critique of Pure Reason (1787), if the matter had been taken up energetically by half a dozen men of authority, able and willing to follow his transcendental speculations. Quite right. Once in science a doctrine is proved to the satisfaction of the initiated, nobody would think of contradicting it. This is true even when applied to poetry and the plastic arts in so far, at least, as the layman can easily read a poem and view a statue or a painting, thus seeking for himself the confirmation of the judgment of those superior to him by professional training and experience. But it is different with music. A score is nothing but an image of an image; it does not come to life without the performance. If this image represented is incorrect in the main point, the performance cannot be otherwise than distorted. In no other art are there so many unintentional caricatures than in reproductive music. A dozen men of authority may do their best to further the general understanding of a masterpiece, yet their work will vanish with them when there are no successors to continue it until all opposition is completely broken, all prejudice vanquished, and it is then found that the verb to ignore is derived from “ignorance.”³⁵⁷

In an unpublished essay, which seems to have been intended to introduce his edition of Liszt’s B minor sonata, Friedheim waxes about style and tradition:

In our days there is a faction among musicians of all nations who flatly reject the idea of tradition. But nobody would deny what is termed style in a musical performance. What is style? Style is the manner in which the works of a master are rendered, displaying their innermost character naturally and convincingly, leaving nothing to doubt or misunderstanding. With rare exceptions this manner is developed during the lifetime of the master [...]. Once this style is established [...], it is accepted by everybody [...]. Therefore: what is style after all? An accumulated crystallised tradition.³⁵⁸

It is strongly implied that this style and tradition, in that it relates to rendering the innermost character of the work, is *not* contained in the score; it is a question for performers, who must “read between the

³⁵⁶ Remember the following passage of Liszt: “If we consider the matter from the point of view of self-sufficiency and independence, the virtuoso has every advantage over the actor; whom the painter, sculptor and mimic can alike afford to ignore and forget. [...] Its [Poetry’s] faculty of dispensing with the dramatic artist is also so complete that the exercise of its control over the human heart is capable of continuing into far-off ages. Thus, in time to come, even when its language has long ceased to be that of the people, and is only understood by men of superior refinement and education, they will require no interpreters to enable them to enjoy its genius, verve or sentiment. But the musical composer is far from being in the enjoyment of this position; for he cannot live, and therefore there can be no question of his survival without the help of the executant.” Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 268-269.

³⁵⁷ Arthur Friedheim, “We Do Not Know Liszt,” in *Musical Observer* (c.1925): 1.

³⁵⁸ In Gordon Rumson, “Arthur Friedheim’s Edition of the Liszt B Minor Sonata” *Liszt Society Journal* (UK) vol. 26 (2001): 24

lines,” as he relates in the paragraph that followed.³⁵⁹ This is clearly related to Liszt’s conception that the virtuoso is no mere mason, who only follows instructions.³⁶⁰

That tradition is not contained in the score is related explicitly by Tilly Fleischmann (1882-1967), who studied with two Liszt pupils Berthold Kellermann (1853-1926) and Bernhard Stavenhagen (1862-1914). “It is,” writes Fleischmann, “manifestly false to suppose that the mere notation of a work alone can derive a full realisation of all that it is intended to express.”³⁶¹ According to Fleischmann, the knowledge required for such a performance is to be found in tradition, which “stands as the sum total of various qualities which are ultimately indefinable,” that she compares to the way that communities of people living in a certain region assume certain characteristics and inflections of speech, distinct from other regions yet not easily codified.³⁶² The same is observable of performance informed by a tradition, in which particular compositions gradually acquire a “certain distinctiveness of utterance.”³⁶³ Fleischmann defines a number of possible sources for such a tradition, including poetic or literary allusions made by a composer relating to the “meaning” of their work:³⁶⁴

Such allusions, either quoted in biographical studies or handed down by word of mouth, are of the utmost importance to the pianist who has a general sense of reverence for the works he is studying and a genuine desire to give them authentic utterance. They disprove Toscanini’s statement that tradition is to be found in the music alone, and the dull, insipid or robot-like performances one may hear by pianists who profess to be literal and objective provide sufficient proof that the printed notes are merely the bare bones of a work, and that its living soul must be created by the artist’s imagination. Between the playing of two sensitive pianists, each of whom genuinely believes that he is merely reproducing what the composer has written, there can be a world of difference. Only the possession of rare artistry, coupled with the guidance of tradition, will enable a pianist to give the ideal performance.³⁶⁵

This is clearly in line with Friedheim’s writings, as much as it is with Liszt’s: particularly Fleischmann’s point that the “living soul must be created by the artist’s imagination” appears almost indistinguishable from some of Liszt’s language above, evidently based on the same kinds of assumptions about the role of the Virtuoso.

³⁵⁹ See Rumson, “Friedheim’s Edition,” 24.

³⁶⁰ See Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 265.

³⁶¹ Tilly Fleischmann, *Tradition and Craft in Piano-Playing* ed. Ruth Fleischmann and John Buckley (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2014), 157.

³⁶² Fleischmann, *Tradition and Craft*, 157.

³⁶³ Fleischmann, *Tradition and Craft*, 157.

³⁶⁴ Fleischmann, *Tradition and Craft*, 158-159. These four sources: a) “Affinity of temperament between the performer and the composer—as revealed in his music.” b) “Knowledge and guidance derived from a teacher, through whom is transmitted the accumulated interpretative detail gained from the best exponents of the past.” c) “Knowledge of the *Zeitgeist* or spirit of the period in which the composer of a particular work lived, of his environment, of the literary and other influences by which he was affected and of his output as a whole.” d) “Knowledge of a particular work—of any literary, biographical or other details which may throw light on it, or help towards its true interpretation.” Fleischmann gives long descriptions of these types.

³⁶⁵ Fleischmann, *Tradition and Craft*, 161.

Similar assumptions were made by Alfred Reisenauer (1863-1907), who was taken to Liszt “at a very early age” and later became a favourite pupil.³⁶⁶ In an interview for the book *Great Pianists on Piano Playing*, Reisenauer offered the following:

Before notation existed,—before keyboards were invented,—people sang. Before a child knows anything of notation or a keyboard, it sings. It is following its natural, musical instinct. Notation and keyboards are simply symbols of music—cages in which beautiful birds are caught. They are not music any more than the alphabet is literature.³⁶⁷

While put rather more poetically, this is in essence the same idea as Friedheim’s line above that “A score is nothing but an image of an image,”³⁶⁸ seeming to posit music as symbolic sound. We must presume that, like for Liszt, this music is symbolic in the sense that it is an auditory representation of feeling.

In the course of Reisenauer’s interview, he offered an imitation of a typical lesson with Liszt. While this is only an imitation, and not an actual lesson with the master, it does give us a terrific insight into the kind of process by which one may *actually* apply the Lisztian ideas in the practice room—the same set of assumptions are clearly evident, and he seemingly quotes Liszt verbatim in the last paragraph.³⁶⁹ We quote the entirety of the passage, for it hence offers an important insight into Liszt’s method, not found in the other sources. We may well trust Reisenauer’s impersonation as being relatively truthful, for not only is the language absolutely in the character of Liszt as we’ve come to know him; but also, according to Bettina Walker, Reisenauer was allowed to follow the master “wherever he went,” (presumably to Rome and elsewhere, like Friedheim), and “it happened pretty often that when Liszt himself disinclined to show some of the less-advanced pupils the reading he wished to be given to a piece, he would depute this task to Reisenauer.”³⁷⁰ Firstly Reisenauer himself speaks, describing Liszt’s teaching in general, before the interviewer James Francis Cooke sat at the piano:

“His [Liszt’s] generosity and personal force in his work with the young artists he assisted are hard to describe. You ask me whether he had a certain method. I reply, he abhorred methods in the modern sense of the term. His work was eclectic in the highest sense. In one way he could not be considered a teacher at all. He charged no fees and had irregular and somewhat unsystematic classes. In another sense he was the greatest of teachers. Sit at the piano and I will indicate the general plan pursued by Liszt at a lesson.”

³⁶⁶ James Francis Cooke, *Great Pianists on Piano Playing* (Mineola, N.Y: Dover Publications, 1999), 224. See also Albert Morris Bagby “Some Pupils of Liszt” in *The Century Magazine* vol.35 no.5 (March 1888), 728.

³⁶⁷ Cooke, *Great Pianist on Piano Playing*, 223.

³⁶⁸ Friedheim, “We Do Not Know Liszt,” 1.

³⁶⁹ For instance, Liszt’s line “The virtuoso is not a mason; who, taking blocks of stone and with square, level and trowel in hand, (a conscientious and exact proceeding), constructs the poem which the architect has already designed upon paper. He is not a passive instrument, reproducing the thoughts and feelings of others, whilst adding nothing of his own. He is not a reader, more or less expert, delivering a text; without marginal notes or glossary, and requiring no interlinear commentary.” Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 268.

³⁷⁰ Bettina Walker, *Musical Experiences*, 96.

Reisenauer is a remarkable and witty mimic of people he desires to describe. The present writer [James Francis Cooke] sat at the piano and played at length through several short compositions, eventually coming to the inevitable "Chopin Valse, Op. 69, No. 1, in A flat major." In the meanwhile, Reisenauer had gone to another room and, after listening patiently, returned, imitating the walk, facial expression and the peculiar guttural snort characteristic of Liszt in his later years. Then followed a long "kindly sermon" upon the emotional possibilities of the composition. This was interrupted with snorts and went with kaleidoscopic rapidity from French to German and back again many, many times. Imitating Liszt he said,

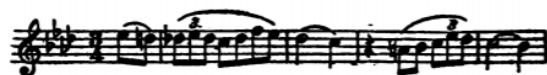
"First of all we must arrive at the very essence of the thing; the germ that Chopin chose to have grow and blossom in his soul. It is, roughly considered, this:



"Chopin's next thought was, no doubt:



"But with his unerring good taste and sense of symmetry he writes it so:



"Now consider the thing in studying it and while playing it from the composer's attitude. By this I mean that during the mental process of conception, before the actual transference of the thought to paper, the thought itself is in a nebulous condition. The composer sees it in a thousand lights before he actually determines upon the exact form he desires to perpetuate. For instance, this theme might have gone through Chopin's mind much after this fashion:



"The main idea being to reach the embryo of Chopin's thought and by artistic insight divine the connotation of that thought, as nearly as possible in the light of the treatment Chopin has given it.

"It is not much so much the performer's duty to play mere notes and dynamic marks, as it is for him to make an artistic estimate of the composer's intention and to feel that during the period of reproduction he simulated the natural psychological conditions which affected the composer during the actual process of composition. In this way the composition becomes a living entity—a tangible resurrection of the soul of the great Chopin. Without such penetrative genius a pianist is no more than a machine and with it he may develop into an artist of the highest type."³⁷¹

³⁷¹ Cooke, *Great Pianists on Piano Playing*, 227-228. Image credit, *ibid.*

We note here that it is quite explicitly *not* through reading the score, in the literal sense, that we bring the music to life, rather through “penetrative genius”—divine insight, as Hanslick might have mockingly called it.³⁷² Yet, tracing the argument carefully thus far, it might be surprising to find that the emphasis laid here is on the composer’s intention—indeed this is what the penetrative genius has to “divine,” when one is attempting to turn Chopin’s waltz into a living entity. Taking a step in the other direction, though, we see that the composer’s intention was *not* literally contained in the score, instead relating to “thought” and “psychological conditions.” While this can be interpreted in a number of ways, in light of the above writings of Liszt, Friedheim and Fleischmann, we can perhaps safely posit that the “thought” hereto referred was not *specifically* a musical thought—in the limited sense of a fully-formed sound entity—but rather a “poetic” thought, the “meaning” of the particular phrase, the *end* to which this music is a means. Once we know the end, the means should soon become apparent. In either case it is clearly *not* contained in the score—but whatever it is, it is important.

There is of course an apparent logical inconsistency here. If we are supposedly interested in the composer’s intention, and yet we do not believe it is evident in the score; how do we know that what we have “divined” does represent those intentions? It is one thing when we have some vague notion of “tradition” in the Friedheim-Fleischmann sense above—but it is another thing entirely to arbitrarily imagine something and then assert this to be the truth (which is what happens here). And while this may be true, and the logician would at this point probably like to discard Liszt’s pianistic philosophy—we do find that this base was covered in Liszt’s initial definition of the virtuoso as an artist, when he says that the executant must “pride himself and take pleasure in the accomplishment” of bringing works to life, it is *thereby* that he becomes a creator, that is, a virtuoso.

Musical works which have been dictated by inspiration are, fundamentally, only the touching or tragic *scenario* of feeling, which it appertains to the executant by cause, by turns, to disclaim, sing, weep, sigh or adore; **as also to pride himself and take pleasure in the accomplishment.** The virtuoso is therefore just as much a creator as the writer; for he must virtually possess, in all their brilliancy and flagrant phosphorescence, the written passions to which he has undertaken to give life.³⁷³ [my emphasis]

³⁷² Hanslick writes, in his review of Liszt’s symphonic poems: “The ‘symphonic poems’ are published with explanatory prefaces by Liszt [...]. Just as with these prefaces, which provide an explanation as a ballet programme explains a deaf-and-dumb-dance, the pronunciamiento printed on top of all Liszt scores throws a revealing light upon the falsity of his method. ‘Although I have endeavoured,’ it runs, ‘to elucidate my intentions by definite instructions, I cannot deny that many, even the most essential ideas, cannot be put down on paper.’ I leave it to the musically educated reader to decide how one can still speak of musical compositions when the ‘most essential ideas’ cannot be conveyed by notes. Conductors and players, therefore, have to be gifted with special divine insight – and audiences, too.” In Eduard Hanslick, *Music Criticisms 1846-99*, ed. and trans. Henry Pleasants (London: Penguin Books, 1963), 55.

³⁷³ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 266.

This might be an application for Liszt's description of poetic egoism, that was so essential to the Bohemian sentiment and the Bohemian artist.³⁷⁴ This taking pride in one's accomplishment, is the necessary quality at the base of all artistic achievement:

The activity of genius and even that of goodness would not exist but for the esteem (either tacit or expressed) which one has of one's self. Is it not that esteem [of the self,] which engenders and promotes the desire of developing our faculties, to whatever order they may belong, to their utmost limit, and sometimes beyond—of using them [our faculties], in short, as means of action and enjoyment?³⁷⁵

b. The Spirit and the Letter

In the Liszt school, individuality was respected and encouraged, whilst arbitrary musical decisions were not. Tradition and the composer's intention, both seen as relating to something *outside* a literal reading of the score, were to be respected. Not for the sake of idolatry or worship but for the fact that distortion of the composer's intention may lead to unintended caricature, hence undesirable in an *artistic* sense.³⁷⁶ But we must note, strongly, according to the definitions, that this idea does *not* rule out the possibility of textual alterations (playing something other than what the composer specifically notated)—for tradition and the composer's intentions lie outside the score, and realising the score accurately is *not* the primary consideration—artistic expression is.³⁷⁷ Consequently, if perchance I come across a more effective way (in my opinion) of expressing the composer's intention (the idea he wished to be expressed), I should feel within my right as artist, as virtuoso, to make those changes as I see fit. But, again, we should be careful with definitions. Presuming we can apply Liszt's doctrine of egoism here, I should be careful to avoid being clouded by *egotism*, which would be preferring my opinion simply because it is my opinion.³⁷⁸ I should be sincere in my pursuit of artistic expression.

Despite what we might perhaps imagine of a player who would follow a musical aesthetic such as this one, we find Friedheim describing Liszt's own playing thus:

All who ever heard Liszt are agreed that he, after his so-called "best years," was the most objective piano-player that can be imagined, inasmuch as his entire individuality was merged in that of the composer whom he was interpreting—hence the convincing effect.³⁷⁹

Moving to Liszt's particular mode of teaching, we tend to get conflicting reports from different pupils, as to what he would discuss—one presumes that Liszt would adapt his instruction depending on the

³⁷⁴ See chapter "The Love of Nature and the Proud Primordial Egoism" above.

³⁷⁵ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 73.

³⁷⁶ Friedheim discusses distortion in the context of phrasing: "As in elocution, *phrasing* must be taught in piano playing. Essentially it means nothing more than joining a group of notes forming a musical period, and thus separating this group in a perceptible manner from the following group forming another period, etc. In this case the teacher faces, perhaps, a harder task than in pedalling, for any error in phrasing directly touches the integrity of the text itself to a degree of distortion." In "What is Piano Technique," *Musical Observer* (c.1925).

³⁷⁷ See chapter "Virtuosity and Representation" above.

³⁷⁸ See chapter "The Love of Nature and the Proud Primordial Egoism" above.

³⁷⁹ Friedheim ed., *Chopin: Etudes* (G. Schirmer), 1.

particular individual or music. For instance, José Vianna da Motta (1868-1948), whose recordings reveal a masterly sensitivity to musical delivery, recalled:

His [Liszt's] remarks were almost only concerned with the purely musical: *tempo*, nuances, rhythm. He seldom gave a poetic image as an explanation and never a technical instruction. (He did not possess Bülow's enchanting eloquence.) In earlier times he certainly must have been more communicative, but Weissheimer says that at that time his manner of teaching consisted more of example than of explanation. He sat at his piano, the student at the other, and when he wanted to correct something he played the passage as he wished it.³⁸⁰

Frederic Lamond (1868-1948), whose discs portray a musician with a relatively sober, restrained approach to musical nuances, gave the opposite review:

We who were studying with Liszt, met together every second day at the Hofgärtnerei. Sometimes there were only a few of us. He could be very strict, even severe in his remarks. The mere mechanical attainments of pianoforte technique meant very little to him. Speed, pure and simple, of which so much is made by pianists of the present day, he held in contempt. I remember a pianist who was performing Chopin's Polonaise in A-flat with great gusto. When he came to the celebrated octave passage in the left hand, Liszt interrupted him by saying: "I don't want to listen to how fast you can play octaves. What I wish to hear is the canter of the horses of the Polish cavalry before they gather force and destroy the enemy." These few words were characteristic of Liszt. The poetical vision always arose before his mental eye, whether it was a Beethoven sonata, a Chopin nocturne, or a work of his own, it was not merely interpreting a work, but real reproduction.³⁸¹

The review of Emil Sauer (1862-1942), a pianist of the unflustered, noble style, recalls Liszt's teaching along the same lines as Lamond:

Liszt did not give piano lessons in the way it has been done from Czerny to the present; rather, he would wax eloquent on the high forms of art [...] similar to the way that Greek philosophers passed their ideas on to their disciples without being teachers.³⁸²

In either case, whether he was speaking in terms of style (purely musical delivery), or speaking of poetic imagery, which he may have seen as related to the composer's intention (in terms of expression); Liszt's teaching was clearly *not* about the execution of the score in the limited mechanical sense—these instructions relate broadly to ends rather than means, concerning the music as sound, heard and felt.

This is not to say, either, that he wasn't occasionally strict about observing the letter of the score. In the case of Bach and Beethoven, for instance, Lachmund reports that Liszt was more diligent as regards details:

³⁸⁰ In Appendix B of August Göllerich, *Master Classes of Franz Liszt*, 167. Originally from an article in *Der Merker* (Vienna), October 1911.

³⁸¹ In Appendix A of August Göllerich, *Master Classes of Franz Liszt*, 164. Originally from his published *The Memoirs of Frederic Lamond* (Glasgow, 1949).

³⁸² In Cecilia Dunoyer, *Marguerite Long: A life in French Music, 1874-1966* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 115. Original in French journal *Candide*, February 8, 1934.

When someone wanted to play something by Bach or Beethoven, Liszt became deeply serious. He took his place next to the player so that he could follow all the details, or if the pupil played from memory he placed the music on the lid of the piano and followed its lines carefully, standing so that the player could see him.³⁸³

On one particular occasion, a student bought Liszt's arrangement of Bach's A-minor Prelude and Fugue. As Lachmund describes the proceedings, despite Liszt's apparent austerity, he surprised Lachmund with a reading that seemed to eschew the kind of literal interpretation that one tends to expect with this music:

Liszt seated himself at the grand, to illustrate to us his idea as to the proper interpretation of a Bach fugue. There was nothing of the old-fashioned stiffness of rhythm, or dryness of tone, one often hears in the interpretation of these fugues. There was freedom in the phrasing, as also in the cadenza-like runs. He made a very fine effect with the "divertimentos" (*Zwischenspeile*) which he played with lightness akin to indifference.³⁸⁴

Happily, Liszt offered an explanation, in this case not based on poetic imagery, but on a concept of style that nevertheless must arise from an understanding *outside* what is written in the score:

"You see," he explained, "these *divertimento* measures, or little interludes, are *Nebensache* (side issues) and are intended to rest the mind for a moment, and if you play them in this manner, with no pretence at expression, the re-entry of the theme will have a refreshing effect."

"There are two things one should always observe when playing a fugue," he continued, "that is, play just as you would at the organ, do not keep the keys down after playing them, and play the theme at each return in the same style and rhythm, which, however, does not mean that you may not play it *piano* or *forte* at pleasure."

Of the little cadenza-like runs, he said: "Do not play these strictly in time, but with a little freedom." At the trill (in the 23rd measure [of the prelude]): "One may extend this as though there were a hold on it."³⁸⁵

As we can see, Liszt's ideas were not in his mind arbitrary, in that they were based on the way he understood the style of the fugue, presumably arising from his sense of tradition. But we should note also, and more importantly, that the suggestions made by Liszt in fact *assume* an approach to the process of piano-playing that sees music as sound. A suggestion such as "play the theme at each return in the same style and rhythm" would be almost meaningless (or at least should go without saying) if one were literally realising the score; for if the composer has always notated the "rhythm" in the same way, it cannot be otherwise than the same at each occurrence (if one were successful in their literal reading). Liszt's statement assumes that rhythm and style are qualities of music *performed*, which must be the domain of the player, and implies that we must be making decisions about the style and rhythm of the theme from the very first bar of the fugue. And yet—we are not

³⁸³ Lachmund, *Living with Liszt*, 68.

³⁸⁴ Lachmund, *Living with Liszt*, 68.

³⁸⁵ Lachmund, *Living with Liszt*, 68-69. The examples actually refer to the prelude, not the fugue. We will see similar suggestion for elongating trills in relation to the Rhapsodies below.

bound to this; we are at will to vary the dynamics and the time when it might be necessary, such as the cadential trills and cadenzas. These, of course, are based on an understanding of the musical “language,” which must be learnt through hearing other musicians or some other kind of instruction, if it is not contained in the score. A similar thought evidently occurred to Lachmund:

It struck me that there were no expression marks in his arrangement of the edition. When I expressed my regret at this, he said: “You see, I preferred to omit suggestions as to expression, rather than give the critics an opportunity to devour me and cry out at modernizing Bach; and pianists can put these in to suit their own tastes.” Then, rising from his seat, he added significantly, as if he wished to go on record: “That is the way I should play Bach—and I do not think Bach would chastise me for it if he were here. Nor would Beethoven, I imagine.”³⁸⁶

One notes Liszt’s apparent sincerity for what he regarded as the appropriate Bach style, which may or may not have arisen from an “authentic” Bach tradition, but may likely have drawn influence from the Beethoven-Czerny school—in any case he did not believe Bach would have disagreed with his approach.³⁸⁷ In that sense we might understand Friedheim’s point about Liszt’s “objectivity” in interpretation—whether he was historically informed or not (in the modern sense), Liszt apparently believed his understanding to be correct and true. But this was the 1880s, and Liszt was the wise old sage of Weimar—as Friedheim hints at too, things may have been different in Liszt’s glory days as a virtuoso.³⁸⁸ Note the following anecdote, which just so happens to concern the same work:

In 1844, at the height of Liszt’s career as a pianist, a lover of Bach in Montpellier, Jules Laurens, reproached him for his charlatanry, and then asked him to play his famous arrangement for the piano of Bach’s Prelude and Fugue in A minor for organ:

“How do you want me to play it?”

“How? but... the way it ought to be played.”

“Here it is, to start with, as the author must have understood it, played it himself, or intended it to be played.”

And Liszt played. And it was admirable, the perfection itself of the classical style exactly in conformity with the original.

“Here it is a second time, as I feel it, with a slightly more picturesque movement, a more modern style and the effects demanded by an improved instrument.” And it was, with these nuances, different... but no less admirable.

“Finally, a third time, here it is in the way I would play it for the public – to astonish, as a charlatan.” And, lighting a cigar which passed at moments from between his lips and fingers, executing with his ten fingers the part written for the organ pedals, and indulging in other

³⁸⁶ Lachmund, *Living with Liszt*, 69.

³⁸⁷ Note the similarity of Liszt’s general principles for fugue playing with those of Czerny in his *Pianoforte School*, *Op.500* trans. J. A. Hamilton (London: R. Cocks & Co., c.1839), 89-91.

³⁸⁸ “All who ever heard Liszt are agreed that he, after his so-called “best years,” was the most objective piano-player that can be imagined...” Friedheim ed., *Chopin: Etudes* (G. Schirmer), 1.

tours de force and prestidigitation, he was prodigious, incredible, fabulous, and received gratefully with enthusiasm.³⁸⁹

This seems to offer a stark opposition to the Liszt of the 1880s—but reveals something important about his attitude, at least in his younger days. What Friedheim regarded as Liszt’s objectivity in his autumn years, in the case of Bach, appears to have meant a healthy respect for the score, but realised in a style that Liszt thought appropriate to the composition, and which he believed was not out of character with the composer’s “intention.” Whether this was closer to the first or second class of performances he was making in 1844 is difficult to estimate—but we may imagine that it is somewhere between the two; it was how he “felt it” but at the same time within limits of how “the author must have understood it;” as it appears that these two ideals had merged together by the 1880s. However, what Liszt in 1844 understood was that if one were to play such a work *in public*, that is, in front of a fashionable and perfumed aristocratic public of the 1840s, one needed something *else* than merely idealistic musical perfection—that is if one wanted to find “success.” Many perhaps will be unable to see this as anything other than shallow showmanship, pandering to the masses—but we might see it too as a matter of decorum, in the classical sense, taking into consideration the “time, place and character” of a particular performance.³⁹⁰ Even in the 1880s, Liszt was telling his students to “play for those in the gallery that pay ten pfennigs for their tickets”—if one is to play in public, certain expectations are to be met.³⁹¹ In the privacy of one’s drawing room, where the stakes are different, one can feel free to seek their musical ideals to their heart’s content—but don’t expect it to please the masses, if that’s the career you wish to pursue. Clearly the easy way around this is to *not* play a Bach fugue in public, if one has to resort to party tricks to make it work. Pick your battles.

In this sense, the example of Beethoven’s music is cause for interest. By the 1880s, Liszt was particularly severe about students carefully following Beethoven’s markings; so much so, that it was occasionally the cause of scenes such as the following, reported by Lachmund:³⁹²

Again we saw Liszt in anger—more than ever before; but his anger, so quick to rise, subsided almost as quickly. A young man from Berlin who had studied with Kullak, endeavoured to play Beethoven’s Sonata in C major, op. 53, and although he had studied it with his former master, he played it not only unmusically but carelessly. Patiently Liszt made various corrections; but when the pupil did not even observe the dynamic signs, this was too much;

³⁸⁹ Quoted in Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 510-511.

³⁹⁰ Judy Tarling, *The weapons of rhetoric* (St Albans, Hertfordshire: Corda Music Publications, 2005), 54.

³⁹¹ Lachmund, *Living with Liszt*, 308.

³⁹² See also Amy Fay, *Music-Study in Germany*, 238-239: “Oh! You cannot *conceive* anything like Liszt’s playing of Beethoven. When *he* plays a sonata it is as if the composition rose from the dead and stood transfigured before you. You ask yourself, “Did *I* ever play that?” But it bores him so dreadfully to hear the sonatas, that though I’ve heard him teach a good many, I haven’t had the courage to bring him one. I suppose he is sick of the sound of them, or perhaps it is because he feels obliged to be conscientious in teaching Beethoven! When one of the young pianists brings Liszt a sonata, he puts on an expression of resignation and generally begins a half protest which he afterward thinks better of—“Well, go on,” he will say, and then he proceeds to be very strict. He always teaches Beethoven with notes, which shows how scrupulous he is about him, for, of course, he knows all the sonatas by heart.”

the Master suddenly snatched the music from the rack, flung it over onto the piano, scattering the leaves as it hit, and his features darkened with the expression of intense wrath as he spurted out in broken phrases: “Cannot even notice a *forte* where it is marked. No—I do not take in washing here—do your washing at home.”³⁹³

We know that in his youth, Liszt appeared to have a different approach. According to his own letter to George Sand, that appeared in print in 1837 (he was 26!), Liszt was embarrassed by some youthful indulgences:

I often performed works by Beethoven, Weber, and Hummel in public and in the salons, where I never failed to hear the comment that my pieces were “very badly chosen.” To my humiliation I must confess: in order to charm a public that is always very slow to embrace the simple sublimity of the Beautiful, I gave in to bravura, and I had absolutely no qualms in my conscience when I altered tempo or changed the composers’ Idea. Yes, I was so reckless in this manner that I included plenty of runs and cadenzas, which certainly ensured me much ignorant applause, but I was led down the wrong path. Fortunately, I soon gave this up.

You cannot believe, my friend, how deeply I lament the bad state of my manner of concessions, which caused a desecrating injury to the spirit and the letter. When I was this child, I had completely replaced my absolute awe of the masterworks of our great geniuses with my demand for originality and personal success. At that time, I did not understand that by extracting a composition from its prescribed measure and making the assumption that it was best to rejuvenate works and embellish them, as a musician, this now appears to me as an architect who desires to place a Corinthian capital upon the pillars of an Egyptian temple.³⁹⁴

Yet, despite Liszt’s confessional tone, some writers have noted that Liszt apparently found it difficult to give up his old habits.³⁹⁵ It is easy to read this as repentance against the sin of textual alteration; that Liszt renounces his worldly excesses, and promises to stay hereafter on the truthful road of musical purism.³⁹⁶ But let us note, for the moment, two points: first the emphasis on the composer’s Idea—he was reckless in changing the composer’s idea, and *this* led him to unshackled bravura—it was desecrating injury to the spirit *and* the letter. We might imagine that he inserted his

³⁹³ Lachmund, *Living with Liszt*, 72.

³⁹⁴ Hall-Swadley trans., *Liszt Collected Writings* Vol 2, Chapt 2. Swadley’s translation is made after Lina Ramann’s German edition, published in the *Gesammelte Schriften* vol. 2 of 1880/1883. It retains some slight difference to the original French edition of 1837. Suttoni’s translation, while slightly less poetic, is based on the French edition and is perhaps closer to the original: “During that time, both at public concerts and in private salons (where people never failed to observe that I had selected my pieces very badly), I often performed the works of Beethoven, Weber and Hummel, and let me confess to my shame that in order to wring bravos from a public that is always slow, in its awesome simplicity, to comprehend beautiful things, I had no qualms about changing the tempos of the pieces or the composers’ intentions. In my arrogance I even went so far as to add a host of rapid runs and cadenzas, which, by securing ignorant applause for me, sent me off in the wrong direction—one that I fortunately knew enough to abandon quickly. You cannot believe, dear friend, how I deplore those concessions to bad taste, those sacrilegious violations of the SPIRIT and the LETTER, because the most profound respect for the masterpieces of great composers has, for me, replaced the need that a young man barely out of childhood once felt for novelty and originality. Now I no longer divorce a composition from the era in which it was written, and any claim to embellish or modernize the works of earlier periods seems just as absurd for a musician to make as it would be for an architect, for example, to place a Corinthian capital on the columns of an Egyptian temple.” In Liszt, *An Artist’s Journey*, trans. Charles Suttoni (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press: 1989), 17-18.

³⁹⁵ Most notably Ernest Newman, *The Man Liszt* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1969 [1934]), 11-15.

³⁹⁶ Particularly in light of such famous remarks as those of Berlioz on Liszt’s Op.106. See William S. Newman, “Liszt’s Interpreting of Beethoven,” 196.

cadenzas and runs where it was not appropriate to the character—the spirit—of the work; it was of this that he was ashamed, not that he violated the letter *per se*. Hence, second, we note the architectural comparison—his embellishments were fundamentally not appropriate to the style; we recall precisely the *same language* in Liszt’s writings about the Hungarian-Gypsy music and the Bohemian national epic.³⁹⁷

After all, it was due to the fact that his pieces were “very badly chosen” that he felt inclined to resort to tricks to keep the listener’s attention; later on he might have simply played a different piece, chosen to suit the audience and occasion. For instance, Berlioz recalled hearing Liszt around 1830, playing the first movement of Beethoven’s “Moonlight” Sonata, and being shocked at how, “following the custom he had adopted to win the applause of the fashionable public,” the young pianist “distorted the music”: instead of the long sustained bass-notes and severely uniform rhythm, Liszt added “trills and tremolos; he accelerated and slowed down the tempo, thus making passion intrude into the sad tranquillity.” But when, “a few years later it was no longer he who had pursued success, but success which breathlessly pursued him,” in the company of elite friends in a darkened salon, Liszt proved he could be an enlightened artist:

Then, after a pause to collect his thoughts, out of the darkness emerged the noble elegy that he had once so perversely distorted. It was now heard in its sublime simplicity; not a single note, not an accent, was added to the composer’s notes and accents. It was the shade of Beethoven himself, his great voice that we heard, called forth by the virtuoso. Each of us felt the characteristic *frisson* in silence and, after the last chord died away, we were still silent—we were weeping.³⁹⁸

Yet a few years later, in 1841, we still find critics complaining about Liszt “diverging from the composer’s indications” in, for instance, Beethoven’s Emperor Concerto.³⁹⁹

I have already spoken in brief about Liszt’s way of playing the compositions of others, and the performance of Beethoven’s concerto has only rendered new validation to my view. Beethoven’s concerto is full of the highest genius; the player’s striving, in my opinion, must be to penetrate it and bring it to the era in its entire signification and singularity. Liszt certainly does not always do so. To him, not even a Beethoven composition is anything other than a racetrack for his own, wild, unrestrained genius, which, chasing here and there, often wholly diverges from the direction that the composer indicated.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁷ See Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 330-331. Quoted above in Part 1, V, b. “Rhapsodies Hongroises.”

³⁹⁸ Hector Berlioz, *The Art of Music and Other Essays (A Travers Chant)*, ed. and trans. Elizabeth Csicsery-Rónay (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 38-40. Quoted in William S. Newman, “Liszt’s Interpretation of Beethoven,” 194-195. Also Katherine Kolb Reeve, “Primal Scenes: Smithson, Pleyel, and Liszt in the Eyes of Berlioz” *19th-Century Music*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Spring, 1995), 228-229. Berlioz’s original article was published in the Paris *Journal des Débats*, 12 March 1837. Interestingly, Liszt’s letter to Sand was published only one month earlier, in the *Revue et gazette musicale*, 12 February 1837.

³⁹⁹ Clara Schumann noted it as the Emperor Concerto, recalling what seems to have been the same occasion on December 16, 1841: “Liszt played for the last time: Beethoven’s E flat in masterly fashion, but then Robert’s Fantasy dreadfully crudely, and after it the *Galop*. He seemed tired, which with his way of life... is not entirely to be wondered at.” Adrian Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, 175.

⁴⁰⁰ Quoted in Zarko Cvejić, *The Virtuoso as Subject*, 107-108. Unsigned review, “Zehntes Abonnementconcert, d. 16 Decbr. 1841”, in *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, January 18, 1842, 23-24.

Without much detail about what textual liberties Liszt actually took, it is perhaps not too hard to imagine a kind of “amplification” that would make the work more “effective.”⁴⁰¹ It is certainly arguable that with a piece such as the Emperor Concerto, a grand concert work, already full of endless bravura, with no shortage of runs and cadenzas—that, in a Lisztian theory of performance, some enhancement could be considered justifiable. For instance, if one had a bigger instrument where a different kind of bravura mode were better able to get the same “effect”—and if one played before a popular audience—one might certainly feel that such liberties might in fact be necessary to “sell” the piece. We note that only a few years later in 1845, when Liszt played the same concerto again in Bonn for the unveiling of the Beethoven monument, before a gathering of the world’s most distinguished musicians and monarchs, Liszt evidently did not find it necessary to make any enhancements, as the critics duly reported:

The concerto in E flat, the *cheval de bataille* of all the Beethoven pianists, fared nobly in the hands of Liszt. It is almost superogatory to speak now of the merits of Liszt’s pianoforte playing as of the beauties of the composition he interpreted. I shall merely, in answer to the abuses of sundry of his quondam friends, who feasted and lived at his expense (not for the first time), give a direct denial to their statements in regard to his manner of rendering the concerto on this occasion. Instead of altering and exaggerating *almost every passage*, he altered but few, and exaggerated none. Instead of giving way to gestures and affectations of manner, he was remarkably quiet and unassuming. In short, I never heard him play in better style—with more of the air of a master and less of the grimace of an *etudiant*. [...] The only thing that surprised me was that Liszt—a thing unusual with him—played from *book*...⁴⁰²

Of course, the concept of adapting one’s playing to suit the occasion was nothing new in 1845.

Czerny, for one, describes the “brilliant style of playing,” suitable for public performance, for him directly comparable to public declamation before a large assembly:

We must all have perceived, that any one who addresses himself to a number of persons assembled together, or who declaims in public (an Actor for instance), must speak quite otherwise, than he who holds a tranquil conversation with one or merely a few persons only. Without speaking very much louder than usual, or bawling out, he must still raise his voice so much, and give to each word such a degree of emphasis, as the number of his hearers, and the dimensions of the place require; not only to make himself intelligible, but also to produce the desired impression by his discourse. A pianist, who is similarly situated, must naturally take the same circumstances into consideration.⁴⁰³

Czerny opposes this to a softer and tranquil style, that in a large concert room before a great number of hearers, would “assuredly not produce a disagreeable impression, but neither [would] it excite any particular attention or admiration from the audience.”⁴⁰⁴ The same piece, however, played in the brilliant style, “a bold, energetic, piquant manner, with a sharply emphatic tone” and a particular

⁴⁰¹ A notated example of the kind of process here is most definitely Liszt’s “edition” of Weber’s *Konzertstück* to be examined in a moment.

⁴⁰² From J. W. Davison in *The Musical World* vol. 20 (c. August 1845), pp. 470. Quoted in Michael Saffle, *Liszt in Germany 1840-1845* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1994), 177.

⁴⁰³ Czerny, *Pianoforte School* vol. 3, 80.

⁴⁰⁴ Czerny, *Pianoforte School* vol. 3, 80.

mode of staccato that obviates an impressive movement of the hand; the “same passage will not only appear more difficult, but it will in reality be so:”

[The same passage played thus] will proportionably [sic], command greater attention; and the audience will discover that the player has the various skips in both hands perfectly at his command, as to precision and firmness, and that he knows how to produce a clear, impressive tone; nay he may even infuse something of the Bravura into his execution of it, and the audience will become anxious to hear more of his performance. *He will therefore have played with brilliancy.*⁴⁰⁵

Liszt must have been familiar with these principles, if not directly from Czerny, then surely through his own considerable experience as a concert performer, as seen from the above anecdote about his three versions of Bach in 1844. Czerny notes that as some pieces are “called brilliant on their Title page; as also in general the greater part of such pieces as are intended for *public* performance, [they] must of course be executed in this manner, as that which is most suitable to them; and many valuable Compositions of this class will fail in their effect, if the performer either from want of skill, or from a wrong notion of the character of the piece, should employ any other style of playing.”⁴⁰⁶ While Czerny does not mention the possibility of altering the composer’s text for this purpose (and in fact explicitly prohibits it in Beethoven’s works, later in the same treatise⁴⁰⁷), one could certainly imagine that somebody with Liszt’s taste, temperament and improvisational skill would not, for the sake of it, rule out the possibility—as evidenced by the many accounts of his divulging in textual liberties.⁴⁰⁸ But let us underline, for the moment, the fact that all of this, the switching performance styles in the same piece on considerations of *intelligibility*, must be based in an aesthetic that sees music as sound, and the virtuoso as an artist—these questions simply *cannot be* if one sees music as only a process of mechanical reproduction of compositions.

So what did these enhancements sound like? Was it a free-for-all, to deface the great masterworks with endless streams of runs and cadenzas, with no consideration for art at all?⁴⁰⁹ While we have no direct evidence for what kinds of alterations Liszt might have afforded to the Emperor Concerto specifically, we do have published evidence for what kind of liberties he thought one might take in the other great bravura concert-piece from his virtuoso years—Weber’s *Konzertstück*.⁴¹⁰ In this

⁴⁰⁵ Czerny, *Pianoforte School* vol. 3, 80.

⁴⁰⁶ Czerny, *Pianoforte School* vol. 3, 80.

⁴⁰⁷ Czerny, *Pianoforte School* vol. 3 part 2, 32. Czerny writes only one general rule for playing Beethoven’s works: “In the performance of his works, (and generally in all classical authors,) the player must by no means allow himself to alter the composition, nor to make any addition or abbreviation.”

⁴⁰⁸ Although by the 1880s, Liszt had apparently reverted to Czerny’s mode regarding Beethoven, as noted above. See Amy Fay, *Music-Study in Germany*, 238-239 and Lachmund, *Living with Liszt*, 72.

⁴⁰⁹ One might recall the opinion on such things of the Liszt of the 1850s, noted already. See chapter “The Virtuoso and Virtuosity” above.

⁴¹⁰ Liszt’s edition of Beethoven’s emperor concerto offers no significant alterations of the solo part, except that it arranges the orchestral part such that it must be played by both pianos in the tutti sections. It is worth pondering the purpose of using both pianos in the context of these aesthetic ideas; for it reduces the “practical” use of his edition in that when it is played with piano accompaniment, it “requires” the soloist to play part of the accompaniment—it is not there merely to increase the “orchestral” spectacle, but it is an integral part of the

work, his suggested alterations are rarely substantive, often only amounting to producing the effect more boldly, for example, by using doubled octaves instead of single lines, and altering awkward patterns to make them easier to execute with brilliance. (Examples 12, 13, 14) Liszt's suggestions are the "ossia," in smaller type on a separate stave)

This musical score for Example 12 consists of two systems. The top system features a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a tempo marking of *And.* and a dynamic marking of *sfz*. The bottom system features a single staff with a tempo marking of *And.* and a dynamic marking of *sfz*. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and accidentals. The page number 26 is centered below the first system, and the page number 17 is centered below the second system.

Example 12: Excerpt from Weber ed. Liszt, *Konzertstück*

This musical score for Example 13 consists of two systems. The top system features a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a tempo marking of *And.* and a dynamic marking of *sfz*. The bottom system features a single staff with a tempo marking of *And.* and a dynamic marking of *sfz*. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and accidentals. The page number 26 is centered below the first system, and the page number 17 is centered below the second system.

Example 13: Excerpt from Weber ed. Liszt, *Konzertstück*

whole, being often given the melody. This would seem to imply that the work was not considered as a show-off vehicle for soloist with unimportant orchestral accompaniment, but rather as a piece of *music* in its own right, where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. See *Beethoven Piano Concertos* ed. Liszt (Stuttgart: Cotta, c.1881).

19

Mit Orchester Begleitung.
With orchestral accompaniment.

p *ma ben marcato*

ten.

Flauti

(Original Version.)
Obol

pp

Fug.

Ohne Orchester.
Without Orchestra.

pp

ten.

Example 14: Excerpt from Weber ed. Liszt, *Konzertstück*

In these examples, Liszt does not propose to alter the “substance” of the piece: he alters not melody, harmony, rhythm or gesture—but only strives, it seems, to make it more easily intelligible to a listener when performed in a concert hall, in the broad sense that Czerny seems to have expected.

Liszt did not limit such suggested alterations to the *Konzertstück*; his editions of the sonatas and solo works of Schubert and Weber, published by Cotta (from which this example is taken), are full of such textual liberties—but they all tend to follow this type. They are all clearly differentiated from the “original” by the use of smaller type, and employ a more expansive pianistic palette while seemingly preserving the “essential material” of the original—Liszt simply offers enhancements to the textures, that he explained thus:

My responsibility with regard to Cotta’s edition of Weber and Schubert I hold to be: fully and carefully to retain the original text together with provisory suggestions of *my* way of rendering it, by means of *distinguishing* letters, notes and signs. [...] In the *various readings* you will probably find some things *not* inappropriate;—I flatter myself that I have thus given performers greater licence, and have increased the effect without damaging or overloading Weber’s style.⁴¹¹

This being the result of “many years of most delightful communion with Weber’s and Schubert’s pianoforte compositions,” Liszt hoped that his suggestions would be “intelligible, *temperate* and satisfactory, and also of some service to ordinary pianists.”⁴¹² We must presume that it was still within

⁴¹¹ Letter to S. Lebert, October 19th, 1868 in La Mara and Bache, *Letters of Franz Liszt* vol 2, 161.

⁴¹² Letter to S. Lebert, October 19th, 1868 in La Mara and Bache, *Letters of Franz Liszt* vol 2, 162.

the context of these kinds of liberties, that Friedheim considered Liszt to be the most “objective” of pianists, merging himself with the composer’s individuality.⁴¹³ And in this context, too, Liszt offered the affirmation that he considered his liberties would have been understood by Schubert, much as he thought with Bach according to Lachmund, quoted above:

In the Sonatas [of Schubert] you will find some various readings which appear to me tolerably *appropriate*. Several passages, and the whole of the conclusion of the C major Fantasia, I have re-written in modern pianoforte form, and I flatter myself that Schubert would not be displeased with it.⁴¹⁴

In his re-writing of this finale (Example 16), despite what we might expect, Liszt actually makes the figuration considerably *less* complicated than Schubert’s original (Example 15), but in a way that would be undoubtedly more effective on Liszt’s 1860s instrument, reminiscent in style of his arrangement of the *Tannhäuser* Overture.



Example 15: Excerpt from Schubert ed. Liszt, *Wanderer Fantasie*, Schubert’s original

⁴¹³ Noting that Friedheim makes very similar kinds of suggestions in his unpublished edition of Liszt’s B minor sonata, although less-so in the Chopin etudes. See *Facsimile of Arthur Friedheim’s Edition of Franz Liszt’s Sonata in B minor* ed. Gerard Carter and Martin Adler (Ashfield, NSW.: Wensleydale Press, 2011). The edition may also be accessed online through the Friedheim Archive at the Peabody Institute, <https://peabody.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16613coll1/id/43/>

⁴¹⁴ Letter to S. Lebert, December 2nd, 1868 in La Mara and Bache, *Letters of Franz Liszt* vol 2, 165.



Example 16: Excerpt from Schubert ed. Liszt, *Wanderer Fantasie*, Liszt's "modernised" version

It is worth emphasising that we are speaking here about Liszt's *editions* of Weber and Schubert, which he apparently did *not* seem to consider to be in the category of *arrangements*, despite the inclusion of what we might consider substantial alterations—for here, after all, they appear as clearly marked suggestions.⁴¹⁵ It should be noted that Liszt also made suggestions of a very similar kind in his ostensibly "faithful" arrangements of Beethoven's symphonies.⁴¹⁶ And clearly, more freedom was afforded in the more pointedly "brilliant" concert arrangements such as his famous Schubert song "transcriptions" and opera fantasias, where the overlay of ornamentation becomes more specifically a part of the process—much like the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. But in these editions, where Liszt made a firm point to keep *his* "way of rendering it" plainly distinguished from the composer's notation, we can see equally clearly just what is meant when Liszt writes about the virtuoso as artist in the context of performing notated music.⁴¹⁷ The composer's original is *literally* kept in view, yet the virtuoso finds the most effective way to render it in sound. Though the subjectivity is unavoidably inherent in this—it appears that the virtuoso "should" tend toward an objective approach in his own mind, what we might perhaps think of objectivity in regard to the *spirit*, rather the letter. One should not distort

⁴¹⁵ The finale of the *Wanderer Fantasie* was typeset as two alternative versions, Liszt's re-arrangement as an appendix.

⁴¹⁶ See his letter to Dr Härtel, March 26th, 1863: "A pianoforte arrangement of these creations must, indeed, expect to remain a very poor and far-off *approximation*. How to instil into the transitory hammers of the Piano breath and soul, resonance and power, fullness and inspiration, colour and accent? —However I will, at least, endeavour to overcome the worst difficulties and to furnish the pianoforte-playing world with as faithful as possible an illustration of Beethoven's genius." La Mara and Bache, *Letters of Franz Liszt* vol 2, 42-43.

⁴¹⁷ Compare this with Bülow and Lebert's famous Beethoven edition, in which many alterations are made to the text usually without any indication to the fact.

the essence of the music *as one understands it*—neither the character, the feeling, the spirit—nor the sound “effect” in the broadest sense, through which those other elements are represented.

c. Tradition: Style and Lore

How, then, does one come to understand such things? If they are not contained in the score—how are we to find out? Well, if it does not come from one’s own “penetrative insight,” it must inevitably come from tradition in one form or another (i.e. through lessons or listening to others), as Fleischman wrote above: “Only the possession of rare artistry, coupled with the guidance of tradition, will enable a pianist to give the ideal performance.”⁴¹⁸ Fleischmann defined tradition as relating to the various ideas that broadly govern the interpretation of a work within the musical society, which presumably become accrued over time and across generations.⁴¹⁹ For if we hold, as she does, that such ideas are *not* contained in the score, then, indeed, if such ideas exist at all, they must come from hearing other musicians (in lessons or performance)—or in other words, from tradition. Friedheim went further when he wrote that “anyone who rejects tradition sets himself in opposition to the facts;” sagely warning: “Let us beware of taking the shadow for the substance.”⁴²⁰

We have to guess that, in this sense, if the substance is the music as sound, as performed; then the score is but a shadow. One should be wary of taking the shadow’s source for granted, simply because it is the shadow that we are most accustomed to seeing. Tradition is our reminder.

As in Plato’s famous allegory of the cave, in which prisoners are trapped eternally to watch the interplay of shadows upon the wall in front of them—shadows cast by the goings-about of the world outside. Unable to turn around, to see either the source of the light or the real objects of which the shadows are but an impression; the prisoners only know existence by these impressions, which they among themselves compare and discuss, and bestow honours upon those who can “discriminate” the happenings of the shadows most effectively. Plato describes the consternation among the prisoners when, one day, one among them is chanced to turn around, towards the light, and leave the cave. After the initial pain caused by his leaving the darkness, his eyes soon adjust, and he learns all about the source of the shadows, and the world of light and colour beyond the cave. But when he returns, to offer gushing salvation to his fellows—they believe him not. Thy eyes have been ruined, they say. The shadows are the truth, they say.⁴²¹

This ancient metaphor, as apt as it is beautiful, as it is all things to all men, offers us a useful window into the notion of tradition in the Liszt school. To them, it appears, the wise old Abbé Liszt was something like the freed prisoner from Plato’s cave. He had seen the light, and been beyond the

⁴¹⁸ Fleischmann, *Tradition and Craft*, 161.

⁴¹⁹ See Fleischmann, *Tradition and Craft*, 160-165.

⁴²⁰ Friedheim ed., *Chopin: Etudes* (G. Schirmer), 1.

⁴²¹ See Plato’s *Republic* 514a.

cave, and was able to tell tales of his adventures—describing the sun and the stars, the green of the grass and the blue of the skies—and for them, it appears, these tales, so wonderful in their poetry that they could excite the imagination; were a thing to be cherished and kept alive, for generations to come.⁴²² This was the tradition. This was not tradition in the sense of stale ritual or vexatious dogmatism, but tradition in the sense of the sublime—the vast corpus of human experience, appearing like a Mount Parnassus to the grim shadows of Plato’s cave. Liszt had climbed. “Liszt looks as if he had been through everything, and has a face *seamed* with experience,” wrote Amy Fay, “He made me think of an old time magician more than anything, and I felt that with a touch of his wand he could transform us all.”⁴²³

In Friedheim’s writings, we find a man positively reverent towards his great teacher. In his edition of Chopin’s *Études*, for instance, he writes:

With the present edition an attempt has even been made to establish a tradition at second-hand. True, the man from whom this tradition is derived was not merely by far the most renowned pianist of the last century, [...] but also enjoyed, while a youth of nearly the same age as Chopin, such intimate intellectual intercourse with him that in Paris, in the early ‘thirties, they were called the Dioscuri. [...] Now, when one has heard, let me say, the majority of these *Études* played repeatedly by Liszt; when, moreover, he has heard in hundreds of lessons and on other occasions pretty much everything that Liszt had set forth concerning them; such a person must certainly be endowed with a remarkably treacherous memory if, after all this, he were not well posted.⁴²⁴

Clearly Liszt’s wisdom was seen not only from his own personal talents, as much as his being linked with many great figures of the past. As Lamond wrote of his first encounter with the master:

Suddenly the door of his bedroom opened, and there before me stood the man who as a child had received the kiss of concertation from the mighty Beethoven himself: who had been, during their lifetime, the friend of Chopin, of Paganini: the pioneer for Hector Berlioz and Richard Wagner: the inventor of a new form in orchestral music, namely the symphonic poem: the teacher, the preceptor of Carl Tausig and Hans von Bülow, and all the great pianists from the ‘forties of the last century down to that day in 1885.⁴²⁵

His eulogy to John Field, his book on Chopin; Liszt’s own writings constantly looked back, as much as his music looked forward. His cherished memories in Vienna as a youngster, studying under Czerny and making the acquaintance of Beethoven; latter days spent in the presence of kings and queens, and the company of many of the great artists, writers and musicians of the age. All of these marvellous tales were at risk of being lost amidst the sands of time. “And so you think that my life is

⁴²² Note Friedheim’s rather puzzling but firm assertion that Liszt was some kind of mystic, not of this realm in *Life and Liszt*, 90

⁴²³ Amy Fay, *Music-Study in Germany*, 207

⁴²⁴ Friedheim ed., *Chopin: Etudes* (G. Schirmer), 1.

⁴²⁵ In Göllicherich, *Liszt’s Master-Classes* Appendix A, 163.

one out of which Romances are woven?,” Janka Wohl recalled Liszt responding slyly, when she asked him to recount some episodes from his long life, so that she might be inspired to write.⁴²⁶

Why were so many of his pupils inclined to publish their own memories of their time with Liszt, for the future generations? Even pupils of his pupils felt the weight of his influence, such as Claudio Arrau (1903-1991) who recalled various Lisztian techniques taught by Liszt-pupil Martin Krause (1853-1918).⁴²⁷ Fleischmann fondly cherished various Lisztian epithets that she heard in her lessons with Stavenhagen and Kellermann.⁴²⁸ August Göllicher (1859–1923) kept a diary with countless sayings and ideas of Liszt; and a systematic volume was published by Lina Ramann, known as the *Liszt-Pädagogium*.⁴²⁹ Hans von Bülow’s (1830-1894) contribution to the once-renowned Bülow-Lebert Beethoven Sonatas edition, is famously dedicated to Liszt as the “fruits of his teaching.”⁴³⁰ This was something of the inspiration to Friedheim, who wanted to create a similar Lisztian monument in his Chopin *Études* edition, referenced above, that is steeped in reminiscences of Liszt’s performances and teaching of those works, which were after all dedicated to him.⁴³¹ The existence of these documents attest to the fact that the pupils of Liszt sincerely valued the wisdom they received from their master—that they valued the tradition.

The narrower idea of tradition, in the sense of ideas governing the manner of performance of a given composition, can perhaps be understood as containing within it two sub-categories. That is, a) ideas relating to traditional performance style (henceforth termed “style-tradition”), referring specifically to how the music is played or how it sounds, and b) ideas relating to traditional *poetic* interpretation, that may or may not be authentically from the composer; what we shall term the “lore” that surrounds certain works.⁴³² A famous example (still today) might be the notion that the final movement of Chopin’s B-flat minor sonata represents the “wind in the graveyard”—an idea that appears to have come from Tausig via Amy Fay’s famous book, and has since become ubiquitous.⁴³³ In the context of the Lisztian aesthetic that we have been discussing, we can see that the poetic interpretation should theoretically contain within it the implications of performance style too, assuming one sees music as sound representative of feeling and so on—but we saw too that in certain

⁴²⁶ Wohl, *Francois Liszt*, 27.

⁴²⁷ See Joseph Horowitz, *Arrau on Music and Performance* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1999), 34-42.

⁴²⁸ See for instance Fleischmann, *Tradition and Craft*, 222.

⁴²⁹ Lina Ramann, *Liszt-Pädagogium* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Hartel, 1986)

⁴³⁰ Noted in Walker, *Reflections on Liszt*, 88.

⁴³¹ Friedheim ed., *Chopin: Études* (G. Schirmer), 1.

⁴³² The existence of these kind of broad traditions of interpretation for particular composers or works seem to have become the impetus behind much “historical performance” research, when it is to be found that the modern “received tradition” in fact differs considerably from the traditions or expectations that may have existed during a composer’s lifetime. A recent example is Anna Scott, “Romanticizing Brahms: Early Recordings and the Reconstruction of Brahmsian Identity” (PhD diss., University of Leiden, 2014) who found that the modern stock in interpretation of Brahms’s music seems to be inconsistent with that master’s own ideas. The present study obviously starts from the similar considerations.

⁴³³ See Amy Fay, *Music-study in Germany*, 194.

cases (such as the Bach example above) the interpretative ideas arose not from poetic imagery but from a purely musical understanding.

The question of how the ideas of tradition relate to any particular performance may be approached via Friedheim. In an unpublished essay, which seems to have been intended to introduce his unpublished edition of the Liszt B minor sonata, Friedheim waxes about style and tradition:

In our days there is a faction among musicians of all nations who flatly reject the idea of tradition. But nobody would deny what is termed style in a musical performance. What is style? Style is the manner in which the works of a master are rendered, displaying their innermost character naturally and convincingly, leaving nothing to doubt or misunderstanding. With rare exceptions this manner is developed during the lifetime of the master [...]. Once this style is established [...], it is accepted by everybody [...]. Therefore: what is style after all? An accumulated crystallised tradition.⁴³⁴

So then tradition according to Friedheim is the broad set of ideas, that, when brought to a particular performance, manifests as style. Style here is in the sense of the particular—what this specific performance sounded like. This is subtly distinguished from the broader *idea* of style in the universal sense, the sub-category of tradition, knowledge of which might *inform* the particular performance (becoming established during the life of the master, etc.). But style in the particular may come about via lore-tradition or style-tradition; it is like the tradition made tangible in sound—hence the “style-particular” is crystallised tradition.

It might be necessary to re-emphasise that insofar as tradition refers to the collection of ideas pertaining to interpretation and performance, it refers wholly to things *outside* the score—in the context of Liszt’s virtuoso as artist, we might assume that a relation between a particular performance and tradition bears dependence on the player’s individual understanding/interpretation of the traditional style or lore. This is also what appears to be meant by Fleischmann when she writes “Only the possession of rare artistry, coupled with the guidance of tradition, will enable a pianist to give the ideal performance.”⁴³⁵

In this context, it appears that tradition is a set of guidelines rather than a dogma, and presumably, if the Lisztian aesthetic values individuality, an artist should feel free to break with tradition whenever they feel it appropriate, or at least feel that they are not *bound* by tradition to perform in a particular way. Ultimately, it seems that tradition is inserted to prevent arbitrary or literal interpretation, when a specific kind of interpretation might have been necessary—much like the dry or “robot-like” performances that are likely to result, as Fleischmann observed, of pianists who reject the idea of tradition.⁴³⁶

⁴³⁴ Rumson, “Friedheim’s Edition,” 24.

⁴³⁵ Fleischmann, *Tradition and Craft*, 161.

⁴³⁶ Fleischmann, *Tradition and Craft*, 161.

Liszt-disciple Lina Ramann (1833-1912), in her biography of Liszt, seems to affirm this supposition. She observed that Liszt's teaching was centred around the "passing-down of the style of delivery [Vortrag], as the latter evidently emerges as a reflection of the creative spirit."⁴³⁷ She also points out that it was Liszt's *own* rendering and interpretation (of the masters) that he wished to pass down.⁴³⁸ Liszt was very much concerned with developing the pupils such that it allowed their individual talents to flourish, as such "his form of teaching was completely free," offering insights, commentary, demonstrations of his own manner of playing, comparisons with other art-forms; "he did not hand over fully-formed rules, although the rules he did offer were art-based, they were not formulas."⁴³⁹ She continues:

He criticised the performance [Voträge] with playing and words; that by giving the model on the pianoforte, this through aesthetic or historical explanations, providing analogous examples which he took from the poetry of all lands, the sculptures, the painting and nature. His speech was short, flashing, more aphoristic than lingering. He preferred to express his intentions through illustration and gesture. His facial expressions spoke. The imagery was new, apt, taken from all regions of the mind [Geistesregionen]. Often, a single word was enough to illuminate entire stretches of a composition.⁴⁴⁰

Yet within this, creative-individuality remained central. It seems that he wished to position himself as an inspiring light, to provide living example or an image of *one* ideal towards which the student might strive with his or her own playing—it would have to be left to them accomplish the rest of it. This was Ramann's conclusion, also:

Looking at Liszt's activity as a teacher in principle and form, shows it to be an expression of a creative force, sharply delineating the path of progress. A great pedagogue, he was still no "music professor." His teaching began where it ended. Only genius does that—genius points in the direction of new paths. It was in complete contrast to the existing forms and methods of music education. It was diametrically opposed to the conservatory system, through the principle of progress and free individual development.⁴⁴¹

Clearly within the context of his teaching, which was in essence just the passing on of tradition, the principle of creative-individuality was held up by Liszt as of prime importance.⁴⁴² The Lisztian tradition, therefore, is to grant "free individuality" to the Virtuoso, who should at the same time preserve the tradition.

⁴³⁷ Lina Ramann, *Franz Liszt: Als Künstler und Mensch*, 101. Translation mine.

⁴³⁸ Lina Ramann, *Franz Liszt: Als Künstler und Mensch*, 102. "Liszt's mission as a teacher aimed to transfer the technique he had created and the performance of his own compositions to others, while on the other hand, he intended to transmit to his pupils and disciples, his conception and rendering of the works of the masters." Translation mine.

⁴³⁹ Lina Ramann, *Franz Liszt: Als Künstler und Mensch*, 104. Translation mine.

⁴⁴⁰ Lina Ramann, *Franz Liszt: Als Künstler und Mensch*, 104. Translation mine.

⁴⁴¹ Lina Ramann, *Franz Liszt: Als Künstler und Mensch*, 110. Translation mine.

⁴⁴² See Lina Ramann, *Franz Liszt: Als Künstler und Mensch*, 106. "The individual opinion of the student would be upheld by Liszt, even if it did not correspond with his. "You can do it that way," but, "I prefer it this way," he would say, and then demonstrate the part in question. But he did try to limit extravagance..." Translation mine.

In the context of the nineteenth-century music world more generally, we can observe that the notion of stylistic tradition seems to have been an established practice. We have already noted Czerny's delineation of the "brilliant style," which was equally a genre of composition as it was a manner of playing. But Czerny also defines other styles: including an "impassioned or characteristic style," and a "strict style."⁴⁴³ And beyond this: there are distinct styles for different composers, each of whom are seen by him as at the head of a distinct school, "we may therefore assume the 6 following styles of execution as so many principal schools:" these were Clementi's style, Cramer and Dussek's style, the style of Mozart's school, Beethoven's style, and the style associated with the "modern brilliant school" of Hummel, Kalkbrenner and Moscheles.⁴⁴⁴ And still "a new style is just now beginning to be developed, which may be called a mixture of and improvement on all those which preceded it. It is chiefly represented by Thalberg, Chopin and Liszt."⁴⁴⁵ Each of these styles have distinct characteristics, and the diligent student of music must aim to be adept in all of them: "the reflecting Pianist will easily perceive that the works of each Composer must be executed in the style in which he wrote; and that the performer will assuredly fail, if he attempts to play all the works of the Masters above named in the self-same style," writes Czerny.⁴⁴⁶

We note that this section in Czerny's treatise comes right after the section on playing at sight, and right before the chapter on transposition: this was basic stuff for the nineteenth-century pianist. We've already seen that Friedheim, at the opposite end of the century, was still assuming that "nobody would deny what is termed style in a musical performance," defining it in much the same way: "Style is the manner in which the works of a master are rendered, displaying their innermost character naturally and convincingly, leaving nothing to doubt or misunderstanding."⁴⁴⁷ Ramann defined two aspects of style, namely "the compositional style of a master, and the performance style [Vortragsstil] of his compositions." Both are "of the same origin," based in the "individuality" of the composer, the performance style derived from the compositional one; "purity of style in performance can only be spoken of" when the peculiarities of both styles "combine into one." Thus, similar to Czerny, Ramann asserts that "Performing Beethoven in the Bach style, Liszt in the Mozart style, Mendelssohn in the Schumann style, would be so nonsensical as to be inartistic."⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴³ On the impassioned style see Czerny, *Pianoforte School* vol 3, 83. On the strict style see Ibid, 89.

⁴⁴⁴ Czerny, *Pianoforte School* vol 3, 100.

⁴⁴⁵ Czerny, *Pianoforte School* vol 3, 100.

⁴⁴⁶ Czerny, *Pianoforte School* vol 3, 100.

⁴⁴⁷ Rumson, "Friedheim's Article," 24.

⁴⁴⁸ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 3. "Das Wort 'Stil' als Kollektivbegriff aber teilt sich wieder in den Kompositionsstil eines Meisters und den Vortragsstil seiner Kompositionen. Der letztere fällt dem Gebiet der reproduzierenden Kunst zu. Er ist vom Kompositionsstil abgeleitet, von ihm abhängig und wurzelt in seiner Eigenart. Demgemäß sind beide ein und desselben Ursprungs, welch letzterer in der Individualität eines Meisters sich gründet. Von hier aus gestalten sich die Gesetze für beide. // In Folge dessen wird von einer Reinheit des Stils seitens der Reproduktion nur dann die Rede sein können, wenn die Eigenart des Kompositionsstils und die des Vortragsstils sich zur Einheit verbinden. Beethoven im Bach-, Liszt im Mozart- Mendelssohn im Schumann-Stil vorzutragen, wäre so widersinnig wie unkünstlerisch."

In the latter half of the century, it appears that styles became more specifically designated upon lines of genre as much as composer. For instance, the abundance of national dance styles such as the mazurka and polonaise, could well imply a characteristic performance style to those who regularly danced them in the ballroom—no doubt suggesting not merely a tempo, but also various rhythmic swings and accents.⁴⁴⁹ Liszt, in his book on Chopin, spends a considerable number of pages describing the history and peculiar character of the polonaise, before a similar essay on the mazurka:

In everything that concerns expression, Chopin's mazurkas differ widely from his polonaises; indeed, in character they are totally unlike. In the mazurka the bold and vigorous colouring of the polonaise gives place to the most delicate, tender and evanescent shades; it is not the nation as a whole, in a united, single and characteristic impetus, which is brought before us, but the character and the impressions become purely personal, and are always individualised and divided.⁴⁵⁰

Liszt was, evidently, attempting to impart an impression of the style of playing that Chopin brought to these works, apparently essential to their very nature but difficult to convey in notation:

By his peculiar style of playing, Chopin imparted with the most fascinating effect this constant rocking, making the melody undulate to and fro like a skiff driven over the bosom of tossing waves. This manner of execution, which set so peculiar a seal upon his own style of performance, was indicated by the words *tempo rubato* affixed to his works; a *tempo* broken, agitated, interrupted; a movement flexible while it was abrupt and languishing, and as vacillating as the flame under the fluctuating breath which agitates it. This direction is no longer found in his later productions; he was persuaded that if the player understood them he would divine this regular irregularity. All his compositions ought to be played with this accentuated and measured swaying and rocking, though it is difficult for those who never heard him play to catch hold of this secret of their proper execution. He was desirous to impart this style to his many pupils, especially those of his own land.⁴⁵¹

It certainly appears that the system of notation itself could not explicitly communicate the essence of the style, with its subtle or not-so-subtle flexibilities of rhythm and time; but to those who *knew*, the notation could communicate all the essential information. But according to Liszt, only those who heard Chopin play would ever really understand—and after Chopin had died, it was left to his pupils and those such as Liszt to preserve the tradition of this style. And yet, even with page after page of poetical description by none other than Liszt himself, we are left with frustratingly little concrete information about what this style actually sounded like—to attempt to re-construct it without access to the *sound* of the stylistic tradition, we would be simply relying on guesswork. And even, as much as Liszt may have tried his best to keep the Chopin tradition (for instance) alive, he could do none else

⁴⁴⁹ Such styles are clearly still evident in early recordings. Ignaz Friedman's mazurkas are most famously pronounced in their swinging rhythmic effect; but others, such as Rosenthal, Koczalwski, Grunfeld and Rachmaninov offer subtler shadings of a similar effect. One wonders whether pianists of the day would recognise mazurka elements in other compositions (those not literally called "mazurkas"), such as the second piece from Schumann's *Kinderszenen*, or the "tempo di Mazurka" in Chopin's Op.44 Polonaise—and strive bring out the mazurka rhythm. See *Ignaz Friedman: Complete Recordings Vol.3* (2003: Naxos 8.110690).

⁴⁵⁰ Franz Liszt, *Life of Chopin* trans. John Broadhouse (London: William Reeves, n.d. [c. 1925]), 56.

⁴⁵¹ Liszt, *Life of Chopin*, 84.

than pass it down through *his* interpretation—a fact that he presumably understood well.⁴⁵² From this we can see why the Liszt school might have been concerned about preserving such tradition in writings and teaching (not to mention playing), because without such documentation, we are ultimately at risk of losing something that was apparently essential to the understanding of these musical works. This even for our finest virtuosi, because an important part of the music, none less than “the secret of its proper execution,” has *not* been preserved in the notation as Liszt here states about Chopin’s later works. Was this an isolated case? Liszt made a similar statement in regard to his Schubert and Weber editions discussed above:

My endeavour with this work is to avoid all quibbling and pretentiousness, and to make the edition a practical one for teachers and players. And for this reason at the very last I added a goodly amount of fingering and pedal marks [...].—With regard to the deceptive *Tempo rubato*, I have settled the matter provisionally in a brief note (in the finale of Weber’s A-flat major Sonata); other occurrences of the *rubato* may be left to the taste and momentary feeling of gifted players. A metronomical performance is certainly tiresome and nonsensical; time and rhythm must be adapted with the melody, the harmony, the accent and the poetry... But how to indicate all this? I shudder at the thought of it.⁴⁵³

This letter is often used as evidence that Liszt did not play in time—which of course is plain—but we should note that the emphasis is really on the fact that these subtleties were troublesome to *notate*, and hence must be left to the taste of gifted players. In the next paragraph he quotes St. Paul: *Littera occidit, spiritus vivificat!*⁴⁵⁴ The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

The *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, much like the polonaise and mazurka, would have implicated a particular performance style, a fact well known even if the specifics might differ from Liszt’s own ideas. Liszt’s pupil Eugen d’Albert for one noted the following in the preface to his edition of the collection:

The manner of interpreting these works is so widely known that I have refrained from the attempt of forcing them into one narrow channel of academic rules. [...] Metronome-marks I have naturally abstained from putting, as much in pieces like these wild children of the

⁴⁵² Ramann writes “Liszt’s mission as a teacher aimed to transfer the technique he had created and the performance of his own compositions to others, while on the other hand, he intended to transmit to his pupils and disciples, his conception and rendering of the works of the masters.” Lina Ramann, *Franz Liszt: Als Künstler und Mensch*, 104. Translation mine. One remembers the “coda” to Liszt’s book on Chopin: “In pondering upon our long friendship with Chopin and on the exceptional admiration we have always felt for him from the day of his first appearance in the world of music; remembering that, being like him an artist, we have on frequent occasions been the interpreter of his inspirations—an interpreter, we can safely venture to say, loved and charmed by himself; remembering, too, that we have more often than others received from his own lips the spirit of his style [...]—we have fondly imagined that these connecting circumstances imposed upon us a nearer and dearer duty than that of simply adding an unformed and anonymous stone to the growing pyramid of homage which his contemporaries are building in his honour.” *Life of Chopin*, 239-240.

⁴⁵³ Letter to S. Lebert, January 10th, 1870 in La Mara and Bache, *Letters of Franz Liszt* vol.2, 194.

⁴⁵⁴ Letter to S. Lebert, January 10th, 1870 in La Mara and Bache, *Letters of Franz Liszt* vol.2, 194.

Pusztá, which are always moving in rhapsodic rubato-rhythms, such directions would be sheer folly.⁴⁵⁵

Liszt wrote in a similar vein in *Des Bohémiens*, proffering that Gypsy music, so free in its rhythm, was of a different order entirely than the mazurka:

Nevertheless, these rhythms assume a gait which is not only free in itself but freely treated. There are no trepidations to be met with, no hesitations similar to those of the waltz or the mazurka. On the other hand, their diversity is infinite. Their rule is to have no rule.⁴⁵⁶

Liszt also warned that notation, at least in poorly-transcribed cases, gives little to no impression of the style of performance so essential to Gypsy music itself:

When we examine the dead-letter of these improvisations (which in our country are to be met with at every step, or perhaps we should say at every music-shop) we find many a *Lassan* or *Friska*, originally taken from a Bohemian Hongraise, which has not only lost its name, but could never convey to any reader the least idea of the *brio* of execution of the Bohemian virtuosi, the incessant mutation of their rhythms, the burning eloquence of their phrasing, or the expressive accent of their declamation.⁴⁵⁷

It seems that, much like with his book on Chopin, one of Liszt's main objectives with *Des Bohémiens* was to provide a poetical description of this playing style to people who would never have the chance to hear a Gypsy band play. While surely no substitute for the real thing, it does at least suggest that Liszt did not believe that his scores in isolation would give enough information for performers, especially those who were not familiar with the sound of Gypsy music.

In the case of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, as we've seen, there was not only a style that Liszt wanted to associate with them—but also a poetry, a lore. To see the elements of the style, the *brio* of execution and incessant mutation of rhythms, *not* as easy café entertainment or musical debauchery; but *as* burning eloquence, the soaring expression of sentiments noble and painful—this required explanation for, by and large, these are *interpretative* elements that could not possibly be notated.

Liszt's characterisations of the polonaise and mazurka took a similar route. He did not bother with a guided description of how one actually plays the style, but instead describes the dances in the context of Poland's history, in the sense of the impression it gave to observers, what it meant to the people who traditionally danced these steps—the rest is left to the gifted interpreter. Of the Polonaise, for instance:

A rhythmical, regularly cadenced, undulating step was secured, and the entire form of each dancer swayed with graceful wavings and harmonious poisons. The dancers were very careful not to go forward with too much haste, or to take each other's places as if urged on by

⁴⁵⁵ Liszt: *Ungarische Rhapsodien* ed. Eugen d'Albert (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne, 1906) preface. It is worth noting that d'Albert, in his edition of Liszt's E-flat Concerto, writes that he is "opposed to all metronome marks." See Liszt: *Klavierkonzert No. 1, Es dur* ed. d'Albert, (Berlin: Schlesinger, 1907), 3.

⁴⁵⁶ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 304.

⁴⁵⁷ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 325.

some relentless necessity. On they went like swans gliding down a slow and tranquil stream, their flexible forms swayed to and fro as by the ebb and flow of unseen and gentle waves.⁴⁵⁸

This “parade exhibiting the entire splendour of a company gratified with its own admiration and fully conscious of its own elegance, brilliancy and noble courtesy,”⁴⁵⁹ described thus, gives us little clue about which beats should be accented, or what tempo to correctly play the polonaise—instead, however, it does give us a clue about what the dance *felt* like. And as we’ve come to know, for Liszt this was more important than mere correctness. As he wrote in his introduction, although Chopin’s works were “so full of refinements of harmony never before heard, bold and startling in their originality” that one might well “dissect his magnificent pages, which furnish so fine a field for scientific observation,” *Liszt’s* book was “not the time or place for such an examination, which would only be of interest to adepts in counterpoint and thoroughbass.”⁴⁶⁰ Rather:

[Chopin’s] works have become known and popular because of the *feeling* which they contain—feeling of a kind pre-eminently romantic, individual, subjective; peculiar to the composer and yet evoking immediate response and sympathy; appealing not merely to the heart of his country, indebted to him for yet another glory, but to all those who are capable of being touched by the misfortunes of exile or touched by the tenderness of love.⁴⁶¹

In another example, that of the Waltz, Lachmund recalled Liszt saying: “I do not dance the waltz, but I know quite well what the rhythm of the waltz should be like!”⁴⁶² Evidently if one were to play a waltz, one should be aware of such things. Even in the Rhapsodies, Borodin recalls a scene relating to the fifth Rhapsody (Example 17), the *Héroïde élégaique*, where Liszt found helpful the following method, to impart the idea of the mood and the rhythm to a young pupil:

When it came to Mademoiselle Timanova’s turn, he made her play his Rhapsody in E minor, which she was studying for her concert at Kissingen. After a few little remarks he sat down to the piano and played a few passages from the piece with his iron fingers. ‘This must be as solemn as a triumphal march,’ he cried. Springing up from his chair and putting his arm through Mademoiselle Timanova’s he paced solemnly up and down the room, humming the theme of the Rhapsody. The young people began to laugh.⁴⁶³

⁴⁵⁸ Liszt, *Life of Chopin*, 35-36.

⁴⁵⁹ Liszt, *Life of Chopin*, 37.

⁴⁶⁰ Liszt, *Life of Chopin*, 12.

⁴⁶¹ Liszt, *Life of Chopin*, 12.

⁴⁶² Lachmund, *Living with Liszt*, 325. Lachmund recalls a charming scene relating to the Waltz on another occasion, *Ibid.* 213

⁴⁶³ Quoted in Adrian Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, 543-44.



Example 17: Excerpt from Rhapsody No. 5, mm. 1-2

While the character of such a work, as a slow and mournful march, may seem painfully obvious; in this case, Liszt evidently found it expedient to communicate the idea by relating to the actual feeling of solemnly marching, rather than *just* demonstrating with his playing. Perhaps he thought the young pupil might miss the point, if he did not make this connection—that she might have focused on the movement of his fingers, or the direct sound of his playing, rather than noticing the feeling that he wished to evoke.

Of course, he did not *need* to have her march around the room—he could have just played the example, told her to accent these notes in such and such a way, and left it at that. But it certainly seems that Liszt really *believed* in these poetic elements, and he knew from experience that not all pupils would understand him from the first.⁴⁶⁴

Liszt was probably conscious of such reservations long before his twilight years. Why, after all, did he choose to affix so many of his compositions with poetical names and associations? And not merely pretty titles either, or the short epithets that were enough for some of his contemporaries, like Schumann or Henselt. Liszt, as always, went further—his *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* came with French poems, while the *Années de pèlerinage* had pictures; the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* got an entire book. This stuff cost real money to produce, and Liszt clearly felt it was essential in some way to his musical works. Why?

In 1856, in the preface to what was at that point Liszt's most significant compositional achievement, his collection of *Symphonic Poems*, Liszt stated the following. Firstly, that these new works were difficult, and would thus require more rehearsal time than was customary. And then he continued:

At the same time, I wish to remark: I would like to remove, as far as possible, the chopped-up, mechanical, bar-centric [taktmäßige] up and down kind of playing, that is still customary in many places: instead I recognise as valid only the *periodischen Vortrag*, bringing out the appropriate accents and the rounding off of the melodic and rhythmic nuances, as necessary.

⁴⁶⁴ See Siloti "Liszt told me that he could explain nothing to pupils who did not understand him in the first." in *My Memories of Liszt*, 346.

The life-blood of a symphonic performance lies in the spiritual conception of the conductor, provided that in the orchestra the appropriate means for its realization are present; otherwise it would seem advisable not to deal with works which do not claim daily popularity.

Although I have endeavoured to clarify my intentions by means of precise indications, I do not deny that much, indeed the most essential, cannot be put down on paper; it is to be found only through the artistic ability of both the conductor and the orchestra, in a sympathetic and enthusiastic reproduction. It is therefore up to the goodwill of my fellow artists to do most of the important work.⁴⁶⁵

We see that, in essence, Liszt was worried about the fact that the success of his new works would hinge not merely on an adequate or accurate performance; but that they would require sympathetic and enthusiastic performances by musicians who could combine the traits of technical competence and artistic ability, under the direction of a conductor with the right spiritual conception, all the while facing what was likely to be a manner of playing entirely distinct from their usual course. Evidently, much of this was unable to be notated—it had to rely on the attitude and aptitude of the players.

If we consider it from the Lisztian point of view, as we've been unpacked it above, all this seems quite plain. The difficulty of Liszt's point of view, however, lies in the fact that not *everyone* was party to the same line of reasoning; and even if he *did* attempt to make clear that the "most essential" elements of his compositions were *not* to be found in the notes, he would nevertheless be treated to mocking sarcasm, as was made clear by the review of Hanslick; who, perhaps rather ironically given Liszt's point, found the preface laughable:

The 'symphonic poems' are published with explanatory prefaces by Liszt, drawn up in that horrible sentimental bombast associated with Richard Wagner. Just as with these prefaces, which provide an explanation as a ballet programme explains a deaf-and-dumb-dance, the pronunciamiento printed on top of all Liszt scores throws a revealing light upon the falsity of his method. 'Although I have endeavoured,' it runs, 'to elucidate my intentions by definite instructions, I cannot deny that many, even the most essential ideas, cannot be put down on paper.' I leave it to the musically educated reader to decide how one can still speak of musical compositions when the 'most essential ideas' cannot be conveyed by notes. Conductors and players, therefore, have to be gifted with special divine insight—and audiences, too.⁴⁶⁶

This criticism spells out, conveniently, the point of difference between Liszt's approach and the approach of a certain class of his contemporaries—shedding some light on just *why* Liszt may have felt it necessary to attach things such as titles, poems and pictures to many of his compositions, including the Symphonic Poems.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁵ Liszt, German Preface to *Symphonic Poems*, (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1856). Translation mine. Interestingly in the French version of the preface, the language appears rather kindly and suggestive rather than the polemical tone offered in the German.

⁴⁶⁶ In Eduard Hanslick, *Music Criticisms 1846-99*, ed. and trans. Henry Pleasants (London: Penguin Books, 1963), 55.

⁴⁶⁷ The fact that things may have differed between France and Germany is perhaps represented by the difference in tone between Liszt's two prefaces—Hanslick was probably the prime candidate for representing the German musical establishment outside Weimar, at this point in time (c.1856).

What Hanslick's criticism makes clear is that because Liszt's musical aesthetic is dependent on sound representative of feeling—it would seem to *require* that there be some kind of “explanation” of the intended feeling, such as a descriptive title; for, rather than being superfluous, as implied by Hanslick who would like to think that music should speak for itself, the poetic title in some sense makes it so that conductors, players and audiences *do not* need some kind of “special divine insight” to discern the broad meaning of the difficult and unusual music, which might otherwise be impenetrable.⁴⁶⁸

These arguments aside, the more important point is that these descriptive titles guide the conductor and the orchestra in their performance. In a society that tends to see music simply “as it is” rather than seeking to appreciate what it might signify; it would seem natural that if one wanted to publish music that, in performance, was intended to signify something in particular, that attaching a suggestive title to it would be something of a necessity. One could well simply leave it to chance, as Chopin apparently did with his *Ballades*, rumoured to be inspired by particular poems.⁴⁶⁹ Yet for Liszt, as we saw already from his letter to George Sand (quoted in the introduction), from as early as 1837, he was concerned that the appreciation of a composition would be dependent on the performance capturing the appropriate spirit; it would be vital that the performer, at least, understood the task.⁴⁷⁰ This is made doubly important when one considers that the “most essential ideas” were not able to be put down on paper, and would always in the final instance rest on the sympathy, ability and enthusiasm of the player, as Liszt noted in his preface.⁴⁷¹ The necessity of all this, is rendered still more emphatic when one considers the fact that these *Symphonic Poems* would apparently rely upon a particular way of conceiving music, which Liszt here termed the “*Periodischer Vortrag*.”

d. **The *Periodischer Vortrag***

In the German preface to the *Symphonic Poems*, Liszt remarked that he wanted to “remove, as far as possible, the chopped-up, mechanical, bar-centric [taktmäßige] up and down kind of playing, that is

⁴⁶⁸ Liszt did not expect the audience to necessarily divine this either. He did apparently expect that the title and a short poetical explanation might be given to the listener. See the preface material to the first *Symphonic Poem*, *Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne*: “These words, indicating the content, are to be added to the program of the concerts, in which the following symphonic poem is performed. . . .” an explanation of the poetical meaning of the work is then given.

⁴⁶⁹ See Fleischmann, *Tradition and Craft*, 202-210. She discusses some of the traditional poetical associations between the ballades and certain poems by Mickiewicz, urging that pianists make up their own mind about the validity of the association in each case: “Writers who deal with the *Ballades* usually refer to an alleged connection between the *Ballades* and certain of Mickiewicz's poems, but dismiss the subject on the grounds that the connection cannot be adequately authenticated, and that in any event such programmatic explanations are irrelevant, or even misleading and harmful. These objections, however, do not seem to allay the references to Mickiewicz's poems, which continue to be named even in the latest works of reference, and to be dismissed, often – one may suspect – without having been read or the possibility of their being related to the *Ballades* examined.” *Ibid*, 202.

⁴⁷⁰ Hall-Swadley, *Liszt: Collected Writings* vol.2, chapter 3.

⁴⁷¹ When he wrote: “It is therefore up to the goodwill of my fellow artists to do most of the important work.” Liszt, German Preface to *Symphonic Poems*, (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1856). Translation mine.

still customary in many places,” in its place he wanted to advocate what he calls “*Periodischer Vortrag*,” translating roughly as “phrase playing;” adding, rather vaguely, that one must pay attention to “bringing out the appropriate accents and rounding off of the melodic and rhythmic nuances, as necessary.”⁴⁷² But what does this mean? Why did this require special comment, in such authoritative language?

In the third volume of her “official” biography of Liszt, published 1894, Lina Ramann defines the *Periodischer Vortrag* as the “marking the rhythm of the thoughts, instead of the bars.”⁴⁷³ While a similarly vague definition, cited within the context of her chapter on Liszt’s conducting, we do get some clue as to the essence of the idea. Ramann posits the concept as a defining aspect of Liszt’s reformed method of conducting, called “free conducting.”⁴⁷⁴ This free conducting was in opposition to the traditional method of beating time, called here “bound conducting”:

Before Beethoven, the works of instrumental music were rooted in the principle of formal beauty and spiritual integration, the principle of bound conducting (the beating of tempo and metre [Takteinheiten]) was therefore entirely justified. When, with Beethoven, however, they entered the Romantic realm of ideas and subjective moods, the classical principles of conducting had to develop sharper expression of the accentuation; in addition to the metrical accent the rhetorical accent was required—derived from the musical thoughts, not from the arithmetic of form—thus, the earlier principles of tempo and metre were not abolished, but romanticism was also evident. In distinction from his earlier works, Beethoven’s “second period” made use of sections of heightened drama and contrast, demanding on the one hand the freely dramatic [style], and on the other hand the “*Periodischen Vortrag*”; this necessitated the use of free-conducting alongside the former principle of bound-conducting. The practical implementation of these principles on the part of the conductor leads to the highest result, which Liszt calls “Style in execution.”⁴⁷⁵

It seems that these two conducting techniques were used by Liszt in conjunction with each other, presumably depending on the character of the particular passage. In certain cases, it might be necessary to beat time; while in other cases, the use of such a turbulent gesture might go against the nature of the music:

⁴⁷² Clive Brown translates this passage as Liszt wished to “see an end to mechanical, fragmented up and down playing, tied to the bar-line, which is still the rule in many places and can only acknowledge as appropriate the phrase-based style of performance, with the prominence of special accents and the rounding off of melodic and rhythmic shading.” See Clive Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice, 1750-1900* (Oxford, UK.: Oxford University Press, 1999), 27. The German reads: *Den periodische Vortrag, mit dem Hervortreten der besondern Accente und der Abrundung der melodischen und rhythmischen Nuancierung.*

⁴⁷³ Lina Ramann, *Franz Liszt: Als Künstler und Mensch* vol. 2b (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1894), footnote to 93: “Das Markiren des Rhythmus der Gedanken anstatt des Einzeltaktes.” Ramann cites the symphonic poem preface as the source for this term. Note Friedheim in his chapter on Liszt the Conductor: “Liszt’s biographer, Lina Ramann, speaks of three great pathbreakers of performing art in the era after Beethoven – Berlioz, Liszt and Wagner. But Berlioz alone is entitled to the claim of not having discovered the “Law of Melos” and its ideal treatment – not to confine the significance of time to each measure, but to transfer it to the rhythm of thought.” In Friedheim, *Life and Liszt*, 104.

⁴⁷⁴ See Lina Ramann, *Franz Liszt: Als Künstler und Mensch* vol. 2b (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1894), 92-95

⁴⁷⁵ Lina Ramann, *Franz Liszt: Als Künstler und Mensch*, 92-93. Translation mine.

With these goals in mind, it was necessary to go beyond the constraints of the established practice, to develop and use free conducting—in short: to derive the conductor’s output from the spirit of the thing. At the Weimar court theatre, Liszt soon won all the technical requirements to bring this about [...]. They [the Weimar orchestra] understood and followed every wave of his hand, the gesture like the expression, with or without a baton. They understood him, for example, when in lyrical parts his baton seemed to follow more than it commanded, or seemed entirely at rest in places of lyrical rising and falling; in epic and declamatory moments, he would indicate just the main and rhetorical accents; and when a solo was played, he would simply put down the baton, to ensure freedom of movement for the artist.⁴⁷⁶

But what did this free-conducting actually entail? The distinction is made against the idea of beating time—something which Liszt himself wrote about as troublesome, in his oft-quoted letter on conducting of 1853:

These works [modern Romantic compositions], starting with Beethoven’s last style, to my mind demand from soloists and orchestras alike [...] a progress in the style of execution itself, in accentuation, in rhythm, in the manner of phrasing and declaiming certain passages, and of distributing light and shade. This establishes between the musicians and conductor a natural link which is quite different from the one cemented in to position by an imperturbable beating of time. In many cases, even the rough, literal maintenance of time and of each continuous bar |1,2,3,4,|1,2,3,4,| clashes with the sense and the expression. There, as elsewhere, the letter killeth the spirit, a thing to which I will never subscribe. [...] In my opinion, the real task of a conductor is making himself seem superfluous. We are helmsmen, not oarsmen.⁴⁷⁷

We must presume, therefore, that Liszt’s free-conducting was probably not based on beating time. It appears, on the surface, that it might be linked with the idea of a *Periodischer Vortrag*, a phrase-based style of playing, as Liszt seems to have spelled out in a footnote to part of his oratorio *Die Legende von der Heiligen Elisabeth* (1869), saying that he would like to ban the “usual” kind of conducting from all of his works:

At this point and at the entrance of the chorus, the orchestra should sound transfigured. The conductor is asked to scarcely mark the beats, and since this has been said, it should be added, that the composer considers the usual time-beating (Taktschlagen) as an unseemly, senseless, and brutal habit; and would like to ban it from all his works. Music is a succession of tones that attract and enclose one another—and should not be chained by time *beating* (Taktprügel)!⁴⁷⁸

This rather obscure footnote offers an unusually clear insight into Liszt’s conception of music and performance alike—music is a succession of tones that enclose one another—i.e. music is a

⁴⁷⁶ Lina Ramann, *Franz Liszt: Als Künstler und Mensch*, 93-94. Translation mine.

⁴⁷⁷ Quoted in Walker, *The Weimar years*, 281-282.

⁴⁷⁸ Liszt, *Die Legende von der Heiligen Elisabeth* (Leipzig: C.F. Kahnt, n.d.[1869]), 69. Walker translates the last sentence as: “Music is a succession of tones which cleave to one another, self-contained... and they are not to be joined by thrashing out the beats.” Walker, vol 2: *Weimar Years*, 282-83 n34. Original: “An dieser Stelle und bei dem Eintritt des Chors [...] soll das Orchestra wie verklärt erklingen. Der Dirigent wird gebeten den Takt kaum zu markieren, und da dies gesagt, sie noch hinzu bemerkt, dass der Componist das übliche Taktschlagen als seine sinnwidrige, brutale Angewohnheit betrachtet, und es gerne bei allen Werken verbieten möchte.—Musik ist eine Folge von Tönen, die sich einander begehren, umschliessen—und nicht durch Taktprügel gekettet werden dürften!”

succession of phrases, or thoughts, and they are not to be chained together by the interminable beating of time. We can thus make sense of Ramann's description of Liszt's phrase-based style of playing, which makes it clear that this "succession of tones" proceeds on its own terms, with no obligation to breathlessly pursue the beat:

And finally, regarding the "*Periodischen Vortrag*" created by Liszt, in which the beat [Taktrhythmus] is a precondition [Vorbedingung] and a means to an end, occurring in the background and in between the now hastened, now halting, flow of thoughts—depending on the character of which there is a lot to be done—forced across individual bars like flying buttresses, or rushing over great stretches like a mighty stream: so became the conductor with the Meister.⁴⁷⁹

The *Periodischer Vortrag*, then, seems to be a matter of identifying the phrases, be they small or large, subtle or pronounced; and playing and accentuating them in such a way that the music appears like a flow of thoughts that proceed naturally, according to their "meaning"—that is, not driven by a beat, but by impetus of the phrases themselves when delivered in the appropriate manner. The nearest analogy is probably going to be to the recitation of verse, an interpretation which can be supported by the diary of Mme. Boissier, whose daughter studied with Liszt in the mid-1830s. She noted down the following anecdote, seeming to refer to the same easy manner of playing without observing the beat for its own sake:

He spoke about measure. "I don't play according to the measure," he said. As I expressed astonishment at this frank statement, he proceeded to comment on it. Measure is in a musical sense what rhythm is in verse—not a heavy cadence that falls like a burden on the caesura. Music must not be subject to a uniform balance; it must be kindled, or slowed down with judgment and according to the meaning it carries. This goes for all romantic music of the present time. The old-fashioned classics must be rendered with greater regularity.⁴⁸⁰

That the *Periodischer Vortrag*, in spirit if not in name, maintained a central importance throughout Liszt's long career as pianist, eventually adapted to his work at the orchestra, is evidenced by quotes such as this one. The most important differentiating feature between this process and others, which must need constant re-emphasis, is the fact that the *Periodischer Vortrag* does not rely on the beating of time: it does not rely on counting. As Ramann noted above, the beat, if it is observed, is merely a means to an end—i.e., one does not follow it for its own sake.

Friedheim affirms that Ramann "hit the nail on the head by remarking that 'Liszt at the head of an orchestra, is the continuation of Liszt at the piano.'"⁴⁸¹ Ramann writes the following, that Liszt as a teacher of piano, followed also along the same lines:

Liszt the teacher of artists, cannot be separated from Liszt the conductor. The one explains the other. Considering that the starting point for his reforms as a conductor were based on extending the style of his pianistic interpretations to the orchestra, that both aimed at the

⁴⁷⁹ Lina Ramann, *Franz Liszt: Als Künstler und Mensch*, 94. Translation mine.

⁴⁸⁰ In the preface to *The Liszt Studies* ed. Elyse Mach (New York: Associated Music Publishers, 1973), xv.

⁴⁸¹ Friedheim, *Life and Liszt*, 108.

creative manifestation of genius, the achievement of the same ideals and goals. His teaching further established these ideas and goals. This came mainly to piano-virtuosos, as to virtuosos in general, founding a new era of piano-playing, the Liszt school represents the pinnacle of modern pianistic achievements in technique, spirit and idea.⁴⁸²

William Mason (1829-1908), who studied with Liszt in the 1850s, recalled the revelation of one of his first lessons with the master, whose manner of treating the phrases with an “accented, elastic movement” left an immediate and lasting impression:

While I was playing to him for the first time, he said on one of the occasions when he pushed me from the chair: “Don’t play it that way. Play it like this.” Evidently I had been playing ahead in a steady, uniform way. He sat down, and gave the same phrases with an accentuated, elastic movement, which let in a flood of light upon me. From that one experience I learned to bring out the same effect, where it was appropriate, in almost every piece that I played. It eradicated much that was mechanical, stilted, and unmusical in my playing, and developed an elasticity of touch which lasted all my life, and which I have always tried to impart to my pupils.⁴⁸³

Carl Lachmund, who heard Liszt in the 1880s, wrote in a similar tone. This passage is often quoted in reference to the description of Liszt’s *rubato* playing; but let us note the fact that this was just a part of the convincing and enchanting effect of Liszt’s *phrasing*, where he seemed *unmindful of the time*. This must be a remarkably apt description, given to our definition of the *Periodischer Vortrag*:

It was an important part of this lesson for it [Liszt playing one of his Consolations] gave us an insight into the Liszt *rubato* which, be it said, is quite different from the Chopin hastening or tarrying *rubato*. The Liszt *rubato* is a momentary halting of the time, by a slight pause on some significant note and when done rightly brings out the phrasing in a way that is declamatory and remarkably convincing. In playing Liszt seemed unmindful of the time, and yet the aesthetic symmetry of the rhythm did not seem disturbed. Never before, nor even to the present time, have I heard any other pianist phrase as Liszt did; so convincing, so enchanting that it seemed to hypnotize one.⁴⁸⁴

The language of Mason and Lachmund, in these accounts, is perhaps telling in itself, in that they both speak of Liszt’s playing *phrases* rather than bars or measures; this may be an unconscious bias on their part, but it does suggest they were at least aware of the concept and able to listen to (or write about) Liszt’s playing in that way.

While Friedheim would also draw attention to the importance of phrasing in a general sense; it fell to Ramann, with her *Liszt-Pädagogium*, to sketch out the reasoning behind its vitalness to Liszt’s performance practice.⁴⁸⁵ Through Ramann we learn that the *Periodischer Vortrag* is more than

⁴⁸² Lina Ramann, *Franz Liszt: Als Künstler und Mensch*, 101. Translation mine.

⁴⁸³ William Mason, *Memories of a Musical Life* (New York: The Century Co., 1901), 99.

⁴⁸⁴ Friedheim, *Living with Liszt*, 53. Also quoted in Steinberg, “Liszt’s Piano Playing,” 127. Lachmund writes also: “While it was the impassioned expression of his playing with which Liszt most entranced his audiences, and took them by storm, his phrasing seemed to me still more striking, and it was distinctively Lisztian, a point which his biographers have rather overlooked. His phrasing was so illuminating in manner that any familiar piece, coming from under his fingers, became a revelation.” *Living with Liszt*, 205.

⁴⁸⁵ Lina Ramann, *Liszt-Pädagogium* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1986 [reprint der Ausgabe Leipzig 1902]). See Friedheim: “As in elocution, *phrasing* must be taught in piano playing. Essentially it means nothing

just a matter of making phrases clear to the listener, in the mere sense of good taste; but it in fact seems to encapsulate a fundamental driving force behind Liszt's approach to music-making in the broadest sense, that "takes the rank of a necessary precondition" to playing in the Liszt style.⁴⁸⁶

Ramann herself had studied with Hans von Bülow and had been witness to Liszt's classes at Weimar for almost a decade (since at least 1874), while undertaking the task of writing Liszt's "official" biography, during which time she no doubt interviewed Liszt on many important topics.⁴⁸⁷ In the biography, she spelled out three "essential points" that formed the basic principles of "higher piano-playing," according to Liszt's teaching. "On the one hand," she writes, "Liszt's mission as a teacher aimed to transfer the technique he had created and the performance of his own compositions to others, while on the other hand, he intended to transmit to his pupils and disciples, his conception and rendering of the works of the masters."⁴⁸⁸ In line with the idea of tradition discussed above, Ramann saw Liszt's teaching activity as the "passing-down of the style of delivery [Vortrag], as the latter evidently emerges as a reflection of the creative spirit."⁴⁸⁹ This culminated in the three principles:

- I. "Periodischer Vortrag",
- II. Style in execution,
- III. Capturing the individual idiosyncrasies of the masters,

Apart from spelling out, in no uncertain terms, the importance that Liszt held for a creative, practical, individually-driven artistic education for those who would wish to pursue such a vocation; in the context of the biography, Ramann offers little by way of expansion on these three principles from a practical standpoint:

His form of teaching was completely free; due to the creative spirit, it was applied to virtuosity as well as to composition. In both, he did not hand over fully-formed rules, although the rules he did offer were art-based, they were not formulas. The rule of the genius is to have no rule. A Siegfried cannot be a Fafnir; a Faust cannot be a Famulus. The newly inspired and fertilized art technique created by a master contains within it the epitome of all

more than joining a group of notes forming a musical period, and thus separating this group in a perceptible manner from the following group forming another period, etc. In this case the teacher faces, perhaps, a harder task than in pedalling, for any error in phrasing directly touches the integrity of the text itself to a degree of distortion." In "What is Piano Technique", *Musical Observer* (c.1925).

⁴⁸⁶ Ramann, *Liszt-Pädagogium*, 4. "Zur Erfüllung seiner andern beiden Lehrgebote [...] nimmt es [Periodischer Vortrag] den Rang einer Hauptbedingung ein." Compare with Fleischmann, who defines phrasing similarly to Friedheim, emphasising its importance, but does not place it in the same place of absolute significance to Lisztian performance, as Ramann did—leaving it until to chapter eight of her treatise: "Having dealt so far with matters technical, we now come to finer problems which confront the pianist in interpreting the music of the masters. Among such problems phrasing is one of the most important, since upon the phrasing will depend the clarity of the melodic line, and even of the structure as a whole. [...] In its broadest aspect phrasing means the demarcation between one phrase, or part of a phrase, and another [...]." *Tradition and Craft*, 46-47.

⁴⁸⁷ See Lachmund (ed. Walker), *Living with Liszt*, 216 note 5.

⁴⁸⁸ Lina Ramann, *Franz Liszt: Als Künstler und Mensch*, 104. Translation mine.

⁴⁸⁹ Lina Ramann, *Franz Liszt: Als Künstler und Mensch*, 101. Translation mine.

previous developments: but the new spirit needs a new body, which cannot be put into words. It is all personal, and what can be learnt from it can only be communicated practically.⁴⁹⁰

A few of years later, however, in her *Liszt-Pädagogium*, she noted that a “great and essential part” of the treasure that is represented by Liszt’s influence on piano-playing, remained “locked up and far away from the general populace, threatening to evaporate.” “In particular,” she writes, this “essential part concerns the intellectual [geistige] conception, and the peculiarity of execution in the master’s compositions, not to mention the interpretation of the other masters according to his teaching and example.”⁴⁹¹ It was this that she wished to address with her new work, the *Liszt-Pädagogium*, a kind of textbook that attempted to “record the main features master’s teachings and insights” assembled from her own “many years of communication with the master,” in addition to input from a number of other Liszt pupils.⁴⁹²

In the introduction to the *Liszt-Pädagogium*, Ramann sets out an explanation of the three principles given above, starting from the presupposition, much like the argument used by Liszt in relation to the Virtuoso and the dramatic artist (discussed above): that the art-genius is autonomous, i.e. the artist operates on their own terms; and that the very individuality of a composer “crystallises into style.”⁴⁹³ As discussed already, Ramann’s concept of “style” was differentiated into two parts: a “compositional style” and a “performance style,” the latter derived from the former, “based in the individuality of the master.”⁴⁹⁴ This implies that each composer (or composition) had a peculiar style, that the performer must endeavour to exemplify.

⁴⁹⁰ Lina Ramann, *Franz Liszt: Als Künstler und Mensch*, 104. Translation mine.

⁴⁹¹ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 1.

⁴⁹² Namely: August Stradal, Berthold Kellermann, August Göllerich, Heinrich Porges, Ida Volckmann, Auguste Rennebaum and others. See Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 2. “We lack a textbook that attempts to record the main features master’s teachings and insights into his piano compositions, considering specific technical moments and explaining the peculiarities of the character and genius of his works, distinguishing the incidental from the fundamental, that strives to present the latter in its essential elements and stylistic peculiarities—a work that, in summation, sets the task: on the one hand to convey the poetic and aesthetic intentions of the master to the general population, and on the other hand to bring his style of delivery [Stil ihres Vortrags] more clearly to the foreground.”

⁴⁹³ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 3. “Das Kunstgenie ist autonomisch [...]. Die Grunzüge seiner Eigenart krystalisieren sich zum Stil.” Translation mine. Recall Friedheim’s use of the same language, quoted above, in the B minor sonata preface: “In our days there is a faction among musicians of all nations who flatly reject the idea of tradition. But nobody would deny what is termed style in a musical performance. What is style? Style is the manner in which the works of a master are rendered, displaying their innermost character naturally and convincingly, leaving nothing to doubt or misunderstanding. With rare exceptions this manner is developed during the lifetime of the master [...]. Once this style is established [...], it is accepted by everybody [...]. Therefore: what is style after all? An accumulated crystallised tradition.” Rumson, “Friedheim’s Edition,” 24.

⁴⁹⁴ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 3. “Das Wort ‘Stil’ als Kollektivbegriff aber teilt sich wieder in den Kompositionsstil eines Meisters und den Vortragsstil seiner Kompositionen. Der letztere fällt dem Gebiet der reproduzierenden Kunst zu. Er ist vom Kompositionsstil abgeleitet, von ihm abhängig und wurzelt in seiner Eigenart. Demgemäß sind beide ein und desselben Ursprungs, welch letzterer in der Individualität eines Meisters sich gründet. Von hier aus gestalten sich die Gesetze für beide. // In Folge dessen wird von einer Reinheit des Stils seitens der Reproduktion nur dann die Rede sein können, wenn die Eigenart des Kompositionsstils und die des Vortragsstils sich zur Einheit verbinden. Beethoven im Bach-, Liszt im Mozart- Mendelssohn im Schumann-Stil vorzutragen, wäre so widersinng wie unkünstlerisch.”

The essence of the Liszt style is in the three principles given above—*Periodischer Vortrag*, Capturing the individualities of the masters, and Style in execution. These points “refer to the general as well as the specific, to the whole as to the individual, and are mutually dependent in their essence.”⁴⁹⁵ “Based on the double nature of his imagination,” Liszt’s personality, from which both his compositional and performance style descend, “places him, the instrumental composer, in the rank of the poets; who entrusts the expression of his ideas not to words, but to sound [Ton]:”⁴⁹⁶

He is a tone poet—a lyrical tone poet [lyrischer Tondichter]. From here his individuality can be grasped. Poetry is the life-giving and form-setting factor of both his works and their delivery [Vortrags]. The latter has to capture this essence of Liszt’s individuality as a fundamental.⁴⁹⁷

This all seems to be in line with the arguments that we have presented above, that for Liszt music was sound representative of feeling. Even more-so in the next paragraph, Ramann conveniently spells out the reasoning behind the practical utility of such a principle, how in the context of the Lisztian performance style, the “content” becomes a guiding light to the “form,” that is, the feeling guides the sound:

If we add that Liszt in terms of lyricism and as poet was at the same time orator, rhapsode and mime, it is obvious that with the structure of his works, their Melos, their often strange harmonic combinations, their varied rhythms, their notes and their pauses – in short, their style, opposes the mathematical equations of classical dogmas and formal binds; it moves with poetic-freedom, the formal reins placed in the hands of the poetic idea, and from that is accomplished the logical construction and expansion of his works. It follows that “Poetic-freedom” does *not* mean how the practice of immature virtuosos interpret it: neither as shape-distortion, nor bold autonomy of the virtuoso-fingers! The difference between the poetically-free and the formally-bound is a question of content and form.

For one, the form creates the content, for the other, the content creates the form.

Following these starting points: there the content is essentially determined by the form, derived from and limited by it; here it is defined by feeling, from the sphere of living poetical stuff, immediate, unlimited – there, the form is fixed; here, it follows the modifications of the idea itself. The difference between content and formal descent does not, however, abolish the logic of design, neither for the one or the other, neither for the composition, nor for its rendering.⁴⁹⁸

In the context of the Lisztian ideas that we have unpacked thus far, this passage fits right in the centre. We saw already that Virtuosity was a means to an end, and that for the musical Virtuoso this meant navigating sound to represent feeling. The feeling (the content) that drives the sound (the form). The technique of form is a means to an end—the feeling to be expressed. For Ramann, the Lisztian style is

⁴⁹⁵ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 3.

⁴⁹⁶ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 3.

⁴⁹⁷ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 3.

⁴⁹⁸ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 3-4

based on this principle in both composition and performance, the “poetically-free,” as she calls it—where the content drives the form.

This insight reveals the importance of the *Periodischer Vortrag* to the whole equation—why, for instance, it “takes the rank of a necessary precondition” to playing in the Liszt style, according to Ramann.⁴⁹⁹ The essence of her “formally-bound” is that the form defines the content. That is, in such an aesthetic, whatever I play means nothing more than itself—the purpose of playing a *Hungarian Rhapsody* would be just to play a *Hungarian Rhapsody*, nothing more, nothing less. If it does happen to communicate any poetical feelings, that is out of my control—and in this sense it does not really matter *how* I play it. I could pretend to be “artistic” and distort the rhythm as far as it will go, or play it as fast as possible with no concern for anything but hitting the right notes—autonomy of the virtuoso’s fingers, as she calls it.⁵⁰⁰

On the other side of the coin, however, in the “poetically-free,” the content defines the form. That is, the content comes first; a form is then found to communicate it. The content is the poetical feeling that the music should ultimately represent—the musician has the job of finding the corresponding form, the sound that represents this feeling. The feelings themselves are universal, unlimited—they are not merely musical ideas, but human experiences. At least, this was the essential concept to which Liszt was referring when he wrote, in his essay on Clara Schumann, that “All art springs from the same source.”⁵⁰¹ “If two poets want to express their thoughts in different idioms,” writes Liszt, “there can be no reason to want to put one over the other.” For:

It is the sense—the idea—not the manner of saying it, that decides the rank in the hierarchy of the beautiful.

The arts are an incarnation of beauty-revealed feeling, incarnated in a form adequate to the idea and feeling. By nature and by birth, they [the arts] are the same and the preference of artists among each other can only exist in relation to a higher degree of real artistic conviction and ability, in a higher understanding of the beautiful and in a greater unity between the thought and form of their works.⁵⁰²

In the context of playing a notated composition, this question always seems to become more complicated. In this essay, Liszt compares the art of the Virtuoso to that of the Painter, saying that although the Virtuoso’s art, his “representation of the Ideal—that which is held up by his soul—only recreates and thus apparently only interprets another’s work;” nevertheless the Virtuoso “must be as

⁴⁹⁹ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 4. “Zur Erfüllung seiner andern beiden Lehrgebote [...] nimmt es [Periodischer Vortrag] den Rang einer Hauptbedingung ein.”

⁵⁰⁰ See also Arrau on Krause “He [Krause] encouraged [his pupils] to develop their own approach. One thing I remember about him is that he hated people who just played, senselessly. “*Klimpern*” [tinkling], he called it. And he always said that one should have a general cultural base.” In Horowitz, *Arrau on Music and Performance*, 38.

⁵⁰¹ Ramann ed., *Liszt Gesammelte Schriften* vol. 4, 195

⁵⁰² Ramann ed., *Liszt Gesammelte Schriften* vol. 4, 195.

much a poet as the painter and sculptor, who, as it were, only perform Nature in their own way, singing from the sheet music of the Creator.”⁵⁰³

The score seems to be like the actual natural landscape of trees and bushes that the painter would like to paint. But, of course, as Liszt put it, “That would be a bad artist or no artist at all, who with blind loyalty would simply follow the contours that he had before him, without imbuing them with life created from passions or feelings!”

Nobody would call painting a servile, material reproduction of nature. Reproduction has the same relationship in the production of Music [Tonkunst]. The same gap that lies between a landscape, such as the Ruins of Paestum by [Alexandre] Calame, and a mere view; also separates the performance of one and the same piece of music by two artists, one who merely does his job, while the other creates art. No matter how carefully and conscientiously he imitates the natural lines of his subject, in order to reproduce the inner sense, the poetic effect, the riddle of the model; the painter, much like the virtuoso, must be able imbue his production with an unusual glare, to resound its indescribable harmony, to take a special view-point, to give it a suitable lighting and an ideal frame.⁵⁰⁴

“Without this ability,” writes Liszt, the viewer of a painting would “never feel the special innermost movement as the Creator of the Original Work [Nature] intended.”⁵⁰⁵ Similarly, as we seem to have heard a few times before: “Virtuosity is not a passive servant of the composition; the life or death of the artwork that is entrusted to her, depends on her breath: she can reproduce the splendour of its beauty, its freshness, its enthusiasm, she can twist it, make it beautiful, or disfigure it.”⁵⁰⁶ It follows:

Virtuosity, like painting, is not subordinate to the other arts: for both require creative ability, which formulates according to an idea captured in the soul of the artist, according to a type, and without which his product does not rise above industrial products, in the way that an artwork can. It is not an act of empty receptivity—it is not the prattling of learned phrases, like a starling. Rather, it brings ideas to light and takes them from the limbus of incorporeal abstraction, into the palpable, tangible world.

Accordingly, just like that of a composition, its value depends on the artist's emotional development and the gift he is given to find the corresponding form that is communicable to the intensity of a feeling. Without this life-breathing force of feeling, which dictates solely the forms of the beautiful and gives the will to produce them exclusively, both composition and virtuosity are only sensuous head- or finger mechanisms, mindless skill or calculation.⁵⁰⁷

As Ramann stated “The difference between content and formal descent does not [...] abolish the logic of design,” seeming to mean that such an aesthetic is not a license for arbitrary music-making, to be

⁵⁰³ Ramann ed., *Liszt Gesammelte Schriften* vol. 4, 196.

⁵⁰⁴ Ramann ed., *Liszt Gesammelte Schriften* vol. 4. The particular painting by Calame referred to by Liszt seems to have been in Schletter collection, today housed at the MdBW Leipzig.

⁵⁰⁵ Ramann ed., *Liszt Gesammelte Schriften* vol. 4, 194. “Ohne diese Fähigkeit werden beide bei dem Beschauer, wie bei dem Hörer nie die innerste und besondere Bewegung, wie sie der Schöpfer des Originalwerkes beabsichtigt hat, fühlbar machen.”

⁵⁰⁶ Ramann ed., *Liszt Gesammelte Schriften* vol. 4, 193.

⁵⁰⁷ Ramann ed., *Liszt Gesammelte Schriften* vol. 4., 194-5.

rationalised away as “free poetic expression.”⁵⁰⁸ On the other hand, it implies by definition a difference between what might be perceived as the fundamental tenants of design—in that the limitless-ness of content demands a limitless-ness of form or formal possibilities.⁵⁰⁹ To Liszt, this was the central question of Romanticism, as he reminisced in his *Life of Chopin*:

The order of the day [in Paris, c.1832] was *Romanticism*, the battle was obstinately fought both for and against. How could there possibly be any truce between those who on the one side would not admit the possibility of writing in any form other than that already established, and those who on the other side contended that an artist should be allowed to select such forms as he thought best suited for the expression of his ideas, and that the rule of form should be found in the fitness of the form chosen for the sentiments to be expressed, every varying shade of emotion demanding of course a different mode of expression? [...] The one wanted to restrict, within the lines of the same symmetrical frame, the creations of times and of natures very dissimilar; the other claimed that all writers should have liberty to create their own mode, obeying no rules but those which are the result of the direct relation of sentiment and form, only requiring from the form that it should be adequate for the expression of the sentiment [...].⁵¹⁰

If this is Liszt’s definition of Romanticism, that form should be free to match its sentiment, it would seem that in the context of Virtuosity, the art of the musical performance—for which we saw somewhere already (in Liszt’s letter on conducting) required an “update” for Romantic compositions—an idea like the *Periodischer Vortrag* would have to stand at the base, as a necessary support to all higher aims of expression.⁵¹¹

The *Periodischer Vortrag* is a mode of playing not bound by the formal constraints of beating time; the rhythm to be led instead by the poetical meaning of the thoughts. Having such a principle as the fundamental driving force allows the music liberty to match the form to its sentiment, “obeying no rules but those which are the result of direct relation of sentiment and form.” If the music happens to demand a dystopian-like mechanical pulse, marching forward with titanic regularity—then this is a valid mode, as equally as every other grade of softly halting or urgently pressing movement. In all cases it is dependent on the nature of the sentiment to be expressed—it is not to be limited by the external or technical concerns of maintaining a consistent beat for its own sake.⁵¹²

⁵⁰⁸ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 3-4.

⁵⁰⁹ As opposed to form being rigidly bound to theoretical rules.

⁵¹⁰ Liszt, *Life of Chopin*, 140-141.

⁵¹¹ Even Czerny, in the volume of his pianoforte school on “playing with expression”, after a short introduction about how all the technical aspects of piano-playing, such as correctness in keeping time, correct fingering, observing the composers markings, etc., “are to be considered only as a *means* towards the real end of the art, which consists in infusing *spirit* and *soul* into the performance,” “every musical composition, without exception acquires its entire value and effect with a hearer from the manner in which it is played...” Czerny starts the treatise proper from the axiom that “Every one knows that *time* and *space* are infinitely divisible.” See Czerny, *Pianoforte School* vol.3, 1-2.

⁵¹² This appears to have implications for how we might look at (or understand) the score in itself, but this interesting question is sadly beyond the scope of the present dissertation.

As Ramann puts it in her *Liszt-Pädagogium*, the *Periodischer Vortrag* is based upon the poetically-free style of Liszt's music—it is because the music is “content-driven”—that the *Periodischer Vortrag* becomes a necessary element.⁵¹³ In this context, Ramann defines the *Periodischer Vortrag* thus: it “condenses the phrase-rhythms as time-units, such that each bar as a whole assumes the accentuation (the weight), like the beats of an individual bar.”⁵¹⁴ Ramann observes:

To perform according to this principle requires a complete re-birth. The elasticity of rhythm that results from this loosens the metrical restraints [taktische Fesselung] into freedom of movement and to a greater swing of expression, to emotional accents and the supreme power of speech: it takes the architecture of the construction into a lively flow and at the same time maintains the light transparency of the individual parts—in summary: it leads to the grand style of execution [grossen Stil des Vortrags].⁵¹⁵

e. **Melos and Style in Execution**

In addition to the *Periodischer Vortrag*, Lina Ramann put forth two other principles that she considered to be fundamental to Liszt's teaching. While, in some sense, slightly less practical, these principles nevertheless demand some examination here in order to tie up our exploration of the Liszt tradition of piano-playing. These were “Capturing the individual peculiarities of the masters” and “Style in execution.”⁵¹⁶

Ramann uses the conception of “Melos” to focus her short explanation on the “individual peculiarities” of Liszt's compositions, and how understanding the Melos is vital to successful performance:

“Melos” is not melody per se, but a lyrical-melodic force that permeates all parts of the composition, animates it, gives it shape and is rooted in singing. It is the soul that is the central point of music itself, and hence also a performance. Richard Wagner's treatise “On conducting” reveals the essential meaning that Melos holds for the latter. By showing the

⁵¹³ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 4.

⁵¹⁴ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 4. “die periodischen Rhythmen als Zeitenheiten zusammenfaßt, denen sich bezüglich der Accentuation (dem Gewicht) der Einzeltakt unterstellt, wie ein Takteil dem Takt.” This description reminds one of Lachmund's observation after Liszt's teaching Beethoven's Sonata Op.110: “At the fugue (the last movement of the Sonata) he said: ‘Do not phrase measure by measure; it stunts expression. One should usually draw together four or more measures into a phrase; by doing this you obtain broader lines.’” What a wealth this sentence contains! It is the key to the secret that has made d'Albert the greatest Beethoven player of today.” Lachmund, *Living with Liszt*, 146. Ramann too observes that Liszt played Beethoven in this manner, writing “Liszt's interpretations of works by other masters – above all Beethoven – also breathe according to this principle [the *Periodischer Vortrag*], living through it and permeated by it as if by necessity.” See Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 4.

⁵¹⁵ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 4. One is reminded of Friedheim: “The difficulty with Liszt's music is its style [...]. By nature, Liszt was a rhapsodist and improviser, and this lends a singular charm to his music, quite aside from all its other qualities. But he was a rhapsodist in his own way; he never improvised without design [...]. The difficulty which Liszt's interpreters run into, even today, is the flexibility demanded of them. There is *tempo rubato* even when one seems to be facing an almost Roman structure. And yet the thread of the line of development in Liszt's construction must unfold smoothly and without interruption.” Friedheim, *Life and Liszt*, 189.

⁵¹⁶ See Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 4.

deep influence of the same [the Melos] on the character of the tempo, the rhythm, figuration, dynamics, he speaks irrefutably: that the musical individuality of a master rests in his Melos and is manifested through him.⁵¹⁷

This mysterious concept evidently needs unpacking. From Wagner's treatise, we learn that (for him) the secret to rendering Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was for each and every member of the orchestra to grasp what he calls the Melos. He tells us that when in Paris in 1839, he first witnessed an orchestra produce such an effect, "in every bar the orchestra had learnt to recognise the Beethovenian *melody*;" it was as if "the orchestra *sang* that melody."⁵¹⁸

To be able to "sing" it correctly, however, the *right tempo* had to be found for its every beat: and that was the second point impressed upon my mind on this occasion. Old Habeneck [the conductor] had certainly no abstract-aesthetic 'inspiration' of the thing; he was without all "Genialität": but *he found the proper tempo, while diligently leading on his orchestra to grasp the symphony's melos*. But a correct conception of the melos alone can give the proper tempo: the two are indivisible; one conditions the other.⁵¹⁹

In this language, we get the sense that the Melos might be closely related to the idea of poetical content, the sentiment that drives the form, as we have been discussing it in the previous chapter. Yet Wagner apparently did not see the conductor as necessarily requiring "abstract-aesthetic inspiration;" it was however important for the players to grasp the Melos in order to give the symphony an adequate rendering. So what is it then? Ramann writes:

Liszt's Melos contains the world-spanning inwardness and passion of his individuality. Quite apart from that, the metrical part of his Melos, by virtue of the vital truth of his pulsation, broke through the classical principle of form, much like modern verse compared to ancient; [...] [the Melos] forms a basic element of his entire instrumental design, the embodiment of the life essence of lyricism: this stretches to dramatic conciseness, to poetic idea, or else: staying in place, resting. His Melos expresses itself both in the development and characteristic of the thematic subjects, as well as in the mood of the harmonies, in the rhythm as in the figuration, in the dynamics, the tradition, even in the pauses and fermatas. It runs through it sometimes as a melodic fluid, sometimes as a lively, warmly pulsating inspiration, and acts as a unity in multiplicity.⁵²⁰

While it still seems clouded in mystery, we see the Melos starting to take shape as some kind of underlying "essence," that lends an inspirational quality. It appears also to bear some vague relation to Liszt's "impalpable flame," his strange equilibrium between ends and means, the Melos might be like the gas that lights such a flame.⁵²¹ For Ramann, it would seem, much like for Wagner, one must be able to *grasp* the Melos in order to understand the particularities of a composition and its various constitutive elements:

⁵¹⁷ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 5.

⁵¹⁸ Richard Wagner, *Prose Works* vol.4 trans. William Ashton Ellis (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., 1895), 300-301.

⁵¹⁹ Wagner, *Prose Works* vol. 4, 303.

⁵²⁰ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 4.

⁵²¹ See chapter "The Impalpable Flame" above.

When his great contemporary, Wagner, sees the “most musical of all musicians” in Liszt, this undoubtedly gets at the point that the present “Pädagogium” tries to approach in practical terms, emphasising its importance for the rendering of his piano works, since some of their peculiarities of style can only mature after they have been freed from misunderstandings. For example, Liszt’s grand, often overwhelming passagework is far from technical bravura as such, serving as a stirrup for the virtuoso, as many imagine. Rooted in the Melos, it is chiefly the moods of grandeur, strength, passion, the highest feeling of life in happiness and unhappiness; that is the language he has created, not in speech, but in poetry. The melodic-thematic foundations of the passages give evidence for this.⁵²²

By way of further example, Ramann discusses the pauses to be found frequently in Liszt’s compositions. Their execution depends on where they are found, their meaning within the context as a point of transition or of mediation between thoughts or phrases, “sometimes dramatic, sometimes like a lyrical fluid, sometimes like a hidden apron-knot.”⁵²³ The answer in each case lies in the Melos, the poetical-musical essence of the particular phrase, the pauses “will only be able to fulfil their purpose when the pianistic interpreter wrests the secret from the dead signs [toten Zeichen] and recognises the moments of transition in the construction, where those points of mediation lie.”⁵²⁴ The duration of the pause is determined not so much by the personal mood of the player, but “according to the character of the transition itself.”⁵²⁵ She continues:

The transitions themselves—these difficult mediating sentences and bars, which to a certain extent place creative demands on the pianist—in Liszt do not grow out from considerations of form, as with the classical masters, but primarily: the poetical idea and mood. With no one are they as much of an expression of individuality and style as with him. According to their mediating nature, sometimes marking the end of a sentence, sometimes heralding a coming one, or acting as the springboard to a new idea; there out of the Feeling (lyrical, melodic), here from the Will (dramatic, rhetorical): their innermost being points to the Melos. The foundations for a comprehensible rendering lie in its characteristics.⁵²⁶

Clearly such a notion rests on a certain freedom with regard to the execution of rhythm, it requires “a reproduction that is poetically-free, the design extracted from the essence, situation and character of the whole.” According to Ramann, this notion of the Melos, guiding the interpretation, “complements the principle of ‘*Periodischen Vortrag*.’” The latter “in connection with the Melos leads [the player] to the music-form,” and thus “the intended poetic idea can become manifest as music.”⁵²⁷

All of this leads inevitably to the crux of the matter, namely “Style in Execution,” Ramann’s third principle. Many of the reproaches and criticisms that are commonly thrown against Liszt’s compositions are apparently made by a concert-audience that is “always inclined to declare the composer as the whipping-boy for the sins of the performer.” That is to say that the “treasure of jewels that are contained in the piano works of the great tone poet” remained locked away behind the

⁵²² Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 4-5.

⁵²³ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 5.

⁵²⁴ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 5.

⁵²⁵ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 5.

⁵²⁶ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 5.

⁵²⁷ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 5.

misjudgement of the style on the part of the performer: “the lack of appreciation for the master’s intention, the withholding of all poetry through often eminent technique and stupendous bravura,” of virtuosi trained especially in “technique and form, but not style.”⁵²⁸ According to Ramann: “on the part of the Interpreter is demanded the rendering of the architectonic structure and the psychological development of the material, through creative and poetical unity with the composer.”⁵²⁹

“Style in Execution” in this sense, seems to refer to what we termed before as the style-particular, as opposed to the style-tradition that is a collection of ideas governing interpretation.⁵³⁰ The style-particular, the style in execution, is the “performance style” made evident in a particular performance. Its importance here is very much central: between our understandings of poetical content, sentiment and form, style-tradition and lore, *Periodischer Vortrag* and *Melos*—it all becomes, crucially, focused through the prism of the style-particular: the resulting music like a scattered rainbow, released from the antecedent white light of scores and dry literary analogies. Creativity and imagination—interpretation at all sides—remains the key, as Ramann relates:

“Technique is created by the spirit, not by mechanics!” was Liszt’s often used, here related phrase [Wort], that should be repeated, again and again, in the ear of every art-disciple and music-pedagogue.

Without an “inspired hand” the rendering of an artwork must remain halved. Because according to the master’s sense and model, interpretative technique finds the essential factor for hand-formation in feeling and in the imagination, the Alpha and Omega of reproductive art. The intellectual understanding represents the critical junction-point. Detached from the psyche, technique can only do justice to the formal part of the artwork, leading to mechanics.⁵³¹

The rather cryptic maxim quoted here by Ramann is one often repeated in the Liszt scholarship—but what does it mean? Hopefully, following on from what we have learnt in the preceding pages, its meaning is now clearer than it once might have been.

If music is sound representative of feeling, and we operate within a framework that sees the poetical content as driving the form, the feeling driving the sound—the meaning of Liszt’s instruction becomes plain. If we simply change the terms: sound as technique, and feeling as spirit; we see that Liszt is advising us that the spirit—the sentiment, the *Melos*, the poetical content—comes first; technique is simply a means to serve that end, to solve the problem of finding the corresponding form. Technique is *not* an end in itself—it is not by *doing* “technique” that “technique” can be created; it does not come from mechanics. This maxim, then, appears to encapsulate Ramann’s idea of the “poetically-free,” warning us not to let the form drive the content. Virtuosity is a means to an end.

⁵²⁸ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 5.

⁵²⁹ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 5.

⁵³⁰ See chapter “Tradition: Style and Lore” above.

⁵³¹ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 6.

The other apparent implication is that the million-and-one subtleties required for the satisfying performance must be guided by a myriad of things other than merely the score—and that seemingly no amount of technical instruction, even in the most highly specified manner, would ever come close to the fluid, natural expression of the “inspired hand,” attached to the sympathetic mind, creating music as if by pure spirit:

In a few words, we still need to think about the pianistic tools of the master, his hand. Not only a technical tool, it was for him a creative organ of the soul, in that his feelings and ideas poured forth with an immediacy, which alone allowed you to grasp the wonder of his piano-playing; as also the eminent expansion, and continual re-designing of pianistic technique itself. The mind and body were merged—the hand of the creative genius of this art! But this hand also, in its unity of technique and soul, represents the ideal image of pianistic teaching, artistic striving and high-artistic virtuosity.⁵³²

It seems that ultimately, these ideas lead to a kind of playing that appears intrinsically motivated—like Liszt’s impalpable flame—poetry itself seems to emerge by the first touch of the piano, deliberate yet care-free, like the invisible gust of wind that creates the eagle’s flight.

One could poetise unto the end of time. But our initial problem still remains: what does such a music sound like? How do we, actually, apply this kind of thinking to the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*? How does it change what we might have been doing already? This will be the subject of Part 3.

Earlier, we defined two parts of tradition: style and lore. Style (style-tradition) referred to the purely musical aspects of how a particular composition *sounded*, while lore referred to the literary or verbal aspects of tradition. This dichotomy was made in order to highlight the fundamental issue with this study of performance tradition—that much of what we look at, and in fact every part of it once we start discussing it in words, must ultimately be *interpreted* by the artist who wishes to consider these things and apply them in their own practice. All verbal description, as also scores themselves, when we are discussing music, are always a step or two removed from the actual phenomenon we are discussing (sound)—it is too easy to get caught up in a literalistic view, or else the mechanical side of the tradition by not considering the true value of the evidence (relative to the unbridgeable gap of interpretation) or presuming that we understand already what the terms and signs might mean. As we have seen, it would apparently be a mistake if in the context of the Lisztian tradition, if we merely copied the formal aspects of tradition while ignoring the poetical aspects; while it would likewise be an error to superficially (or begrudgingly) gloss over the poetical ideas and then change nothing about how we play—it seems that if we really want to produce an impression on our hearers in the way Liszt did, then we most probably need to really believe in and understand every aspect of these ideas

⁵³² Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 6.

in the way that he did. Superficiality simply will not do. “Technique is created by the spirit, not by mechanics!”

So what about the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*? We now proceed, finally, to look at the tradition that specifically surrounded the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. These two aspects of tradition, style and lore, will be treated separately. Of the former, we have the evidence of the sound recordings and reproducing-piano rolls of Liszt’s pupils. There is a sizeable number of recordings that we are able to compare, but there will firstly be some considerations that need to be made about how they fit into the context of the foregoing chapters, which will be made at the beginning of the following section. The question of lore, which we shall consider secondly, concerns the written sources pertaining to how the Liszt pupils perceived the *Rhapsodies*—in order to ascertain what the average Liszt pupil might have *actually* had in mind when he or she interpreted these works.

Part 3: Performing the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* in the Liszt Tradition

I. The Liszt Tradition on Record

a. Studying Recordings: Technical Limitations

If style, in its traditional aspect (style-tradition), refers to how music *sounded* in the past—then it is clear that to study it, it must be heard. Therefore, if we want to get a sense of such a thing in the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, we are led to listen to the recordings of the pupils of Liszt, those members of the Liszt tradition who give us a window into that fabled age of Weimar in the 1880s. But what do these recordings tell us? What *can* these recordings tell us?

In the case of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* we have a number of recordings available to consider, all by pupils of Liszt who can (arguably) each offer a unique and valuable look at the tradition that may have surrounded these works in the Liszt school. It was possible to locate in readily-available formats, 23 such recordings (including one of the *Hungarian Fantasy*, the concerto arrangement of *Rhapsody* No.14), by 11 different pupils, including one or two “duplicates” of the same work recorded by the same pupil on different formats.⁵³³ In the case of some piano roll

⁵³³ See Discography for complete listing. There are also a number of piano roll recordings that are not readily available, such as Friedheim playing *Rhapsody* No.1—sadly it was not possible within the timeframe of the present research to attempt to locate such recordings. Those that are listed in Larry Sitsky, *The Classical reproducing piano roll: a catalogue-index* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), are listed in the discography

recordings, it is also possible to hear a number of different recorded versions of the roll playback, that can give a sense of some of the inherent difficulties with that format itself. It is worthwhile, before we look at the recordings, to consider the technical limitations of these documents: what we can reliably learn from them.⁵³⁴

Of the total 23 recordings, 10 of them are sound recordings. 6 of these were commercially released acoustically-recorded 78rpm discs, 3 more were recorded electrically (i.e. with microphone as opposed to earlier mechanical technologies). All of the discs surveyed were limited to approximately 4 minutes a side, meaning that cuts and alterations are evident on all such recordings. The one exception is Rosenthal's 1929 live radio broadcast archive recording, recently made available on YouTube.⁵³⁵ At best these formats give a reasonable representation of a pianist's art, but they are limited by such factors as compressed dynamic range and reduced frequency response, which can affect our perception of certain aspects of the sound.⁵³⁶

The remaining 14 recordings were made on reproducing-piano rolls. These were paper rolls that accurately encoded the key-presses (as well as pedalling) of a pianist's performance as perforations in the roll. Systems for dynamics varied between the various piano roll systems, most only encoding a certain number of degrees of "loudness" (not always "captured" live).⁵³⁷ Tempo accuracy can vary depending on the accuracy of the settings and mechanism during playback. Piano-roll playback relies much on the playback instrument being well-maintained and correctly adjusted, and many modern readily-available "transfers" of these can be misleading if one does not consider the technical limitations of the system, such as the lack of minute control of dynamics.⁵³⁸

In this day and age the most convenient way to hear these recordings is through commercially-available (or YouTube) "transfers" of the original disc or roll onto a more modern digital format—but this allows room for another layer of potentially misleading "interference" through varying methods of transfer, digital noise reduction or other processes that attempt to improve the approachability of the recordings, though often at the expense of fidelity to the original recording.⁵³⁹

only for the sake of completeness. Hopefully it will be possible to hear these recordings in the future. We have also not counted Siloti's short home-made recording of the first twenty bars of Rhapsody No.12 here.

⁵³⁴ For a thorough review of the challenges and limitations of pianos and early recording formats, see Peres Da Costa, *Off the Record*, 1-40.

⁵³⁵ Broadcast on WJZ, New York, February 11, 1929 and recorded on experimental 30rpm disc.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vpzs0U8IjJg>

⁵³⁶ See Peres Da Costa, *Off the Record*, 8-9.

⁵³⁷ For more detail see The Pianola Insitute: <http://www.pianola.org/index.cfm>

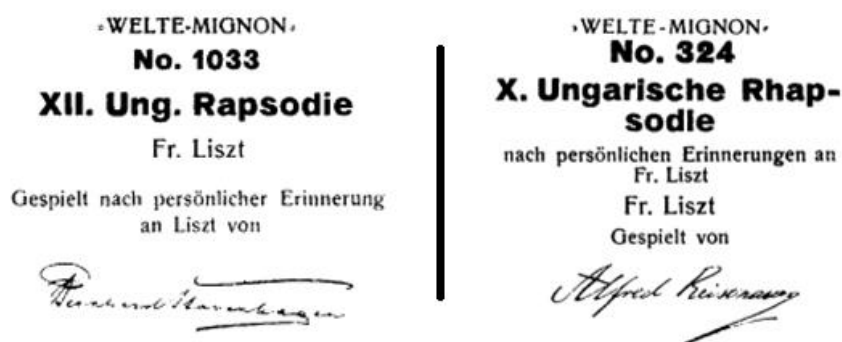
⁵³⁸ A simple comparison between a piano-roll playback and a good quality sound recording of the same pianist and the same work is often enlightening. See *Piano Rolls and Discs – Selected Comparisons* (2004: Symposium 1211).

⁵³⁹ The present study was made exclusively after such digital "transfers." See Discography.

Yet, all in all, the value of these documents really cannot be over-estimated. As we saw hinted at in the previous section, there was apparently much that could not be notated that composers like Chopin and Liszt very much intended (or at least actively employed in their own playing), and it was left to the living tradition of their students to carry these ideas on into the future. If these traditions did indeed survive, these early recordings must provide the best “living” example of that tradition.

b. An Overview

That there existed an effort to preserve a Liszt tradition is rendered demonstrable by several particular recordings. For instance, the group of four piano rolls made on the Welte-Mignon system by Bernhard Stavenhagen and Alfred Reisenauer, around the year 1905, which were subtitled as played “after personal recollection of Liszt” by the pianists. This group of recordings included *Hungarian Rhapsodies* and Chopin/Liszt Polish Songs, one of each by the two pianists.⁵⁴⁰ (See Example 18)



Example 18: Labels on Welte-Mignon rolls of Bernhard Stavenhagen and Alfred Reisenauer,

Source: <https://www.mmdigest.com>

The manner of playing on all four of these recordings is incredibly striking, as much in the textual liberties as the titanic “grand manner” of playing that seems to live here—at once free and bold, the gestures enhanced without being exaggerated. More interesting perhaps, is how these rolls compare with the other recordings by the same pianists—Reisenauer’s other rolls of Liszt, Schumann and Chopin carry little of the same overt freedom; while Stavenhagen seems to take an even bolder approach in his Welte-Mignon roll of Liszt’s *Legende* No.2.⁵⁴¹ Their performances of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* will be discussed in detail shortly.

In the catalogue of Liszt-pupil recordings, these few do stand out. But it would also seem that some other pupils had similar nostalgic attachments to certain pieces they heard Liszt play.⁵⁴² For

⁵⁴⁰ The details of all of the recordings discussed will be listed in the Discography.

⁵⁴¹ Available through www.petersmidi.com.

⁵⁴² Recall Siloti’s resolve to never hear the Beethoven “Moonlight” sonata from any other pianist, after he heard Liszt play the work with matchless artistry. See *My Memories of Liszt*, 355-357.

instance Conrad Ansorge recorded Liszt's *Glans de Woronince* No.2, a relatively obscure piece that Liszt seems to have played frequently around 1886, in the period that Ansorge was a pupil.⁵⁴³ Friedheim's interpretation of Liszt's B-Minor sonata, recorded on Hupfeld roll, would seem to carry similar sentimental value, given Friedheim's recollections about playing the work for Liszt, supplemented by his carefully-annotated edition that remained unpublished at his death.⁵⁴⁴ One might draw a similar connection between Friedheim's fond remembrance of a particular lesson in Italy on Liszt's *Harmonies du Soir*, and his piano-roll recording of the same work.⁵⁴⁵

On the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* particularly, it is difficult to draw with complete certainty whether the pupils happened to have studied with Liszt the numbers they recorded, but there appears tenable links in a few cases. According to Göllicher's diary notes, one Mr Liebling appears to have played a Rhapsody in E flat for Liszt on 10 August 1885—which could in all likelihood be the same Rhapsody No.4 in E flat that Georg Liebling (1865-1946) recorded on Welte piano roll.⁵⁴⁶ It may be noteworthy then, that Liebling takes some textual liberties, which we will discuss in detail shortly.

Emil Sauer, who spent a comparatively short amount of time in Weimar, recalled playing the Rhapsody No.12 for Liszt in 1884, when he first went to Liszt, the master apparently being suitably pleased.⁵⁴⁷ Friedheim was present at the same meeting, and also seems to have played the same Rhapsody for Liszt on another occasion.⁵⁴⁸ Both pianists recorded the work—and given such an apparent link with Liszt, as well as the several noticeable similarities between their interpretations, it is tempting to suggest that some kind of authentic tradition is in evidence here.⁵⁴⁹ But when one

⁵⁴³ Liszt played the piece in a private gathering in Weimar on May 30, 1886, and later the same year at a concert in the Luxembourg Casino, July 19. It is unclear whether Ansorge was present on either of these occasions, but Thordarson has suggested Ansorge was in all likelihood present on the occasion at Weimar. See Thordarson, "Recordings of Works of Liszt Played by his Pupils," 16

⁵⁴⁴ See Gordon Rumson, "Arthur Friedheim's Edition of the Liszt B Minor Sonata" *Liszt Society Journal* (UK) vol. 26 (2001): 17-59.

⁵⁴⁵ "I recall one of my later lessons with him in the Villa d'Este, in Tivoli, not far from Rome. Late one afternoon I sat down at the piano to play Liszt's 'Harmonies du Soir'. Before I had time to begin he called me to the window. With a wide sweep of the arm he pointed out the slanting rays of the declining sun which were mellowing the landscape with the delicate glamor of approaching twilight. 'Play that,' he said. 'There are your evening harmonies.'" in *Life and Liszt*, 52.

⁵⁴⁶ See Göllicher, *The Master-classes of Liszt*, 94. There is potential that the Liebling in question could have Georg Liebling's brother Saul Liebling, who was also a notable pianist and pupil of Liszt. Similarly, the Mr Liebling in question may have played the other Rhapsody in E-flat major (No.9) for Liszt.

⁵⁴⁷ "At the little private matinée [...] I played [...] Liszt's Twelfth Rhapsody. Although because of continual travelling around I was not in practice, and my performances revealed more technical defects than I would have wished on such an important occasion, the Master was tolerant enough to show warm appreciation, especially in his Rhapsody. From time to time he called out such encouraging words as 'bravo', 'bravissimo', 'pretty...', 'hm,' 'very pretty...', 'hm!' When I had come to the end he confirmed his pleasure with a kiss on the forehead, and also seemed delighted to grant my request to enrol me among his pupils for the summer." Quoted in Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, 631. One can read more about Sauer's impressions of Liszt, published in Etude Magazine, here: <https://etudemagazine.com/etude/1910/11/lessons-with-franz-liszt.html>

⁵⁴⁸ See Friedheim, *Life and Liszt*, 140. Friedheim writes about playing the Rhapsody No.12 in a concert at which Liszt was present, and could very well have had lessons on the piece in the lead up to this event, although there is no direct evidence for this.

⁵⁴⁹ See Nicholas Williams, "Performance Practice in Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies*," 27-28.

compares with the Rhapsody No.12 “after personal recollections of Liszt” played by Stavenhagen, that is in a manner in seemingly complete opposition to Sauer and Friedheim, one would be hesitant to declare which style might be the truly authentic one.

Stavenhagen’s No.12, at first listen, seems to have much more in common with the No.12 of Alexander Siloti, who studied with Liszt in Weimar from 1883 to 1886; and who recalled the following anecdote, seeming to confer that whatever approach he has taken would have had the master’s approval under oath:

I once brought the 14th Rhapsody to play to him, telling him beforehand that I had dared to make some alterations in it, and even to omit certain passages, and that I had wanted his opinion on it. After I had played it he said: “I not only acquiesce in, but thoroughly approve of what you have done, in proof whereof I give you my permission to make any alterations and omissions you wish—and this at any time, even after I am gone; for I know that what you consider necessary will not be detrimental to the music—indeed you may say in such cases that it is as *I* wished it. You have my sanction in advance to anything you may do in my name; only,” he added with a smile, “please don’t sign my cheques.”⁵⁵⁰

Yet when we speak of general approach, we must be careful; for, whereas Stavenhagen takes the Rhapsody with absolute freedom with regard to the text, Siloti makes rather little by way of alteration—and in *that* specific sense, Siloti is much closer to Friedheim and Sauer who also make very few noticeable alterations. But to the casual listener, Friedheim and Sauer seem quiet and restrained, where Stavenhagen and Siloti appear bold and extroverted. Indeed, it is in terms of *spirit* that Stavenhagen and Siloti appear related, in that they both strike the listener as being exponents of the fabled “grand manner,” which Friedheim himself touted as one of the irresistible qualities of Liszt’s own playing.⁵⁵¹ In the hands of Siloti and Stavenhagen the twelfth Rhapsody gushes forth with a kind of forceful energy, like the crashing waves of Poseiden’s ocean, to the shining Apollonian calm of Friedheim and Sauer—but who was closer to Liszt’s intention?

Another pupil of Liszt to describe the “grand manner” was Moriz Rosenthal, who told of “a manner of playing which forms itself upon grand concepts, makes such concepts personal by grand enthusiasms, and paints its pianistic picture in bold, brilliant, grand strokes.”⁵⁵² Although Rosenthal spent relatively little time in Weimar, it does appear that he had the opportunity to play the Rhapsody No.2 for Liszt, despite the fact that the work was among the pieces that Liszt “banned” from being played for him in Weimar.⁵⁵³ In his disc recording, issued in 1930, Rosenthal delivers the work with much energy and verve, and plays his own cadenza at the marked “ad libitum” before the coda, along

⁵⁵⁰ Siloti, *My Memories of Liszt*, 359.

⁵⁵¹ Friedheim, *Life and Liszt*, 49.

⁵⁵² Quoted in Hamilton, *After the Golden Age*, 5.

⁵⁵³ See Lachmund, *Living with Liszt*, 355-356. Regarding Liszt’s disfavour for the Second Rhapsody, see Lachmund, *Living with Liszt*, 147. Also Göllicherich, *The Master-Classes of Franz Liszt*, 47, 167. Also *Remembering Franz Liszt* (New York: Limelight, 1986), 47, 346.

with numerous crashing low notes that seem intended to test the limits of the instrument.⁵⁵⁴ Rosenthal did present an original cadenza to Liszt, who apparently approved of it, although it is not clear whether this is the same one that Rosenthal plays.⁵⁵⁵ It is rather interesting to compare Rosenthal's 1930 disc to the archived recording of a live radio broadcast he gave of the piece in 1929 for the Edison radio hour.⁵⁵⁶ By comparison with the live recording, Rosenthal's disc seems relatively tame, despite the radio announcer's proud decree that Rosenthal would be playing it now "just as he will for his recording next year" for the Edison record label. In the live performance we hear a manner of execution that is unquestionably grand, enthusiastic and bold; seeming to leave no opportunity spared to add the colossal cannon-shots in the bass, especially in the Friska movement. This is a manner of playing that is completely unlike any of the other Liszt-pupil recordings—Friedheim even wrote of these kind of added low bass notes in quite disparaging terms.⁵⁵⁷ Comparing with the "studio" recording, it is tempting to suggest that Rosenthal was simply adapting his playing to suit the occasion, in this case for a special live broadcast event on Mr Edison's birthday—and that perhaps he generally did play differently for "live" audiences. Despite the fact that Rosenthal appears to have played the work for Liszt—the stark contrast between his interpretation and the other Liszt-pupil recordings generally, perhaps highlights the effect that the sense of "tradition" might have varied between pianists.⁵⁵⁸

By contrast, the majority of these pianists exhibit a "sensitive and stylish" approach—much opposed to the show-stopping bravura of Rosenthal, or the overt grandeur of Siloti and Stavenhagen. Friedheim's recordings make up a good portion of this collection—having recorded Rhapsodies Nos.

⁵⁵⁴ The cadenza was not included in Rosenthal's edition (*Tonmeister Ausgabe*) but bears some vague similarities to the cadenzas included in the editions by Burmeister and d'Albert. The latter's cadenza apparently had approval from Liszt, as Lachmund recalls the occasion when the young d'Albert presented the piece (with cadenza) at the masterclasses. See Lachmund, *Living with Liszt*, 55-56.

⁵⁵⁵ Lachmund, *Living with Liszt*, 355-356, in a letter from V. May Hauser to Lachmund "I remember hearing Rosenthal playing a cadenza to the Rhapsody no. 2 for Liszt, who said it was the best written. I do not remember whether he played it in the lesson or after, when I was privileged to stay." See (**Sound Example 33 – Rosenthal 2, cadenza**)

⁵⁵⁶ Broadcast on WJZ, New York, February 11, 1929 and recorded on experimental 30rpm disc.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vpzs0U8IjJg>

⁵⁵⁷ "The sixth rhapsody, for the last decades the most hackneyed after the second [...]. This work usually suffers to a greater extent by the mishandling of the virtuosi, and becomes more "common" in the estimation of the audience. [...] Just this work, for the sake of its friska, needs to be attacked with the utmost care. As known, this fast movement consists a gradual intensification of a simple dance theme, which is so popular in its character that the louder it resounds the more apt it is to approach the "banal;" a few basses, played an octave lower (not intended by the composer), suffice with one step to bring it within the boundaries of the "vulgar." James Huneker was quite right when he said that the rhapsodies "begin in a mosque and end in a tavern." His "aperçue" is, however directed to the wrong address. The fault is not to be found in the music, and Liszt demonstrated this fact by his bold orchestration" in "Reflections and Remarks," 8.

⁵⁵⁸ It is worth noting that Rosenthal cited his personal relations with Brahms (and the latter's approval) in response to criticism of certain alterations he had made in Brahms' Paganini Variations. Evidently Rosenthal did value tradition in that sense. See the *Moriz Rosenthal in Word and Music*, ed. Allen Evans (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), 64-65.

2 (twice), 6 (twice), 9, 10 and 12.⁵⁵⁹ Lachmund mentions Friedheim having played No.6 for Liszt.⁵⁶⁰ Perhaps unsurprisingly given the tone of his article on the Rhapsodies, quoted in the introduction (discussed more below), Friedheim takes a markedly controlled approach in all of his recordings. It would seem as if he did not wish to let his “interpretation” become apparent; that he simply aimed to deliver the work integrally, without undue fuss or exaggeration. But again, that might be expected from one who would write of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* as “a national epic, of which no other nation can boast: Is not such a national epic entitled to a more respectful treatment by interpreters?”⁵⁶¹

But we do not forget that Friedheim was one who was also vocally concerned about the idea of tradition, as we saw above.⁵⁶² His playing is comparable with the recording of Vera Timanova (1855-1942), who already made an appearance above in the anecdote of Borodin, from the year 1877, quoted already:

When it came to Mademoiselle Timanova’s turn, he made her play his Rhapsody in E minor, [...]. After a few little remarks he sat down to the piano and played a few passages from the piece with his iron fingers. ‘This must be as solemn as a triumphal march,’ he cried. Springing up from his chair and putting his arm through Mademoiselle Timanova’s he paced solemnly up and down the room, humming the theme of the Rhapsody. The young people began to laugh.

Timanova resumed the piece, paying attention to his remarks. Liszt leaned towards me and said: ‘She is a splendid fellow, that little Vera.’ Then addressing himself to her: ‘If you play like that at the concert, you will see what ovations! But they will not be more than you deserve.’ Tears of joy ran down her blushing cheeks.⁵⁶³

It wouldn’t be hard to imagine that one who could remember youthful scenes such as this, might later in life treat the works of her great teacher with a healthy respect. This is certainly borne out by her Welte roll recording of Rhapsody No.1, which is sensitive and controlled without a note out of place. She spent a considerable period as a pupil of Liszt, between 1875 and 1882, regularly attending the Weimar classes.⁵⁶⁴ She seems to have played a number of Rhapsodies, although there is no direct evidence of having studied No.1 with Liszt.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁵⁹ As well as No.1, of which no transfer was found. See Discography.

⁵⁶⁰ Lachmund, *Living with Liszt*, 137-138.

⁵⁶¹ Friedheim, “Reflections and Remarks,” 7.

⁵⁶² See Rumson, “Friedheim’s Edition,” 24. Also Friedheim ed., *Chopin: Etudes* (G. Schirmer), 1.

⁵⁶³ Quoted in Adrian Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, 543-44.

⁵⁶⁴ See Thordarson, “Recordings of Works of Liszt Played by his Pupils,” 46.

⁵⁶⁵ She presented to Liszt Rhapsodies No.5 (see the anecdote) and No.11, which she played in a concert in Weimar, June 19, 1882 and presumably would have studied it with Liszt. See Lachmund, *Living with Liszt*, footnote to 97-98. She also studied with Tausig around 1870, making an appearance in Amy Fay’s *Music Study in Germany*, 39-40. Lachmund mentions that Timanova was a pupil for twelve years which does not seem to line up with the other sources. See *Living with Liszt*, 81.

The other “long term” pupil was Alfred Reisenauer (1863-1907), who was taken to Liszt “at a very early age,” in 1876, and remained a regular at Weimar until Liszt’s death in 1886.⁵⁶⁶ Bettina Walker, who travelled to Weimar in 1883, noted:

The prominent pianists at the reunions [in Weimar] during the weeks when I was ‘a listener there’ were Reisenauer, Katy Ranuschewitz, Silotti [sic], Paul Eckhoff, Fräulien Richter, and Amina Goodwin (of Manchester). The first of these (Reisenauer) had for several years followed Liszt wherever he went, and it happened pretty often that when Liszt himself disinclined to show some of the less-advanced pupils the reading he wished to be given to a piece, he would depute this task to Reisenauer.⁵⁶⁷

Reisenauer’s two roll recordings offer an interesting case study in the question of tradition. In his Welte-Mignon recording of Rhapsody No.10, mentioned above as being inscribed as “played after personal reminiscences of Liszt,” Reisenauer plays with a pronounced improvisatory approach, with the addition of many short interpolations and alterations, such as arpeggios flicked off at the end of a phrase, or cimbalom-like repeated notes before the entry of a melody. His extremely characterful playing has considerable charm—and the middle section, with a kind of extended cimbalom monologue, is of stirring and bittersweet quality, much enhanced by Reisenauer’s alterations. His Triphonola roll of Rhapsody No.12, on the other hand, while similarly stylish and free in spirit, contains rather less by way of alterations—the only notable addition being a few of the cimbalom-like repeated notes emphasising entry of one of the particularly heartfelt melodies. **(Sound Example 5 – Reisenauer Rhapsody 12)** In this sense, Reisenauer’s rather introspective manner in No.12 draws comparison with Timanova and Friedheim, in the eschewing of textual liberties—and while in the formal sense, Reisenauer’s Rhapsody No.10 is able to be compared to Stavenhagen’s No.12 in the overtly free approach to the text, that really must have been a characteristic of Liszt’s playing of these pieces.

The remaining few recordings are by pupils whose degree of influence from Liszt is harder to gauge, yet we may observe some consistency in style of interpretation, compared with the other pupils. Conrad Ansorge (1862-1930), mentioned once above, visited Weimar in 1882, and returned in 1885 and played a number of Liszt compositions for the master.⁵⁶⁸ His roll recording of Rhapsody No.14 makes for very interesting comparison with the same work recorded by a Hungarian pupil of Liszt, Josef Weiss (1864-1945). Weiss was a pupil at the Royal Academy of Music in Budapest (of which Liszt was president) from a young age, beginning his studies in 1875, and received lessons from Liszt himself as well as Ferenc Erkel, the noted Hungarian composer. In 1882 Weiss received

⁵⁶⁶ See *Great Pianists on Piano Playing*, 224. Also Thordarson, “Recordings of Works of Liszt Played by his Pupils,” 31-32.

⁵⁶⁷ Bettina Walker, *My Musical Experiences*, 96.

⁵⁶⁸ The works he played for Liszt included *Funérailles*, the *Liebestraum* No.2, and several of the Paganini etudes, among others Thordarson, “Recordings of Works of Liszt Played by his Pupils,” 15. Also Göllicherich, *Masterclasses*, 61, 72, etc.

the Liszt Scholarship at the Academy, selected personally by Liszt.⁵⁶⁹ There are some noticeable similarities in the approaches of Ansorge and Weiss, at least in a general sense—very little by way of alteration, and a pronounced style of rhythm and character that lends comparison with Friedheim, Timanova and Reisenauer; with Weiss in particular reminding one of the descriptions of the *Periodischer Vortrag* described in the previous section, with his clearly “etched out” phrases. And it is the rhythm too that would seem to betray that one of the pupils, namely Weiss, was “in” on something, that the other was not.

The “main tune” of the first part of the Rhapsody is notated by Liszt as follows (Example 19):



Example 19: Excerpt from Rhapsody No. 14, mm. 25

While Ansorge plays the rhythm “as written,” Weiss plays it with an unmistakable “reverse overdotted” of the second part of the bar, closer to the following, resembling a Lombard rhythm (Example 20):



Example 20: Excerpt from Rhapsody No. 14, with rhythm as played by Josef Weiss

(Sound Example 6 – Weiss Rhapsody 12, 1)

This manner of execution can be heard on other recordings by Hungarian musicians—notably in the orchestral version of the Rhapsody (numbered as No. 1 instead of No. 14) by Arthur Nikisch (1855-1922) conducting the London Symphony Orchestra in 1914, and Iván Fischer conducting the Budapest Festival Orchestra in 1998.⁵⁷⁰ Interestingly, however, one does not hear it on any of the several gypsy-band recordings of the same work.⁵⁷¹ It is an example of tradition at work; but whether

⁵⁶⁹ Thordarson, “Recordings of Works of Liszt Played by his Pupils,” 47.

⁵⁷⁰ See Arthur Nikisch: *Complete Orchestral Recordings* (2006: Symposium 1087-1088), track 5. Iván Fischer and Budapest Festival Orchestra, *6 Hungarian Rhapsodies* (1998: Philips 456 570-2), track 1.

⁵⁷¹ These seem to be in reality cimbalom (with band) arrangements of the *Hungarian Fantasy*, Liszt’s piano concerto arrangement of Rhapsody No. 14. Oszkár Ökrös, *The Cimbalom Wizard* (1990: Qualiton/Hungaroton

Weiss saw this as a Liszt tradition, or a Hungarian tradition, is difficult to tell.⁵⁷² It notably does not appear in Ansorge's recording, nor the recording of the *Hungarian Fantasy* (Liszt's concerto arrangement of Rhapsody No.14) by Arthur de Greef (1862-1940), a Belgian pianist who studied with Liszt in Weimar in 1882.⁵⁷³

Weiss also recorded the Rhapsody No.12 on disc, of which Harold C. Schonberg declared: "It is an example of the Liszt school at its worst—eccentric, inaccurate, rhythmically unstable."⁵⁷⁴ To present writer's ears, however, Weiss's playing comes across as fabulously stylish; it is a performance that bears much similarity to the other Liszt-pupil recordings of the work in its sense of freedom, with a few textual additions such as arpeggio flourishes.⁵⁷⁵ Much like his Rhapsody No.14, Weiss's playing here strongly reminds one of the *Periodischer Vortrag*, that in this case seem to be helped by his quicker tempi: each short section of the piece seems like one stanza of a poem, with its own arch and structure, each thought following along without much concern for the notated rhythmic values.

A much more dramatic approach, fuelled by strong contrasts, is taken by De Greef, on both of his two disc recordings of Rhapsody No.12. Like Weiss, De Greef makes a number of alterations, but the existence of the two recordings offers an interesting insight into the nature of these embellishments.⁵⁷⁶ One might expect that these flourishes were an off-the-cuff improvisation, and not necessarily "practised in," in contrast with Rosenthal's two recordings of Rhapsody No.2, who did appear to be improvising. In the case of De Greef's No.12, his two recordings made three years apart (1922 and 1925) exhibit identical alterations, using the same cuts and modified cadenza before the finale section.⁵⁷⁷ Similar evidence of such planned alteration can be seen in Emil von Sauer's

10257), track 15. Rajkó, *Rajkó: The Young Gypsy Band* (1983: Qualiton/Hungaroton 10180), track 9. Istvan Albert, Orchestra Of The Hungarian State Folk Ensemble, *Hungarian Rhapsodies Nos. 2, 13, 14, 15, 19 / Csárdás Macabre* (1968: Qualiton/Hungaroton 10104), track 4.

⁵⁷² Hungarian pianist Louis Kentner who makes reference to the folk tune on which the Rhapsody is based, seems to suggest that this dotted rhythm does not come from the folk tune itself but is a more generic Hungarian trope: "Liszt used the melody as it was presented to him and we must, of course, play it as 'Liszt' rather than 'Hungarian music' [...]. It might in some cases be useful to know that the Hungarian language always stresses the first syllable (when the words are available to us), that the rhythm ♩ frequently veers towards ♩♩. and that these things must be divined rather than deduced from the score which more often than not gives incomplete information; instinct, being at the bottom of creation, must be complemented by a kindred instinct in the *re-creation* (which is interpretation)." See *Franz Liszt: The Man and his Music* ed. Alan Walker (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1970), 205-206.

⁵⁷³ See Thordarson, "Recordings of Works of Liszt Played by his Pupils," 21.

⁵⁷⁴ Harold C. Schonberg, *The Great Pianists from Mozart to the Present* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), 303.

⁵⁷⁵ For a more detailed comparison of all the Liszt pupil recordings of Rhapsody No.12, see Nicholas Williams, "Performance practice in Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies*: A comparison of the Liszt-Pupil recordings of *Hungarian Rhapsody* No.12" (Hons. diss., Edith Cowan University, 2018).

⁵⁷⁶ Thordarson suggests that De Greef may have played the Rhapsody No.12 for Liszt, as the work was already in his repertoire prior to visiting Weimar. See Thordarson, "Recordings of Works of Liszt Played by his Pupils," 21.

⁵⁷⁷ Both recordings are available on *Arthur de Greef: Solo and Concerto Recordings* (2014: APR 7401), disc 1 track 6 and disc 2 track 11. One finds similar repeated use of identical alterations in the recordings of Frederic Lamond's three recordings of *Gnomenreigen*, who interestingly does not follow the various subtle alterations suggested by Fleischmann as being of the Liszt tradition. See Fleischmann, 230. Lamond's recordings can be

Rhapsody No.15, comparing his edition of c.1913 (Example 21) and his disc recording from 1925. In a footnote on the last page of the Rhapsody, Sauer suggests the following alteration, that is heard loud and clear on his disc recording:⁵⁷⁸

The image shows a musical score excerpt from Rhapsody No. 15, edited by Emil Sauer. It features a piano part with a 'sempre ff' marking. Below the main score, there is a footnote in three languages: German, French, and English, all stating that the editor plays a different bass line in his concerts. The footnote is numbered 9883 and includes the 'Edition Peters' logo.

*) Der Herausgeber spielt in seinen Konzerten hier folgenden Baß:
 *) L'éditeur joue dans ses concerts ici le basse suivant:
 *) The editor plays in his concerts here the following bass:
 Edition Peters 9883

Example 21: Excerpt from Rhapsody No.15, edited Emil Sauer

(Sound Example 7 – Sauer Rhapsody 15, 1)

Apart from the large cut of repeated material in the middle of the composition, which was probably due to time constraints of the 4-minute disc, Sauer's Rhapsody No.15 contains no other obvious alterations.⁵⁷⁹ His playing is best described as slick, with the difficult figuration flicked off with swaggering ease. The same could be said about Sauer's Rhapsody No.12, although the more plaintive moments of that work allows a softer and considerate approach than was possible in the more confident No.15.⁵⁸⁰ Both works are delivered with the kind of "no fuss" approach that is observable in a number of the recordings, most notably Friedheim, Timanova and Reisenauer.

c. Style and Interpretation

It is hopefully clear from the above discussion, which aims to give a brief overview of what can be ascertained about each pupil's influence from Liszt, that while there are some noticeable trends across this catalogue, each pupil nevertheless manages to give his or her own personal stamp to the music—they are all very much unique. The issue that soon becomes apparent in such an exercise is the

found on *Frederic Lamond: The Liszt, HMV and Electrola Recordings* (2018: APR 7301). The alterations of both De Greef and Lamond can be found transcribed in Fan Wei-Tsu, "Variant performances of Franz Liszt's piano music in early recordings: A historical perspective on textual alterations" (Ph.D diss., Northwestern University, 1991).

⁵⁷⁸ Franz Liszt, *Klavierwerke Band II: Rhapsodien Vol.2* ed. Emil von Sauer (Leipzig: Edition Peters, n.d.[c.1913-1917]), 172. Sauer's recordings can be heard on *Emil von Sauer: The Complete Commercial Recordings* (Marston Records 53002-2). Sauer also suggests an alteration to the last bar of the *Consolation* No.3 in his edition, that he again plays on his recording of that work. See *Klavierwerke Band V: Original Kompositionen* (Leipzig: Edition Peters, n.d.[c.1913-1917]), 127.

⁵⁷⁹ Interestingly Sauer does not take the cut of the "cadenza," that is suggested by Liszt in the first edition, which is reproduced in Sauer's edition also.

⁵⁸⁰ The 15th rhapsody is in reality little more than a "concert arrangement" of the popular and (in Liszt's day) patriotic Hungarian tune called the Rákóczy March For more on the Rákóczy March see Emile Haraszti, "Berlioz, Liszt, and the Rakoczy March" in *The Musical Quarterly* Vol. 26, No. 2 (Apr., 1940), pp. 200-231.

difficulty of discussing and comparing these musical recordings in even the most general way. Hence the observations made thus far have tended towards the mechanical (“formal”) side of things, such as textual alterations and rhythmic approaches that are plain and objective. Stavenhagen does more, Friedheim does less. Great! But what does any of this mean in the context of a performing tradition that saw each musician as an individual creative artist? In that context, too, it is clear that merely making formal observations tends to steer one’s focus *away* from what was the more important question in the Liszt tradition—why are they playing this way? What were they trying to express? But how on earth do we measure that?

Yet this is the benefit of having established (or hypothesised) a theoretical way of understanding the music *first*, before we listen to any recordings. While of course we cannot in any way definitively *prove* that any of these pianists were necessarily following the Liszt aesthetic that we have attempted to outline, we now at least have some definite language that we can use to discuss, compare and hopefully understand what is going on in these recordings in a more subjective way. The obvious objection here is that such a mode of thinking can quickly lead to a confirmation bias—that we start noticing certain things precisely because we started looking for them, thereby skewing what we see and how we understand it in a way that may not represent reality.

In the present context, it is inevitable that such biases will influence our “findings.” We must be clear, therefore, what exactly we are here to find out—and rather what we *can* find out, given the available evidence and information. We saw in the previous chapters that, for instance, some textual alteration was an evidenced part of Liszt’s own practice—and for that reason alone, perhaps, we might not be surprised to find his eminent pupils indulging in the same kinds of liberties, especially when they were apparently attempting to evoke Liszt’s manner of playing such as in the two recordings by Stavenhagen and Reisenauer. But what are we supposed to do with this information?

The present dissertation aims to providing a more-or-less practical framework for understanding and performing the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* in the Liszt tradition. It seeks to engage with the question of how somebody versed in the Liszt tradition might have approached the performance of the works—and for this reason it was necessary to unpack the ideas that go together to form such a tradition. Fundamental to this was accepting the Virtuoso as a creative artist, who is also aware of tradition. As part of this, we established the concept of a style-tradition, defined as the handing down of essential elements of how the music “should” sound, that encompasses various important elements not notated by the composer. It is this style-tradition, in its broadest sense, that I propose we may hear evidenced in the recordings of the Liszt-pupils.

Intuitively, one gets the sense that the “style-tradition” is much like Wagner and Ramann’s *Melos*, a vaguely defined “something” that performers must grasp if they are to give an ideal rendering of the music. This must ultimately lead us to “style in execution”—i.e., that the performer

must *play* the music with its appropriate style. One becomes familiar with this the general sound of this “style-tradition,” and reflects their understanding of it in their own playing.

Although following our definitions, each one of these recordings does *not* represent a style-tradition, *per se*, but represents the “style-particular,” i.e. an individual pupil’s interpretation of the style—we may, perhaps, through broad familiarity with many recordings form an impression of the style-tradition in its general sense.⁵⁸¹ Given the availability of 23 recordings by 11 pianists of the Liszt school of several different numbers of the collection of Rhapsodies, such an opportunity certainly seems available here. As noted already, while they do differ considerably on the “local” scale, there are certainly trends that begin to emerge when we consider the collection as a whole. It is these trends that we will discuss in the next section.

The first discussion will focus on the “formal” aspects, such as textual alterations, which lends itself well to notated musical examples. The second discussion however will attempt to describe “effect” of the playing in more poetical terms, focusing on questions of rhythm and phrasing. In the latter section, notated examples were deemed not necessary, reference instead made to sound clips only, justification for which decision will be made below.

II. The Hungarian Rhapsodies in the Liszt Tradition

a. Tradition and Textual Alteration

In the overview, above, we noted already a number of trends that seem to emerge from even a cursory glance at the collection of recordings. In terms of general stylistic approach, there is one pianist who stands out without question—Rosenthal. In his “by the scruff of the neck” approach to the Friska of Rhapsody No.2, in both his disc and radio recordings (though particularly the latter), Rosenthal puts himself in striking contrast to the other pupils. (**Sound Example 8 – Rosenthal Rhapsody 2**) His colossal slamming of clusters in the bass lend kinship to other very famous pianists of the age in these works—such as Mark Hambourg (mentioned in the introduction), the effect also became much associated with Horowitz.⁵⁸² While I’m not here to question the aesthetical validity of this manner of playing—the fact of the matter is that none of the other 21 recordings by Liszt pupils seem to resemble this fashion of playing at all, and in the context of the rest of this catalogue it seems so much *out of place* compared to the general approach that it does not seem unfair to conclude that this was

⁵⁸¹ As suggested by Kenneth Hamilton, “Performing Liszt’s Piano Music,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Liszt* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 178. A similar assessment is made in Steinberg, “Franz Liszt’s Approach to Piano Playing”, 19.

⁵⁸² Horowitz’s famous interpretation of the Second Rhapsody seems to have much in common with Rosenthal. See *Artists of the Century: Vladimir Horowitz* (2000: RCA Red Seal 163471). Hofmann often made use of the same effect, although he does not bring exhibit this particular talent in his 1922 recording of the Second Rhapsody. See *Josef Hofmann - Acoustic recordings (1916-1923)* (2008: Naxos 8.111326), track 11.

not a product of the Liszt tradition, despite the fact that Rosenthal appears to have played the work for Liszt.⁵⁸³ The two recordings of No.2 by Friedheim, that were mentioned in the introduction, provide a valuable counterpoint. While we have seen, from his writings, that Friedheim was expressly concerned about preserving the Liszt tradition—he was also sensitive to the effect of performance style on the Rhapsodies. How much of his manner of playing might be reflective of his personal temperament rather than a style-tradition can be perhaps be estimated by comparison with the other recordings.

Friedheim's interpretation of No.2 was captured in two versions—a short abridged disc recording, and a piano-roll of the complete work. As discussed above, while the two recordings leave something to be desired in terms of quality, there is nevertheless clear consistency in terms of general approach, namely in the marked abstinence from the kind of “indulgences” enjoyed by Reisenauer and some of the other pupils. In this sense, it must be said, Friedheim's No.2 belongs to a group that makes up the majority of recordings here. This group happens to include those pupils who, like Friedheim, spent a considerable period of time with Liszt—namely Timanova (in No.1) and Reisenauer (in No.12 only), as well as the other recordings by Friedheim of No.6 (two recordings, roll and disc), No.9, No.10 and No.12. To this group we can add Siloti and Sauer in No.12, Weiss and Ansorge in No.14. This group of twelve recordings are chiefly distinguished from the remainder by the *lack* of obvious textual alteration—apart from the liberal use of unnotated arpeggiation and other similar techniques, these being such common practices in this period that they need hardly be noted.⁵⁸⁴

While the use of textual alteration (or lack thereof) might seem like a strange feature to observe, in the context of the Liszt-pupil recordings of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, it would appear to be noteworthy either way—for even in this group of “minimal alteration,” we still can observe some minor additions.⁵⁸⁵ These include the “cimbalom-bebung” in Reisenauer's No.12 (noted already), defined as a decorative repetition of a particular note of a melody, examples of which are used by Liszt in a number of the other Rhapsodies.⁵⁸⁶ Friedheim also makes minor alterations to No.12, such as the clipping of several notes in a cadenza passage, as well as the swapping around of two near-identical sections, that appear more like memory lapses than definite decisions; the same might be said of the one or two minor alterations that occur in Friedheim's No.9.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸³ See Lachmund, *Living with Liszt*, 335-336.

⁵⁸⁴ For more detail see Peres Da Costa, *Off the Record*, 101-187.

⁵⁸⁵ We do not include cuts that appear in all the disc recordings cited (except Friedheim's No.6) for it is not possible to discount whether these were merely due to time restraints, rather than for artistic reasons.

⁵⁸⁶ See Rhapsody No.2 and Rhapsody No.13. Lina Ramann suggests the addition of these in Rhapsody No.3 in the *Liszt-Pädagogium*, chapt. 3, 9. See Appendix.

⁵⁸⁷ More details on the alterations to No.12 can be seen in Nicholas Williams, “Performance practice in Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies*: A comparison of the Liszt-Pupil recordings of *Hungarian Rhapsody* No.12” (Hons. diss., Edith Cowan University, 2018). Most of these alterations have also been transcribed in Fan Wei-Tsu, “Variant performances of Franz Liszt's piano music in early recordings: A historical perspective on textual alterations” (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1991).

The remainder of the recordings offer a more liberal treatment of the text. This includes the two pianists who seem to have planned alterations, namely Sauer's No.15 and De Greef's No.12. Sauer's alteration, as we saw, was relatively insignificant, that one might not have noticed had his edition not made it obvious. De Greef's changes include sizeable cuts that may well be due to restraints of the 4-minute disc, which necessitated a side change in the middle of the work. His other changes include swapping the section at mm. 31-34 with the varied version of the same material from mm. 104-109, and substituting the long violinistic cadenza (mm. 181) before the finale section, with a version in alternating double thirds, presumably of his own invention. **(Sound Example 9 – De Greef Rhapsody 12, 1)** He plays the first bar of the finale twice, giving the impression that the “soloist” of the right hand enters when it pleases, as the accompanying part vamps in anticipation.⁵⁸⁸ De Greef also doubles the bass of the left hand part, giving the music a stronger sense of accentuation (Example 22):



Example 22: Excerpt from Rhapsody No.12, as played by Arthur de Greef: mm. 184-188

(Sound Example 10 – De Greef Rhapsody 12, 2)

Weiss's recording of No.12 contains the addition of two added flourishes, that seem to be of an improvised nature: stopping before the bar-line at the end of mm. 149, as if to take a breath, then embellishing the cadence with an ascending arpeggio figure (based on the chord) giving a stronger sense of emphasis, followed in the next bar by an ascending glissando along the black keys that serves to balance out the phrase nicely (Example 23) (the alterations are heard at the end of the sound example):

⁵⁸⁸ Kenneth Hamilton suggested this kind of extension of accompaniment figure as a common element in Lisztian practice, in a lecture available on YouTube: Kenneth Hamilton, *Professor Kenneth Hamilton discusses Liszt's Legacy to his Students* (9 October 2012), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vaU-T8ZAHkc>



Example 23: Excerpt from Rhapsody No.12, with additions played by Josef Weiss: mm. 146-153

(Sound Example 11 – Wiess Rhapsody 12, 1)

At first listen, Liebling’s roll of Rhapsody No.4 seems to adopt considerable alteration from the very first bars—that is until one realises that he has simply substituted (perhaps “by mistake”) the varied accompaniment pattern from the reprise of the theme a page later—and in fact the entire first section contains a number of inconsequential changes to the left hand. In the more decorative middle section, delivered by Liebling with utmost caprice and elegance, he adds many sparkling grace notes and mordents, that lend considerable charm. An enviably well-executed embellishment is made before both of the cadenza passages, with delightful grace-notes that allow the melodic voice to land on the fifth, rather than the third as written by Liszt—making room for the repetitious figure of the so-called “Kuruc-fourths,” a somewhat stereotyped trope of Gypsy music that works very well here; one wonders why Liszt didn’t think of it (Example 24, Liebling’s alteration on the upper stave).⁵⁸⁹



Example 24: Excerpt from Rhapsody No.4, with alteration by George Liebling, mm. 43-44

(Sound Example 12 – Liebling Rhapsody 4, 1)

Textual alteration is taken a step further in Reisenauer’s roll recording of Rhapsody No.10, that, as we saw, was inscribed as “played after personal recollections of Liszt.” His alterations are of distinctively

⁵⁸⁹ Kuruc-fourths are used by Liszt in Rhapsody No.11 and the *Hungarian Fantasy*, as well as his song-setting *Die Drei Zigeuner*. See Jonathan Bellmann, *Style Hongrois*, 122.

improvisatory character, with arpeggio flourishes in the right hand snapped off at the end of several of the phrases, much like Weiss's example above. He adds short interpolated figures at various points in the piece, also of an improvisatory style. A more substantial alteration is made to the ornamental figuration in mm. 26 (Example 25), changing it into a quick chromatic run, as well as an extended flourish at the end of the sound example:

Example 25: Excerpt from *Rhapsody No. 10*, with alterations by Alfred Reisenauer, mm.22-24

(Sound Example 13 – Reisenauer 10, 1)

In the next example, Reisenauer inserts a descending scale run, as well as his own extensive cadenza passage in place of the marked fermata in mm. 81 (Example 26, Reisenauer's cadenza in small note-heads):

Example 26: Excerpt from *Rhapsody No.10*, with alterations by Alfred Reisenaur, mm. 79-82

Reisenauer makes considerable alteration to the section following marked “quasi cimbalom” in mm. 82-89, extending and varying the figuration written by Liszt, with several interpolated ornaments of a similar character to the above examples. Reisenauer’s embellishments, much like Liebling’s, are very well integrated into the style and are perfectly executed with a beautiful sense of rhythm—one probably wouldn’t guess that he was making alterations at all. (**Sound Example 14 – Reisenauer 10, 2**)

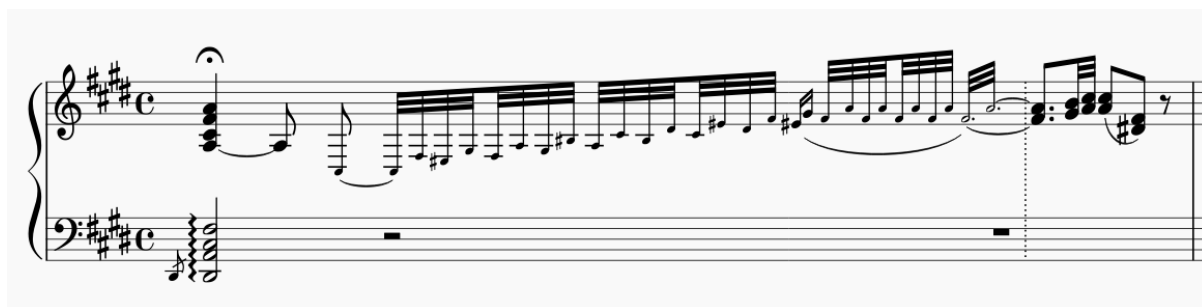
Stavenhagen’s No.12, however, takes textual alteration still one step beyond Reisenauer. In a general sense, Stavenhagen’s embellishments are of a similar character to Reisenauer’s—mostly running passages and cadenzas integrated into the music, or tossed off at the end of a phrase. This begins from the very first bar (Example 27), with an extra octave added to the assertive declamation in mm.1, followed by a wild chromatic run (not written by Liszt, see Example 28) inserted over the grumbling response in mm.2. The same alterations are made to the similar bars in mm.5-6.

(**Sound Example 15 – Stavenhagen Rhapsody 12, 1**)

Example 27: Excerpt from Rhapsody No.12, Liszt’s original, mm. 1-3

Example 28: Excerpt from Rhapsody No.12, with alterations by Bernhard Stavenhagen, mm. 1-3

In the next example, Stavenhagen invents his own ascending cadenza passage, at the marked fermata in mm. 11, in alternating thirds that leads to a tremolo that unfolds into Liszt’s dotted figure, now in double-thirds. (Example 29)



Example 29: Bernhard Stavenhagen's cadenza added to *Rhapsody No. 12*, mm. 11

The descending passage in mm. 12-13 is played with great speed, leading to a truncated version of Liszt's cadenza. The chordal passage in mm. 14-15 gains incredible *brio* leading up to a grand arpeggio flourish up and down the piano, that was not written by Liszt. (**Sound Example 16 – Stavenhagen Rhapsody 12, 2**)

For most of the remainder of the Rhapsody, although Stavenhagen takes a liberal approach to the text, he does not often alter the outward effect, apart from the cut of a “variation” in mm. 67-80, and the addition of a few “cimbalom-*bebung*” notes, in the same place as Reisenauer in his recording of the work. Stavenhagen's other alterations are of such a kind as to enrich chords with added bass notes, or small grace notes and mordents added in places of a distinct ornamental character.

The next example contains more considerable alteration. (**Sound Example 17 – Stavenhagen Rhapsody 12, 3**) The cadenzas before the finale are given in a severely shortened version, that seems like an apt decision in order to keep the “drama” moving, where Liszt's two long cadenzas may have halted the flow at this brisk tempo. In the finale he offers more substantial changes, such as dropping the right hand part an octave lower with each successive phrase. Following this relatively harmless suggestion, however, we get a more unusual invention: Stavenhagen suddenly goes “off book,” inserting a seemingly improvised “filler” passage that takes the place of a cut of about 20 bars—the effect is one of confusion, in a flurry of double thirds and strange modulations that would seem to betray the frustration of a memory lapse... until he suddenly emerges at mm. 207, nonchalantly inserting a bar of accompaniment before the melody continues on, seeming to brush it all off as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened. But the melody continues for only eight bars until the crash of a dominant chord and the grand sweep of a descending glissando, as if the curtains were quickly drawn, only to suddenly reopen with a burst of light and a scene change: he cuts to mm. 254, with the ascending bravura chords and cimbalom-like tremolos passing by like a flash as he arrives at the coda, the whole band seeming to come together. He adds expansive octave scales in the left hand from mm. 273, to be shortly interrupted by a glissando over the entire length of the piano. The final cadence is enhanced with an extended chordal passage of magnificent strength and grandeur, bringing the performance to a mighty close.

Stavenhagen's playing seems very effectively to produce the impression of free improvisation. While we know he is ostensibly playing a written composition, it really does sound like he is making it up as he goes along; each new phrase seeming to be in response to the last one, thoughts gushing forth with remarkable fluidity and yet composure, that remind one of Ramann's description of Liszt: "his feelings and ideas poured forth with an immediacy;" as if "mind and body were merged."⁵⁹⁰ And perhaps Stavenhagen was making it up as he went along—at least as far as the alterations were concerned—but it would not be the alterations in themselves that produce such an effect of spontaneity, rather it is the approach to rhythm.

b. **Style: Rhythm and Phrasing**

Indeed, if there were anything to unite these Liszt-pupil recordings, in their approach to the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*; it would surely be their approach to rhythm. While they do vary in a considerable degree, in terms of their specific interpretative decisions—all of these pianists exhibit a playing that is at once free and controlled. They are free in the sense that they absolutely do not just "read" the literally notated values, while at the same time the result never is so free as to appear wayward, indecisive or confused. These are, of course, subjective qualities—and clearly the question of taste can influence one's view, as we remember from Schonberg who described Weiss' recording of No.12 as "eccentric, inaccurate, [and] rhythmically unstable."⁵⁹¹ But while Schonberg's criticism here is, perhaps, objectively true as per the letter of the score; should we simply discount Weiss's playing as eccentricity? Was he in actuality just considering the score in a different way?

While, obviously, we cannot really know how or what Weiss was thinking (or even *if* he was thinking, as Schonberg would probably quip); we, having learnt a little about Liszt's thoughts on the question of rhythm, can at least try and understand it in a way that may have been closer to Weiss' intention, considering that this may well be what he was taught in his lessons with Liszt.⁵⁹² We are referring to the *Periodischer Vortrag*, that driving principle that we learnt about above through Liszt's Symphonic Poem preface and the writings of Lina Ramann. It was defined as a "phrase-based" manner of playing, that is, the music moves *not* according to beats, but according to the meaning and nature of the phrases. In practical terms, this relies on certain ways of conceiving and conceptualising the music and the score itself.⁵⁹³ Fundamentally, the most important consideration is that music is sound—and this provides an essential key to beginning to understand these Liszt-pupil recordings of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, as the I have come to realise in the course of this research. One of the *main* problems is the score—which becomes immediately apparent when one attempts to analyse any

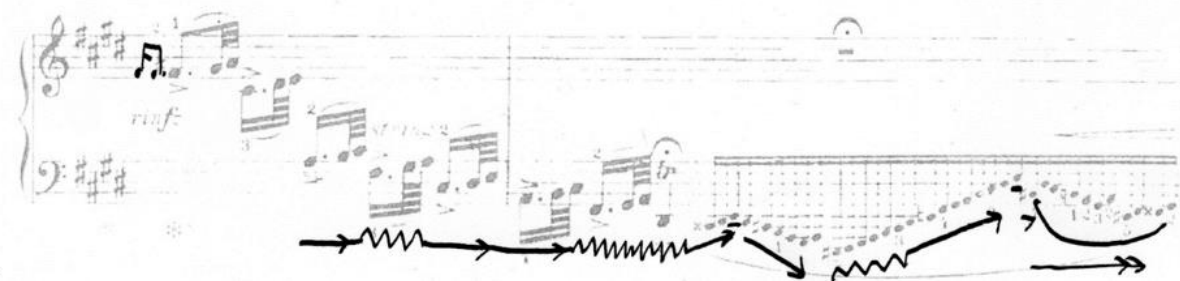
⁵⁹⁰ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 6.

⁵⁹¹ Schonberg, *The Great Pianists*, 303.

⁵⁹² Remembering that Weiss received the Liszt Scholarship in 1882, chosen by Liszt himself, which would seem to imply that he was probably doing *something* right. See Thordarson, "Recordings of Works of Liszt Played by his Pupils," 47.

⁵⁹³ See chapter "The *Periodischer Vortrag*" above.

of these recordings against the score itself. For instance, here is an excerpt from Weiss' Rhapsody No.12 (**Sound Example 18 – Weiss Rhapsody 12, 2**) analysed with a system devised to notate tempo fluctuations and other nuances (Example 30) (wavy lines=slow down; arrow=speed up):⁵⁹⁴



Example 30: Excerpt from Rhapsody No.12, as played by Josef Weiss, mm. 12-13

While this notation captures something, there are an infinitude of nuances that are simply missed: the peculiar *bounce* that Weiss gives to the descending pattern, or the irresistibly “Hungarian” flavour that he gives to the cadenza. Here’s another example, from a similar analysis of Siloti’s roll-recording of the same work (Example 31) (**Sound Example 19 – Siloti Rhapsody 12, 1**) in a section marked *Ritenuto il tempo, sempre rubato*:

Example 31: Excerpt from Rhapsody No.12, as played by Alexander Siloti, mm. 88-98





While again, from this notation, we can see some interesting things—the dotting of the rhythm, the clear “to-and-fro” pattern to the tempo fluctuation—it in fact misses a lot more that is of a nature that simply *defies* this kind of notation. For instance, the instruction “*sempre rubato*” is read by Siloti in

⁵⁹⁴ This was the method used in my Honours research, from which these examples are taken: Nicholas Williams, “Performance practice in Liszt’s *Hungarian Rhapsodies*: A comparison of the Liszt-Pupil recordings of *Hungarian Rhapsody No.12*” (Hons. diss., Edith Cowan University, 2018).

what seems to be the “old-fashioned” sense; the two hands playing in different paces—the left hand arpeggios spring up with harp-like simplicity, a subtle lingering on the lower notes; while the melody soliloquizes to itself in luxurious freedom, like the lonesome poet and his lyre. How does one notate that?

What looks on Liszt’s score to be equal semiquavers over a 2/4 time signature—in Siloti’s hands becomes dotted, and each dotted rhythm is different to the last, with utterly inimitable nuance to each and every note. All of this could *well* be what Liszt “intended,” and seemingly tried to indicate with his markings—yet even with our extended palette of symbols, we have little hope of communicating in any meaningful way, not merely the poetical effect of Siloti’s playing, but even the purely mechanical side of it, in what he actually played.⁵⁹⁵ It is certainly not a leap to suggest that this is precisely the kind of nuance that Liszt was concerned about in the writings cited above.

But what is even more compelling about this thought is that Liszt in fact *tried* to use symbols that were essentially the same as this, in his earlier works, such as the *Grandes études* and the *Album d’un voyageur* (Example 32).⁵⁹⁶

The  signs mark breaks of a smaller value than the 
 The double lines  the *crescendo* movement (*accelerando*, etc.)
 The single lines  the *decrescendo* movement (*rallentando*, *ritenuto calando*, etc.)

Example 32: Footnote explaining Liszt’s markings, from Breitkopf & Härtel edition of *Grandes études*, page 1

Liszt eventually abandoned this system, perhaps for similar reasons as he wrote in relation to Chopin’s use of the term *tempo rubato*: “This direction [for *tempo rubato*] is no longer found in his later productions; he was persuaded that if the player understood them he would divine this regular irregularity.”⁵⁹⁷ While in this example, Liszt himself was obviously still employing the direction for *rubato*; if Siloti’s playing is anything to go by, one understands immediately the complete inadequacy of such an instruction, let alone these supposedly more specific symbols that would be more likely to confuse than elucidate (given the number of possible ways to interpret such things).

Whatever we might argue regarding the troubles of the notation, the fact is that in the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, the pupils of Liszt all play with a free approach to rhythm, and not just in places that are marked *sempre rubato*. The difficulty, however, in the context of attempting to write about these aspects, is that visual examples offer little help, for much that is important in this manner of playing is simply made more difficult by looking at the score, particularly in the context of the

⁵⁹⁵ One could, for instance, simply convert a MIDI file of the piano roll into a score with digital software—the result is indecipherable!

⁵⁹⁶ See Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years*, 310. It does not seem that Liszt necessarily invented these symbols, as they appear too in the scores of J. C. Kessler (1800-1874) who introduces a number of such notational innovations that never caught on, some of which even seem to have come from French harpsichord music. For example, see Kessler’s *Études rhapsodiques* Op.51 (Paris: Richault, c.1840s).

⁵⁹⁷ Liszt, *Life of Chopin*, 84.

Periodischer Vortrag, which seems to go against the very nature of the notational system (depending on how one reads it, of course). This must have been what was meant by Ramann's insistence of the following:

To perform according to this principle requires a complete re-birth. The elasticity of rhythm that results from this loosens the metrical restraints [taktische Fesselung] to freedom of movement and to a greater swing of expression, to emotional accents and the supreme power of speech: it takes the architecture of the construction into a lively flow and at the same time maintains the light transparency of the individual parts—in summary: it leads to the grand style of execution [grossen Stil des Vortrags].⁵⁹⁸

For this reason, there seems to be no alternative to simply listening to the recordings—preferably *without* looking at the score at the same time.

For the most part, the approach to rhythm in these recordings is just as we've described previously—that in general the playing does not seem to be driven by a beat, but rather driven by phrases. This means that, in general, the music is marked off into groups of notes or chords (called a phrase), these phrases are clearly separated by time from one another in a manner that they are audible and understandable to a listener. Different parts of successive phrases are given different accentuation depending on their nature, which, when set off against *non*-accented notes, provides the sense of forward momentum—directly proportional to the “force” applied. A succession of phrases that seem, as it were, to form a sentence, we might call a “period.”⁵⁹⁹ There would surely be many a grammatical analogy to be made here.⁶⁰⁰ Friedheim's description might be helpful, although he seems to use “period” to refer to an individual phrase rather than a succession of them:

As in elocution, *phrasing* must be taught in piano playing. Essentially it means nothing more than joining a group of notes forming a musical period, and thus separating this group in a perceptible manner from the following group forming another period, etc. In this case the teacher faces, perhaps, a harder task than in pedalling, for any error in phrasing directly touches the integrity of the text itself to a degree of distortion.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁸ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 4. One is reminded of Friedheim: “The difficulty with Liszt's music is its style [...]. By nature, Liszt was a rhapsodist and improviser, and this lends a singular charm to his music, quite aside from all its other qualities. But he was a rhapsodist in his own way; he never improvised without design [...]. The difficulty which Liszt's interpreters run into, even today, is the flexibility demanded of them. There is *tempo rubato* even when one seems to be facing an almost Roman structure. And yet the thread of the line of development in Liszt's construction must unfold smoothly and without interruption.” Friedheim, *Life and Liszt*, 189.

⁵⁹⁹ An associate of Liszt, Mathis Lussy, in his *Traité de l'expression musicale* (1874), makes a systematic use of this approach of comparing phrases to sentence structure. English translation as Mathis Lussy, *Musical expression, accents, nuances, and tempo, in vocal and instrumental music* trans. Miss M. E. von Glehn (London: Novello, 1892).

⁶⁰⁰ We note that Liszt was well educated on poetic metres. We recall, for instance, the reference to the Asclepiad in *Des Bohémiens*. See Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 304. Hans von Bülow's edition of Beethoven Op.109 contains numerous applied examples of this kind of grammatical theory, demonstrating a branch of knowledge seemingly lost in the modern world.

⁶⁰¹ Friedheim, “What is Piano Technique,” *Musical Observer* (c.1925).

The “rhythm” is essentially determined by the natural flow of these phrases—not joined by beats, but flowing on naturally like speech. The bar-lines and note-values in this sense must have more to do with describing accentuation and the relative “length” of the notes themselves, rather than anything to do with beats or divisions in a mensural sense. The plainest example of this seems to be Weiss’ piano-roll recording of Rhapsody No.14, in the main tune marked “Allegro energico” mm. 25, which we have already mentioned before in connection with his characteristic over-dotted rhythm. (**Sound Example 6 – Weiss Rhapsody 14**) Weiss reads the contents of each successive bar as a phrase, which is usually (but not always) cut off cleanly from the following phrase by a “rest” (silence)—and then the next two bars come as one phrase, to form the whole period (see Example 33, the V marks the break between the phrases):



Example 33: Excerpt from Rhapsody No.14, with phrasing by Josef Weiss, mm. 25-28

Listening to the recording, one notices that while Weiss sometimes cuts off the phrase cleanly—most of the “work” is done with the timing and accentuation. The point is that these phrase-relationships are made *audible* to the listener through whatever means necessary, so that the effect of a “natural” flow can occur, which will also rely on the “correct” accentuation in successive phrases. A good example of such a flow is the first few minutes of Sauer’s No.15, a masterful example of how successions of very short phrases proceeding quickly, when executed with such impeccably perfect timing, can create an infectious sense of rhythm (**Sound Example 20 – Sauer Rhapsody 15**). It might be said that the succession of phrases of varying length, and the associated patterns of accentuation, provides the key to this kind of artistic playing.

An example of this playing at its most “speech-like” can be heard in Sauer’s No.12 at mm. 21, the section marked “*in tempo ad libitum*.” (**Sound Example 21 – Sauer Rhapsody 12**) Sauer’s delicate pauses on the end of each quiet phrase, the ornamental notes becoming sincere and gentle; as the period unfolds with the glowing warmth of sunshine. When the coldness of the minor questions in response, the tempo steps forward with a tinge of anxiety and fear—all such wonderful poetry comes through Sauer’s phrasing. Weiss, on the other hand, by taking in more material in a single phrase, manages to create a more urgent feeling with the same music, though no less beautiful (**Sound Example 22 – Weiss Rhapsody 12, 3**).

This process of taking larger phrase-groups, and playing them in such a way that they become clear to the listener, seems to be one of the methods used by the Liszt pupils to produce a grand, exhilarating effect. Siloti and Stavenhagen in No.12 both prove themselves to be masters of such playing—yet occasionally make differing decisions in this regard. For example, hear first Stavenhagen, who takes the phrases as one bar at a time, as most pianists do (**Sound Example 23 – Stavenhagen Rhapsody 12, 4**)—Siloti however takes the phrases as two-bar units, lending a sprightly and joyous rhythm that reflects Liszt’s marking of *allegretto giocoso* very well, while Stavenhagen is able to more aptly justify the marking of *dolce grazioso* that adorns the second period of this section (**Sound Example 24 – Siloti Rhapsody 12, 2**). Siloti’s use of well-defined phrases in the finale, executed with a snappy exactness, combine with the rollicking tempo to give a sense of supreme command over the instrument (**Sound Example 25 – Siloti Rhapsody 12, 3**). Stavenhagen’s use of longer yet sharply delineated phrases, occasionally gives us a glimpse of a playing that can only be described as “Lisztian”—it’s a kind of fleet-footed energetic movement, effortlessly light and transparent, that transcends the mere notes with a poetry that is difficult to describe. Hear the shimmering cimbalom effect, receding into the distance, in this example, followed by the tantalising phrasing of the section marked *sempre rubato*, executed with such boundless liberty that would truly be impossible to notate. (**Sound Example 26 – Stavenhagen Rhapsody 12, 5**)

A noticeable trait that some of these recordings manage to possess is the effect of improvisation—where it seems like they are carefully listening and responding to every note played, such that each next phrase appears to come as a considered response to the previous one, with a feeling of continual unfolding. Liebling’s No.4 is a beautiful example of such an effect, of almost liquid, limpid fluidity (**Sound Example 27 – Liebling Rhapsody 4, 2**). Timanova’s No.1 gives a similarly understated sense of ease and naturalness that contributes to the feeling of relaxed spontaneity—less a public speech than a meaningful intimate conversation (**Sound Example 28 – Timanova Rhapsody 1**). Friedheim proves himself a master of delivering a series of phrases such that each leads on to the next, giving the impression of eloquence, such as in the slow section of No.6 (**Sound Example 29 – Friedheim 6**). Reisenauer (in No.10) and Friedheim (in No.12) both exploit this ability to set up a clear “expectation”—and then suddenly doing something different, unexpectedly; moving forward briskly, only to suddenly pause as if unsure of how to continue—this can lead to a breathtaking effect. (**Sound Example 30 – Reisenauer Rhapsody 10, 3**) and (**Sound Example 31 – Friedheim Rhapsody 12**)

While one could enthusiastically proceed with extracting examples from these recordings *ad infinitum*, it hopefully becomes clear that these players operate in a manner that seems to be intrinsically free, the defining characteristic being the playing of *phrases*, measuring how *they* proceed. That this relies on much creativity on the part of the player is obvious. One must decide where to delineate the phrases, at what pace they should proceed, how they might string together,

where and how they might be accented—through lengthening a note, through arpeggiation of a chord... the amount of subtlety that one must consider could soon become overwhelming. In the line of the Liszt tradition, it might all be simplified by deciding first the “meaning” of what we are trying to communicate—and with that in mind we come to the question of lore, the verbal aspect of tradition.

c. **Lore: Liszt-Pupils on the *Hungarian Rhapsodies***

Clearly the most important source for lore surrounding the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* is Liszt’s book, *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie*, which we thoroughly reviewed in the first part of the dissertation. In the present chapter, we will briefly consider the evidence that comes down to us via the writings of the pupils, relating to more specific questions of how the Rhapsodies might be interpreted, examining two documents that provide important insight into this question. These are the third volume of Lina Ramann’s *Liszt-Pädagogium*, on Liszt’s Hungarian works; and the article by Friedheim, mentioned several times already, published in the *Musical Courier* in 1921 entitled “Reflections and Remarks on Liszt’s Hungarian Rhapsodies.”⁶⁰²

The introduction to Ramann’s volume owes much to *Des Bohémiens*, drawing on ideas from that work to introduce her readers to the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, which, like Liszt’s “other Hungarian compositions, occupy a special place in music literature.” But, she explains, “it would be a mistake to classify them as only for the purposes of virtuosity: in substance and form, they are jewels—which, by their artistic polishing are rendered extraordinary, in the intensity and peculiarity of their lustre and colouring.”⁶⁰³ Ramann points out that behind the Rhapsodies stand “the idea of the national (folk) epic, an epic composed not of legends, but of preserved tunes and melodic fragments offering the poetic essence [Dichtstoff], whose cantos, songs and episodes, the Rhapsodies represent with their manner of feeling, their individuality foreign to European music [Tonkunst], to be expressed only by this people”—namely, the Bohemians—“These manners of feeling are borne, intertwined, interwoven with the poetry; blossomed from the land, the culture, the practices, the history; which in form and mood found its resonance in music.”⁶⁰⁴ Quoting a familiar passage from Liszt’s book comparing Gypsy music and poetical forms, defining the idea behind his musical epic composed of self-sufficient cantos or episodes; Ramann comments that “Here lies the starting point for comprehending and understanding the stylistic rendering of the Hungarian Rhapsodies.”⁶⁰⁵ She describes in her own language the Bohemian sentiment, as we have come to understand it:

Eccentric, wild, fantastic zest for life, goes forth unto unbridled frenzy without restraint; in sharp contrast to it, a melancholy without hope, like a bird without wings, whose distant gaze

⁶⁰² Arthur Friedheim, “Reflections and Remarks on Liszt’s *Hungarian Rhapsodies*,” *Musical Courier* LXXXII, no. 18, (1921): 7.

⁶⁰³ Ramann, *Pädagogium* vol 3, 3.

⁶⁰⁴ Ramann, *Pädagogium* vol 3, 3.

⁶⁰⁵ Ramann, *Pädagogium* vol 3, 3.

seems to be lost in the pitiful bleakness of nature—besides defiance, pride, courage and heroism. Overall, here as there: the wild-poetic touch of the Puszta.

The abruptness, the sharp contrasts, the disjointed alternation of extreme feelings, are expressed in the two forms of the old Hungarian folk tunes: the serious *Lassan*, filled with defiance, pride, heroism and desolate sadness; and the whirling, frenzied *Friska*, gushing with the zest for life. These form the starting point for the structural-design of Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. The limitations of their figurative means of expression is found in the historical, and still typical, make-up of the Gypsy band, in which the violin and cimbalom play the leading roles (the improvisations of the virtuosi): the same is to be found in the figuration and accompanying parts of the Rhapsodies: with their individuality, the rendering is stamped and coloured by the player, as it were. – For all that is remaining to be said concerning the Hungarian Rhapsodies, we expressly refer to the Master's book *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie*, that is as important as it is poetically-rich.⁶⁰⁶

Ramann describes three elements that form the character of Hungarian music, having “grown organically” into Liszt's music: “the Hungarian scale, with sharpened fourth and major seventh endow their melody and harmony with a wild colour that is peculiarly painful, dazzling and fascinatingly vibrant—a strange, multifarious rhythm with shifted, flashing accentuation, and lastly the long-winded and improvisation *fioratura*, which originate from the Hungarian gypsy virtuoso.”⁶⁰⁷

In the *Liszt-Pädagogium*, Ramann gives detailed instructions on the performance and interpretation of Rhapsodies Nos. 3 and 5. A short discussion is given on the poetical character of No.5, titled by Liszt as “*Héroïde élégaique*,” which, as pointed out by Ramann, bears deliberate relation to an ancient style of poetry in the form of a letter (by the same name), giving an explanation of the work's structure in terms of this idea:⁶⁰⁸

With this “*Héroïde élégaique* [elegiac letter]” dedicated to his friend, the Countess Sidonie Reviczky, who sadly met a tragic fate: Franz Liszt conceived, for his Hungarian epic, a noble song of mourning for a hero; the music of this poem is of the most unusual beauty.

Considered as a poem, the E-minor Rhapsody is of epic-lyrical character, which, even if its ancient poetical title does not hint at such, it does remind one of it. Both the Elegy and the “*Héroïde*” shimmer in this elegiac *Héroïde*, thus it is tempting to call it a translation into our subjective modern tonal language.

Liszt's “*Héroïde*” is strophic in its phrase [periodischen] sentence-structure. Like the ancient *Héroïde*, she [the Countess] speaks through another's mouth, but music replaces the hero who sends the message, the Hungarian way of mourning (the first theme), with elegiac lament, broken by glorifying, comforting remembrances (the second theme), increases from stanza to stanza, reaching the painful heroic tones, it sinks back, bending under the brazen saying of doom (the coda).⁶⁰⁹

Ramann's insightful “glossary” lesson on the work proceeds bar by bar, with minute detail on matters of phrasing and style, described mostly in technical language, with the occasional aphoristic

⁶⁰⁶ Ramann, *Pädagogium* vol 3, 3-4.

⁶⁰⁷ Ramann, *Pädagogium* vol 3, 4.

⁶⁰⁸ The *Héroïde* of Ovid: <https://www.theoi.com/Text/OvidHeroides1.html>

⁶⁰⁹ Ramann, *Pädagogium* vol 3, 5.

description (allegedly drawn from Liszt's own instructions). Her lesson on Rhapsody No.3 is of a similar kind—methodical, detailed and carefully considered.⁶¹⁰ Ramann makes little suggestion pertaining to the kind of textual alteration that we saw in the recordings, although in an appendix she does include a number of apparently authentic alterations to Rhapsody No.2.⁶¹¹

Ramann's thoroughness is contrasted by the rather more rhetorical and fast-paced article signed by Arthur Friedheim. Much like Ramann, Friedheim begins by pointing out that the Rhapsodies occupy an unusual place in Liszt's output:

A comparatively small group of Liszt's works serves as transition from his transcriptions to the original works. This group consists of pieces which, with one brilliant exception, appear in such thorough unity of originality, blending, and adaptation, that a distinction may be observed only by competent local "musical magistrates," or critics. This group consists of *The Hungarian Rhapsodies*.⁶¹²

Before offering a few personal observations about the general nature of the works, Friedheim highlights the influence that famous pianists have upon the reputation of the Rhapsodies, which act upon Liszt's reputation like "a cankerous disease, or like a 'curse of the wicked deed' in Schiller's 'Bride of Messina,' that perpetuates the wicked spirit."⁶¹³ But, according to Friedheim, "The culprit was none other than Liszt himself, for under his very eyes and with his consent a '*trouvail*' was perverted into the contrary and became a curse to himself."

Without effort, Liszt was capable of improvising a little rhapsody, treating and combining Hungarian airs in novel fashion, and, as a matter of fact, many of this series was the result of such happy inspiration. Thereupon, pianists, instead of regarding this as the result of an extraordinary gift quite peculiar to Liszt, formed the opinion that the rhapsody was not to be taken seriously, and everybody considered himself entitled to treat the musical world to a newly devised and "*disarranged*" edition. Sad to say, Liszt himself approved of such extravaganza. Great in every respect, he was equally great in sanctioning those liberties, either out of kindness, indifference, or in a whimsical mood. The ancient Romans had a proverb, "*Si duo faciunt idem non est idem*," and they also had a stronger version of the same idea, which, however, for reasons of politeness, had better be omitted.⁶¹⁴

While one tends to sense the influence of an editor this kind of language, given the context of a casual music magazine—the essence here, regarding the Lisztian tradition of embellishing these works, may be more or less supported by those recordings of pupils who did not shy away from indulging in such textual liberties, presumably after hearing Liszt play in such a manner—Stavenhagen and Reisenauer

⁶¹⁰ Some of this is translated in Ian Pace "Performing Liszt in the *Style Hongrois*," 76-82. Pace also discusses some of the less substantial suggestions that come from Göllicher. These have not been discussed here as we are more interested now in the pupils' interpretation, whereas Göllicher is quoting Liszt.

⁶¹¹ In Rhapsody No.3, Ramann does suggest the use of "Cimbalom-Bebung" embellishments, described above. See Ramann, *Pädagogium* chapt. 5, 11-12.

⁶¹² Friedheim, "Reflections and Remarks," 7.

⁶¹³ Friedheim, "Reflections and Remarks," 7.

⁶¹⁴ Friedheim, "Reflections and Remarks," 7.

being the most compelling examples, but the tradition evidently lived on among a number of these players.

Before we continue with Friedheim's argument, let us examine some of the lore that surrounds this attitude in the Rhapsodies. Liszt's fondness for alterations has been recounted already, evidenced by his Schubert and Weber editions.⁶¹⁵ These specimens did not, however, contain the *addition* of material as heard in Stavenhagen and Reisenauer's rolls. Evidence of this practice may be found in Liszt's writing out of cadenzas and other amendments to various pieces (mostly his own works), for his students, that are featured in the *Liszt-Pädagogium*, including alterations for Rhapsody No.2.⁶¹⁶ We get an impression of the ease with which Liszt extemporised this kind of passagework from Amy Fay, who wrote of an occasion on which Liszt played a Hungarian Rhapsody:

He never did the same thing twice alike. If it were a scale the first time, he would make it in double or broken thirds the second, and so on, constantly surprising you with some new turn. And while you were admiring the long roll of the wave, a sudden spray would be dashed over you, and make you catch your breath! No, never was there such a player!⁶¹⁷

The question is to what extent Liszt expected his students, and players of his music, to invent these things for themselves. In 1877, Margaret Chanler attended some of Liszt's masterclasses; she later wrote:

A student played one of Liszt's own Rhapsodies; it had been practised conscientiously, but did not satisfy the master. There were splashy arpeggios and rockets of rapidly ascending chromatic diminished sevenths. 'Why don't you play it this way?' asked Liszt, sitting at the second piano and playing the passage with more careless bravura. 'It was not written so in my copy,' objected the youth. 'Oh, you need not take that so literally,' answered the composer. He intended his Rhapsodies to be played rhapsodically, with a certain character of improvisation.⁶¹⁸

It is not clear what kind of alteration Liszt suggested here, but one gets the sense that it might be of the kind seen in his Schubert and Weber editions, discussed previously—an "amplification" of the material, or else subtly altered to make it more easily playable. F. W. Riesberg relays an anecdote that might be symptomatic of Liszt's opinion in this regard: having asked Liszt about altering a particular passage to make it easier to play, Liszt answered: "I merely wrote the notes—play them the easiest way."⁶¹⁹ One common kind of alteration is the playing of the notes "as written," but simply changing which hand plays it, regrouping the passage in order to facilitate the effect—this was evidently

⁶¹⁵ See also Hamilton, *After the Golden Age*, 225-246.

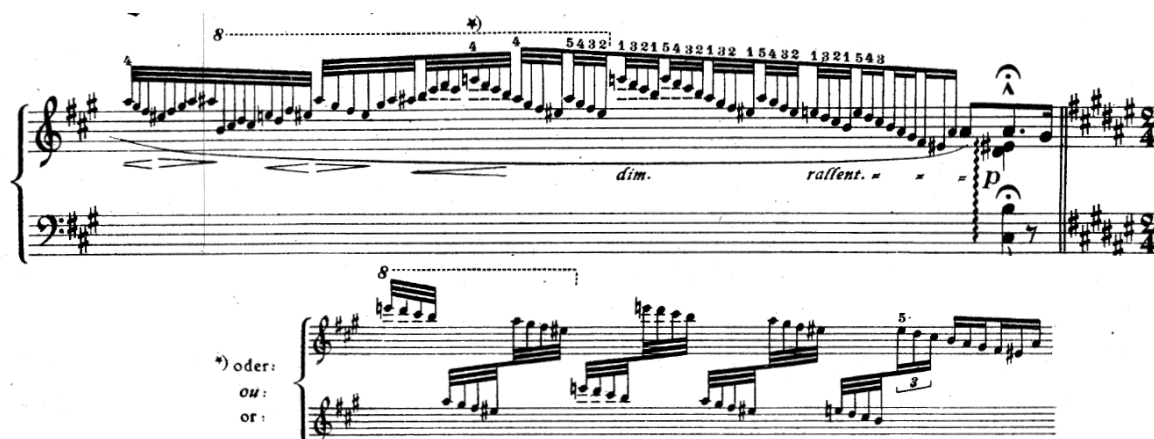
⁶¹⁶ A number of these alterations come down to us via the *Liszt-Pädagogium*. Many of these are reproduced as footnotes in the *Neue Liszt Ausgabe*, but as Hamilton has pointed out there is often a scholarly mistrust of alterations that are not in Liszt's own handwriting. Kenneth Hamilton, *Professor Kenneth Hamilton discusses Liszt's Legacy to his Students* (9 October 2012), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vaU-T8ZAHkc>

⁶¹⁷ Amy Fay, *Music Study in Germany*, 251.

⁶¹⁸ Quoted in Williams, *Portraits of Liszt*, 551. Rhapsody No.9 might be the subject here.

⁶¹⁹ Quoted in Steinberg, "Liszt's Piano Playing," 174. See <https://etudemagazine.com/etude/1936/11/gala-days-with-liszt-at-weimar.html>

common practice in cadenza passages, according to the several Liszt-pupil editions of the Rhapsodies, such as Eugen d'Albert in Rhapsody No.8 (Example 34).⁶²⁰ The vast majority of these not-infrequent cadenza passages in the Rhapsodies are notated by Liszt as in this example, as if for one hand alone—one wonders whether this notation was intended to specify the “technical” solution, or rather just the “meaning” of the voice-leading.



Example 34: Excerpt from Rhapsody No.8, ed. Eugen d'Albert

D'Albert notes in his preface that the “principal aim” of his edition was “to furnish the dynamic signs and sometimes to add such embellishments as the Master had approved of.”⁶²¹ His suggestions frequently include re-arrangements of cadenza passages such as this one, but his own cadenza at the Liszt's suggested point in Rhapsody No.2 seems to be the only added embellishment.⁶²² The “revision” of the first two Rhapsodies by Liszt-pupil Richard Burmeister contains similar suggestions for hand re-distribution, but no obvious textual alterations or embellishments, apart from also attaching his own cadenza to No.2, which bears some resemblance to d'Albert's (both cadenzas are attached below as Appendix II).⁶²³ Rosenthal's edition of No.2 includes a number of minor suggested alterations to the Friska that can hardly be called embellishments, such as the following (Example 35):⁶²⁴

⁶²⁰ See *Ungarische Rhapsodien* ed. Eugen d'Albert (Mainz and Leipzig: B. Schott's Söhne, 1906). Similar suggestions are to be found among the other Rhapsodies. Sauer makes similar suggestions in cadenzas of other Liszt works, but not in the Rhapsodies.

⁶²¹ See ed. d'Albert, *Franz Liszt: Ungarische Rhapsodien*, preface.

⁶²² D'Albert writes: “As the editor's cadenza met with Liszt's full approval, it was thought expedient to introduce it here.—Should the same be omitted, it is advisable to immediately proceed with the prestissimo movement.” D'Albert, ed., vol. 1, 36. As mentioned previously, Lachmund wrote of the occasion when d'Albert played the cadenza for Liszt: See Lachmund, *Living with Liszt*, 55-56.

⁶²³ Rhapsodies Nos. 1 and 2 ed. Richard Burmeister (Berlin: Schlesinger, c.1910 [no plate nos.])

⁶²⁴ Rhapsody No.2 by Rosenthal (Berlin: Verlag Ullstein, Tonmeister Ausgabe No.298). Rosenthal did edit more of the Rhapsodies for the same edition, yet it was not possible to get hold of these in the timeframe of this research.

a) Variante des Herausgebers.

Example 35: Excerpt from Rhapsody No.2, edited Moriz Rosenthal

Sauer makes a number of similar such “hints,” in addition to the one already mentioned in Rhapsody No.15 (See Example 21). Among his suggestions are hand-swapping (No.2), subtle re-voicing of chords (No.6), and raising a repetitious phrase up the octave (No.6, No.8). He makes a suggested extension to a trill effect in No.6 (Example 36).⁶²⁵

★rinforzando molto *Bis (a piacere)* *sempre staccato*

f

*) Der Herausgeber spielt:
L'éditeur joue:
The editor plays:

rinforzando molto

Example 36: Excerpt from Rhapsody No.6, with alteration by Emil Sauer

While these editions don't offer any kind of substantial alteration, in the manner that Friedheim seems to imply in his article, Siloti's anecdote, quoted already, gives evidence that some pupils were given license to “do as you like” in the Rhapsodies,

I once brought the 14th Rhapsody to play to him, telling him beforehand that I had dared to make some alterations in it, and even to omit certain passages, and that I had wanted his

⁶²⁵ Franz Liszt, *Klavierwerke Band II: Rhapsodien Vol.1* ed. Emil von Sauer (Leipzig: Edition Peters, n.d.[c.1913-1917]), 61. Sauer's only suggestion in the second volume is the noted alteration to Rhapsody No.15. In a letter to Lachmund, F. W. Riesberg relays that Liszt had pencilled in a similar suggestion in his copy of the sixth Rhapsody, adding the marking “Ad lib”, presumably implying to extend the trill effect somewhat. A suggestion was also made to repeat several bars in the first section of this Rhapsody. See Lachmund, *Living with Liszt*, 358.

opinion on it. After I had played it he said: “I not only acquiesce in, but thoroughly approve of what you have done...”⁶²⁶

But was this the kind of admission that Friedheim would have seen as misleading? As Friedheim continues, we get the sense that he wasn’t so much concerned with the keen amateur who might enjoy spicing up their Rhapsody in the privacy of their own home, presumably with the kind improvisational touches we hear in several of the Liszt-pupil recordings. Rather, he was worried about the artists of renown and authority, who perhaps took things too far, seeming to betray their ignorance or indifference:

Now, if one encounters pianists (who have no time to think) indulging in such “allotria,” that requires no comment: but if prominent artists who themselves compose, and therefore ought to adhere to the importance and value of the written note, take the initiative in such cases, one cannot be surprised at the callousness with which they disregard all sense of responsibility. For what was and is the result of such indiscretion?

As quoted in the introduction, Friedheim goes on to describe the common or garden virtuoso, who through their careless stylistic charlatanism, can do irreversible harm to the public opinion of the compositions; leading some astray, while disappointing others:

John Smith, famous as a brilliant virtuoso, plays a rarely heard rhapsody in a town where he has not previously performed it, and a great part of the audience awaits the work with anticipation. Possibly he introduces the first bars by doubling the theme in octaves, contrary to the wishes of the composer; he exaggerates cymbalum effects, which Liszt uses with discrimination and finesse [...] and shocks the initiated listener by introducing these effects where they are not even implied. He omits entire sections, alters the succession of others, nay, he borrows some from a different number of the series. So finally the output represents a crude compilation, which is an etymologically correct translation of the word “rhapsody.” Those of the audience who possess the instinct of the style dislike the piece, owing to its grotesque lack of balance. Others, impressed by the clever technical display, purchase the music which does not contain what they heard; disappointed, they lay it aside. But the majority retains nothing excepting a dim recollection that this rhapsody does not amount to much, and thus the *vox populi* has asserted itself once again.⁶²⁷

As he continues, however, we note that Friedheim doesn’t censure *all* textual alteration, permitting a sensitive approach that might enhance effectiveness—but much beyond this, and one might be wary of making a show of their lack of taste:

With the exception of the petty pedant, none would censure the performer who occasionally appropriates passages, reinforces a bass, a chord, or extends a cadenza over the few keys that lie beyond the range of the Lisztian piano, and other trifles of this kind. But whosoever transgresses beyond this should consider in advance that Liszt for years in numberless concerts subjected the Hungarian national melodies to a severe test, regarding their effectiveness, and also he was at his height as a virtuoso, when, having completed and

⁶²⁶ Siloti, *My Memories of Liszt*, 359.

⁶²⁷ Friedheim, “Reflections and Remarks,” 7.

polished them with the utmost finesse, he published them under the title of “Hungarian Rhapsodies.”⁶²⁸

Most of the recordings surveyed make some greater or lesser deviation, cut or alteration—and although one might argue that while the extent of these variations was in some cases considerable, none seemed to “transgress” to the point of distortion in the manner that Friedheim seems to be implying, even Stavenhagen and Reisenauer in their overt improvisatory styles do not “omit entire sections” or “borrow some from a different number of the series.” It is noteworthy that Friedheim himself was among the group that made the least by way of alterations, and one might presume that his personal opinion was having some sway here—Liszt was evidently *less* concerned about the “value of the written note.” Nevertheless, the crux of Friedheim’s rhetorical point may still hold true, as he continues:

Lina Ramann, Liszt’s first biographer [...] is right in terming the rhapsody the only musical epic of Liszt’s country, a national epic, of which no other nation can boast. Is not such a national epic entitled to a more respectful treatment by interpreters?⁶²⁹

Yet, apparently one can still occasionally “appropriate passages, reinforce a bass, a chord, or extend a cadenza” and “other trifles of this kind,” *without* treading on disrespect—so if it is not in the simple act of altering the text; where is the line in the sand?⁶³⁰ While Friedheim, tantalisingly, does not answer this vital question, we can gather some clue as to his attitude by the rest of the article, which describes the nature of the Rhapsodies. We see from the passage just quoted that Friedheim was aware of Liszt’s “national epic” intention for the Rhapsodies, although unlike Ramann he does not expressly refer to Liszt’s book in his article. From another source, however, we can prove that Friedheim himself was very much familiar with *Des Bohémiens*—as he, in fact, penned a summary of the work, published posthumously as an appendix to his memoir.⁶³¹ Much like Ramann, Friedheim considered Liszt’s book to be of some significance:

Liszt’s last book, “The Gypsies and Their Music in Hungary”, is a casual work, as many of his writings had to be. It was developed from a description in his Preface to the “Hungarian Rhapsodies”. The remoulded Preface forms the last chapter of the book. Kapp considers this to be Liszt’s “weakest work in spite of its many merits”, and “altogether too prolix and too intricate”. After a repeated study of the book, one must conclude that “prolix” should be read “detailed”, and “intricate” should be “far-sighted”. There are occasional lengths and digressions it is true, but there are reasons for them in the subject itself. One might easily

⁶²⁸ Friedheim, “Reflections and Remarks,” 7.

⁶²⁹ Friedheim, “Reflections and Remarks,” 7.

⁶³⁰ We can get a sense of what kinds of alterations Friedheim considered acceptable in his edition of the B minor sonata, much akin to the sort we have referred to in the other pupil editions of the Rhapsodies—he suggests the enhancement of tremolo effects and the occasional octave doubling and similar “trifles”. See *Facsimile of Arthur Friedheim's Edition of Franz Liszt's Sonata in B minor* ed. Gerard Carter and Martin Adler (Ashfield, NSW.: Wensleydale Press, 2011). The edition may also be accessed online through the Friedheim Archive at the Peabody Institute, <https://peabody.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16613coll1/id/43/>

⁶³¹ See Friedheim, *Life and Liszt*, Appendix I: “Liszt the Writer”, 261.

come to a conclusion that is diametrically opposed to Kapp's: that this is essentially Liszt's most important literary achievement.⁶³²

In his short review of Liszt's book, Friedheim details and contextualises some of Liszt's arguments, drawing on long quotations from the work, in a fashion similar to our own version in Part 1 of this dissertation. His recommendation is that "the student of art" should read the book, but makes no special suggestion for the student of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* (as Ramann did). It is clear, however, that Friedheim himself had carefully considered the book and its meaning, as it seems to have informed the interpretations offered in his (more consumer-friendly) *Musical Courier* article. For instance, Friedheim emphasises the "national" feeling of the Rhapsodies, hinting at the idea of unified stylistic identity across the collection:

The Hungarians agree and everybody feels intuitively that the music is national, not only on the first hearing, but after thorough knowledge as well, and this is a most important thing. Liszt gathered a multitude of glorious, variegated blooms, scattered by the winds, forming them into perennial, artistic, magnificently colored bouquets. The success of his wondrous achievement is evident by the ever-increasing popularity of the rhapsodies, in spite of the rough handling they experience at times. . . ⁶³³

Like Ramann, Friedheim draws attention to the structure—slow and fast—making particular mention of the characteristic rhythm:⁶³⁴

In Hungarian music one experiences a peculiarity, the triplet being one of its characteristics both in the slow and fast movements. [...] One might presume that this peculiarity would lead in time to an unavoidable monotony, particularly as there are marked rhythmical terms which reappear stereotypically again and again. But within the tempi the rhythm is so manifold and varied that the previously mentioned oddity becomes evident only as a matter of afterthought, not being recognizable during the rendition.⁶³⁵

The remainder of Friedheim's article is spent discussing and comparing the character of a number of the Rhapsodies. Clearly aimed at a much more casual readership than Ramann's work, Friedheim discusses only the most popular Rhapsodies Nos. 2, 6, 9, 10, 12 and 14. It is interesting that these (excepting No.14) were the same Rhapsodies that Friedheim recorded, which might tempt one to

⁶³² Friedheim, *Life and Liszt*, 261.

⁶³³ Friedheim, "Reflections and Remarks," 7.

⁶³⁴ Friedheim's statement here that the triplet is characteristic is puzzling. The rhythm is found scarcely at all in the *Rhapsodies*, and never once used as a feature, apart from one or two ornamental passages in Rhapsody No.9 (and perhaps the hemiola-like opening to Rhapsody No.6). The sentence cut reads "But the uneven rhythms, 3/4, 9/8 and relatively 6/8, which, speaking plainly, are nothing less but an augmentation, an amplification of the triplet, seem scarcely in harmony with its character." This will be borne out, but the point about triplets is curiously at odds with the following passages from Liszt's book: "The triple measure is completely foreign to the Bohemian genius; just as is also the sentiment which has inspired such forms as those of the polonaise, valse and mazurka; all of them dances in triple time." Also "[The Friska] is never met with in triple time and its constant retention of the duple 2/4 or C ensures a firmness of accentuation with which it sometimes rises to the terrible." See Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 315. Liszt's only mention of triple movement being used is to say that "they [the Bohemian virtuosi] pass from duple to triple movement according to the requirement of impression, tumultuous or resigned, as the case may be." Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 305.

⁶³⁵ Friedheim, "Reflections and Remarks," 7.

compare the two sources—but the very general or else poetical descriptions that Friedheim offers here can do little but fire our imagination. It is, nevertheless, a fascinating insight into how a pupil of the Liszt tradition thought about the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*.

The rhapsodies numbers two, six and twelve are the ones most widely known and played in comparison, for instance, with numbers ten and fifteen, which are less popular. The remaining ones not having been commented upon in this article are of more intimate character, being “genre” paintings which dispense with strong contrasts, moderating an allegro to an allegretto, etc. They may be compared to rare plants which blossom only in seclusion, and the real reason thereof may be found in the discomforting fact that, with the sincerest endeavours to “trivialize” them, they remain absolutely disqualified “to set the town on fire,” like the old “*chevaux de bataille*.” [warhorses] Who has ever seen the first rhapsody on a program?⁶³⁶

Friedheim’s advice for Rhapsody No.2 seems telling, warning against the “excessive display of strength” and general over-exuberance in the Friska. We note that Friedheim lends a poetical description also, referring to “mystic miniature spirits,” an interpretation that might seem at odds with the usual fare with this work:

The second rhapsody is the least “rhapsodical” of all, for the “friska” goes on and on, leading to the great pause just before the end, where the cadenza comes. There is no break in the middle of the movement, followed by a fresh start; there are no “firmatas,” which, if neglected, lead to abrupt, jagged progressions, and if not observed, easily cause embarrassment. In public performances the younger generation generally sins against the piece by excessive display of strength (there are but four FF’s in the long friska) and a speed which blurs the outlines and cripples the exhilarating effect. The mystic miniature spirits stirring in a faint glimmer and not dispersing until the first bars of the friska, require adequate imaginative capability of perceiving them.⁶³⁷

In relation to No.6, Friedheim makes reference to the humorous aspect that is brought out with the seemingly out-of-place “Presto” section of the piece (amusingly in C-sharp major, after the opening section in D-flat major):

Liszt was the first to make use of every available opportunity to introduce the element of humor into his performances at the piano – in fact, making it acceptable for the salon. It is all the more surprising that one looks in vain for this quality in lengthier works of his; much gaiety, amalgamation and irony is evident, but of pure humor very little. The rhapsodies alone show a different aspect in this respect. In the friska of the second rhapsody, with all its monotonous, prickly, whimsical rhythm, also is humorous, verging on the comical. In order to produce this effect, the performer must have humor at his command, as Goethe demands of his playwright, concerning his art, in the first prologue to “Faust.” Provided that this ability is inborn, it must nevertheless be developed through practice and mental training like any other talent; but just this is generally neglected.⁶³⁸

⁶³⁶ Friedheim, “Reflections and Remarks,” 8.

⁶³⁷ Friedheim, “Reflections and Remarks,” 8.

⁶³⁸ Friedheim, “Reflections and Remarks,” 8.

Friedheim laments that some famous pianists, perhaps puzzled by the humorous juxtaposition, would prefer to cut out the section of the piece, thereby throwing the entire structure off balance.⁶³⁹ He also censures the over-use of extended low bass notes (presumably of the kind used by Rosenthal in No.2) in the Friska of this Rhapsody, that “with one step to bring it within the boundaries of the ‘vulgar.’”⁶⁴⁰ That the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* might occasionally indulge in humorous or comical mirth, while seemingly out of place with the serious or melancholic side of the Bohemian sentiment, should in fact come as no surprise given that Liszt wrote of the Gipsy artist: “In short, everything that imagination can picture can be called up at the artist’s will. It may be lugubrious or charming, grandiose or delicious; that depends upon whether the master makes his appeal to the laughing or weeping faculties of his listener.”⁶⁴¹ According to Friedheim, this “laughing faculty” is taken to the extreme in the 9th Rhapsody, the *Carnival at Pest* as titled by Liszt. Friedheim sketches out a short narrative program, for the piece:

The “Carnaval de Pesth” is a “Kermesse,” a fair, a monster *Fête champêtre* of the people where the multitude assembles. To particularize, after Prince Carnaval has announced his presence with a flourish of trumpets, the frolic commences, with sallies of wild gaiety. Suddenly a “*Poncinello*” appears grinning upon the scene, to bagpipe croaking accompaniment, with serio-burlesque steps, haranguing with the crowd to dance. . .⁶⁴²

And so the description continues, giving a comical air to the Rhapsody No.9, that with its incredible bravura element, might otherwise lend itself to a prosaic interpretation. Friedheim’s recording of the piece certainly seems to bring this kind of characterful imagery to life, with its cheeky and capricious rhythm, with the almost slapstick comical effect brought about with the overly “deliberate” staccatos, in this example: (**Sound Example 32 – Friedheim Rhapsody 9**). Significantly, Friedheim highlights how a lack of imagination in interpreting the work can prove troublesome:

This sketch may be regarded as a program, suggesting itself to the imaginative student; it proves at least that the work cannot be successfully approached without a certain amount of humour.

Furthermore, the piece is technically extremely exacting. This of course would be no particular hindrance nowadays, but the difficulty of this at times rather massive technique lies in the case with which it has to be manipulated, without drawing undue attention to itself.

What does one hear, in nine cases out of ten, when a virtuoso plays this rhapsody? Some music, frequently very noisy, of indefinite character, with plenty of unjustified shallow display, with something, at moments, like short outbursts of hoarse laughter, as if the performer were sardonically mocking himself. For in general the matter stands thus: He who possesses the right kind of technic is lacking in humor and vice versa. So quite seriously the

⁶³⁹ Friedheim mentions that Teresa Carreño and Sophie Menter were culprits of this practice. The former recorded Rhapsody No.6 on piano roll, and does not make the cut as Friedheim accuses—although it is tempting to suggest that she may have played it differently in concert, as we heard with Rosenthal. See *The Caswell Collection Vol.6: Teresa Carreño* (2010: Pierian Records 0022), track 3.

⁶⁴⁰ Friedheim, “Reflections and Remarks,” 8.

⁶⁴¹ Liszt, *Gipsy in Music*, 309.

⁶⁴² The remainder of Friedheim’s little program will be reproduced in the Appendix.

question arises whether this piece has ever received the superior treatment it deserves, excepting the composer himself.⁶⁴³

For Rhapsody No.10, Friedheim offers another short programmatic sketch, pointing out that, once again, such a poetical approach is “advisable.” A peculiar mysticism apparently asserts itself in this Rhapsody, and without this “fundamental, mental and supermental root, the whole middle section [...] is deprived of all sense of meaning—the ethereal fluctuating effects becomes brutalized, and in place of the ‘genre painting’ stands the caricature”:⁶⁴⁴

The tenth rhapsody as a “genre painting” is the most perfect regarding details and contents, but its delicate lines at times receive a rather blurred and crude handling by interpreters. To prove this fact it again seems advisable to sketch a sort of program. It might be termed a “solo scene,” insofar as the one active figure is joined only at the end by a second passive one.

The [Bohemian], just returned from the city, gazes dreamily into his campfire; he had mingled with the crowds as an onlooker, where the proud nobility with its fair and costly bedecked wives and daughters proceeded to the town hall banquet...⁶⁴⁵

Regarding the Rhapsodies Nos. 12 and 14, also discussed by Friedheim, he offers little more than some surface observations about the form and structure of the works, sadly without any charming programs.⁶⁴⁶ As Friedheim concludes, he summarises his thoughts thus:

And the sum and substance of this long discussion? Remembering that as a vast majority of listeners is unable to master most of the rhapsodies from a technical standpoint, and therefore incapable of forming an opinion of its own and must rely upon the interpretation of the professional, the relationship in general between the audience and the rhapsodies particularly, may be defined thus: One third of this series is known by hearsay only; the second resembles the kind of acquaintances whose names remain on the tip of the tongue, and the third may be compared to old time friends, whom after years and years of intimate association we imagine we know like ourselves, until one day the astonishing discovery is made that in reality they differ considerably from the idea we had formed of them.

It is difficult to see how the truth of this conclusion can be denied. To verify this, it is only necessary to know, to perceive, and to listen. Secondly, the present essay furnishes a defence in honour of the Hungarian rhapsodies.⁶⁴⁷

Why did the Rhapsodies need a defence? It would appear, from the substance of Friedheim’s essay, that there were two considerations he wished to put forward: that the Rhapsodies can be understood in poetical, expressive terms, and that, therefore, one may yet discover that there is more to these Rhapsodies than meets the *eye*, provided one approaches them with an open *ear* and imagination. This

⁶⁴³ Friedheim, “Reflections and Remarks,” 8

⁶⁴⁴ See Friedheim, *Life and Liszt*, 90, for further explanation of Friedheim’s theory of Liszt’s “mysticism.” The term is not mentioned anywhere else in this article on the Rhapsodies, which may suggest that the article was at some point intended to be included as part of Friedheim’s planned book on Liszt that was published posthumously as part of his memoir (see introduction to *Life and Liszt*, 1-2).

⁶⁴⁵ The program will be reproduced in its entirety in the Appendix. Friedheim, “Reflections and Remarks,” 8

⁶⁴⁶ These passages will be reproduced in the Appendix. See Friedheim, “Reflections and Remarks,” 8

⁶⁴⁷ Friedheim, “Reflections and Remarks,” 9.

was in some way opposed to the approach that appeared to be at that time fashionable—and resulted in the “rough handling they experience at times.”

As we’ve seen, such a view seems to be in line with the Liszt tradition more generally, in the use of poetical ideas to guide music-making—technique as a means to an end. We note that these two disciples, Ramann and Friedheim, who were both ostensibly concerned with propagating their understanding of the Lisztian tradition in these writings, similarly offer views of the Rhapsodies that underline the importance of the ideas contained in Liszt’s book—the national epic and the peculiar musical style—and both put forth poetical interpretations of the works, though in slightly different styles. While Liszt-pupil Eugen d’Albert would surmise that “the manner of interpreting these works is so widely known” that it would not be necessary to attempt to “force them into one narrow channel of academic rules”—Friedheim seems to have more deliberately eschewed such academic rules by offering guidance in purely programmatic suggestions, and while Ramann did present detailed technical instructions for the specific pieces at hand, these were prefaced by a discussion that put the pieces in a poetical, emotional context.⁶⁴⁸

While Ramann wrote that “it would be a mistake to classify them as only for the purpose of virtuosity,” Friedheim seemed willing to concede that some of the Rhapsodies were well suited to public performance, while others were not—in either case it would appear that one should not look upon them as trivial bravura pieces; such that might lead to the rollicking Rhapsody No.9 coming across as merely “Some music, frequently very noisy, of indefinite character, with plenty of unjustified shallow display.”⁶⁴⁹

Ramann thought it worth recommending her readers to read Liszt’s book as an important key to understanding the Rhapsodies—while Friedheim did not explicitly make the same suggestion. Similarly, while Ramann was clearly aware that ideas related to the Bohemian sentiment could be directly applied to the Rhapsodies—Friedheim did not make this direct connection in his article. However, we can see from his summary of the book that he himself had digested the ideas thoroughly, and his two narrative programs suggest how one might go about applying the broad ideas of the Bohemian sentiment to a particular Rhapsody, by connecting the music with definite imagery and feelings drawn from the poetic world of Liszt’s Bohemians.⁶⁵⁰ In all, both of these sources give us a fascinating glimpse into how two musicians thoroughly immersed in the Liszt tradition went about approaching the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*.

⁶⁴⁸ D’Albert also writes: “Metronome-marks I have naturally abstained from putting, as in pieces like these wild children of the Puszta, which are always moving in rhapsodic rubato-rhythms, such directions would be sheer folly.” See d’Albert ed., *Franz Liszt: Ungarische Rhapsodien*, preface.

⁶⁴⁹ See Friedheim, “Reflections and Remarks,” 8

⁶⁵⁰ See Friedheim, *Life and Liszt*, Appendix I: “Liszt the Writer”, 261.

An Appendix to the present dissertation will collate all the available sources relating to the interpretation of each *Hungarian Rhapsody* specifically, extracted from the various Liszt-pupil documents.

Conclusion

I. *Telos: Means and Ends*

Adored by audiences, but maligned by critics, Franz Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies* occupy a peculiar place in the canon of piano music. With their glittering cadenzas, their grand sonorities, and their ineffable charm, the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* seem to have been exactly calculated to extract ecstatic exultation from even the coldest of crowds. Yet, ask any common-or-garden, run-of-the-mill piano teacher of their opinion on the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, and they will probably mutter something about "circus tricks" or "mere virtuosity"—"bad taste".

Traditionally played to *end* a recital, as the ultimate of encore-pieces—the very title "Hungarian Rhapsody" has come to be associated with a certain notion of contrived spectacle, of vacuous showmanship... this interpretation, rather pointedly, becoming particularly evident from the certain style of playing that is usually associated with the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, such as described by Friedheim. That is to say, the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* are usually played in manner that is perhaps befitting of their usual place on the program—as the tried and trusted crowd-pleaser. But is this what the composer intended?

Some part of this interpretation is undoubtedly due to how the public seems ever to imagine Mr Liszt himself, as "the first rock star"—the scandalous womanizer, obsessed with nothing but his own fame, fortune and debauchery; using his transcendental piano technique to conquer Europe, one provincial capital at a time. But for anybody remotely well-versed in the *actual* lore of Liszt's life, art and ideals, this popular perception couldn't seem farther from the truth. The writings we have explored attest to this profusely.

But it's a fact: the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* have become entangled with this imagery. Though perhaps I should clarify: when I say "*Hungarian Rhapsodies*," what exactly do I mean? I would wager, that for the vast majority of piano lovers, when I say *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, what they think of is the *second* Hungarian rhapsody... Hungarian Rhapsody No.2.

The Second Rhapsody has always been the best loved—the rest of the collection of Hungarian rhapsodies stand modestly behind the Second, firmly in second place. In fact, from my point of view, many of the stereotypes I have been referring to are *specifically* in relation to the popular idea of the Second Rhapsody... the popular associations of that piece being so strong, that one can hardly speak of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* at all, without facing the prejudices that have arisen around that piece in particular.

Today, the Second Rhapsody is probably *best* known as the piece from the “Tom and Jerry” cartoon (1945).⁶⁵¹ But, of course, the Second Rhapsody was famous long before the era of television. And, of course, the cartoon was only making fun of a stereotype that was already established long before, already old fashioned, by 1945.

Indeed, the cartoon is hardly a satire of the Second Rhapsody at all, but rather of the Piano Virtuoso. Tom and Jerry stand as evidence for the fact that—not counting the undeniable suitability of this music for the purpose of such a cartoon sketch—the Second Rhapsody was, at least by 1945, virtually synonymous with the popular idea of the Piano Virtuoso: the professional “concert pianist,” who tours the world, playing “virtuosic” works in public: an idea forever associated with vanity, show-off antics, and above all else: the display of “technique.”

From the certain, pompous air, engendered from the very first note, with a flick of the tails over the piano stool... through the lavish cadenzas, offering a multitude of possibilities for one’s technical prowess to be viewed, *awed at*, from every angle, like a revolving shop-display... beneath the cascading waterfall of thunderous octaves... over the giant leaps, that seem to defy space and time, and the limits of the human hand... and, after the long crescendo of ever-increasing excitement and difficulty—reaching the final cadence with a furious *burst* of bravura, always to be met with that seductive, sumptuous, sensational rush of raucous applause...

While I’m describing the Second Rhapsody—all of this is virtually synonymous with the idea of the Virtuoso; but has any of it got *anything* to do with Virtuosity?

The word is derived from Virtue, and can be quite correctly understood in that sense. Virtuosity in the sense of Virtue, is Virtuosity in the sense of transcendence—like an eagle, above it all, high and noble.

For, what does Virtuosity mean, if not transcendence? Where things seem easy, where “the piano disappears, and the spirit of music shines forth,” as poet Heinrich Heine once wrote of Liszt? Where it *cannot* be mere technical display, for there is no question of technique; technique is a simple fact, accepted and forgotten; taken for granted, as a just and proper means to some other, all-important

⁶⁵¹ *Tom and Jerry*: “Cat Concerto,” (1945). The Second Rhapsody was also featured in *Bugs Bunny*: “Rhapsody Rabbit,” (1945), and it also briefly features in the Mickey Mouse cartoon “The Opry House” (1929).

end. Virtuosity: where Idea and Execution are of a ratio exactly equal; Form and Sentiment matched exactly—each serving the other interdependently and absolutely; it becoming impossible to draw the line between them, to separate the one from where the other ends. Virtuosity in the sense of Virtue, is Art in the sense of Truth: the *literal purveyance* of Truth in an absolute, classical sense. Is this not the *true* sense of Virtuosity?

This, at least, was the Virtuosity that was understood by Liszt.

In conclusion, there appears one clear, over-arching concern that defines the question of performing the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* in the Liszt tradition. Namely:

Technique is a means to an end.

With his *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, Liszt looked for a grand narrative. So far beyond the mere tinkling of the ivory keys, he heard this wild, emotionally-charged music as something sublime—something that could evoke the very expanse of time itself, and the strange mystique of a people who told their national story with their violin. But it was not *merely* a national story, it became the expression of pure feeling, pride and pain, at once personal and shared by all. It was never limited.

As a musician, a Virtuoso and Composer, Liszt looked for meaning in all that he did. It was not to push buttons or splash ink across a page: it was to *create*. Composer and Virtuoso, to Liszt, became Poet and Orator, expressing sentiments *directly* and *purposefully*. And with this *end* in mind, he searched for the *means* to bring it into being. He passed this truth onto his students.

Don't put the cart before the horse, Liszt seemed to say—for techniques are just that, the horse that pulls the artistic cart, the artist like Helios, transporting ideas and feelings from the ethereal realms of imagination to the shining world of experience. At every step of the way, Liszt's approach to music was to look *beyond*. Every step had a purpose. It was about identifying the end, so that the means could present themselves—one need only to never let this search for a means become the end in itself. This, it seems, is the essence of Liszt's Poetry.

Of course, we saw it already in Liszt's eulogy to Paganini, and in his homage to Viardot-Garcia: Technique should *serve*, as a means to an end.⁶⁵² As Lina Ramann remembered, the favourite phrase of Liszt, "Technique is created by the spirit, not by mechanics!" was one he repeated often—and one that she wished to be repeated, again and again, in the ear of every artist and teacher. It was an impassioned plea against letting technique become an end in itself.⁶⁵³

⁶⁵² Paganini in Hall-Swadley trans., *Liszt Collected Writings* vol.2, 292. Viardot-Garcia in *Ibid.* vol. 3, 195.

⁶⁵³ Ramann, *Pädagogium*, 6.

Across Friedheim's writings, we find him, again and again, selling one point in regard to Liszt: One should not "hear" the technique:

Those who had no ears to hear charged that Liszt's three rules for success in piano playing were: Technique, technique, technique. Nothing could be more nonsensical than to think that he considered the best player the one who could strike the greatest number of notes in a given time. In his later years, particularly, Liszt was the most objective of pianists, merging his entire individuality into that of the composer he was interpreting.

To be sure he expected technique, a very fine technique, of any student who approached him. [...] Interpretation was the thing. The inner meaning of the composition must be found; the spirit must be brought out. Heine understood. "When Liszt sits down at the piano," he said, "the piano disappears and the spirit of the music shines forth."⁶⁵⁴

One must "subdue" the technique, according to Friedheim, apparently something of a motto of Liszt's lessons:

The technical difficulty of most works by Liszt is over-estimated on the whole. With the exception of a few operatic Fantasies written during his virtuoso career and some of the twelve Etudes where the technique indeed is carried to the extreme, they are accessible even to the well trained amateur. But as they nevertheless frequently contain some brilliant passages, the performer is easily induced to use these for making a show of his "ability," thus blurring the outlines and the character of the work. This is meant when people speak of Liszt's "fireworks." **Liszt was preaching incessantly: "subdue the technique; it is nothing but a means of expression."** When he played, nobody ever thought of technique.⁶⁵⁵

In his unpublished essay on the Sonata in B minor:

Concerning the interpretation of the Sonata as a whole the feature remains: **technique must be utilized solely as a medium.** It blurs the outlines and breaks the thread of musical ideas when predominating. When Liszt played, whatever it may have been, nobody thought of technique.⁶⁵⁶

And, concerning the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*:

His Hungarian Rhapsodies are not correctly delivered today because players have not caught the correct *stimmung*. **They do not subordinate the technical aspects of the music sufficiently.** They do not seem to realize that Liszt conceived of these pieces as a series of paintings. They fail with his operatic transcriptions for the same reason and because they overlook all but the technic. In the hands of innumerable pianists, the 'Don Juan Fantasy' is no longer like champagne but whisky.⁶⁵⁷

Tilly Fleishmann, in the preface to her treatise on "Tradition and Craft in Piano-Playing" as according to the Liszt school, offers the same advice:

In stressing the extent of Liszt's influence and the indebtedness to Liszt of the pianists and teachers of a generation ago, the question arises as to what the Liszt tradition has to do with

⁶⁵⁴ Friedheim *Life and Liszt*, 51-52.

⁶⁵⁵ Emphasis added. Friedheim "We Do Not Know Liszt," *Musical Observer* (c.1925): 34.

⁶⁵⁶ Emphasis added. See Rumson, "Friedheim's Edition," 25.

⁶⁵⁷ Emphasis added. Friedheim, quoted in introduction to *Life and Liszt*, 15. Originally from interview in *Musical America*, c.1910 or 1911.

piano-playing today. First of all, in matters of technique Liszt did for piano-playing what Paganini had done for violin-playing, with the difference that Liszt, to a far greater extent than Paganini, *used technical virtuosity as a means to an end, namely, the enrichment of the means of expression.*⁶⁵⁸

Mme. Boissier recalled much the same a century earlier, in the 1830s:

“Don’t play quite so much,” Liszt said to her; and this sentence means a great many things to one who knows his method. In fact, there is nothing between his heart and that of the listener’s when he plays. There is only pure passion without interjecting pretentious passages; and if these passages are clear, brilliant, rapid, admirable, *they are so only as a means to an end, never as ends in themselves.*⁶⁵⁹

Árpád Szendy, pupil of Liszt at the Budapest Academy in the 1870s, who later became a respected pedagogue in Hungary, publishing many instructive editions of pedagogical works:

Furthermore, in forewords to several instructive editions, Szendy sets out, in various turns of phrase, the idea that although “*it is self-evident that technique is merely a means to achieve a higher purpose*”, for the sake of the latter “the technical difficulties must be overcome in the minutest detail.”⁶⁶⁰

And, of course, Lina Ramann, with her unequivocal sense of authority, tells us that it was “With this principle, Franz Liszt became the first hero of modern pianoforte playing, and the founder of a new school in this domain”:

Although Liszt followed Paganini’s skill in art and raised it, on his own instrument, to the wonderful, it never became the aim of his life, not even in those years when men are so inclined to take empty show for sterling worth. He never treated his concert audience to mere feats of art. Kalkbrenner’s sonata for the left hand (*pour la main gauche principale*), *e.g.*, was so hateful to him, even as a youth of seventeen, that when W. von Lenz visited him (1828), and thought to make an impression on him by playing it, he positively refused to listen. “I won’t hear that. I don’t know it, and I don’t wish to know it!” he cried out angrily. It was not technicality *as such* that Liszt pursued, but technicality as the language of the spirit. He wished to develop it to that height of expression that it should slavishly follow and obey every, even the smallest, movement of his inner life, **with him it was the means to an end, and that end the ADVANCEMENT OF ART.**⁶⁶¹

⁶⁵⁸ Emphasis added. Fleischmann, *Tradition and Craft*, 2.

⁶⁵⁹ Emphasis added. *The Liszt Studies* ed. Elyse Mach (New York: Associated Music Publishers, 1973), xv.

⁶⁶⁰ Emphasis added. In László Stachó “Gradus ad Parnassum”: The Purgatory of Instrumental Technique. In *Musikforschung der Hochschule der Künste Bern*, Bd. 14 (2019) <http://www.hkb-interpretation.ch/publikationen/reihe-musikforschung-der-hochschule-der-kuenste-bern/rund-um-beethoven.html>

⁶⁶¹ Italics and caps in the original, bold emphasis added. Lina Ramann, *Franz Liszt: artist and man 1811-1840* (vol. 1) trans. E. Cowdery (London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1882), 265-266. Compare this to Walter Beckett, *Liszt* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1956), 33: “Effect was for the Liszt of these days [c.1841] of supreme importance, of much more importance, in fact, than the music. It was a ruthless trick of his, when a show-piece had received great acclamation, to play it again; the second time embellished with extemporized variations so as to make it even more brilliant and exciting.”

Let us conclude with a quote upon the Second Rhapsody. While to us today, this famous “encore of encores” speaks of pomp and showmanship, frivolous bravura and the rubble of a thousand broken Steinways—to the Hungarian writer Janka Wohl, a close friend of Liszt, it spoke of something different, when one day she heard him play it:

At a time when Hungary was less known by civilised Europe than China, Liszt called himself with pride Magyar, and thus threw on his country the brilliancy of his glory, and won all hearts to us with his ‘Hungarian Rhapsodies.’ I discovered what we owe to these rhapsodies through chance meetings—in Florence from a Russian family; in the train from Americans. [...] The ‘Hungarian Rhapsodies’ show us Hungary in its lyrical and martial aspect. We see its sufferings, its hopes, its impetuous ardour, its battles, and its triumphs, and the basis of character, half indifferent, half strange, which defies analysis. They found an echo in every heart. In Russia, in England, in Scotland, they have been played, and are played, with zeal. But those who have not heard them played by Liszt himself can have no idea of their worth or the magical effect they are capable of producing. I shall never forget one of his *matinées*, always brilliant and run after, when he played the second of these Rhapsodies, dedicated to Count Ladislas Téliéky, of tragic memory. It was a revelation! For the first time, I felt that the artist was truly blood for our blood, and that, if his lips could not speak our language, his soul spoke it all the better. One could feel the fire and sweetness of Tokay in those languorous ‘melopoeias,’ in those daring rhythms, and in the electric fluid which seemed to be generated. The saying, ‘The Hungarian amuses himself in tears,’ which describes so concisely the Magyar disposition, was never better expressed—and that, too, from the very first notes, grave and pompous, majestic and slow, which recall the commencement of the polonaise, when the two dancers, holding each other’s hands, let themselves be lulled in their sadness to finally and gradually give themselves up to the more marked movements of the *lassù*. The melodies collected haphazard from the national lyre unfold the whole gamut of sentiment, resignation, love’s sorrows, the joy of shared misfortune, desire and self-denial, mourning of the patriot, despair which is nothing else but home-sickness for liberty rooted in the heart of this people, which has bled for centuries in slavery. There is nothing more strange and more melancholy. Then, little by little, the rhythm grows more animated, it is abrupt, brusque, checked by starts, but always full of intoxicating melody. Mirth gets the upper hand; a catching fire takes possession of the couples; they seek each other, they try to escape each other, they clasp each other, then leave each other. The delirium of intoxication takes hold on their fevered souls, and they are carried away by the flaming whirlwind of this striking music, which grows madder every moment. It culminates in a savage cry, paroxysm of fury and joy, which escapes from the lips of the dancer, be he prince or peasant, and whose sharp note, full of passion and excitement, electrifies the crowd like the sound of the clarion. ... Ah! How he threw back his lion head, how his face beamed at this sublime inspiration, of which we all felt irresistible sway! ...

Shall we ever again hear music like that? Will this soul of fire ever come back to us in any form? It is a useless question. I shall never have it answered.⁶⁶²

⁶⁶² Wohl, *François Liszt*, 233-236.

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Discography

<i>Pianist</i>	<i>Rhapsody</i>	<i>Recording Type</i>	<i>Modern Re-Release</i>
Ansorge, Conrad (1862-1930)	No. 14 in F major	Triphonola piano roll no. T53799	<i>Rediscovering the Liszt Tradition</i>
Friedheim, Arthur (1859-1932)	No. 2 in C-Sharp Minor	Aeolian roll	Nimbus NI8815
	(abridged) No. 2 in C-Sharp Minor	Acoustic recording Emerson 7235 (c.1917)	Naxos Historical 8.112054
	No. 6 in D-Flat Major	Triphonola piano roll no. T50260	<i>Rediscovering the Liszt Tradition</i>
	No. 6 in D-Flat Major	Acoustic recording	Symposium Records SYMP1343
	No. 9 in E-Flat Major, "Pesther Carneval"	Triphonola piano roll no. T51888	Nimbus NI8815; <i>Rediscovering the Liszt Tradition</i>
	No. 10 in E Major	Aeolian roll	Nimbus NI8815
	No. 12 in C-Sharp Minor	Welte vorsetzer roll no.198 (25 January 1905)	The Caswell Collection, Vol. 10 - Pierian Recording Society PIR0039-40,
Greef, Arthur De (1862-1940)	No. 12 in C-Sharp Minor	Acoustic recording (26 Sept 1922)	Radiex RXC1007, APR APR7401 (cd1)
	No. 12 in C-Sharp Minor	Electric recording (24 March 1926/17 Nov 1925)	APR APR7401 (cd2)
Liebling, Georg (1865-1946)	No. 4 in E-Flat Major	Welte piano roll no.3928	The Caswell Collection, Vol. 10 - Pierian Recording Society PIR0039-40
Reisenauer, Alfred (1863-1907)	No. 10 in E Major	Welte vorsetzer roll no.324 (c.1905-1907)	The Caswell Collection, Vol. 10 - Pierian Recording Society PIR0039-40
	No. 12 in C-Sharp Minor	Triphonola piano roll no. T50263 (c.1905-1907)	<i>Rediscovering the Liszt Tradition</i>
Rosenthal, Moriz (1862-1946)	No. 2 in C-Sharp Minor	Acoustic recording (1930)	APR APR7503
		Live radio broadcast archive recording: WJZ, New York, February 11, 1929	https://youtu.be/vpzs0U8IjJg
Sauer, Emil von (1862-1942)	No. 12 in C-Sharp Minor	Acoustic recording (c.1923) Spanish Regals	Marston Records 53002-2 (disc1)
	No. 15 in A minor	Acoustic recording (c.1925) German Vox Recordings	Marston Records 53002-2 (disc1)
Siloti, Alexander (1863-1945)	No. 12 in C-Sharp Minor	Duo-Art piano roll no.6585	<i>Rediscovering the Liszt Tradition</i>
	No. 12 in C-Sharp Minor	acoustic fragment	Pearl 9993
Stavenhagen, Bernhard (1862-1914)	No. 12 in C-Sharp Minor	Welte-Mignon licensee vorsetzer roll no. 1032 (9 December 1905)	The Caswell Collection, Vol. 10 - Pierian Recording Society PIR0039-40
Timanoff (Timanova), Vera (1855-1942)	No. 1 in C-Sharp Minor	Welte-Mignon piano roll	The Caswell Collection, Vol. 10 - Pierian Recording Society PIR0039-40

Weiss, Josef (1864-1945)	No. 12 in C-Sharp Minor	Acoustic recording	Symposium Records SYMP1404
	No. 14 in F major	Piano roll (c.1905)	https://youtu.be/F4rE6Fh11rl

Istvan Albert, Orchestra Of The Hungarian State Folk Ensemble, *Hungarian Rhapsodies Nos. 2, 13, 14, 15, 19 / Csárdás Macabre* (1968: Qualiton/Hungaroton 10104).

Artists of the Century: Vladimir Horowitz (2000: RCA Red Seal 163471).

Friedheim; Early Recordings by the Pianist, The Condon Collection (1993: Bellaphon 690-07-017).

Ignaz Friedman: Complete Recordings Vol.3 (2003: Naxos 8.110690).

Ivan Fischer and Budapest Festival Orchestra, *6 Hungarian Rhapsodies* (1998: Philips 456 570-2).

Arthur de Greef: Solo and Concerto Recordings (2014: APR 7401).

Mark Hambourg: Liszt: The Hungarian Rhapsodies (2005: APR 7040).

Josef Hofmann - Acoustic recordings (1916-1923) (2008: Naxos 8.111326).

János Hosszú & Ensemble, *Cymbalom!* (1973: Request Records 10089).

Patricia Kopatchinskaja, *Rhapsodia* (2009: Deutschlandradio Kammermusiksaal).

Frederic Lamond: The Liszt, HMV and Electrola Recordings (2018: APR 7301).

Legends of the Piano – Acoustic Recordings 1901-1924 (2010: Naxos Historical 8.112054).

Arthur Nikisch: Complete Orchestral Recordings (2006: Symposium 1087-1088).

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Emil von Sauer: The Complete Commercial Recordings (Marston Records 53002-2).

The Caswell Collection Vol.6: Teresa Carreño (2010: Pierian Records 0022).

Rajkó: The Young Gypsy Band (1983: Qualiton/Hungaroton 10180).

Appendix I: Source Quotations on the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*

This Appendix is a collection of miscellaneous primary source quotations that were assembled during the course of the research, relating to performing the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, according to Liszt and his pupils.

Assorted Quotations

Alexander Borodin, in Adrian Williams, *Portrait of Liszt* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 545:

After tea our hostess led the way to the piano in the drawing-room and gave Liszt one of his own Rhapsodies, asking him to show us how such and such passages should be played. It was a feminine ruse, but an innocent deception; Liszt began to laugh. 'You want me to play it,' he said; 'very well, but first I want to play Monsieur Borodin's symphony with the composer. Do you play treble or bass?' he asked me. (....)

To put an end to their entreaties, I went through a short chorus from Prince Igor, which seemed to give them pleasure, and then in my turn I begged Liszt to play something. He played some of his Rhapsodies and a few other pieces. He did not play much, because it was getting late; but what a wonderful execution! What expression! What astonishing light and shade - pianissimo, piano, forte, fortissimo! What a crescendo and diminuendo, and what fire!

Alexander Serov (1858) in Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, 348-49:

"...Liszt soon sat down at the piano again (he had promised the Princess to make much music that evening) and played one of his Hungarian Rhapsodies. How I felt! It seemed as if I were again in the Engelhardt Hall, or the Great Hall of the Nobility, in St Petersburg, as I was in 1842 -- the same beatifically[sic] transfigured countenance of that 'artist of all artists', the same electrical, magnetical, magical ascendancy over his listeners, the same virtuosity to which nothing on earth is comparable, that knows no difficulties, and yet is but the servant of the thought. To me it is a matter of wonderment how the concert-giving pianists (not excepting even Clara Schumann) can ever venture to present themselves to the public so long as such a daemon of pianistic art exists in the world! If there be a disparity between the Liszt of today and the earlier Liszt, it is, outwardly, only that he has grown gray, and, inwardly, only that he plays even more enchantingly and composes incomparably better. (Yesterday, before the soirée, he played -- entre nous -- some fragments from his Legend of St Elisabeth; the music is truly marvellous in its simplicity, the melody -- genuine -- to say nothing at all about the rest, for this 'rest' is a matter of course in the works of such a brain.) When he had displayed the wonders of his Rhapsody -- sometimes replete with trills and figurations, while in other passages the piano was transformed into a 'steel-ribbed Leviathan', and with the piano vibrated Liszt, and all of us, and the entire room -- after all these wonders he arose, radiant with the aureole of his renown (you remember how his face is transfigured when he is playing), and was instantly surrounded by his guests, especially the ladies, who always and everywhere overwhelm him with compliments. People of our sort find it rather difficult to say anything whatever to him. Liszt is so frightfully clever, so surfeited with adulation, that any expression of enthusiasm must seem to him like a platitude. Still, I felt unable to renounce the pleasure of saying a word or two to him; he was really pleased, and pressed my hand heartily, remarking: 'No more of your compliments, my new old friend!'... Following the Rhapsody, Miss Genast sang very charmingly two songs by Liszt..."

Amy Fay (1873), *Music Study in Germany* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1897), 251:

He never did the same thing twice alike. If it were a scale the first time, he would make it in double or broken thirds the second, and so on, constantly surprising you with some new turn. And while you were admiring the long roll of the wave, a sudden spray would be dashed over you, and make you catch your breath! No, never was there such a player!

One of the pieces he played was [the Hungarian Fantasy]. Of these I was at the rehearsal. [...] I was enchanted to have an opportunity to hear Liszt as a concert player. The director of the orchestra [...] is a beautiful pianist and composer himself, as well as a splendid conductor, but it was easy to see that he had to get all his wits together to follow Liszt, and who gave full rein to his imagination, and let the *tempo* fluctuate as he felt inclined.

Margaret Chanler (1877) in Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, 551:

A student played one of Liszt's own Rhapsodies; it had been practised conscientiously, but did not satisfy the master. There were splashy arpeggios and rockets of rapidly ascending chromatic diminished sevenths. 'Why don't you play it this way?' asked Liszt, sitting at the second piano and playing the passage with more careless bravura. 'It was not written so in my copy,' objected the youth. 'Oh, you need not take that so literally,' answered the composer. He intended his Rhapsodies to be played rhapsodically, with a certain character of improvisation.

Carl Lachmund (c.1882-1884), *Living with Liszt* ed. Alan Walker (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1995), 232:

A young lady from Stuttgart, who then played a [Liszt] Rhapsody, had a habit of rushing the last four notes of runs. Many pianists do this. The Master made her play just the last few notes of the run a dozen times evenly, to impress this upon her, and us.

Arthur Friedheim (c.1911), *Life and Liszt* ed. Theodore Bullock in *Remembering Franz Liszt* (New York: Limelight, 1986), 15:

Even those Liszt pupils who enjoyed his personal ministrations were not always successful. One had to understand the man, to be in perfect communion with the spiritual beauty and sublimity of his nature, to profit by what he taught. There are not too many in this world capable of responding to those transcendental qualities, and so much of what the Master sought to impart was lost.

His Hungarian Rhapsodies are not correctly delivered today because players have not caught the correct *stimmung*. They do not subordinate the technical aspects of the music sufficiently. They do not seem to realize that Liszt conceived of these pieces as a series of paintings. They fail with his operatic transcriptions for the same reason and because they overlook all but the technic. In the hands of innumerable pianists the 'Don Juan Fantasy' is no longer like champagne but whisky.

Arthur Friedheim (1921), "Reflections and Remarks on Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies*," *Musical Courier* LXXXII, no. 18, (1921): 7:

In Hungarian music one experiences a peculiarity, the triplet being one of its characteristics both in the slow and fast movements. But the uneven rhythms, 3/4, 9/8 and relatively 6/8, which, speaking plainly, are nothing less but an augmentation, an amplification of the triplet, seem scarcely in harmony with its character. One might presume that this peculiarity would lead in time to an unavoidable monotony, particular as there are marked rhythmical terms which reappear stereotypically again and again. But within the tempi the rhythm is so manifold and varied that the previously mentioned oddity becomes evident only as a matter of afterthought, not being recognizable during the rendition. The proof of this is that the virtuosi who close a program with an extensive rhapsody sometimes add another of equal length as an encore, without provoking any critical "rhythmical" investigation.

*

Without effort, Liszt was capable of improvising a little rhapsody, treating and combining Hungarian airs in novel fashion, and, as a matter of fact, many of this series was the result of such happy inspiration. Thereupon, pianists, instead of regarding this as the result of an extraordinary gift quite peculiar to Liszt, formed the opinion that the rhapsody was not to be taken seriously, and everybody considered himself entitled to treat the musical world to a newly devised and "*disarranged*" edition. Sad to say, Liszt himself approved of such extravaganzas. Great in every respect, he was equally great in sanctioning those liberties, either out of kindness, indifference, or in a whimsical mood.

John Smith, famous as a brilliant virtuoso, plays a rarely heard rhapsody in a town where he has not previously performed it, and a great part of the audience awaits the work with anticipation. Possibly he introduces the first bars by doubling the theme in octaves, contrary to the wishes of the composer; he exaggerates cymbalum effects, which Liszt uses with discrimination and finesse . . . and shocks the initiated listener by introducing these effects where they are not even implied. He omits entire sections, alters the succession of others, nay, he borrows some from a different number of the series. So finally the output represents a crude compilation, which is an etymologically correct translation of the word "rhapsody." Those of the audience who possess the instinct of the style dislike the piece, owing to its grotesque lack of balance. Others, impressed by the clever technical display, purchase the music which does not contain what they heard; disappointed, they lay it aside. But the majority retains nothing excepting a dim recollection that this rhapsody does not amount to much, and thus the *vox populi* has asserted itself once again.

With the exception of the petty pedant, none would censure the performer who occasionally appropriates passages, reinforces a bass, a chord, or extends a cadenza over the few keys that lie beyond the range of the Lisztian piano, and other trifles of this kind

Eugen d'Albert (1906), *Ungarische Rhapsodien* (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne, 1906), preface:

On looking through a good book which we have not seen for years, we experience a similar pleasure as when suddenly meeting a dear old friend, whom we have not seen for a long while. This, I suppose, is the best test of the inherent worth of a book. Such a feeling of delight the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* by Liszt awakened in me, I had not set eyes on them for many a year although I had a good deal of them in my fingers. What abundance of spirit, what

magic richness of imagination does not dwell in these works! The primordial, weird strains of the Magyars of wild descent, could not have found a more intense nor a more brilliant exponent of their characteristics than Franz Liszt. Born and bred a true Hungarian, he above anyone else understood how to weld these lays into an interesting and artistic whole, preserving in an inimitable manner so enchanting as to provide a lasting artistic treat of the highest order to all music-lovers.

The manner of interpreting these works is so widely known that I have refrained from the attempt of forcing them into one narrow channel of academic rules. It has been my principal aim to furnish the dynamic signs and to sometimes add such embellishments as the Master would have approved of. I have carefully marked the fingering -- this necessary evil -- as well as completed the signs for the pedals where they seemed to have been wanting. Metronome-marks, I have naturally abstained from putting, as much in pieces like these wild children of the Puszta, which are always moving in rhapsodic rubato-rhythms, such directions would be sheer folly.

Laura Kharer, in Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, 457.

I heard Liszt play daily, and often by the hour. [c1870] To begin with, Bach and Scarlatti. The former he played remarkably slowly -- such as is no longer heard! -- and the piano seemed to become an organ. In Scarlatti on the other hand it became an eighteenth-century spinet; and yet it was the same Bechstein grand used by the rest of us. His touch changes so totally with each composer that we could have thought we were listening to an entirely different instrument. What struck me most of all was the way in which Liszt seemed as it were to orchestrate with his fingers, and phenomenon most noticeable in his performances of his own works, above all the Rhapsodies, in which he displayed an amazing and unprecedented range of colour. His playing was at once poetry and revelation! He different from other great pianists, such as Rubinstein, in that his use of the fingers, and the resulting touch, was different for every composer; indeed, for every piece. Whereas with Rubinstein you always heard the same instrument -- it was nevertheless wonderful playing -- with Liszt you don't hear the piano: you heard him and followed his tones, and were transported by the power of his imagination, which presented each work anew as though it were only then and there being brought into existence.

Bettina Walker, *My Musical Experiences*, 182:

(Walker spent a short time at Weimar and met Liszt a number of times, also studied with Sgambati)

The room in which I had practised adjoined that of an extremely cultivated and refined old gentleman, who professed to have heard Chopin play very often, in a country house where they both used to visit for weeks together. He had heard me play many of Chopin's compositions; and assuming the privilege of age, and (as he himself said) of superior knowledge and experience, he commented freely on my rendering of Chopin, as being far too strictly in time, and he often told me that Chopin played his compositions with much freedom, and many variations in the *tempo*. Whilst I was practising the Concerto which I was preparing to play to Henselt, my self-constituted mentor has come more than once in the course of a morning, 'just to offer me suggestions,' as he chose to term them. The result of all this well-meant but unsound advice was, that I tried to turn the Concerto into a sensational piece, something in the style of the Liszt *Rhapsodies Hongroises*...

Wilhelm von Csapó (1870), Ernst Burger, *Franz Liszt: A Chronicle of his Life in Pictures and Documents* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), 248:

Szekszárd yesterday offered its visitors a rare delight. Sophie Menter, who is at present staying with Liszt's entourage at Baron August's, gave a charity concert; the audience was attracted not so much by the distinguished artiste as by the news that the Master himself might perhaps also perform something outside the official programme – and so indeed it proved. When the concert organizer announced that Reményi was unwell, a great cry of 'Liszt went up on all sides. For some time he refused to comply with the general request. But when he saw that it was all in vain, he made a gesture as if entreating patience. Each of his movements is so singular and expressive; he stands before his fellow humans like some mythical phenomenon incarnate. Everyone waited with tense curiosity as he finally sat down at the piano. He chose one of his *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, but I noticed only his manner of playing it: his facial expression changed from a fiery glance to a delicate smile; his fingers glided over the keys with magical tenderness or descended on them like lightning! He seemed to delight in the unbounded enthusiasm. In the background August winked and smiled like a happy impresario.

The following is my rather rough-and-ready translation of the introduction to the Hungarian works, in Lina Ramann's *Liszt-Pädagogium* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Hartel, 1986). This important work deserves to be translated into English in its entirety.

Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies, like his other Hungarian compositions, occupy a special position in the literature of music. But it would be a mistake to classify them as only for the purpose of virtuosity: in substance and form, they are jewels, whose artistic polishing renders as extraordinary, the intensity and peculiarity of their colour and lustre.

The Hungarian Rhapsodies are not to be understood as individual pieces, although each forms a self-contained whole; and although they are music through and through, they should neither be viewed from a purely musical standpoint. Behind them is a nation of non-European origin, which, despite being mixed with European culture and maturing by means of decidedly Germanic influences, has retained the original racial characteristics in sentiments that are significantly different from e.g. Germanic feelings; behind them stands, on the part of the composer, the idea of the national (folk) epic, an epic composed not of legends, but of preserved tunes and melodic fragments offering the poetic essence [Dichtstoff], whose cantos, songs and episodes, the Rhapsodies represent with feeling-types, their individuality foreign to European music [Tonkunst], to be expressed only by this people.

The feeling types are borne, intertwined, interwoven with the poetry, blossomed from the land, the culture, the practices, the history; and in form and mood found its resonance in music.

In relation to this epic in tones, as the master thought his Hungarian Rhapsodies as a whole, in relation to the position of the individual rhapsodies, the master expressed himself thus:

"From this new point of view we had no trouble in perceiving (to 334) that the poetry which abounds in Bohemian music may easily be marked off into separate items, corresponding to the Ode, Dithyramb, Elegy, Ballad, Idyll, Distich; as also song melodies, Martial, Funereal, Bacchanalian, in character. The task was therefore to collect these into one homogenous body. Though forming a complete work, it might be divided in such a way as to allow each

“canto” to be self-sufficient, as well as forming part of the grand total. It might be made susceptible of being separated from the rest; enjoyed apart and quite independently of the rest; whilst, all the while, remaining one with the rest by identity of style, analogy of inspiration, and unity of form.”

Here lies the starting point for comprehending and understanding the stylistic rendering of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*.

The [feeling] types themselves must be a complication of the feelings of the Hungarian people with those of their earliest musicians and virtuosos, the sons of the Pusta: the so-called gypsy; though not the gypsy-musician of today, but those of former times, since its original culture threatens to be destroyed. Eccentric, wild, fantastic zest for life, goes forth unto unbridled frenzy without restraint; in sharp contrast to it, a melancholy without hope, like a bird without wings, whose gaze seems to be lost in the pitiful bleakness of nature—besides defiance, pride, courage and heroism. Overall, here as there: the wild-poetic touch of the Pusta.

The abruptness, the sharp contrast, the disjointed alternation of extreme feelings, are expressed in the two forms of the old Hungarian folk tunes: the serious *Lassan*, filled with defiance, pride, heroism and desolate sadness; and the whirling, frenzied *Friska*, gushing with the zest for life. These form the starting point for the structural-design of Liszt’s *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. The limitations of their figurative means of expression as found in the historical, still typical Gypsy band, in which the violin and cimbalom play the leading roles (the improvisations of the virtuosi): the same is to be found in the figuration and accompanying parts of the *Rhapsodies*: with their individuality, the rendering is stamped and coloured by the player, as it were. – For all that is remaining to be said concerning the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, we expressly refer to the master’s book *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie*, that is as important as it is poetically-rich.

The character of Hungarian music is based on three elements: the Hungarian scale, with sharpened fourth and major seventh endow their melody and harmony with a wild colour that is peculiarly painful, dazzling and fascinatingly vibrant --. a strange, multifarious rhythm with shifted, flashing accentuation, and lastly the long-winded and improvisation *fioratura*, which originate form the Hungarian gypsy virtuoso. – These three characteristics have grown organically into Liszt’s *Hungarian music*.

They form moments to which the interpreter must pay special attention, that he should imbue with the poetry brought into view by the just-mentioned book.

The *Hungarian Rhapsodies* (Nos.1-15) that represent Liszt’s epic ideas date from the Weimar period, in the years 1851-1854, but had their forerunners in the fragments of gypsy music that he collected at the time of his travels, which he transcribed for the piano and published in 10 volumes under the title “Hungarian National Melodies”, “Magyar Dallok” etc. (Wien, Tob. Haslinger), the rights for which he later collected. These are hardly related to the epic idea other than by melodic material – the harmonic consequences of the Hungarian scale are still bound up. The idea of the epic and the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* grew and developed together. The earlier “songs” are re-smelted here and the essentials of them, deepened, combined with others to form a body. They relate to each other like the raw material, and the finished work formed from it.

Hungarian Rhapsody No.1 in C-sharp Minor (1851)

Arthur Friedheim, "Reflections and Remarks on Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies*,":

The rhapsodies numbers two, six and twelve are the ones most widely known and played in comparison, for instance, with numbers ten and fifteen, which are less popular. The remaining ones not having been commented upon in this article are of more intimate character, being "genre" paintings which dispense with strong contrasts, moderating an allegro to an allegretto, etc. They may be compared to rare plants which blossom only in seclusion, and the real reason thereof may be found in the discomforting fact that, with the sincerest endeavours to "trivialize" them, they remain absolutely disqualified "to set the town on fire," like the old "chevaux de bataille." Who has ever seen the first rhapsody on a program?

Hungarian Rhapsody No.2 in C-sharp Minor (1851)

NB: Two cadenzas by Liszt pupils (Eugen d'Albert and Richard Burmeister), intended to be inserted at the marked section in Rhapsody No.2 (just before the coda) are reproduced in Appendix II. A third cadenza can be heard on Moriz Rosenthal's recordings of the work (See Discography). D'Albert's and Rosenthal's cadenzas evidently had Liszt's approval (See Lachmund, *Living with Liszt*, 55-56 and 355-356). Additional alterations for this work may be found in the *Liszt-Pädagogium*.

Adrian Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, 390:

Heinrich Ehrlich [in 1846, the young struggling Ehrlich gave Liszt some of his manuscripts including a Hungarian Fantasy, and asked him to play some in Pest to further his fame. In 1852, he visited Liszt who played his latest rhapsody (No.2), Ehrlich was surprised to hear that the themes were from his own piece. In 1864, Ehrlich mentioned it to Bulow who prompted Liszt to reply with the following]:

"I am very happy, Monsieur, to accede to your desire to give you (without any fight) full satisfaction on the field of the Hungarian Rhapsodies. In publishing under this title a kind of patriotic Anthology whose character I sought to define in my volume on the Hungarian gypsies and their music, I was not in any way laying claim to rights of ownership as far as the melodies themselves, or even certain details inseparable from their manner of expression are concerned. The use and fruit, but not the property, were enough for me, and my task as Rhapsode was limited to a simple *mise en oeuvre* as congeneric as possible. And so, in all good faith, I was justified in taking my material everywhere I could find it, firstly in my childhood memories of Bihary and other gypsy celebrities, and later in my excursions across country amidst bands of gypsy musicians from Sopron, Pozsony, Pest, etc. Lastly, I retained and reproduced in my own manner many themes, traits, and characteristic features which over a couple of decades were communicated to me in generous profusion, both at the piano and in musical notation by Counts Amadé, Aponyi, [Imre] Széchenyi, Barons August and Fáy, Messrs Egressy, Erkel, Doppler, Reményi -- and by you, dear Monsieur Ehrlich. An embarrassment of riches, is it not? And yet I hope that I have managed to extricate myself tolerably well from it by means of the fifteen Rhapsodies that you know. They protest resolutely, and in all the keys, that I have wronged none of my numerous creditors in the domain of the *csárdás*, among whom it gives me pleasure to count yourself, while assuring you of my affectionate acknowledgements as well as of my sincere esteem for your rare talents.

To this letter I replied.... By remarking that there was a vast difference between the use of national themes already known and that made of wholly original ones entrusted to an artist by

a youthful composer; that I left it to him to judge the feelings which came over me when I had to hear this most popular Rhapsody and recall its genesis, and the time when, in very straitened circumstances, I gave him the manuscript and asked him to play something from it in Pest; and that, this said, I considered the whole incident closed....

But I must at once go on to say that in relating these matters I am not in the least intending to belittle Liszt's memory, and that to this day I cherish feelings of the keenest admiration for him. With all his weaknesses, he was one of the kindest and most lovable of men, possessing a character such as can be found only too rarely. In intellect, culture, and personal charm he was the first among all contemporary artists, none of whom could even begin to equal him in his power of winning people's affection.

August Göllicherich (c.1884), *The Piano Master Classes of Franz Liszt, 1884-1886* ed. William Jerger, trans. Richard Louis Zimdars (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 46:

The master did not listen to then to the (Liszt) E-flat Concerto or the Rhapsody No.2.

Lachmund, *Living with Liszt*, 55:

Again there were additions to the class....Eugen d'Albert.... From his appearance little was expected of the newcomer; yet his eyes beamed with an intelligence and good nature that invited one to address him. Soon the Master had singled him out, saying: "Just play for us your cadenza to my Second Rhapsody." This was one of the pieces he would not hear in its entirety as he considered it hackneyed. We therefore concluded that the newcomer must be a pianist of extraordinary calibre. The cadenza proved original and made all hearken up. [this cadenza can be found in d'Albert's edition of the Rhapsodies] Even more, the young chap's fiery style of playing caused a sensation. Liszt's face beamed with pleasure as he patted the lad on the shoulder.

Lachmund, 147:

He was referring to the hackneyed Second Rhapsody which an uninitiated pupil now and then would bring, and which he had tabooed; and again he mimicked the rhythm of its stirring "ta-ta---ta-ta; ta-ta---ta-ta."

Lachmund, 355-56:

[from a letter to Lachmund from V. May Hauser] I remember hearing Rosenthal playing a cadenza to the Rhapsody no. 2 for Liszt, who said it was the best written. I do not remember whether he played it in the lesson or after, when I was privileged to stay.

Alexander Siloti, *My Memories of Liszt*, in *Remembering Franz Liszt* (New York: Limelight, 1986), 346:

Liszt told me that he could explain nothing to pupils who did not understand him from the first. He never told us what to work at; each pupil was to lay our music on the piano; Liszt then picked out the things he wished to hear. There were only two things we were not allowed

to bring; Liszt's 2nd Rhapsody (because it was too often played) and Beethoven's Sonata quasi una fantasia which Liszt in his time had played incomparably.

Friedheim, *Life and Liszt*, 47:

After these ceremonies, Liszt would look over the music lying about and make choice of the things he wishes to hear, according to his mood. Only two compositions were rejected regularly, Chopin's B flat minor Scherzo, which he called the "Governess Scherzo" because "every Governess plays it well", and his own Second Hungarian Rhapsody. Both works were heard too much, he said.

Friedheim, "Reflections and Remarks," 10:

When in the '70's it became known that the Hungarian dances by Brahms were not original compositions, as believed by innocent souls, but transcriptions only, he was ostracized for having neglected to mention this fact on the title page. He le the (coolly received) disclosure be known that Liszt's second rhapsody, still, the great favorite, was absolutely original. [not true see ----] Its popularity could scarcely be increased thereby, for one encounters it in the palace and in the cottage, original and simplified. Of course this immense popularity is due principally to its monumental, epical "lassou" [sic] and the gay, fiery "friska," as well as to the fact that are no imaginary obstacles to overcome by the student. The second rhapsody is the least "rhapsodical" of all, for the "friska" goes on and on, leading to the great pause just before the end, where the cadenza comes. There is no break in the middle of the movement, followed by a fresh start; there are no "firmatas," which, if neglected, lead to abrupt, jagged progressions, and if not observed, easily cause embarrassment. In public performances the younger generation generally sins against the piece by excessive display of strength (there are but four FF's in the long friska) and a speed which blurs the outlines and cripples the exhilarating effect. The mystic miniature spirits stirring in a faint glimmer and not dispersing until the first bars of the friska, require adequate imaginative capability of perceiving them. The "commercial," coarse-grained orchestration by Mueller-Berghaus was remarkable, in so far as it succeeded in dragging the piece down to the level of roof-garden music, where the scoring by the composer himself remains in oblivion.

Janka Wohl, *François Liszt: recollections of a compatriot* trans. Payton Ward (London: Ward & Downey, 1887), 233-236:

At a time when Hungary was less known by civilised Europe than China, Liszt called himself with pride Magyar, and thus threw on his country the brilliancy of his glory, and won all hearts to us with his 'Hungarian Rhapsodies.' I discovered what we owe to these rhapsodies through chance meetings—in Florence from a Russian family; in the train from Americans. [...] The 'Hungarian Rhapsodies' show us Hungary in its lyrical and martial aspect. We see its sufferings, its hopes, its impetuous ardour, its battles, and its triumphs, and the basis of character, half indifferent, half strange, which defies analysis. They found an echo in every heart. In Russia, in England, in Scotland, they have been played, and are played, with zeal. But those who have not heard them played by Liszt himself can have no idea of their worth or the magical effect they are capable of producing. I shall never forget one of his *matinées*, always brilliant and run after, when he played the second of these Rhapsodies, dedicated to Count Ladislas Téli, of tragic memory. It was a revelation! For the first time, I felt that the

artist was truly blood for our blood, and that, if his lips could not speak our language, his soul spoke it all the better. One could feel the fire and sweetness of Tokay in those languorous ‘melopoeias,’ in those daring rhythms, and in the electric fluid which seemed to be generated. The saying, ‘The Hungarian amuses himself in tears,’ which describes so concisely the Magyar disposition, was never better expressed—and that, too, from the very first notes, grave and pompous, majestic and slow, which recall the commencement of the polonaise, when the two dancers, holding each other’s hands, let themselves be lulled in their sadness to finally and gradually give themselves up to the more marked movements of the *lassù*. The melodies collected haphazard from the national lyre unfold the whole gamut of sentiment, resignation, love’s sorrows, the joy of shared misfortune, desire and self-denial, mourning of the patriot, despair which is nothing else but home-sickness for liberty rooted in the heart of this people, which has bled for centuries in slavery. There is nothing more strange and more melancholy. Then, little by little, the rhythm grows more animated, it is abrupt, brusque, checked by starts, but always full of intoxicating melody. Mirth gets the upper hand; a catching fire takes possession of the couples; they seek each other, they try to escape each other, they clasp each other, then leave each other. The delirium of intoxication takes hold on their fevered souls, and they are carried away by the flaming whirlwind of this striking music, which grows madder every moment. It culminates in a savage cry, paroxysm of fury and joy, which escapes from the lips of the dancer, be he prince or peasant, and whose sharp note, full of passion and excitement, electrifies the crowd like the sound of the clarion. ... Ah! How he threw back his lion head, how his face beamed at this sublime inspiration, of which we all felt irresistible sway! ...

Shall we ever again hear music like that? Will this soul of fire ever come back to us in any form? It is a useless question. I shall never have it answered.

Hungarian Rhapsody No.3 in B-flat Minor (1853)

Ramann, *Pädagogium* chapt. 3, 9:

The B-flat major Rhapsody brings the Hungarian-musical type in terms of harmony, rhythm and fioratura, to a sharper expression than the *Héroïde élégaique* (Rhapsody No.5). It is also closer to the formal starting-point of the Hungarian Rhapsodies (Lassan and Friska).

It also begins with a kind of mourning song (1. Thema, Andante), but defiance sits deep within its chest and converts the gloomy melancholy into defiant resignation.

The song becomes a softly tingling vortex, (2. Thema, Allegretto) in which melancholy resonates. They and the defiance, they are the blood of this piece, they are the feeling-types of its content. Everything else is scenery, decoration – twilight Puszta air. (See Ibid. for detailed notes on performing this piece).

Hungarian Rhapsody No.4 in E-flat Major (1853)

Göllerich, *Master-classes*, 56:

“After the first few bars the public must be bowled over!” The master played several passages himself. (example, bars 1-3)

Göllerich, 131-132:

“Play the beginning like a Knight of the Golden Fleece!” Play the sixteenth notes at the end of the theme without accelerating; instead slow down somewhat (even a lot).

At the end of bar 55 play the last two thirty-second note groups (four notes per group) several times then play bar 56. Make a good diminuendo to *ppp* and slow down a lot in bars 56-58 (example; bars 55-58, violinistic cadenza passage)

Definitely do not begin the Allegretto rapidly, and always slow down, very gypsy-like, at the end of the theme [bars 66-67, etc]. Each repetition a degree faster, and finally the theme is Presto [as indicated in the score] (example; bars 66-68, octave section, similar to rhapsody no 6)

Hungarian Rhapsody No.5 in E Minor, “Héroïde élégaique” (1853)

Göllerich, 131-132:

“That is a military piece! Like the funeral possession of a distinguished major.” He played a few passages himself very sustained and plaintively -- solemnly.

Not too slow at the beginning. Always “take the *una corda*” at the second theme in bar 17. Always play the triplets in time at the place where the left hand crosses over in bar 51, etc.

Difference between triplets and eights, theme with the left hand. Thumb. [Probably referring the major theme]

Lachmund, 147:

Young Riesberg came next with the Master’s Rhapsody no.5 He seemed pleased to see this, and remarked: “Ah, that one, one does not hear often.” He was referring to the hackneyed Second Rhapsody which an uninitiated pupil now and then would bring, and which he had tabooed; and again he mimicked the rhythm of its stirring “ta-ta---ta-ta; ta-ta---ta-ta.” The Fifth is quite different, being an impressive movement. At its opening he gave the last eighth a peculiar touch by breaking the octave in a hesitating way. It was another of his “I merely mention it” suggestions. At the close he praised the young American.

Friedheim, “Reflections and Remarks”:

The exceptions [in terms of length and form] primarily are in three and five. Both proceed in moderate time from beginning to end, the first of the two without suffering any particular loss in comparison to the others; it simply implies something different. But Number five, notwithstanding the pathetic, impressive funeral march, is weakest musically, and is the only one of the whole collection which causes Liszt to forget his nationality at times, and revel in sonorous Italianized “cantilene.” Nevertheless, it can compete with the others if played with beautiful singing tone.

Borodin, in Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, 543-44:

When it came to Mademoiselle Timanova’s turn, he made her play his Rhapsody in B minor [S244/5 according to Williams], which she was studying for her concert at Kissingen. After a few little remarks he sat down to the piano and played a few passages from the piece with his iron fingers. ‘This must be as solemn as a triumphal march,’ he cried. Springing up from his

chair and putting his arm through Mademoiselle Timanova's he paced solemnly up and down the room, humming the theme of the Rhapsody. The young people began to laugh.

Timanova resumed the piece, paying attention to his remarks. Liszt leaned towards me and said: 'She is a splendid fellow, that little Vera.' Then addressing himself to her: 'If you play like that at the concert, you will see what ovations! But they will not be more than you deserve.' Tears of joy ran down her blushing cheeks.

Ramann, *Pädagogium* chapt.3, 5:

With this "elegiac letter" to his friend, the Countess Sidonie Reviczky, who sadly met a tragic fate: Franz Liszt conceived, for his Hungarian epic, a noble song of mourning for a hero; the music of this poem is of the most unusual beauty.

Considered as a poem, the E-minor Rhapsody is of epic-lyrical character, which, even if its ancient poetical title does not hint at such, it does remind one of it. Both the Elegy and the "Héroïde" shimmer in this elegiac Héroïde, thus it is tempting to call it a translation into our subjective modern tonal language.

Liszt's "Héroïde" is strophic in its phrase [periodischen] sentence structure. Like the ancient *Héroïde*, she speaks through another's mouth, but music replaces the hero who sends the message, the Hungarian way of mourning (the first theme), with elegiac lament, broken by glorifying, comforting remembrances (the second theme), increases from stanza to stanza, reaching the painful heroic tones, it sinks back, bending under the brazen saying of doom (the coda).

The elegiac *Héroïde* is based on two melodies: the first in the Lasso character, the second in the character of comforting gentleness – no Friska. The Hungarian nationality of the two melodies is in question.

The evenness of the verse structure, the classical tranquillity, the simplicity of the thematic treatment, the epic containment of the great subjective passion, the deep masculine handling of grief, lets us see the pattern of musical Heroïdes in the "*Héroïde élégaique*"

The first sketch of this Rhapsody (No.5 of the volume "Magyar Dallok" etc) dates from 1846, the arrangement in its present form dates from 1853.

Thirty years after this first edition, the master arranged the "*Héroïde élégaique*" symphonically (with F. Doppler). The wider and richer sound-body required an expansion of the form. Various additions and interpolations were thus required, but the character changed in accordance with the expanded form: the heroic-elegiac element became heroic pain, the accents became sharper, the dynamic colours more contrasting, the whole more glamorous. A piano edition for four hands after the symphonic arrangement has the same character.

For the pianistic execution, there were differences from the double additions, of which I expressly consider here, since they make themselves felt in practice, they are not in favour of the original edition; they gave to it an accentuation that when not under the sign of a symphonic expansion, the character sets up foreign lights, shining beyond its borders into another area, and through the double glow it throws, it undoes the unity of elegiac-heroic amalgamation that is the character of the original. The nation speaks in the symphonic Rhapsody – in this one, the individual.

Our instructions stay within the limits of the original edition, which corresponds to the master's own piano performance. (See *Pädagogium* chapt.3, 6-8, for these very detailed notes on the performance of this work).

Hungarian Rhapsody No.6 in D-flat Major (1853)

Lachmund, 137-38:

The Rhapsody was followed by another, the Sixth, that capital octave study, which [Arthur] Friedheim played with great spirit. Liszt relished the spirit of his national music. The play of his features, and his many gestures not only gave evidence of this, but served to give the students a more vivid understanding of the eccentricities of Hungarian music. There are those who feign that their taste is above it. Conceding that tastes differ, and that everyone may not like all that is good, I feel sorry for those who are too blasé to enjoy a Liszt rhapsody -- or a Johann Strauss waltz for that matter. The same for the opposite extremists, who, overfed on modern paprika would accept Beethoven as simple, when Liszt and Wagner, both genuine modernists mind you, bowed in reverence to this mighty genius!

Lachmund, 357-58:

[from a letter to Lachmund from F.W Riesberg] His Sixth Rhapsody was one of the pieces he marked with blue pencil in certain spots, and just what this was I will indicate on the back of this [letter]. Liszt authority as you are, you will recognize where they belong.



Friedheim, "Reflections and Remarks":

The sixth rhapsody, for the last decades the most hackneyed after the second, does not tolerate simplification, and as it requires still greater powers of endurance on the part the performer it remains limited to a smaller circle of pianists merely for this reason. This work usually suffers to a greater extent by the mishandling of the virtuosi, and becomes more "common" in the estimation of the audience. The short presto episode following the first march-like section at this point should be commented upon.

Liszt was the first to make use of every available opportunity to introduce the element of humor into his performances at the piano -- in fact, making it acceptable for the salon. It is all the more surprising that one looks in vain for this quality in lengthier works of his; much

gaiety, amalgamation and irony is evident, but of pure humor very little. The rhapsodies alone show a different aspect in this respect. In the friska of the second rhapsody, with all its monotonous, prickly, whimsical rhythm, also is humorous, verging on the comical. In order to produce this effect the performer must have humor at his command, as Goethe demands of his playwright, concerning his art, in the first prologue to "Faust."

Provided that this ability is inborn, it must nevertheless be developed through practice and mental training like any other talent; but just this is generally neglected.

What does the pianist do in such a case? His rendering of this episode [the C sharp major presto] leaves him dissatisfied, and he cuts this puzzling "Gordian knot" by simply omitting the movement. This was the means adopted by Teresa Carreno, also by Sofie Menter, a great pianist though perhaps the very worst "rhapsody sinner." They, however, abstained from disfiguring the following slow movement by aggressive, wild "cymbalum-jingling" effects, as has now become the fashion. But the sixth rhapsody by this omission is deprived of an integral section, of the well planned balance of contrast and shading. Just this work, for the sake of its friska, needs to be attacked with the utmost care. As known, this fast movement consists a gradual intensification of a simple dance theme, which is so popular in its character that the louder it resounds the more apt it is to approach the "banal;" a few basses, played an octave lower (not intended by the composer), suffice with one step to bring it within the boundaries of the "vulgar." James Huneker was quite right when he said that the rhapsodies "begin in a mosque and end in a tavern." His "aperçue" is, however directed to the wrong address. The fault is not to be found in the music, and Liszt demonstrated this fact by his bold orchestration, with its abundant use of the cymbalum and other instruments of percussion towards the end. Besides, this rhapsody, in its form it is only an augmented version of No. 4.

Hungarian Rhapsody No.7 in D Minor (1853)

One should note the character marking at the top of this Rhapsody: "*Im trotzigen, tiefsinnigen Zigeuner-Stil vorzutragen*": To be played in the defiant, profound Gypsy style.

Hungarian Rhapsody No.8 in F-sharp Minor (1853)

Göllerich, 56:

He played the finale several times and stressed that the tempo should not be taken too fast, or everything will be blurred and sound like an etude. [see the ending of Hungaria!]

Hungarian Rhapsody No.9 in E-flat Major, "Carnaval at Pest" (1853)

Göllerich, 55:

He insisted that it should ring out powerfully right at the beginning. At the bass passage in the finale, the master made a wonderful snoring motion with his head and continually rumbeld along with it. The lady played very powerfully, and the master said, "Yes indeed, that is the weaker sex!"

Lachmund, 136:

While the lesson was the most vehement witnessed at Weimar, we were yet to enjoy the Master in his usual good nature; yes, even in a humorous mood. This came when [Walter] Bache played the Carnaval de Pesth Rhapsody, which, by the way, should appear on recital

programmes more often than it does. Seeing his long-time conscientious friend seated at the keyboard may have done something toward re-establishing the Master's good humor.

Besides, the axiom that "every emotion appoints its reaction" had, no doubt, taken effect. Bache played well, and above all in a musicianly manner. At a place where a phrase in the low basses alternates repeatedly with a brighter retort in the treble, he played this like a dialogue, giving the bass part a morose and uneasy expression

The Master smiled: Yes, that is a domestic scene; the old man would like to have her again, but she teases him and he grumbles." At each recurrence of the place Liszt growled the bass part as he mimicked the old man in facial expression; this with such comical effect, that he soon had us all laughing, and our merriment increased with each repetition, as it recurs ten times in the Finale.

Liszt was appreciative of the humorous. In his own music he rarely shows a comic vein, and this little episode is one of the few instances I know.

Friedheim, "Reflections and Remarks," 10.

It is an easy matter to create a sensation, namely a bad one. What has been said regarding the humorous episode of No.6 can be applied to No.9 in the highest degree, as implied by the sub-title "Carnaval de Pesth." This piece invites comparison with two other masterworks. Schumann's *Carnival* is a "Bal Masque" of elite circles, by arrangement and participation of selected men of wit; the "Carnaval Romain" by Berlioz evidently takes place in an aristocratic section of the town, but the "Carnaval de Pesth" is a "Kermesse," a fair, a monster fete champetre of the people where the multitude assembles.

To particularize, after Prince Carnaval has announced his presence with a flourish of trumpets, the frolic commences, with sallies of wild gaiety. Suddenly a "Poncinello" appears grinning upon the scene, to bagpipe croaking accompaniment, with serio-burlesque steps, haranguing with the crowd to dance. He makes a sentimental grimace, and with mighty grotesque leaps sets the example of others to join him in his revelry. The spectators remain unmoved; becoming more persistent, he repeats his capers, but all in vain, nobody responds, and with a clumsy ironical obeisance, he takes his departure. A crowd of masqueraders enters with great to-do, emitting hoarse cries in anticipation of some new deviltry. A married couple of disproportioned age commence to squabble while the discordant strains of a tuneless hurdy-gurdy are heard in the distance. She, young, pleads persistently; he, old, stubbornly and gruffly refuses. The disagreement cools down, and giggling slyly she at length has the last word. But now huge masses of people come tramping along after their day of toil, singing a chorus like rugged children of nature. Suddenly Prince Carnaval himself makes his appearance in all his glory. His satellites after a short sham fight overcome the unwieldy resistance of stubborn adversaries, parodying "the old husband," and the prince, surrounded by joyfully surging crowds, carried away by the supreme desire of revelling in life's glowing gifts, continues on his triumphant procession.

This sketch may be regarded as a program, suggesting itself to the imaginative student; it proves at least that the work cannot be successfully approached without a certain amount of humour.

Furthermore, the piece is technically extremely exacting. This of course would be no particular hindrance nowadays, but the difficulty of this at times rather massive technique lies in the case with which it has to be manipulated, without drawing undue attention to itself.

What does one hear, in nine cases out of ten, when a virtuoso plays this rhapsody? Some music, frequently very noisy, of indefinite character, with plenty of unjustified shallow display, with something, at moments, like short outbursts of hoarse laughter, as if the

performer were sardonically mocking himself. For in general the matter stands thus: He who possesses the right kind of technic is lacking in humor and vice versa. So quite seriously the question arises whether this piece has ever received the superior treatment it deserves, excepting the composer himself. Certainly this scarcely harmonizes with the usual popularity of the rhapsodies, even granting that the ninth is the most unique of them all.

Hungarian Rhapsody No.10 in E Minor (1853)

Göllerich, 112.

At the third ascending run [bar 3] make a ritardando and play gracefully but with bite; execute the next bars very rhythmically. (example, bars 3-5, scale in both hands, cadence)

Friedheim, "Reflections and Remarks:"

The tenth rhapsody as a "genre painting" is the most perfect regarding details and contents, but its delicate lines at times receive a rather blurred and crude handling by interpreters. To prove this fact it again seems advisable to sketch a sort of program. It might be termed a "solo scene," insofar as the one active figure is joined only at the end by a second passive one.

The gypsy, just returned from the city, gazes dreamily into his campfire; he had mingled with the crowds as an onlooker, where the proud nobility with its fair and costly bedecked wives and daughters proceeded to the town hall banquet. Presuming the curtain rises, he reenacts the impressive scene in his imagination, nevertheless a feeling of melancholy overcomes him; the day seems different from others; a dance melody haunts him persistently, which was wafted from the banquet hall to his ears. Seizing his fiddle, he allows a pensive mood to assert itself by improvising upon the enchanting tune. Ceasing abruptly he soliloquizes upon and feels the seriousness of life with death and hereafter in its train. The fire is dying and dusk descends. Bracing himself up, he gasps the fiddle once more to dispel with its soft tones the disquieting spirits. His love of life reawakens to full vigor, and clasping his sweetheart, who was watching him in wonder, he seeks earthly salvation with her in the dance. Here mysticism asserts itself for moments at least, where nobody would look for it, or where nobody would expect to find it. But without this previously mentioned fundamental, mental and supermental root, the whole middle section referred to is deprived of all sense of meaning--the ethereal fluctuating effects become brutalized, and in place of the "genre painting" stands the caricature.

Hungarian Rhapsody No.11 in A Minor (1853)

Quoted Adrian Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, 516-17

At a charity concert on the 15th [1875], Liszt played Weber's Sonata in A flat, Chopin's Polonaise in C minor, the Eleventh Hungarian Rhapsodies, and *Les Patineurs*. His reception by the audience packed into the small hall of the Vigadó was one of boundless enthusiasm. 'How did Liszt play?' asked the *Pester Lloyd*. 'To say, would be superfluous for those who heard him -- and still more superfluous for those who did not! How to bring out poetic content with crystal clarity is something he understands as does none other.' Of his playing of the Rhapsody, the *Neue Pester Journal* remarked: 'Who can describe the enthusiasm evoked by

Liszt with his dazzling rendering of this masterpiece, when the well-known national melodies rang out in the magic sounds unique to him? The splendid Bösendorfer piano at which the Master sat seemed ever to be changing into a new and different instrument. At one moment came whirling cymbal crashes, at another the long-held note of the violin, to which it its turn succeeded the sweet song of the flute -- until the magic was dispelled by the thunderous applause of the audience.'

Hungarian Rhapsody No.12 in C-sharp Minor (1853)

Friedheim, "Reflections and Remarks:"

No.12 may be termed the "ideal" rhapsody aspired to by Liszt; for this reason, it meets almost without exception in style and spirit a more exact rendering by the virtuosi. With all the freedom permitted to the performer, everything therein is so concise in outline and expression that the much favored "ad libitum" variations become prohibitive; at times the principle theme, when it reappears in the first section, suffers by the domination of the accompaniment; but, strangely enough, Liszt himself is to be blamed in this instance, owing to the somewhat misleading notation; as a rule, like Beethoven and Chopin, he is very exact in this respect.

Emil von Sauer, from *Meine Leben*, in Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, 631:

At the little private matinée which took place at Blüthner's, only a few listeners were present: Madame Jaëll, Krause, Friedheim, Rosenthal, and one or two others. I played some pieces by Chopin and Grieg, Rubinstein's Staccato Etude, and Liszt's Twelfth Rhapsody. Although because of continual travelling around I was not in practice, and my performances revealed more technical defects than I would have wished on such an important occasion, the Master was tolerant enough to show warm appreciation, especially in his Rhapsody. From time to time he called out such encouraging words as 'bravo', 'bravissimo', 'pretty...', 'hm,' 'very pretty...', 'hm!' When I had come to the end he confirmed his pleasure with a kiss on the forehead, and also seemed delighted to grant my request to enrol me among his pupils for the summer.

Hungarian Rhapsody No.13 in A Minor (1853)

On Liszt playing in London 1886, in Adrian Williams, 667-68.

Alfred Hollins (1865-1942). I shall never forget that sudden hush in animated conversation and the sigh of expectant delight when Liszt walked over to the piano. His first piece was one I did not know. I was told afterwards that it was a *Divertissement* by Schubert transcribed by Liszt himself. Next he played the Allegro from his 13th Hungarian Rhapsody. Although his touch had lost some of its vigour, and it was very beautiful and clear. He was still a great pianist. ...

George Grove. I went to Liszt's reception and was delighted (1) by his playing, so calm, clear, correct, refined -- so entirely unlike the style of the so-called 'Liszt School' -- (2) by his face.....

The critic J. A. Fuller-Maitland (1856-1936). His playing was a thing never to be forgotten, or approached by later artists. The peculiar quiet brilliance of his rapid passages, the noble proportion kept between the parts, and the meaning and effect which he put into the music, were the most striking points.

The Athenaeum (17 April). His performance will certainly never be forgotten by those who were fortunate enough to hear it. Though he no longer possesses the physical power of his earlier years, there is still that indescribable beauty of touch, that unrivalled master of the gradations of tone, and, more than all, that wonderful depth of expression which have placed him absolutely alone among pianists... and there were occasional glimpses of the stupendous execution for which he was formerly renowned, to enable his hearers to form a conception of what he must have been in his prime.... The chief characteristic of his performance on this occasion was its exquisite delicacy and finish.... Such playing is an absolute revelation, unapproached, and in all probability unapproachable hereafter, by anyone else.

Hungarian Rhapsody No.14 in F Major (1853)

Siloti, 359:

Liszt's confidence in me as a musician was not confined to the present but extended to the future. I once brought the 14th Rhapsody to play to him, telling him beforehand that I had dared to make some alterations in it, and even to omit certain passages, and that I had wanted his opinion on it. After I had played it he said: "I not only acquiesce in, but thoroughly approve of what you have done, in proof whereof I give you my permission to make any alterations and omissions you wish -- and this at any time, even after I am gone; for I know that what you consider necessary will not be detrimental to the music -- indeed you may say in such cases that it is as I wished it. You have my sanction in advance to anything you may do in my name; only," he added with a smile, "please don't sign my cheques."

Friedheim, "Reflections and Remarks:"

The fourteenth rhapsody is perhaps the most eloquent of all, resplendent and full of temperament. Nothing could be said against the purely pianistic style from the Lisztian standpoint, provided one is not acquainted with the arrangement for orchestra. Comparing the two versions one is apt gradually to think less favorably of the former, which gives the impressions of a piano score, and, at that, not of the best. Very logically, in the orchestral edition Liszt utilizes transitions thematically, whereas in the piano edition cadenzas are introduced instead--glittering [to page 11] and sparkling as usual with Liszt, but they are but cadenzas after all. In this case some "variations" in harmony with the score would be more desirable.

Hungarian Rhapsody No.15 in A Minor, "Rakoczy March" (1853)

Quoted in Williams, *Portrait of Liszt*, 9.

Two weeks after the concert of 13 April [Vienna, 1823], the Liszts journeyed to Pest, to enable Franz to show his compatriots something of the prowess acquired under Czerny, and as a farewell to them before the more extensive travels now envisaged. (...) On the 19th [May] he appeared before a smaller gathering, playing the Rákóczy March- out of which several decades later he fashioned the Fifteenth Hungarian Rhapsody...

Friedheim, "Reflections and Remarks:"

The third and last exception, Number Fifteen is, on the contrary, very Hungarian, but again no rhapsody at all. It consists of an extremely brilliant paraphrase of the celebrated "Rakoczy March," scored by Liszt himself for symphony orchestra several years later.

Lachmund, 250:

Her playing contrasted with that of Miss Pussy Purr, who, wanting in the named qualities [tone quality], made a rather weak attempt at the Master's Rákóczy March. Had it been so weakly played by the Swiss girl there would no doubt have been acrid remarks, but the American was kindly treated.

Hungarian Rhapsody No.16 in A Minor (1882)

Hungarian Rhapsody No.16 was dedicated to the Hungarian painter Mihaly Munkacsy (1846-1900), who painted a well-known portrait of Liszt. See Göllicher, 196n13.

Göllicher, 117-18.

Bring out the octaves in the bass strongly, especially beginning in bar 3 of the third line.

Hungarian Rhapsody No.17 in D Minor (1885)

Hungarian Rhapsody No.18 in F-sharp Minor (1884)

Göllicher, 160-61.

{“} Motive I: Bad weather outside and even more so in the soul. A bit coquettish at the Allegretto, not fast. [There is no allegretto in the score.] Afterwards, at the rockets, knock the octaves down with the second finger. [This could refer to the several ascending octave passages found throughout the piece.] On the last page, first B-A sharp, instead of D sharp-E sharp. {“}

Long trills. "I am fond of long trills."

Hungarian Rhapsody No.19 in D Minor (1885)

August Stradal, in Adrian Williams, 647:

Liszt was then working on among other things the last of his Hungarian Rhapsodies [S244/19]. I often had the opportunity of observing the Master during composition of this work. Like all great masters, he composed in his mind, without calling upon the services of the piano. In lengthy passages he would from time to time play upon the desk with his fingers, perhaps to set down the fingering. The themes from this Rhapsody, which Liszt began in

Rome at the end of 1884, and which, with interruptions he worked at for a long time, he took from the *Csárdás nobles* of his friend Kornál Ábrányi, who taught composition at the Budapest Music Academy. They are, of course, gypsy themes, which Ábrányi published in a *csárdás* collection....

Whereas in the two Rhapsodies which preceded the Nineteenth he had turned, so far as technical demands are concerned, more towards the simpler piano technique of his last period, the Nineteenth he again used the daring technical combinations of earlier times, but simultaneously raised this technique into the magic realm of expression of his last works.

When I entered the Master's room one morning, he had just finished this Rhapsody.... 'Copy it out for the publisher straightaway, and play it from memory at the music teachers' concert next week,' he said. In that first moment, because of the near date of the concert, I felt slightly alarmed, but did not let it show, and merely asked the master if he would do me the great kindness of playing the Rhapsody to me. He stood up, we went through his dining-room and salon into the adjoining concert hall of the Music Academy. And there, to me alone, the Master now played the Rhapsody, which he probably never tried out on the keyboard, altogether matchlessly, overcoming at the age of seventy-three, and with unbelievable ease and accuracy, all its great technical difficulties. What a singing and resounding in the *Lassan!* It was all of life's sorrows, of memories of blissful times that were past, that he sang. And then came the *Friska*. It was as though a whole army of gypsies on fiery steeds were raging all over the puszta. Exhausted, the Master finished.... I had experienced a rendition such as I would never hear again....

I could at first find no words to describe the profound impression which the work and Liszt's playing had made upon me. It was a revelation. The piano had lost everything material; from the strings there cried out a voice of yearning; it was the artistic outpouring of a great and lonely soul, of the singer of sorrow who is taking leave of life and, after all its bitter experiences, seeking to glide gently into realms of eternal rest and heavenly peace....

Appendix II: Two Liszt-Pupil Cadenzas for Rhapsody No.2

This Appendix reproduces two cadenzas for Rhapsody No.2 by pupils of Liszt.

The first is by Eugen d'Albert (1864-1932), allegedly approved by Liszt, and included in d'Albert's c.1906 edition of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. Of this cadenza, D'Albert writes in a footnote: "As the editor's cadenza met with Liszt's full approval, it was thought expedient to introduce it here.—Should the same be omitted, it is advisable to immediately proceed with the prestissimo movement."⁶⁶³ Further corroboration of this is provided by Lachmund, who witnessed and wrote of the occasion when d'Albert played the cadenza for Liszt and the class in Weimar, May 1882.⁶⁶⁴ The score is in the public domain and was downloaded from IMSLP.⁶⁶⁵

The second cadenza is by Richard Burmeister (1860-1944), who studied with Liszt for three years, from 1880 to 1883.⁶⁶⁶ The cadenza was included in Burmeister's c.1910 edition of the first two Rhapsodies, which is marked on the title page as being a "new edition" revised by the editor.⁶⁶⁷ Several anecdotes concerning Burmeister's appearances in Liszt's class are related by Lachmund, which give the reader the suggestion that Burmeister was among the "inner circle" of special pupils.⁶⁶⁸ It is unclear whether Burmeister had played the cadenza for Liszt, but it noticeably bears some resemblance (in terms of structure, style and content) to d'Albert's cadenza, who did have the "rubber stamp" from the Master. Thanks and credit to Ton van de Laar of the OBA Oosterdok (Amsterdam) for providing access to the scans of Burmeister's edition (a one-page excerpt from which is reproduced below).

A third cadenza may be heard in the 1929 and 1930 recordings of Moriz Rosenthal (1862-1946), who played the Rhapsody for Liszt when he visited Weimar around 1884 (**Sound Example 33 – Rosenthal Rhapsody 2 cadenza**). V. May Hauser recalled later, in a letter to Lachmund, that: "I remember hearing Rosenthal playing a cadenza to the Rhapsody no. 2 for Liszt, who said it was the best written. I do not remember whether he played it in the lesson or after, when I was privileged to stay."⁶⁶⁹ It is unclear whether this is the same cadenza Rosenthal was still playing over 40 years later, though we note that d'Albert evidently kept his "approved" cadenza around for a number of years.

⁶⁶³ *Ungarische Rhapsodien* ed. Eugen d'Albert (Mainz and Leipzig: B. Schott's Söhne, 1906), vol. 1, 36.

⁶⁶⁴ Lachmund, *Living with Liszt*, 55-56.

⁶⁶⁵ [https://imslp.org/wiki/Rhapsodies_hongroises_\(Liszt%2C_Franz\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Rhapsodies_hongroises_(Liszt%2C_Franz))

⁶⁶⁶ Lachmund, note 1 on 146.

⁶⁶⁷ *Rhapsodies hongroises* ... Nos. 1 and 2 ed. Richard Burmeister (Berlin: Schlesinger, c.1910 [no plate nos.])

⁶⁶⁸ Lachmund relates that Burmeister had the privilege of studying Liszt's revised version of the sixth *Soirée de Vienne* from the manuscript. See Lachmund, 266.

⁶⁶⁹ See Lachmund, 355-356

The cadenza can be heard on Rosenthal's recordings of the work, but it does not appear in print in his edition of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*.⁶⁷⁰

Further alterations to Rhapsody No.2 may be found in Lina Ramann's *Liszt-Pädagogium* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Hartel, 1986).

The two cadenzas are reproduced on the following two pages.

⁶⁷⁰ See Discography. Rosenthal's edition in *Ungarische Rhapsodie Nr.2* ed. Moriz Rosenthal (Berlin: Verlag Ullstein, Tonmeister Ausgabe No.298).

Cadenza to Rhapsody No.2 by Eugen d'Albert

Ungarische Rhapsodien ed. Eugen d'Albert (Mainz and Leipzig: B. Schott's Söhne, 1906), vol. 1, 36.

Accessed via IMSLP.

**) Cadenza*

molto cresc. ff

Vivace

p brillante

cresc.

poco riten.

ff

*) Da diese Cadenz des Herausgebers die besondere Zustimmung Liszts erworben hat, glaubt der Herausgeber sie hier einfügen zu können. Bei Weglassung derselben gehe man sofort zum Prestissimo über.

*) Etant donné que notre cadence obtint l'assentiment spécial de Liszt, nous croyons pouvoir l'ajouter ici. Au cas où on la supprimerait, on passerait ensuite au Prestissimo.

*) As the editor's cadenza met with Liszt's full approval, it was thought expedient to introduce it here.— Should the same be omitted, it is advisable to immediately proceed with the prestissimo movement.

Cadenza to Rhapsody No.2 by Richard Burmeister

Rhapsodies hongroises Nos. 1 and 2 ed. Richard Burmeister (Berlin: Schlesinger, c.1910), 34.

Credit to Ton van de Laar of the OBA Oosterdok (Amsterdam) for providing access to this scan.

34

Cadenz von Richard Burmeister.

Presto.
R.

pp
una corda
senza Pedale

molto vivo
pp

precipitato
sf
staccato

sf
staccato

sf
di - mi - nu - en - do
attacca subito