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SELECTED OPERATIC PARAPHRASES OF FRANZ LISZT (1811-1886):
COMPOSITIONAL STYLE AND PERFORMANCE PERSPECTIVES

by

Yoon Ju Lee

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As members of the Final Examination Committee, we certify that we have read the document prepared by Yoon Ju Lee entitled SELEC TED OPERATIC PARAPHRASES OF FRANZ LISZT (1811-1886): COMPOSITIONAL STYLE AND PERFORMANCE PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates Liszt's compositional style, and considers performance perspectives in his operatic paraphrases. *Reminiscences de Don Juan* and *Valse de l'opera "Faust" de Charles Gounod*. The great body of transcriptions by Liszt forms an important contribution to the development of piano music, combining technical challenges, innovative notation, dramatic projection, and pianistic effects.

*Reminiscences de Don Juan* and *Valse de l'opera "Faust" de Charles Gounod* offer good examples of Liszt's genius in condensing an operatic score into a viable piano texture. Rather than offering simple medleys of popular arias, Liszt extracts the principal elements of the operas and creates a new art work from each. The relationship of his transcriptions to the original operas is carefully planned throughout.

The artistic insight, creativity, and integrity Liszt devoted to these paraphrases extends to his use of the piano to evoke sonorities of both voices and orchestra, and in doing so, he expands the pianist's concept of the instrument. These transcriptions thus pose challenges beyond the purely technical, exploiting the performer's sense of drama, color and imagination in unique ways.
INTRODUCTION

Liszt departed in his solo recitals from the traditional practice of including other instrumental musicians on programs in 1839. By this time, audiences had also started paying for the privilege of going to concerts. Patronage was beginning to be a thing of the past and artists won success by pleasing the taste of these new concertgoers, no longer the aristocracy, but members of an emerging middle-class. In these early days of Romanticism, even the greatest musicians catered to the tastes of their listeners. Liszt said that musicians were the servants of the public, whether they wanted to be or not.

Ever-present in piano recitals until 1850 were operatic paraphrases and variations on themes from popular operas. Audiences loved to see famous pianists play on the same stage as if in competition. Sponsors of concerts simultaneously featured such "leading lights" as Liszt, Herz, Thalberg, and Moscheles, for listeners loved to watch them "incinerate" pianos in operatic fantasies, in which the great pianists would embellish popular operatic themes to suit themselves and their listeners. Liszt filled this heroic role perfectly and composed and performed many brilliant operatic paraphrases on his programs.

Through piano transcriptions and arrangements of major works by himself and other composers, Liszt advocated the popularity of the piano and expanded its repertoire. The hundreds of transcriptions of symphonies, operatic selections, and other large

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2 Ibid., p. 132.
instrumental and vocal works were, in themselves, an important contribution to the
development of piano music. Moreover, by performing and publishing such works, Liszt
made those compositions by others available to many people who were unable to attend
live performances of the original works. In this way Liszt elevated the status of the
transcription from mere audience pleasing pyrotechnics into works which had a more
lasting impact.
CHAPTER I: FRANZ LISZT

Background

The life of Franz Liszt (1811-86) was filled with contradictions, as was the Romantic era in which he lived. He had the kind of personality that accepted and carried out responsibilities yet wanted freedom, that sought a priestly life yet wanted all the world had to offer.3

Early Years

The father of Franz Liszt. Adam Liszt (1776-1827) who played the cello in the Esterhazy court orchestra, started teaching Franz the piano at the age of seven. Franz Liszt began to compose in an elementary way at the age of eight and may also have first played in public at Baden in the same year; he certainly appeared in concerts at Sopron and Poszony in October and November 1820, after which a group of local Hungarian magnates put up a sum of money to provide for his musical education.4

In 1821 the Liszt family moved to Vienna, and Franz Liszt studied the piano with Carl Czerny (1791-1857) and composition with Antonio Salieri (1750-1825). Czerny, who had been Beethoven’s pupil, was the most celebrated Viennese piano teacher of the

Salieri was a distinguished composer and former teacher of Beethoven. Czerny, Moscheles, and Schubert. Salieri also taught Liszt free of charge. At the age of 11, Liszt played his first public concert in Vienna.

In the autumn of 1823 Liszt moved with his family to Paris, giving concerts in Munich, Stuttgart and other German cities. However, in Paris he was refused admission to the Conservatoire by Cherubini, on the grounds that he was a foreigner; instead he studied theory with Reicha and composition with Paer. By good fortune the family had rented rooms in an hotel across from the residence of the piano manufacturer Sebastien Erard and his family. This leading instrument maker had lately perfected and patented the "double-escapement" piano action, an important development which for the first time enabled keys to be very rapidly repeated by the player without the key having to return fully to the keyboard surface. Sebastien and his nephew Pierre presented Liszt with one of their new seven-octave models. Liszt took the instrument on tour with him and introduced it all over Europe.

Liszt was a success in Parisian society and began to concertize throughout the Continent. In 1826, at the age of 15, he composed the *Etude en douze exercices*, the original version of the Transcendental Studies. This marked the beginning of his career as a serious composer.
Contact with Parisian Society

By 1827 the constant touring was beginning to affect Liszt's health, and he had thoughts of becoming a priest. Liszt went to recover in Boulogne with his father, who died there suddenly of typhoid fever. Liszt returned to Paris and set up house with his mother. He gave up touring and earned a living as a piano teacher.

Liszt met Berlioz on December 4, 1830. Apart from anything else, Berlioz and Liszt were drawn together by the uncommon breadth of their artistic tastes, which did not stop at music but ranged across poetry, drama, and painting. Another quality they shared was a lifelong dislike of academicism. Liszt made several transcriptions of Berlioz' works including the *Symphonie fantastique*, *Harold in Italy*, the overtures *Les Francs-Juges*, and *King Lear*. Throughout his life, Liszt made transcriptions and arrangements of other composers' works—more than 400 of them survive.5

On the 9th of March, 1831, Liszt heard Paganini for the first time. Dazzled, Liszt was determined to transfer Paganini's technical effects to the piano, and in the following year wrote a fantasy on *La campanella*, a melody from Paganini's B minor Violin Concerto. Liszt's other studies on Paganini's 24 Caprices for solo violin are a re-creation in terms of another instrument, not just of the notes and harmonies, but of the textures and technical difficulties of the original.6

Meanwhile he was forming a friendship with Chopin who was to affect him

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deeply, and under whose influence the poetic and romantic side of Liszt's nature now began to develop. Liszt attended Chopin's performance at the Salle Pleyel in 1832. The question of Chopin's influence on Liszt has often been debated. For a time, though, Liszt lay under the spell of certain individual compositions of Chopin; in particular, the ghosts of Chopin's A-flat major Polonaise (op. 53), the F-minor Study (op. 10), and the Berceuse later turned up to haunt some of Liszt's middle-period works.7 Liszt never lost interest in Chopin's music and often included it in his programs, particularly the polonaises, studies, and mazurkas.

In 1834 Liszt composed the *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* and the set of three *Apparitions*. Both are poetic works that show many features of his mature harmonic style, melodic fingerprints and formal structures.8 About this time Liszt met Countess Marie d'Agoult, with whom he soon began an affair. In the summer of 1834 Liszt began to write articles on music for various European journals. In 1835 the Countess left her husband and lived with Liszt for about nine years. They had three children: Blandine (1835-62), Cosima (1837-1930), and Daniel (1839-59). Liszt taught at the newly founded Geneva Conservatory and also began a manual of piano technique.

For the next four years (1835-1839) Liszt and the Countess lived mainly in Switzerland and Italy, though they occasionally visited Paris. During this time, he composed *Album d’un voyageur*, lyrical evocations of Swiss scenes that he later

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transformed into the first book of the *Années de pèlerinage*, and transcribed three Beethoven symphonies for the piano. In 1837 he went with the Countess to Italy, where he wrote the original versions of the pieces that formed the second book of the *Années de pèlerinage*, the first version of the Paganini Studies and the 12 *Grande Etudes*. Liszt was at the height of his concert career in 1838. He gave concerts in Vienna and various Italian cities.

On the 9th of May, 1839, Daniel was born, but in the autumn the lovers’ relationship became strained. When Liszt offered funds to build a Beethoven monument in Bonn, meaning a return to the life of a traveling virtuoso, the Countess returned with the children to Paris. He gave six concerts in Vienna, and visited Hungary for the first time since childhood.

**Lisztomania, the Virtuoso Period**

For the next eight years Liszt continued to tour the whole of Europe, from Ireland to Turkey, from Portugal to Russia. In 1842 he was appointed “Grand Ducal Director of Music Extraordinary” at Weimar. In 1844 Liszt and the Countess finally separated, and Liszt took his children to Paris to arrange for their education. This was Liszt’s most brilliant period as a concert pianist. He received adulation everywhere, and honors were showered on him.

In 1847 Liszt met the Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein. She several times requested a divorce so that she and Liszt might marry but could not obtain the Pope’s
consent. Carolyne persuaded Liszt to give up his career as a traveling virtuoso and to concentrate on composition. Once that decision was made, he accepted the conducting post at Weimar as a permanent position.

Weimar

Liszt started his conducting appointment at Weimar in February 1848. Between 1847 and 1858 he wrote most of the compositions that established his reputation as a major composer and for which he is known in the twentieth century. It was a period of remarkable productivity.9

At Weimar Liszt conducted major works by contemporary composers as well as those of past generations. Because of his willingness to perform works of promising composers, he attracted many of the avant-garde in Germany, known as the ‘New German School’ or the ‘futurists.’10

Naturally, this activity was not always to the taste of the more academic musicians. When Liszt conducted his own works in Aachen and Leipzig in 1857 there was strong opposition in the press. Meanwhile his daughter Cosima married the pianist/conductor. Hans von Bülow (1830-1894), but later left him for Wagner. Hans von Bülow was one of the Liszt’s greatest pupils. After seeing Rienzi in Dresden in 1844

10 Ibid.
Liszt took great interest in Wagner’s work. Wagner was a fugitive from the Dresden revolution, and hardly safe anywhere in Germany. Liszt supplied him with cash and a false passport and sent him over the border, bound for Switzerland in 1849. The Weimar court was now beginning to distrust Liszt because of his continued support of Wagner, who was living in Switzerland as a political refugee. In 1858 Liszt resigned his position at Weimar. His misfortunes continued when, on the 13th of December, 1859, his son died in Berlin at the age of 20, and Liszt expressed his grief in Les morts, an ‘Oration for Orchestra.’

In 1861 Liszt left Weimar, travelling to Berlin and Paris, and then moved to Rome on the 21st of October, 1861, the day before his 50th birthday, on which he had hoped to be married to the princess. But at the last moment the Pope revoked his sanction of her divorce. The couple remained in Rome in separate establishments.

Rome and the Last Years

For the next eight years Liszt lived mainly in Rome, occupying himself chiefly with religious music. In 1865 He composed a Missa Choralis based on Gregorian chants. He completed the oratorio Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth (1857-62), composed Christus (1862-67), and wrote Via Crucis. When his daughter Blandine died, he composed variations on the passacaglia theme from Bach’s Cantata No. 12. In 1863 Liszt entered the Oratorio della Madonna del Rosario and in 1865 took minor orders in the
Catholic Church, but he never became a priest. He continued to compose sacred music, including a Mass for the coronation of Emperor Franz Josef of Austria as King of Hungary (1867).

In 1869 Liszt was invited back to Weimar to give master classes in piano playing, and two years later he was asked to do the same in Budapest. From then until the end of his life he made regular journeys between Rome, Weimar and Budapest. He was visited by numerous composers, including Anton Rubinstein, Albeniz, Borodin, Saint-Saëns and Fauré. He also taught a number of pianists, including Fredric Lamond, Sophie Menter, Moriz Rosenthal, Emil von Sauer and Jose Vianna da Motta. Occasionally, he performed in charity concerts.

In 1885 Debussy visited Liszt in Rome and was advised by him to hear the music of Palestrina and Lassus at the church of Santa Maria dell'Anima. His last public performance was in Luxembourg in 1885. He attended concerts of his works in Budapest, Liège and Paris and then visited London for the first time since 1841. He also attended a performance of *Elisabeth* in Paris and visited Antwerp, Weimar and Sondershausen. On the 3rd of July, an ailing 75 year old Liszt visited Bayreuth for the wedding of his granddaughter Daniela von Bülow. His illness developed into pneumonia, and he died on the 31st of July, 1886.
Compositional Style

Liszt sought to expand and develop music in new, highly personal ways. His interest in experimentation was lifelong and always allied to furthering the means of expression. Liszt constantly applied new ideas of form, structure, rhythm, melody, harmony, and sonority.

Two important aspects of Liszt's style seem to govern his approach to the problems of large-scale forms in his original compositions: freedom from formal plans such as sonata form, and monothematicism. He relies very little on the Classical forms of Beethoven and his predecessors and seems to have been inspired more by the varied formal organization of Beethoven's later works than by the stricter Classical structure of his earlier sonatas. Many of Liszt's works, including most of the Transcendental Studies, are monothematic, and it is usually in the larger works that he introduces more than one theme.

This monothematicism led Liszt to develop the concept of "transformation of themes", a process by which one or more short ideas are subjected to various techniques of alteration to generate the thematic variety of an entire work. Liszt's technique does not require that the form of a work be dependent entirely on pictorial or dramatic elements: in this respect it differs from Wagner's use of leitmotifs, in which similar transformations

are guided by the necessities of the drama. His greatest abstract work, the B minor Sonata, carries forward the principle of transformation of themes, and is in a “three movements-in-one” form.

His use of rhythm invokes the concept of improvisation. In some early piano pieces Liszt attempted to convey subtleties of accent and rhythm by inventing a new notation for altering tempo, highlighting individual stresses, and occasionally he wrote without time signature. Harmonies poétiques et religieuses (1834) offers a good example (ex. 1).

Liszt’s earlier harmonic style was congruent with the early Romantic harmonies found in the works of Chopin and the late works of Schubert and Beethoven. His harmonic Romanticism gradually increased as he used more tritones, diminished chords, augmented chords, and chromatic scales. Héroïde funèbre (1849-1850) has themes using the ‘gypsy’ scale with its characteristic augmented 2nds. After c. 1860, whole-tone scales appear more frequently in his works including Der traurige Mönch (1860). Sometimes his harmonies clash to the extent that it seems he completely dispensed with the
traditional rules governing tonal harmony. Even the earlier operatic paraphrase, Réminiscences de Don Juan (1843), is a good example of his use of tritones, diminished chords, chromatic scales, and whole-tone scales (ex. 2).

Liszt’s approach to the piano transcended that of his predecessors as he strove for not only new harmonies but sonorities. K Marie Stolba writes:

In addition to Czerny, who, as a teacher, transmitted to Liszt Beethoven’s playing style, the most significant influences on Liszt’s piano playing and compositional style were Hungarian gypsy music, Field, Chopin, and Paganini. In his piano playing, Liszt strove to make the piano transcend its apparent limitations. He could caress the keys and draw forth intimate, delicate tones, or elicit from the instrument full, almost orchestral, sonorities. Emulating Paganini’s violin virtuosity and showmanship, Liszt became the “Paganini of the piano.” He played with brilliance and clarity, and his technique, shaped by Czerny, was flawless.\(^\text{13}\)

In general, the purpose of Liszt’s new piano techniques was to exploit all the resources of the instrument in order to make it sound like an orchestra. In the operatic

\(^\text{13}\) K Marie Stolba. The Development of Western Music. 2nd ed, Dubuque: Brown, 1990, p. 539.
paraphrases, his genius was manifest in his ability of combining a facsimile of orchestral
texture with that which is idiomatic to the piano thus transcending either medium. The
transcription of the overture to Tannhäuser illustrates the achievement of such as an
orchestral effect. The descending string passages are written in octaves followed by
single notes. The bass is filled out with repeated chords to sustain the sonority (ex. 3).

ex. 3. Piano transcription of Wagner's overture to Tannhäuser

These concepts--freedom from formal structures, harmonic invention and an
unprecedented exploitation of pianistic color and sonority--are the foundation of the
operatic paraphrases.
CHAPTER II: LISZT'S OPERATIC PARAPHRASES

Classifications

The technique of paraphrasing has its origins in cantus firmus technique. During the Renaissance, paraphrase was the free elaboration of an existing melody with original and added notes subtly blended to form a seemingly new melody. The technique of paraphrasing formed a line through melodic paraphrase variation during the seventeenth century. In the 19th century, paraphrase simply borrowed the idea of varying a well-known theme.

Liszt's operatic paraphrases are comprised of two significant types. The first mainly takes the form of operatic fantasies; the second is the stricter arrangement of operatic extracts. The two types occasionally become blurred, when the division between strict arrangement and freer fantasy is less clear.

In 1835 Liszt began his long series of operatic fantasies by paraphrasing themes from Halevy's La Juive, Pacini's Niobe and Donizetti's Lucia di Lammermoor. The operatic paraphrases of the 1840's are very important examples of the genre. While some of the operatic fantasies of the 1830s and 1840s can be cited as "superficial," most of them encapsulate the dramatic kernel of a particular opera in striking and original ways.

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17 Ibid., p. 194.
Two in particular stand out. The paraphrase on *Norma* (1841) by Bellini summarizes the musical content of the opera in a concentrated form. Liszt takes seven musical ideas from the drama and arranges their appearances to depict Norma’s tragic dilemma: the conflict between her human feelings of love, revenge and grief and her spiritual calling as High Priestess. Liszt’s achievement in *Norma* is that he summarizes the ‘content’ of the original and simultaneously creates a compelling formal structure through his employment of a purposeful progression of keys: G-B-E flat. The leading key scheme shapes the unity of this music. Two years later in the operatic paraphrase *Réminiscences de Don Juan* (1843), Liszt presents the important theatrical themes of Mozart’s original *Don Giovanni*, summarizing three cardinal aspects of the story: justice, seduction, and carefree enjoyment. His choice of themes and arrangement of musical materials suggest that he intended to offer his own view of Mozart’s opera rather than to present a mere retelling of the story. By contrast, Liszt’s treatment of *Le Nozze di Figaro* (1842), that Liszt left very nearly complete, is a slighter work based on *Figaro’s* two arias from Act 1, but does not attempt such a comprehensive interpretation of the opera.

The operatic fantasies which appeared in print between 1836 and the end of Liszt’s career as a traveling virtuoso, eleven years later are described by some scholars as the finest examples of the genre. Even Johannes Brahms, no Liszt admirer, saw merit in these “old operatic fantasies”, maintaining that these demonstrated “the classicism of

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Certainly the most important arrangements of paraphrases during the Weimar period (1848-1861) based on the works of Wagner and Verdi are less innovative in form, if not in technique. With the Verdi arrangements Liszt’s emphasis shifts to more straightforward transcriptions of an operatic extract, with the exceptions to this are the earliest and the last of the Verdi paraphrases: his first Concert Paraphrase on Ernani of 1847 and the Réminiscences de Simon Boccanegra of thirty-five years later. In the paraphrase, Rigoletto oper von Verdi (1860), Liszt expands and develops Verdi’s harmonic conception, not only in the introduction, cadenzas and coda but in a multitude of chromatic doublings, altered chords and rich appoggiaturas (ex. 4).

![Image of Rigoletto's Theme]

ex. 4. Verdi’s Rigoletto

Most of Liszt’s Wagner paraphrases are straightforward attempts to reproduce the sound

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21 Ibid., p. 211.
of Wagner’s music on the piano.\textsuperscript{22} The move towards a literal transcription of an opera is even more complete in the Wagner arrangements than in the Verdi.

In addition to Wagner and Verdi, Liszt’s art of operatic alchemy after 1847 was applied to a variety of composers, most significantly Meyerbeer, Mosonyi, Goldschmidt, Raff, Tchaikovsky and Gounod.\textsuperscript{23} One of the most interesting transcriptions of the Weimar period is that of the waltz from \textit{Faust} made soon after the first production of the opera, while formally a more straightforward affair. Liszt’s waltz from \textit{Faust} invests Gounod’s tune with a diabolic quality, creating the atmosphere more of an orgy than a simple fair. Liszt raises and changes the whole effect, redeeming it from its narrow meaning in the musical concept of the opera, and giving it his own impression of spaciousness and worldliness.

The Relationship with the Original Operas

\textit{Réminiscences de Don Juan}

In the case of \textit{Don Juan} Liszt did not try to tell the whole story, but extracted its core from three musical sections of Mozart’s work—a duet, an aria and the statue music—developing, contrasting and combining material chosen from the original.

\textit{Réminiscences de Don Juan} is in three sections, each concerned with a different aspect of the drama. The introduction opens with a \textit{Grave} section, based on the

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., p. 213.
Commendatore’s music from the scene in which *Don Giovanni* mocks the statue in the churchyard - “Di rider finirai pria dell’ aurora” (You will finish your laughter before the day breaks) and “Ribaldo, audace, lascia ai morti in pace” (Boor and villain, leave the dead in peace) (examples 5a and 5b).

ex. 5a. Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, “Di rider finirai pria dell’ aurora” and

“Ribaldo, audace, lascia ai morti in pace”
Liszt uses chromatic octaves and the demonic D minor scales of Mozart’s “stone guest” in this introduction, expanded to the range of four octaves.

Then come the diminished seventh chords that herald the statue’s entry into Don Giovanini’s banquet in the last act, and the sinister scales that succeed them. Finally the statue’s words “Non si pasce di cibo mortale chi si pase di cibo celeste” (He will not eat earthly food who has fed on the food of heaven) lead, in Liszt, to an even wilder chromatic scale passage (examples 6a and b).
ex. 6b. Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, "Non si pasce di cibo mortale chi si pase di cibo celeste"

The texture at the *Andantino* lightens, preparing for a seductive elaboration of the

Act 1. Scene 3 duet. *La ci darem la mano* (examples 7a and b).
This duet is heard complete in its original form, with a cadenza added before the 6/8 section. The theme is followed by two variations. Thus, *Don Juan* (1843) combines a fantasy on themes from Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* with a series of variations. Liszt rarely
incorporates variation sets within an operatic fantasy. Variation technique, which is the free repetition of a theme or harmonic or melodic patterns with modifications or embellishments, as opposed to sets of variations, is an intrinsic element in the operatic elaborations in Liszt’s works of Mozart, Weber, Meyerbeer, Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti.\(^{24}\)

The words from the banquet scene; “Tu m’invitasti a cena, il tuo dover or sai; rispondimi, rispondimi: verrai tu a cenar meco?” (You have invited me to dine, you know what is your duty; answer me, answer me: will you dine with me?) lead to a tempestuous passage, the dramatic quality of which was remarked on by Bernard Shaw, in which the seduction music struggles with the Commendatore’s chromatic scales (ex. 8).

![Ex. 8. Liszt’s passage](image)

After a long anticipatory preparation, Liszt launches into the sparkling B flat major aria of *Don Giovanni* Act 2, Scene 3, the “Champagne” aria. Fragments of the

aria begin to appear, still in combination with the upward and downward scales, and eventually lead to a Presto in which the whole aria makes a brilliant appearance (examples 9a and b).

ex. 9a. Mozart’s Don Giovanni, “Champagne aria”

ex. 9b. Liszt’s Presto

The tempo of this finale begins presto, increases to prestissimo, and ends in an andante, a reminiscence of the mood of the introduction. Liszt utilizes a wide range of
dynamics in the finale of the “Champagne” aria, building from mp to ff, and fff. The seven pages of octave passages are sure to exhaust the unfortunate pianist who does not carefully plan the progression of dynamics. In the middle section Liszt modulates further afield than Mozart did, and reminders of Don Giovanni’s ultimate fate are heard in the reappearance of the Commendatore’s scales and a final reference to his “Di ridere finirai.”

Liszt abridged the entire story, preserving the three principal dramatic elements of Mozart’s opera: justice or retribution, seduction, and carefree enjoyment. The motive of retribution opens the paraphrase, followed by Don Giovanni’s seduction duet with Zerlina in which much of Mozart’s original is omitted. In the finale, Don Giovanni’s carefree enjoyment and contempt for authority (the “Champagne” aria) are interrupted, as in the opera, by the sudden appearance of the Commendatore, who will drag Don Giovanni off to Hell. Mozart’s Don Giovanni is a synthesis of comedy and tragedy. Liszt preserved the balance between these dramatic forces in acknowledgement of Mozart’s musical and theatrical genius. At the same time, however, he asserted a keyboard style filled with innovative technical challenges and surprising pianistic effects. He wrapped these in an ingeniously condensed reconstruction of the operatic material and transferred the essence of the vocal and orchestral writing into a viable texture for the piano.
The paraphrase *Valse de l’opera “Faust” de Charles Gounod* was published in 1861 and must, therefore, have been written soon after the first production of *Faust* in Paris in 1859. The *Valse de l’opera “Faust” de Charles Gounod* is based on the waltz tune and duet that end Act 2, in the course of which *Faust* meets Marguerite for the first time and offers his arm to conduct her through the crowd. She refuses, but clearly is not wholly displeased with his attentions. In contrast to the *Don Juan*, Liszt did not try to set the entire plot from Gounod’s *Faust*. He extracted material from only two sections of Gounod’s work, a waltz tune and a duet. However, by considerably extending the harmonic and atmospheric content of Gounod’s music, Liszt has transformed this somewhat trivial piece into something entirely different, and as in the Mozart’s *Don Juan*, Liszt succeeds in revealing some overriding dramatic themes and characterizations in spite of the severe abridgement of musical material.

Liszt prefaces the waltz tune with a rumbling introduction that sets up a most diabolic atmosphere and adds chromatic passages with contrasting dynamics (examples 10a and b)
ex. 1a. Liszt’s introduction

ex. 1b. Gounod’s introduction
The *Un poco meno vivace* with the waltz tune is based on the Waltz and Chorus from Act II. (examples 11a and b). It begins loudly and repeats the tune one octave higher but this time softly.

![Liszt's Waltz](image1)

ex. 11a. Liszt's Waltz

![Gounod's Waltz](image2)

ex. 11b. Gounod's Waltz
The melody starts in the violins and then flutes are added. Liszt transfers the register of flutes and violins into the higher range of the piano for brilliant sound (examples 12a and b).

After the second, quieter waltz theme, which passes through a number of different keys, comes the central Andantino section, the passage in which Faust accosts Marguerite. Liszt extends this by adding a whole new section based on the love duet between Faust and Marguerite from Act 3, "O nuit d'amour:" this is a passage of most ravishing beauty (examples 13a and b).
ex. 13a. Gounod's "O nuit d'amour"

ex. 13b. Liszt's *Andantino*
After a short cadenza the waltz returns, quietly at first, but soon returning to the spirit of the introduction. At this time, the waltz tune comes back with *glissandi* in the right hand adding sparkle and brilliance to the musical impression (ex. 14). It is a magic, perhaps supernatural that Liszt weaves into this musical fabric. The virtuosity is a perfect analogy to the supernatural.

![ex. 14. Waltz tune with glissando](image1)

The last section ends prestissimo with a barrage of low and high registered chords. Liszt adds more chords to reinforce the diabolic atmosphere (example 15a and b). The tempo increases more and more and the waltz ends in a wild and orgastic manner.

![ex. 15a. Liszt's ending](image2)
ex. 15b. Gounod's ending
CHAPTER III: IMPORTANCE OF OPERATIC PARAPHRASES IN THE HISTORY OF KEYBOARD MUSIC

Innovations in Notation

Liszt was enthusiastic about the possibilities of an eight-octave keyboard and in his open letter to Pictet of 1837 he spoke of pianos with a pedal manual for lower bass-notes and envisaged the natural evolution of pianos with two or three keyboards. Historically the most successful double-keyboard piano is the Moor-Duplex, introduced in 1921 by Liszt's Hungarian pupil Emanuel Moor (1863-1931). Liszt possessed his own elaborate instrument that consisted of three keyboard manuals, sixteen registers and pedal-board, delivered at Weimar in 1854. It was put into storage when he left the Altenburg, and Liszt missed it so much that he had a smaller version built for his use in Rome and later in Budapest. These unusual instruments may account for his experiments in multi-stave notation.

Because his compositions frequently arose from his improvisations, his notation occasionally assumes a spontaneous character. It must sometimes have been a problem for him to find a form of notation that perfectly matched his free-ranging creations. Liszt frequently unfolded his keyboard music on three or four staves in order to avoid overcrowding and to make his intentions clearer, or to offer ossias (ex. 16a and b).
By contrast, Liszt could unfold an entire piece on one stave alone, without ambiguity (see example 17).

During the 1830s and ’40s Liszt developed some unconventional marks of expression, presumably because the ones currently in use were not subtle enough for his needs. Thus a single straight line over a group of notes (——) indicated a ritenuto. An oblong box (——) indicated an accelerando. Another symbol was the double line with open ends (——), which stood for an agogic accent (ex. 18a)
Liszt’s operatic paraphrases are pivotal in the history of keyboard notation. The notation is in itself an innovation, appearing in different shades of typeface, large and small, so that the player is immediately aware of the composer’s conception of the balance between voices. The 6/8 section of the duet *La ci darem* in *Don Juan* and the quartet section in the *Rigoletto* fantasy are good examples of this notation (examples 19a and b).

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This notation of ornaments is commonplace nowadays; in Liszt’s day it was new. A perennial problem of transferring orchestral texture to a piano texture is the clear separation of melody and accompaniment. Liszt’s solution was to print his notation in two different shapes (ex. 19a). Liszt’s solution to this dilemma proved to be an important milestone in the history of keyboard notation.\(^\text{26}\)

Unlike his contemporaries, Liszt was interested in the use of the soft pedal as an

expressive device. Liszt uses the soft pedal to create certain moods of colorful sound impressions. In the early paraphrase of Auber’s La Fiancée, Liszt indicates that both pedals are to be used simultaneously (Deux Pédales) (ex. 20). This pedal marking was without precedent.

ex. 20. Liszt’s paraphrase on Auber’s La Fiancée

These devices, many of which are commonplace to today’s pianists, serve to show us the extent of the composer’s aural imagination as well as clarifying the text on the page.

Performance Perspectives

Piano Textures

Liszt made extensive use of the extremes, high and low, of the keyboard, to emulate an orchestral effect. He wished his players to have an orchestrally-attuned imagination. In Don Juan Liszt transcribes Mozart’s scales in high and low alternating registration to reinforce the drama while Mozart places them consistently in the middle register. Liszt reflects this orchestral registration with more variety of timbres than

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27 Ibid., p. 312.
Mozart does (examples 21a and b).

ex. 21a. Liszt’s Don Juan

ex. 21b. Mozart’s Don Giovanni

Liszt places the baritone voice of Don Giovanni in the left hand and the soprano of Zerlina in the right hand, thus condensing an operatic score into a viable piano texture in which melody and accompaniment are clearly separated. Liszt also used registration to imitate voices (ex. 22).
Liszt puts the violin scales into a higher range in *Valse de l'opéra “Faust” de Charles Gounod*. He uses the extended range of the piano as much as possible for bright sound (ex. 23).

In these examples, one can see how Liszt’s compositional techniques, coupled with his innovations in technical writing for the piano, served the dual purpose of capturing the larger-than-life drama of operas as well as capitalizing the spirit of virtuosity which audiences of the time craved.

**Technical Difficulties**

Liszt’s innovative approach to the piano is significant in *Reminiscences de Don Juan*. Liszt used technical devices such as blocked octaves, arpeggios with added intervals, wide leaps, staggered octaves with chords, and trills and tremolos over octaves. Use of interlocking hands was a favorite device and famously exploited in the technique
known as ‘Liszt octaves’: double octaves played with alternating hands. The possibilities of octave playing are extended in Reminiscences de Don Juan where Blocked octaves are used effectively. (ex. 24).

![Ex. 24. Don Juan](image)

The arpeggio with added intervals is adopted on of Liszt’s standard procedure. Liszt repeats the arpeggio with chords in each octave thus avoiding a thumb crossing (see example 25).

![Ex. 25. Don Juan](image)

The technical writing of wide leaps is one of Liszt’s common features. Leaps were a particular specialty, and Liszt himself enjoyed taking risks. The interval range is extreme in Reminiscences de Don Juan (ex. 26)

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Staggered octaves with chords, and trills and tremolos with extensions, which are over octaves, are other characteristic Lisztian effects (ex. 27).

Liszt develops Mozart's diatonic scales into chromatic scale-figures. Liszt uses the chromatic scale-figures in octaves to reinforce the drama, and even doubles these in thirds, which is an addition to Mozart's score. These chromatic thirds pose considerable technical difficulty for the performer (ex. 28).
Liszt did not conceive of a pianist’s hands as consisting of two parts of five fingers each, but as one unit of ten fingers. In his youth Carl Czerny had installed into him the doctrine of finger equalization. But Liszt far outstripped his old mentor in the new application of this philosophy. The interchangeability of any finger with any other became an ideal towards which he constantly strove. In *Valse de l’opéra “Faust” de Charles Gounod*, Liszt distributed a melody and accompaniment from the waltz into both hands as one sparkling unit (ex. 29).

![Musical Example 29](image)

*Ex. 29. Valse de l’opéra “Faust” de Charles Gounod*

Even this relatively simple looking section requires fleetness coupled with control. This sort of pyrotechnical writing has contributed to the disappearance of these works from the mainstream repertoire of the 20th century. Only a few determined survivors of the 19th century continued to perform these unbelievably challenging works, filled with technical pitfalls.
CONCLUSION

The operatic fantasy fell into disrepute in the early 20th century, but in the first half of the nineteenth century every pianist-composer was expected to have a number of them in his repertoire, normally based on themes from the most popular operas of the day.

Franz Liszt remains well-known as a virtuoso pianist, composer, author, and teacher. While his other piano works have been played often, his operatic paraphrases did not remain in the repertoire. Alan Walker writes:

After his death, the operatic paraphrases fell into neglect for fifty years. There were good historical reasons for this. One of the values of the early twentieth century was an emphasis on "authenticity." Musicologists encouraged presentation and preservation of composer's original thought. The objection to the paraphrase was that it did not preserve the "original thought."31

However, operatic paraphrases have made a resurgence and have been included in major competitions such as Liszt International Competition in Hungary. Today it is less necessary to defend the art of transcription, and arrangements are again part of the accepted repertoire. Watson writes:

In the first half of the twentieth century the prevailing tendency to condemn them was a symptom of the new age of musicological purism. It became the fashion to see the legacy of the past as sacred, which ought not to be re-thought and shifted by latter-day standards. The purist is of course right in claming that the Urtext is to be preferred to editorial excrescence. To an extent the stylistic range and historical breadth of Liszt's transcriptions were designed to provide pianists and audiences of his day with music they would otherwise have

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32 Ibid.
had rare opportunities to study or hear.

His own century was the great age of arrangement and it must be admitted that in the name of 'transcription' some of the worst crimes of musical history were committed.33

Indeed, nevertheless, music history is replete with serious examples of paraphrases. in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries arrangements of vocal music for lute, viols or keyboard instruments were standard. Caccini's solo madrigal *Amarilli, mia bella*, published in Florence in 1602. was the subject of transcription by Peter Philips for virginals that appeared in London in 1603. Some more recent famous historical precedents for paraphrases include Mozart. and Bach with his radical re-workings of Vivaldi and other old Italian masters. Beethoven turned his own Violin Concerto into a Piano Concerto. Brahms composed a left-hand piano version of Bach's D minor solo violin Chaconne. and Busoni produced the version for both hands. This illustrates a view of old and new music belonging to a continuum of which Liszt is very much a part.

Liszt created the best of his operatic paraphrases with artistic insight, creativity and integrity. Liszt's operatic paraphrases provide technical challenges, coloristic study, exploration of bel canto phrasing and dramatic possibilities. and a means whereby Performers can explore the piano's full capabilities. In short this is worthy repertoire well worth the time and effort required for its mastery. repertoire which yields rich rewards.

EDITIONS


REFERENCES


