



H-1064 Budapest, Vörösmarty u. 35. • Tel./Fax: (36-1) 342 1573 • Bank: 11706016-20441966
 E-mail: lisztferenc tarsasag@gmail.com • Website: <http://www.liszt society.hu/>

2022. augusztus

NR. 48

August 2022

Liszt magyar szemmel * The Hungarian View of Liszt

A Magyar Liszt Ferenc Társaság információs kiadványa
 Newsletter of the Hungarian Liszt Society

Tartalom

Content

Találkozások Liszt Ferencsel 2022. március 30. NAGYBŐJT – HÚSVÉT (Kaczmarczyk Adrienne)	2	Encounters with Ferenc Liszt March 30th 2022 LENT – EASTER (Adrienne Kaczmarczyk)	7
Fejezetek a Liszt Ferenc Társaság életéből 1986. II. rész (Rozsnyay Judit)	13	Chapters from the life of the Liszt Ferenc Society 1986. Part Two (Judit Rozsnyay)	15
Albert Brussee: The Mazeppa Music of Franz Liszt: Genesis, Analysis and Reception (Domokos Zsuzsanna)	18	Albert Brussee: The Mazeppa Music of Franz Liszt: Genesis, Analysis and Reception (Zsuzsanna Domokos)	20
Liszt Ferenc műveinek ismeretlen változatai a budapesti Liszt Múzeum archívumából (Gombos László)	23	Unknown versions of Ferenc Liszt's works from the archives of the Liszt Museum in Budapest (László Gombos)	26
42. Liszt Ferenc Nemzetközi Lemezdíj	29	42nd Franz Liszt International Grand Prix du Disque	31

UNKNOWN VERSIONS OF FERENC LISZT'S WORKS FROM THE ARCHIVES OF THE LISZT MUSEUM IN BUDAPEST

(László Gombos)

Recently, the music historian Mária Eckhardt gave me an interesting publication that I had already heard of but had not yet encountered in practice. It doesn't seem ordinary in any way. It is not even easy to define its genre: an elegant book with a DVD supplement, a filmed recording of musical performances with a detailed, multilingual accompanying study also richly illustrated with pictures, or even more a representative presentation of an institution in a complex, audiovisual form.¹ These three elements are all present at the same time, and it is, in fact, up to the user to decide which is the most important for him/her. The focus is on unknown versions of Ferenc Liszt's works, which are featured in film footages, their manuscript and printed sources are presented in the majority of the pictures, they are the subject of the accompanying studies, and biographies of their performers are included in the last major chapter.

The other protagonist is the Music Academy, the Liszt Ferenc University of Music, which played a more important role than usual in the production of this publication. The publisher is the Music Academy itself, the performers are its teachers and former students, and the recordings were made by the Music Academy's AVISO studio between 2011 and 2016. The venue, in keeping with the style, is the chamber hall of the Old Music Academy, where Liszt performed on several occasions in the last years of his life, and which was next door to his last home in Budapest. The Liszt Museum currently preserves some of the master's former instruments, including the unique piano harmonium (*piano-orgue*) that can be heard and seen on the recording. Even the rare music scores that contain the compositions are the property of the Academy of Music, and then there is the music historian-philologist work and expertise that is essential to their acquisition, processing and interpretation. All the sources belong to the archives of the Liszt Museum, and their textual presentation and analysis are a credit to Zsuzsanna Domokos, the museum's director.

The Academy of Music and the museum that is part of the Academy intended the book, combined with the DVD, to be truly representative, and the design demonstrates it: 131 pages on art paper, bound and with a hard cover, in four languages, with titles or headings in gold for the Hungarian version, green for English, red for German and blue for French. Not in a brash manner, of course, but discreetly and tastefully. The professional and visual jewels of the publication are the many pictures, in addition to the photographs of the Liszt salon and the *piano-orgue* in the museum, also the dozen and a half excellently selected facsimiles of sheet music. Liszt enthusiasts will be impassioned by the Master's recognisable entries in the manuscripts, as well as by Liszt's letter on the subject, published in full on pages 24–25.

The disc features four Liszt compositions in excellent performances. They are not pieces that have been played and recorded thousands of times, but true rarities, versions essentially unknown to the general public. All four are transcriptions, either by Liszt himself or revised and approved by him. The longest of them is the piano transcription for two hands of the *Faust Symphony*, seventy minutes in length, occupying two-thirds of the DVD. It was made by one of Liszt's favourite pupils, who died at a young age, Carl Tausig (1841–1871) – in 1857, when he was only 16 years old. Performing it is a challenging task, bordering on the impossible. It is no coincidence that István Lajkó won the Liszt Society's *Grand Prix du Disque* for his recording for Hungaroton in April 2016. And six months later, in December, he recorded the composition again, this time in a filmed version. The latter can be seen on the DVD discussed here.

In the case of such works, the question always arises as to whether a single piano can render the sound of the orchestra, whether it can create the same experience as the large ensemble in the concert hall. The answer is a resounding “no”. But this does not mean that Liszt and his colleagues did their work in vain. They made precious music accessible and enjoyable in places where no symphony orchestra was available, and due to their mission compositions by Beethoven, Berlioz, Mendelssohn, Verdi, Wagner, and others (including Liszt) could come closer to the public. In addition to these practical results, new works were also created: self-contained piano pieces that use melodies and harmonies from the original works but which are only precursors to new compositions.

Of the two extremes, the piano extract and the independent piano composition, the transcription of the *Faust Symphony* is closer to the latter, and István Lajkó makes us indeed believe this at several points of the work. Tausig often turned the music into pianistically instrumental material exactly at the most complicated and dense points, and in Lajkó's performance we can almost forget that we already knew the symphony in another way, and vice versa: sometimes we forget the piano and hear the orchestra directly, while we see two hands playing the keys. This experience alone makes the recording worth watching again and again.

Liszt: Faust Symphony, 2. Gretchen. Piano transcription by Carl Tausig with Liszt's numerous corrections
(Liszt Ferenc Memorial Museum, Budapest)

The combined effect of the brilliant music, the transcription, the performance and the sound quality lead the listener into a closed world, where the bright, round and harmonious, but also unearthly (hellish and heavenly) scenes are played in a setting that is familiar to us. However, those with strong nerves may like to compare this interpretation with one of its extreme opposites. I'm thinking of the 1978 recording by the former child prodigy Ervin Nyíregyházi, which is available on the Internet. The performance seems to be a literally "horrible" cacophony at some points, the notes sometimes sound only the distant kin of the ones in the score, and the sub-standard sound quality spoils the illusion further. Yet it is as if, from beneath the ruins of the 75-year-old's stirring piano playing, fragments of a 19th century performance style emerge, a style with much more freedom than what we are used to today. Under his hands, the terrible visions of Hieronymus Bosch come to life, and in the sighing melodies we hear the cries for help of Faust and all mankind (perhaps the two minutes from 3'18 are the most interesting²). Of course, the playing of Nyíregyházi cannot be an example to be followed, yet it could teach today's generation a lot.

The next two tracks on the DVD are two transcriptions of the second movement (*Gretchen*) of the *Faust Symphony*. The first is a work by Leopold Alexander Zellner (1823–1894), a Croatian-born musician and composer, while the second is a version by Friedrich Wilhelm Stade (1817–1902), a German organist and conductor. What they have in common is the use of piano and harmonium, the intimate and at the same time somewhat bizarre nature of the two instruments sounding together, which encourages the listener to pay close attention. There is no place at all here for overblown, al fresco surfaces and romantic sound cascades; this is music of particular sensitivity and demands exceptional sophistication from performer and audience alike.

Zellner transcribed the movement for violin, viola, cello, harmonium, piano and harp in early 1858, and Liszt revised the manuscript in red pencil. The strings and the harp play mostly what they would have played in the original score, while the harmonium takes over the woodwind part. In the first bars, the latter sounds deceptively similar to the timbre that Liszt created in the orchestral work. The only shortcoming we notice about the October 2011 recording is that the harmonium was not sufficiently miked, so that, for example, the melody is drowned out by the accompanying counterpoint at the entrance of the viola. All the musicians (Barnabás Kelemen, Gábor Homoki, Dóra Kokas, Balázs Szokolay, Diána Szőke and Andrea Vigh) give an impeccable performance, although the instrumentation and the nature of the instruments mean that only the strings have an opportunity to show their individual excellence.

Stade prepared a transcription of the same movement in 1880, exclusively for the strange and rare doubling of piano and harmonium. The two instruments complement each other wonderfully in the performance of Jenő Jandó and István Lantos! Their alternations follow the rhythm of the original score, and the sound becomes even more interesting when the piano's brightness and jingle combine with the harmonium's more muted but rich colours. As we read in Zsuzsanna Domokos's study, Stade's work also won Liszt's appreciation. "*Your transcription of 'Gretchen' for piano and harmonium is magnificent, entirely as I wished.*" Liszt's appreciation is shown by the fact that he also asked the composer to write a piano version for four hands of the complete *Faust Symphony*.



In the final DVD track, *Jeanne d'Arc bûcher*, the piano and harmonium are played by a single performer, thanks to the combination instrument for which this version of the work was composed. Liszt originally composed it for voice and piano in 1845 to the poem by Alexandre Dumas Sr., then in 1866 (or the previous year at the earliest) he transcribed the accompaniment for the *piano-orgue* he owned. This two-manual instrument, today preserved in the Liszt Museum, had been created by combining a Sébastien Erard-type upright piano and a Jacob Alexandre harmonium, the upper keyboard acting as a piano and the lower one as a harmonium. On this recording Jenő Jandó plays the instrument, while the vocal part is performed by Katalin Halmai with exceptional dramatic flair. Their interpretation would certainly have pleased the composer.

The publication, if it finds a wide audience, will certainly achieve its goal. Its appearance and its professional-artistic values are remarkable (although it should be noted that, in addition to the many excellent contributors, it would have been worthwhile to have employed the services of a reading editor). The Liszt Academy can be proud of its former founding master, the manuscript and sheet music collections of its library and museum, its unique musical instrument, and also its professors and students and the museum director all of whom who interpret the Music Academy's intellectual property in an authentic manner.

NOTES:

1. The most recent term used in English terminology is digibook.
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=edk69hf1ecM>