

“*Ich dirigiere mit Vergnügen...*”
Liszt’s Influence on Richard Strauss –
Strauss Conducts Franz Liszt

Kenneth BIRKIN
Richmond/Wien

On January the 20th 1889, Hans von Bronsart the Weimar Theater Intendant,¹ sent the following lines to Richard Strauss in Munich inviting him to join the staff of the *Hofoper* as second *Kapellmeister*,

Ihre Äusserung, daß Sie in Ihrer dienstlichen Tätigkeit am Münchner Hoftheater keine rechte künstlerische Befriedigung finden, hat mich oft darüber nachdenken lassen, ob es nicht möglich wäre, Sie für Weimar zu gewinnen.²

Strauss was nothing loath and after some ‘sharp’ financial negotiation mailed his acceptance on February the 9th of that same year in the following terms,

Also ich habe mich entschlossen u. nehme mit Freude Ihr Anerbieten an, als Hofkapellmeister nach Weimar zu kommen. Mein besseres Ich hat gesiegt: der Gedanke an eine wahrhaft künstlerische freie Tätigkeit unter Ihrer Leitung hat die Bedenken von materieller Seite niedergerungen.³

Weimar was a tempting proposition for this recent convert to the ‘New German School’. Under Alexander Ritter’s⁴ tutelage in Meiningen and in Munich, forsaking the old Brahmsian allegiance, he had fallen irrevocably under the spell of Richard Wagner and Franz Liszt. Ritter, related by marriage to the former⁵ had come decisively under the latter’s influence in Weimar in the 1850s. Ritter’s veneration for his old Master and his advocacy of the prototypical importance of Liszt’s music for the future of the art proved in the 1880s, at a crucial formative period in his career, equally

¹ Hans Bronsart von Schellendorff (1830–1913): Liszt pupil, pianist and composer. Conductor of *Euterpe* orchestral concerts (Leipzig) from 1860–62. Theater Intendant in Hannover (1867–87) and in Weimar (1887–95).

² Gabrielle Strauss [ed.] *Lieber Collega!* Schneider 1996, p. 120.

³ *Lieber Collega!* op. cit. p. 125. There was an element of ‘gamesmanship’ here on Strauss’s part. That wished for title was never his in Weimar. Eduard Lassen was *Hofkapellmeister*; Strauss’s appointment was as ‘second *Kapellmeister*’.

⁴ Alexander Ritter (1833–1896): conductor of Stettin Opera (1856–58), violinist (Meiningen) under von Bülow (1882–86): composer; friend and counsellor to Richard Strauss.

⁵ Alexander Ritter married Wagner’s niece Franziska in 1854.



F. Liszt

Figure 1. Franz Liszt as Abbé
(silhouette – W. Schulze)



Richard Strauss

Figure 2. Richard Strauss as conductor
(silhouette – K.B.)

decisive for Strauss. Indeed, the Lisztian ‘effect’ was soon to make itself felt in his symphonic works. Weimar, the Goethe/Schiller-Stadt, where Liszt had reigned ex-officio as *Hofkapellmeister* for so many years was, with its cultural resonance, an immensely attractive proposition for the young aspirant for *Zukunftsmusik* honours. Indeed, for the fledgling composer of symphonic tone-poems⁶ the town was a place of pilgrimage, its creative ambience thoroughly – if in the event only theoretically – congenial to a renewal of that Lisztian spirit already patently to the fore in *Don Juan* and *Tod und Verklärung*. The prospect was enticing; the opportunity on offer, irresistible:

Die Aussicht auf eine Tätigkeit in der altrenommierten “Zukunftstadt” Weimar ist zu verlockend für einen jungen musikalischen Fortschrittler (äußerste Linke) ... Ich freue mich ungeheuer auf Weimar und bin selbst sehr glücklich, daß meine bessere künstlerische Einsicht die Oberhand gewonnen hat.⁷

Such enthusiasm is hardly surprising. All the evidence goes to show that Strauss’s Liszt studies were crucial to his musical development. Weimar offered him the opportunity to translate theory into practice. When he took

⁶ By 1889 Strauss had completed *Aus Italien* (1844), *Macbeth* (first version, 1886), *Don Juan* (1888) and *Tod und Verklärung* (1889).

⁷ *Lieber Collega!* op. cit. p. 125.

up his duties in September 1889 the 'Ilm-Athen' repertoire, as he indicated in a letter to his father,⁸ was somewhat staid. Determined to programme as much *avant garde* music as possible, he dosed his audiences with what, in the artistic climate of the time, was strong medicine indeed: Liszt, Wagner, von Bülow and Berlioz – not forgetting, of course, Richard Strauss – with Beethoven and occasional 'spoonfuls' of Mozartian 'sugar' to help it all down. The Liszt 'effect' was already evident in *Aus Italien* (1886) as also in the first version of *Macbeth* (1888) – works dedicated, respectively, to Hans von Bülow and Alexander Ritter. *Don Juan* (1888) and *Tod und Verklärung* (1889) continued the trend, to be followed, 'lapped' as it were, by the *Macbeth* revision which occupied him up to 1890. These Munich Ritter-instigated works bear the structural, instrumental and psychological imprint of the great Hungarian Master's hand: they confirmed Strauss's commitment to programme music and firmly established him as Liszt's successor; as the foremost young *Zukunftsmusik* practitioner of his day.

Between 1886 and 1889 Strauss had been primarily active as a conductor of opera. His concert work had centred around performances of his own music – guest appearances outside Munich – ostensibly the *Symphony in F minor* and later, *Aus Italien*. These single engagements for single works, however, offered him little control over 'supporting' programme items which, by inclination, might well have included music by Liszt. Nevertheless, in a concert in Milan late in 1887, he waved the modernist banner in works by Glinka and Wagner,⁹ following up in the autumn of 1888 with Wagner's early symphony in Dresden. On the Liszt front he heard *Christus*, *Les Préludes* and d'Albert's rendering of the *Don Juan Fantasie* in Munich – '...zu unser aller größter Bewunderung und Entzücken' – while evidence of continued Liszt study is implicit in those regular evenings with Ritter and cronies in Leibenfrost's wine parlour in Munich where opinions were exchanged, and heated argument was the order of the day. Strauss himself tells how after such gatherings he invariably accompanied Ritter home where they made music together. On one such occasion, so he relates, he played Liszt's *Faustsinfonie* on the piano direct from the full score¹⁰ – no isolated occurrence, one can be sure but rather the 'tip' of an explorative 'ice-berg'.

⁸ Willi Schuh [Ed.] *Brief an die Eltern*: 22.10.1989, p.117.

⁹ Concerts on December the 8th and 11th : see Willi Schuh: *Richard Strauss*. Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 133. Glinka's *Kamarinskya* and Wagner's *Meistersinger* Prelude were performed together with Beethoven's *Leonore Nr. 3* Overture, Weber's *Euryanthe* Overture and Strauss's *Symphony in F minor*.

¹⁰ See Schuh: op. cit. p. 130.

Small wonder that in 1889, taking up his post as *großherzoglicher Kapellmeister* with responsibility for the winter subscription concerts, he set out to explore a repertoire daring in the extreme even for post-Lisztian Weimar. From now on, his own works excepted, it was Liszt's music that was to dominate his programmes both at home and abroad. This bold exploration of the Master's *symphonische Dichtungen* betokened admiration and a deep sense of commitment to the music: it constituted a crucially important practical and instructional exercise which was to have a formative influence upon Strauss's own work. His enthusiasm was boundless. On March the 14th 1892, reporting on his recent Gewandhaus concert in Leipzig which had featured *Die Ideale* and *Mazeppa*, he commented,

Ich fühle mich wenigstens mit den sinfonischen Dichtungen so ganz eins und sie entsprechen so ganz meiner Individualität, daß ich wirklich glaube, ohne den großen Meister je gekannt und gehört zu haben, den in seinen Werken liegenden dichterischen Gehalt wenigstens zu 'entsprechendem' (nach Alexander Ritter) Ausdrücke bringen zu können.¹¹

What could be more explicit than that! His dedication to the cause was decisive and unequivocal. He had already daringly replaced Brahms's *Requiem* with Liszt's *Héroïde funèbre* at the Wiesbaden Tonkünstlerversammlung of 1889, going on to complete the concert with Berlioz's *Das Heilands Kindheit*. Now, in Weimar between 1889 and 1894, he conducted *Die Ideale*, *Totentanz*, *Hunnenschlacht*, *Faustsinfonie*, *Les Préludes* (Figure 3), *Ce qu'on entend sur le montagne*, *Orpheus*, *Mazeppa*, *Tasso* and *Festklänge*. Guest appearances outside Weimar included the *E flat major Piano Concerto* (Braunschweig), *Die Ideale*, *Mazeppa* and the Liszt *Wandererfantasie* arrangement (Leipzig), *Mazeppa* again in Hamburg, *Héroïde funèbre* (Leipzig), and a spectacular double bill – the *Dante* and *Faust* Symphonies – also in Leipzig on March the 5th 1894. No one had done so much for Liszt's music since Bülow's heyday in the 1850s and 60s.

Indeed, Liszt's orchestral music had been largely shunned and despised in the great traditional performing centres of Europe during his life-time. It was kept alive, despite his own selfless protestations, by individual pupils: Bülow and Bronsart as pianist/conductors, Leopold Damrosch¹² (who soon disappeared to America) and by pianist/pupils of the order of Sophie Menter

¹¹ Franz Trenner: *R. Strauss – Cosima Wagner Briefwechsel*. Schneider, Tutzing 1978, p. 119.

¹² Leopold Damrosch (1832–1885): violinist/conductor Liszt pupil and Liszt champion – emigrated to America in 1871.

Weimar.

Großherzogl. Hof-Theater.

Montag den 19. Oktober 1891.

Erstes

Abonnement-Concert

unter gefälliger Mitwirkung der Pianistin **Miß Mariel Elliot** aus London.

1) Sinfonie (A-dur) Jos. Haydn.
Allegro, All. viv. — Allegretto — Moderato — Finale. Presto.

2) Ode aus der Oper „Così fan tutte“ W. A. Mozart.
Der Baumstumpfe Gesang.

3) Klavierconcert (B-moll) F. A. Mozart.
Was Meinet Willen.

4) 3 Violen Franz Liszt.
Der Ozean.

5) 3 Sätze aus der dramatischen Sinfonie „Roméo und Juliette“ Charles Gounod.
Roméo allein, das Fest bei Capulet — Verlobung — Die Ehe Nacht.

6) Les Préludes, fünfte Fassung Fr. Liszt.
Nägel von Beethoven.

Preise der Plätze:

Orchestraleloge 1. Rang	3 Mark — 50 Pf.	Besterer-Sperritz	1 Mark 50 Pf.
Orchestraleloge 2. Rang	2 — 50	Besterer-Loge	1 — —
Orchestraleloge 3. Rang	2 — —	Sperritz-Orchestraleloge	1 — —
Orchestraleloge 4. Rang	2 — —	Besterer-Orchestraleloge	— 75 —
Orchestraleloge 5. Rang	2 — —	Orchestraleloge	— 75 —
Orchestraleloge 6. Rang	— — —	Orchestraleloge	— 50 Pf.

Orchestraleloge von 3—4 Mark.
 Die Halle mit 6^u Uhr geöffnet.

Anfang 7 Uhr, Ende 9 Uhr.

Wittich von 21. Monatsstage Abonnement A. Bezeichnung 2. Mitt. der Bezeichnung, zu jedem in einem halben
 von 21. Monatsstage, 21. Monatsstage und 21. Monatsstage in einem halben von 21. Monatsstage, 21. Monatsstage
 Monatsstage (da vollendet) 21. Monatsstage in einem halben von 21. Monatsstage. (Anfang 2^u Uhr, Ende 8^u Uhr.) —
 Monatsstage von 21. Monatsstage. (Anfang 2^u Uhr, Ende 8^u Uhr.) —
 Monatsstage. (Anfang 2^u Uhr, Ende 8^u Uhr.) —
 Monatsstage. (Anfang 2^u Uhr, Ende 8^u Uhr.) —

Figure 3. The first concert of Strauss's third winter Abonnement series as second Kapellmeister in Weimar – the Großherzogliche Hofcapelle with Liszt's *Les Préludes* as grand finale

and, much later, Bernhard Stavenhagen.¹³ The situation was not so very different when Strauss joined the Weimar music staff in 1889 only three years, one remembers, after Liszt's death. Rejection and neglect was still the order of the day, and it was to be some time before the orchestral music became acceptable concert-hall fare in the capital cities of Europe. Strauss, it was, by his determined Liszt championship at the turn of the century, who led the revival of that music; a fact to which his concerts in Weimar, Berlin and, indeed, throughout the Continent, bear outstanding witness.

That obsession with *Zukunftsmusik* in general, and with Liszt's music in particular, was inevitably construed in some quarters as an act of youthful rebellion. Indeed, Strauss's obvious glee at 'establishment' diasapproval of his 1889 Weimar concert proposals hardly absolves him from such a charge.

Ich habe gestern Bronsart meine Konzertprogramme unterbreitet. A-dur-Sinfonie, König Stephan und Leonore 1 von Beethoven, Ideale, Festklänge, Orpheus von Liszt, Symphonie phantastique von Berlioz, Faust-Ouvertüre und Sieg-

¹³ Bernhard Stavenhagen (1862–1914): Liszt pupil pianist/composer and conductor in Weimar (1895), Munich (1901) and Geneva (1907).

fried-Idyll von Wagner, Nirwana von Bülow [...] worüber Bronsart die Hände über den Kopf zusammenschlug.¹⁴

Poor Bronsart! But despite such frivolity, Strauss's engagement with the modernist school was deadly serious; it sprang from a creative need directly relevant to his own work. He was particularly fascinated by Liszt's approach to the problem of structural-dramatic unity – as also by that heady, altogether revelatory and very distinctive Lisztian orchestral sound. His engagement with this music approached the obsessional; indisputably emotional in nature, it was at the same time transparently educational. His performances constituted a learning process of material advantage to his own work. Significantly enough, an enthusiastic appraisal of the *Faustsinfonie* in a letter to Ludwig Thuille¹⁵ immediately after his Weimar performance of November the 17th 1890 (*Figure 4*), pays tribute to the psycho-analytical significance of Liszt's achievement:

Ich habe zwei sehr anstrengende Tage hinter mir, Sonntag *Tannhäuser*; Montag *Faustsinfonie*, zu welchen beiden Siegfried Wagner eigens aus Berlin gekommen war. Er war sehr befriedigt von meinen Aufführungen ... Wirklich sehr schön war die Ausführung der ja über alles herrlichen *Faustsinfonie*, wo mein kleines Orchester wirklich unglaubliches geleistet hat; ich habe meine Sache aber auch sehr gut gemacht und Ihr hättet auch Freude daran gehabt. Bei dem ins Leben der Töne tretenden Lisztschen Werke ist mir so recht anschaulich wieder zum Bewusstsein gekommen, daß Liszt der einzige Sinfoniker ist, der auf Beethoven kommen mußte und auf ihn einen riesigen Fortschritt bedeutet. Alles übrige ist purer Dreck. Und selbst die Mehrsätzigkeit, die er sonst nur im *Dante* angewandt hat, ist hier so notwendig bedingt und etwas so Wesentlich von der Beethovenschen Verschiedenes *Neues!* Die eigentliche dramatische Handlung geht ja erst im Mephisto vor sich und der ist ja auch erst die 'sinfonische Dichtung', die beiden großen Typen des Faust und des Gretchen sind dagegen so complicirt, daß ihre *Darstellung* nebst der dramatischen Entwicklung in einem Satz gar nicht möglich war. Daher als Exposition die beiden größten Stimmungsbilder, die je geschrieben (der *Faust* hat ja allerdings in sich auch eine gewisse Entwicklung) und die eigentliche dramatische Verwicklung im Mephisto. Dabei ist die Verbindung der drei Sätze durch das Andeuten des Mephisto im ersten Satze, das Hereinspielen der Faustnatur ins Gretchen so meisterhaft, daß man vor Bewunderung gar nicht weiß wohin und dabei diese blühende Erfindung, diese Präcision im poetischen musikalischen Ausdruck, diese Sicherheit in der Instrumentation, es hört sich einfach Alles auf. Doch ich schwätze vielleicht vor lauter Begeisterung Unsinn; jedenfalls war's herrlich! Und Ihr hättet dabei gewesen sein sollen! Ich habe eine Energie und Leidenschaft, und einen

¹⁴ Willi Schuh: op. cit. 12.10.1889; p.116.

¹⁵ Ludwig Thuille (1861–1907): composer and professor at Munich Conservatoire. A childhood friend of Richard Strauss.

Weimar.

Großherzogl. Hof-Theater.

Montag den 17. November 1890.

Zweites

Abonnement-Concert.

1) Kupffers-Operntheater Fräulein Sachau.
(Zum ersten Mal)

2) Violoncello E. v. Ketzmann.
Gee. Concertmeister Gahler.

3) Die Allmacht Franz Schütz.
(Mit Krennfelds, Mühlensenders und Köpfflers eingestrichelt von Franz Richter)
Gee. Kammerjäger Wiesner.

4) Faustsinfonie Franz Schütz.
a. Bassl. b. Oboen. c. Klarinetten.
Kunstspiel in beiden Sätzen von Gahler.

Preise der Plätze:

Vorkoncert-Orge 1. Rang	2. Rang	3. Rang	Vorconcert-Orge 1. Rang	2. Rang	3. Rang
..... 2	..... 2	..... 2	..... 1	..... 1	..... 1
..... 50	..... 50	..... 50	..... 75	..... 75	..... 75
..... 2	..... 2	..... 2	..... 1	..... 1	..... 1
..... 50	..... 50	..... 50	..... 75	..... 75	..... 75
..... 2	..... 2	..... 2	..... 1	..... 1	..... 1
..... 50	..... 50	..... 50	..... 75	..... 75	..... 75

Küsterdienst von 8-4 Uhr.

Die Kasse wird 6^{1/2} Uhr geöffnet.

Anfang 7 Uhr, Ende 9 Uhr.

Zweites Abt. (S. 20.) Der Unterhaus-Orchester, Kupffers in vier Aufzügen von Franz Schütz.

Der Text von Fr. v. Krennfeld ist aus der Handschrift.

K. — G. H. — G. H. — G. H.

Figure 4. The second concert of Strauss's second winter Abonnement series featuring Liszt's *Faustsinfonie* with the *Großherzogliche Hofcapelle* in the Weimar *Hoftheater*

Rhythmus entfaltet, daß das Theater wackelte; und dabei habe ich vor lauter Herumfuchteln und Turnen im Mephisto ein Seitenstechen bekommen, ein Seitenstechen, das nicht von schlechten Eltern war; beim ewig Weiblichen verlor sich's wieder.¹⁶

Written under the heady influence of a performance-wise personal 'first' this account demonstrates Strauss's appreciation of the pivotal importance; indeed, of the benchmark significance, of this work. As he was later to remark to the composer Johann Levoslav Bella:¹⁷

Programm-Musik eigentliche Musik! Absolute Musik: ihre Verfertigung mit Hilfe einer gewissen Routine und Handwerkstechnik jedem nur einigermaßen musikalischen Menschen möglich! Erstere: wahre Kunst! Zweite: Kunstfertigkeit! Nun hat ja merkwürdigerweise unsere heutige Musik ihren Ausgangspunkt von No. 11 genommen und ist erst durch Wagner und Liszt vollbewußt ihrer wahren Bestimmung zugeführt worden. Wir heutigen jungen Musiker beginnen daher noch immer mit No. 11 bis wir dahinterkommen, daß dies noch gar nicht Musik ist, sondern 'der präziseste Ausdruck einer musikalischen Idee', die sich

¹⁶ Franz Trenner [Ed.] R. Strauss/L.Thuille: *Briefwechsel*. Hans Schneider 1980, Letter: 19. November 1890, pp. 115–116.

¹⁷ Johann Levoslav Bella (1843–1936): Hungarian composer and conductor.

dann ihre Form selbst schaffen muß, jede neue Idee ihre neue eigene neue Form, die Grundbedingung eines musikalischen Werkes ist.¹⁸

A statement by the 26 year-old Strauss that might well have been representative of a passing phase in his development: this, however, as subsequent events prove, was very far from the case.

From Weimar Strauss moved on to his second term in Munich which lasted from 1894 to 1898. Now, as first *Kapellmeister* and *Hofkapellmeister-in-waiting*, he occupied, apart from his opera-house commitments, a more commanding position in Munich's concert life than heretofore. In the autumn of 1894, for instance, he took over the conductorship of the Munich Academy concerts where, to his annoyance, and despite his modernist leanings, he was increasingly forced to adopt a traditional stance as far as concert programming was concerned. The *Akademie* audience was notoriously conservative in its tastes, and management with an eye on the box-office, upheld the miserly attitude of a fund-administering beurocracy. Thus, in the two Munich seasons that Strauss conducted up to 1896, apart from a few songs, he found opportunity to programme only two Liszt works – both, significantly enough, in the first season; the *Faustsinfonie* in the second concert on November the 30th 1894, and *Die Ideale* in the final concert of March the 22nd 1895. Although this is a low tally in two seasons worth of eight concerts each, he was obviously steering a difficult course against powerful counter-currents. That first season also included works by Schillings, Rubinstein, Gilson, Berlioz, Smetana, Raff, Wagner and his own *Guntram* Vorspiel. The second season was markedly more restrained: of *Zukunftsmusik* practitioners only Berlioz, Smetana, Schillings and Reznicek appeared, although, in a concert series primarily devoted to Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert and Brahms, he did managed to squeeze-in his own *Till Eulenspiegel* and Alexander Ritter's *Sursum Corda*. Even this was too much for his opponents and in the winter of 1896, to his obvious chagrin, 'wegen der zu modernen Programme',¹⁹ he was succeeded by Max Erdmannsdorfer.²⁰

Concurrently with that first *Akademie* season (1894–95), Strauss also conducted in Berlin where, temporarily, as it turned out, he followed Bülow as director of the Philharmonic Orchestra Abonnement series. Here, too, he

¹⁸ Letter to Johann L. Bella: March 13. 1890: quoted in Ernst Krause: *Richard Strauss – Gestalt und Werke*. Piper, Leipzig 1988, revised edition, p. 238.

¹⁹ Willi Schuh [ed.] *Richard Strauss: Betrachtungen und Erinnerungen*. Atlantis, Zürich 1957, p. 215.

²⁰ Roswitha Schlötterer-Traimer: *Richard Strauss und die Musikalische Akademie in München*. An invaluable source of information on Strauss's Munich concert activities.

actively supported Liszt's music. The *Mephisto-Waltz* appeared in the first concert, *Die Ideale* in the third, *Mazeppa* and the *2nd Piano Concerto* in the seventh and in the ninth Rosenthal played the *5th Hungarian Rhapsody*. Once again, however, his programming was too advanced for a public still reeling from von Bülow's untimely death earlier that year. Bülow's reputation and notoriety had always ensured full houses – with his departure from the scene there was a pronounced tendency for the regular Philharmonic public to desert to Weingartner's opera-house series with the *Hofkapelle*. The situation was not helped by the tone of the Press. August Ludwig in the *Neue Berliner Musik-Zeitung* was seldom complimentary, but it was Erich Reinhardt in the influential *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*, whose report, at a decisive moment, probably sealed Strauss's fate.

Das philharmonische Konzert, am 4. d. Mts. [March 4], bot ein trauriges Bild. Es zeigte, wie diejenige künstlerische Stätte an der der herrliche unvergeßliche Bülow mit reiner Hand und hohen, edlen Geistes voll, seines Amtes als Priester der Kunst waltete, nunmehr die Stätte greulicher Verwüstung und der Tummelplatz von Pygmäen geworden ist.²¹

Unsurprisingly, Strauss's concerts continued to be poorly attended, and the point arrived when Hermann Wolff, the 'proprietor' was forced to take action. Strauss, despite his three year contract had to give way to the coming man – Arthur Nikisch.

Fortunately, Strauss was increasingly in demand in the 1890s in concert-halls elsewhere. His reputation as a conductor of international rank was by now, despite his youth, firmly established. These years saw the production of *Till Eulenspiegel* (1895), *Zarathustra* (1896), *Don Quixote* (1897) and *Ein Heldenleben* (1898) – works which continued to proclaim his Lisztian discipleship and which singled him out as the leading 'modernist' composer of his day. His reputation went before: impresarios with an eye on box-office receipts were keen to introduce him to a public who, in turn, were curious about such notoriously contentious music and 'all ears' for the by now famed big Straussian orchestral sound.

Once again, with this unwonted 'personality cult', the opportunity to perform Liszt's music was minimal. Nevertheless the old enthusiasm was still there. Thus, writing to Joseph Dupont,²² about an impending guest

²¹ Erich Reinhardt in *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung* 8. März 1895, p.139. Reinhardt was deputising for Otto Lessmann who usually wrote these reports. On this occasion Lessmann, a strong Strauss supporter, probably found it more diplomatic to delegate responsibility. Nevertheless, the view expressed was widely held and even, in retrospect, later endorsed by Strauss himself.

²² Joseph Dupont (1838–1899): conductor of the orchestra of the *Concert Populaires* in Brussels.

appearance in Brussels in 1896, he enquired, “Soll das Programm nur aus meinen Compositionen bestehn?” – proposing *Aus Italien*, *Don Juan*, *Macbeth* and *Till Eulenspiegel* – with the rider,

doch bin ich ebenso gern bereit, als erste Abteilung eine Sinfonie von Berlioz oder Beethoven, Compositionen von Liszt und Wagner zu dirigiren.²³

In the event Dupont decided for an all-Strauss programme but other ‘outings’ confirm the inclusion of Lisztian works whenever, and wherever, practicable and appropriate. In Wien, in April 1895, for instance, he conducted the *Mephisto Waltz*, in Budapest of that same year *Festklänge* (Figure 5),²⁴ in November 1896 *Mazepa* at a Wagnerverein concert in Potsdam, *Prometheus* in Frankfurt, the *Mephisto Waltz* again in November 1897 in Barcelona and, on November the 15th 1898, *Orpheus* in Prague.²⁵ Such performances bear witness to the continuing importance of Liszt’s music in Strauss’s life.



Figure 5. Concert Zettel advertising Richard Strauss’s Vigadó concert of December the 4th 1895, his first appearance in Budapest. The programme included Liszt’s *Festklänge* together with the Hungarian premiere of *Tod und Verklärung*.

²³ Françoise Vandervorst in *Revue Belge*, XLIV, 1990: *Richard Strauss à Bruxelles (1896–1900)*.

²⁴ That Budapest concert took place on December the 4th 1895: the programme consisted of Beethoven’s 6th (*Pastoral*) Symphony; Strauss’s *Tod und Verklärung* and the *Festklänge* of Franz Liszt.

²⁵ As a typical Strauss *Berliner-Tonkünstlerorchester* programme one might cite that of Monday, November the 3rd 1902 which consisted of Strauss’s *Aus Italien*; Emil Sauer’s *Klavierkonzert Nr. 2* and Liszt’s *Symphonic Poem Hungaria*.

Certainly, one can take him at his word when he hailed Liszt as the most important symphonist since Beethoven, and proclaimed the symphonic poems to be as significant for the future of the art as had been Beethoven's symphonies in their day.

It was undoubtedly Liszt's perception of the complementary nature of form and expression that was so attractive to Strauss. While Liszt's music was perceptibly linked to the classical tradition – the concept of an extra-musical stimulus whose aesthetic and formal design would shape, and in turn be shaped, by the musical structure, was new and revelatory. Musically and intellectually Strauss found the idea tremendously appealing. That alignment of poetic and musical form, that correspondence of expression and design, seemed to propose the ultimate in terms of artistic unity. The germ of the concept – newly taken up by Strauss – appears first in *Aus Italien*. Composed in 1886 and inspired by the Italian holiday of that year, its four movement form, reminiscent of the classical symphony, was already influenced by Ritter's polemic on Liszt and the nature of *Zukunftsmusik*. Interestingly enough, Strauss was soon to move away from mere 'scene painting' to develop a more personal psychological approach. It is, indeed, the individuality, nature and scope of subject-matter, that, on a primary level, distinguishes the Straussian and Lisztian concept. In Strauss's case the generating idea invariably springs directly from his own personal experience. Thus, his third *Tondichtung*, *Tod und Verklärung*, was inspired by his very serious illness of 1892; *Zarathustra* by his speculation on the 'life force' in the wake of a lively and very personal interest in Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. *Heldenleben* also, of course, embodies a process of self-identification traceable in unbroken line through to the personal, family intimacies of the *Sinfonia Domestica* (1903); a 'theme' continued, though rather more subtly, in *Eine Alpensinfonie* of 1915. Those intimate associations are, perhaps, rather less obvious in *Don Juan*, *Till Eulenspiegel* and *Don Quixote*. To some extent these works are exceptions to the rule. But while they draw their primary inspiration more directly than here-to-fore from purely literary sources, they also strongly reflect character traits specific to the composer, and include narrative detail entirely foreign to the Lisztian concept. If in some respects these works are less subjective in nature than their peers, then they arguably stand closer in spirit to the patent objectivity of the Liszt's *oeuvre*.

Conversely, in those towering symphonic creations of Liszt we seldom come across anything quite so personally revealing. Inspiration from litera-

ture and painting – yes indeed; and, naturally, an element of emotional identification, particularly in a ‘nationalistic’ context, was part and parcel of the creative generative process. His approach, however, while highly expressive, is perceptibly more objective than that of Strauss. He invariably selected sources universally considered to be visual or literary ‘signpost’ of European civilisation – Goethe’s *Torquato Tasso*, Schiller’s *Ideale*, Shakespeare and Victor Hugo, for instance. The resulting musical concept is indicative of a high cultural mission – of an epic idealism typical of the noble nature of this remarkable man. The concept is interpretational and translates the artistic/poetic vision into a new creative medium. These works treat of grand, heroic ideas on a grand scale: they are seldom directly revelatory of his personal feelings: here, emotion and expression serve the higher ideal. Liszt is occupied with universality, and speaks a universal message of accepted universal cultural and human significance. The concept was endemic to his way of life as to his art: its expression is directly related to the spirit of emerging German nationality. Thus, Liszt is the least sentimental of composers of the symphonic poems – an aspect of his work that, oddly enough, seemed to appeal Strauss. Perhaps Liszt came nearest to a biographical statement in *Festklänge* which, inspired by his expectedly imminent nuptials, is unsurprisingly, one of the most attractive and engaging orchestral works in the series. There is, however, at least one outstanding exception; *Héroïde funèbre* – a work which, forged in the fire of the French revolution of 1830, was later reworked, in Weimar, between 1850–54.²⁶ There is evidence that this piece was very close to Strauss’s heart – small wonder, for it is a young man’s music – a miracle of construction, rich in emotion and, instrumentally, a *tour de force*. The *Faust* and *Dante* Symphonies, while clearly at one with his concept of cultural interpretation, also seem to occupy a more significantly subjective place in Liszt’s oeuvre: the image of ‘die ewige Weibliche’ an emotive theme for this composer, also hovers suggestively over the *Orpheus* miracle of 1854.

Form and content apart, Strauss’s was also intrigued by Liszt’s unconventional harmonic procedures and, in particular by his very individual style of orchestration. Liszt handled instruments in a thoroughly creative, unprecedentedly expressive and virtuosic manner. His procedures, which owed something to both Berlioz and Wagner, were far removed from the practice

²⁶ *Héroïde funèbre* was revised by Liszt in 1854 and first performed in Breslau on November the 10th 1857 under Leopold Damrosch.

of traditionalists such as Schumann and Brahms. His legendary pianistic skills also lent flair and excitement, inspiring orchestral scoring of comparable brilliance. Together with his contemporaries, Berlioz and Wagner, he completely revolutionised nineteenth century orchestral technique and practice. From now on virtuosic playing ability might be expected from every member of the orchestra. Small wonder that Liszt's music was frowned on in its time. It was difficult to perform even without the problem of free formal structure and new psychological dramaturgy.²⁷ The characteristics of Lisztian sound – a clean palette, clear colours, unison doublings in strings, the individual role given to the percussion and brass instruments, the 'highlighting' of solos, the effective use of harps and his ability to blend all these colours to create an expressive 'canvas' which embodied the essence of a poetic idea – all this was new. Expression was the objective – but expression regulated by a wide historical knowledge and a deep study and understanding of the great masters of the past. For Liszt, too, Beethoven was the turning point and the watershed from which his own art emanated. All this was grist to the Straussian mill. It was this Lisztian path that he was to follow with works that would have a determining influence on the course and development of music in the twentieth century.

In 1898, Strauss shook the dust of Munich off his feet and moved to Berlin as *erster königliche Kapellmeister* at the *Staatsoper*. From now on his time would be circumscribed and his duties legion. There were still concert tours – ostensibly with his recently composed melodrama *Enoch Arden*, as also *Lieder* recitals with his wife Pauline Strauss-de Ahna.²⁸ Outside the opera house he was, of course, chiefly occupied with the composition of his second opera *Feuersnot* which was completed in May 1901 and premiered in Dresden in November of that same year. The occasion was a turning point in his life. With the opera completed, he clearly felt free to develop his interests in other directions. Orchestral concerts had always been important to him. Back in his Weimar post-negotiation days, the contract had nearly foundered on the thorny question of how much concert work he could prise out of Lassen:

²⁷ The Weimar music school was founded in 1872 under Liszt's auspices. With the title *Orchester- und Musikschule*, it aimed at an improvement of orchestral standards. This was the first establishment of its kind in Germany, its first director being Liszt's 'Mitgründer' Carl Müller-Hartung (1834–1908).

²⁸ Pauline de Ahna, Strauss's former pupil. She created the role of *Freihild* in *Guntram* (Weimar 1894). She and Strauss were married in the September of that same year. She often appeared with him on the concert platform always in programmes of Strauss *Lieder* either with orchestra, or accompanied on the keyboard by her husband. Elisabeth, in Liszt's *Die heilige Elisabeth* was one of her regular, as well as one of her favourite, roles.

Wie wichtig für die Gestaltung des Orchestervertrags die Leitung der Concerte für mich ist, das brauche ich Ihnen, hochverehrter Herr Generalintendant, nach obigen Ausführungen wohl nicht zu erklären. Darum muß ich Sie dringend bitten, mich in die Concerte wenigstens bloss mit Lassen, mit dem ich mich, wie ich glaube, sehr gut verstehen werde, teilen zu dürfen.²⁹

Now, in Berlin, in 1901, he took over the recently formed *Berliner Tonkünstler-Orchester*, and instituted a series of regular Abonnement concerts in direct competition to those already established by the *Hofkapelle* under Weingartner and the *Philharmoniker* under Nikisch.

There was logic as well as practical artistic need in his decision. Both Weingartner and Nikisch were operating under restrictive circumstances – serving an ultra-conservatively-minded public, they were forced to programme along strictly traditional lines. Their main fare consisted of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms with ‘accepted’ *Neue-Deutscher* such as Rubinstein; a little something by Raff or Saint-Saëns, here and there and, on one occasion, even a piece by Max von Schillings! Between 1900 and 1903, Weingartner programmed only two Liszt works in his Berlin concerts, *Mazeppa* and the *Faustsinfonie*,³⁰ while Nikisch, who at least conducted good deal of the man no one at this time could completely ignore – Richard Strauss – stuck mainly to the classics with the exception of the *Dante Symphony* in 1903. As a counterbalance, Strauss decided to establish a series of concerts with a truly modern repertoire – he spotted a gap in the market and went for it! The venture was critically well received:

Brächten uns diese Konzerte nur den einen Gewinn, Richard Strauss an ihrer Spitze zu sehen, so hätten wir Veranlassung genug, ihr Gedeihen zu wünschen. Aber sie wollen uns noch etwas andres bringen, und zwar wollen sie mit unseren stark schematisierten Konzert Programmen radikal brechen. Und das ist ein künstlerisches Streben, das aufs höchste zu loben ist. Man studire die Programme Weingartners und Nikischs der ganzen letzten Jahre, und man wird finden, daß es ein enger Kreis von Werthen ist, die mit unfehlbarer Sicherheit immer wiederkehren. ...ich will nur daran erinnern, daß Weingartner seine Sinfonieabende in stereotyper Form mit je einer Sinfonie von Haydn, Mozart und Beethoven zu beginnen pflegt, daß er seines Publikums Sehnsucht nach Beethovenischer Musik gar zu bereitwillig zu stillen geneigt ist, und daß Nikisch keinen Winter verstreichen läßt ohne etwa ein Dutzend seiner bewährten Repertoirenummern aufs neue vorzuführen. [...] Hoffentlich wird es Richard Strauss nicht bei dem Anfange bewenden lassen, an der Nachfolgerschaft seiner Kollegen

²⁹ *Lieber Collega!* op. cit. p.129.

³⁰ Although in fairness it must be admitted that Weingartner’s later programmes with the Munich Kaim orchestra were more adventurous – even if his subsequent tours were, as Strauss pointed out, very staid as far as repertoire was concerned.

<p style="text-align: center;">Programm-Uebersicht der Modernen Concerte. Concert-Saison 1903/04.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I. Concert Montag, den 6. Oktober 1903.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PROGRAMM:</p> <p>Sinfonie C-moll, No. 1 Anton Bruckner „Friedenszählung“ aus „Guntram“ Richard Strauss Ein Zwiesgespräch, für Orchester Max Schillings Monolog aus der Oper: „Der faule Hans“ Alexander Ritter Festklänge, sinfonische Dichtung Franz Liszt. Solist: Einar Forchhammer.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">II. Concert Montag, den 3. November 1903.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PROGRAMM:</p> <p>Héroïde funèbre, sinfonische Dichtung Franz Liszt II. Concert C-moll für Clavier Emil Sauer „Aus Italien“, sinfonische Fantasie Richard Strauss Solist: Emil Sauer.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">III. Concert Montag, den 24. November 1903.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PROGRAMM:</p> <p>„Pan“, sinfonisches Idyll Hermann Bischoff Violin-Concert D-dur Peter Tschaikowsky „Hungaria“, sinfonische Dichtung Franz Liszt Adagio aus dem Es-dur Concert, Sarabande, Double, Gavotte J. S. Bach Joyeuse Marche Emanuel Chabrier Solist: Willy Burmester.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">IV. Concert Montag, den 19. Januar 1904</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PROGRAMM:</p> <p>„Hamlet“, sinfonische Dichtung Franz Liszt Anakreons Grab Hugo Wolff Bitte Klaus Pringsheim Hymnus Richard Strauss „Irish Rapsody No. 1“ Villiers Stanford „Aus unserer Zeit“, sinfonische Fantasie Gustav Brecher Heimliche Aufforderung } Lieder Richard Strauss Drei Wanderer Hans Hermann Tod und Verklärung Richard Strauss Solist: Hans Schütz.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">V. Concert Montag, den 16. Februar 1904.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PROGRAMM:</p> <p>„Tabor“, sinfonische Dichtung Friedr. Smetana Sinfonie No. 3, C-dur (heroizinte) Hans Huber Concert G-dur, für Clavier Peter Tschaikowsky „Hunnenschlacht“, sinfonische Dichtung Franz Liszt Solistin: Sofie Menter.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">VI. Concert Dienstag, den 7. April 1904.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PROGRAMM:</p> <p>Feierlicher Marsch Schilling-Ziemssen Violin-Concert Philip Rüfer „Waldwanderung“, Stimmungsbild Leo Blech Lethe } Orchestergesänge Schirach Das Thal } Richard Strauss „Die Ideale“, sinfonische Dichtung Franz Liszt Solisten: Paul Knüpfer, Alfred Wittenberg.</p>
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Figure 6. A programme *Vorschau* of Strauss's second and last series of *Berliner Tonkünstler-Orchester*, 'Modern Concerts'. Each concert, as in the previous season included a Liszt symphonic poem. The date (1903/04) is incorrect, it should read 1902/03

wird es nicht fehlen. Möge er das Verdienst den Stein ins Rollen gebracht zu haben, bewußt und energisch an sich reißen.³¹

Sadly, however, Strauss reckoned without the Berlin public. Despite such critical advocacy, it was hard in that city to find a permanent audience for *avant garde* music. Thus, these concerts in the Kroll Theatre, the established venue for Strauss and his band were, increasingly, as time went on, only sparsely attended.

Strauss's Kroll 'modern' concerts ran from October 1901 until April 1903 – two seasons of six concerts each. At the outset Strauss made known, and stated publicly in the Press, his intention to include the entire set of Liszt symphonic poems during the course of the series (Figure 6). He was as good as his word. His programmes included works by Sgambati, Bruckner, d'Indy, Hausegger, Mahler, Rösch, Elgar, Thuille, Blech, Nietzel, Bruneau, Pfitzner, Schillings, Ritter, Reznicek, Sauer, Bischoff, Villiers Stanford, Brecher, Smetana, Rüfer and, of course Richard Strauss. As advertised, each concert featured a

³¹ Max Marschalk in *Die Vossische Zeitung*—Berlin 23.10.1901.

Industrie-Halle.
Donnerstag den 5. und Freitag den 6. März
 um 7 Uhr abends:
Zwei Gastspiel-Konzerte
 des
Berliner
Tonkünstler-Orchesters
 Dirigent: Komponist
Richard Strauss.

Programm:

Donnerstag den 5. März 1903 I. Gastspiel.
Anton Bruckner: Sinfonie Nr. 3, D-moll.
Richard Wagner: Vorspiel zu „Tristan und Isolde“.
Franz Liszt: „Tasso“, Lamento et Trionfo. Sinfonische Dichtung.
Richard Strauss: „Don Juan“. Sinfonische Dichtung (nach Nikolaus Lenau), op. 20.

Freitag den 6. März 1903 II. Gastspiel.
Richard Strauss: „Aus Italien“, sinfonische Phantasie.
Alfred Bruneau: Extra-Acte aus „Messidor“.
Richard Wagner: „Meistersinger“-Vorspiel.
Richard Strauss: Liebesscene aus „Feuersnot“.
 „ „ „Tod und Verklärung“. Tongedicht.

Preise der Plätze für einen Abend: Logensitze 8 und 8 K., Cerclesitze 8 und 7 K., Sperrsitze 6, 5, 4 und 3 K., Stehplatz 2 K. — **Programmbuch** für beide Abende Preis 1 K. 469A

Marten-Ausgabe in der k. u. k. Hof-Kunst- und Musikalienhandlung des Herrn **Carl Tendler**, Graz, Herrngasse Nr. 7.

Figure 7. An announcement from the Graz newspaper *Tagespost* [*Morgenblatt*] the 4th March 1903 advertising two of Strauss's *Berliner Tonkünstler-Orchester* tour concerts of 1903. There is a confusion of dates here, the orchestra played on March the 5th and 6th, not on the 3rd and 6th. As usual Strauss features a Liszt work – on this occasion, *Tasso*.

Liszt symphonic poem. Commencing on October the 21st 1901 with *Ce qu'on entend sur le montagne* the series proceeded in order of composition: *Tasso* (18.11.1901), *Les préludes* (16.2.1901), *Orpheus* (21.1.1902), *Prometheus* (10.2.1902), *Mazeppa* (10.3.1902), *Festklänge* (6.10.1902), *Héroïde Funèbre* (3.11.1902), *Hungaria* (24.11.02), *Hamlet* (19.1.1903), *Hunnenschlacht* (16.2.1903) and finishing on April the 7th 1903 with *Die Ideale*.³² During the course of that period of intense performing activity Strauss also took the orchestra on an extensive tour of four European countries, Germany, Switzerland, France and Italy. Those concerts embraced some twenty-eight city venues and, unsurprisingly, once again Liszt's music was to the fore, featuring prominently in the orchestra's programme itinerary (*Figures 7, 8*).

The facts speak for themselves. Strauss's admiration for Liszt's music and its seminal impact upon his own work is beyond doubt. Aesthetic appreciation apart, it was the intellectuality of these Lisztian works that appealed

³² There is no record of Strauss ever performing Liszt's last Tone poem *Von der Wiege bis zum Grabe*. It was written during the period 1881–1882 in Rome and, indeed, Liszt himself never heard it performed. It is not certain that the score and parts would have been available to Strauss at this time, but it is also possible that since it did not belong to the great Weimar series Strauss may automatically have discounted it on stylistic grounds.

© Concert-Direction Albert Gutmann. ©

Mittwoch, den 4. März 1903
abends halb 8 Uhr

im grossen Musikvereins-Saale:

Drittes (letztes)
Philharmonisches Concert

Orchester:
Das Berliner Tonkünstler-Orchester

Dirigent:
RICHARD STRAUSS.

== PROGRAMM: ==

Beethoven Symphonie Nr. 3, Es-dur, »Eroica«.

Liszt »Tasso«, Symphonische Dichtung.
Lamento e Trionfo.

Alfred Bruneau Extracte aus »Messidor«.
(Neu. I. Aufführung.)

Richard Strauss »Aus Italien«, Symphonische Phantasie.
(Neu. I. Aufführung.)

Karten zu fl. 5.—, 4.—, 3.—, 2.— und 1.— in
GUTMANN'S k. u. k. Hof-Musikalienhandlung (Hofopernhaus)
und Clavier-Etablissement, I., Himmelpfortgasse 27.

Weitere Concert-Ankündigungen der Concert-Direction Albert Gutmann
befinden sich anschliessend an den Text der Analysen dieses Programm-büchchens.

Figure 8. A programme announcement for the *Berliner Tonkünstler-Orchester* tour appearance in Vienna in the *Musikvereinsaal* on March the 4th 1903

to this most intellectual of turn-of-the-century composers. His devotion to the Lisztian cause is transparent and was enduring: witness his tireless and enabling activities on behalf of the Liszt *Gesamtausgabe* as *Vorsitzender* of the *Allgemeine Deutsche Musik-Verein*.³³ His involvement with the music went far beyond a youthful enthusiasm for something new – it struck a fundamental chord in his being: its significance remained paramount throughout the course of his long career. Conductors such as Weingartner, Nikisch and Mottl ostensibly in Munich and Leipzig continued to make a limited contribution in the Liszt field, from time to time including Liszt works in their programmes. Fleeting birthday homage, usually in the shape of *Die heilige Elisabeth*,³⁴ was also regularly paid to the Master and, of course, his music featured prominently in the ‘once a year’ gatherings of his foundation, the *Allgemeine Deutsche Musik-Verein*. Other ‘occasional’ performances were initiated by various branches of the 1887-formed *Franz Liszt-Gesell-*

³³ Strauss was *Vorsitzender* of the *Allgemeine Deutsche Musik-Verein* from 1901–09.

³⁴ The *Elisabeth* of *Die heilige Elisabeth* was one of Pauline de Ahna's, Strauss's wife's, favourite roles. He presented her a copy of the score in 1892 inscribed – ‘To his kind and self-less Samaritan, this beautiful Gospel of pure loving kindness is dedicated in sincerely grateful memory of 17–18 June 1892’. It was a work Strauss knew well. In April 1892 – as he admits in a letter to Cosima Wagner – he improvised upon themes from the work on the organ of the Elisabeth-Kapelle in Wartburg. His comment to Cosima: ‘So wenig Kunstfertigkeit und so viel Poesie, so wenig Kontrapunkt und so viel Musik!’

schaft but, duty done, these Lisztian ‘time-servers’ reverted, with a sigh of relief, to more comfortable, audience friendly, musical fare.

It is apparent that in those early years of the twentieth century the jury was ‘still out’ as far as Liszt’s music was concerned. As Max Marschalk pointed out after Strauss’s first *Berliner Tonkünstler* concert in 1901:

Die Akten über Liszt sind noch lange nicht geschlossen. Es besteht die merkwürdige Thatsache, daß er einerseits rückhaltlos und dauernd abgelehnt, andererseits als der Messias einer neuen Kunst angebetet wird. Da kann nur der Wandel der Zeiten Klärung bringen.³⁵

Strauss, however, was in no doubt! He alone amongst his contemporaries came down unequivocally on the side of the ‘defendant’; he, it was, who with an enthusiasm born of conviction, kept Liszt’s orchestral works in the public domain by making them the focal point of his permanent repertoire. One particularly remembers those complete cycles of the Master’s orchestral music between 1889 and 1937 – a period spanning the bulk of his professional conducting career. He also directed the *Graner Messe* in Regensburg in 1904, and included *Mazeppa* and the *Mephisto Waltz* when guesting with the Munich Kaim Orchestra in 1914 and 1932 respectively. It was the concert-hall exposure Strauss gave to Liszt’s music at the turn of the century that was instrumental in raising the Lisztian profile in the years up to the outbreak of World War One.³⁶ The cultural implications, both social and ‘political’ of that catastrophe were far-reaching – so much irretrievable ‘musical capital’ was lost. After 1918, with the advent of the New Viennese School, the gathering impact of French and Russian music dominated by Debussy and Stravinsky, Liszt performances dwindled. Nothing daunted, in his Munich *Jubiläumskonzerte* of 1936/37, Strauss yet again set out his stall for the Weimar Master. In a regular series of eight concerts his programmes included, five of the symphonic poems: *Mazeppa*, *Les Préludes*, *Bergsymphonie*, *Orpheus*, *Festklänge*, *Die Ideale* and the *Faustsinfonie*. The final concert, on May the 8th 1937, was devoted to a performance of Beethoven’s 9th, the Choral Symphony – a complimentary gesture of which Liszt would have thoroughly approved.

With the completion of *Die Ideale* – and leaving aside the much later ‘Strauss unperformed’ *Von der Wiege bis zum Grabe*, Liszt reached a tally of twelve orchestral symphonic Poems. Strauss produced ten up to the *Alpen-*

³⁵ Max Marschalk in *Die Vossische Zeitung* op. cit., 23. 10. 1901.

³⁶ During this period Liszt’s music began to feature more regularly in concerts across Germany. The symphonic works most often performed being *Mazeppa*, *Die Ideale*, *Les Préludes*, the *Faustsinfonie* and *Die heilige Elisabeth*.

sinfonie of 1915³⁷ – but eleven if one includes the single movement, purely symphonic *Metamorphosen* of 1944/45. One remembers, however, that also in the 1940s, he sketched a further symphonic poem – *Die Donau* – which remained unfinished at his death in 1949.³⁸ The importance he attached to that Liszt cycle is very clear. Is it possible, one wonders, that Strauss felt an artistic, perhaps even a superstitious, need to match Liszt's output in this field? A flight of musicological fancy, perhaps – but, after all, those *symphonische Dichtungen* of the Master were as significant to Strauss, and so he believed to musical history as the 'immortal' Nine. The influence of Beethoven's symphonies have had on generations of composers is indisputable – witness Mahler's anxieties over *Das Lied der Erde*, Bruckner's feverish attempt to match the Titan's output or, nearer our own time, or Vaughan Williams's commitment to an eighth and a ninth Symphony in his declining years. Perhaps Strauss, too, felt it incumbent upon himself to complete an twelfth tone-poem as a tribute to one whose symphonic output he regarded as epoch-making and to which he had paid a life-long, practical tribute both in performance, and in his own symphonic works.

Liszt's music was, undoubtedly, a life-long obsession for Strauss. What exactly did that music mean to him? Certainly it 'sign-posted' the way toward future artistic and creative fulfilment. The cultural intellectuality of the Lisztian concept was also, undoubtedly, a powerfully attraction to Strauss who was arguably the most intellectually and culturally aware musical practitioner of his day. Liszt's work provided a sense of direction: its adventurous nature was confidence-building; it encouraged a pioneering spirit and strengthened the Straussian resolve. Above all, it was that re-evaluation of the symphonic concept – so singularly Franz Liszt's achievement, that provided the necessary impetus for Strauss's own creative work. After Liszt's death re-evaluation and revival of his music was inevitable. To some extent Strauss's *Liszt-Pflege* of the Weimar, Munich and Berlin years followed an, at that time, barely perceptible trend which he was destined to accelerate. The intensity, and practical conviction with which he took up the cause, however, ultimately gave his deeds nothing less than a vogue-setting significance. Thus it was, and with undeniable truth and foresight, that Otto

³⁷ As Willi Schuh points out in *Richard Strauss Jugend und früh Meisterjahre*, op. cit., the *Alpensinfonie* was the first of a planned but, in the event abandoned, triptych (p. 22 [English ed.]). If that plan had matured then Strauss's tally of symphonic poems would have equalled that of Liszt's Weimar cycle by the second decade of the century.

³⁸ The Tondichtung *Die Donau* dates from the 1940s – it only exists in sketch form – a page of which was presented to the 100 year jubilee of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra in 1942.

Lessmann, winding-up Strauss's second *Berliner Tonkünstler-Orchester* Abonnement series, in April 1903, could proclaim:

Den Schluß des Konzertes machte Liszts sinfonische Dichtung *Die Ideale*, die gegen alles Voraufgegangene so klar disponirt in Anlage und Ausführung, so verständlich in seiner Melodik und Harmonik und so durchsichtig in seiner Instrumentation wirkte, daß der tosende Beifall, der der geistvollen Wiedergabe folgte, unwillkürlich die Erinnerung an jene erste Aufführung desselben Werkes wachrief, die Hans v. Bülow vor mehr als 40 Jahren in demselben Saale veranstaltet hatte,³⁹ und bei der es mit Zischen und Pfeifen vom Publikum aufgenommen wurde. Bülow hielt damals seine erste Konzertrede, indem er die Zischer aufforderte, den Saal zu verlassen. Ad. Glasbrenner, der Berliner Humorist, machte in der damaligen *Montagszeitung* die Bemerkung über den Vorfall, Hans von Bülow könne das Publikum wohl mit Liszt aber nicht mit Gewalt aus dem Saal entfernen. Wie sich die Zeiten geändert haben. Heute haben die sinfonischen Dichtungen, die Herr Rich. Strauss in den modernen Konzerten zur Auf-führung gebracht hat, und es waren, im Verlauf des Winters deren sechs – mit Ausnahme des schwachen *Hamlet* – einen wahren Jubel erweckt. Liszts Zeit ist wirklich gekommen und man wird jetzt unbefangener über diesen Meister urtheilen!⁴⁰

It was all down to Strauss! Looking back in old age, remembering the heady days, the trials and successes of those years of youth and early manhood, he finally acknowledges his debt to Liszt, bringing the Master's formative influence upon his *own* work into sharp focus:

Neue Gedanken müssen neue Formen suchen – dieses Lisztsche Grundprinzip seiner sinfonischen Werke, in denen tatsächlich die poetische Idee auch zugleich das formbildende Element war, wurde mir von da ab der Leitfaden für meine eigenen sinfonischen Arbeiten.⁴¹

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Katalin Szerző, director of the Music Collection of the Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, Budapest for permission to reproduce the Strauss concert *Zettel* featured in Fig. 5; to the Thüringisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Weimar for Figs 3, 4; to the Musiksammlung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, Wien for Fig. 8; and to Dr. Hans Günter Klein of the Musikabteilung der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin for Fig. 6. Thanks are also due to Dr. Josef-Horst Lederer for the *Grazer Tagespost* advertisement for Strauss's two BTO tour Graz concerts of March 1903, Fig. 7.

³⁹ Bülow's performance of Liszt's *Die Ideale* took place in the *Singverein* on January 14, 1859. Strauss's final concert of the 1902–1903 Abonnement series was also held in the *Singvereinsaal* although all other Strauss BTO fixtures had taken place in the *Krolltheater*. Whether the change of venue was made with 'historical' *Absicht* or was simply the result of day-to-day practicality is not known.

⁴⁰ Otto Lessmann in *Allgemeine Deutsche Musik-Zeitung*; Nr. 16, 17. 4. 1903, p. 281.

⁴¹ Willi Schuh: *Richard Strauss: Betrachtungen und Erinnerungen*. Atlantis Verlag, 1957, p. 210.