

REVIEW ARTICLE

Liszt, Yesterday and Today

Christopher H. Gibbs and Dana Gooley, eds, *Franz Liszt and His World* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006). xx + 587pp. £41.95

Kenneth Hamilton, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Liszt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). xv + 282pp. £40

Perhaps one of the biggest surprises to grace the first weekend of the 'Franz Liszt and His World' music festival, held at Bard College, New York, in August 2006, came not from the pen of the eponymous guest of honour, but from his teacher Carl Czerny. On the programme for the second concert, entitled 'The Young Liszt: From Vienna to Paris', the venerable piano pedagogue's name appeared a bit out of place next to virtuosos of such stature as Ignaz Moscheles, Chopin, Adolph von Henselt and Alkan, or canonical, crowd-pleasing composers such as Beethoven, Schubert and even Liszt himself. And when stacked up against evocative Romantic titles such as 'Si oiseau j'étais, a toi je volerais' or *Jadis et aujourd'hui*, Czerny's offering seemed about as dull as could be imagined: a fugue for string quintet, op. 177, no. 1. Even the key, C major, was uninspiring.

And yet, when the ensemble exuberantly issued its final sonorous chord – each member with a smile on his or her face – the concert hall erupted in approval. Some listeners were swept away by Czerny's unapologetically boisterous fugal subject; others marvelled at his ability to sustain interest in such an unforgiving compositional Baroque technique. Most, however, applauded the fact that buried deep within those hundreds of anonymous opus numbers – famously damned by Schumann as exhibiting nothing but Czerny's 'bankruptcy of imagination' – lie some real compositional gems. While hardly of the historical import of Felix Mendelssohn's pathbreaking presentation of J.S. Bach's *St Matthew Passion* at Berlin in 1829, the Czerny performance was a twenty-first-century wake-up call to those who continue to conceptualize the two decades following Beethoven's death as the arena inhabited exclusively by the virtuoso soloist, with a few great orchestral works and oratorios thrown in for good measure. For works such as Czerny's or Alkan's – his 'Le vent' from the *Trois morceaux dans le genre pathétique* of 1837 was equally well received during the same afternoon – unsettle the historiographic status quo. If the narrative of nineteenth-century music is told from the perspective of a handful of artists dwelling within the pantheon – either for practical or for ideological reasons – what amount of contextual understanding is sacrificed? How, if at all, should the more ostensibly peripheral figures be treated? More germane to the festival: if this was the unknown Czerny, then what of the unknown Liszt?

The world of Liszt research began asking itself this very question in earnest some time in the early 1980s. Liszt had hobbled through the first three-quarters of the twentieth century with even more crippling reputational baggage than Czerny, and as a result he was spurned by most in the scholarly community. First and foremost, the reasoning went, he was regarded as the pre-eminent

representative of the virtuoso caste, an entertainer who had inveigled his way to public attention with flimsy piano pyrotechnics and scandalous liaisons with several high-profile women. (Since the second half of the nineteenth century, the term 'virtuoso' had packed about the same critical punch as two four-letter words rolled into one.) Charles Rosen has pithily explained the ambivalence of Liszt's staying power: 'Liszt has never needed revival. ... Nevertheless, he has appeared to need rehabilitation. From the beginning he had his admirers as well as his critics, but the admiration has often been uneasy, qualified, even shamefaced – it has paradoxically been withheld from, or given only grudgingly to, the most successful works, those that have held their place in the pianist's repertoire for more than a century.'¹ This inveterate profile of the virtuoso led scholars such as Alan Walker – whose first volume of a biography on Liszt covered, among other periods, the pianist's contentious virtuoso years (1838–47) – to offer a more even-handed assessment of the much-maligned composer. Yes, Walker admitted, Liszt had his warhorses just like Thalberg, Dreyschock and the other, less capable virtuoso pianists, but he was hardly a one-trick pony.

Released in 1983, Walker's volume appeared during a time when musicology in the English-speaking world was experiencing a turn away from positivism toward cultural contexts, a trend elucidated most notably two years later by Joseph Kerman in his wide-ranging and widely-discussed *Musicology*.² Walker's methodology seemed to adumbrate Kerman's, although for starkly different reasons: 'The present state of Liszt biography, particularly in the English-speaking world,' he reported, 'reflects a sort of Gresham's Law whereby the constant recapitulation of the same events leads only to the most sensational details being recalled. It was high time to redress the balance.'³ In preparation for this ambitious task, Walker and his assistants combed libraries and archives on both sides of the Atlantic for any and all documentation on the composer: long-forgotten diaries, heretofore unknown press reports and unpublished correspondence furnished Walker's readers with pages of entirely new ways of looking at the virtuoso figure, as well as rectifying many of the myths and misattributions that had plagued Liszt's reception for almost a century. Although certain elements of Walker's narrative have been hotly contested in various musicological annals, what eventually became a three-volume narrative over the next fourteen years has also become the starting point for every subsequent inquiry into the composer and his milieu.⁴

¹ Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996): 473.

² Joseph Kerman, *Musicology* (London: Collins, 1985). The American edition, published by Harvard University Press the same year, carried the more provocative title *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology*.

³ Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years, 1811–1847* (New York: Knopf, 1983): 29.

⁴ See reviews by Rena Charnin Mueller in *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 37 (1984): 185–96; Allan Keiler in *The Musical Quarterly* 70/3 (1984): 374–403; and Serge Gut in *Revue de musicologie* 74 (1988): 81–96. Walker's response to Keiler can be found in *The Musical Quarterly* 71 (1985): 211–19. When Serge Gut released his biography *Franz Liszt* (Paris: Editions de Fallois/L'Age d'Homme, 1989), Walker offered a detailed critique in *The Journal of the American Liszt Society* 26 (1989): 37–51. More recently, Michael Saffle has criticized several aspects of Walker's complete three-volume project in 'Lingering Legends: Liszt after Walker', in *Musical Biography: Towards New Paradigms*, ed. Jolanta T. Pekacz (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006): 89–110. But judging by the position he takes on several

Among its many virtues, Walker's biography made clear the sheer range of Liszt's involvement in the course of nineteenth-century musical events: he met Beethoven and Debussy, attended the premieres of the *Symphonie fantastique* and *Parsifal*, toured most of the continent (during which he generously offered his talents to the needy), was the driving force behind the *Allgemeine deutsche Musikverein*, wrote about musical aesthetics and the future of church music, and prefigured – or at least kept pace with – innovations in harmony, form and even instrumentation that had long been ascribed exclusively to others. For all of Walker's detail, however, one was often left with the sense that each of these activities still could be developed much further. Such is the primary impulse behind *Franz Liszt and His World* (FLW), edited by Christopher H. Gibbs and Dana Gooley, and *The Cambridge Companion to Liszt* (CCL), edited by Kenneth Hamilton. The editors of FLW, while recognizing the completeness of Walker's biography, suggest that such scholarship has 'tended to isolate Liszt studies in a hermetic world, relatively out of touch with the larger field of musicology, not to mention other disciplines' (p. xvi). Moreover, history has shown that Liszt does not necessarily benefit from 'the hagiographic tone adopted by so many of his commentators and biographers, which all too clearly replicates the cultish admiration of his own audiences, colleagues, and students. The values of more recent musicology and cultural studies – with their embrace of plurality and boundary-crossing, of performance, self-fashioning, and associative meaning – should be working in his favor' (pp. xvi–xvii). Thus FLW attempts to capture Kerman's spirit while avoiding Walker's tone and alleged oversimplification. Ironically, Liszt's many contradictions would seem to make him the poster boy for what has come to be known as New Musicology – the figure whose actions seem to have been the barometer of nineteenth-century music life now finds himself in desperate need of his own contextualization.

On the other hand, CCL is more conciliatory toward Walker; citations from his biography are frequent and often go unchallenged. But if FLW is intent on deepening and at times correcting Walker's observations, CCL aims to fill perhaps the most noticeable lacuna: Liszt's vast musical output. In this respect it complements Walker's volumes quite well, as Hamilton writes in his short introduction: 'The chapters that follow survey the major genres of Liszt's music, and attempt to balance range of reference with depth of discussion, always a problem with a composer like Liszt, who simply wrote too much' (p. x). Given their divergent goals yet equally ambitious scopes, both of these new volumes necessarily vary considerably in methodology, analytic depth, even audience expectation. Thus, reading FLW and CCL in tandem offers a productive way to glean some of the more contentious issues in Liszt scholarship.⁵ But more importantly, both volumes collectively mark a substantial leap forward in recovering and reconciling him for the modern scholar and lay reader. In that spirit, the following does not seek to provide a blow-by-blow account of each contribution to FLW and CCL, but rather engages some of the broader topics of Liszt research to which many of the authors in both volumes return time and again. Consequently, some portions will be treated in more depth than others,

issues in his recent *Reflections on Liszt* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), Walker has not been persuaded by these or any other critics.

⁵ James Deaville's chapter in CCL, 'Liszt and the twentieth century', and Michael Saffle's recent *Franz Liszt: A Guide to Research*, 2nd ed (New York and London: Routledge, 2004) nicely dovetail into many of the discussions in FLW and CCL.

but by no means should lack of attention to a particular selection translate into an analogous qualitative statement. Indeed, FLW and CCL provide some of the best scholarship available today.

Perhaps the most energizing contribution – and one that implicitly feeds into many of FLW's other selections – comes from Liszt himself. In 1835 he published *De la situation des artistes, et de leur condition dans la société*, a series of essays that chronicled the descent of the artist into the degrading contemporary position of menial entertainer to the salon-hungry aristocracy and dance-crazed public. In the sixth and final instalment presented here, the 23-year-old offers a number of striking solutions to remedy the cultural malaise: greater education in music for all social classes, reform of church music, state support for professional musicians, and initiatives to make available and sustain good music for society as a whole. Ralph P. Locke points out that many of these goals persisted well into Liszt's tenure at Weimar and perhaps beyond, with the composer leaving an indelible stamp on society as soon as he was able to come up with the requisite means to put his changes into effect. Locke's translation is particularly praiseworthy, in that it manages to capture much of the virtuosity that characterizes the original French text. Indeed, some of Liszt's passages read so 'musically' that one wonders if there is a study to be conducted that would consider the relationships between the syntax of Liszt's prose and compositional styles. After all, in the 1830s Liszt's obsession with the *mise en page* extended both to the printed word and the published musical note, and his experiments with numerous types of graphical performance directions seem to have a counterpart in the plethora of ellipses, capitalized words and precise spacings of early articles such as *De la situation des artistes*.

Liszt was, after all, looking for a unification of the arts long before Wagner made it fashionable to do so, and Anna Celenza demonstrates the extent to which visual and sounding objects were fused in Liszt's creative mind during his peregrinations in Italy in the second half of the 1830s. Celenza maintains that, while Liszt did journey southward to seek refuge from the intrigues that his relationship with Marie d'Agoult had caused in the French capital, his primary motivation was professional: with the artistic treasures of the Italian past as his backdrop, Liszt hoped to realize a master plan that would make him a pre-eminent writer *and* composer. Liszt had written in *De la situation des artistes* that he was an 'embryonic' composer; Italy, then, was where his parturition as artist was to take place. '[The] literary and artistic sources Liszt encountered during his travels across Italy profoundly influenced his self-image as a composer. ... Specifically, it was a creative space where Liszt interacted with an imagined community of artists derived from early-modern Italian art and literature' (p. 6).

On the surface, Celenza explores the visual objects that helped inspire many of the pieces contained in the famous Italian book of the *Années de pèlerinage*. Therefore, Raphael's *Sposalizio* and Michelangelo's *Il penseroso* are dealt with in turn. (Celenza's chapter on Liszt's piano concertos in CCL develops this mode of analysis more fully.) But more compelling for Liszt's formative years in Italy is her thesis of the 'Republic of the Imagination', which Celenza characterizes as 'An imagined community of artists, separated by time but united in thought and spirit, work[ing] together for the sake of art' (p. 26). Indeed, if Liszt's time in Paris following the July Revolution saw him fight vigorously for the future of art, it was in Italy that he retreated into the past. Those whom Liszt took as artistic models during these years – Lord Byron, Alphonse de Lamartine, Salvatore Rosa – were dissociated from the composer either geographically or temporally. Liszt

was alone (and depressed), and in his *Lettres d'un bachelier ès musique* he rarely missed an opportunity to let his Parisian readers forget. Celenza quotes frequently from these letters, but since her focus is on the construction of Liszt's 'prism of Romantic fantasy' (p. xviii), there is little discussion of his public disapproval of the contemporary cultural landscape. Liszt repeatedly maintained that the Italians misguidedly worshipped the false idol of opera to the neglect of the more worthy (Germanic) instrumental music practitioners, a position that got him into immediate trouble in Milan and damaged his reputation in the Republic perhaps permanently.

Did Liszt, then, hope to invigorate his own genius through the melancholy that would inevitably be jumpstarted by travelling to what in his mind was a contemporary cultural wasteland? Perhaps. In any event, it seems to have worked. Beyond sketching material that would eventually find its way into the second book of the *Années de pèlerinage*, Liszt produced *partitions de piano* of Beethoven symphonies and orchestral works by Berlioz; dozens of arrangements of Schubert lieder, including *Schwanengesang* and *Winterreise*; and several études. Critics recognized the benefits of his time abroad. Discussing Liszt's arrangements of Beethoven's Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, a reviewer for the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* noted that 'At least the two symphonies in part solve for us the riddle of why he chose this southern land, which though it offers a warmer climate, is populated by people who are not so receptive to loftier instrumental music: namely, to be less disturbed than in Paris or Germany, thus giving his muse full reign over his creations'.⁶ And while Liszt did invest himself heavily in the riches of Italy's past, much of what he set down on paper was aimed at pleasing audiences to the north, especially in France and Germany, where one day he would return as a fully formed artist. (As he spent more time in and around Rome beginning in the 1860s, the Romantic melancholy would fade in its transparency, but Liszt's work ethic and insouciance toward Italy's contemporary cultural scene would linger.)

But then, as the story goes, the rains came. A great portion of Buda and Pest was wiped out when the Danube swelled beyond its banks in March 1838. Liszt headed off to the Imperial City of Vienna a month later, where he gave a series of concerts that brought substantial relief to the flood victims and sealed Liszt's career as a travelling virtuoso. In his weighty contribution to *FLW*, Christopher H. Gibbs questions the manner in which Walker presented this inauguration of Liszt's *Glanzzeit*. The tidy picture of Liszt the Hungarian saviour is problematized immediately: 'It is, of course, impossible to determine [Liszt's] motivations, which no doubt were many and complex, but they were surely not as simple and altruistic as often presented' (p. 181). Indeed, only Liszt's inaugural concert was mounted expressly for the purpose of aiding the flood victims; the seven others were for his own financial gain. Gibbs thus redirects the focus of Liszt's charity from the Hungarians onto Liszt himself, a move that suddenly raises a number of tantalizing questions surrounding the pianist's six weeks in Vienna: What was the constitution of the Viennese concert scene in the 1830s? Who were the other pianists vying for supremacy on the concert stage, and how did Liszt deal with them? How did the models of self-fashioning that Liszt established in Vienna transform him as an artist and stay with him during his next decade as travelling virtuoso, and perhaps beyond?

⁶ G.W. Fink, 'Pianoforte-Werke von Franz Liszt', *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 42 (8 April 1840): col. 306.

It was by no means assured that Liszt would enjoy an unparalleled success in Vienna. A number of virtuosos, beginning with Paganini in 1828, had graced the Viennese concert stage, and Sigismond Thalberg and Clara Wieck in particular had set a high standard of pianistic excellence, for which each had received the coveted title of 'Royal Imperial Chamber Virtuoso'. With copious illustrative material, Gibbs provides exhaustive detail and insightful analysis to Thalberg's three concerts of 1836 and Wieck's six concerts given between 14 December 1837 and 18 February 1838. Wieck extended her stay in Vienna in order to meet Liszt and hear him perform, and entries in the 18-year-old's unpublished diaries (co-authored by her father Friedrich) reveal the admiration she had for Liszt. But Liszt benefited from these encounters with Wieck as well, for the frequency, locations and content of his concerts suggest that he extracted the most successful elements from her persona and attempted to improve upon them in his own presentation to the Viennese. In particular, he was able to make a tangible connection to the hallowed Viennese tradition of composers (especially Beethoven and Schubert), a relationship that he could only entertain in his imagination during his Italian years. And while his efforts failed to garner support for the imperial chamber virtuoso title, he succeeded in besting his competition on a number of fronts: Gibbs teases out five issues that pervaded the contemporary commentary on Liszt – including repertoire, manners and quality of execution – noting wryly that 'this enthusiasm and adulation merged with what he perceived as higher musical values and understanding, [making] the experience all the more welcome – and seductive' (p. 206).

Liszt's Viennese audiences, like the composer himself, were intoxicated by his successes. They had wanted to see him in the flesh for quite some time, as he had been preceded in the German-speaking lands by a number of reports in the press regarding his personality on and off stage. The most detailed of these early biographical attempts – a translation of which was commissioned by Robert Schumann the following year for publication in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* – had been one penned in 1835 by Liszt's close friend Joseph d'Ortigue, a self-proclaimed member of the *Beethovenistes* and frequent contributor to several Parisian music journals. D'Ortigue's assessment of Liszt the artist is still remarkably viable today, elucidating as he does the tension inherent in a man who is – as Benjamin Walton (FLW) characterizes it in the introduction – 'defined temporally by the alternation of extreme spirituality and equally extreme sensualism, and temperamentally by the two separate personalities he describes within the composer's single body' (p. 306). D'Ortigue was attempting to advance his own agenda, but the Lisztian prism diffuses his arguments too severely. Liszt's contradictions made him the embodiment of his age, a fact which – at least in 1835 – certainly increased his cachet at home and east of the Seine.

By the time Ludwig Rellstab issued his pamphlet *Franz Liszt: Beurtheilungen–Berichte–Lebensskizze*, Liszt had been established as the premier pianist in Germany for more than two years, but the rumour mill had been in full swing for more than a decade. A cursory comparison of d'Ortigue's and Rellstab's *Lebensskizzen* already illustrates the solidification of invented story into historical fact in a relatively short time-frame. A case in point is Liszt's childhood years in Vienna, working with Czerny and Salieri. Rellstab emphasizes that 'Liszt was hard at work composing' and that Salieri kept the young pianist 'working diligently on genuine exercises in composition' (FLW, p. 343), a component of Liszt's pedagogy that d'Ortigue glosses over entirely. And Rellstab alludes to what would become the famous *Weihekuss* incident between Liszt and Beethoven, which purportedly took place

at Liszt's farewell concert on 13 April 1823, for the first time. Throughout his life Liszt knew many of the writers who contributed to his biographic bibliography, and yet, as Allan Keiler points out, 'he was, as usual, selective about what he chose to include and ignore' (p. 339). It would have been easy enough for Liszt to redress the sensational biographical falsehoods, so why did he not set the record straight, once and for all? Why not provide the world with an autobiography along the lines of Berlioz or Wagner? Alexander Rehding, in his CCL chapter entitled 'Inventing Liszt's life: early biography and autobiography', suggests that Liszt consciously avoided such statements because of the historical weight that they embodied. If 'the later nineteenth century perceived autobiography as pure authenticity, as unmediated access to the truth about greatness for the benefit of all of mankind' (p. 18), then Liszt's evasiveness could allow him to maintain the numerous self-constructions he had accumulated over his long career. Liszt seems to have made a commitment to everyone but himself.

Indeed, Rehding's observation that 'What would seem to be missing in [the] flood of accounts of Liszt's life is any sign of his own authoritative voice' (p. 15) becomes maddeningly tangible when one is presented with primary documents as foundational as Lina Ramann's seventeen questionnaires to the composer, deftly annotated by Rena Charnin Mueller in FLW. These documents reveal that Ramann, who polled Liszt throughout the 1870s in order to gather material for what would become her epic, albeit somewhat over-the-top, *Franz Liszt als Künstler und Mensch* (1880–94), was an assiduous and indefatigable scholar. Her queries strive to come to terms with, among other things, the biographies of Liszt's parents, his education, his early works and Liszt's assessment of their reception, his three children, high-profile stops during the virtuoso years and, of course, the inspiration, genesis and publication history of numerous original compositions and arrangements. She managed to extract plenty of useful information from Liszt's often equivocal responses, much of which is still quite timely for the modern scholar. For instance, the composer remarked about the performance direction 'avec un profond sentiment d'ennui' from the first version of the *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* (published in 1835) that 'ennui is used here in the sense described by Bossuet: "this inexorable world-weariness which is the basis of human life" – not as boredom in the ordinary sense, but rather as the suffering and sorrow common to all humanity' (p. 392), an interpretation which very well complements Celenza's reading of Liszt's activities during his Italian years from the same volume.

But Liszt delivers such telling morsels far too infrequently; rather, his responses generally consist of little more than lists of names, dates or locations. And while it may not come as a surprise that he was reluctant to go into details about his deceased family members – particularly his son Daniel – he remained equally tight-lipped about the creative impulses that led to, say, the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, his relationships to figures such as Wagner and Chopin, or his thoughts on German or Italian politics. As Mueller points out in her useful introduction: 'While Liszt's motto, *génie oblige*, seemed to be his working aesthetic, we see that he was quite terse with Ramann, providing her only with the barest essentials about his compositions and his myriad musical activities' (p. 367). Consider the tone of the following responses to two very important questions posed by Ramann:

Ramann: In what year did your first face-to-face meeting with Richard Wagner take place?

Liszt: Richard Wagner recounts it the best himself in one of his Parisian essays. ... If these memories seem appropriate to you for your work, I'll willingly tell you more personally. One should neither brag about such things, nor dismiss them. [p. 406; questionnaire answered December 1875]

Ramann: Am I right in assuming that Paganini's "*Caprices*" fundamentally contribute to the completely radical change in piano technique accomplished by you, which to a certain extent they have also determined? The latter to the extent that the work of transposing for piano the hair-raising figures, arpeggios, etc. showed you the way to a new technique.

Liszt: That's for my biographer to say. [p. 419; questionnaire answered December 1876]

One wonders what he would have had to say about Rainer Kleinertz's complimentary nod toward Liszt and his possible influences on aspects of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*! For if Liszt's first response demonstrates his ambivalence to Ramann's biographical project, then the second defines the limits of interpretive detail that he was willing to divulge, much less entertain. Indeed, Ramann's perceptive second question alludes to issues of Romantic genius and transcendental technique, and while Liszt may have been happy to muse on such subjects earlier in life with public polemical essays such as *De la situation des artistes*, in his later years he was not as willing to commit his opinions to posterity. The Ramann–Liszt questionnaires remain some of the most personal documents we possess penned by the composer, yet they convey little sense of his artistic depth, to say nothing of his humanity.

Nevertheless, Ramann did manage to spin three large volumes out of Liszt's opaque responses, and other contemporaries – friend and foe – were equally unfazed by the composer's reticence. A selection of 'Criticism and Reception' rounds out the third portion of FLW, with contributions by François-Joseph Fétis, Heinrich Heine, Felix Draeseke and accounts of the Bonn Beethoven Festival by various attendants in the press. Fétis's article is curious. It is not so much a review of any one work – it is even unclear whether he takes as his point of departure Liszt's *Etudes d'exécution transcendante d'après Paganini* or the *24 Grandes Etudes pour le piano* – as it is a musing on the history of piano technique alongside a narrative of Liszt's long struggle to assert himself as a true innovator. Peter Bloom rightly observes in his introduction that 'Fétis's preference for generic purity and his desire to incorporate all musical phenomena into larger logical categories can thus come into conflict with his recognition of the uniqueness of certain observable facts' (p. 429). Indeed, given Fétis's world-view, it is little wonder that he cannot speak beyond vague notions of 'new modulatory procedures' or 'new forms' in Liszt's music, but such comments nevertheless suggest that the reviewer had in mind the *Grandes Etudes*. The 'Paganini' set, audacious as it may be technically, is by and large an accurate formal and harmonic reproduction of the violinist's trademark *Caprices*. On the other hand, the *Grandes Etudes* are ordered as a set in the mould of Chopin's Preludes, op. 28, and each of the 12 (not 24) pieces sports an array of formal and harmonic twists and turns that were novel for Liszt and many of his contemporaries. (The eighth study in C minor, for example, is a remarkable application of Beethovenian models of motivic development.)

It is important to establish the *Grandes Etudes* as the work in question because Fétis is unequivocally convinced by its importance for the composer and history more generally: '[Liszt] created a genre of piano music that belongs only to himself, and that answers in the affirmative the question that has so often been posed: *Will Liszt become a distinguished composer?*' (p. 436; emphasis in original). In fact, Robert Schumann had left the question open in his much more expansive review of the same set in the autumn of 1839 for the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*.⁷ Schumann's non-committal judgement of Liszt's abilities as composer has become a perennial one – today there is still no study that attempts to come to terms with Liszt's compositional output using the type of critical methodologies that Kerman advocated over a quarter-century ago.⁸ To be sure, Draeseke's brilliant articles on the symphonic poems are a model of their kind in many respects, but the uncritical stance he adopts toward the master and his music at times mitigates the ostensible objectivity of his comments. (His was, as James Deaville notes, a powerful piece of propaganda for the New German School.) The inclusion of Fétis's article in FLW provides a sobering reminder that Liszt did have his advocates, and that they could come from some of the most unlikely corners of the critical world.⁹

José A. Bowen has amplified this more sympathetic tendency in his collection of reactions to Liszt's involvement in the festivities surrounding the unveiling of the Beethoven monument in 1845 at Bonn. Liszt's more than half-decade of concert tours throughout Europe had split the international press into pro- and anti-Liszt camps, again returning to the issues of Liszt's virtuosity and abilities as composer. Bowen's selections focus specifically on the 12 August concert in which Liszt appeared as soloist in the 'Emperor' Piano Concerto and conducted the Fifth Symphony. D'Ortigue had positioned Liszt as an heir to Beethoven's legacy a decade earlier in his biography, and the majority of the reviewers – many of whom came to the Festival already predisposed to humiliating Liszt – were convinced by the reverence that the musician paid to his mentor. 'In the estimation of those who think rightly and without prejudice [Liszt] has covered himself with honor by his exertions in aid of the Beethoven Festival', wrote the London critic J.W. Davison, 'which but for him might never have taken place' (FLW, p. 477).

Liszt successfully appeared the next day with his *Bonner Beethoven-Kantate*, as it has come to be known, thus securing a trifecta as pianist, conductor and composer in a remarkably compressed period of time. Bowen's documents wonderfully ground discussions of the ideologies of this massive work for symphony orchestra and choir by Rehding in CCL and Ryan Minor in FLW. Rehding uses the Cantata as a case study for what he calls a 'performative mode of

⁷ Schumann, 'Etüden für das Pianoforte', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 11 (24 September and 15 October 1839): 97–8 and 121–3.

⁸ A notable exception is Jim Samson's *Virtuosity and the Musical Work: The Transcendental Studies of Liszt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), which coincidentally addresses the same works in the context of revision and the work concept.

⁹ Liszt was clearly elated by Fétis's review. He wrote to his Viennese friend Simon Löwy that 'Speaking of journals, I am enclosing the article that Fétis (my erstwhile more formidable antagonist) has just published in the Gazette musicale. It has been constructed with great skill and neatly encapsulates the issue.' The composer then asks Löwy to have Fischhof translate it for Bäuerle, the editor of the *Wiener Theaterzeitung*. See Liszt's letter of 20 May 1841 in Franz Liszt, *Briefe*, ed. La Mara [pseud. Marie Lipsius] (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1893), 1: 43.

biography', a notion that does not illuminate aspects of biography as engendered in compositions, 'but rather in the circumstances in which these compositions might function as autobiographical acts. This form of autobiography manifests itself much more in an abstract relationship between Liszt, as he choreographs his own life in and through his music, and his audience, which "reads", in a broad sense, these events and may interpret them as biographically relevant' (p. 20). Liszt used the occasion of the unveiling of the memorial to compose himself into Beethoven's afterlife, Rehding argues, by incorporating an arrangement of the slow movement of the 'Archduke' Trio. At the Cantata's apotheosis Liszt and Beethoven merge musically and historically, the result of which brought Liszt into the pantheon of great symphonic composers. This appropriation of music by other composers was, as Kenneth Hamilton stresses in his illuminating chapter on the composer's early and Weimar piano works in CCL, one of Liszt's signature compositional procedures, but never had Liszt used his foreign material so audaciously and self-consciously.

Ryan Minor, however, contends in FLW that this sublime moment of apotheosis was less a personal triumph for Liszt than it was a shared one among the attendees of the Beethoven Festival.¹⁰ He describes the 'imagined *Volk*', whereby 'the choral collective is accorded the figurative status as autonomous generating subject or dependent impoverished object in the exchange of religious, musical, or national sentiments' (p. 117). This construct not only blended seamlessly with many of the ideas Liszt had expressed so forcefully in the 1830s, but most likely also informed many of his later religious works, which becomes evident, say, in Dolores Pesce's CCL description of Liszt's *Graner Messe* – a piece, not coincidentally, also written for a public dedication. Minor teases out the tension between individual (Liszt) and collective, Beethoven and his legacy, through a lengthy analysis of Liszt's first large-scale choral-symphonic work. But several of his musical examples – and this is somewhat strange given the otherwise extremely high production values of FLW – contain notable mistakes, leading the curious reader to consult Günther Massenkeil's Peters edition of the complete work (Frankfurt, 1989); when one does so, however, some of Minor's observations that appeared persuasive in the context of excerpts seem less revealing. To give one example: Minor suggests that the descending tetrachord at the outset of the third movement of Liszt's Cantata 'conveys certain stylistic traits that confer a ... sense of seriousness and nobility upon the collective subject depicted in the text' (p. 128). But Liszt uses the descending tetrachord as the motivic basis for the entire second movement (see boxed notes in Ex. 1), whose text describes the ephemeral nature of human existence. Can these two ideas – the immortal *Volk* and their mortal membership – occupy the same interpretive space?

That notwithstanding, however, both Minor and Rehding present viable models for fusing analysis, biography and primary-source materials in order to clarify what was a defining moment in Liszt's life. This attention to detail informs the essays by Susan Youens and Rainer Kleinertz in FLW and many of the chapters in CCL. Youens selects three of Liszt's Heine songs for a series of remarkable analyses: 'Vergiftet sind meine Lieder', 'Anfangs wollt' ich fast verzagen' and 'Ein Fichtenbaum steht einsam'. Heine's texts were particularly potent objects when mixed with Liszt's advanced harmonic palette and rhythmic

¹⁰ Minor is actually responding to Rehding's argument as presented in the latter's 'Liszt's Musical Monuments', *19th-Century Music* 26 (2002): 52–72, but Rehding has not altered his conclusions in his CCL contribution.

Ex. 1 Liszt, *Bonner Beethoven-Kantate*, mvt 2, bars 10–14

10

S1 *f* Gleich den Wo - - gen des

S2 *f* Gleich den Wo - - gen des

T. *f* Gleich den Wo - - gen des

B. *f* Gleich den Wo - - gen des

sempre *f*

12

Mee - res rau - schen die Völ - ker

Mee - res rau - schen die Völ - ker

Mee - res rau - schen die Völ - ker

finesse, Youens argues, thus allowing the composer to ‘experiment magnificently with the questioning of received categories in song. Tonal certainty, firm rhythmic ground underfoot ..., meter, song form – all are subjected to an incandescent probing’ (pp. 54–5). But Youens is on firm ground, analysing – as she admits (p. 68) – undisputed masterworks. Monika Hennemann, in her concise survey of Liszt’s lieder in CCL, is more practical about her material: many of Liszt’s lieder evade public acceptance ‘for the dramatic qualities that cause some of them to hover indecisively between salon concert hall and stage’ (p. 204). Hennemann profitably spends precious space on the vexing issue of Liszt’s revisions and transcriptions of his lieder (Youens also broaches the former topic in her discussion of ‘Ein Fichtenbaum’), a practice that critiques the inherited notion of genre and the work concept and by extension publication series such as the Cambridge Companions, whose organization typically runs along traditional generic lines.¹¹

¹¹ Two companion pieces to Youens’s and Hennemann’s essays should be mentioned, both by Rena Charnin Mueller: ‘The Lieder of Liszt’, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Lied*, ed. James Parsons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 168–84, and

The issue of revision also lies at the heart of the two versions of Heine's report on Paris's musical season of 1844 in FLW. Presented on facing pages, the divergences between Heine's original text and its revision a decade later challenge us to explore not only the Heine–Liszt relationship with greater critical acuity, but also invite further investigation into Liszt's own revisionist practices. Somewhat surprisingly, it has been in Liszt's songs – especially 'Die Lorelei' and 'Ich möchte hingehn' – and their revisions that the question of two-way harmonic influence with Wagner has been posed. But Rainer Kleinertz moves the issue of influence into the structural realm, musing on possible connections between Liszt's symphonic poem *Orpheus* and the genesis of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. In particular, he identifies an organizational device in *Orpheus* best expressed in the following mathematical equality (for bars 84–179):

$$\alpha - \alpha' - \beta = (A - A' - B) - \alpha' - \beta = ([a - a - b] - A' - B) - \alpha' - \beta$$

In other words, *Orpheus* is not constructed out of "'closed forms" or a concrete "form model," but rather a constant unfolding of small, "open" elements into greater units' (p. 240), a cumulative procedure that thus manages to avoid the formal periodicity that Wagner had consigned to 'classicists' such as Beethoven. The Lisztian process of unfolding is evident in some of the early sketches to *Tristan*, but Kleinertz cautions about overemphasizing the implications of these similarities. Regardless, his methodology can usefully complement other analytic approaches to Liszt's output, including James M. Baker's survey of larger forms in the late piano cycles (*Via Crucis*, the *Hungarian Historical Portraits*, *Années de pèlerinage, troisième année*) and Reeves Shulstad's thoughtful consideration of programme, form and instrumentation within the symphonic poems and symphonies, both in CCL.

Ironically, it is this calculated approach to composition – one that seems to achieve the greatest effect through the simplest means – that brings us full circle to the nagging issue of Liszt's virtuosity. Kenneth Hamilton revisits much of the music that made Liszt a stage superstar. By paying greater attention to the development of Liszt's piano technique (an often overlooked facet of Liszt's virtuosity during his concert years), he is able to explain how the virtuoso Liszt turned out to be the composer Liszt's own worst enemy. Indeed, Liszt's virtuoso works were inaccessible to all but the most seasoned and ambitious piano technicians, and although James Deaville has quantitatively shown in FLW that this impediment did not necessarily harm print sales, such works were also construed in the German press at times as socially insidious. Gooley illustrates in his FLW essay how a virtuoso's 'ambiguous status between professional and amateur' (p. 83) could destabilize public music as a 'medium for the transmission of socially shared sentiments and aspirations' (p. 94), especially in provincial German towns, where hierarchical musico-social structures – from Kapellmeister down to dilettante – formed a fundamental component of civic life. Liszt, however, managed to avoid much of this bad press by drawing attention away from his ostensibly self-centred 'kleines Ich' and by focusing instead on the work of art, the public, compositions of other composers and various humanitarian efforts. 'By channeling his unique talent to larger socially useful ends', writes

'Reevaluating the Liszt Chronology: The Case of *Anfangs wollt ich fast verzagen*', *19th-Century Music* 12 (1988): 132–47.

Gooley, 'he was putting his subjective individuality in service of the objective social body' (p. 96).

Reading Gooley makes one question the motives behind Liszt's participation in the Beethoven Festival (see Rehding and Minor), the promotion to 'Kapellmeister in außerordentlichen Diensten' at Weimar in 1842 and Liszt's attempts to pacify almost every German self-interest group from the 1840s onwards. Indeed, it was Liszt's virtuoso experience, Leon Botstein contentiously explains in the final essay of FLW, that led him to work 'within decisively conservative frameworks beginning in 1848 and after the 1860s' (p. 549). As a mirror to the long nineteenth century, Botstein contends, Liszt adopted a Mozartian compositional aesthetic in his early professional career, whereby melody – as opposed to motifs or themes – framed and unified the work. Botstein's analysis gels well with Kleinertz's parsing of *Orpheus*, and his intuition that Liszt was less 'Romantic' in word and deed than, say, Katharine Ellis suggests in the opening chapter to CCL leaves the reader of Botstein's essay searching for closure while at the same time questioning many of the conclusions that are advanced in both volumes.

Thus, Liszt may not be the pre-eminent representative of the Romantic tradition in music history narratives for legitimate reasons, but he certainly is its torchbearer within the larger arena of nineteenth-century cultural history. As these volumes make clear, such a status has made him a perennially controversial figure, but nevertheless a compelling and remarkably flexible one. His biography and music seem readily adaptable to a rich variety of interpretation and analysis. Indeed, behind the assertions and conclusions in FLW and CCL lurks a fundamental question: Have cultural studies rehabilitated Liszt (in Rosen's sense of the word), or has he helped reinvigorate the fields of cultural studies? The debate will always remain open-ended, of course, but the Liszt of both yesterday and today will continue to be blended and refashioned as new avenues of inquiry in musicology and other cultural disciplines emerge.

Jonathan Kregor
University of Cincinnati
College-Conservatory of Music