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FRANZ LISZT'S APPROACH TO PIANO PLAYING

by
Arne Steinberg

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of the University of Maryland in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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1971

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APPROVAL SHEET

Title of Thesis: Franz Liszt's Approach to Piano Playing

Name of Candidate: Arne Steinberg
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ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: Franz Liszt's Approach to Piano Playing
Arne Steinberg, Doctor of Musical Arts, 1971
Thesis directed by: Professor Stewart Gordon

This study is an attempt to arrive at Liszt's basic approach to piano playing: what he concentrated on when he sat down to perform at the piano; what particular concepts he emphasized and considered vital and fundamental; and what the unique qualities of his approach were.

Primary sources for this study are Liszt's markings in his own piano works, his Technische Studien (a twelve-volume compilation of exercises made by Liszt and published in 1886, the year of his death), his letters, and the editions he made of the works of other composers.

Secondary sources include the extensive body of literature by Liszt's students dealing with their association with him. Also investigated are the writings on piano playing, "methods," and editions made by Liszt's students. While, of course, the students' own ideas are intertwined with those of Liszt, inferences can be drawn from certain basic approaches which occur constantly in these works and are supported by evidence from Liszt himself. Carefully examined in this connection are such works by Hans von Bulow, William Mason, Carl Tausig, Rafael Joseffy, Moritz Rosenthal,

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and Arthur Friedheim. Two important sources with regard to Liszt's ideas on pianism brought to light in this study are the writings of Adolph Christiani and C. F. Weitzmann. In addition, the influence on Liszt by Carl Czerny, his only significant piano teacher, is investigated. Czerny's teaching is thoroughly examined and strong connections are drawn between his methods and principles that were followed and stressed by Liszt.

The study begins with a biographical section that emphasizes pedagogical influences on Liszt. This is followed by an investigation of those aspects of pianism which were important to Liszt in his playing and teaching. Included are numerous examples of Liszt's treatment of specific passages from the literature of the piano.

This second section is summarized as follows:

1. Accentuation. This device formed perhaps the basis of Liszt's approach to piano playing and music in general. He used it both for basic time-keeping and evenness in passage-work and also for expressive purposes.

2. Dynamics.

3. Phrasing.

4. Rhythmic Freedom.

5. Pedalling.

6. Technical Approach. This chapter demonstrates that Liszt did not regard the "technical side" as an isolated aspect of piano playing, but only as inseparably combined with musical and expressive values, such as consideration of dynamics and some types of rhythmic definition. This section shows that a possible clue to Liszt's legendary facility may lie in certain types of touch he strongly recommended for use in rapid passage-work. Also included are: exercises Liszt practiced himself

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and recommended to his students; an investigation of Liszt's originality and inventiveness with regard to fingering; and an extensive section dealing with methods of practicing followed by Liszt and recommended by him to his students.

7. Styles. This is an attempt to find Liszt's approach to various styles in keyboard literature, ranging from Bach through the works of Liszt himself.

8. Special Skills at the Keyboard. These include sight-reading, score-reading, and transposing.

The study concludes with an examination of those psychological elements in Liszt's personality which possibly contributed to his immense success as a pianist.

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CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHY

In a short autobiography entitled Recollections From My Life, the great Viennese piano teacher Carl Czerny recorded:

> One morning in 1819 . . . a man brought a small boy about eight years of age to me and asked me to let that little fellow play for me. He was a pale, delicate-looking child and while playing swayed on the chair as if drunk so that I often thought he would fall to the floor. Moreover, his playing was completely irregular, careless, and confused, and he had so little knowledge of correct fingering that he threw his fingers over the keyboard in an altogether arbitrary fashion. Nevertheless, I was amazed by the talent with which Nature had equipped him. I gave him a few things to sight-read, which he did, purely by instinct, but for that very reason in a manner that revealed that Nature herself had here created a pianist. He made the same impression when I acceded to his father's wish and gave him a theme on which to improvise. Without the least bit of acquired knowledge of harmony he yet managed to convey in his performance a feeling of inspiration. The father told me that his name was Liszt, that he was a minor official at the court of Prince Esterhazy, and that up to that time he himself had taught his son; he was now asking me whether I would take charge of the little boy beginning the following year when he would come to Vienna. Of course, I gladly assented and, by showing him scale exercises, etc., also instructed him how to continue the little boy's training in the interim. About a year later Liszt and his son came to Vienna and moved to the same street where we lived; since I had little time during the day, I devoted almost every evening to the young boy. Never before had I had so eager, talented, or industrious a student. 1

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1 Carl Czerny, "Recollections From My Life," translated by Ernest Sanders, Musical Quarterly, XLII (1956), 314-15.

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This small boy eventually established himself as the greatest pianist of his time, and today he still retains a legendary reputation as the greatest pianist of all time. After firmly establishing himself as the leading pianist of his time, Liszt retired at the height of his powers when only thirty-six, and devoted the remaining thirty-nine years of his life to composing, teaching, and promoting the works of composers whom he admired.

Franz Liszt was born in Raiding, Hungary, on October 22, 1811. His father, Adam Liszt, a steward in the employ of the Esterhazy family, quickly recognized his son's enormous talent, and had the boy's ability exhibited at several concerts in their native country. After hearing the young Liszt play at a concert at Pressburg, Hungary, a group of Hungarian noblemen created a fund of 600 Austrian florins a year for a period of six years to enable the boy to study under the best masters.

With this financial security, Adam Liszt decided to resign from his position with the Esterhazy family and devote himself to the development of his son's talent. He took the boy to Weimar to study with Hummel, who was then generally accepted as the best pianist alive.[1] However, the

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1 Czerny, "Recollections," p. 308.

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price Hummel demanded for lessons was so enormous that Liszt reconsidered and instead took his son to Carl Czerny in Vienna.

Czerny continues:

> The young Liszt's unvarying liveliness and good humor, together with the extraordinary development of his talent, made us love him as if he were a member of our family, and I not only taught him completely free of charge, but also gave him all the necessary music, which included pretty nearly everything good and useful that had been written up to that time. After only one year I could let him perform publicly, and he aroused a degree of enthusiasm in Vienna that few artists have equalled. In the following year his father, mindful of the advantages, arranged to have him give public concerts, in which the boy played Hummel's new Concertos in A minor and B minor, Moscheles' Variations, Hummel's Septet, Ries' Concertos, and a number of my compositions; in addition he would always improvise on motives the public gave him, and people had indeed every right to see a new Mozart in him. Unfortunately his father wished for great pecuniary gain from the son's talent, and just when the boy had reached a most fruitful stage in his studies and had barely begun to receive from me some rudimentary instruction in composition, he went on tour, at first to Hungary and ultimately to Paris and London. Everywhere he caused a sensation, as is confirmed by all the papers of that time. 1

Franz Liszt owed virtually his entire training as a pianist to Carl Czerny, for Czerny's own words indicate that Liszt's training with his father was little more than rudimentary. Once Liszt left Czerny his formal piano instruction ceased. The first lessons Liszt received from Czerny

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1 Czerny, "Recollections," p. 316.

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were devoted almost entirely to technique. After being satisfied that he had given the boy a technical background so solid that it could never be shaken, Czerny next concentrated completely on musical expression.[1] How thoroughly both the technical and musical training he received from Czerny affected Liszt will be one of the points examined in the course of this study.

After leaving Czerny at the age of twelve, the young Liszt's life became a continuous round of tours with his father. In Paris, where he was already well known, Liszt applied for entrance to the Paris Conservatory in order to study composition. Admittance was denied by Cherubini, the director of the Conservatory, on the grounds that Liszt was a foreigner (despite the fact that Cherubini himself was an Italian). This incident made a deep impression on the young Liszt. In fact, Liszt later told his student Alexander Siloti that Cherubini's refusal influenced his later decision to teach all students who came to him free of charge.[2]

In 1827 Adam Liszt died and the fund which had supported Liszt for the previous six years was terminated. Franz,

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1 Czerny, "Recollections," pp. 315-16.

2 Alexander Siloti, My Memories of Liszt, translated from Russian, n. t. (London: Methuen Simpson, n. d.), p. 16. This incident may also have been at least a partial cause for the many derogatory remarks Liszt made about conservatories in later life.

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who was not quite sixteen, found himself faced with having to support himself and his mother. Liszt set himself up as a teacher in Paris, spending the next few years teaching and studying rather than playing in public.

An impression of Liszt's schedule during this period may be gained from a letter to M. de Mancy, dated December 23, 1829, in which Liszt excuses himself from attending a social function by writing:

> I am so full of lessons that each day, from half-past eight in the morning until 10 at night, I have scarcely breathing time. . . . I don't write you a longer letter, for there is a pupil who has been waiting for me for half an hour. 1

From this period of Liszt's life come two valuable sources of information on his teaching. During the years 1831 and 1832 Liszt gave lessons to a young French girl named Valerie Boissier, whose mother took detailed notes of Liszt's teaching. Another pupil during this period was Wilhelm von Lenz, who also left some detailed accounts of his lessons with Liszt.[2]

During these years in Paris, Liszt spent much of his time in study, not only of music, but of philosophy,

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1 Franz Liszt, Letters, collected and edited by La Mara, trans. by Constance Bache, I (London: H. Grevel and Co., 1894), p. 5.

2 Caroline Boissier, Liszt pédagogue (Paris: H. Champion, 1927); Wilhelm von Lenz, The Great Piano Virtuosos of Our Time, trans. from German by Madeline Baker (New York: Schirmer, 1899).

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literature, and all of the other arts. In these years he came into contact with many of the leading figures in art and literature, including Lamartine, Victor Hugo, and Heinrich Heine. The scope of Liszt's self-imposed education caused his pupil Frederick Lamond later to describe Liszt as "a kind of encyclopedia of world information, acquainted with the great things in history, art, and literature."[1]

The startling appearance of Nicolo Paganini on the European scene in the early 1830's had some effect on all who heard him, including Schubert, Schumann, Mendelssohn, Chopin, and Berlioz. But for the twenty-one-year-old Liszt, hearing Paganini resulted in a complete change in the course of his entire life. In the years immediately before he heard Paganini, Liszt had been undecided as to what to do with his life. For a time he even seriously considered becoming a priest.[2]

Liszt wrote to his friend Pierre Wolff after hearing Paganini play in Paris in 1832:

> "And I too am a painter!" cried Michael Angelo the first time he beheld a chef d'oeuvre . . . Though insignificant and poor, your friend cannot leave off repeating those words of the great man ever since Paganini's last performance. René, what a man, what a violin, what an artist! What sufferings, what miseries,

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1 Frederick Lamond, "Some Vital Points Piano Students Miss," Etude, Sept., 1923, p. 583.

2 Walter Beckett, Liszt (London: Dent, 1956), p. 9.

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> what tortures in those four strings! . . . As to his expression, his manner of phrasing, his very soul in fact! -- 1

Hearing Paganini caused Liszt to throw himself into a period of renewed intensive study. He wrote to Wolff:

> . . . my mind and fingers have been working like two lost spirits, - - Homer, the Bible, Plato, Locke, Byron, Hugo, Lamartine, Chateaubriand, Beethoven, Bach, Hummel, Mozart, Weber, are all around me. I study them, meditate on them, devour them with fury; besides this I practise four to five hours of exercises (3rds, 6ths, octaves, tremolos, repeated notes, cadenzas, etc., etc.). Ah! provided I don't go mad, you will find an artist in me! Yes, an artist such as you desire, such as is required nowadays! 2

While others came only to marvel at Paganini, Liszt observed him closely, and learned much from this master showman who had such remarkable control over his audiences. Liszt probably adapted some aspects of Paganini's musical performance into his own playing, including the "phrasing" mentioned in his letter to Wolff. Liszt now returned to public playing, attempting to equal as a pianist the incredible successes Paganini had achieved as a violinist.

Liszt's Adult Career as a Public Performer

Two characteristics of the mature Liszt's playing in public during his years of concertizing were an enormous

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1 Liszt, Letters, I, pp. 8-9.
2 Ibid., p. 8.

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bravura and a control over his audiences which probably no pianist since his time has been able to approach. The English pianist, Charles Hallé, visiting Paris as a young man, wrote to his parents of Liszt's playing:

> When I heard him first I sat speechless for a quarter of an hour afterwards, in such a stupor of amazement had the man put me. Such execution -- such limitless -- truly limitless -- execution no one else can possess. He plays sometimes as to stand your hair on end! He who has not heard Liszt can have no conception -- literally no conception -- of what his playing is. 1

Robert Schumann wrote of the effect of Liszt's playing:

> This power of dominating an audience, of uplifting, carrying along, and letting it go again, is probably not possessed by any other artist, with the exception of Paganini. At the same time, delicacy, boldness, sweetness, fieriness alternate, and the piano glows and glitters under its master. We no longer have piano-playing of this or that kind, but the expression of a daring personality to which Fate has for once allotted the peaceful ways of art instead of dangerous weapons as its means of dominating and conquering. 2

Liszt's ability to subjugate his listeners is clearly illustrated in the following quote from the diary of the statesman Varnhagen von Ense:

> In conclusion Liszt played a chromatic galop that I could not stand. He had my pulse completely under his control, and so quickened it by his playing that I was seized with giddiness. 3

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1 Sir Charles Hallé, Life and Letters of Sir Charles Hallé (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1896), p. 227.

2 Ralph Hill, Liszt (New York: A. A. Wyn, Inc., 1949), p. 60.

3 Arthur Friedheim, Life and Liszt, edited by T. Bullock (New York: Taplinger, 1961), pp. 159-60.

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In his days as a touring virtuoso, Liszt's confidence in his own abilities enabled him to behave with a recklessness which shocked other artists. Robert Schumann warned his wife Clara not to follow Liszt's example of appearing on stage for an important concert without ever having tested the piano. Hector Berlioz provides a further illustration of Liszt's nerve in his description of a banquet given after a concert of Berlioz' works in Prague:

> Liszt was unanimously chosen to make a speech instead of the chairman, whose French was not very fluent. In proposing the first toast, he made a speech in my honor, in the name of the whole gathering, lasting at least a quarter of an hour. His words were fervent, his sentences rich in thought and his powers of expression so brilliant that many an orator might have envied him; I was deeply moved. Unfortunately, he was as valiant in drinking as he was in speechmaking . . . . When day broke I was worried about Liszt, because he had his concert at midday. At half past eleven he was still sleeping. At last we woke him up, he got into his carriage, entered the hall, where the audience greeted him with three salvos of applause and played, I think, as never in his whole life. They have their god -- pianists. 1

At this time Liszt's actions were often characterized by an arrogance which disappeared as he grew older. To illustrate the power he held over his public, he would sometimes deliberately arrive late for a concert and then stop to visit with some acquaintances at their box, keeping his audience

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1 Alexander Buchner, Franz Liszt in Bohemia, translated by Roberta Finlayson Samsour (London: Peter Nevill, 1962), p. 100.

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waiting until it became restless with anger.[1] Likewise, Liszt's treatment of his competitors in these early years was in strong contrast to the kindliness he exhibited toward other musicians at a later age. Liszt's treatment of his dangerous rival, Thalberg, including the writing of vicious newspaper criticisms, has often been criticized. A further example of Liszt's behavior toward one of his competitors is provided in the following incident from the biography of Sir Charles Hallé:

> At another occasion at a concert given for the benefit of the Polish refugees at the house of Princess Czartoriska, he did me the honour to ask me to play a duet for two pianos with him and chose Thalberg's well-known Fantasia on Norma. We had no rehearsal, but he said to me, "Let us take the theme of the variations at a moderate pace; the effect will be better." Now the first part of this theme is accompanied on the second piano (which Liszt had chosen) by octaves for both hands, which octaves in the second part fall to the lot of the first piano. What was my horror when, in spite of the caution he had given me, Liszt started his octaves at such a pace that I did not conceive the possibility of getting through my portion of them alive. Somehow I managed it, badly enough, but if I ever understood the French saying "suer sang et eau" [2] it was then. I had my revenge, however. In the second variation where the pianos successively accompany the theme with chromatic scales, Liszt instead of confining himself to the scales, altered them by introducing double and additional notes, a feat of amazing difficulty, which made my hair stand on end, but which I did not feel compelled to try and imitate, simple chromatic scales neatly and rapidly played being, on the whole, more effective; so when my turn came I confined myself to them, and earned a round of applause in

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1 Camille Saint-Saëns, "Franz Liszt," The International Library of Music, I, (New York: The University Society, 1925), p. 230.

2 "sweat blood and water."

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which Liszt most generously joined. [1]

Liszt did not give up his teaching completely after his return to public performance. During a stay in Geneva in 1836 with the Countess Marie d'Agoult, who had left her husband and family for Liszt and became the mother of his three children, Liszt agreed to teach the most talented students at the local conservatory without pay. He kept some notes on these students, which read as follows:

> Julie Raffard: musical feeling very remarkable; very small hands. Execution brilliant.
> Amélie Calame: pretty fingers, work is very carefully done, almost too much so. Capable of teaching.
> Marie Demallayer: vicious method (if any method at all), extremely zealous, mediocre mind. Grimaces, contortions.
> Ida Milliquet: typical Genevan artist; flabby and mediocre. Good enough attitude at the piano.
> Jenny Gambini: beautiful eyes. 2

According to his correspondence, Liszt gave at least a few lessons during the years 1842 or 1843 to Carl Filtsch. Filtsch was an enormously gifted student of Chopin who died prematurely at the age of fifteen. Another gifted young pianist Liszt spent some time with was Anton Rubinstein, who, by the end of Liszt's life, was considered by many as the best pianist after Liszt himself.[3]

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1. Hallé, Life and Letters, p. 89.
2. Sacheverell Sitwell, Liszt (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1956), p. 36.
3. In later years Rubinstein often visited Liszt. Although he was considered one of the finest pianists and did not fit under the designation of a "pupil" of Liszt at these later times, he still continued to absorb much from Liszt's playing.

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In the very earliest part of Liszt's career public concerts in many cities were like a circus, with a player's main object being to prove through a variety of technical stunts that he was superior to his competitors. Although this was not true to the same extent in some of the centers of music such as Vienna and Leipzig, and changed considerably for the better even during the years that Liszt was playing in public, these conditions must be taken into account in considering Liszt's playing and programs.

The following quotations provide good illustrations of the atmosphere Liszt often faced when he played in public during these early years:

John Orlando Parry, a comedy singer who appeared on the same program at a concert Liszt gave in Dublin in 1840, wrote in his diary, "Liszt and Ruderdorff [a violinist] played a piece 'Sonata of Beethoven' 20 minutes long! -- 'Twas dreadful."[1]

In his work Franz Liszt in Bohemia, Alexander Buchner describes a concert Liszt gave in Prague in 1840:

The first item on the program was Beethoven's

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1 Beckett, Liszt, pp. 30-31.

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> Sonata in C Sharp Minor. The audience remained however, in general cool after the playing of this composition. The Prague public could not at first explain why Liszt had chosen for the first item of his first concert in Prague this Beethoven sonata. It was in their view a piece of unheard-of daring, at which the town's citizens had been amazed on reading the posters. Contemporary experts on pianoforte playing had proclaimed that there were only three Beethoven sonatas which could be listened to, and these were the opus 2 group. Some were of the opinion that Liszt had chosen this sonata designedly, for tactical reasons. "Yes, just imagine," related one of the concert goers to the Prague musical historian, Dr. August Wilhelm Ambros, "Liszt appears -- and we await wonders. He sits down to the piano and plays a long and immeasurably dull composition; one note every quarter of an hour. We remained speechless and looked at one another in amazement. Suddenly, when we began to nod occasionally, Liszt let himself go -- well, you should have heard the storm of applause! But it was clever tactics." 1

Liszt's tours began on an extensive scale in the year 1840. They took him to England, Czechloslovakia, Hungary, Russia, and even Constantinople, as well as the musical centers in Austria, Germany, and France. At his first concerts Liszt's own performances alternated with those of other musicians, and, in his concerts in England, even with comedy acts and other such entertainment. At some point during his concertizing Liszt began the innovation of giving concerts devoted entirely to his own playing, without the help of any assisting artists. This practice was later followed by Liszt's students, despite the protests of critics such as

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1 Buchner, Liszt, p. 68.

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Eduard Hanslick, who complained that a whole concert of piano playing did not offer enough variety to sustain his interest.[1] Liszt was also one of the first to play everything from memory in his concerts, another practice which became generally accepted (although as renowned a pianist as Clara Schumann protested against this practice, because she had never been trained to do so).[2]

In England, Liszt's successes did not equal those he achieved in other countries. His arrogance did not appeal to the English public, who preferred his rival Thalberg, with his aristocratic bearing and severely dignified appearance. The English impressario, Willert Beale, remembered from his childhood:

> Franz Liszt also came to Albion Street, but he frightened us. His hair was so long, and he had such a wild appearance, that when he played the pianoforte we were always glad to leave the room. 3

In his early career Liszt sometimes embellished and rearranged passages for greater effect in the works he played, especially when playing before unsophisticated audiences. Hallé tells that in his early twenties Liszt did this in a performance of Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto, playing some

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1 Hanslick, Music Criticisms, translated and edited by Henry Pleasants (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1950), p. 123.

2 Amy Fay, Music Study in Germany (New York: Dover, 1965), p. 274.

3 Beckett, Liszt, p. 27.

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passages in octaves which appear as single note passages in the original. With the passing of years Liszt shed this habit. Hallé reports:

> . . . when, on the occasion of the unveiling of Beethoven's statue at Bonn in August, 1845, he played the same concerto, he adhered scrupulously to the text, and a finer and grander reading of the work cannot be imagined. 1

In additon to playing the necessary opera fantasias and other virtuoso display pieces on his tours, Liszt did what he could to promote the works of composers he respected. He played the works of Beethoven regularly, despite the fact that most of them were little-known and understood by the general public at that time. Liszt also helped to spread the name of Chopin throughout Europe. His arrangements of the songs and dances of Schubert brought the music of this generally unknown composer before a large public for the first time. Liszt also played many of the works of Schumann in public. Liszt's programming of his own arrangements of symphonic works, such as the symphonies of Beethoven, is often misunderstood today by commentators who are ignorant of the musical conditions existing at the time when Liszt did this. During the years when Liszt played these arrangements, few orchestras existed, and for most of Liszt's audiences in areas other than the

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1 Hallé, Life and Letters, p. 85.

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large centers of music, Liszt's playing of these works constituted the only time his hearers were brought into contact with them.

Liszt was considered one of the most important figures on the European scene during his years as a touring virtuoso. In fact, his position in European society was such that he held no awe of royalty. In Russia, when playing before Czar Nicholas I, Liszt suddenly stopped when the Czar persisted in talking during the performance. When the Czar asked him why he had stopped, Liszt replied sarcastically, "Music, herself, should be silent when Nicholas speaks."[1]

On one occasion when Liszt met Louis Phillipe of France by accident at Erard's music store, the king approached Liszt in a friendly manner and said, "Do you remember that you played at my house when you were but a boy and I was Duke of Orleans? Much has changed since then." Liszt, who detested Louis Phillipe for his slighting of the arts in general and his abolishing of certain musical pensions, answered "Yes, Sire. But not for the better." The king reciprocated by striking Liszt's name off a list of those about to receive the Legion of Honor.[2]

After a concert at Elizabethgrad, Russia, toward the

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1 Sitwell, Liszt, p. 147.

2 H. R. Haweis, My Musical Memories, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1884), p. 273.

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end of the year 1847, Liszt suddenly retired from public playing. At the end of his life he discussed his retirement with his pupil, Alexander Siloti, who reports:

> He told me that he was proud of being the only pianist who had given up playing at the right time . . . "Everybody was indignant, and insisted that it was too soon, but, in fact, I acted wisely. I did not wish to hear afterwards that I had gone on playing too long -- which is what many people are saying now of Rubinstein. It was very hard for me to leave the concert platform, for it takes a strong effort of will to make a decision of that sort." 1

First Period at Weimar

For three years before Liszt retired from public playing, he had acted as conductor and musical director at the Grand Ducal court at Weimar for three months out of every year. In 1848, upon retiring from his concertizing career, Liszt settled in Weimar with Princess Carolyne von Sayn Wittgenstein, whom he had met in Russia shortly before he made his decision to retire. Princess Wittgenstein had left her husband for Liszt, and the two eventually hoped to be married. This never took place, however, as first the Czar of Russia and later, the Pope, refused to give Carolyne a divorce.

At Weimar, Liszt lived at the Altenburg, a castle

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1 Siloti, Liszt, p. 35. After 1847, Liszt's appearances in public as a pianist totaled barely a dozen throughout the remaining years of his life and were done only without pay for charitable causes.

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located high on a hill overlooking the city. Kept there were many relics prized by Liszt, including pianos which had belonged to Mozart and Beethoven. On the first floor of the Altenburg were Liszt's own pianos and the rooms where he gave his lessons and entertained visitors.

In a short time, Liszt made Weimar the European center of contemporary music. At his disposal there was an opera house with an orchestra of 37 players. Among the works of his contemporaries which Liszt performed at Weimar were Schumann's Faust, Manfred, Genoveva, and Paradis und Peri, and Wagner's Tannhäuser and the first performance of Lohengrin.[1] In addition, Liszt devoted an entire week of concerts to the works of Berlioz. Among works written before his time, Liszt chose to direct operas of Gluck, Mozart, and Rossini. He also brought Schubert's opera Alfonso und Estrella out of oblivion. Under Liszt's direction, the Weimar orchestra also performed Haydn and Mozart symphonies and all nine of the Beethoven symphonies.[2]

Liszt devoted a great deal of his time and energy to building up the Weimar orchestra. In 1850, Joseph Joachim became the concertmaster and remained in this position for three years. In 1853 he resigned to become director of music

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1 August 28, 1850.
2 Beckett, Liszt, p. 39.

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at the Hanover court. Joachim was an enthusiastic admirer of Liszt at first, but as time passed, he drifted further and further away from Liszt and his circle, finally becoming completely antagonistic.

The settlement at Weimar marked the beginning of Liszt's friendship with Richard Wagner. This relationship eventually led to the establishment of Wagner's music as the rallying point for the more extreme supporters of "progressive" tendencies in music. Liszt's pupil, Alfred Reisenauer, once told an interviewer:

> He [Liszt] had the most generous nature of any man I have ever met. He had aspirations to become a great composer, greater than his own measure of his work as a composer had revealed to him. The dire position of Wagner presented itself. He abandoned his own ambitions -- ambitions higher than those he ever held toward piano virtuosity -- abandoned them completely to champion the difficult cause of Wagner. What Liszt suffered to make this sacrifice, the world does not know. But no finer example of moral heroism can be imagined. His conversations with me upon the subject were so intimate that I do not care to reveal one word. 1

When Wagner had to flee from Dresden in May of 1849 because of the part he took in the riots which had occurred there, Liszt provided him with a hiding place at Weimar. During a week's stay there, Wagner heard Liszt conduct a rehearsal of Tannhäuser. Wagner later wrote of Liszt's conducting of his music, "I was astonished to find in him my second

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1 James Francis Cooke, Great Pianists on Piano Playing (Philadelphia: Presser, 1917), p. 227.

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self."[1]

Liszt unselfishly dedicated a large portion of his energies to the furtherance of Wagner's art, to the anger and surprise of Princess Wittgenstein, who wanted Liszt to concentrate on establishing himself as a composer. In addition, to promoting Wagner's works in the following years, Liszt answered all of his incessant and excessive demands for money. Wagner was the incarnation of selfishness in this relationship, taking whatever he could get from Liszt, and eventually breaking with him when he was securely set up at Bayreuth.

However, Liszt never allowed himself to say an unkind word about Wagner. Toward the end of Liszt's life, Alexander Siloti once expressed his disapproval of Wagner's actions in very strong terms. Describing Liszt's reaction, Siloti writes:

> But Liszt looked at me very, very gravely and said in a quiet voice, "Gently! This must not be said aloud."[2]

In addition to running the orchestra and opera house and establishing Weimar as a center of contemporary music, Liszt composed some of his most important works during his first ten years there. These include the Dante and Faust symphonies, the Sonata in B minor and the thirteen symphonic poems. He also wrote extensively, including essays on Wagner,

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1 Beckett, Liszt, p. 41.
2 Siloti, Liszt, p. 55.

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Berlioz, Gluck's Orfeo, and Beethoven's Fidelio. Liszt's book on Chopin was also written during this period.[1] At the same time, Liszt carried on a large correspondence with musicians all over the world.

Amid all this flurry of activity, Liszt found some time to teach, and accepted a few pupils. During his first years at Weimar, Liszt had only a few pupils. In later years, the numbers swelled to hundreds. For example, when the American pianist William Mason arrived at Weimar in 1853, he found only two pupils studying with Liszt.[2] Although the number of students at Weimar grew larger during Liszt's first stay there, it was always small in comparison to the inundation of pupils which took place toward the end of his life.

Some of the most important pupils during Liszt's first stay at Weimar (often called the "golden age" of Weimar by his pupils), were Hans von Bülow, Karl Klindworth, William Mason, Carl Tausig, and Peter Cornelius.

Liszt Resigns His Post at Weimar

In 1853, Liszt's patron at Weimar, the Grand Duke Charles Frederick, died, and a new Grand Duke, Charles Alexander, took over. Charles Alexander was less interested

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1 Beckett, Liszt, p. 39.

2 William Mason, Memories of a Musical Life, (New York: Century Co., 1901), p. 91.

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in music than his predecessor, and as years passed he gradually tried to ease Liszt out of his position at Weimar, turning down Liszt's request for a production of Wagner's Ring as well as many smaller projects. In December of 1858, ten years after he had come to Weimar, Liszt was hissed by the audience after the first performance of The Barber of Bagdad, an opera by his student Peter Cornelius. Liszt used this as an excuse to resign from his post at Weimar, although he did remain virtually in charge there for the two following years.

In 1860, Liszt drew up his will, a long document in which he expressed his ideals and aims in life. During the next decade he lived mainly in Italy, where he had two residences, one in Rome, and the other at the Villa d'Este at Tivoli. In 1865, Liszt became a secular priest, or "abbe." As an abbe he received four of the seven orders of the priesthood, but was not permitted to celebrate Mass or hear confession. In these years, Liszt wrote a great deal of church music. For the decade or so after resigning his post at Weimar, Liszt taught only a very limited number of students and these mostly in Rome. Two students of Liszt during these years were the Italian pianist, Giovanni Sgambati, and the

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English pianist, Walter Bache.

Liszt Returns to Weimar

After a time the Grand Duke Charles Alexander apparently had second thoughts about Liszt's resignation and began negotiating for his return. In 1869, Liszt agreed to return to Weimar. In the following years, Liszt divided his time between Rome and Budapest in the winters, and Weimar in the summer months. In 1875, an Academy of Music was opened in Budapest. At first it offered only two subjects, piano and composition. Liszt acted as director of the school and spent three or four months a year there teaching piano classes.

In this last period at Weimar, Liszt stayed at the Hofgärtnerei, a two-story villa which had previously belonged to the Duke's gardener. It contained a large music room which looked out over a park, a bedroom, a dining room, and several servants' rooms. It was in the large music room of the Hofgärtnerei that Liszt conducted the piano classes of which so many of his students from this final Weimar period have left descriptions. In this final stay at Weimar, Liszt had little to do with the opera and orchestral performances there, occupying himself mainly with a salon of pupils which

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eventually grew to alarming proportions.

Some of the students from Liszt's final period at Weimar were A. Strelezki, Sophie Menter, Rafael Joseffy, Otto Neitzel, Amy Fay, Laura Kahrer, William Sherwood, Moritz Rosenthal, Edward MacDowell, Vera Timanoff, Isaac Albeniz, Arthur Friedheim, Alfred Reisenauer, Eugene D'Albert, Alexander Siloti, Martin Krause, Emil Sauer, Frederick Lamond, W. Waugh Lauder, Carl Lachmund, Bernard Stavenhagen, Jose Vianna D'Motta, F. W. Riesberg, and Stefan Thoman.[1] Students of Liszt from this final Weimar period who later became important conductors included Arthur Nikisch, Felix Mottl, and Felix Weingartner.

The impression Liszt made on his pupils was an overwhelming one. Almost without exception they later spoke of Liszt as the greatest personality they ever met, and of their time spent with Liszt as the most memorable years of their lives. For example, Max Meyer Olbersleben wrote:

> It has been my great pleasure and honor to know many men and women whom the world regards as great, but to this day the majestic figure of Franz Liszt stands in my memory as does that of no other man. 2

Moritz Rosenthal wrote:

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1 Thoman was the teacher of Bartók, Dohnanyi and Fritz Reiner.

2 Max Meyer Olbersleben, "Recollections of Franz Liszt," Etude, June, 1909, p. 372.

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> When one was with Liszt, one felt the power of his overwhelming personality . . . 1

Alfred Reisenauer told an interviewer:

> I consider Liszt the greatest man I have ever met. By this I mean that I have never met, in any other walk of life, a man with the mental grasp, splendid disposition, and glorious genius. This may seem a somewhat extravagant statement. I have met many, many great men, rulers, jurists, authors, scientists, teachers, merchants and warriors, but never have I met a man in any position whom I have not thought would have proved the inferior of Franz Liszt, had Liszt chosen to follow the career of the man in question. Liszt's personality can only be expressed by one word, 'colossal.' 2

Those who heard Liszt in his younger days claimed that after he reached the age of sixty or so his playing began to decline to the point where it gave no indication of his earlier abilities, especially technically. William Mason wrote in his autobiography:

> In the year 1873 Rubinstein told Theodore Thomas that it was fully worth while to make a trip to Europe to hear Liszt play; but he added, "Make haste and go at once; he is already starting to break up, and his playing is not up to the standard of former years, although his personality is as attractive as ever."3

Mason also describes an argument which took place in his home between the violinist Remenyi, who had known Liszt from the early days at Weimar, and Bernard Stavenhagen, a

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1 Moritz Rosenthal, "The Training of a Virtuoso," Etude, March, 1918, p. 189.
2 Cooke, Great Pianists, pp. 226-27.
3 Mason, Memories, p. 111.

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pianist who had studied with Liszt at Weimar during the last two years of Liszt's life:

> In March, 1895, Stavenhagen and Remenyi were dining at my house one evening, and the former began to speak in enthusiastic terms of Liszt's playing. Remenyi interrupted with emphasis: "You have never heard Liszt play -- that is, as Liszt used to play in his prime," and he appealed to me for corroboration, but, unhappily, I never met Liszt again after leaving Weimar in July, 1854. 1

However, Walter Bache, who had studied with Liszt in Italy from 1862 to 1865, heard Liszt play in Florence in 1874 and wrote to his sister:

> He is the same as ever . . . his teeth are going a little, and this sometimes affects his pronunciation; but this is the only difference I notice. He played a great deal to me -- several hours every day -- as magnificently as ever. 2

After seeing Liszt in August of 1876, Bache again wrote to his sister:

> Liszt is here, and is as charming and good as ever; he is playing just as he did ten years ago. 3

Liszt's playing definitely began to show signs of deterioration technically after he reached the age of 71 or 72. Arthur Friedheim writes:

> Until the very end (in 1886) his intellectual vigor was astounding; and, although towards 1883 his sovereign mastery of technique began to abate, there were days when

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1 Ibid., p. 112.

2 Constance Bache, Brother Musicians (London: Methuen and Co., 1901), p. 237.

3 Ibid., pp. 240-41.

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> the old magic asserted itself in undiminished power, and the burden of age seemed thrown off. 1

In 1885 a group of Liszt students, headed by Alexander Siloti and Martin Krause, formed a Liszt society which was dedicated to promoting Liszt's compositions. Liszt told Siloti that he did not approve, but actually he was deeply touched by the loyalty of his younger students. The society lasted until 1900.

Nineteen-year-old Claude Debussy, in Rome as a recipient of the Prix de Rome, heard Liszt play at the home of Liszt's student Sgambati in 1885 during Liszt's last visit to Italy. In 1915, Debussy wrote of the aged Liszt's playing, of which he especially noticed the pedalling, "It was as if he were breathing."[2]

In 1886 Liszt went on a final tour, first to France, where several concerts of his works were given, and then to England, where his pupil, Walter Bache, had arranged a series of concerts in his honor. Liszt played several times at private gatherings in England, although he had written to Bache before arriving that he would not play at all on his visit. Bache wrote to a friend after Liszt had departed from England:

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1 Chopin, Etudes, edited by Arthur Friedheim (New York: Schirmer, 1916), p. 1.

2 Victor Seroff, Debussy: Musician of France (N.Y.: Van Rees Press, 1956), p. 67.

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> Before leaving, Liszt spoke in detail of the Broadwood which he played on Thursday evening at Westwood House; he said he liked playing on it because it lent itself so well to different shades and nuances, on which he professes to be now entirely dependent for producing musical effect, for he says he has no longer any fingers for difficulties. 1

After leaving England, Liszt visited his student Sophie Menter at the Castle Itter on the Tyrol. Bernard Hoff, who was present, wrote the following description of the aged Liszt's visit:

> How old he had become in the last year! The slender figure seemed bowed and tottering; the countenance was flabby and the eyes seemed tired and strained. The three or four days which now succeeded were dedicated to a true culture. The old man went friendly and somewhat tired among his admirers. He had the restlessness of the old, who are never quiet and yet never accomplish anything. At four o'clock in the morning he was up and went in the church. An entire hour he prayed in the small cold village church before the redcheeked Madonna with the flaxen wig and the tin crown. When the hour of prayer was over, he wrote and read. Then he came where the others drank coffee and sat conversing an hour or two, until Vasili or one of the the other pupils played him to sleep before dinner. He slept very well while they played; he sat nodding his head and slept sweetly while the pupil, with quaking heart, played before the fate-determining master. When the last note was heard, Frau Menter would make a little noise and the old man would awake and say a word of praise, with which he had made so many happy during his life, perhaps a little too many.
>
> After dinner the entire company played whist, at which the master always won, for he possessed the weakness not to like to lose. He had become old, but once in a while came a moment when one saw what he once had been. In the midst of a speech would appear a brilliant

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1 Bache, Brother Musicians, p. 302.

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> paradox, a flash of wit, an expression with such a fine and self-conscious superiority, and often, when the old champion parried words with a lightning rapidity, a brilliant fire would come into his eyes . . .
>
> One evening he played himself. Facility -- one did not think if he still possessed that. It was only an echo of wonderful music that endured for a moment. So poetically played no other; as if the music was breathed over us . . . 1

In July of 1886, Liszt decided to attend the festival at Bayreuth, although his daughter Cosima, who was now in charge at Bayreuth since the death of her husband, Richard Wagner, was not on friendly terms with him. Liszt's health had been failing for some time and his student, Alexander Siloti, asked him not to make the trip. Liszt did not follow Siloti's advice, but perhaps sensing that the end was near, he requested that Siloti visit him before he left Weimar. When they bade farewell to each other, the old man thanked Siloti for the work he had done to promote his compositions, telling him, "I will never forget it." 2

Already ill, Liszt arrived at Bayreuth late in July. Against doctor's orders, he attended a performance of Tristan, but had to be carried from his box before the performance was over. After almost a week in bed, he died late on the evening of July 31, 1886.

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1 Bernhard Hoff, "Liszt With Sophie Menter," Etude, Sept., 1887, p. 120.

2 Siloti, Liszt, p. 72.

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Although requests were made that Liszt be buried at Weimar and Budapest, Cosima Wagner quickly arranged for Liszt's burial at Bayreuth. A group of Liszt's students who arrived hurriedly at Bayreuth upon hearing of his death included Friedheim, Siloti, Reisenauer, Stavenhagen, and Weingartner. Of the older students, only Klindworth and Bache were present. While the Bayreuth festival continued without interruption, Liszt's students decided to form a guard of honor around his body. Siloti writes:

> Three days later, the funeral took place. The day before, Cosima Wagner's son-in-law told me that she had given orders that she and her children should walk immediately behind the coffin; after them the artists from the Bayreuth theatre, and after them we -- Liszt's pupils. I told him to tell Cosima Wagner that she could give any orders she pleased, but that my friends and I would walk immediately behind the coffin -- for this reason: That we were nearer in spirit to Liszt than all the inhabitants of Bayreuth. When it was objected that the order was already given, I replied that I would allow no change in my arrangement, but that Frau Wagner might, if she pleased, ask the police to send us away from the funeral altogether. I probably spoke with great determination, because everything happened according to my wishes, and we walked the whole of the way close behind the coffin. 1

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1 Siloti, Liszt, p. 73.

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CHAPTER II

LISZT'S IMPORTANCE IN HIS CENTURY

Franz Liszt's influence on his century cannot be overestimated. Generally recognized is Liszt's enormous influence on the development of piano playing, not only through his own works, which greatly extended the resources of the keyboard, but also through his teaching, which began while he was still concertizing and extended over a period of almost sixty years. Not as well known is the full extent of the influence of Liszt's compositions on those of other composers. Finally, mention should be made of the fact that Liszt aided the careers of innumerable composers, both before and after his retirement as a public performer. Before considering Liszt's importance as a pianist and teacher in greater detail, his influence as a composer and his role as a benefactor of other composers will be touched upon briefly.

The extent of Liszt's influence on other composers is seldom recognized in most accounts of the history of music. Liszt's compositions were a major influence on the works of Richard Wagner. Wagner wrote in a letter to Hans von Bulow:

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> There are many matters which we are quite frank about among ourselves (for instance that since my acquaintance with Liszt's compositions my treatment of harmony has become very different from what it was formerly), but it is indiscreet, to say the least, of friend Pohl to babble this secret to the whole world. 1

F. W. Riesberg, a student of Liszt, writes that at one class where Liszt's Petrarch Sonnet 104 was played, Liszt said, "Those augmented harmonies -- something new. Wagner used them in the Venusberg scene (Tannhäuser), published in 1845, whereas mine appeared in 1841."[2] Not only was Liszt an influence on composers in his own lifetime, but also on composers well into the 20th century. Bela Bartok, for example, wrote that he considered Liszt as one of the most important influences on his own style.[3]

As has already been noted, Liszt helped to promote the works of many composers during his years as a touring virtuoso. Later in his position as head of the Weimar orchestra and opera house, he exercised an important influence on contemporary tastes, tirelessly promoting the works of his contemporaries. In his later years, Liszt did his best to promote the works of the newer Russian school of composers

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1 Dent, Busoni (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 233.

2 F. W. Riesberg, "Gala Days With Liszt at Weimar," Etude, Nov., 1936, p. 738.

3 Bence Szabolcsi, The Twilight of Franz Liszt, trans. from Hungarian by András Deák (Budapest: Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1959), pp. 75-77.

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including Borodin, Mussourgsky, and several of their contemporaries. Numerous composers, including Grieg, Borodin, Smetena, and, of course, Wagner, have recorded the value they placed on Liszt's moral encouragement as an important aid in their careers.[1]

Liszt as a Pianist

Throughout his lifetime and even after his death, Liszt's fame as a pianist impeded the acceptance of his works as a composer. The impact Liszt's playing made on his listeners is difficult to realize today. In his career as a virtuoso, Liszt came into contact with virtually all of the important musicians of his time. Most of them left comments on his playing. Over a dozen of these comments have been assembled here in order to give some indication of the extraordinary regard in which Liszt's playing was held by his professional contemporaries:

Frederick Chopin wrote to the pianist Ferdinand Hiller:

> I write to you without knowing what my pen is scribbling because at this moment Liszt is playing my etudes and driving me out of my respectable thoughts. I would like to steal from him the way to play my own

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1 See, for example Borodin, by Serge Dianin, trans. from Russian by Robert Lord (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 98.

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etudes. 1

Felix Mendelssohn wrote in a letter to his mother:

> Liszt, on the other hand, possesses a degree of velocity and complete independence of finger, and a thoroughly musical feeling, which cannot be equalled. In a word, I have heard no performer whose musical perceptions extend to the very tips of his fingers and emanate directly from them as Liszt's do. 2

Robert Schumann wrote to his wife, Clara, of Liszt's playing:

> How extraordinarily he plays, and how daringly and madly, and again how tenderly and airily -- that I have never heard . . . today he played Chopin's studies, a piece from Rossini's 'Soirees' and other things, in such a manner that we all trembled and jubilated. 3

Sir Charles Hallé wrote in his autobiography:

> To return to my own experiences in 1836, I have to relate that a few days after having made the acquaintance of Chopin, I heard Liszt for the first time at one of his concerts and went home with a feeling of thorough dejection. Such marvels of executive skill I never could have imagined. He was a giant, and Rubinstein spoke the truth when, at the time when his own triumphs were the greatest, he said that, in comparison with Liszt, all other pianists were children. Chopin carried you with him into a dreamland, in which you would like to have dwelled forever; Liszt was all sunshine and dazzling splendour, subjugating his hearers with a power that none could withstand. For him there were no difficulties of execution, the most incredible seeming child's play under his fingers. One of the transcendent merits of his playing was the crystal-like clearness which never failed for a moment even in the most complicated and, to anyone else, impossible passages; it was as if he had photographed them in their minutest detail upon the ear

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1 Sitwell, Liszt, p. 26.

2 Mendelssohn, Letters, ed. by G. Selden-Goth (London: Paul Elek, 1846), p. 289.

3 Hill, Liszt, p. 61.

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> of the listener. The power he drew from his instrument was such as I have never heard since, but never harsh, never suggesting 'thumping.' 1

Describing Liszt's playing of the first movement of Beethoven's Sonata opus 27, number 2 (the "Moonlight" Sonata), at a private gathering in Paris, Hector Berlioz wrote:

> It was the shade of Beethoven, conjured up by the virtuoso to whose voice we were listening. We all trembled in silence and when the last chord had sounded no one spoke -- we were in tears. 2

Richard Wagner heard Liszt play during his days as a touring virtuoso but carried away with him no impression beyond being "stunned."[3] Years later, after coming into more intimate contact with Liszt, Wagner said of Liszt's playing of Beethoven's Sonatas opus 106 and 111:

> Those who never heard him play them in a friendly circle could not know their real meaning. 4

Many important musicians heard Liszt play after his retirement from public playing. For example, Edvard Grieg visited Liszt in Rome, where Liszt sight-read the manuscript of a violin sonata by Grieg, playing the violin part on the piano together with the piano part. Grieg described Liszt's performance in a letter:

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1 Hallé, Life and Letters, p. 37.
2 Huneker, Liszt (New York: Scribner's, 1911), p. 215.
3 Wagner, My Life (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1911), p.290.
4 Oscar Beringer, Fifty Year's Experience of Pianoforte Teaching and Playing (London: Bosworth, 1907), p.38.

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> He was literally all over the whole piano at once, without missing a note, and how he did play. With grandeur, beauty, genius, and unique comprehension. I think I laughed, laughed like an idiot. 1

Alexander Borodin wrote to his wife after hearing Liszt play at Weimar in 1877:

> What a wonderful execution! What expression! What astonishing light and shade -- pianissimo, piano, forte, fortissimo! What a crescendo and diminuendo, and what fire! 2

Camille Saint-Saëns wrote in his Outspoken Essays on Music:

> As I write, I picture myself once more in the home of Gustav Dore gazing upon that pallid face and those eyes which fascinated all listeners, whilst, beneath his apparently indifferent hands, in a wonderful variety of nuances, there moaned and wailed, murmured and roared the waves of the "Legende de Saint Francois de Paule marchant sur les flots." Never again will there be seen or heard anything to equal it. 3

Toward the end of his life, Saint-Saëns wrote:

> The memory of his playing consoles me for no longer being young. 4

A remarkable point about Liszt's ability then was that almost all of his competitors admitted his superiority. In the early part of his career Liszt engaged in a bitter

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1 Henry T. Finck, "Was Liszt the Paganini of the Piano?" Etude, August, 1916, p. 554.

2 Habets, Borodin and Liszt, trans. by Rosa Newmarch (London: Digby, 1895), p. 140.

3 Saint-Saëns, Outspoken Essays on Music (London: K. Paul, 1922), p. 79.

4 Saint-Saëns, "Franz Liszt," p. 242.

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rivalry with the Austrian pianist Sigismund Thalberg. Although Liszt was unanimously judged the victor in a pianistic confrontation with Thalberg, there were a few who never admitted Liszt's superiority to Thalberg. Later, however, all accepted Liszt's predominant position. Despite the colossal egos which necessarily accompanied their own artistry, such pianists as Anton Rubinstein, Carl Tausig, and Hans von Bülow readily admitted Liszt's superiority to themselves.

William Mason reports, "Rubinstein said to Mr. William Steinway in the year 1873: 'Put all the rest of us together and we would not make one Liszt.'"[1] Carl Tausig told Wilhelm von Lenz, "No mortal can compete with Liszt. He dwells upon a solitary height."[2] Hans von Bülow once said that if he, with his gigantic intellectual ability, Tausig, with his infallible technique, and Anton Rubinstein, with his tremendous emotional force, were put together, they could not form a Liszt.[3]

An anecdote from the autobiography of the American pianist William Mason illustrates the effect Liszt's playing had in comparison with that of other pianists. Mason had heard the Bohemian pianist Jules Schulhoff and was impressed by his "exquisitely beautiful touch." (Schulhoff's tone was also

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1 Mason, Memories, p. 111.
2 Lenz, Piano Virtuosos, p. 85.
3 Carl Lachmund, "Franz Liszt -- the Last Word in Piano Playing," Etude, Nov., 1915, p. 785.

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praised by Chopin and the great pedagogue, Theodore Leschitizsky). However, when Schulhoff visited Weimar and played on a piano immediately after Liszt had finished playing, Mason was shocked to find his playing suddenly dwarfed:

> About the latter's [Liszt's] playing there was intellectuality and the indescribable impressiveness of genius, which made Schulhoff's playing, with all its beauty, seem tame by comparison. 1

Although a strong animosity existed between Johannes Brahms and Liszt, Brahms still unhesitatingly admitted Liszt's ability as a pianist. In a conversation after Liszt's death with Liszt's pupil Frederick Lamond, Brahms agreed that Anton Rubinstein was by far the best pianist alive. Brahms then said to Lamond, "When Rubinstein is at his very best, I am faintly reminded of Liszt."[2]

Edward Dannreuther, who heard Liszt play many times at private gatherings, wrote:

> Performances, it may be of the same pieces, by younger men, such as Rubinstein or Tausig, left an impression as of Liszt at second hand, or of Liszt past his prime. None of Liszt's contemporaries or pupils were so spontaneous, individual and convincing in their playing; and none except Tausig, so infallible with their fingers and wrists. 3

William Mason summarizes the effect of Liszt's playing in his autobiography:

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1 Mason, Memories, p. 112-13.

2 Frederick Lamond, "The Indefinable Liszt," Etude, July, 1936, p. 419.

3 Beckett, Liszt (London: Dent, 1956), p. 137.

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> The difference between Liszt's playing and that of others was the difference between creative genius and interpretation. His genius flashed through every pianistic phrase, it illuminated a composition to its innermost recesses. 1

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1 Mason, Memories, p. 112.

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CHAPTER III

SOURCES

The primary source for Liszt's concepts and approaches to piano playing are his own writings on the subject. These would include indications found in the original editions of his own works, editions he made of works of other composers, and references made to piano playing in his numerous letters and other documents. Also of major significance is the twelve-volume Technische Studien of Liszt, published by Schuberth in Leipzig in 1886, the year of Liszt's death.[1] In a letter to Marie Lipsius,[2] Liszt wrote that the Technische Studien was not a "method", but rather only a group of exercises.[3] According to Liszt's biographer Peter Raabe, Liszt began compiling his Technische Studien in 1868 and did not finish the work until 1879.[4]

A second source of some value in an investigation of

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1 Franz Liszt, Technische Studien (Leipzig: J. Schuberth and Co., 1886). This work is available today from Carl Fischer Music Co., 312 South Wabash, Chicago, Ill.

2 Marie Lipsius was a writer on musical subjects who used the pseudonym of La Mara.

3 Liszt, Letters, II, p. 348.

4 Peter Raabe, Franz Liszt: Leben und Schaffen, II, (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1931), p. 244.

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Liszt's attitudes on piano playing are the writings and teaching of Carl Czerny, Liszt's only significant teacher. The influence Czerny had on Liszt was an important one and throughout his life Liszt remained grateful to Czerny. The correspondence between the two, which then continued until Czerny's death in 1857, gives ample indication of Liszt's high regard for Czerny. In editing the proofs of a short biography of himself printed in 1841, Liszt wrote in the margin of the section devoted to his boyhood, "Wish that some words of praise and gratitude could be added for Carl Czerny, who, during 18 months, gave me instruction free of charge."[1] The dedication of the final revision of Liszt's Transcendental Etudes, published in 1852 when Liszt was over forty years old, is a significant indication of Liszt's feelings toward Czerny:

To Carl Czerny
in token of gratitude, esteem and friendship
his pupil,
Franz Liszt

Czerny's ideas on piano playing, in regard to the manner in which they coincide with those of Liszt, will be examined in the course of this volume. Czerny's many books of technical studies, which contain numerous directions for manner of playing and practicing, give some indication of

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1 Johann Wilhelm von Cistern, Franz Liszt's Leben und Werken (Leipzig: Schuberth, 1841), p. 11. Liszt's corrections on the proofs of this work are quoted in "Views and Review," no author, Musical Quarterly, XXII (1936), 359.

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Czerny's ideas on piano playing. In addition, two other sources are of great value. The first of these is Czerny's Pianoforteschule, opus 500, of which the third part, entitled "Von der Vortrag" (Concerning Expression) coincides in many specific instances with Liszt's own ideas on expression.[1] The second source is Czerny's book, Letters to a Young Lady on the Art of Playing the Pianoforte.[2] A final source for Czerny's ideas on piano playing are comments by his students on his teaching. The great pedagogue Theodore Leschitizsky, for example, often mentioned his teacher,Czerny, in the many interviews on piano playing given late in his life.

A further source on Liszt's ideas on piano playing are the records kept by his students on his teaching. These are extensive and in some cases quite detailed. One of the most complete and detailed accounts of Liszt's ideas on piano playing and approach to music are the notes taken by Madame Auguste Boissier of the lessons which Liszt gave her daughter, Valerie, in Paris during the years 1831 and 1832.[3]

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1 Translated into English by Adolph Christiani, The Principles of Expression in Pianoforte Playing (New York: Harper and Bros., 1885), pp. 264-71.

2 Carl Czerny, Letters to a Young Lady on the Art of Playing the Pianoforte, translated by J. Hamilton (New York: Gordon, 1868).

3 Caroline Boissier, "Mme. Auguste Boissier," Liszt pédagogue (Paris: H. Champion, 1927).

Caroline Boissier, Liszt als lehrer; deutsch herausgegeben von Daniela Thode-von Bulow (Berlin: P.Zsolnay, 1930).

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Since Valerie Boissier was not on an advanced level, Liszt went into detail on points which he later expected students to know before coming to him. As he grew older, Liszt mentioned technique less and less, and in his final days at Weimar he demanded a competent technique from anyone who played for him, telling those whose technique he felt was not worth his time to "go to the conservatory."[1]

Liszt preferred working with advanced players, with whom he concentrated basically on interpretive points, although at times he suggested special exercises and ways of practicing. Even in teaching Valerie Boissier, it is clearly evident that Liszt's concepts of sound and his interpretive ideals were always entwined with his ideas on so-called "pure technique."

Another pupil of Liszt during the same period he taught Valerie Boissier was Wilhelm von Lenz.[2] In his book The Great Piano Virtuosos of Our Time, from personal acquaintance,[3] Lenz describes his lessons with Liszt in detail, as well as the lessons he had with his three other most famous teachers: Chopin, Tausig, and Henselt. Lenz' credibility has

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1 Siloti, Liszt, p. 23.

2 Today Lenz is perhaps best known for his book Beethoven et ses trois styles (Bruxelles: G. Stapleaux, 1854).

3 Lenz, The Great Piano Virtuosos of Our Time, trans. from German by Madeline Baker (New York: Schirmer, 1899).

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been attacked by several of Chopin's biographers as well as by Liszt's biographer, Lina Raaman. However, in each case Lenz is attacked for points other than any actual description of lessons. The specific points on piano playing and the general approach to music which Lenz ascribes to Liszt's teaching coincide with other reliable accounts and are at least of some value. Furthermore, Liszt himself partially verifies Lenz' report, for Liszt wrote in a letter to Lenz:

> The friendly remembrance that you have kept of our talks, under the name of lessons, of the Rue Montholon, is very dear to me, and the flattering testimony your book gives to these past hours encourages me to invite you to continue them at Weimar . . . 1

In addition to Lenz' book, the correspondence between Liszt and Lenz contains several detailed discussions of music, especially that of Beethoven.

Of some value in a study of Liszt's approach to piano playing is an examination of various aspects of his students' work: their editions, their published "methods," and reports of their teaching. Although the students' own ideas are often mingled with those of Liszt, one can nevertheless discern certain approaches which seem to be common to a great number of Liszt's students and recognize the probability that such approaches came from Liszt himself. To arrive at

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1 Liszt, Letters, I, p. 148.

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such recognition, however, entails the examination of a great deal of material in a variety of forms by a representative number of Liszt's students. Although this pursuit seems to lead far afield when viewed at short range, it becomes revealing in the long run.

The students who have been selected for this purpose represent the various periods of Liszt's teaching career. They include Hans von Bülow, William Mason, Karl Klindworth, Carl Tausig, A. Strelezski, Rafael Joseffy, Otto Neitzel, Amy Fay, Laura Kahrer, William Sherwood, Adolph Christiani, Moritz Rosenthal, Arthur Friedheim, Alfred Reisenauer, Martin Krause, Eugene D'Albert, W. Waugh Lauder, Emil Sauer, Frederick Lamond, Carl Lachmund, Jose Vianna D'Motta, F. W. Riesberg, Bettina Walker, and Felix Weingartner.[1]

At this point it is necessary to examine briefly what each of these students has to offer in the way of material which might shed light on the question under consideration here. The reader then will not only be able to get an idea of the quantity and type of material produced by these students, but also will become familiar enough with the students themselves to insure quick recognition when their names are mentioned in connection with various principles presented in the remaining

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1 The order of listing represents as nearly as possible a chronology of these students' associations with Liszt.

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chapters of this volume.

Some of the students listed above are famous in the history of music, others less so. Some produced material which is extremely significant for purposes of this study; other contributions are less significant. The amount of space each of these students receives in the remaining pages of this chapter depends on the importance of the student's career itself and the pertinence of his work to the problem under consideration.

Hans von Bülow, who arrived at Weimar in the summer of 1851 at the age of twenty, was one of the most important pupils to study with Liszt during the first Weimar period. Bülow later became one of the major pianists of his time. His playing was highly intellectual, characterized by a careful attention to the most minute details, great clarity of touch, and exactness in phrasing or "musical punctuation" (as Bülow himself called it). William Mason, who knew Bülow at Weimar and later heard him again when Bülow toured the United States, wrote of Bülow's playing:

> He had an extraordinary memory [1] and a remarkable technic. He was invariably accurate and precise in his

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1 Liszt once said to a visitor to Weimar in speaking of Bülow, "His memory is astounding. It is a never ending cause for wonderment." See Otis Boise, "An American Composer Visits Liszt," Musical Quarterly, XLIII (1957), 324.

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> careful observance of proper accentuation, [1] and the clear phrasing resulting therefrom made up a good deal for the absence of other desirable features, for his playing was far from being impassioned or temperamental. 2

Although he was known for his irritable and sarcastic personality,[3] Bülow spent much of his time teaching. On several occasions he took over the classes at Weimar at Liszt's request when Liszt was indisposed. Notes taken by students of classes and lessons with Bülow appear in many periodicals at the turn of the century.

Clear and precise explanations of certain principles which formed the basis of Liszt's approach to music can be found in some of the numerous works which Bülow edited. Bülow's edition of Bach's Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue contains extensive directions for phrasing and declamation. Of it Walter Bache, an English student of Liszt, wrote in a letter to a friend, " . . . it is splendid -- quite equivalent to having had a lesson on it from Liszt."[4]

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1 Mason's mention of "accentuation" is significant, for this was one of the most important principles Liszt stressed in his teaching.

2 Mason, Memories, p. 238.

3 Bülow perhaps reached his high point as a master of the insult when he told a girl who had just finished playing Liszt's Mazeppa that she had only one qualification to play the piece -- the soul of a horse. See Berthold Kellerman, Errinerungen (Zurich: 1932), pp.25-26.

4 Constance Bache, Brother Musicians, p. 163.

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Liszt expressed his approval of Bülow's edition of the Beethoven Sonatas.[1] The edition is filled with comments on practicing, fingering, and interpretation. Although it contains markings which are not those of the composer, it is valuable nevertheless for its many interpretive suggestions and analyses of the Sonatas.[2] At a later point in this volume it will be demonstrated that this edition definitely reflects Liszt's basic approach to the music of Beethoven.

In 1868 Bülow published an annotated edition of Cramer's Etudes, with extensive directions on practicing. These methods of practicing reveal a strong influence of Liszt, for they are in many ways similar to methods of practicing advocated by Liszt. Other students of Liszt also used them: Carl Tausig, Rafael Joseffy, and Mortiz Rosenthal.[3]

The American pianist, William Mason, arrived at Weimar on April 14, 1853, and remained until July of 1854. Liszt had great respect for Mason's abilities as a pianist. After Mason returned to the United States, he and Liszt carried on a correspondence which lasted until Liszt's death.

Following his return from Europe, Mason became a major figure on the American musical scene until his death in

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1 Amy Fay, Music Study in Germany (New York: Dover, 1965), p. 238.

2 In this edition done in collaboration with Sigmund Lebert, Bulow edited all of the works from opus 53 on, and of the earlier ones, only opus 13, 26, 27, and 31 #3.

3 See Chapter VII of this study.

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1908. Many of the leading pianists who toured the United States stopped for visits at Mason's home in New York. These included Thalberg, Anton Rubinstein and Bülow. Many important American pianists studied with him before leaving for study in Europe, some of them resuming their lessons with him after their return. One of his most important students was William S. Sherwood, an American pianist who, after working with Mason, went to Europe and studied with Liszt.

James Huneker wrote of Mason's playing, "I am sure those who had the pleasure of listening to William Mason recall the exquisite purity of his tone, the limpidity of his scales, and the neat finish of his phrasing."[1] Even critics who were antagonistic to Mason admitted his technical mastery, and for this reason his extensive writings on technique are of great value, especially since they were strongly influenced by Liszt. As a pianist, Mason was noted for his "pearly touch" in passagework, a characteristic often mentioned in connection with playing of all of Liszt's better students. This touch is one which Mason discusses thoroughly in his works on technique.

In 1878 Mason published his Technics,[2] a work which contains detailed explanations and diagrams of the use of the

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1 James Huneker, "Old Fogy's Comments," Etude, March, 1905, p. 107.

2 Mason, Technics (Boston: Ditson, 1878).

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fingers for the various touches used in piano playing. Mason sent a copy of this work to Liszt, who answered expressing approval of certain aspects of the work. In 1889, Mason published the first volume of a four-volume work entitled Touch and Technic.[1] The first volume was actually a revision of his earlier Technics. It is devoted entirely to the "two-finger exercise" which had been recommended to Mason by Liszt. In 1890-92, Mason published the remaining three volumes of his Touch and Technic: Volume II -- scales, Volume III -- arpeggios, and Volume IV -- octaves and bravura.

Mason based his entire Touch and Technic on the treatment of the various forms of technique with a very thorough system of varied accentuation. It has already been mentioned that Liszt expressed approval of Mason's earlier Technics, a volume which presents the same principles. Mason's Touch and Technic was highly praised by many of the leading pianists of his time, including Rafael Joseffy and Paderewski. Today it is virtually forgotten.

Mason's autobiography, Memories of a Musical Life, published in 1901, is a gold mine of information on the nineteenth century.[2] In addition to detailed descriptions of his

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1 Mason, Touch and Technic (Philadelphia: Presser, 1899). Consists of Vol. I only.

Mason, Touch and Technic (Philadelphia: Presser, 1890-92). Vol. I-IV.

2 Mason, Memories of a Musical Life (New York: Century Co., 1901).

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lessons with Liszt, Mason also describes his lessons with his earlier teachers, Moscheles and Dreyschock. He includes information on methods of practicing and opinions on various points in piano playing of such acquaintances as Thalberg and Anton Rubinstein. In the course of the work, Mason describes his friendship with Schumann, Wagner, and Brahms. At the end of the book, Mason compares pianists appearing in New York in the 1890's with those he heard earlier in his career, especially in regard to changes in style of performance.

Karl Klindworth, who studied at Weimar at the same time as Mason, later distinguished himself as a teacher and editor rather than as a player. Klindworth's editions of Beethoven and Chopin were widely used in Europe during the last century. Although certainly not reliable as urtexts, Klindworth's editions are valuable because of their interpretive ideas and especially their fingering.

Klindworth's editions were highly respected by other students of Liszt. Hans von Bülow once advised a student to use Klindworth's editions of the Beethoven Sonatas rather than his own. Rafael Joseffy, a pupil of Liszt and Tausig, considered Klindworth a genius at fingering, telling his pupil Edwin Hughes, "Klindworth has often expressed

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things of more importance in his mere marks of fingering than Bülow does in his notes. With Klindworth no notes are needed; every finger talks." At another time Joseffy said, "as you study Klindworth's Chopin, you will always learn something valuable about fingering."[1]

There is no way of proving beyond question that Klindworth's fingering or interpretive suggestions came from Liszt. However, Klindworth's editions were obviously influenced by Liszt to some degree. Specific proof that Klindworth made use of Liszt's ideas in his editions come from Arthur Friedheim, another Liszt student. In his own edition of the Chopin Etudes, Friedheim mentions Klindworth's edition of the Etudes in discussing the performance of the Etude in F minor, opus 25, number 2:

> The pedal-markings here are calculated in the main for small hands. Liszt employed the pedal far less -- only for binding, in fact, or for mysteriously veiling some few short strains. But, from the very beginning, he did hold down each bass note in hand until the next change, as Klindworth indicates. The effect was admirable, and Chopin himself unquestionably performed the piece in a similar manner. 2

In 1855 a fourteen-year old boy named Carl Tausig came to Weimar to study with Liszt. Near the end of his life,

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1 Edwin Hughes, "Rafael Joseffy's Contribution to Piano Technique," Musical Quarterly, II (1916), 357-58.

2 Chopin, Etudes, edited by Arthur Friedheim (New York: G. Schirmer, 1916), p. 6.

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Liszt said that he considered Tausig the greatest talent ever to have come under his hands.[1] William Mason recounts:

> Many years after I left Weimar a relative of mine met Liszt in Rome. She had a short time previous to this heard Rubinstein in concert, and was in a state of great enthusiasm about his playing and so expressed herself to Liszt. His sole comment was, "Have you heard Tausig?" The inference was that those who had heard Rubinstein and not Tausig had missed hearing the greater of the two. I think Liszt regarded Tausig as the best of all his pupils. 2

Liszt paid Tausig's expenses at Weimar and devoted many hours to teaching the boy. He never ceased to marvel at Tausig's abilities, often saying of him, "He will be the inheritor of my playing."[3] In return, Tausig idolized Liszt and made every attempt to imitate him, not only in his playing, but even in his personal habits. Wagner relates that the sixteen-year-old Tausig constantly smoked powerful Hungarian cigars in imitation of his hero.[4] After teaching the boy for a time, Liszt took Tausig with him as piano soloist when he returned to the scenes of his own earlier triumphs to conduct concerts of his own works.

Tausig's sudden death from typhoid in 1871, at the age of twenty-nine, was a cruel blow to Liszt, who could never reconcile himself to Tausig's passing. On his last visit to

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1 Amy Fay, Music Study, p. 250.
2 Mason, Memories, pp. 175-76.
3 Amy Fay, Music Study, p. 250.
4 Wagner, My Life, no translator. (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1911), p. 683.

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England in 1886, a few months before his own death, Liszt met Oscar Beringer, an Englishman who had studied with Tausig. Beringer reports: "Liszt pathetically remarked to me that he 'wondered why it should have pleased God to take away our dear little Tausig, when there were so many fools left on His earth, who could so easily have been spared.'"[1]

Six days after Tausig's death Liszt wrote to the biographer Marie Lipsius in answer to a request for some information on Tausig:

> In what year of the fifties his father brought him to Weimar, I do not now recollect; but I do remember how greatly astonished I was at his extraordinary talent when I first heard him play. The intellectual claws and pinions were already giving signs of mighty power in the youth who was scarcely fourteen years of age and somewhat delicate in appearance. I felt some compunction in undertaking to give him further instruction, determined not to undertake the task, and therefore informed the father that in the case of such a stupendous organization the wisest plan was to leave it to a free, independent development without a teacher. However Tausig insisted upon remaining with me. He studied immoderately; as a rule kept very much to himself while in Weimar, and got into various little scrapes in consequence of his quick ironical humor. I was accused of being overindulgent with him, and of thus spoiling him; but I really could not have acted otherwise, and I loved him with all my heart. On various occasions when I had to undertake short journeys in connection with the performances of my works he accompanied me; among other places to Dresden, Prague, and Vienna. Subsequently he lived in Vienna for some length of time, and got up some concerts there with the view of having some Symphonic Poems performed which

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1 Oscar Beringer, Fifty Years Experience of Pianoforte Teaching and Playing, p.40.

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> he himself conducted -- but he was unable to get a proper start. He had to struggle on and to endure many privations before attaining the success he deserved. His brilliant vocation did not become firmly established until a few years ago, in Berlin, Leipzig, etc.
>
> In the spring of '69 I met Tausig in Paris (after the Tannhäuser scandal), and returned to Weimar for the Tonkünstler-Versmmlung. Bülow conducted the Faust Symphony by heart (at the rehearsals most accurately mentioning the letters!), and Tausig played the A major Concerto marvellously. Since then I have seem him only twice: Last May at the Tonkünstler-Versammlung in Weimar (where he played Beethoven's Eb major Concerto) and now . . . 1

Five years before his death, Tausig had set up a school of piano playing in Berlin (Die Schule des Höheren Clavierspiels) in 1866. The school lasted until 1870. Among those who studied there were Rafael Joseffy; Max Pinner, an American who went on to study with Liszt; Oscar Beringer, who also taught at the school; Vera Timanoff, who later studied with Liszt; and Amy Fay, an American girl who reported some detailed descriptions of her lessons with Tausig in various American periodicals, as well as the more general description in her book, Music Study in Germany.

The relationship between Liszt and Tausig was such that we might well look for the influence of Liszt in Tausig's works as an editor, which are remarkably extensive for his short lifetime. Tausig's editions include a selection of 29

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1 Liszt, Letters, II, pp. 207-8.

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studies from Clementi's Gradus ad Parnassum, a selection from the Well-Tempered Clavier of Bach, an edition of Beethoven's G major Concerto, and numerous other works. Tausig's fingering was regarded as the epitome of this art by such pedagogues as Rafael Joseffy, Ferruccio Busoni, and Ludwig Deppe.

Tausig's selection of 29 studies from Clementi's Gradus ad Parnassum is an important source for ideas on fingering and methods of practicing.[1] His Daily Exercises, published posthumously with extensive notes by his friend Heinrich Erlich, is sometimes regarded as the most valuable single book of exercises for advanced pianists.[2] Erlich's notes give a thorough explanation of Tausig's methods of practicing and working on pieces, all of which were undoubtedly influenced by Liszt.

Closely connected with Tausig's school is another possible source of information on Liszt's basic approaches to music: the writings of a teacher of theory and composition at the school, C. F. Weitzmann. This pedagogue was highly respected by both Liszt and Tausig, and according to several of Liszt's students, Weitzmann's approach to the study of music literature and his interpretive suggestions were

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1 Clementi, Gradus ad Parnassum, edited by Carl Tausig, trans. by T. Baker (New York: Schirmer, 1903).

2 Tausig, Daily Exercises, edited by H. Erlich (New York: Schirmer, n.d.).

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identical to the basic approach to music taken by Liszt himself. Weitzmann's closeness to Liszt is demonstrated by the fact that he contributed the fourth variation (a canon) to Liszt's Totentanz.

Weitzmann wrote extensively on musical subjects, including a History of Pianoforte Playing and Pianoforte Literature[1] and a biography of his friend Tausig entitled The Last of the Virtuosos.[2] Weitzmann also wrote the preface to Tausig's selection from Clementi's Gradus. In 1877 E. M. Bowman, an American pupil of Weitzmann published Weitzmann's Manual of Musical Theory,[3] an explanation of Weitzmann's teachings published with the permission and approval of Weitzmann. This work contains some specific instructions in regard to the performance of various musical examples.

Walter Bache studied with Liszt in Italy during the years 1862 to 1865 and later visited classes at Weimar right up to the time of Liszt's death. Bache describes his lessons with Liszt in some detail in letters written home during these years. Many of Bachė's letters are published in a book by his

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1 C. F. Weitzmann, A History of Pianoforte Playing, trans. by Dr. Theodore Baker (New York: G. Schirmer, 1893).

2 Weitzmann, Der letzte der virtuosen (Leipzig: C. F. Kahnt, 1868).

3 Bowman, Weitzmann's Manual of Musical Theory New York: Pond and Co., 1877).

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sister Constance, entitled Brother Musicians.[1] This book contains much valuable information on Liszt, including very detailed descriptions of his final visit to England.

The largest body of literature on Liszt's teaching comes from those who worked with him from 1869 until his death in 1886, his final period at Weimar. The first of this group was an English pianist named Strelezki who came to Weimar in 1869 with an introduction from his former teacher, Nicholas Rubinstein. In 1887 Strelezki published a book entitled Conversations with Liszt, which contains some valuable, detailed accounts of his lessons.[2]

Rafael Joseffy was the most important pianist to study with Liszt during the earlier years of the final Weimar period. Joseffy, born in 1852 in Hunafalu, Hungary, first studied with Brauer (who also taught Stephen Heller) in Budapest. In 1866 he went to Leipzig to study with Moscheles and in 1868 to Tausig in Berlin, where he remained for two years. Joseffy then spent the summers of 1871 and 1872 studying with Liszt before he made his debut in Berlin in 1872.

As a pianist Joseffy was noted for his incredible technical ability, which some observers said approached that of his teacher, Tausig. Joseffy specialized in effects of

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1 Constance Bache, Brother Musicians, (London: Methuen and Co., 1901).

2 Quoted in Newman, The Man Liszt and Beckett, Liszt.

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great delicacy and velocity and was unsurpassed in his use of the so-called "pearly touch." An American visitor at Weimar, the composer Otis B. Boise, reports that Liszt "heard Joseffy in Vienna just before the latter's departure for America and pronounced his playing delicious."[1] Before leaving Europe, Joseffy taught Moritz Rosenthal, who later said that he owed all of his technical development to Joseffy.[2]

Joseffy spent the first 27 years of his life in Europe, and his last 36 years in the United States. He came to America to head the piano department of the National Conservatory in New York, founded by Mrs. Jeanette Thurber. (Antonin Dvorák was brought to America at the same time to head the composition department of this school.) Joseffy toured extensively during his first years in America and most American musical periodicals declared that he was the best pianist appearing before the public at that time. In an issue of the Etude magazine in 1886 one writer, speculating on which European pianists would tour the United States during the following season, wrote, "D'Albert is in no hurry as he knows he will have to encounter the mighty reputation of Rafael Joseffy."[3]

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1 Boise, "An American Composer Visits Liszt," Musical Quarterly, XLIII (1957), 324.

2 Edwin Hughes, "Rafael Joseffy's Contribution to Piano Technique," Musical Quarterly, II (1916), p. 359.

3 James Huneker, "News of the Month," Etude, Sept., 1886, p. 227.

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Many of Joseffy's students in America kept notes on his teaching and published them in various American periodicals. His students in the United States included James Gibbons Huneker and Edwin Hughes. Joseffy edited the complete works of Chopin and also many of Liszt's works, Especially valuable is a selection of etudes by various composers which he edited in 1902, with very extensive directions for practicing.[1]

In 1880, soon after his arrival in America, Joseffy published a set of Daily Studies.[2] These are almost identical to exercises which Otto Neitzel and W. W. Lauder report having been suggested by Liszt to his students during the final years at Weimar. Joseffy had a great interest in pianistic analysis and his School of Advanced Piano Playing[3] as well as his First Studies for the Piano[4] contain clear, detailed instructions in addition to exercises. Joseffy was strongly influenced by Tausig, and often mentioned him in his teaching.

Otto Neitzel spent the summer of 1873 in Weimar

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1 Etudes for the Piano, Instructive edition, edited with directions for practice by Rafael Joseffy (New York: G. Schirmer, 1901).

2 Joseffy, Daily Studies (New York: Schuberth, 1880).

3 Joseffy, School of Advanced Piano Playing (New York: Schirmer, 1902).

4 Joseffy, First Studies for the Piano (New York: Schirmer, 1913).

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with Liszt after having studied for a number of years with Theodore Kullak. He later taught at the Moscow Conservatory. Neitzel records that Liszt did teach from the technical side at times, in addition to extensive work on interpretation. Specific exercises connected with the playing of scales suggested by Liszt to his students are described by Neitzel.[1]

Amy Fay arrived at Weimar in May of 1873 and remained until September of that year. Earlier she had studied with Tausig and Theodore Kullak, and after leaving Liszt she became a disciple of Ludwig Deppe. While studying in Europe she wrote home a series of letters which were published in her home town paper. It was at the suggestion of her neighbor, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, that she published the letters in the form of a book entitled Music Study in Germany.[2] This book, published in 1881, has had more than twenty printings and has been translated into French and German.

At the time she studied with Liszt, Amy Fay was 29 years old. Readers of her book often picture her as much younger. Her book contains perceptive accounts and impressions of Liszt, Tausig, and many other artists and musicians

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1 Otto Neitzel, "Important Observations Upon Piano Practice," Etude, April, 1911. p. 231.

2 Amy Fay, Music Study in Germany (New York: Dover, 1965).

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she encountered. In the course of the book, she includes some information of value on Liszt's playing and teaching. Amy Fay also wrote articles for American musical periodicals. Her writings for the Etude magazine contain some detailed accounts of her lessons with Tausig and Deppe. She died in 1928 at the age of eighty-four.

Laura Kahrer, an eighteen-year-old girl who had studied in Russia with Adolph Henselt, was also at Weimar in 1873.[1] She was considered a remarkable technician by another of her teachers, Hans von Bülow. Laura Kahrer's notes of her lessons reveal that Liszt sometimes made up stories or word pictures for pieces in order to help students interpret them. Her notes include the pictorial allusions Liszt made for each of the 24 Chopin Preludes.

The writings of the American pianist William Sherwood comprise one of the most valuable sources of specific information on Liszt's approach to piano playing. Sherwood studied with William Mason, and then traveled to Europe where he studied with Theodore Kullak, Deppe, and Liszt. Sherwood's detailed description of his lessons with C. F. Weitzmann, with whom he studied while taking piano lessons from Kullak,

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1 She later became Laura Kahrer-Rappoldi.

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provide the link between the teachings of Liszt and Weitzmann, for he ties the two together in terms of specific principles. Sherwood is also one of the rare sources to include observations on Liszt's playing from a physiological standpoint. Sherwood returned to the United States in 1876, where he established the Sherwood Music School in Chicago, concertized extensively throughout the United States, taught, and wrote articles for many American periodicals. He died in 1911.

It is through the writings of Sherwood that the significance of the writings of Adolph Christiani, a relatively obscure student of Liszt, is brought to light. After Sherwood had returned to the United States, he was visited by Christiani, who showed Sherwood the manuscript of a book he had been compiling called The Principles of Expression in Pianoforte Playing. After looking over Christiani's manuscript, Sherwood exclaimed, "That is just what I am trying to do in my regular practice; that is just what I learned from Weitzmann and Liszt."[1]

Christiani hoped to get Sherwood to write a recommendation for his book, but Sherwood refused, thinking that

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1 William Sherwood, "Musical Europe of Yesterday," Etude, March, 1909, p. 159.

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Christiani was claiming the principles listed in the book as his own rather than giving credit to Liszt and others.[1] Christiani died in 1885, and his book was published the same year.[2] Christiani's regard for his teacher Liszt is shown in the dedication of the book:

to
FRANZ LISZT
the great magician of the pianoforte
THIS WORK
in admiration of his matchless genius

and in recognition of his sympathetic kindness

Is Dutifully Inscribed

by A. F. Christiani

This book contains thorough and detailed explanations and discussions of principles which, according to Liszt's own letters, as well as the testimony of Sherwood and others, formed the basis of Liszt's approach to music.

After hearing twelve-year old Moritz Rosenthal play in 1876, Liszt said to Bösendorfer, the piano manufacturer who had brought Rosenthal to the audition, "In diesem Knaben steckt ein Künstler der nicht stecken bleiben wird."[3] Liszt's pun on the word "stecken" can be roughly translated, "In this boy is stuck an artist who will never get stuck."

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1 Ibid., p. 159.

2 Adolph Christiani, The Principles of Expression in Pianoforte Playing (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1885).

3 Rosenthal, "The Apprentice Years of a Master," Etude, November, 1938, p. 707.

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Rosenthal went on to become one of the great virtuosos of his time. He was noted for his sensational technical ability, characterized by a remarkable, unfailing clarity even in the most difficult passages.

Rosenthal first studied with Chopin's pupil, Carl Mikuli, and then with Rafael Joseffy, who was in his early twenties at the time. It was from Joseffy that Rosenthal learned certain concepts of piano playing, especially in regard to brilliant passagework, which he later found to be identical with those of Liszt. Rosenthal, at the age of fourteen, went to study with Liszt at Joseffy's suggestion.

Rosenthal continued to study with Liszt until the latter's death in 1886. Despite the fact that Rosenthal was considered by some to be the greatest technician then playing before the European public, he still returned to Weimar every summer to study with Liszt. During his long life, Rosenthal contributed many articles and interviews to various musical periodicals. In these can be found many references to his study with Liszt. Rosenthal also edited several of Liszt's works, including the Transcendental Etudes.

In 1877 the Russian composer Alexander Borodin visited Liszt at Weimar. Borodin's diaries and letters

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describing the time he spent with Liszt have been compiled by Alfred Habets in a book entitled Borodin and Liszt.[1] This is a valuable source not only for information on the classes at Weimar, but also for the picture it gives of Liszt's personality, for Borodin viewed Liszt from an angle very different from that of the many students who worked with Liszt during this period.

In 1880 Arthur Friedheim, a student of Anton Rubinstein, came to study with Liszt. In addition to studying with Liszt, Friedheim also became his private secretary for a time. As a result, Friedheim came into more constant and intimate contact with Liszt than most of Liszt's other later students.

As a pianist, Friedheim was widely respected by his colleagues. C. F. Weitzmann, the friend of Liszt and Tausig, wrote that Friedheim "in regard to brilliancy and precision of technique has few rivals. He is in the main a Liszt player, and with reference to the latter's work is a reliable maintainer of the direct tradition."[2] William Mason, in writing of the concerts given in New York in the 1890's, mentions:

. . . Arthur Friedheim, whose recent concert was brilliant

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1 Alfred Habets, Borodin and Liszt, trans. by Rosa Newmarch (London: Digby, 1895).

2 Weitzmann, A History of Pianoforte Playing and Pianoforte Literature, p. 196.

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> in a high degree, and who on that occasion gave an interpretation of Liszt's great Sonata in B minor which it seems to me was not surpassed by the master himself -- and I have heard Liszt play this work many times. 1

Friedheim edited several works of Liszt as well as the Chopin Etudes. Friedheim's edition of the Chopin Etudes is considered by many pedagogues today as the finest edition of this work. In his Introduction to the Etudes, Friedheim writes that his purpose in making this edition was to reproduce Liszt's playing of the various Etudes as nearly as possible.[2] Friedheim's notes to the edition include several specific descriptions of Liszt's playing of certain of the Etudes.

Friedheim's autobiography, Life and Liszt, was published in 1961, almost thirty years after his death, edited by Theodore Bullock.[3] This work is a description of Liszt as a man by one who knew him intimately. Although when it first appeared some reviewers complained that Friedheim did not reveal the "secret" of Liszt's playing and teaching, less superficial readers of this volume may come to realize that the description of Liszt by Friedheim gives a more thorough insight into Liszt's approach to life and music than may be

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1 Mason, Memories, p. 270.
2 Chopin, Etudes, ed. by Arthur Friedheim, pp. 1-2.
3 Arthur Friedheim, Life and Liszt, ed. by Theodore Bullock (New York: Taplinger, 1961).

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immediately evident.

Alfred Reisenauer, whom Liszt once described as "unfortunately inclined to obesity,"[1] came to Weimar in 1881, and became one of Liszt's favorite students. Before coming to Liszt, Reisenauer had studied with the well-known pedagogue, Louis Kohler, with whom Liszt carried on a rather large correspondence, often discussing various aspects of piano playing and music. Reisenauer concertized over the entire world after leaving Liszt. Although he left no writings on Liszt, Reisenauer did give an extremely valuable interview to James Francis Cooke, the first editor of the Etude magazine, in which he describes very explicitly Liszt's manner of teaching and his approach to music.[2]

Another student who came to Weimar in 1881 was Eugene D'Albert, who in Liszt's opinion had the largest amount of talent of any student to come to him since Tausig.[3] Still in his teens, D'Albert's playing caused a sensation at his first concerts in Vienna and Berlin. One European critic wrote of D'Albert, "He plays everything so fast that he is compelled to rest from time to time, in order to let the tempo catch up with him."[4] D'Albert's editions of various

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1 Sitwell, Liszt, p. 314.

2 Cooke, Great Pianists on Piano Playing (Philadelphia: Presser, 1917), pp. 222-235.

3 Carl Lachmund, "Franz Liszt," Etude, Nov., 1915. p. 785.

4 Quoted in Etude, 1887, p. 43.

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works of Beethoven and Liszt include some comments on Liszt's playing of these works and are valuable for their many unusual fingerings, which show the influence of Liszt and Tausig.

Alexander Siloti, a pupil of both Anton and Nicholas Rubinstein, came to Weimar in 1883. In his years of concertizing, Siloti was noted for the abandon and climax of his playing. His playing of Liszt's Totentanz was regarded as unequalled. Siloti returned to Russia after a few years of concertizing, where he taught until the Russian revolution. He left Russia in 1919, and settled in the United States in 1922.

Siloti edited several works of Liszt. His edition of Un Sospiro shows how greatly Liszt altered the piece in performing it near the end of his life. Siloti's book, My Memories of Liszt, first published in Russia and later translated into English, is one of the most valuable sources of information on Liszt and the last years at Weimar.[1]

Martin Krause arrived at Weimar in 1883, the same year as Alexander Siloti. Krause was very interested in Liszt's teaching from a pedagogical point of view. He later

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1 Siloti, My Memories of Liszt, trans. from Russian, no translator given, (London: Methven Simpson, Ltd., no date).

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taught extensively, numbering Claudio Arrau among his pupils. At Weimar, Krause noticed Liszt's "wonderful faculty for recognizing and bringing out each pupil's strong point and special capacity."[1] Krause later published a condensed version of Liszt's Technische Studien.[2]

W. Waugh Lauder, a Canadian pianist, spent some time in Italy with Liszt during these late years. Lauder lived most of his life in the United States and is credited by some with introducing the "lecture-recital" in America. Lauder is a source for some of Liszt's specific suggestions to advanced pupils as to which exercises he considered worthwhile for practice.

Emil Sauer, a pupil of Nicholas Rubinstein, spent the summers of 1884 and 1885 in Weimar. Although he told the other students at Weimar that he considered Anton Rubinstein a greater composer than Liszt, Sauer later made a twelve-volume edition of the works of Liszt. Sauer's autobiography, Meine Welt, published in 1901, contains detailed accounts of his time spent at Weimar, although he spends more time discussing external conditions which irritated him there than he does describing the actual teaching of Liszt.[3]

The Scottish pianist Frederick Lamond came to Liszt

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1 Weitzmann, History of Pianoforte Playing, pp. 196-97.

2 Liszt, Technische Studien, in 2 Bänden bearb. und hrsg. von Martin Krause (Leipzig: Schuberth, 1901).

3 Sauer, Meine Welt (Stuttgart: W. Spemann, 1901).

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in 1885 after studying with Bulow. Lamond's London debut took place in 1886, during Liszt's final visit to England, with Liszt himself present. After Liszt's death, Lamond spent some time studying with Anton Rubinstein. Lamond wrote several periodical articles in which he discusses his study with Liszt.

Other students from this final period included: Carl Lachmund, an American pianist who studied with Liszt from 1881 to 1884 and later wrote numerous periodical articles on his years with Liszt; Jose Vianna D'Motta, a Portugese pianist who came to Liszt in 1885, later wrote a biography of Liszt and headed the Lisbon Conservatory from 1919 to 1938; and F. W. Riesberg, an American pupil who later wrote some detailed and valuable descriptions of Liszt's teaching in several periodicals.

Further sources of information on the classes at Weimar during this final period are Bettina Walker's My Musical Experiences[1] and Felix Weingartner's Buffets and Rewards.[2]

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1 Bettina Walker, My Musical Experiences (London: Bentley, 1892).

2 Felix Weingartner, Buffets and Rewards (London: Hutcheson and Co., 1937).

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CHAPTER IV

LISZT'S RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS PUPILS

In his younger days Liszt's moody temperament often affected his teaching. Both Madame Boissier and Lenz report that when he was in a bad mood Liszt gave lessons which were of little value. Later, Liszt learned to control his moods, and although he retained a remarkably sharp brand of sarcasm to the end of his life, he let his bad temper get the better of him on only a few occasions during these later years.

During the first Weimar period, Liszt had only a few pupils, and at this time he gave far more detailed lessons and personal attention to his students than he was able to give at a later period. Hans von Bülow wrote to his mother soon after his arrival at Weimar:

> Enough that although overwhelmed by work, he regularly devotes two consecutive hours a week to my development as a pianist . . . Apart from the lessons I see him almost every day, either in the afternoon in company with other artists or with strangers, or else at the family supper in the evening. In a word, Liszt does far more for me than fill his promises. I am happy to be able to do some small services for him, such as copying his manuscripts, or doing some of his correspondence. 1

William Mason, who arrived at Weimar in 1853, wrote:

I learned soon after my arrival at Weimar that he

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1 Hill, Liszt, p. 91.

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> never took pay from his pupils, neither would he bind himself to give regular lessons at stated periods. He wished to avoid obligations as far as possible, and to feel free to leave Weimar for short periods when so inclined -- in other words, to go and come as he liked. His idea was that the students whom he accepted should all be far enough advanced to practice and prepare themselves without routine instruction, and expected them to be ready whenever he gave them an opportunity to play. 1

Mason wrote of his lessons:

> It was necessary for the pupil to have an absolutely sure foundation to benefit from Liszt's instruction. If he had that preparation Liszt could develop the best there was in him. 2

When Mason arrived at Weimar, Liszt had a total of three pupils: Karl Klindworth, Dionys Pruckner, and Mason himself. Mason continues:

> Joachim Raff, however, we regarded as one of us, for although not at the time a pupil of Liszt, he had been in former years, and was now constantly in association with the master, acting frequently in the capacity of private secretary. Hans von Bülow had left Weimar not long before my arrival, and was then on his first regular concert tour. Later he returned for short visits, and I became well acquainted with him. We constituted as it were, a family, for while we had our apartments in the city, we all enjoyed the freedom of the two lower rooms in Liszt's home, and were at liberty to come and go as we liked. 3

Mason's description of his time spent at Weimar reveals the close association Liszt's students of this period had with Liszt and his musical activities. At one concert Liszt had Mason, Klindworth and Pruckner perform Bach's Triple Concerto. Mason reports that he and the other students acted

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1 Mason, Memories, p. 90.
2 Ibid., p. 115.
3 Ibid., p. 91.

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as claquers at the performances of Wagner's operas. On one occasion Mason heard Liszt give the Hungarian violinist Remenyi "a lesson in conception and style of performance" on the "Kreutzer" Sonata of Beethoven. Sundays at Liszt's home were frequently devoted to chamber music. The violinist Henry Wieniawski often visited and would play first violin in quartet performances at these gatherings. Joachim sometimes visited Liszt after he left Weimar and took part in these chamber music sessions.

In this first period at Weimar, Liszt considered his students so much a part of his own household that he felt free to give them advice on matters that had nothing to do with piano playing. The following quotation from a letter Liszt wrote to William Mason shortly after Mason had returned to America reveals the familiar manner in which Liszt dealt with his students at this period:

> Do you continue your familiar intercourse with the Old Cognac in the New World, my dear Mason? Let me again commend measure to you, an essential quality for musicians. In truth, I am not too well qualified to extol the quantity of this quality, for, if I remember rightly, I have often employed tempo rubato when I was giving my concerts (work which I would not begin again for anything in the world), and even quite recently I have written a long symphony in three parts, called "Faust" (without text or vocal parts), in which the horrible measures 7/8, 7/4, 5/4 alternate with common time and 3/4. By virtue of which I conclude that you should be satisfied with 7/8 of a little bottle of old cognac in the evening, and

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never exceed five quarts!

Raff, in his first volume of "Wagner Frage," has thoroughly realized something like five quarts of doctrinal sufficiency, but that is an unadvisable example to copy in a critical matter, and above all in the matter of cognac and other spirits!

My dear Mason, excuse these bad jokes, justified only by my good intentions; that you may bear yourself valiantly, physically and morally, is the most cordial wish of

Your very friendly affectionate
F. Liszt

In a postscript, Liszt adds:

Cornelius, Pohl, Raff, Pruckner, Schreiber, and all the new school of new Weimar send you their best remembrances, to which I add a cordial shake hand. 1
F.L. 2

In later years, Liszt kept much more aloof from his students, who regarded him with awe.

Max Meyer Olbersleben, who later became a highly respected teacher and Director of the Royal Bavarian Music School at Wurzburg, grew up in the city of Weimar during the time of Liszt's first period there. At the age of sixteen, Olbersleben was brought to visit Liszt by Müller-Hartung, an acquaintance of Liszt who asked him to listen to one of the boy's compositions. Olbersleben later wrote:

This was naturally in a style and of a type that could have hardly been expected to interest the master. Nevertheless he placed the composition upon the music rack of the piano, and played it over with the same consideration that he would have given a serious and mature work. I had dreaded the ordeal, but his kindliness and thoughtfulness put me at ease at once. He praised certain

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1 This final word (shake hand) was written by Liszt in English, while the rest of the letter was in German.

2 Mason, Memories, pp. 179-180.

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> portions of the little work and suggested some improvements. It was all done in so patient and considerate a manner that the recollection of it is as vivid today as was the actual experience. I cannot help thinking that it was in little things of this kind that the true greatness of the man was continually shown. Many another musician of far lesser importance would have been annoyed if requested to look at the work of a youth, which could at best show little more than promise. The very fact that he took such pains with my work was at once an encouragement and an inspiration.
>
> Thereafter I made frequent visits to Liszt's home, and took to him every composition of my own that I considered of sufficient importance to merit his attention. No matter how tired he was or how much he might have wished to enjoy a few moments rest he nevertheless went carefully over my manuscript with a pencil and eraser and suggested changes of all sorts. He laughingly baptized me the "Thuringen Brahms," as I was born in the section of Weimar known as "Thuringen." This appealed to my callow vanity and doubtless inspired me to attempt things I might not otherwise have done. Liszt was far-seeing in everything he did and in every remark he made. He was a great judge of human nature and was a diplomat in all that he did and said. 1

During these years, Olbersleben often attended the gatherings which took place at Liszt's home on Sundays. He writes:

> These meetings of the musical immortals were an education in themselves. Bülow, Rubinstein, Taussig, Saint-Saens, Damrosch, Raff and many others attended these assemblies and the conversation and discussions were of the most elevating and helpful description. With a number of virtuosi present and all put upon their mettle by the knowledge of the presence of their famous contemporaries one can imagine the character of the pianoforte playing. Nevertheless, when Liszt sat at the keyboard his supremacy was at once recognized. 2

Although Olbersleben's interest was in composition rather than in piano playing, he did attend a number of Liszt's

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1 Max Meyer Olbersleben, "Recollections," p. 372.
2 Ibid.

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lessons, both in the early years at Weimar and the later period. He writes:

> At his lessons, as far as I was able to observe through the long number of years that I was in association with the master, he had little to do with technical considerations. There is, therefore, no Liszt "Method," and it would be foolish to claim that there was. He was simply a great artist teacher. 1

Liszt eventually became inundated with students during his final period at Weimar. At the beginning of this final period, however, Liszt was not yet besieged with students, and his relations with his students were not as formal as they necessarily later became. A. Strelezki writes the following account of an afternoon spent with Liszt in 1869:

> The second time that I saw Liszt was three days after I had delivered my letter of introduction to him; I had been to lunch and was walking back home to practice, as I intended, for a couple of hours, when to my surprise and delight I almost ran against him as he came out of a cigar-shop. He was accompanied by one of his pupils only, a certain Karl Heymann, who later rose to a high position as virtuoso. On seeing me, the dear old Abbe graciously held out his hands and said: "Ah! lazybones; you ought to be at home, studying." I explained that I had already practiced four hours that morning, and was on my way home to continue my work. "Ah, then," Liszt exclaimed, "If you have already done four hours' slavery today, come up home with me; only my young friend Heymann is with me, and we can chat and play all the afternoon. Come along!"
>
> I was only too delighted, so off I went with them. No sooner had we got to the house than Liszt went straight to the piano, without even taking his cloak off, and commenced playing something. After several minutes he called out to Heymann, "Karl, what is that? It has been running in my head all the afternoon, and I can't for the life of me think what it is; it is most beautiful." He

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1 Max Meyer Olbersleben, "Recollections," p. 372.

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> kept playing it over and over again, till at last I thought I recognized it. Heymann seemed altogether puzzled; so I begged leave to speak, and I suggested it was the slow middle movement from Balakirev's Islamey. "Why, of course it is," said Liszt. "Bravo, bravo. I haven't heard it played since Tausig studied it with me, and it has haunted me all afternoon." 1

Soon after the beginning of Liszt's final period at Weimar, however, the number of students who traveled there to study with him swelled to numbers larger than at any previous time. Moritz Rosenthal, who first played for Liszt in 1876, wrote of his study with Liszt:

> At most times he was the center of a coterie of pupils and admirers in the midst of whom he reigned like an affable, magnanimous prince. His cosmopolitan, brilliant presence was always fascinating, whether he was in one of his genial moods or out of sorts. In the autumn of 1878 it was my great good fortune to be his only pupil, and for a time I had daily opportunities for observing his rich, beautiful artistic temperament. Each afternoon I went to the Villa d'Este, where I found him, sometimes in his room composing, and at other times standing on the terrace, looking far into the distant blue depths of the wonderful Italian sky 2

With talented and advanced students, Liszt concentrated on interpretation, often teaching by example. Rosenthal reminisced:

> I remember when I first went to him as a boy -- he was in Rome at the time -- he used to play for me in the evening by the hour -- nocturnes by Chopin, etudes of his

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1 Sitwell, Liszt, pp. 285-86. Karl Heymann, who became famous almost overnight for a performance of Beethoven's "Appassionata" Sonata in a charity concert in Vienna, was later to become the teacher of Edward Macdowell. Heymann wrote several very effective virtuoso piano works, including a piece called Elfespiel, which was popular for a number of years. For almost the last half of his life he was hopelessly insane.

2 Moritz Rosenthal, "Franz Liszt as I Knew Him," Etude, Dec.,1911, p. 817.

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> own -- all of a soft dreamy nature that caused me to open my eyes in wonder at the marvelous delicacy and finish of his touch. The embellishments were like a cobweb -- so fine -- or like the texture of the costliest lace. 1

Arthur Friedheim wrote of Liszt's teaching:

> Of course, one could never learn more from Liszt than when he would push the player aside, sit down at piano, and demonstrate what he was explaining . . .2

When Alexander Borodin visited Liszt in 1877, Liszt threw off the air of reserve he usually kept in the presence of his younger students. Borodin was close to Liszt's own age, and Liszt had great respect for his talent as a composer. In his letters, Borodin describes Liszt's remarkable, untiring endurance in discussing or playing of music, which time and again left Borodin exhausted.

Borodin describes an early morning visit he made to Liszt in the city of Magdeburg while Liszt's servant was trying to get Liszt to shave and dress in preparation for a rehearsal he was to conduct that morning:

> I wished to go away but Liszt asked me to stay while he dressed, and talk to him . . . Liszt's Montenegrin servant, with all sorts of signs, tried to hurry Liszt to shave and dress. The indefatigable old man paid no attention but went on talking, overwhelming me with questions. I again tried to go away, but Liszt again held me back . . . The old master, after more urgent reminders from his Montenegrin, went into the next room, the bedroom. The Montenegrin sat the tireless old man in an armchair and prepared to shave him. Through the door, Liszt continued to hurl all sorts of questions at me. 'But -- come in here; I'm not a young lady' . . . I went

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1 Huneker, Liszt, p. 367.
2 Friedheim, Life and Liszt, p. 48.

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into the bedroom. Liszt was sitting in an armchair, while the Montenegrin was tying around his neck a sort of bib such as they give little children when they feed. On the left of the door stood a little table, on which lay a disorderly heap of musical manuscript . . . I involuntarily went and looked through it . . .'Not that one! Not that one!' cried Liszt. 'It's a bad copy. Take this one.' But before I could manage to take the other, the grey-haired maestro lost patience, leapt up from under the Montenegrin's razor and with lathered cheeks and chin, began to dig among the manuscript and pulled out the other score. 'There -- there you are; look through it.' But it was impossible for me to look through it, for Liszt went on talking without a break. 1

Borodin wrote of Liszt's teaching at Weimar:

He pays awfully little attention to technique, fingering, etc., but dwells on expression and interpretation. But with rare exceptions, all his pupils already possess a good technique, though they have all been taught according to different systems. As for his own personal manner, Liszt imposes it on no one. 2

Alexander Siloti describes Liszt's habits during his final years:

As a rule Liszt got up at 4:00 in the morning; two hours later he went back to bed, rising for the day at 8:00. He dined at one, and then slept for about an hour and a half. He went to bed at 10:00 at night. The early morning was his favorite time for composing. In former years, his housekeeper told me, this was his time for reading the 'Crrritiques' -- as he always called them -- on his compositions. It always made him angry if anyone boasted of having a good critique.

"If you have a good 'crrritique'," he would say,"you probably have a good certificate from the conservatorium too." 3

Liszt had contempt for critics. Once when Arthur Friedheim refused to take part in a card game with Liszt and

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1 Ralph Hill, Liszt, pp. 129-30.
2 Ibid., p. 129.
3 Siloti, Liszt, p. 24.

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some other students, claiming that he knew absolutely nothing about the game, Liszt remarked, "Then you can be the critic." 1 Carl Lachmund reports that at one lesson at Weimar Liszt stopped a student who played without enough clarity and distinctness of touch with the words:

> 'Remember, everything must be heard; people have not the best of ears.' Turning to us he added with a twinkle, 'Except the critics -- who have great long ears' and held his hands high over his ears to illustrate. 2

Bettina Walker gives a detailed description of the classes at Weimar in her book, My Musical Experiences. The classes usually met three times a week, at four o'clock in the afternoon. All those attending the classes were expected to have arrived and be in their places before Liszt made his appearance at four. After he came in, she writes:

> Liszt's next proceeding was to turn to the table on which all the pieces were lying, and, looking towards the young people who were standing between the piano and the door, he would take up the pieces one by one until he had found something which he wished to hear. Holding it up and naming its title, he would say, "Who wishes to play this?' The owner of the piece made a move, without coming forward, and then, if Liszt saw that it was one of his favorites who wished to play, or perhaps a new-comer whom he might wish to hear, he would say with a pleasant tone, 'Come over, then, and play it to me.' It was Reisenauer who usually put the music on the desk. Liszt seated himself beside the young performer, and all the others either sat close behind master and pupil, or else stood in a long close line all around the pianoforte. It was indeed a trying ordeal, and anyone who could emerge victorious, might well face a concert-room with all imaginable 'sang-froid!' 3

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1 Siloti, Liszt, p. 24.
2 Lachmund, "Liszt Speaks," The Piano Teacher, March-April, 1965, p. 4.
3 Walker, Experiences, pp. 100-101.

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> When Liszt held a piece in his hand which had been brought by someone whom he did not care to hear, he would just give a courteous nod to the individual who acknowledged its ownership, and, laying it down again, would take up another and ask whose that was. It has happened more than once that he has taken up several pieces in succession and asked who was going to play them, and put them down again before he came to one which one of his special favourites had placed there. 1

Both Siloti and Lachmund corroborate Bettina Walker's description. Siloti writes:

> He never told us what to work at; each pupil could prepare what he liked. All we had to do when we came to the lesson was to lay our music on the piano; Liszt then picked out the things he wished to hear. There were only two things we were not allowed to bring: Liszt's Second Rhapsody (because it was too often played), and Beethoven's Sonata quasi fantasia which Liszt in his time had played incomparably as was afterwards proved to me. 2

Carl Lachmund reports:

> He liked to start a lesson with something reassuring, either a piece which offered novel treatment or one brought by some favorite pupil. The numbers that must simply be endured were postponed until he had slipper-slappered (his slippers had no heel-pieces) into his bedroom to brace himself with a sip of the superb cognac that he had once given me to test. 3

Liszt often used similies in his teaching to get his points across more vividly. Siloti gives the following description of the first lesson he had with Liszt, where he played the Third Ballade of Chopin:

> I sat down and began the Ballade, but I had only played two bars when Liszt stopped me, saying: "No, don't take a sitz-bath on the first note." He then showed me what an accent I made on the E flat. I was quite taken by surprise. "Si Signore, si signore," said Liszt in Italian, smiling a trifle maliciously. 4

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1 Walker, Experiences, p. 104.
2 Siloti, Liszt, p. 18.
3 Lachmund, "Liszt Speaks," March-April, p. 3.
4 Siloti, Liszt, p. 14.

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Liszt was sometimes extremely sarcastic at his lessons. A number of his better students mention that he would not tolerate wrong notes. Once when a student missed a leap, landing on an A instead of an A flat, Liszt said, "How stupid of Bechstein to put his A so near the A flat." When someone played poor trills or tremolos, Liszt would say, "Ah, such economy in notes." Another thing he would not tolerate was lack of rhythmic clarity and control, stopping a player at once with such remarks as, "You must be very fond of scrambled eggs." Whenever anyone played with an obviously undeveloped technique, Liszt would tell him to go to a conservatory. Siloti reports that Liszt's most devastating insult was "Even the princess plays it better." 1

Liszt often made comments to the class as a piece was being performed, sometimes to help those present understand the piece better. Once when Arthur Friedheim played Liszt's transcription of the Tarantelle from Auber's La Muette de Portici, Liszt accompanied the performance with a running explanation of the piece. 2 He also sometimes commented on a performance in progress in a sarcastic manner. Once, when a girl began Beethoven's C minor Variations much too slowly, instead of stopping her Liszt said, "Here we have a funeral," and, a little later, "Here we see the hearse." Finally at a

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1 Siloti, Liszt, p. 20.
2 Lachmund, "Liszt Speaks," March-April, p. 3.

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particularly lugubrious rendition of one of the variations, he made an exclamation, and said, "Here the sexton himself is being buried!" [1]

Liszt was willing to help any serious student, but was quickly angered at any signs of pretentiousness. He had a strong dislike of letters of recommendation, and any new student who presented him with one immediately found this to be true. An even worse mistake was to ask Liszt for a letter of recommendation. Anyone who did this was shown to the door by Liszt in very short order.

The American composer Otis Boise describes one class at which a young girl preceded her performance by asking Liszt to tell her if he thought she should pursue a career as a musician. Liszt immediately became irritated, and her playing of Chopin's Etude in F major, opus 10, number 8, did not help matters. Boise reports:

> Liszt could endure but a half-dozen measures and then shouted, "No! No!," rushed to the piano, nudged her off the chair, and seating himself, gave vent to his feelings in the most impetuous performance of this piece that I have ever heard. It relieved the master and did no violence to Chopin. As he turned from the piano, he said, "It should be something like that. Now go home, forget your dawdling, and come back again later if you see fit." [2]

Siloti relates:

> Sometimes he worked himself into quite a frantic state of mind, but I only saw him in this condition

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1 Carl Lachmund, "Franz Liszt," Etude, Nov., 1915, p. 786.

2 Boise, "An American Composer Visits Liszt," p. 323.

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about four times during the three years I was with him . . . In such moments as these Liszt was simply terrifying; his face was mephistophelian, and he would literally scream at the unlucky pupil: "I take no payment from you but, if I did, there is no money which could give you the right to come and wash your dirty linen here. Go to the conservatorium, that is the place for you." This state of mind would last some time -- about ten minutes. Afterwards, when we were more intimate, I always began talking to him at these times to divert his thoughts. 1

Bettina Walker describes one class at which Liszt lost his temper as a young man played a Chopin Polonaise:

Liszt stood up, and moving away from the piano, began to pace up and down, saying as he did so, as if partly to himself, partly to us, and in a voice calculated to strike terror into the bravest there, 'Such playing indeed; and to me, who have so often listened to Tausig! Ah, how he played this piece!' The discomfited young man stood beside the piano pale as death, seeming to be transfixed with terror. A profound and painful silence reigned among the students, and no one seemed to know what was coming next, until a young Belgian pianist -- of whom I shall ever think with pleasure for the kindliness he showed on this occasion -- managed by gestures, without saying a word, to make the discomfited young pianist understand that, as the Meister had not taken the music of the Polonaise off the piano, the inference was that he should continue playing. 2

Liszt often mentioned Tausig and Bulow in these last years. Siloti recounts:

The name of Bülow is irresistably linked with that of Tausig in my memory. These two were Liszt's most beloved pupils . . . He used to say that Bülow's noble, chivalrous character should be a model for all artists . . . If any one of us brought one of Tausig's compositions, Liszt invariably had it played, and would tell us each time what a wonderful pianist he was. He used to say it would have been better for Art if a dozen contemporary pianists had died instead of Tausig. 3

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1 Siloti, Liszt, pp. 20-21.
2 Walker, Experiences, p. 106.
3 Siloti, Liszt, p. 68.

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Liszt was fond of telling the following story of one of Tausig's practical jokes: After a concert at an important German music festival a banquet was held, which all of the performers and distinguished guests were invited to attend. Liszt said:

> When all the company were seated there was a dead, awkward silence in place of the usual hum of conversation. I did not realize what had happened at first, but when I caught sight of Tausig wearing a knowing smile I beckoned to him and asked the meaning of it. He then confessed that he had left before the end of the concert on purpose to change the places of the guests, so that those who were unfriendly to one another were seated side by side. 1

Several students point to the fact that Liszt was able to sense which students were gifted enough to profit from his teaching. Friedheim writes, "The master seldom bothered with explanations to pupils who seemed slow to understand." 2 Siloti says, "Liszt once told me that he could explain nothing to those who did not understand him from the first." 3 Emil Sauer wrote:

> As to the instruction, it must not be imagined that this took the form of regular lessons; it was more like a course of university lectures that may be attended or not, according to pleasure. It was always interesting, as everything that proceeds from an intellectual man must be; but no one who was not thoroughly prepared could learn from it any more than a university student who had not gone through his preliminary examinations could profit by lectures. For those who had not been trained to a high degree of technical facility it would have been far more advisable to supply what was wanting in this respect, either by private study or the aid of a conservatory course. The master, however, was an outspoken enemy of

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1 Siloti, Liszt, pp. 68-69.
2 Friedheim, Life and Liszt, p. 47.
3 Siloti, Liszt, p. 18.

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> conservatories, and I must confess that I agree with him in regard to many of these, but it cannot be denied that he went too far in his wholesale condemnation of such institutions. He had to thank many of the music schools that he ridiculed so unsparingly -- even Leipzig -- which was the particular target of his sarcastic attacks -- for the material with which he produced such rich results. 1

Friedheim writes that much of what Liszt tried to teach fell on barren ground:

> One had to understand the man, to be in perfect communion with the spiritual beauty and sublimity of his nature, to profit by what he taught. There are not too many in this world capable of responding to those transcendental qualities, and so much of what the Master sought to impart was lost. 2

In Liszt's final years, Weimar was overrun with students. It was difficult for newcomers to find lodgings and pianos. The townspeople greatly disliked the students and their incessant practicing. Police ordinances against practicing with windows open were rigidly enforced.

On a visit to the United States, Hans von Bülow told William Mason that the old charm of Weimar was gone. In addition to the excellent students there were a large number of poor ones. Friedheim mentions that especially from 1884 on, Weimar was besieged by many mediocre female students. Rosenthal reminisced:

> In his later years Liszt was, of course, surrounded by swarms of pupils . . . Unfortunately he was also surrounded by many mediocrities, particularly those of the feminine gender. These he treated with the greatest possible indulgence. In fact, there were so many that

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1 Emil Sauer, "Lessons with Franz Liszt," Etude, Nov.,1910, p. 722.

2 Friedheim, Life and Liszt, pp. 15-16.

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> he frequently forgot the name of the particular pupil and would say, for instance, "Play your sonata, Norway." Sometimes he would wink to me in an adjoining room and whisper, "What is the name of the young lady who is playing now?" 1

Bettina Walker noticed that:

> Liszt was unvaryingly just in appreciating and encouraging all those who had really any 'talent'; but towards one or two who really had neither school nor talent he would, if their personality had pleased him, be so indulgent as to let the very worst faults, the greatest shortcomings, pass without any adverse criticism. 2

Emil Sauer writes in his autobiography of the first class he attended after arriving at Weimar:

> The next afternoon, my enthusiasm received its first chill. The salon was filled with people who plainly did not belong there; indeed, they could hardly have given a reason why they had come at all. What I saw then and in the days that followed was enough to show me that a great part of this assemblage was made up of creatures who came merely to scatter incense, and others destitute of talent, who were abusing Liszt's proverbial kindness in order later to adopt the trade-mark of "favorite pupil" when they had never even played a note for him . . .and what was worse, they often hindered the advancement of those who were really gifted. The race of idlers consisted of two groups: young women who instead of smooth scales brought pretty faces, and young men who deployed the most refined art of flattery in order to endear themselves to the old master. 3

Bülow once attempted to rid Weimar of these undesirable students, calling them together in a group and making the following little speech:

> "Ladies and gentlemen, do not forget that the Master was born as long ago as 1811, or that he is the essence of goodness and gentleness; and do not misuse him in this revolting way. You ladies in particular; most of you,

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1 Rosenthal, "Franz Liszt as I knew Him," p. 817.
2 Walker, Experiences, p. 101.
3 Sauer, "Liszt," p. 721.

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> I assure you, are destined for the myrtle rather than the laurel."

But Bülow's action was in vain, because as soon as he left Weimar, all of the rejected students immediately returned to the classes. 1

The very gifted students, however, were not lost to Liszt. Alexander Siloti noticed after attending a few classes at Weimar that some of the better students, such as Friedheim and Reisenauer, remained with Liszt each day at the Hofgärtenerei after the regular classes had ended and the other students left. Soon Liszt told Siloti that he wished for him to remain also after the others left.[2] Friedheim writes:

> So stimulating to high aspiration and endeavor was the atmosphere in the small circle of the chosen few, so great was the desire to excel, not only before the Master but before one another, that we accomplished incredible things. All our playing was done, practically without exception, from memory. And if Liszt suggested that one of us play a certain composition at the next lesson, the possibility of not having it ready never occurred to us. 3

Rosenthal wrote of these lessons that "Liszt taught me to keep high my musical enthusiasm in spite of terrific technical studies." 4

Moreover, the few students who spent the winters in Italy with Liszt received lessons of a different sort than Liszt conducted before his large classes at Weimar. Friedheim writes:

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1 Newman, The Man Liszt, pp. 242-43.
2 Siloti, Liszt, p. 27.
3 Friedheim, Life and Liszt, p. 44.
4 Rosenthal, "Apprentice Years," p.772.

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> Those who had the right to ask for specific information and knew how to ask for it, could always have Liszt explain the intricacies and subtleties of pedalling and even get him to suggest useful fingerings. But this he did oftener in his small classes at Rome than before the larger groups at Weimar. 1

W. Waugh Lauder writes that although Liszt rarely played in his classes at Weimar except for short illustrations:

> A winter in the Villa D'Este was something different; there he played with his pupils (never more than four or five), for hours at a time; I have heard him dream through Chopin's tenderest moments there for an evening at a time. 2

The personality of Liszt created an overwhelming impression on his better students; one which they retained through their entire lives. The conclusion of Alexander Siloti's My Memories of Liszt illustrates this clearly:

> After Liszt's death we scattered to all quarters of the globe, but even from another sphere the spell of his wonderful personality still binds us. Arthur Friedheim, who for fifteen years had neither seen me nor written to me, sent me a postcard in the sixteenth year which began: "Long live our 'Old Man' and our friendship." And when I saw Felix Mottl after a lapse of twenty years, we had to own that while we talked or listened to each other it seemed as if the 'Old Man' were standing between us; that during all those years, whenever anything has happened to us, we always remembered to stop and think what the 'Old Man' would say and what he would advise us to do. And this influence, this presence of Liszt in our midst pervades even our music, because we 'approach' it in the same manner as our master. It would seem that our last and happiest remembrance before we die must needs be of our 'Liszt days.' Only now in the downhill of life do we understand whom we saw, whom we had with us, who it was that remained the guiding star of our whole life. I could envy myself for having lived through such an epoch, and shall thank providence until I draw my last breath for giving me the bliss of seeing, knowing, and hearing this great man. 3

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1 Friedheim, Life and Liszt, p. 48.
2 W. Waugh Lauder, "Piano Technique," Etude, April 1888, p. 67.
3 Siloti, Liszt, p. 75.

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CHAPTER V

ACCENTUATION

An investigation of the available material dealing with Liszt's ideas on piano playing reveals that he devoted a great deal of attention to something which was called "accentuation."

William Mason wrote of his first lesson with Liszt:

> I found at this first lesson that he was very fond of strong accents to mark off periods and phrases, and he talked so much about strong accentuation that one might have supposed that he would abuse it, but he never did. 1

In 1869, fifteen years after Mason had left Weimar, Liszt wrote to Mason in regard to a volume of technical exercises Mason had sent him:

> In going through your "method" I find highly commendable exercises, notably the interlocking passages (pages 136-142) and all the accentuated > > > > treatment of exercises. 2

Other evidence corroborates the fact that Liszt taught accentuation. Max Meyer Olbersleben, who attended lessons at Weimar over a period of more than thirty years, wrote of Liszt's teaching:

> Liszt demanded first of all that the player's work be right as far as right notes, right time, right

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1 Mason, Memories, p. 98.
2 Ibid., p. 295.

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> phrasing, and right accentuation. Nothing could be done until these important matters were settled. 1

This quotation would seem to imply that Liszt considered accentuation as one of the primary elements of musical performance.

The edition of the Chopin Etudes made by Liszt's student Arthur Friedheim (which Friedheim wrote was an attempt to reproduce as nearly as possible Liszt's own playing of the Etudes) is notable for its concentration on accentuation, both in Friedheim's Notes to each etude, and also in his editorial marks on the music itself. [2]

Descriptions of the playing of Liszt's two favorite pupils, Carl Tausig and Hans von Bülow, further bear out the fact that Liszt concentrated on accentuation. William Mason wrote of Bülow's playing, "He was invariably accurate and precise in his careful observance of proper accentuation . . ."[3] Tausig, whose playing was strongly influenced by Liszt, apparently conveyed a strong sense of "metrical" accentuation in his playing. Franz Kullak described it as follows:

> Tausig exercised a fascination upon his public. He worked, to be sure, preferably through sharp contrasts and particularly through an unusually pointed rhythm . . . 4

Accentuation is a concept which is not often mentioned in most twentieth century discussions of piano playing.

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1 Max Meyer Olbersleben, "Recollections," p. 372.

2 See, for example, Friedheim's notes to the etudes opus 10, numbers 1, 3, 4, 7, and opus 25, numbers 3, 12.

3 Mason, Memories, p. 238.

4 Franz Kullak, "Theodore Kullak as a Teacher," International Library of Music, III (New York: University Society, 1925), p. 33.

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However, there is evidence to support the idea that in the nineteenth century it was considered of great importance. William Mason's Touch and Technic, a treatise which was highly praised by most of the important pianists of his time, considers accentuation the basis for developing a secure keyboard technic. One of the most important and best known of all nineteenth century works on piano playing, Adolf Kullak's The Aesthetics of Pianoforte Playing, devotes 37 pages to the subject of accentuation. Liszt's pupil, Adolph Christiani, in his The Principles of Expression in Pianoforte Playing, devotes more than 200 out of a total of 303 pages to a discussion of various types of accentuation, including extensive chapters on "Accents in General," "Rhythmical Accents," "Metrical Accents," "Melodic Accents," and "Harmonic Accents."

One can assume, then, that the meaning of this term was generally understood by pianists of the nineteenth century (including Liszt), and one can define it from a study of the treatises which dealt with it. Adolph Kullak wrote concerning accentuation:

> It is the aim of the accent, to give the ear a clew to the disposition of the tone-forms and their kinship with the uttered meaning; and furthermore, to exhibit clearly the simplest rhythmical divisions mentioned before. As these latter were previously given, they manifested themselves only to abstract reflection, or to the eye by bars on the sheet of music. If they are to be perceived by the actual musical faculty, they must be emphasized by a stronger stress on single notes; and this is the function of the accent.
>
> This function devolving on the accent there splits into two distinct ones. The one last named, which was clearly to exhibit to the ear the simple rhythmical divisions, is the concern of the so called metrical or

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> mensural accent. The other, to be considered later, which articulates the tone-weft after the analogy of oratorical forms, devolves upon the declamatory accent. 1

Defined simply, accentuation consists of pointing out or calling attention to a certain important note, distinguishing it from those around it. Notes so stressed can be accentuated very strongly or almost imperceptibly, depending on the context of each specific example. The underlying basis of correct rhythm and evenness in passagework is dependent on accentuation. Furthermore, a more complex use of the device forms much of the means by which pianists play with "expression."

The various nineteenth century writers who discuss the subject agree on the basic metrical forms of accentuation. However, many of the types of expressive or "declamatory" accentuation, as Kullak calls them, are a matter of taste and differ from performer to performer, no one way being necessarily "correct." A large amount of evidence points to the fact that Liszt considered all types of accentuation of primary importance.

Metrical Accentuation

The following quotation from William Sherwood points to the fact that the relationship between accentuation and metered rhythm was uppermost in Liszt's mind. Sherwood writes:

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1 Adolph Kullak, The Aesthetics of Pianoforte-Playing, translated by Dr. Theodore Baker (New York: Schirmer, 1898), p. 232.

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> On many occasions during my study with Liszt, not only with works played to him by myself and played in turn by him, but in works studied with him by others, while I listened, a strict government of time and accent, the one inseparable from the other, was emphasized. 1

Further evidence that Liszt considered time and accent inseparable comes from Carl Lachmund, who writes that Liszt once said to a student who had just begun Chopin's E minor Concerto:

> Do not play the sixteenth notes at the start in a hurried manner as is often done; play with heavy touch and accents, so that the rhythm may have a strong frame.2

Even the free, apparently unmeasured cadenza passages which often appear in Liszt's own compositions were intended by Liszt to be played with metrical definition, according to the testimony of several of his students. Lachmund writes in discussing Liszt's Third Liebestraum, which he heard Liszt teach at Weimar, "With Liszt one should be conscious of the beats in such cadenzas, even though their rapidity increases or diminishes." 3 Adolph Christiani gives identical advice in his book. 4

Theodore Leschitizsky, the famous pedagogue who, like Liszt, received his training from Czerny, stressed in an interview that "the natural accents of the measure must be properly placed."5 These basic metrical accents which are accepted by all writers on the subject can be summarized as

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1 William Sherwood, "The Spirit of Life in Music -- Rhythm," Etude, June, 1911, p. 369.
2 Lachmund, "Liszt Speaks," The Piano Teacher, Jan.-Feb., 1965, p.8.
3 Ibid., March-April, 1965, p. 6.
4 Christiani, Principles, pp. 52-61.
5 Edwin Hughes, "Theodore Leschitizsky on Modern Pianoforte Study," Etude, April, 1909, p. 227.

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follows:

> The first beat of a measure is the strongest.
>
> In 4/4 time: the first beat is the strongest, the third beat the next strongest, and the second and fourth beats are weaker than those preceding them.
>
> In 3/4 time: the first beat is the strongest, the next two are weaker.
>
> In 2/4 time: the first beat is the strongest, the second beat weaker.

The basic rules of accentuation cited above hold true as note values get faster. For example, in a group of four sixteenth notes the first of the four is the most important and gets a stress; in passages in triplets the first note of each three is the strongest. These stresses consist of an actual lengthening of time (almost imperceptibly) in addition to the dynamic stressing of the accentuated note. In passagework and any musical examples which proceed in continuous motion, these basic accents are of vital importance. Although they are often almost imperceptible to an inexperienced listener, they are always present in the playing of a skilled pianist. If these accents are neglected, the resulting playing has an uncertain, student-like quality. Conversely, knowing where these vital notes are and stressing them accordingly gives the performer a security which corrects many "technical problems."

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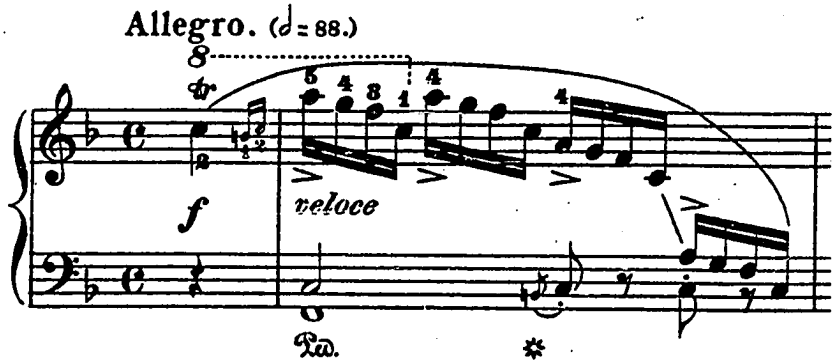
Chopin marked the accentuation himself in the first measures of his Etude in F major, opus 10, number 8: [1]

Example 1. Chopin, Etude, opus 10, number 8 (Mikuli), page 34, meas. 1. [2]



This Chopin example brings us to the next point in dealing with metrical accentuation: that it operates on several levels simultaneously. Although the smaller groupings of three and four notes are vital and must never be slighted, musical examples must be perceived at the same time in groups consisting of more than three or four notes. For instance, in the Chopin example quoted above, the performer must not only perceive the accent on the first of every four notes, but also in terms of the overall measure. The following Schubert example illustrates the same principle in dealing with groups of three notes. Here the first of each group of three notes must be

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1 Chopin also marked the accentuation in his opus 10, numbers 1 and 12.

2 For complete identification of editions from which examples are taken, see Bibliography.

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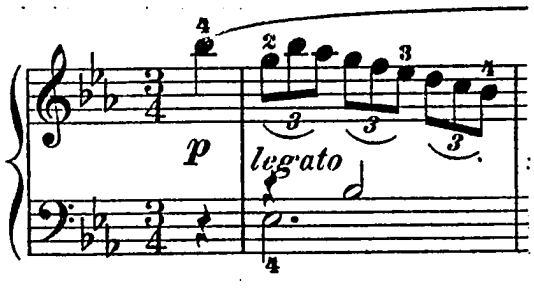
stressed, however slightly. At the same time, however, the first beat of each measure must be stressed over the second and third beats:

Example 2. Schubert, Impromptu, opus 90, number 2 (Buonamici), p. 63, meas. 1.



As a basic rule, when velocity increases, accentuated notes must appear less frequently. For example, in writing his etude Feux follets in 2/4 time, Liszt suggests accentuation which would cause the knowledgeable player to think of an accent on the first of every eight notes:

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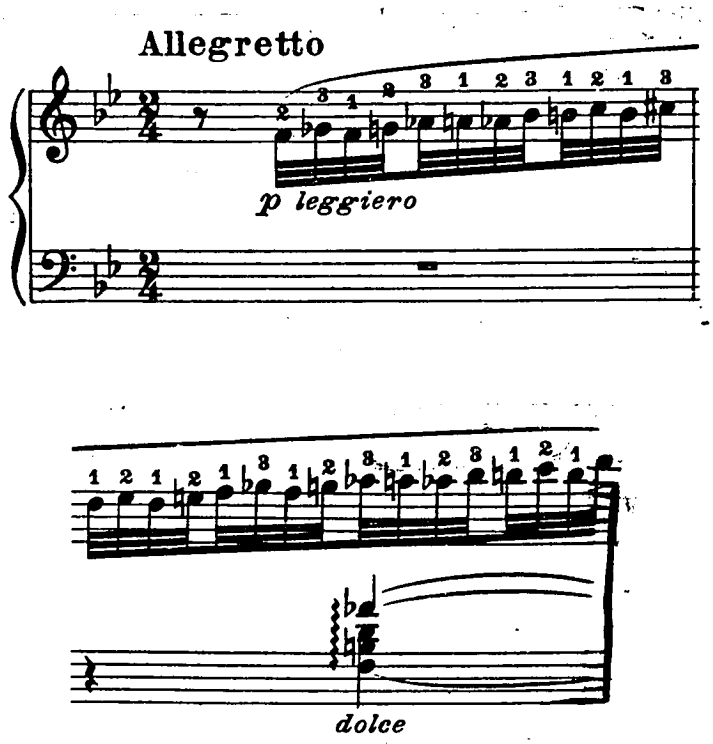
Example 3. Liszt, Feux follets (Sauer), Vol. III, p. 30, meas. 1-2.



In the course of this work Liszt includes several passages in which the first of each eight notes in the passagework is reinforced by an octave, thereby reinforcing the accentuation.

An understanding of accentuation which encompasses many rapid notes sheds light on some of the seemingly impossible metronome marks of the 19th century. For example, the metronomic markings in many of Czerny's etudes are considered impossible or impractical by many pedagogues today. However, if a player observes Czerny's markings of the meter in these works and responds accordingly in regard to accentuation, he

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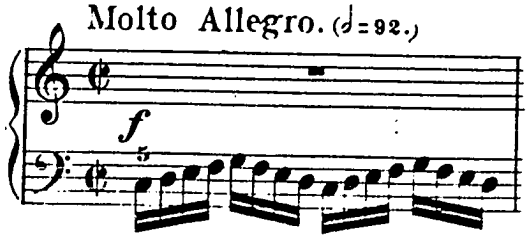
will find that he can increase his speeds almost immediately, and will come to realize that Czerny's markings are within the realm of possibility.

The first etude of Czerny's opus 740 can be used to illustrate this approach. This work was marked by Czerny to be played at ♩ = 92 by the metronome. The piece is marked alla breve, signifying that only the first of each eight notes should be accentuated:

Example 4. Czerny, Etude, opus 740, number 1, p. 3, meas. 1.



Another basic rule of accentuation is that syncopated notes receive a stress. Christiani discusses this thoroughly in his book. [1] Carl Lachmund wrote of Liszt's advice in regard to syncopation:

> "Syncopated notes," he said, "must be played with an obstinate accent; that will give them character." And concerning a syncopated chord passage, "To make such syncopated beats clearly evident, -- for as often played, they sound like regular beats, I extend the value of

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1 Christiani, Principles, p. 70.

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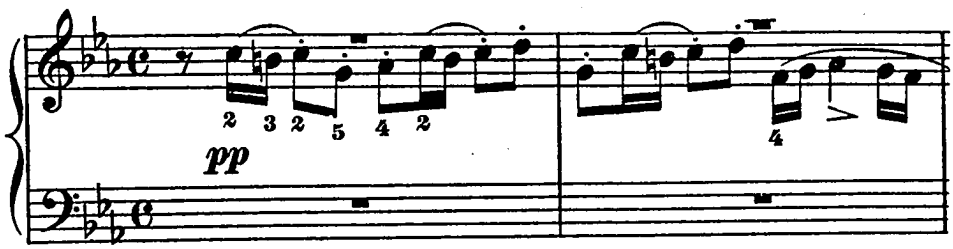
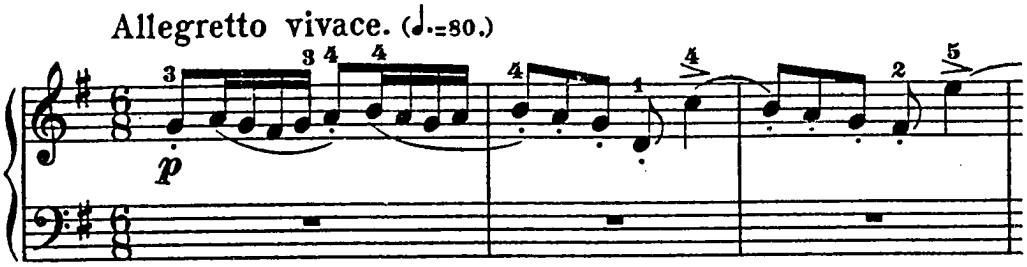
the syncopated note a bit, and shorten that of the following note." 1

The following two examples from Czerny's edition of Book One of the Well-Tempered Clavier illustrate that Liszt's teacher thought in an identical manner in regard to syncopated notes:

Example 5. Bach, Fugue in C minor (Czerny), p. 10, meas. 1-2.



Example 6. Bach, Fugue in G major (Czerny), p. 72, meas. 1-3.



1 Marjorie Lachmund, "Liszt at First Hand," Music Journal, Sept., 1961, p. 39.

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Up to this point, rhythmic or metrical accentuation has been discussed in the context of the final realization of a piece. Exaggerated accentuation as a practice technique has long been an accepted practice in technical preparation of a piece. That it was recommended by Liszt is proved by his own Technische Studien, and by the fact that several of his students endorsed this procedure.

Hans von Bülow advises in his edition of Cramer's Etudes:

> When beginning practice, sharp accentuation of the strong beats, and even of the half-beats, is strongly to be recommended as an aid to the precision of touch. As the difficulties are gradually overcome, these accents may be lessened; for a technically finished execution they should be reduced to the minimum sanctioned by good taste. 1

William Mason insists time after time in his Touch and Technic that when practicing exercises, "The accent must be distinct to the ear of the hearer, and unmistakable." 2

Still another type of metrical accentuation concerns off-the-beat or "abnormal" accents, as Christiani terms them. That Liszt used these at times to add spice to his playing is shown by A. Strelezki's description of a lesson with Liszt on several works of Schumann. After they had finished discussing the Fantasie, Liszt said:

> 'And now to give you an idea of Schumann in his less sober moods!' Saying which, he seated himself before the

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1 Cramer, Etudes, edited by Bülow, p. 87.
2 Mason, Touch and Technic, II, p.6.

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piano, and after a few chords (taken from the Nachtstücke in F, I think) he commenced the Traumeswirren at such a pace and with such startling clearness and crispness that I fairly held my breath with wonder and astonishment.

Having finished it, as if it was as easy as a first-grade piece, he smilingly turned to me and said:

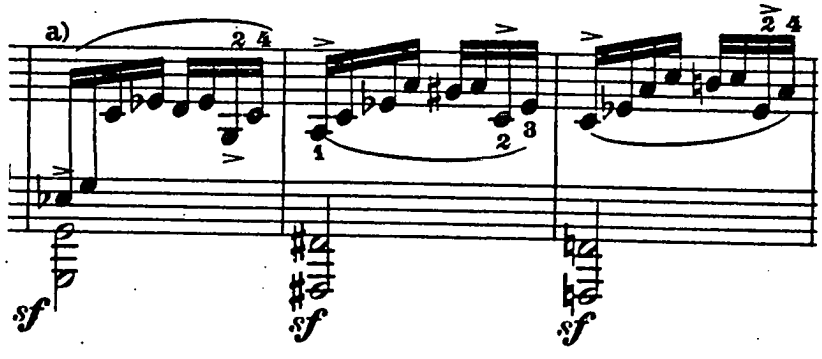
'You will remark that I play this little Traumes-wirren differently from everybody!'

'Yes,' I replied, 'for I have heard Tausig play it often, but never with such effect; especially in the accent.'

'Ah! you noticed it, then,' replied Liszt; 'I played it thus to Schumann, and he fully accepted my rendering of it. You see the accent on the third sixteenth note of each group, this relieves the piece of a certain monotony, and produces a somewhat characteristic effect, although it is very difficult to play without any jerky movement, which of course would absolutely spoil it, and spoil every and all effect.' 1

Bulow suggests a similar effect in his edition of the finale of Beethoven's opus 54, writing, "An accentuation of the fourth eighth-note will secure a rhythmic animation which appears not unsuited to the character of the figure, and prevents the uniformity in the movement from making an impression of monotony." 2

Example 7. Beethoven, Sonata, opus 54 (Bulow), Vol. II, p. 433, meas. 16-18.



1 Walter Beckett, Liszt, p. 65.
2 Beethoven, Sonatas, ed. by Bulow, II, p. 433.

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William Sherwood gives an example of Liszt's use of this type of accentuation in triple meter:

> To return to the waltz and the occasion spoken of, Liszt had a habit frequently of dashing the wrist abruptly from the chord at the second beat of the measure, with more or less accent, sometimes almost prematurely, the movement being correspondingly retarded, before playing the chord on the third beat of the measure, with another less conspicuous up stroke. Such treatment certainly lent a piquancy and sparkle to the performance. As it was never twice alike there was no objectionable mannerism therein. 1

Liszt often indicated such accentuation in the markings of his own works. His Galop Chromatique, for example, is heavily marked with accents and stresses, both on and off the beat. Liszt created such an effect when he played this work himself (probably largely through his use of accentuation) that the pulse of one listener, Varnhagen von Ense, was increased to the point where dizziness occurred.

The past few examples, although primarily rhythmic in nature, border on the type of accentuation which forms a second large category. This type of accentuation was used to call attention to various points in regard to melody, harmony, and other aspects of a piece. Kullak called them "declamatory accents," and indeed such a term points to the fact that they were used to clarify musical meaning or to project expressive ideas. They were a personal matter for the most part

---

1 Sherwood, "Student Days," Etude, May, 1908, p.285.

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and differed from performer to performer. That this type of accentuation was emphasized in nineteenth-century teaching and that Liszt was among those who taught it is shown by the following series of incidents related by Liszt's pupil, William Sherwood:

> I arrived in Europe to study music some time after the death of Carl Tausig, with whom I had originally hoped to study. Dr. Mason, from whom I had some invaluable lessons -- all too short -- had recommended two teachers, one was Theodore Kullak and the other Carl Tausig. I went to Kullak and to C. F. Weitzmann, who had been the leading teacher of harmony, counterpoint, composition, instrumentation, etc., under Tausig. I probably learned more under this man, in some important ways, which have influenced my entire career, than from any of my piano teachers. Weitzmann was held in high esteem by the greatest masters at that time. Liszt told Amy Fay . . . that 'if he were young he would go back to school with Weitzmann.' Wagner, likewise, spoke in acknowlegement of his superiority. 1

After having established the importance of Weitzmann's teaching in the eyes of Liszt, Sherwood describes in detail some of Weitzmann's principles:

> Weitzmann found out where accents belonged; he found melodic accents and knew how to classify their relative value in the melody or phrase, as related to the rhythm or measure beat, to the meter, to the scale and intervals, to the harmonic sense and coloring and to the relative duration or rapidity of different intervals.
>
> Again, while learning to write harmony according to correct rules, Weitzmann found out, and knew how to explain, the expression in harmony, its accents, its leading tones, its suspensions, syncopations and resolutions, in their relations to the rhythm and melody of the piece and to each other. 1

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1 Sherwood, "Musical Europe," p. 159.

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Sherwood writes further of Weitzmann's teaching:

> Weitzmann took Schubert dances and marches and got the student into the habit of looking for the melodic peculiarities, the rhythmical individuality and harmonic effects as intended by the composer. He took fugues from the Well-Tempered Clavier and showed that if one would take definite note of the movement and exact rhythmical beat of the theme, and notice the peculiarities of the melody, its intervals, variety, touch and dynamic treatment belonging thereto, along with proper understanding of thekey in which it was written, one would know the most important things about the character of that particular fugue.
>
> The habit of looking at a piece of music as a composition, with a trained mind, so as to identify and sense the laws of rhythm, harmony, and otherwise, governing the interpretation of such a composition, is necessary to every musician at the piano and every 'pianist' who would be a musician. I have found such a habit the real guide to technic, for music is first and technic second in order, from a logical standpoint. 1

After Sherwood had gone on to study with Liszt and Deppe, he eventually returned to the United States where he taught and concertized extensively. He relates still another incident which links Weitzmann's and Liszt's ideas on accentuation:

> Some years ago Adolph Christiani brought a huge package of manuscript to my attention in New York. It was called "Principles of Pianistic Expression." Since then A. J. Goodrich, Dr. Henry G. Hanchett and others have written similar and practical books along these lines. When Mr. Christiani showed me how he classified melodic accents, rhythmical accents, harmonic accents, accents of extremes, accompaniment parts and much else, I exclaimed: "That is just what I am trying to do in my regular practice; That is just what I learned from Weitzmann and Liszt." 2

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1 Sherwood, "Musical Europe," p. 159.
2 Ibid., p. 160.

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It seems logical to assume, therefore, that Liszt stressed the concept of expressive accentuation as it was practiced in his day. A description of expressive types of accentuation must be limited here to a discussion of a few of the most basic points. Therefore, only a short discussion of melodic and harmonic accentuation will be undertaken. The reader may refer to Christiani's book for a more elaborate presentation.

Melodic Accentuation

Melodic accentuation is a way for the performer to indicate what he considers the most important points in a melody. The effect of accentuation in this case was more often than not created by a subtle alteration of rhythmic flow. Typical techniques are hesitating on a given note or immediately before it in order to point it out. Such devices are obviously intertwined with the various rhythmic adjustments which come under the heading of "rubato," but the fact that musicians of the nineteenth century viewed melodic accentuation as a separate technique in itself necessitates discussing it as a separate practice outside the framework of fluctuations of time (a topic to be considered in the following chapter).

That Liszt used a type of melodic accentuation often

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in his playing is shown by Carl Lachmund's description of "a momentary halting of the time by a slight pause on some significant note" as one of the distinguishing features of Liszt's playing.[1] Lachmund describes a class at Weimar where Liszt advised the use of a form of melodic accentuation:

> Alfred Reisenauer, rotund and baby-faced but always magnificent at the piano, played the Largo of Chopin's B minor Sonata. He did not play the part following the one in four flats quite to the Master's liking. Here the first note of each group of six eights is also a half note and part of the melody. "In such places," advised Liszt, "one should give the first note of each group a little more than the exact time." As Reisenauer did this the difference was striking. 2

Another nineteenth-century example of the suggested use of melodic accentuation comes from Tausig's pupil, Oscar Raif, who wrote:

> In delivering a melodic passage or motif, the highest note of the series should always receive somewhat more than its exact time, provided it falls on an accented count. For example, Chopin (Op. 48, No. 2) 3

Actual proof that Chopin used the device of pausing on the highest note of a melodic line at times can be found in

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1 Lachmund, "Liszt Speaks," Jan.-Feb., p. 8.
2 Ibid., March-April, p. 4.
3 August Oetiker, "Points from Oscar Raif's Method," International Library of Music, III, p. 48.

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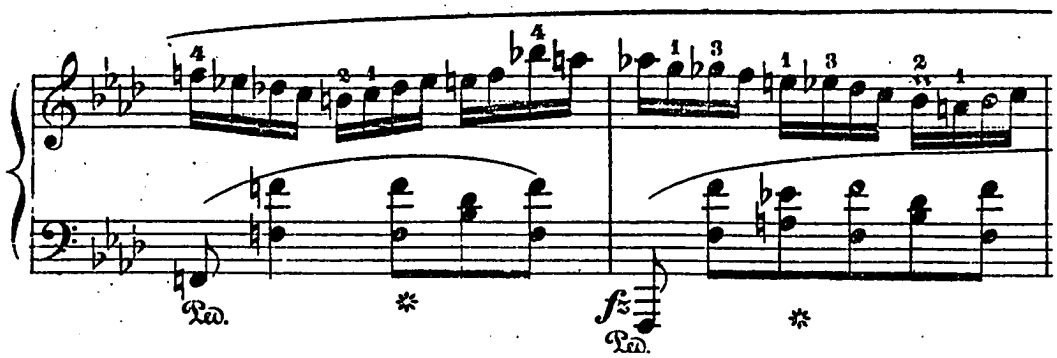
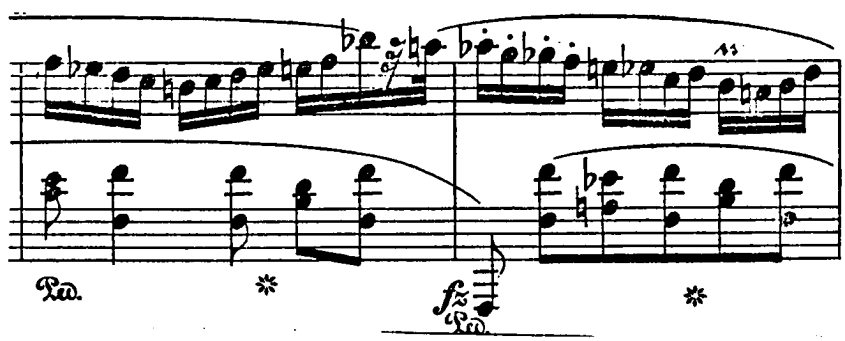
the middle section of his Polonaise in A flat where he alters the rhythm of a passage (Example 8) when it is repeated later on in the section (Example 9):

Example 8. Chopin, Polonaise (Mikuli), p. 57, meas. 1-2.



Example 9. Chopin, Polonaise (Mikuli), p. 57, meas. 5-6.



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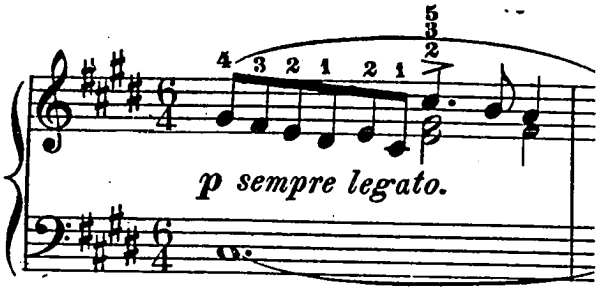
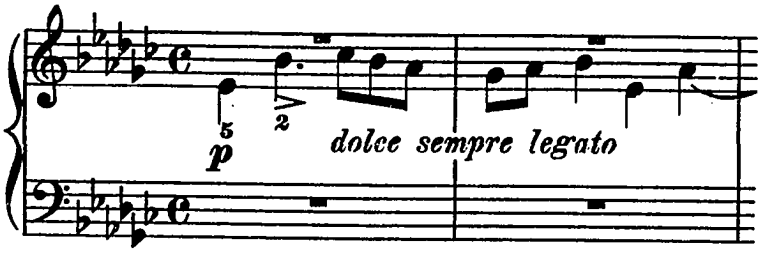
The editions of Carl Czerny are filled with "accent" marks indicated over the highest notes of melodic lines. These "accents" in Czerny's editions of Book One of the Well-Tempered Clavier were obviously his manner of indicating the "melodic accentuation" and are almost certainly intended to be understood as a stress more in regard to the time value of the notes rather than any sharp dynamic hitting or stressing of these notes:

Example 10. Bach, Prelude in C# minor (Czerny), p. 18, meas. 1.



Example 11. Bach, Fugue in Eb minor (Czerny), p. 40, meas. 1-2.



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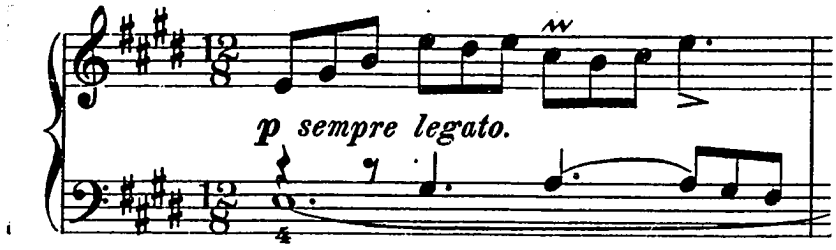
Example 12. Bach, Prelude in E major (Czerny), p. 44, meas.1.



Because it is difficult or impossible to ascertain the effect of such markings without actually hearing them demonstrated, such markings are often misunderstood. The important point, however, is that Liszt did use such effects in his playing, obviously partly as a result of Czerny's teaching.

Harmonic Accentuation

The function of harmonic accentuation is to point out significant points in the harmonic structure of a work. Hans von Bülow writes in his edition of Cramer's Etudes:

> The teacher should take care, at the same time, to stimulate a feeling for the leading of the bass amid the endeavors after a smooth and even touch. This feeling should be expressed by an accentuation (though not too pointed) of tones marking successive modulations. 1

With regard to Etude number 7, Bülow suggests:

> Of course, such accents must not be unnecessarily multiplied; in measures 1 and 2, for instance, a repeated accent on this lowest note is not allowable.

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1 Cramer, Etudes, ed. by Bülow, p. 15.

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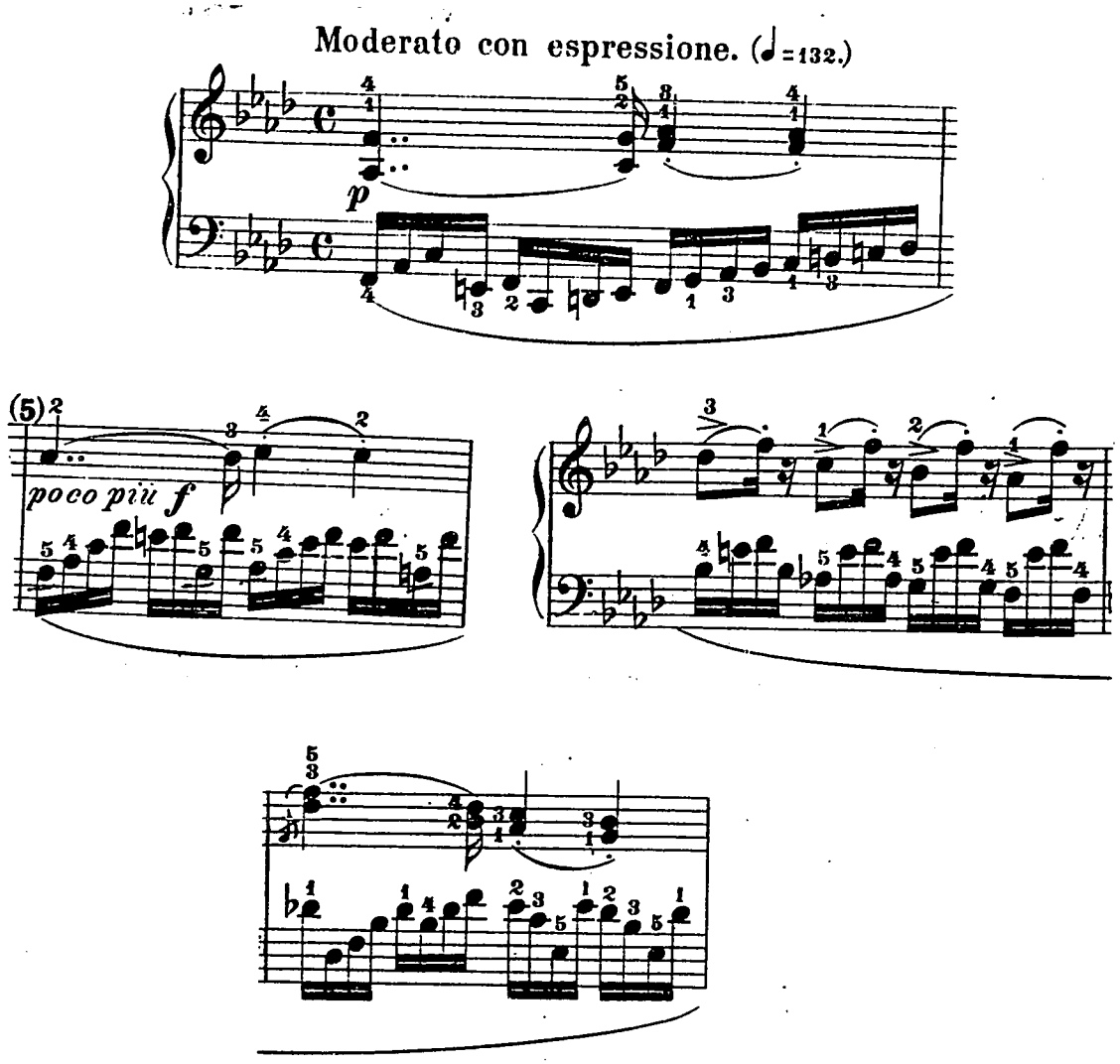
In measure 5, on the other hand, besides the first and third beats, the G and A natural (on the second and fourth half beats respectively) are to be slightly marked, and in measures 6 and 7 each beat; whereas in meas. 23 and 31, the second beat, on account of the unchanging harmony, admits of no accent. 1

Example 13. Cramer, Etude in F minor (Bülow), pp. 14-15, meas. 1; 5; 6; and 23.



1 Cramer, Etudes, ed. by Bülow, p. 15.

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In his edition of Beethoven's Sonata, opus 110, Bülow advises in performing the first theme of the first movement, "An accentuation (though by no means an obtrusive one) of the bass tones beginning each measure or each new harmony is recommended." 1

It is obvious that the uses of accentuation go far beyond those discussed here. The device can be used to emphasize any aspect of a composition which the performer wishes to project. It is not within the scope of this discussion to consider all of the various types of accentuation per se but rather simply to point out that a comprehension of the ramifications of this concept is essential if one is to arrive at an understanding of Liszt's approach to piano playing.

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1 Beethoven, Sonatas, ed. by Bülow, II, p. 637.

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CHAPTER VI

MUSICAL APPROACHES

In an attempt to describe what he termed the "subtle magic" of Liszt's playing, the American composer, Otis B. Boise, who was at Weimar in 1877, wrote:

> This quality is a thing quite apart from digital skill, although the latter is necessary to its realization. It arises from a sense for tone and color and logical sequence and manifests itself in dynamic adjustments and significant phrasing. 1

It is evident from this statement that much of Liszt's unusual control over his listeners resulted from his handling of aspects of pianism generally described as "musical" (as opposed to "technical"). Some of these aspects will be considered at this point.

Dynamics

One of the basic aspects of Liszt's approach to piano playing was his thinking in terms of light and shade. Apparently one of the most remarkable features of Liszt's playing was his use of dynamics, for a number of those who heard him were particularly impressed by this facet of his pianism. Ernest Haywood, who, as a student at the Royal Academy of Music, heard Liszt play his own Cantique d'amour

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1 Boise, Liszt, p. 324.

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there on Liszt's last visit to England, wrote: "To me, the most striking thing was the tone graduation from a singing piano, to an overwhelming forte."[1]

Madame Boissier wrote of the twenty-year-old Liszt's playing, "The shadings he projects into everything are amazing."[2] Amy Fay wrote, "You cannot conceive, without hearing him, how poetic he is, or the thousand nuances that he can throw into the simplest thing. . ."[3] Borodin wrote in a letter to his wife, "What astonishing light and shade -- pianissimo, piano, forte, fortissimo! What a crescendo and diminuendo, and what fire!"[4] Saint-Saëns wrote of the "wonderful variety of nuances" in Liszt's playing of his own Legende de Saint Francois de Paule marchant sur les flots.[5] The critic Eduard Hanslick described Liszt's playing as "replete with imaginative shadings."[6]

Liszt probably acquired his concentration on dynamics from Carl Czerny, for in his teaching Czerny insisted that great attention be paid to dynamics, Theodore Leschitizsky, another pupil of Czerny, remembered that Czerny required his own etudes "to be played repeatedly in different styles -- pianissimo, fortissimo, and lastly,

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1 Ralph Hill, Liszt, p. 139.
2 Madame Auguste Boissier, "Liszt as Pedagogue," trans. by Maurice Dumesnil, Piano Teacher, May-June, 1961, p. 13.
3 Fay, Music Study, p. 219.
4 Habets, Borodin and Liszt, p. 140.
5 Saint-Saëns, Outspoken Essays, p. 79.
6 Hanslick, Music Criticisms, p. 109.

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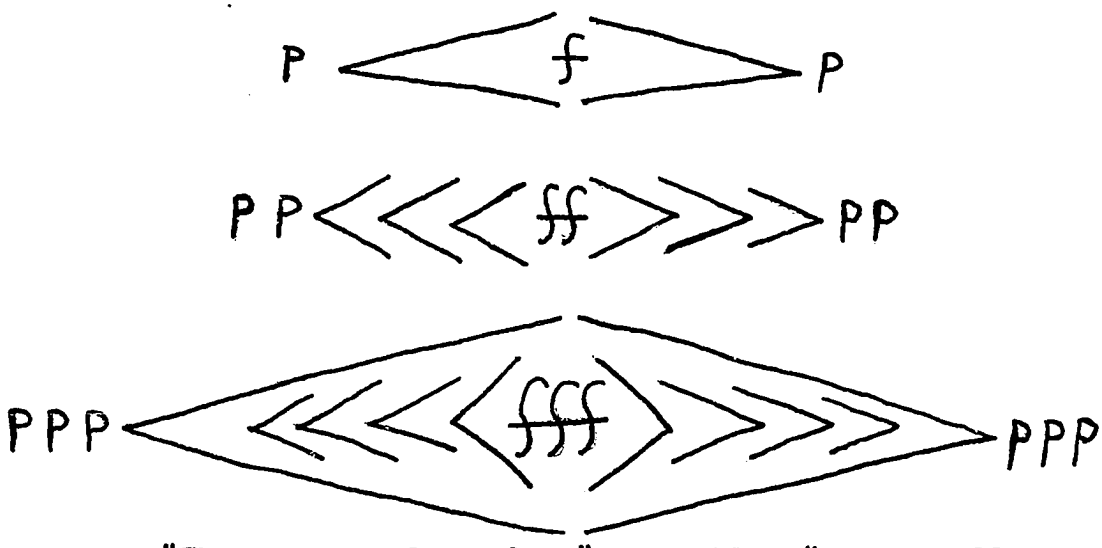
with nuances."[1]

Liszt followed Czerny's example in his own teaching, for Madame Boissier recorded in the notes of her daughter's lessons with Liszt:

> This time Liszt has Valerie concentrate on dynamics. He has in mind a goal of ideal perfection and is never satisfied with half measures. Valerie had to play some exercises with constant modification of the shading. At one point he took his pencil and wrote down the following:



> "These are only a few," he said. "Invent all kinds of shadings and if you can, some new combinations. One must develop the mind as well as the fingers." 2

Liszt's concentration on dynamics is evident in his Technische Studien, the twelve-volume work published after his death. It will be noted that the first exercise in the first volume, the well-known exercise of repeating a tone with a single finger while the other fingers remain at rest on adjoining keys, is marked to be played at various

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1 Edwin Hughes, "Leschitizsky," Etude, April, 1909, p. 228.

2 Boissier,"Liszt as Pedagogue," July-Aug., p. 14.

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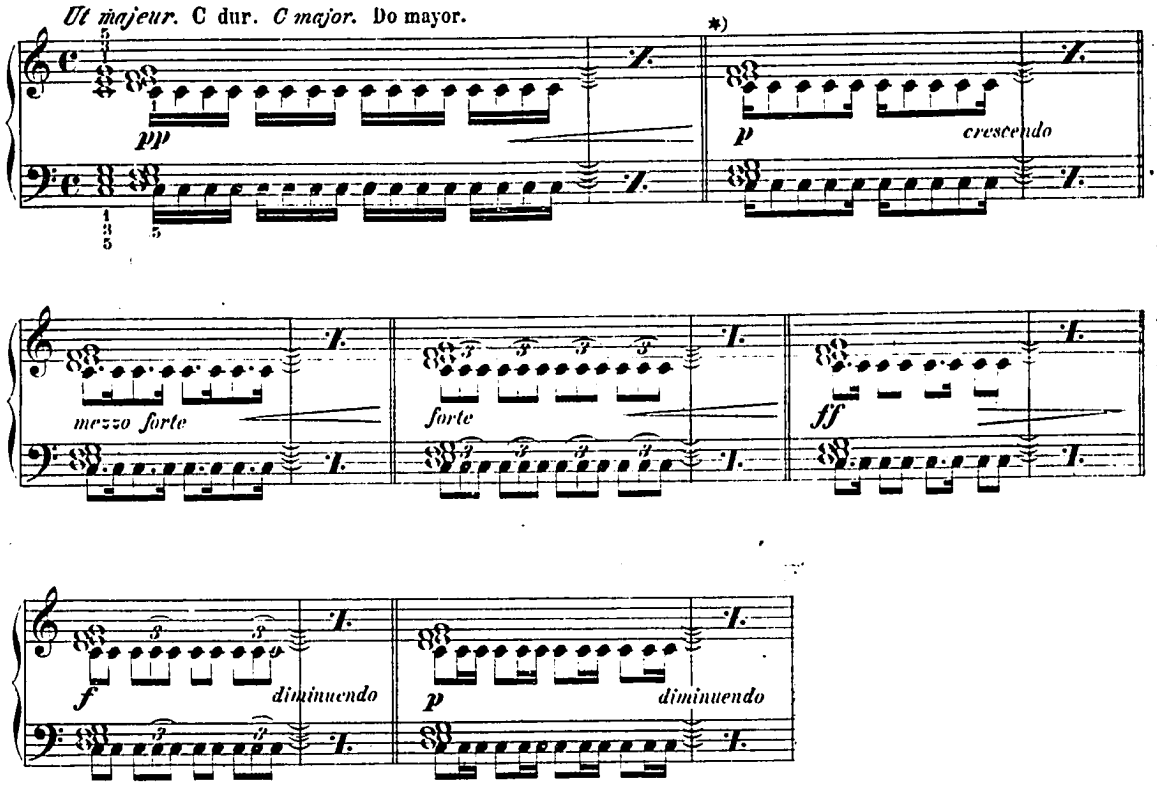
dynamic levels with points of crescendo and diminuendo:

Example 14. Liszt, Technische Studien, Vol. I, p. 3.



It is therefore obvious that Liszt considered dynamic control an integral part of even the most basic exercise. In this context, Liszt often applied dynamic shadings to extremely small units of a composition. Observe, for example, Liszt's marking of dynamic shadings for each note in the following three-note motive from his Tarantelle based on Auber's La Muette de Portici:

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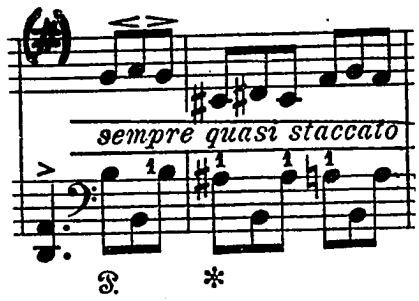
Example 15. Liszt, Tarantelle (Sauer), Vol. VIII, p. 105, meas. 20-21.



Other accounts of Liszt's teaching provide more comments on dynamics. Arthur Friedheim writes, "Liszt often used to observe, 'In order to produce an intensification, one should first diminish in force.'"[1] Liszt once advised a student to play the last few notes of ascending scales and runs with a crescendo in order to assure clarity and avoid having them sound "like a piano tuner's prelude."[2] Liszt said at one lesson at Weimar, "When basses descend at regular intervals, you must increase a little as they go lower," remarking as an afterthought that he believed this "rule" would hold good in most instances.[3]

As might be expected, a number of Liszt's students also gave dynamic control an unusual amount of attention. Bülow once told a student, "A diminuendo of several bars

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1 Chopin, Etudes, ed. by Friedheim, p. 2.
2 Lachmund, "Liszt Speaks," Jan.-Feb., p. 8.
3 Ibid.

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should be divided into stations, one each for forte, mezzo-forte, mezzo-piano, piano, and pianissimo."[1] It has already been shown that the ideas in Adolph Christiani's book are at least similar to those which Liszt taught, and perhaps actually came from Liszt. With regard to dynamics, Christiani wrote:

> The great point, in dynamic respect, to be aimed at, without which no pianist can be an artist, is not so much the attainment of immense power, but that of having one's touch under perfect control as to be able to say:
>
> This is my pianissimo; this, my piano; my mezzo-forte; my forte; my fortissimo.
>
> Such discrimination of touch, when judiciously applied, converts mere mechanism into artistic technique, and is not only of far greater moment than the most marvelous execution without such discrimination, but contains the true charm of pianoforte playing, the secret of success, such as execution alone could never attain. In fact, the proper application of dynamic degrees and tones constitutes the beauty of musical expression. 2

One of the most important aspects of dynamic control for the pianist is the relative levels between melody and accompaniment or between various voice parts. That Liszt stressed an awareness of this balance in his teaching is shown by Carl Lachmund, who wrote of a class at Weimar where a girl played several of Chopin's Preludes:

> When she had finished the one in G major, having played it like a Czerny etude, the Master gently shoved her from the chair and played it himself. Charmingly he subdued the murmuring runs in the left hand while the right hand melody sang out with the soaring tone which Liszt alone seemed to produce. 3

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1 Brower, Piano Mastery, (New York: Stokes, 1915), pp. 243-44.
2 Christiani, Principles, p. 219.
3 Lachmund, "Liszt Speaks", March-April, p. 3.

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Arthur Friedheim writes:

> Once Liszt, while talking to a party, sat down at the piano and stroked just a few simple chords, but in such a wonderfully sonorous manner that I exclaimed, "That sounds like some fine choral singing."
>
> Liszt said, laughingly, "That is a good guess. When I was young I trained my fingers like a conscientious chorus master treats his voices -- first in importance stands the soprano, bass, then tenor and last alto." 1

Liszt further advised Friedheim regarding the balance between the two inner voices (the tenor and the alto), ". . . the strings of the tenor on the piano are longer, and the tone, therefore, louder, so you must subdue this voice to get a right value."[2]

In addition to stressing the overall balance between the various voices or parts which go to make a composition, Liszt also emphasized the importance of playing each of these separate parts with its own independent dynamic inflection.

Carl Lachmund describes a class at Weimar where Liszt demonstrated at the piano how he wanted the opening of his own B minor Ballade to be played:

> The running passages in the bass he wished played with a crescendo (but not in every measure) and contrary to the expression of the right hand. This is not easy to do, and der Meister played it eight or ten times so we would understand. 3

In discussing Liszt's manner of playing fugal works, William Sherwood uses as a point of departure the playing of

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1 Friedheim, "Franz Liszt -- Recollections and Experiences," The Musician, Sept., 1915, p. 556.

2 Ibid.

3 Lachmund, "Liszt Speaks," March-April, p. 4.

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the Joachim String Quartet, which he heard on numerous occasions during the time he spent studying in Europe:

> When these men played a fugue, each voice had its own peculiarities of expression, of accent and impulse, of increasing or decreasing tone volume, of rounding out each phrase. . . . One man could accent a note, the climax in his phrase, and sustain the note at moment when another man would be making a diminuendo and ending it for his particular phrase. . . . I have referred at such length to the Joachim Quartet in order to emphasize the independent beauty and infinite variety of expression in Liszt's playing of fugues and other music where two or more voices of independent meaning are so frequently heard simultaneously. 1

Rafael Joseffy told his student, James Huneker, that Liszt and Tausig delighted in the art of "color variation," or slight dynamic variations in the repetition of a theme or section.[2] It was this concentration on minute changes of dynamics in Joseffy's playing that caused Liszt to describe his playing as "delicious."[3]

A final point in this compendium of evidence referring to Liszt's regard for dynamics touches upon the type of soft playing he was noted for. Liszt delighted in playing very rapid passages in an extremely light "pianissimo" style, with subtle nuances within this basic level of softness. This style of playing is epitomized in Chopin's Etude in F minor, opus 25, number 2, which Liszt often played, not only in public, but also on many occasions after he retired. A work of Liszt that stresses this style of playing is his

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1 Sherwood, "Student Days, p. 286.

2 Huneker, "Old Fogy's Comments," Etude, Jan., 1905, p. 17.

3 Boise, "Liszt," p. 324. This was after Liszt heard Joseffy at his last European concert, shortly before Joseffy left for America.

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etude, La Leggierezza.

After hearing Liszt play his own La Campanella at Weimar, Amy Fay wrote:

> I longed for M., as she is so fond of the Campanella. Liszt gave it with a velvety softness, clearness, brilliancy and pearliness of touch that was inimitable. And oh, his grace! Nobody can compare with him! Everybody else sounds heavy beside him! 1

Ernest Legouve, who heard Liszt during his concert-giving days, wrote:

> He had tones of a delicacy that made one think of tiny spangels or the light explosion of sparks of fire. Never have fingers bounded so lightly over the piano. 2

Phrasing

Evidence points to the fact that a consideration of phrasing was paramount in Liszt's playing, in his training, and his teaching. Carl Lachmund wrote of Liszt:

> What charmed, if not astounded, me most of all in Liszt's playing was his lucid phrasing; he seemed to present to you the emotional content as if on a server, entirely oblivious as to the technical means. Nothing could eradicate from my memory the inimitable manner in which he did this one afternoon at our own home: when he played Chopin's arpeggio etude in A flat, and the harp-like etude in E flat. What a revelation in phrasing it was! The like of which I have never heard again from any pianist. 3

Carl Czerny wrote in his autobiography that one of the first things he concentrated on with the young Liszt was teaching him "proper musical phrasing."[4] In his own teaching,

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1 Fay, Music Study, pp. 248-49.
2 Ibid., p. 286.
3 Lachmund, "Franz Liszt," Etude, Nov., 1915, p. 785.
4 Czerny, "Recollections," p. 315.

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Liszt spent much time on this subject. Madame Boissier writes:

> The balance of the lesson was devoted to the slow movement of Beethoven's Sonata Op. 2, No. 1. Valerie had worked on it most conscientiously but she was mistaken as to the results. The phrasing -- or declamation -- such as Liszt understands it is a complicated affair, and I am afraid we will not be able to grasp his full conception before we leave. 1

Since obviously there are no aural examples of Liszt's phrasing, a discussion of the subject is severely limited. However, four points seem to emerge with some clarity regarding Liszt's ideas on this subject:

1. Liszt's attention to the "long line";
2. his use of a "punctuation point" which occurred at the end of phrases and/or sections;
3. his application of accentuation to indicate the boundaries of phrasing;
4. his use of a carefully-calculated freedom concerning motion within phrases.

Carl Lachmund writes with regard to Liszt's teaching of the first point: "Another characteristic maxim, and one which he often urged: 'Do not conceive expression narrowly within one measure, but covering phrases of two or more measures, and it will be on broader lines.'"[2]

In his conducting, according to many accounts, Liszt did not beat the time for each measure, but instead

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1 Boissier, "Liszt as Pedagogue," trans. by Maurice Dumesnil, Piano Teacher, July-Aug., 1961, p. 14.

2 Lachmund, "Franz Liszt," p. 785.

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used a single long motion for each entire phrase.[1] This larger, overall view of the music he performed was obviously an important part of Liszt's basic approach to music.

The second point, that of the "punctuation point," is discussed in Weitzmann's Manual of Musical Theory:

> A caesura or rhythmic punctuation point occurs at the end of each section. In writing, this may be indicated by a point (') , and in performance by an instant's silence between sections. . . . Few writers, however, are so scrupulous in this respect, presuming that the executant's culture in the art of phrasing is such as not to require punctuation points. 2

Wilhelm von Lenz, a pupil of Liszt and Tausig, writes:

> As essential requirement in an instrumental virtuoso is that he should understand how to breathe, and how to allow his hearers to take breath -- giving them the opportunity to arrive at a better understanding. By this I mean a well-chosen incision, the caesura, and a lingering ("letting in air," as Tausig cleverly called it), which in no way impairs rhythm and time, but rather brings them into stronger relief; a lingering which our signs of notation cannot adequately express, because it is made up of atomic time values. 3

This "punctuation point" was stressed by Liszt in his teaching, for Carl Lachmund writes:

> When a student rushed from one section to another without the desired break (sometimes called kusstpause), the Master remarked: "No, do not rush headlong here; hesitate a bit, as if to glance back over the road you have come, and to determine in which direction you will go." Having elbowed the pupil from the chair, the Master played the piece -- and lo, what a new forcefulness there was in its meaning! 4

1 Dorian, History of Music in Performance (New York: Norton, 1942), p. 257.
2 E. M. Bowman, Weitzmann's Manual of Musical Theory, (New York: Pond, 1877), p. 55.
3 Lenz, Great Piano Virtuosos, p. 95.
4 Lachmund, "Franz Liszt," p. 785.

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Amy Fay also records an instance when Liszt demonstrated how the taking of a little more time at certain points could add to the effectiveness of a performance:

> Liszt does such bewitching little things! The other day, for instance, Fräulein Gaul was playing something to him, and in it were two runs, and after each two staccato chords. She did them most beautifully, and struck the chords immediately after. "No, no," said Liszt, "after you make a run you must wait a minute before you strike the chords, as if in admiration of your own performance. You must pause as if to say, "How nicely I did that!" Then he sat down and made a run himself, waited a second, and then struck the two chords in the treble, saying as he did so "Bra-vo," and he played again, struck the other chord, and said again "Bra-vo," and positively, it was as if the piano had softly applauded! That is the way he plays everything. It seems as if the piano were speaking with a human tongue. 1

The third point of musical rhetoric, that of using accentuation to indicate the boundaries of phrases and sections, was evidently considered of great importance by Liszt. William Mason wrote of his study with Liszt, "I found at this first lesson that he was very fond of strong accents to mark off periods and phrases. . . ."[2] In a letter discussing the performance of the works of Beethoven, Liszt wrote of the vital importance of "accenting and grouping the subjects."[3]

The following description by William Sherwood of a class at Weimar further illustrates Liszt's use of accentuation to mark off periods and phrases:

> One day a wealthy lady and her daughter from New York appeared. They wore fine clothes, with a conspicuous display of jewelry, while the air was laden with

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1 Fay, Music Study, p. 228.
2 Mason, Memories, p. 98.
3 Liszt, Letters, II, p. 57.

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perfume in their presence. The daughter was invited by Liszt to play, and she certainly played with strength and assurance. Her hands and wrists were powerful and her execution rapid. The weight of the lady's right foot on the damper-pedal was such that all the vibrating resources of the piano were in constant use. She played a brilliant concert waltz, with many wrong notes in the bass and chord accompaniment for the left hand. Liszt had a vein of sarcasm, good-natured but keen, and, while the lady was playing, he went through various gestures behind her back, which caused the other students present to smile.

When the performance was finished he told the young lady that she only needed a few finishing touches to be a great artist, all of which was so elegantly sarcastic that the other students smiled still more. After this he began to talk kindly and to point out some of her greatest errors and faults. Then he sat down and played the parts for the left hand alone, for some two pages of the waltz. In doing this Liszt phrased the bass (one note for each measure) with accented and expressive groupings, in sets of four and eight measures, according to the natural expression of the waltz. He played the alternating chords in such a way as to give meaning to the separate harmonic parts of each chord, as related to those of the next. . . . The playing of this music, really the accompaniment part by the left hand, as Liszt did it, with artistic touch and efficiency and perfect use of the damper-pedal, made a beautiful composition out of the work done, although none of the themes was heard. Certainly the performance sounded like music, whereas the previous performance by the young lady, with both hands and all the fingers (and much greater noise)was anything but music. 1

The fourth point which seems to emerge regarding Liszt's use of musical rhetoric was his frequent use of a carefully-calculated freedom concerning motion within phrases. William Mason wrote of his first lesson with Liszt:

> While I was playing to him for the first time, he said on one of the occasions when he pushed me from the chair: "Don't play it that way. Play it like this." Evidently I had been playing ahead in a steady, uniform

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1 Sherwood, "Student Days," p. 285.

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> way. He sat down, and gave the same phrases with an accentuated, elastic movement, which let in a flood of light upon me. From that one experience, I learned to bring out the same effect where it was appropriate, in almost every piece that I played. It eradicated much that was mechanical, stilted, and unmusical in my playing and developed an elasticity of touch which has lasted all my life, and which I have always tried to impart to my pupils. 1

It is a pity that Mason does not go into more detail, pointing out exactly what Liszt did when he sat down to"play it like this." The significance of this quotation, nevertheless, lies in the fact that Liszt did not want Mason to play ahead "in a steady, uniform way," but rather with a freer, more "elastic" movement within the phrases.

The following description by Carl Lachmund sums up Liszt's way of phrasing:

> His phrasing was so illuminating that any familiar piece coming from under his fingers became a revelation. The Liszt rubato is a momentary halting of the time by a slight pause on some significant note and when rightly done, brings out the phrasing in a way that is declamatory and remarkably convincing. In playing Liszt seemed unmindful of the time, and yet the symmetry of the rhythm did not seem disturbed. Never before or since have I heard any other pianist phrase as Liszt did -- so convincingly, so enchantingly that it seemed to hypnotize one. 2

Time

Inflections of time are obviously extremely closely related to matters of phrasing and musical rhetoric; so much so that some of the material touched upon at this point may

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1 Mason, Memories, p. 99.
2 Lachmund, "Liszt Speaks," Jan.-Feb., p. 8.

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seem redundant. It is of value, nevertheless, to focus specifically on this aspect of Liszt's playing and teaching since there is further source material which bears directly on this subject.[1]

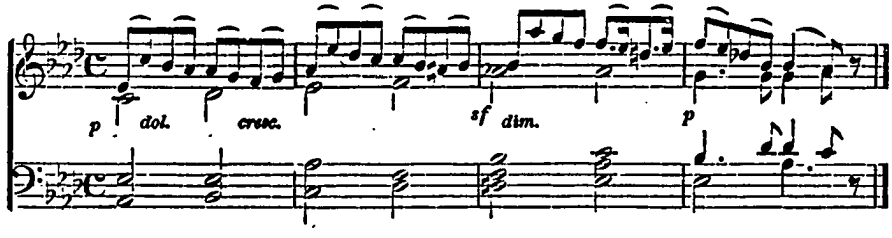
Liszt wrote in a letter:

> The metronomic style of playing is no doubt disagreeable and incorrect; time and rhythm must follow and identify themselves with the melody, the harmony, the accent, and poetic content. . . . But how is this to be indicated in the notation? It makes me shudder to think of it. 2

Liszt was undoubtedly taught to think in this fashion by Carl Czerny, who writes extensively on the uses of accelerando and ritardando in the third part of his Pianoforteschule, opus 500. The section is entitled "Von der Vortrag," or "Concerning Expression," and Czerny writes:

> "Many, in fact, nearly every place or point in a composition, which is susceptible of tact-freedom, can bear more than one mode of employing *rallentandos* and *accelerandos*, without any one of these modes being absolutely faulty or inappropriate. So, for example, can the following little melody be interpreted in four different ways:"

CZERNY—ANDANTE.



FOUR DIFFERENT WAYS OF INTERPRETATION.

1. In *tempo*.....	throughout.	
2. In *tempo*.....	*un poco ritenuto*.....	*smorzando.*
3. In *tempo*.....	*poco accelerando*.....	*rallentando.*
4. In *tempo*.....	*molto ritardando*.....	*perdendosi.*

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1 It might be well to point out that this discussion of time deals with broader adjustments which may cut across the limits of individual phrases (as opposed to point number 4 in the preceding section).

2 Mr. Henry T. Finck, "The Piano in Liszt's Letters," Etude, Dec., 1893, p. 253.

3 Christiani, Principles, p. 265.

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Czerny gives the following rules regarding the use of rallentandos:

"Ritardando is most appropriately employed—

"RULE 1.—Before the return of a principal theme.

"RULE 2.—On those notes within a period which lead to the beginning of a phrase or even a mere section.

"RULE 3.—On accented long notes, followed by shorter ones.

"RULE 4.—Before going over into a different tact, *i. e.*, just before the change of time begins.

"RULE 5.—Immediately before a pause or rest.

"RULE 6.—On the *diminuendo* of a part which was just before very lively, as also on brilliant passages, when suddenly a run occurs which requires a soft and delicate rendering.

"RULE 7.—On all embellishments of many quick notes, which one finds it difficult to get comfortably into the strict measure of time.

"RULE 8.—Occasionally, also, on the ascending *crescendo* of an especially emphasized part, leading to an important climax or to an ending.

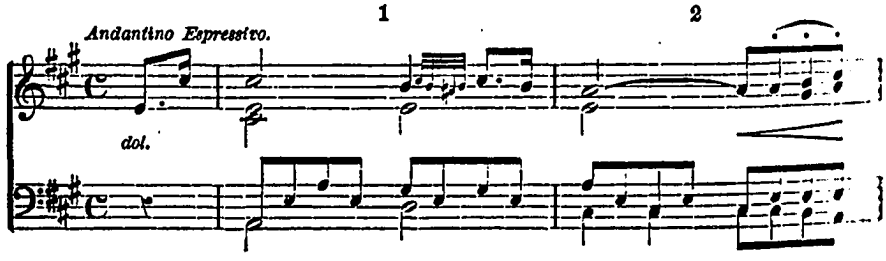
"RULE 9.—On very humorous, capricious, or fantastic parts or passages, to elevate their character.

"RULE 10.—Almost wherever the composer has marked '*espressivo*,' and

"RULE 11.—At the end of every long trill, as on every soft cadence in general.

"As a matter of course, all that is said with regard to *ritardando* refers equally to such synonymous words as '*rallentando, ritenuto, smorzando, calando*,' etc."

He then gives a musical illustration of these principles:



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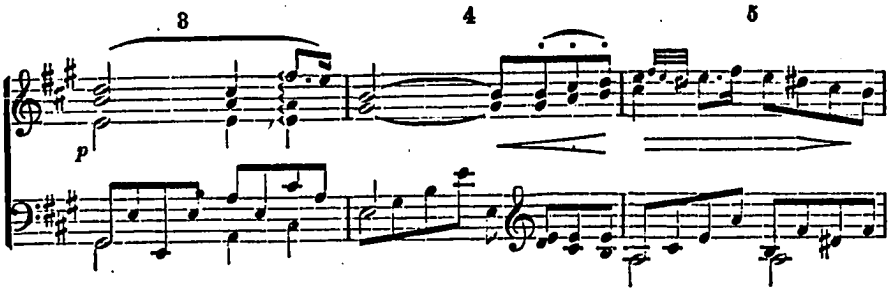


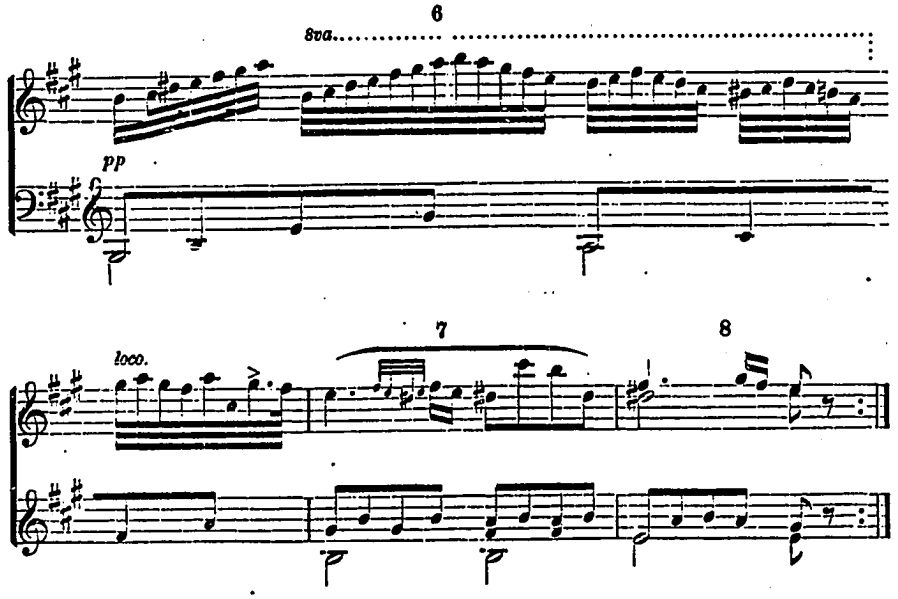
1st Measure.—Strictly in tempo.

2d Measure.—The last three eighths are to be almost imperceptibly retarded; because the next measure brings a repetition of the first, or chief, motive (Rule 2).

3d Measure.—The last arpeggio-chord should be slightly retarded.

4th Measure.—The last three eighths should be played with a little more warmth (almost *accelerando*), which diminishes in the next measure only.

5th Measure.—The embellishment, according to Rule 7, a little *ritardando.*



6th Measure.—A *ritard.* on this kind of embellishment is always permissible—even necessary—as a preventive of an awkward or hasty rendering, and an assistance in performing the quick notes in a delicate, graceful manner, as though the notes were gradually vanishing.

Toward the end of the embellishment only, should the *ritard.* become perceptible, and a slight pause should be made on the G-sharp, the last note but one.

7th and 8th Measures.—Strictly in time.

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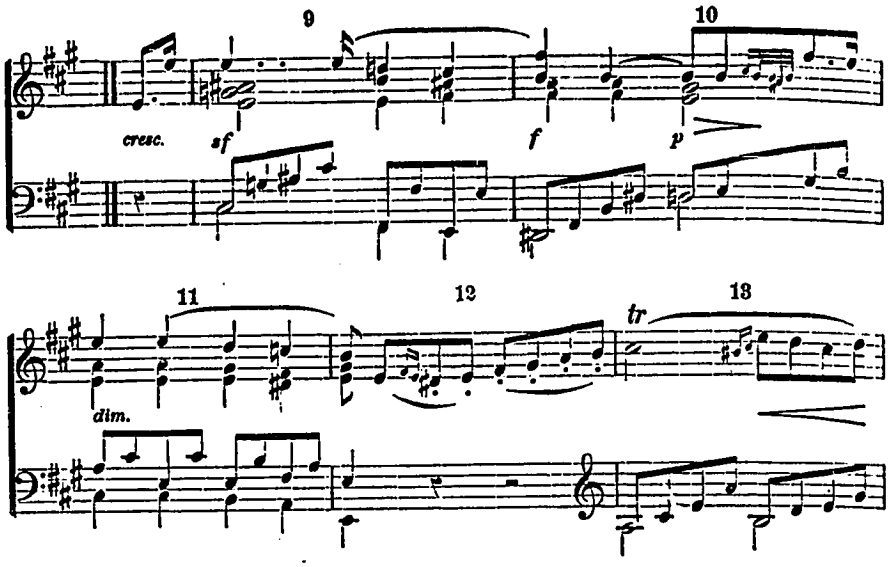


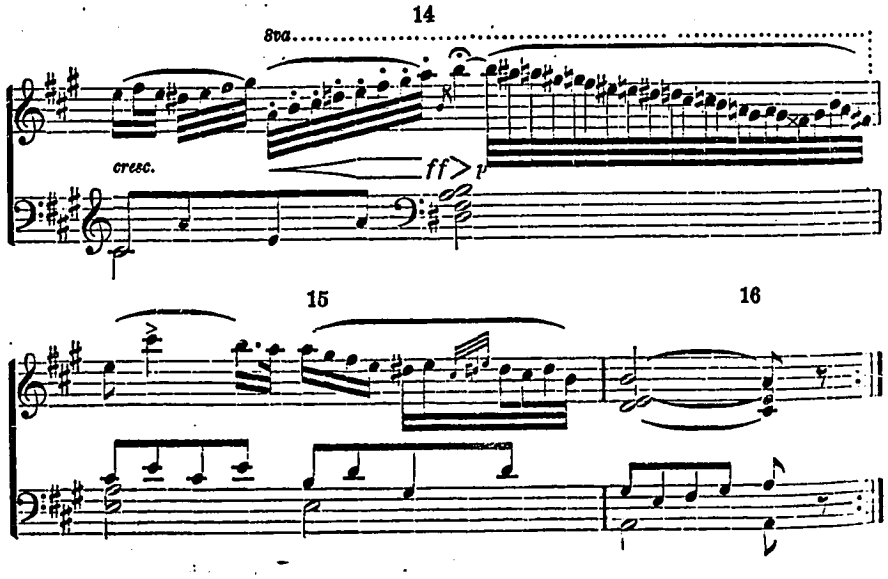
9th Measure.—With warmth and strength; consequently, almost *accelerando.*

10th Measure.—The second half of this measure, more quickly.

11th Measure.—A little *ritardando,* and the last dissonant chord very softly; because every dissonating chord (when *piano*) is more effective if played in this way.

12th Measure.—The first three eighths in tempo, but the last five eighths decidedly *ritardando,* inasmuch as they lead to the theme (Rule 1).

13th Measure.—In tempo.



14th Measure.—The first quarter is already rather *ritard.,* which increases considerably in the second quarter; while the eight upper notes should be strongly marked, and *crescendo.* The fermate, 𝄐, lasts about three eighths, and the subsequent run is moderately fast, delicate, and *diminuendo,* until the last eight notes become quite prominently *ritardando.*

15th Measure.—The first half is in tempo, the second half *ritardando,* while the end of the embellishment should softly die away. The *ritardando* is here most necessary, as the measure contains the soft and tender finale cadence.

Last Measure.—Quietly, in tempo. [1]

1 Christiani, Principles, pp. 266-69.

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Whether or not Liszt would have agreed with every detail discussed by Czerny is moot, yet the fact remains that Liszt was brought up to regard time as partially consisting of an avoidance of "the metronomic style." This was certainly one of the basic characteristics of Liszt's playing.

The degree of freedom which Liszt employed depended on the style and content of the works he played. He told Valerie Boissier to avoid playing "fugues" with any undue freedom with regard to time, saying, "They are to be played in time, with shadings, with expression, but never departing from depth and nobility. Here we have monks singing in a monastery; they may feel moments of passion but they throw a veil over them."[1]

Carl Lachmund writes of a lesson at Weimar where Alexander Siloti played Liszt's Polonaise in C minor: "In the spianato introduction, as well as in the Polonaise itself, Liszt wished some freedom in the rhythm, with the accompaniment not too strict or angular."[2]

Bettina Walker describes a lesson Liszt gave a "young American lady" on Chopin's Fourth Ballade:

> . . . on that afternoon, being in an especially genial mood, he spoke of the composition, and bade her observe how the composer, having wandered away from the opening thought, seems afterwards to be as it were groping for it; and this groping, this seeking, Liszt pictured to us

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1 Boissier, "Liszt as Pedagogue," p. 14.
2 Lachmund, "Liszt Speaks," March-April, p. 3.

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> most wonderfully in his playing -- when, without losing that which the very life of a composition, its rhythmic beat, he seemed to waver and sway, as if uncertain whether to go on in that rhythm or not. During this wavering and swaying, he turned at intervals to the young lady and observed, "He has not found it yet, but it is coming." "It is very near now," he finally said, just before he struck a note of triumph, and came in with a sweep on the opening theme. 1

Tone

Controversy has raged among twentieth-century writers, both scientists and musicians,as to whether or not the piano is capable of any qualitative change of tone. In Liszt's time, this controversy did not exist. In fact, there is a great deal of testimony noting that one of the most important and unforgettable aspects of Liszt's playing was the "sound" he got from the piano.

The Englishman Strelezki, who came to Weimar in 1869, wrote, "I knew that Tausig, with all his transcendental powers, lacked that marvelous touch and that inimitable tone which Liszt and Liszt alone possessed."[2] Felix Weingartner wrote of the aged Liszt's playing, "It was more than mere play; it was as if the piano, magnetized or bewitched, rendered up enchanting sounds from the very depths of its soul. Liszt's touch was indescribably beautiful."[3] Alexander Siloti wrote in an attempt to describe Liszt's tone, "I cannot say that he had a 'big tone'; it was rather that when

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1 Walker, Experiences, p. 109.
2 Beckett, Liszt, p. 138.
3 Weingartner, "Franz Liszt," Musical Quarterly, XXII, (1936), p. 255.

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he played there was no sound of the instrument."[1]

Even Theodore Bernhardi, a politician and military historian who strongly disliked Liszt, was charmed by his tone. Bernhardi, who spent the winter of 1852-53 at Weimar, described Liszt as "a very ugly man, who makes on the whole a disagreeable impression," "not a man of great intelligence," "a man of weak character," and so on. However, after hearing Liszt play at a Court function at Weimar, Bernhardi wrote: "Liszt played a trio with violin and violincello accompaniment -- marvelously beautiful; there is something ethereal in his touch -- I can find no other word for it."[2]

Several writers in the English language use the adjective "penetrating" to describe Liszt's tone. Bettina Walker writes of "his sweet penetrative tone."[3] Edward Danreuther notes, "His tone was large and penetrating, but not hard."[4]

Amy Fay writes:

> For instance, in one place where V. was playing the melody rather feebly, Liszt suddenly took his seat at the piano and said, "When I play, I always play for the people in the gallery (by the gallery he means the cock-loft, where the rabble sit and the seats cost next to nothing), so that those persons who pay only five groschens for their seats also hear something." Then he began, and I wish you could have heard him! The sound didn't seem to be very loud, but it was penetrating and far-reaching. When he had finished, he raised one hand in the air, and you seemed to see all the people in the gallery drinking in the sound. 5

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1 Siloti, Liszt, p. 135.
2 Newman, The Man Liszt, p. 179.
3 Beckett, Liszt, p. 137.
4 Ibid.
5 Fay, Music Study, p. 223.

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There is no very specific evidence on how Liszt produced this sound. In accounts of his teaching, the only mentions of tone concern Liszt's desire to keep students from playing too thin a tone. Carl Czerny wrote, "The most gentle pianissimo ought never to become indistinct and unintelligible"; and Liszt stressed this same point at lessons.[1] Carl Lachmund, for example, writes of a class where a girl played Beethoven's G major Concerto:

> In the slow movement he objected to the Fraulein's tone. "That is too thin -- it would not fill a hall," he protested. "You must remember that people who have paid their three marks of admission expect you to give them three marks' worth of tone." 2

At another lesson, Liszt said of the second theme of the first movement of Chopin's E minor Concerto, "Make this sing out with distinct and full tone, though of course not loud." [3]

Pedalling

The impression of "tone" which Liszt communicated was inextricably bound with his pedalling. Amy Fay wrote:

> You remember I wrote to you that one secret of Liszt's effects was his use of the pedal, and how he has a way of disembodying a piece from the piano and seeming to make it float on the air? 4

Claude Debussy (the composer whose sensitivity to pedalling effects resulted in an entirely new way of thinking

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1 Czerny, Letters to a Young Lady, trans. by J. Hamilton (New York: Gordon, 1868), reprinted in The Piano Teacher, Jan.-Feb., 1960, p. 10.
2 Lachmund, "Liszt Speaks," March-April, p. 5.
3 Ibid., Jan.-Feb., p. 8.
4 Fay, Music Study, p. 297.

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about piano sonority) wrote that the most striking feature of the aged Liszt's playing was his use of the pedal. "It was as if he were breathing."[1]

The use of the pedal on its most artistic levels is too complex and subtle a thing to be reduced either to words or markings. Its use is usually demonstrated by teachers. Written comments on pedalling are generally confined to more rudimentary matters or special effects which require simple techniques. The accepted way of teaching more complex effects is by demonstrations by the teacher, followed usually by trial and error attempts on the part of the student to imitate what the teacher has done. There is evidence that such demonstrations were used by Liszt in his teaching.

The few available comments on pedalling by Liszt concern a rudimentary use of the pedal. In a letter written in 1875 to the pedagogue Louis Kohler, which discusses Kohler's Technische Künstler-Studien (opus 47), Liszt writes:

> The entrance of the pedal after the striking of the chords as indicated by you at the beginning of page 3, and as consistently carried through by you to the utmost extreme, seems to me to be an ingenious idea, the application of which is greatly to be recommended to pianoforte players, teachers and composers -- especially in slow tempi. 2

At a lesson in Weimar, Liszt said, "One should change the pedal an instant after the beat. Otherwise you'll be apt to catch notes of the previous beat and blur the

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1 Seroff, Debussy, p. 67.
2 Liszt, Letters, II, p. 278.

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harmonies. Furthermore, you can thus get a perfect legato on distant notes and chords."[1]

Although Liszt's use of the pedal obviously went far beyond this, there are no further comments of his available. However, certain basic conclusions can be drawn concerning his use of the pedal by correlating information based on an examination of the pedalling Liszt and his students marked in editions of Liszt's own works with comments on this subject by his students.

Liszt frequently used the pedal in passages consisting of very light, detached fingerwork. In an article discussing what he claims are pedal concepts learned from Liszt, Arthur Friedheim writes that any passagework in the higher part of the keyboard can be played "to the greatest advantage of sonority without releasing the pedal as soon and as long as it is supported by a strong harmonic foundation in the lower register."[2]

Quoted below are two examples from editions of Liszt's work made by his students:

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1 Lachmund, "Liszt Speaks," Jan.-Feb., p. 8.

2 Friedheim, "Artistic Pedalling," Etude, Aug., 1932, p. 537. Other points in this article include the following: that Liszt advised a different use of the pedal in every register of the piano; that one should "use the pedal for all melody notes of longer duration which have no harmonic support"; and that the pedal should be used for every trill.

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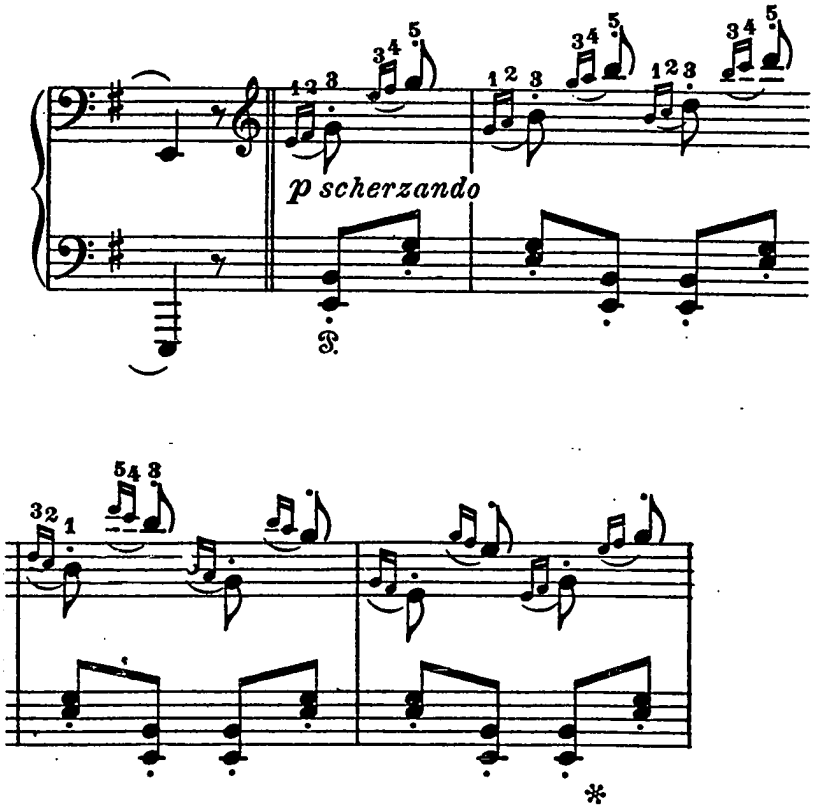
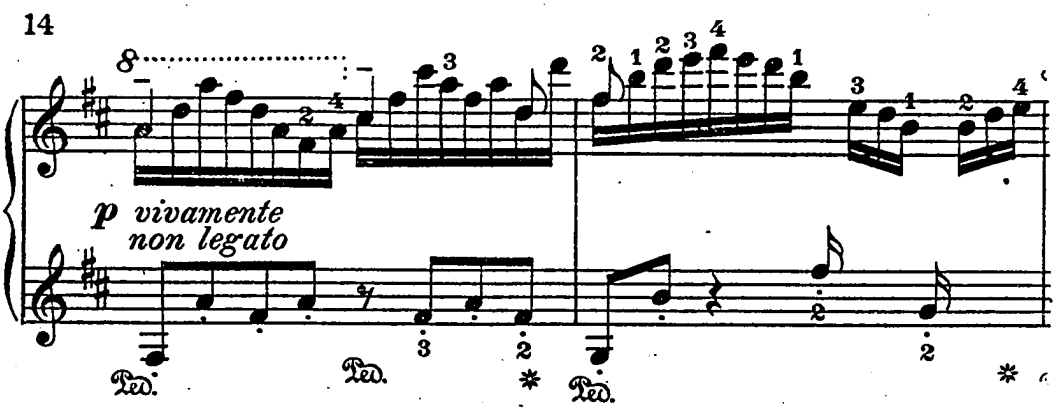
Example 16. Liszt, Tarantelle (Sauer), Vol. VIII, p. 116, meas. 10-14.



Example 17. Liszt, Sonata (Joseffy), p. 14, meas. 1-2.



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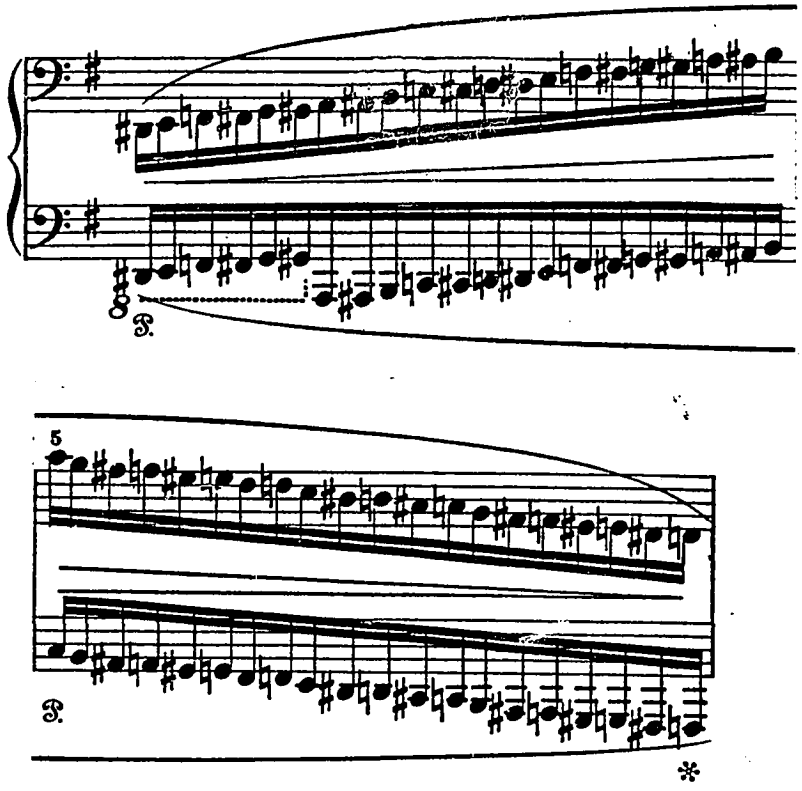
A characteristic effect which Liszt employed often in his own compositions was the use of the pedal for running passages deep in the bass of the piano. Liszt asked for this effect in his own B minor Ballade from a student who was playing in a class at Weimar. Carl Lachmund reports, "He wished the pedal used in the low bass runs, giving a peculiar effect which is quite Lisztian." [1]

An example of this effect in another work of Liszt is quoted below:

Example 18. Liszt, Tarantelle (Sauer), p. 116, meas. 8-9.



1 Lachmund, "Liszt Speaks," March-April, p. 4.

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Finally, many of the special dramatic effects which Liszt used in his own works and for which he was famous depend largely on the use of the pedal. Evidence of his interest in these special effects is given by Amy Fay, who writes:

> I asked him to tell me how he produced a certain effect he makes in his arrangement of the ballad in Wagner's Flying Dutchman. He looked very 'fin' as the French say, but did not reply. He never gives a direct answer to a direct question. "Ah," said I, "You won't tell." He smiled and then immediately played the passage. It was a long arpeggio, and the effect he made was, as I had supposed, a pedal effect. He kept the pedal down throughout, and played the beginning of the passage in a grand rolling manner, and then all the rest of it with a very light pianissimo touch, and so lightly, that the continuity of the arpeggios was destroyed, and the notes seemed to be just strewn in, as if you broke a wreath of flowers and scattered them according to your fancy. It is a most striking and beautiful effect, and I told him I didn't see how he ever thought of it. "Oh, I've invented a great many things," he said indifferently -- "this, for instance," -- and he began playing a double roll of octaves in chromatics in the bass of the piano. It was very grand, and made the room reverberate. 1

The following is an example of one of those special effects invented by Liszt in which the pedal is an important factor:

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1 Fay, Music Study, pp. 240-41.

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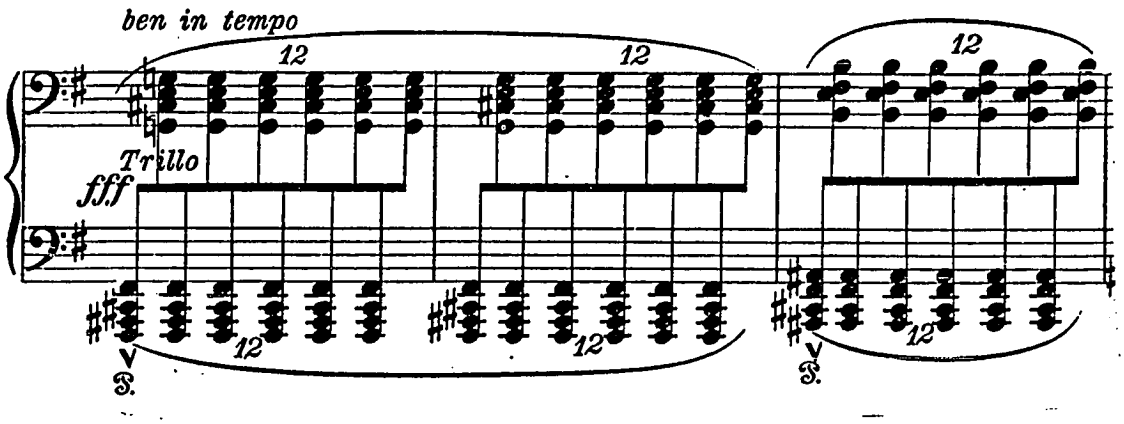
Example 19. Liszt, Fantasie and Fugue on BACH (Sauer), Vol. XII, p. 164, meas. 1-3.



In his own works, Liszt often used long pedals for certain effects, which are completely lost if his own pedal indications are not followed. For example, Liszt clearly indicates that he wants the pedal held down from the beginning to the end of each of the numerous runs in his Paganini Etude in E flat. However, today this work is seldom played in this fashion, and many later editors have changed Liszt's original pedal markings. This is also true in several other instances in Liszt's works.

Climax

The ability to produce tremendous climaxes was probably in large measure responsible for the emotional power Liszt's playing held for his listeners.

Louis Ehlert wrote regarding this:

> He possessed a quality that neither Tausig nor any virtuoso before or succeeding him possessed -- the nearest approach, perhaps, was Rubinstein --

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> namely, a spontaneous control of passion that approximated nature in its power and force. 1

Berlioz wrote of a Paris concert given by Liszt:

> His qualities are so overwhelming, his climaxes so terrifying in their force and precision, his ornamentation so delicate and novel in style that truly sometimes one is incapable of applause, he so petrifies you. 2

Arthur Friedheim, who did not hear Liszt play until the Master was well into his sixties, still writes that Liszt "probably never has been approached as a builder of 'orchestral' climaxes, overwhelming masses of sound and exciting effects." [3]

That Liszt was well aware such climactic effects were necessary to arouse his listeners, especially in playing before the general public, is revealed in the following description Liszt wrote of the audiences a pianist must face in public concerts, "They are like a sea of lead and no less heavy to move, their waves are stirred by fire." [4]

Despite the seemingly wild and unrestrained effect of Liszt's climaxes, such effects were actually carefully planned and controlled. Amy Fay wrote, "Perhaps, after all, the secret of Liszt's fascination is this power of intense wild emotion that you feel he possesses, together with the most perfect control of it." [5] After hearing Liszt play at Weimar, Bettina Walker wrote, ". . . a cold shiver passed

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1 Louis Ehlert, From the Tone World, trans. from German by Helen Tretbar (New York: Tretbar, 1885), p. 17.
2 Hill, Liszt, p. 30.
3 Friedheim, Life and Liszt, p. 160.
4 Liszt, Chopin, trans. by Edward Waters (London: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), p. 83.
5 Fay, Music Study, p. 242.

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through me, not so much at what he actually bestowed on us, as at what he suggested as having in reserve."[1] William Mason wrote that in his playing Liszt was ". . . remarkable for his reserve force and the discretion with which he made use of it."[2]

Mason further writes with regard to the climaxes in Liszt's playing:

> But when has the world ever found a player of Liszt's magnificent caliber who could so intelligently and ably adapt himself as an interpreter of all kinds of music, who was always the master of his resources, and who never fell into the error of anticipating his climaxes? Or, if perchance he found himself in the least danger of such an event, he would readily arrange and develop a new climax, so that at the conclusion of his performance he was always sure to have worked his audience up to a state of almost crazy excitement and unbounded enthusiasm. 3

The ways in which Liszt planned and controlled the elements of such potent effects will in all probability remain undisclosed, for evidence does not seem to go beyond the simple fact that Liszt's climaxes, however large and unrestrained-sounding in effect, were always the result of meticulous planning and control.

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1 Walker, Experiences, p. 108.
2 Mason, Memories, p. 224.
3 Mason, "Paderewski: A Critical Study," International Library of Music, III, p. 17.

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CHAPTER VII

TECHNICAL APPROACHES

Although Liszt worked long and hard on technique, and wrote a twelve-volume compendium of Technische Studien, he did not think of the technical side as an isolated aspect of piano playing. From the markings in his own Technische Studien, as well as from numerous comments made to students, it is obvious that Liszt could not think of an exercise or figure played on the piano as a purely physical response, but rather as inseparably combined with considerations of dynamics and some type of rhythmical definition.

It is interesting in this context to note that in 1856 Liszt wrote in a letter to the pedagogue, Louis Kohler:

> The dedication of your work "Systematic Method of Teaching for Pianoforte Playing and Music" (the latter must not be forgotten!) pleases me much. . . 1

Many of Liszt's students took the same approach. Bülow wrote in his edition of the Cramer Etudes that the student must be compelled to "preserve the integrity of the rhythm; a point always to be borne in mind in all mechanical practice."[2] In discussing the practicing of the exercises included in his Touch and Technic, William Mason wrote, "The meter must be clearly defined, whatever the speed or whatever

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1 Liszt, Letters, I, p. 272.
2 Cramer, Etudes, ed. by Bülow, p. 57.

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the kind of touch employed."[1]

Liszt had contempt for "pedagogues," as he called them, as well as their methods, and made both the butt of numerous sarcastic comments in his classes. In 1875, he wrote in a letter to Kohler, "I am more disposed to turn away from than towards Methods and Pedagogics. . ."[2] Liszt's friend, H. R. Haweis, wrote of Liszt's "hatred of 'Conservatorium' dogma."[3]

In spite of Liszt's attitude toward the isolation of technique, certain basic approaches can be deduced from an investigation of Liszt's comments on piano playing. This chapter will be devoted to a discussion of the exercises and basic approaches which Liszt suggested. These topics have been gleaned from a variety of sources and range over a variety of subjects. They hardly constitute a compendium of piano technique, but they are the points which seem to emerge from from a study of Liszt's approach to the technical side of piano playing.

Before proceeding, it is worthwhile to mention that although Liszt advised the practicing of certain exercises, he did not indicate any particular physiological way of playing the piano, except for a few broad generalities on a very limited number of occasions. For this reason, this chapter does not include any reference to the physiological manner of

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1 Mason, Touch and Technic, II, p. 9.
2 Liszt, Letters, II, p. 278.
3 Hugh Reginald Haweis, My Musical Memories, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1884), p. 254.

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performing these exercises. Due to the great interest of twentieth-century pedagogues in various types of physiological approaches to the instrument, however, a separate chapter (Chapter VIII) will attempt to determine the type of physiological approach Liszt used in certain facets of his playing. Such conjecture must be based almost entirely on comments of those few writers who attempted to describe Liszt's playing from a purely physiological point of view.

Half-Staccato Touch

In passagework, Liszt often used a detached, non-legato touch. Saint-Saëns wrote of this touch:

> It is produced by a clearness of articulation and lightness of touch, which enables one to "put air between the notes," as Liszt said. 1

In the following series of quotations discussing his training as a pianist, Moritz Rosenthal reveals the importance Liszt and those influenced by him attached to this touch. Rosenthal contrasts the teaching of one of his earlier teachers, Karl Mikuli, who had been a pupil of Chopin, with that of his later teacher, Rafael Joseffy, a pupil of Tausig and Liszt:

> Chopin, in his teaching, insisted on a perfect legato. Mikuli was very careful, very thorough in giving me a good foundation and in requiring me to cultivate the pure legato touch. This he accomplished through many

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1 Saint-Saëns, Outspoken Essays, p. 30.

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> technical forms and exercises, which I had to play in all keys, both major and minor, and with much Czerny and continuous study of the Bach fugues.

Rosenthal describes his lessons with Joseffy:

> Soon after beginning to study with Joseffy, I found my new master had ideas quite different from the former one. Whereas Mikuli always insisted on the closest legato, the most exact connection of tones, Joseffy taught a half-staccato touch which was quite the opposite. The former was more smooth and flowing, the latter more scintillating and brilliant; the former in the Chopin manner, the latter in that of the great virtuoso. Not that I entirely gave up my legato manner of playing, but I endeavered to cultivate also the detached, brilliant, delicate style of which my new teacher was such a master.

Later, when Rosenthal went on to study with Liszt, he noticed that:

> Technically, he [Liszt] often employed the half-staccato, detached touch that Joseffy had used. [1]

This touch was stressed by all of Liszt's more important pupils in their teaching and writings on piano technique. Bulow told a student that in order to play a brilliant scale, the touch must be "not too legato -- rather a mezzo-legato,"[2] adding, "Brilliancy does not depend on velocity, but on clarity. What is not clear cannot scintillate nor sparkle."[3] William Mason stressed this touch in his writings on piano technique, advising pianists in the playing of rapid passagework to "put the tones together like a string of pearls, so that each is rounded into shape, and the phrase is a complete and definite series of tones, and not like a lot of

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1 Rosenthal, "The Training of a Virtuoso," p. 189.
2 Brower, Piano Mastery, p. 238.
3 Ibid.

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overboiled peas, so soft that they all mash together."[1]

When Liszt's pupil Tausig first played in public, members of the older school of pianists expressed disapproval of his "staccato" method of playing.[2] This controversy grew to the point where the American pianist, S. B. Mills, wrote that he belonged to the "legato school" of piano playing, "as opposed to the leggiero school of Tausig and Joseffy."[3] In Tausig's edition of selections from Clementi's Gradus ad Parnassum, directions for non-legato practice abound. Tausig writes in regard to the third work in this volume, an etude in broken chords: "The passages should be articulated with such sharpness and distinctness as to almost make the impression of a very fine and light staccato."[4]

Liszt's use of this touch must have been to a large degree responsible for the "crystal like clearness that never failed for a moment," which Sir Charles Hallé described as "one of the transcendent merits of his playing."[5]

It is perhaps of interest that Ferruccio Busoni, who had never studied with Liszt, nevertheless agreed with him and his students when he wrote:

> At this stage the editor considers it proper to call attention to the importance of the non legato touch, as the style closest in sympathy with the nature of the pianoforte. In it is to be sought, for example, the secret of the "pearly" touch, which is based on the same preconditions of separatedness, softness, and evenness. 6

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1 Mason, Memories, p. 244.
2 Mrs. H. Finck, "Rafael Joseffy," International Library of Music, III, p. 135.
3 S. B. Mills, "Attack by Stroke," International Library of Music, III, p. 126.
4 Clementi, Gradus, ed. by Tausig, p. 10.
5 Hallé, Life and Letters, p. 37.
6 Bach, Well-Tempered Clavier, ed. by Busoni, p. 34.

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Although the use of this "half-staccato touch" was obviously an important aspect of Liszt's approach to piano technique, it must not be imagined that he advocated its use to the exclusion of all other types of touch. In fact, his student, W. Waugh Lauder, wrote, "Liszt advocated a legatissimo practice of the scales good for scale players."[1]

The Two-Finger Exercise

Arthur Friedheim wrote:

> Liszt was not fond of discussing purely technical problems, at least not at the time I knew him. When somebody asked him about daily exercises, he abruptly said, "Find out for yourself what benefits your hand most with the least amount of work and time; and, first of all, avoid any kind of strain." 2

However, an an earlier stage in his teaching, Liszt did suggest exercises to his pupils at certain times. During his first period at Weimar, Liszt told William Mason, "There is one exercise that has come down from Hummel that I never give up. It does me more good than anything else."[3] He then went to the piano and played:

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1 W. Lauder, "Piano Technique," Etude, April, 1888, p. 67.

2 Friedheim, "Recollections," p. 559.

3 Mason, "The Two-Finger Exercise," International Library, III, p. 124.

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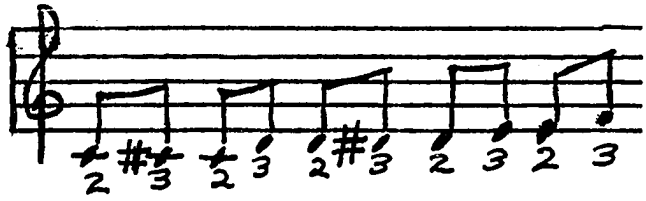
Example 20. The Two-Finger Exercise.[1]



There is no further comment from Liszt as to the type of touch or the speed with which this exercise should be played. But later Mason based the entire first volume of his Touch and Technic on this exercise and went into great detail as to how it should be executed. There is every reason to believe that Mason's treatment of the exercise came from Liszt, for Mason wrote that it was "a favorite of Liszt and Tausig, and constantly used by them in their daily practice. Liszt frequently recommended its use to his pupils, especially as applied to the chromatic scale."[2]

In the first volume of his Touch and Technic, Mason describes the two-finger exercise as "indispensable," writing:

> The attentive student will presently observe that the different touches comprised in these exercises afford the technical resources necessary for artistic phrasing. It is literally true that they furnish precisely the training of the hand and fingers in the different manners of attacking, sustaining and finishing tones, in order to

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1 Ibid., p. 124. It is intended to be done with each combination of two fingers in turn; 1-2, 2-3, 3-4, 4-5.

2 Mason, Touch and Technic, I, p. 6. Mason stresses the use of this exercise on the diatonic as well as the chromatic scale in his Touch and Technic.

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> effectively phrase all kinds of artistic music. In fact they fully accomplish this vital and indispensable part of pianoforte training. It is for this reason, mainly, that their daily practice can never be dispensed with for any considerable time. 1

This exercise was apparently very basic in Liszt's teaching. The second volume of Liszt's Technische Studien is based entirely on this exercise. It also appears in Tausig's Daily Exercises. The fourteenth etude in Tausig's selection from Clementi's Gradus, built entirely out of this figure, is marked by Tausig to be practiced with each combination of two fingers in turn.

Many of Liszt's students from his earlier years of teaching mention the two-finger exercise. In a letter written to his sister, Walter Bache describes the two-finger exercise as "indispensable."[2] One of Rafael Joseffy's pupils, Mrs. Henry T. Finck, wrote in a description of Joseffy's teaching:

> "Two-finger exercises," practiced in these different ways, are, in Mr. Joseffy's estimation, the foundation of piano technique, the most important of all exercises, unless he should except the first number in H. Schmitt's Daily Studies, Op. 4, - - holding a chord in all the different positions and in all keys, then raising and striking with the fingers one after another.3

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1 Mason, Touch and Technic, I, p. 12. At this point, Mason's instructions regarding the execution of the exercise become very much oriented to specific physiological principles, so much so that further presentation of his concept will be reserved for Chapter VIII.

2 Bache, Brother Musicians, p. 230.

3 Mrs. Henry T. Finck, "The Teaching of Rafael Joseffy," International Library, III, p. 135.

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Scales Involving the Thumb on Black Keys

A form of exercise stressed by Liszt and possibly original with him was the practice of scales with fingerings in which the thumb often played on black keys. He advised the use of such fingerings both as beneficial exercises and also at times in the actual performance of scale passages in pieces. Liszt's American pupil, W. Waugh Lauder, wrote:

> A particular hobby with Liszt was the practicing of scales in all keys and in all rhythms of 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 notes, with all fingerings, say first with 1, 2, 3, then with 1, 2, 3, 4, then with 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, never paying the slightest heed to awkwardness of thumb or fifth on black notes, and above all, scales with any two fingers, which, all done from memory in the air, and subsequently repeated on the piano, was of very great benefit.[1]

Liszt's pupil, Bernard Stavenhagen, stressed the use of the fingering 12345-12345-12345 for all scales in two octaves, in both major and minor keys. Stavenhagen, who claimed he got the idea from Liszt, regarded this exercise as the greatest test of scale playing.[2] In his Spanish Rhapsody, Liszt marks this fingering in several of the scale passages.

Another form of this idea was the practice of all scales with the C major fingering. Tausig's pupil, Oscar Beringer, writes, "Tausig advocated that all scales should be practiced with the C major fingering, to facilitate the use of the thumb on black keys." Beringer adds, "Naturally, any such abnormal fingering must not be attempted until a

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1 Lauder, "Piano Technique," p. 67.
2 Tilly Fleischman, "Liszt as Teacher," Musical Opinion, March, 1958, p. 373.

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sound foundation has been laid by the use and practice of the now generally recognized fingerings."[1] Otto Neitzel, who studied with Liszt in the summer of 1873, wrote, "The principle proclaimed by Liszt's pupil Carl Tausig, that of playing all the scales with the same fingering after the conventional fingering had been mastered, came originally from Father Liszt."[2]

A further scale fingering advised by Liszt, which necessitates abducting the wrist in the opposite direction from that usually used for scale playing, is described by Otto Neitzel, who wrote of his study with Liszt: "I remember that once he advised us to play all of the scales with the following fingering: 1234532-1234532 and so on."[3]

Rafael Joseffy devotes the major portion of a book of Daily Exercises (published shortly after he had come to America) to the practice of scales in a manner almost identical to those suggested by Liszt to Lauder and Neitzel. In this volume, Joseffy advises the practice of scales in all keys with the following fingerings: first with 12, 12, etc.; then with 123, 123, etc.; then 1234, 1234, etc.; then 12345, 12345, etc.; and finally with a fingering similar to that which Liszt suggested to Neitzel, 12345432, 12345432, etc. (This final fingering can be used only in an outward direction for each hand.)

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1 Beringer, "Fingering Facts," Etude, June, 1921, p. 369.

2 Neitzel, "Important Observations," p. 231.

3 Ibid.

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A fingering appearing in many editions made by Liszt's students is the use of the fingering 1-5 to end a figure, regardless of the occurrence of black keys. Amy Fay wrote of her study with Tausig:

> At the first lesson he said, "Play me the scale of F# major." I played it. The only thing he said was, "Put the fifth finger on the top note of the scale, instead of turning the thumb under and ending on the second," which was what I had been doing. 1

Such fingerings appear constantly in the works edited by Tausig.

Other Fingerings Peculiar to Liszt

A fingering which constantly appears both in the works of Liszt, that he fingered himself, and also in many editions of his students is the continuous use of the fingers 4-2 for each third in passages consisting of thirds. Emil Sauer insists that Liszt's directions for the use of this fingering in his Mazeppa must be followed in order to arrive at the tone quality Liszt intended in the passages he marked with this fingering.[2] (Most later editors of Mazeppa changed this fingering.)

In a copy of Liszt's Tarantelle based on Auber's La Muette de Portici, which is included with a group of Rafael Joseffy's manuscripts at the Library of Congress in Washington, Joseffy fingers the passages in thirds (consisting

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1 Fay, "How to Practice," Etude, Nov., 1884, p. 205.
2 Liszt, Mazeppa, ed. by Sauer, p. 17.

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of both diatonic and chromatic scales) in the G major section with this 4-2 fingering.[1]

Other points of fingering are brought out by C. F. Weitzmann, who wrote in a description of fingerings taught by Liszt:

> Liszt sometimes played a strongly marked series of tones with the more powerful second finger alone, and a similar octave passage with the thumb and the third or fourth fingers; for a sustained or loud trill he used not only two adjoining fingers, but pairs separated by others, such as the first and third, or third and fifth; the right hand executed such trills in suitable places even with the following fingering: 1423 1423, etc. He likewise produced a sharp trill in sixths or thirds by playing the main notes with the right hand, and the subsidiary notes with the left, with equal power. For a passage regularly repeated in different octaves, he chose the most convenient fingering in one octave and repeated the same in the following octaves, when it frequently occurs in opposition to earlier rules, that the thumb is passed under the fifth finger, or the latter over the thumb. 2

The basic approach of using fingerings which disregard the occurrence of black notes is of great importance in the performance of many of Liszt's own works. Quoted below is a passage (Example 21) which was probably intended by Liszt to be played with such a fingering (no fingering is marked in the original edition):

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1 Joseffy, Library of Congress ML96 J82 case.
2 Weitzmann, History, p. 190.

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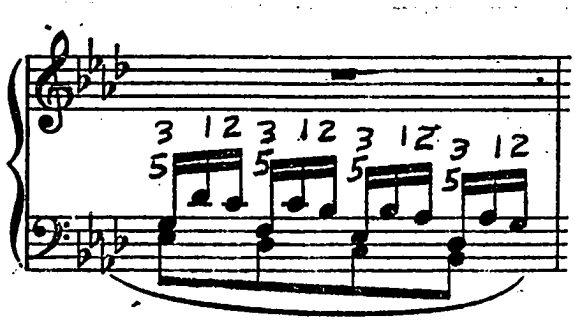
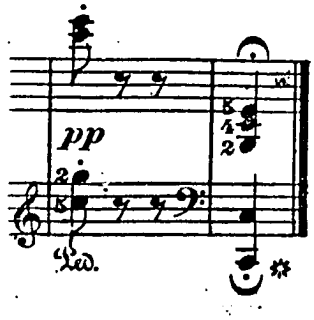
Example 21. Liszt, Transcendental Etude in F minor (Sauer), p. 83, meas. 12.



Another fingering principle used by Liszt and his students was the playing of soft chords without using the thumb where this was possible. Liszt's fingering for the final chord in his edition of Field's Nocturne in C minor is an example:

Example 22. Field, Nocturne in C minor, (Liszt), p. 8, meas. 29-30.



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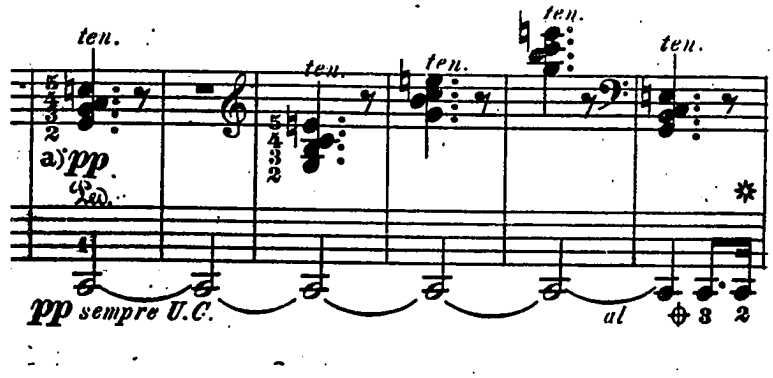
Bülow uses a similar fingering in the following passage from Beethoven's "Appassionata":

Example 23. Beethoven, Sonata, opus 57 (Bülow), Vol. II, p. 470, meas. 15-20.



Double Notes

Liszt attached great importance to the practice of double notes. In fact, the major portion of his Technische Studien is devoted to double note exercises. Tausig also stressed the importance of the practice of scales and other exercises in thirds, sixths, and other forms of double notes in his teaching. Moritz Rosenthal probably reflected the general ideas of Liszt when he advised the taking up of the practice of scales in thirds and sixths as soon as possible. Rosenthal told an interviewer:

> Thus, while scales must be practised, for their value as scales, they should not be regarded as the highest holy ritual of finger development.
>
> It is a better plan to practice the scales in thirds and in sixths. Thus, the fourth and fifth fingers come into use as much as the naturally stronger ones. It is, of course, much more difficult to play

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> these thirds and sixths, but for practical purposes, they can be begun very slowly. Then even a less well developed hand can undertake them; and it will derive actual benefit while doing so. 1

Interlocking Passages

Liszt considered the practice of passages made up of groups of notes divided between the hands to be of great value. In a letter to William Mason, in which he discussed a work on piano technique that Mason had sent to him, Liszt wrote:

> In going through your "method" I find highly commendable exercises, notably the interlocking passages (pages 136-142) and all the accentuated treatment of exercises. 2

In Liszt's own Technische Studien, a remarkably large amount of space is devoted to scales, both chromatic and diatonic, in both single and double notes, which are divided between the hands in an endless variety of ways. Liszt used such fingerings at times for effects of extreme velocity in his own works. Below is quoted an example from his Don Juan Fantasie:

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1 Rosenthal, "The Grand Manner," Etude, May, 1937, p. 301.

2 Mason, Memories, p. 295.

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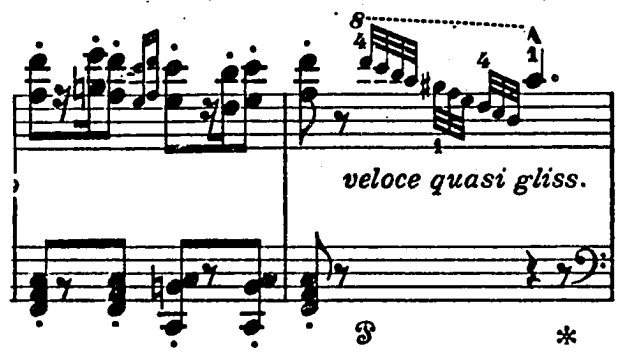
Example 24. Liszt, Don Juan Fantasie, (Sauer), p.11, meas. 17-18.



Rafael Joseffy's Daily Exercises, published shortly after he arrived in America, consists of only two basic forms of exercise: first, the scale forms already discussed; and second, a section devoted to "interlocking" exercises similar to those appearing in Liszt's Technische Studien.

An ingenious effect which Liszt invented and showed to one of his classes during his last years at Weimar could be classified under the category of an interlocking exercise. This was a "glissando chromatic scale" effect. Alfred Reisenauer reports that at one class at Weimar Liszt asked if anyone knew how to produce the effect of a glissando chromatic scale on the piano. When all those present admitted that they had no idea how to produce such an effect, Liszt demonstrated it at the piano:

> With a significant smile and a merry twinkle in his eyes, he placed the second finger of his right hand on Contra C, while playing a glissando on the white keys of this Contra Octave, the five fingers of his left hand in the customary well-known position, struck (with the usual touch) the black keys of that same octave, thus intertwining both sets of keys in a magnificent chromatic

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effect which he carried through the seven octaves of the keyboard. 1

Etudes

Many twentieth-century pedagogues have disparaged the value of practicing "etudes," feeling that the practice of a large number of etudes *per se* yields relatively small returns, and suggesting that the student work to acquire technique in other ways. Liszt would not have agreed, for the practice of etudes formed an important part of his technical background. In the following quotation, Amy Fay reveals the extent of Liszt's etude repertory:

> However, I have felt some comfort in knowing that it is not Liszt's genius alone that makes him such a player. He has gone through such technical studies as no one else has except Tausig, perhaps. He plays everything under the sun in the way of *Etuden* -- has played them, I mean. On Tuesday I got him talking about the composers who were the fashion when he was a young fellow in Paris--Kalkbrenner, Herz, etc. -- and I asked him if he could not play us something by Kalkbrenner. "Oh yes! I must have a few things of Kalkbrenner's in my head still," and then he played a part of a concerto. Afterward he went on to speak of Herz, and said: "I'll play you a little study of Herz that is infamously hard. It is a stupid little theme," and then he played the theme, "but *now* pay attention." Then he played the study itself. It was a most hazardous thing, where the hands kept crossing continually with great rapidity, and striking notes in the most difficult positions. It made us all laugh; and Liszt hit the notes every time, though it was disgustingly hard, and as he said himself, "he used to get all in a heat over it." He had evidently studied it so well that he could not forget it. He went on to speak of Moscheles and his compositions. He said that between thirty and forty years of age Moscheles played superbly, but as he

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1 J. Elsenheimer, "Liszt's Glissando Chromatic Scale," *Etude*, Aug., 1923, p. 522.

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> grew older he became too old-womanish and set in his ways--and then he took off on Moscheles, and played his Etudes in his style. It was very funny. But it showed that Liszt has studied everything, and the universality of his knowledge, for he knows Tausig's and Rubinstein's studies as well as Kalkbrenner and Herz. 1

Among the etudes Liszt considered of value were those of Clementi, Moscheles, Kessler, and also those of his own teacher, Czerny. The piano studies of Muzio Clementi were considered of primary importance in the nineteenth century. Czerny gave these works to all his students, and the young Liszt was no exception. Later, Liszt's pupil, Tausig, made an edition of selections from Clementi's Gradus ad Parnassum, revealing the value he had learned to attach to these works.

Liszt knew the etudes of Ignaz Moscheles thoroughly, and in his early days he played several of them in public. It is perhaps significant that on the occasion when two obnoxious English ladies asked Liszt to play "whatever you play best," he chose an etude of Moscheles. Liszt described this incident to Alexander Siloti, saying that the two ladies knocked on his door at Weimar at half past five one morning and since he happened to be up this hour (he rose during the last years of his life at 4:00 each morning in order to pray), he invited them in. The ladies told him they were just returning to England, but that they could not return without first hearing him play. Usually, when Liszt was asked to

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1 Fay, Music Study, pp. 249-50.

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play he refused, and all his students knew that if anyone asked him to play at a lesson, this immediately assured the fact that he would not play a note during the entire session. However, on this occasion, he merely asked the ladies what they would like to hear. They answered, "Whatever you play best." Liszt told Siloti:

> Laughing I sat down and played Moscheles' Chromatic Study. When I had finished they nodded approvingly, and said with one accord: "Good, very good. You really play very well."

Liszt finally lost his temper when the ladies produced an album for him to sign. He said to them:

> 'There is the window, and there is the door. Choose which way you like.' Without a word they rose and went away, and I went on laughing long after they left. 1

Liszt also considered of great value the etudes of Kessler, a contemporary of Czerny, whose works are forgotten today. He gave Valerie Boissier several of them to practice. Finally, it must be added that Liszt valued the etudes of his teacher, Czerny, highly. According to Theodore Leschitizsky, who was an acquaintance of Liszt, Liszt used certain etudes of Czerny at times in his own practice right up to the end of his life.[2]

In the following letter to L. A. Zellner, the editor of the Blätter für Müsik, Theater, und Kunst, Liszt points to his valuation of the technical works of Czerny (as well as

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1 Siloti, Liszt, p. 26.
2 Edwin Hughes, "Leschitizsky," p. 228.

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those of Moscheles):

> To my letter of yesterday I have still to add a postscript, my dear friend, concerning the information in your new Abonnement, in which I was struck with the name of Bertini among the classics, which does not seem to me suitable. As far as I know, Bertini is still living, and according to the common idea, to which one must stick fast, only those who are dead can rank as classic and be proclaimed as classic. Thus Schumann, the romanticist, and Beethoven, the glorious, holy, crazy one, have become classics. Should Bertini have already died, I take back my remark, although the popularity of his Studies is not, to me, a satisfactory reason for making his name a classic. - - Moscheles' and Czerny's Studies and "Methods" would have a much more just claim to such a thing. . . 1

In addition to the etudes already discussed, Liszt also performed a vast repertory of etudes which have subsequently found their way into the standard concert repertory. Obviously, Liszt played all of his own etudes, including the earlier, almost insanely difficult versions of his Paganini and Transcendental Etudes, which he also played at his public concerts. (The later, final versions of these works, difficult as they may seem, are actually considerably easier than the earlier versions.) Chopin dedicated his Etudes, opus 10, to Liszt, and his Etudes, opus 25, to Marie D'Agoult, the mother of Liszt's children. Liszt often played these works in his classes in later years, according to many accounts. William Sherwood, for example, wrote that during his study with Liszt he heard him play nearly all the Chopin Etudes.[2]

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1 Liszt, Letters, I, p. 299.
2 Brower, Piano Mastery, p. 252.

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Practicing

According to several of Liszt's students, a tradition of practicing prevalent among them came from Liszt himself. This was a routine of making exercises out of difficult passages in pieces, rearranging them into even more difficult combinations, and practicing them equally with both the right and left hands. There are few specific examples of this procedure coming from Liszt directly, but there is an overwhelming mass of examples to be found in the writings and editions of Liszt's students.

Bülow, Tausig, Joseffy and Rosenthal followed this plan in their practicing. Amy Fay wrote of her teacher, Carl Tausig, "Tausig was for Gradus, you know, and practised it himself every day. He used to transpose the studies in different keys and play just the same in the left hand as in the right, and enhance their difficulties in every way. . ."[1] Suggestions for such methods of practice abound in the editions made by Tausig, Bülow, and Joseffy. Mrs. Henry T. Finck wrote of her lessons with Joseffy, "Another important point is, always to practice something more difficult than the special bit of technique one is working for."[2] Edwin Hughes wrote of Joseffy, "He emphasized most strongly the importance

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1 Fay, Music Study, p. 266.
2 Finck, "The Teaching of Rafael Joseffy," p. 135.

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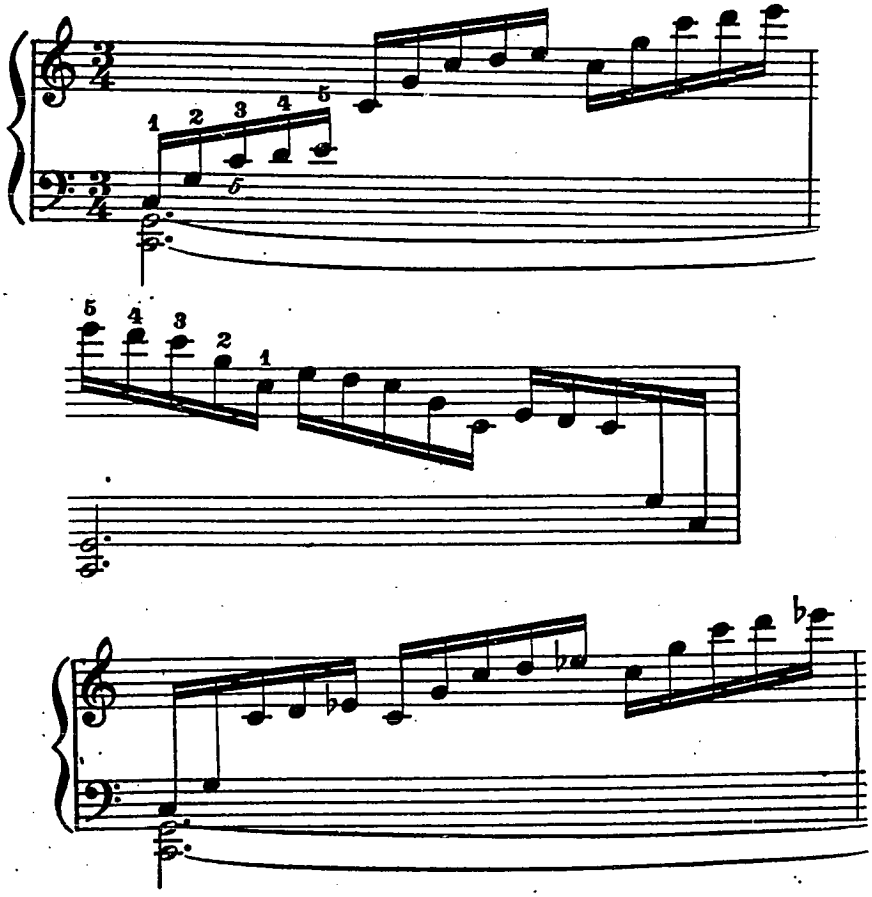
of combining technical practice with the study of pieces, his idea being to take the most difficult passages and construct even more difficult technical studies out of them."[1] When James Huneker asked Moritz Rosenthal how he practiced, Rosenthal "explained that he picked out the difficulties of a composition and made new combinations of them."[2]

The following exercise appears in Tausig's Daily Exercises, with a comment by Tausig's collaborator, Erlich:

Example 25. Tausig, Daily Exercises, p. 91.

4.— This exercise was most likely suggested by Chopin's First Étude, Op. 10.



1 Hughes, "Rafael Joseffy," p. 353.
2 Huneker, Mezzotints on Modern Music, p. 283.

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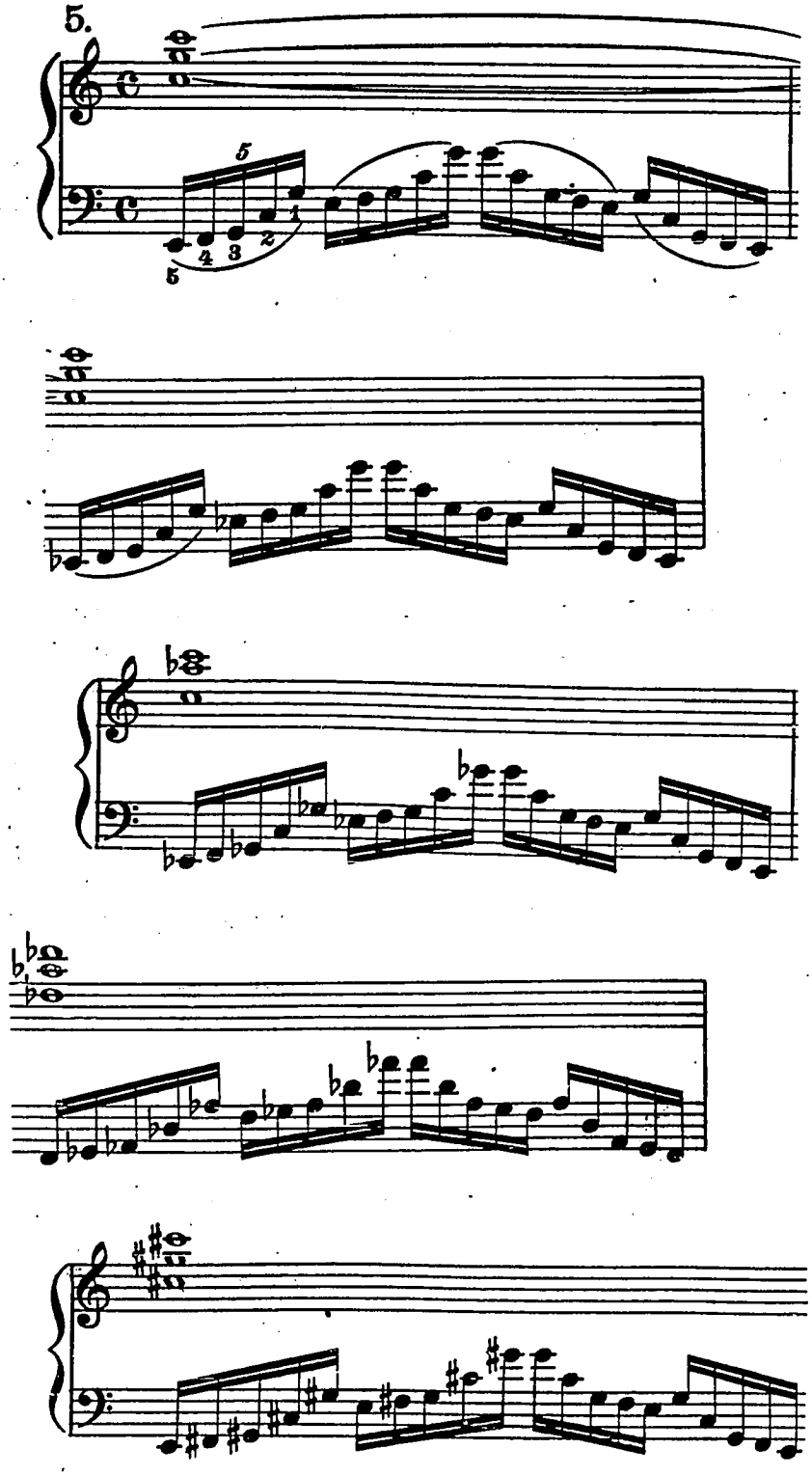

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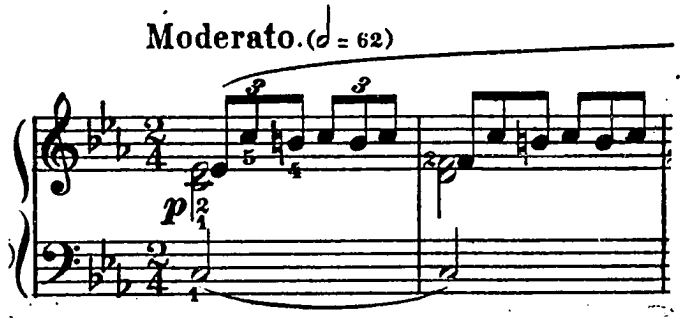
One manner of increasing the difficulty of passages in practicing was to increase the number of notes in the figurations on which these passages are built. Here is an example from Bulow's edition of Cramer's Etudes:

Example 26. Cramer, Etude (Bulow), pp. 18-19.



(1.) To derive full profit from the exercises for the independence of the fourth and fifth fingers, we recommend that the number of movements in each measure should at least be doubled, thus: etc.

One of the most effective ways of making exercises out of pieces is to play material originally written for the right hand with the left hand. After hearing Arthur Friedheim play an arrangement of Schumann's Tocatta for the left alone, Vladimir de Pachman said, "He is a pupil of the devil."

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Friedheim replied, I hope that is not a comment on Franz Liszt."[1] Although Friedheim's remark could have been a mere witticism, there is nevertheless a strong implication that Liszt was well-known for devising such exercises. Further evidence of this practice comes from other pianists who were influenced by Liszt.

Edwin Hughes wrote of his lessons with Rafael Joseffy:

> Also, he advised the practice with the left hand of some of the Chopin Etudes in which the right hand has difficult passagework in the original, calling attention to the fact that Tausig had followed this proceeding and recommended it to his pupils long before the Godowsky left hand arrangements put in their appearance. 2

William Mason writes in his autobiography:

> In this connection, I remember Rubinstein's telling me as long ago as 1873, in the artist's retiring room during one of his recitals at Steinway Hall, that he used in his boyhood days "to do all sorts of things with Chopin's Etudes," as he expressed it, "in order to strengthen and exercise the fingers." By way of illustration, he went to an upright piano which happened to be in the room, and began playing with his left hand alone the right hand part of the chromatic-scale etude, "Op. 10, No. 2," and this he did with fluency. 3

Another basic method of practicing followed by Liszt and his students was to play a passage in all keys, using the original fingering in every key, without regard for the occurrence of black and white keys. Liszt advised Valerie Boissier with regard to exercises, "They must be practiced in all keys, up the chromatic ladder by half tones,

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1 Friedheim, Life and Liszt, p. 3.
2 Hughes, "Rafael Joseffy," p. 355.
3 Mason, Memories, p. 268.

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then reversed in coming down from the top the same way."[1]

Evidently Carl Tausig followed Liszt's example, for Tausig's collaborator Erlich writes in Tausig's Daily Exercises:

> At any rate, it is indispensable, we repeat, to practice in all the keys, and the lamented Tausig regarded this as the chief basis of his system. His idea was, it is true, to begin with the most difficult keys, but the author deems it better for the sake of unity to start from C major. . . [2] Tausig acted on the principle that the player can best master a difficult passage, not by attacking it at once, but by first taking up other exercises containing the same class of difficulty, but in all possible positions and keys. [3]

Rafael Joseffy told his pupil, James Huneker, that Liszt's "B minor Sonata was one of those compositions that played itself, it lay so beautifully for the hand."[4] However, manuscripts belonging to Joseffy reveal that he did practice certain parts of this work. In one manuscript, Joseffy writes out certain passages from the Sonata in B minor in several different keys.[5]

The importance of accentuation in Liszt's approach to piano playing has already been demonstrated. Apparently once the principle of correct accentuation was understood by his students, Liszt then stressed the importance of practising a form of "arbitrary" accentuation for short periods of time. Liszt's own Technische Studien relies on this

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1 Boissier, "Liszt Pedagogue," The Piano Teacher, July-Aug., 1961, p. 15.
2 Tausig, Daily Exercises, p. 100.
3 Ibid., p. 107.
4 Huneker, Mezzotints, p. 233.
5 Joseffy, Library of Congress ML96 J82 case.

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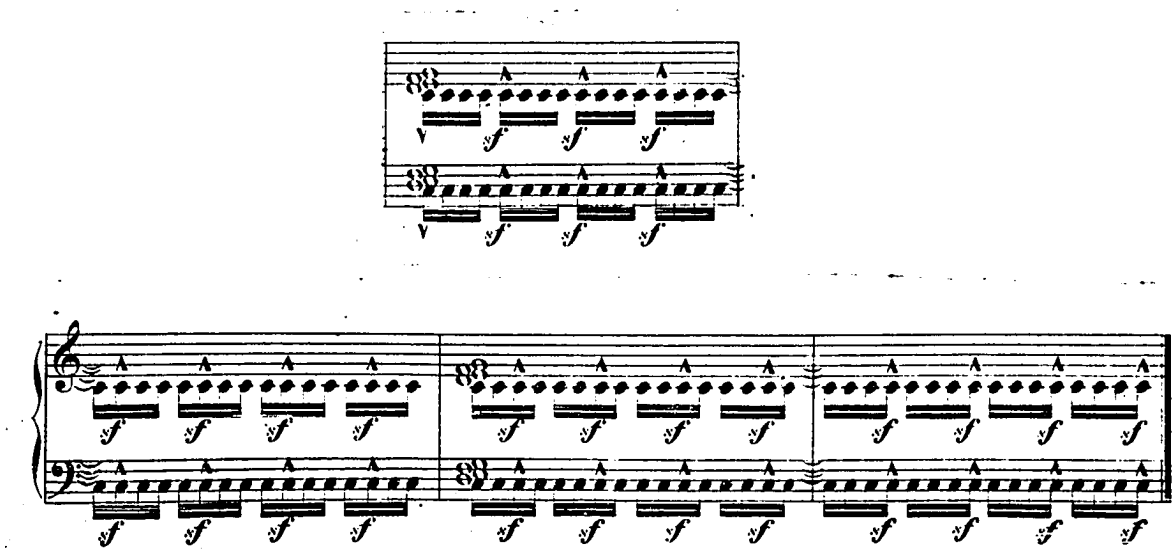
practice extensively. Below is quoted an example from the first volume of this work:

Example 27. Liszt, Technische Studien, Vol. I, p. 3.



Liszt expressed strong approval of William Mason's use of this technique in a book of exercises Mason sent to him. Carl Tausig advised this manner of practicing in his edition of Clementi's Gradus when he wrote:

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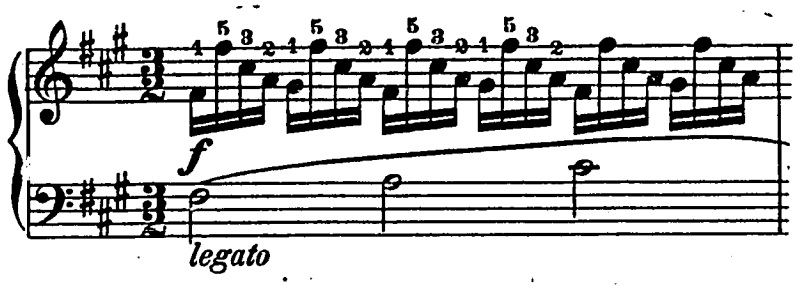
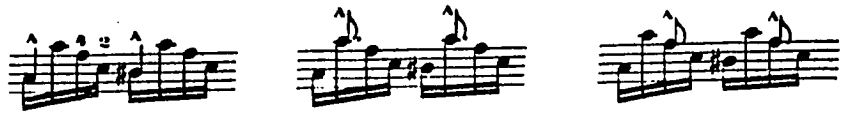
Example 28. Clementi, Gradus, (Tausig), p. 74.



Es ist zweckmässig, bei dem Studium dieser Etüde den Accent abwechselnd auf die erste, zweite und dritte Note fallen zu lassen; z.B.:

When practising this Étude it is advisable to play it through at first with the accent on the first note of each group, the next time on the second, and lastly on the third.



In his First Studies for the Piano, Joseffy devotes a large amount of space to the writing out of scales, both in single notes and in thirds, with an identical method of varied accentuation.

Incidentally, after having practiced a passage with this form of "arbitrary" accentuation, the normal accentuation seems clearer and easier to execute than ever before.

An interesting way of practicing, which is an extension of this method, was suggested by William Mason:

> The principle of studying passage-playing by varying the rhythmic accent is technically very important. The most refractory run studied alternately in rhythms of three, four, six, and nine, becomes plastic and certain. Long rhythms are best for the purpose, because they promote greater smoothness. Scales, arpeggios, and figured passages should be systematically studied in this way,

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> and the result will be a fluent execution and a limpid tone. 1

Liszt placed great value on the practice of octaves. Madame Boissier writes, "As we left, he told me to watch and see that Valerie does not neglect her octave practice, for once octaves are conquered, one can confidently face any difficulties that may occur." Liszt actually advised Valerie Boissier to practice scales in octaves for two hours every day.[2]

Liszt and his students often practiced single-note passages rearranged into octaves for the purpose of enlarging their octave-playing ability. Joseffy said that his teacher, Carl Tausig, could play the finale of Chopin's Sonata in B flat minor in octaves in both hands, with a velocity and lightness equalling that which most players could achieve achieve playing this movement in its original form.[3] F. W. Riesberg describes a lesson at Weimar where Liszt asked a student to rearrange a piece in this fashion:

> D'Albert's introduction to the Liszt class was marked by his playing the Prelude and Fugue in E minor from the Well-Tempered Clavier. At the close, Liszt asked D'Albert if he could play the fugue in E flat minor, which he did. Then Der Meister asked further if he could play it in octaves? "I will try," said the seventeen-year-old D'Albert, and he did it impeccably. 4

Another practice technique was to practice passages with purposely difficult fingerings, especially in order to

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1 Mason, "The Two-Finger Exercise," p. 125.
2 Boissier, "Liszt Pedagogue," Piano Teacher, July-Aug., 1961, p. 14.
3 Huneker, Mezzotints, p. 281.
4 Riesberg, "Gala Days," p. 698.

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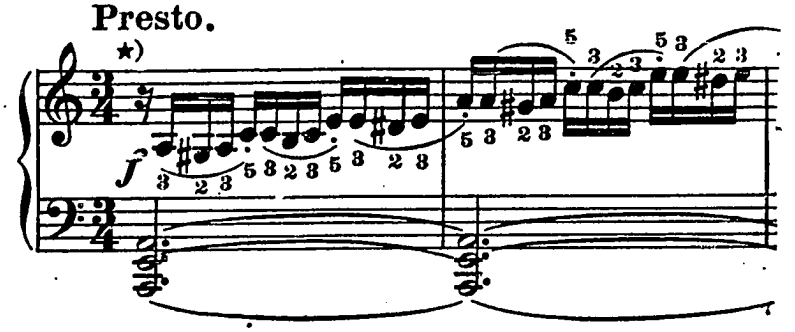
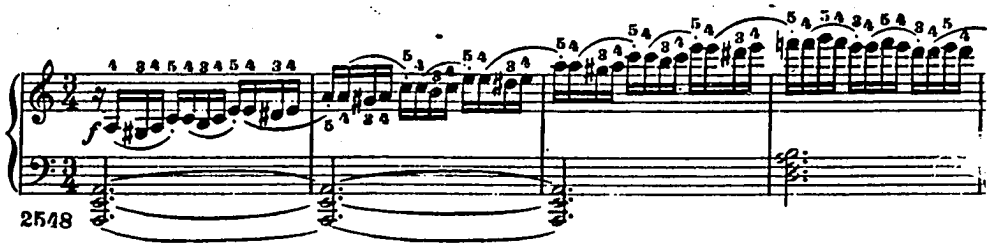
develop the weaker fingers. Fingerings suggested by Liszt in certain exercises in his Technische Studien illustrate this. Bulow and Tausig suggest this practice in their editions of various etudes. Quoted below is an example from Tausig's edition of Clementi's Gradus:

Example 29. Clementi, Gradus, (Tausig), p. 68.



*) Zur besondern Kräftigung des 4ten und 5ten Fingers ist diese Etüde mit folgendem Fingersatz zu üben:

For specially strengthening the 4th and 5th fingers, this Étude should be practised with the following fingering:



Although Liszt recommended the use of these more difficult fingerings in practice, he was not averse to the use of facilitations in actual performance, even in his own pieces. F. W. Riesberg played Liszt's Third Liebestraum with the following changes of fingering:

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In the double trill ending the first section, play:

right hand- Fb, Ab, Db
left hand- Eb, G, Bb

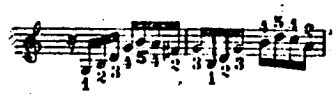
In rapid alternation (as a trill), a tremendous effect is gained. In the cadenza, which goes to the top of the keyboard, if the left hand plays the several notes, D and Eb, there is a great gain in facility. 1

When Riesberg asked Liszt if these facilitations were acceptable, Liszt answered, "I merely wrote the notes -- play them the easiest way."[2]

For practice, and even in performance, Liszt and his students often used fingerings which involved a stretching of the hand. Bulow suggests the following fingering in the finale of Beethoven's "Waldstein" Sonata:

Example 30. Beethoven, Sonata, opus 53 (Bulow), Vol. II, p. 406, meas. 1-2.

The smoothest fingering for fingers capable of wide stretches is this:



Rafael Joseffy writes in a note to the G major Prelude in his edition of Chopin's Preludes:

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1 Riesberg, "Gala Days," p. 733.
2 Ibid.

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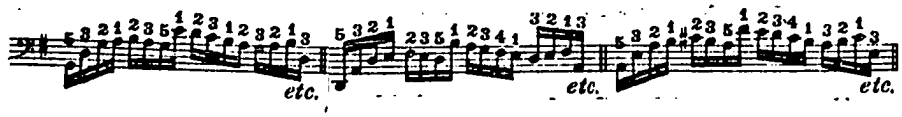
Example 31. Chopin, Prelude in G major (Joseffy), p. 5.

Carl Tausig, who had a marked preference for a stretchedout position of the fingers, used the following fingering:



Further evidence that Liszt stressed an extended hand position at times is the fact that he gave Valerie Boissier some "five-finger exercises" with the hands held in a fixed position in which the fingers are placed over the notes of a diminished seventh chord.[1] This position is in sharp contrast to the five conjunct notes of a diatonic scale which usually form the basis for this exercise.

Finally, it should be mentioned that Liszt was a believer in the value of slow practice. He told Valerie Boissier, "When you think you are practicing very slowly, slow down some more."[2] Tausig advised his students to begin the practice of a new work very slowly.[3] After hearing Amy Fay play Beethoven's G major Concerto, Rafael Joseffy told her, "Let me give you a piece of advice: practice the concerto a whole week slowly. Do not permit yourself to play it fast once during that entire period of time."[4] Mrs. Henry Finck wrote of Joseffy's teaching, "He continually

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1 Boissier, "Liszt as Pedagogue," Piano Teacher, July-Aug., 1961, p. 15.

2 Ibid., p. 14.

3 James Francis Cooke, "Overwork the Enemy of Success," Etude, March, 1907, p. 155.

4 Amy Fay, "Some Important Things I Learned in Germany," Etude, May, 1911, p. 304.

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impresses the necessity of slow practice on his pupils. To one of them he said: "Play six days slowly, the seventh fast. This is recreation."[1] Joseffy also said, "You must not only practice fast things slowly but slow things fast," adding that this would help one arrive at a feeling of "repose" when playing the slow selections in their correct tempo.[2]

William Mason told an interviewer toward the end of his life:

> There is everything in knowing how to practice, but it is something that cannot be taught. I played in public ten years before I found out the secret.
>
> Practice slowly and in sections. Not only must all the notes be there, they must be dwelt on. There must be a firm and rock-like basis for piano-playing; such a foundation can only be laid by patient and persevering slow practice. If the player had not the control over his fingers to play a piece slowly, he certainly cannot play it fast. Slow practice -- one difficulty at a time -- one hand at a time; Napoleon's tactics, 'one division at a time,' applies to music study.
>
> Just as in life every experience of great joy or great grief leaves one better or more callous, so every time you practice you have either advanced or gone back. Right playing, like good manners, becomes habitual from always doing right. 3

The amount of practice necessary to arrive at the ideal of virtuosity aimed at by Liszt and his students involved long hours of work. All of the techniques of practicing discussed in this chapter require enormous amounts of time. In this context, it may be remembered that in Liszt's era life was less diversified than it is today, and people in general had a less hurried outlook. Most modern pedagogues

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1 Finck, "Joseffy," p. 135.
2 Ibid.
3 Brower, Piano Mastery, pp. 260-61.

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do not advise that students practice as long hours as Liszt and many of his students did.

In his younger days, Liszt often practiced ten and twelve hours a day.[1] In a letter written to his friend Pierre Wolff in 1832, Liszt revealed that he was spending "four to five hours" a day on technical exercises alone, in addition to the time he spent on pieces.[2] For the acquiring of endurance and the building up of strength, Liszt advised pupils to practice exercises such as the repeated playing of a single note with a single finger, or the practice of octaves, for hours at a time without interruption.[3]

Apparently many of Liszt's best students followed his example of practicing long hours. Tausig's pupil, Oscar Beringer, wrote that Tausig practiced "nearly all day long, except the four hours on two days in the week which he devoted to teaching," during the period he taught in Berlin.[4] Liszt wrote that while he was his student at Weimar, Tausig practiced "immoderately."[5] In fact, overwork was a partial cause of Tausig's early death at the age of twenty-nine.

Hans von Bülow evidently practiced in a similar manner, for the American pianist and teacher, J. S. Van Cleve, wrote:

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1 J. S. Van Cleve, "How Much Shall I Practice?" Etude, Nov., 1910, p. 735.
2 Liszt, Letters, I, p. 8.
3 Boissier, "Liszt as Pedagogue," Piano Teacher, July-Aug., 1961, p. 14.
4 Beringer, Fifty Years, p. 31.
5 Liszt, Letters, II, p. 207.

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> . . . when von Bulow was to make his initial appearance in America in Boston with the B flat minor piano concerto of Tschaikowsky, in 1875, he shut himself up, and worked for a week 16 hours a day, till the people around him were half frantic. 1

Elise Lathrop, a student of Joseffy at the National Conservatory of Music in New York, wrote:

> Quite frequently Joseffy would ask various ones how much time they gave daily to practice. Five hours was about the least amount that was received by him without unfavorable comment, seven or eight were much more satisfactory. . . . 2

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1 Van Cleve, "How Much Shall I Practice?", p. 735.

2 Lathrop, "How Joseffy Taught the Piano," Etude, March, 1948, p. 150.

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CHAPTER VIII

PHYSIOLOGICAL APPROACH

Liszt's Hands

Liszt's hands were not especially large; in fact, he was barely able to stretch a tenth comfortably. His fingers were extremely thin, however, giving many observers the impression that they were unusually long. At the same time, Liszt's hands were remarkably flexible and supple. A writer discussing the handshake of various well-known pianists wrote in 1885:

> Liszt's is a wondrous structure like a many-limbed, warm blooded reptile that we are unable to grasp because, in its excessive suppleness and flexibility, it slips through our fingers unawares. 1

Amy Fay wrote after seeing Liszt for the first time:

> His hands are very narrow, with long and slender fingers that look as if they had twice as many joints as other people's. They are so flexible and supple that it makes you nervous to look at them. 2

William Mason noted:

> As I remember his hands, his fingers were lean and thin, but they did not impress me as being very long, and he did not have such a remarkable stretch on the keyboard as one might imagine. 3

After hearing Liszt play the slow movement of Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata at Weimar, Carl Lachmund

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1 Etude, 1885, p. 68. No Author.
2 Fay, Music Study, pp. 205-06.
3 Mason, Memories, p. 102.

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wrote of Liszt's playing of the final chord of this movement:

> It struck me that he could barely cover the tenth in each hand sufficiently to play the chord quietly without breaking it. I thought too that he made the same mental reservation, and I was right, for he then said, 'The public generally credits me with having a very large hand; but you can see I can just stretch this tenth to play it quietly -- as it should be done.' With this he placed his fingers on the chord for us to see. 1

A further indication that Liszt's hands were not unusually large is the fact that the largest interval to appear in his own compositions is the interval of the tenth, and even this is not used very often. On the other hand, widely extended figures involving large stretches, but in which the intervals are not played simultaneously, abound in his compositions.

Rudolph Breithaupt wrote after examining photographs and plaster casts of Liszt's hands:

> Liszt's hand was abnormal. Its advantage lay not in the long fingers as it is generally believed, but in its great possibilities of extension and the elasticity of the tendons, which were set very deep in the cuts at the base of the fingers . . . Liszt's (hand) is a commanding, energetic natural type. The fingers are long and strongly developed, the bony structure strong and bold, the sinews powerful, the connecting muscles and flesh loose and elastic. Note the extraordinary stretch of the separate fingers which results from the deeply set tendons.2

Liszt's Physiological Teaching

Over the many years he taught, Liszt's comments regarding the physiological aspects of piano-playing were

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1 Lachmund, "Liszt at First Hand," p. 38.

2 Breithaupt, "The Qualities of the Pianistic Hand," trans. from German by Florence Leonard, Etude, June, 1906, p. 358.

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limited basically to two points. The first point dealt with admonishing students against using too much or unnecessary motion. The second involved a manner of seating and posture at the piano, upon which Liszt very definitely insisted. Beyond these two points, when it came to the physiological approach to the instrument, Liszt let his students more or less alone. Alexander Borodin wrote of Liszt's teaching at Weimar:

> He pays awfully little attention to technique, fingering, etc., but dwells on expression and interpretation. But with rare exceptions, all his pupils already possess a good technique, though they have all been taught according to different systems. As for his personal manner, Liszt imposes it on no one. 1

In fact, William Mason reports that Liszt went so far as to advise certain of his students not to copy his (Liszt's) physiological manner of playing.[2] Liszt was probably influenced by Czerny regarding the first physiological point he stressed in his teaching, or his insistence that the student use no unnecessary or waste motion in playing. In his Letters to a Young Lady on the Art of Pianoforte Playing, Czerny speaks out strongly against any "excessive exertion" at the piano, ridiculing players who:

> . . . mark the commencement of every bar by making a low bow with their head and chest, as if they were desirous of showing reverence to their own playing. Others, after every short note, suddenly take up their hands as far from the keys as if they had touched a red-hot iron. Many, while playing, put on a fierce and crabbed countenance; others, again, assume a perpetual simper,&c. 3

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1 Hill, Liszt, p. 129.
2 Mason, Memories, p. 114.
3 Czerny, "Letters to a Young Lady," Piano Teacher, Jan.-Feb., 1960, p. 10.

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But Czerny also advises:

> Do not suppose, however, that you are to sit at the piano as stiff and cold as a wooden doll. Some graceful movements are necessary while playing; it is only the excess that must be avoided.
>
> When we have to play in the highest or lowest octave, a gentle inclination of the body is at once necessary and appropriate. When we have to play difficult passages, chords struck loud or short, or skips, the hands are and must be allowed a moderate degree of movement . . .
>
> But the elegant deportment of polished life must always be transferred to the art; and the rule applies, generally "that every movement which conduces really and essentially to our better playing is allowed"; here, however, we must avoid all that is unnecessary and superfluous. 1

In his own playing, Liszt definitely followed Czerny's precepts quoted above. The novelist George Eliot wrote after hearing Liszt play, "His manipulation of the instrument was quiet and easy."[2] In describing Liszt's playing of his Legende-Saint Francois de Paule marchant sur les flots, Saint-Saëns wrote of the remarkable effects which came from "beneath his apparently indifferent hands."[3] Amy Fay wrote of Liszt's playing of his own Au bord d'une source, "The notes seemed to ripple off his fingers' ends with scarcely any perceptible motion."[4]

Arthur Friedheim's description of Liszt's playing of chromatic scales in octaves provides a further example of Liszt's quiet approach to the instrument:

> . . . when he played octaves in chromatics, for instance, his thumb kept to a straight line as much as possible,

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1 Ibid., pp. 10-11.
2 Hill, Liszt, p. 92.
3 Saint-Saëns, Outspoken Essays, p. 79.
4 Fay, Music Study, p. 220.

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> striking the black keys at the top, and the white keys nearest to the black tops. This applies as well, of course, to sixths and all similar passages. Altogether there was not the least unnecessary movement of fingers, hands, and wrists; the utmost saving of power produced at the same time the impression of perfect grace. 1

One of the few recorded examples of Liszt's advice to a student in his later years of teaching on the physiological approach to the piano comes from Amy Fay, who wrote:

> One day, when I was playing, I made too much movement with my hand in a rotary sort of passage where it was difficult to avoid it. "Keep your hand still, Fraulein," said Liszt; "don't make an omelette." 2

Bernard Stavenhagen was a student to whom Liszt took a special liking in his final years of teaching. Unlike most of his other students at Weimar during this period, Stavenhagen received a considerable amount of private instruction from Liszt. Stavenhagen also recorded Liszt's dislike for any excessive rotary movement. 3

That Liszt was extremely annoyed by players who moved the entire body excessively while they played is shown by F. W. Riesberg, who writes:

> To a young pianist who crouched over the keys, he said, "Expression does not lie in the nose! I beg you not to wave to and fro at the piano! Sit still!"4

The second point Liszt insisted on regarding a player's physiological approach to the instrument was a manner of sitting at the piano with the head tipped backward rather than forward. Carl Lachmund writes:

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1 Friedheim, "Recollections," p. 560.
2 Fay, Music Study, p. 223.
3 Fleischman, "Liszt as Teacher," p. 373.
4 Riesberg, "Gala Days," p. 738.

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> Liszt was annoyed by players who kept their eyes riveted to the keyboard. He always stopped them with some admonition such as, "That habit is the cause of much of the crippled playing one hears. Look up and away from the keys and you will learn to play with greater freedom." 1

Lachmund writes at another point:

> As to a person's position at the piano, he was always particular. "Sit upright. Look up and away from the ivory, and you will play with greater inspiration."
>
> Sit as if you were to be shaved -- with the head well up," he admonished a young man.
>
> To a young lady: "A pianist should sit like a well-bred society dame, with a quiet air of superiority -- then she can phrase better."
>
> To a young lady who persistently eyed the keys he said, "Sit as if you were having your photograph taken," and when this went unheeded he gave her several gentle but determined raps on the forehead, and with feigned severity: "This is no or-tho-pe-dic institution!"
>
> Finally, she held her head back and, having gained his point, he muttered a satisfied "So!" and resumed his promenade about the room. 2

In paintings and photographs of Liszt at the piano, his head is almost invariably thrown back.[3]

The novelist George Eliot visited Liszt at the Altenburg during his first period at Weimar. Her description of his playing included both points he insisted on in his teaching -- the quiet hands and the head thrown back:

> Then came the thing I had longed for -- his playing. I sat near him so that I could see both his hands and his face. For the first time in my life I beheld real inspiration -- for the first time I heard the true tones of the piano. He played one of his own compositions -- one of a series of religious fantasies. His manipulation of the instrument was quiet and easy, and his face was simply grand -- the lips compressed and the head thrown

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1 Lachmund, "Liszt Speaks," Jan.-Feb., p. 8.
2 Lachmund, "Franz Liszt," Etude, Nov., 1915, p. 785.
3 See Gat, The Technique of Piano-Playing, pp. 22 and 30, for example.

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> backward. When the music expressed quiet rapture or devotion a smile flitted over his features; when it was triumphant the nostrils dilated. 1

Madame Boissier reveals that Liszt insisted on this position of the head even from his earliest years of teaching:

> Liszt wanted the body held straight, with the head bent slightly backward rather than forward. There must be nothing suggestive of tension in the way the hands are held, but they can move with grace when the musical text warrants it. 2

Liszt never insisted on any particular position of the hands in his teaching, and, according to Madame Boissier, he used no one position in his own playing:

> He does not hold his fingers curved because he says this position creates dryness and he has a horror of that. Neither does he hold the hands completely flat, but his are so limber and pliable that they maintain no fixed position. They contact the keys in all manners and forms.3

The above quotation may explain one of the reasons why Liszt had such contempt for "pedagogues" and "methods" insisting that a single position of the hand is necessary or desirable.

Although Liszt did not advocate any one position of the hand beyond that which would be natural and comfortable for the specific passage being played (he constantly warned Valerie Boissier against undue tension, telling her, "Do not be so stiff, so rigid,"),[4] numerous observers testify that Liszt used one position of the hand fairly constantly. This was a position in which the wrist was held higher than any

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1 Hill, Liszt, p. 92.
2 Boissier, "Liszt as Pedagogue," Piano Teacher, May-June, 1961, p. 13.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.

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other part of the hand. C. F. Weitzmann wrote:

> Liszt did not hold his hand horizontally, but with the wrist higher than the front part, so that a coin laid on the back would slide down to the keyboard. 1

An American observer, Dr. Louis Maas, wrote:

> Liszt's way of holding his hands is evidently based on that which is most natural. When playing a scale for instance, his hand will be perfectly straight on the keyboard, with a slight incline from the wrist to the knuckles; these latter, however, neither pressed in nor out, but just as they would be naturally. His fingers are well bent in the front, making the front joints stand perpendicular, while the incline from the wrist to the knuckles makes the thumb stand half perpendicular. 2

Evidently, the fact that Liszt played with an unusually high wrist was well known in pianistic circles even for years after his death. For example, an unidentified writer wrote in a 1902 issue of the Musical Standard:

> Liszt achieved many of his remarkable effects by a very free play of the wrist. He held it quite high, thus enabling him to make crossings impossible to those who maintained a level or depressed position of the wrist. 3

At times in his teachings, Liszt attempted to isolate the action of his students' fingers, making it impossible for them to play with anything other than the fingers alone. For example, he advised Valerie Boissier to use Kalkbrenner's Chiroplaste, a contraption on which the forearm rested in practicing, thus assuring that only the fingers would be used, without any aid from the rest of the arm.[4]

William Sherwood records that Liszt used another method at times in his teaching, which forced the student

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1 Weitzmann, A History of the Pianoforte, p. 190.

2 Julia E. Nichols, "Letter to editor," Etude, Dec., 1884, p. 213.

3 No Author, Musical Standard, Feb. 22, 1902, p. 123. Madame Boissier mentions that Liszt advised Valerie Boissier to use the "wrist," although not in any clear fashion. See Boissier, Liszt als lehrer, p. 56.

4 Boissier, Piano Teacher, May-June, 1961, p. 13.

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to play from the fingers alone:

Upon three occasions I selected compositions to play to Liszt in which a performance of Legato Chords and Octaves was a prominent feature. I had learned how to cling to the keys tolerably well and to use flexibility of the forearm at the wrist in many such cases, instead of tossing the hand up and down, as is more generally done, according to ordinary methods. In each one of these pieces Liszt came over to the piano while I was playing and bore down heavily upon my hands. He held them down steadily in such a manner that I could raise neither knuckles nor wrist and then he told me to go on playing.

Should I have yielded to such pressure upon my hands, as to have held them down heavily against the keyboard, I would not have been able to play a note. I found out immediately that the first thing necessary was to keep the palm of the hand steady at a moderate distance above the keyboard. It was necessary to have a space of from one to three inches between the keys and knuckles. In cases where there were enough fingers to go around the problem was not a difficult one, but with a succession of full chords, containing four notes each for one hand, it was necessary to use the same fingers continually and above all to play legato. Under such circumstances the only thing to do with the finger can be described about as follows:

To straighten out the finger, meanwhile keeping the key down and, when time to play either on the same key or upon another, then lift the tip joint of the finger, enough to let the key up only an instant, drawing the finger back to a curve immediately for the next note. Students with Dr. William Mason always learned to stretch out and draw in fingers. A specialty of Dr. Mason's has been to use such motions for staccato playing, drawing the finger in suddenly and far enough in to leave the key as abruptly as it is approached. But here was a method of stretching the finger in only enough to cling strongly to the key, as related to legato playing in difficult combinations of full chords and octaves. The way in which Liszt insisted on this kind of work was very emphatic. The selections used in these lessons with him, where legato chords were such a feature, were the Schumann's Symphonic Etudes, the Chopin Etude in C sharp, Op. 25, No. 7, and the Liszt arrangement of "Isolde's LiebesTod" from " Tristan and Isolde" -- Wagner. 1

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1 Sherwood, "Student Days," p. 285.

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While the preceding quotation illustrates that Liszt insisted on a strict connection of legato melody lines with the fingers at times, there is also evidence that at other times Liszt played legato melodies by making the legato connection with the pedal, rather than with the fingers. At such times, Liszt apparently used a "wrist" motion to play each tone. Carl Lachmund recorded two instances of Liszt's playing of legato melodies in this manner:

> In his Consolation in E (#6), he played each note of the melody as though it were a significant poetic word, heightening the effect by using the thumb for each of these notes and dropping his hand in a languid manner as he did this. 1

Lachmund writes of Liszt's playing of the theme of his Third Liebestraum in its final appearance:

> An original point Liszt made here was to lift the hand just before the third C and drop it tardily, with a limp movement of the wrist onto this C, as though breathing heavily with a sigh. 2

The following quotation from an American observer, Carlyle Petersilea, should not be accepted at face value, for it implies that Liszt nearly always made his legato with the pedal. It is further proof, nevertheless, that Liszt used this technique at certain times:

> Liszt did not play legato; he used a kind of wrist, half staccato action the most of the time, and got his effects with the pedal. 3

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1 Lachmund, "Liszt Speaks," Jan.-Feb., p. 8.
2 Ibid., March-April, p. 6.
3 Edward Danforth Hale, "The Pianoforte Legato," Etude, March, 1904, p. 101.

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According to Edward Danford Hale, William Mason corroborated Petersilea's statement.[1]

To achieve powerful effects Liszt sometimes dropped on notes from high above the keyboard. (Anton Rubinstein, who was known for the remarkable non-percussive tone he produced, also used this technique at times, according to many accounts of his playing.) Carl Lachmund leaves a specific example of Liszt's use of this technique in a description of Liszt's playing of the opening of his own B minor Ballade:

> Lifting his right hand fully a foot high for each note, he brought it down with a weighty, very marked and resonant tone. 2

There is evidence that points to the fact that Liszt may have used his fingers at times so that a considerable part of the muscular action came from an exertion of the finger from the second, and, especially, the third joints. This touch was possibly used by Liszt in the performance of very light crisp passagework. (It will be remembered that this was a style of playing of which Liszt was extremely fond.)

The following evidence for Liszt's having used this action is not conclusive, but should be considered nevertheless: In showing the "two-finger exercise" to his student, William Mason, Liszt said, ". . . there is one little exercise which has come down from Hummel that I never give up.

---

1 Ibid.
2 Lachmund, "Liszt Speaks," March-April, p. 4.

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It does me more good than anything else."[1] As a player, Hummel was noted for the great clarity and cleanliness of his passagework, and in his works on technique, he advocated a touch in which each finger was drawn in toward the palm of the hand, striking the key as it did so.[2] Liszt's teacher, Carl Czerny, wrote in his autobiography that Hummel's playing was a "revelation" to him and that his own approach to the piano was strongly influenced by Hummel in certain respects:

> I myself was influenced by Hummel's manner of playing to the extent that it kindled in me a desire for greater cleanliness and clarity. 3

In turning to Mason's directions on how to play the "two-finger exercise," it is found that Mason asks for a similar technique: a drawing-in motion of the finger for playing the second of each two notes.[4] The motion is identical to the touch advocated by Hummel. (The first note of each group of two of the "two-finger exercise," incidentally, is to be played with what might be termed a "forearm release.") 5

Mason writes further that this touch can be used in several degrees of flexion:

> The most important and useful of these is effected by a slight and almost imperceptible flexion of the finger tips at the moment of contact with the key. This sliding or caressing touch is exceedingly effective in

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1 Mason, "The Two-finger Exercise," p. 124.
2 Oscar Beringer, "More Advanced Technical Exercises," Etude, Aug., 1920, p. 517.
3 Czerny, "Recollections," p. 309.
4 Mason, Touch and Technic, I, p. 5.
5 Ibid.

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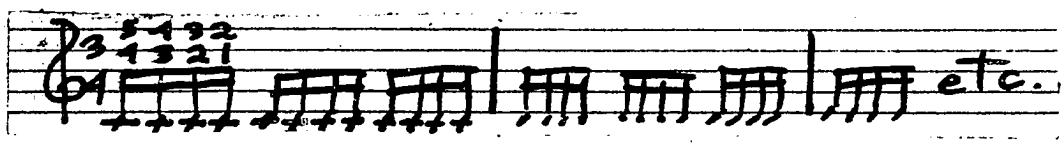
> the performance of very rapid passages, the tone resulting therefrom being so uniformly and distinctly clear and musical as to suggest the simile of "a string of pearls." This has given rise to the expression, a "pearly touch."1

In the second volume of his Touch and Technic, Mason writes that scales should be practiced for a part of each practice period with various degrees of this "pulling" or "drawing-in" touch. He writes:

> The use of this touch for a part of the practice imparts greater distinctness and a more elastic and pearly quality to the tones and to running effects generally. 2

In order to acquire this touch, Mason advises:

> In this connection the following old-fashioned exercise is useful. Try to play rapidly but avoid indistinctness. If played very rapidly the degree of finger-flexion will be moderate.



> In the performance of very rapid scale and arpeggio passages, and also as used in the velocity form, the degree of finger-flexion is so slight as to be hardly perceptible to the eye. 3

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1 Ibid., p. 6.
2 Mason, Touch and Technic, II, p. 9.
3 Mason, Touch and Technic, I, pp. 10-11.

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In another source Mason writes:

> In rapid playing, however, only a slight flexion of the fingers is possible, and this almost confined to the first joints and finger tips, but even when the finger flexion is almost imperceptible its use gives clearness and limpidity to the passage. 1

Mason next advises the use of the repeated note exercise already quoted from his Touch and Technic, writing:

> If done in the right way the fingers will be flexed more or less, or drawn slightly toward the palm of the hand with each stroke. This touch is best adapted for rapid playing of scales, arpeggios, and passages in general, and is especially effective in pianissimo passages.2

In his edition of Cramer's Etudes, Bulow gives almost identical advice as Mason regarding the acquisition of a light touch, writing:

> One of the best means for acquiring lightness of touch is to practice changing fingers on the same key. 3

Tausig was noted for his remarkable jeu perle, or "pearly touch." In his edition of Clementi's Gradus, Tausig constantly advises that the etudes be practiced with a type of touch for which he uses the word "stössen." [4] The standard translation of this word, in a musical context, is "staccato," and in itself does not necessarily imply that Tausig intended the use of the "drawing in" touch recommended by Mason.

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1 Mason, "Touch," Etude, 1886. p. 297.
2 Ibid.
3 Cramer, Etudes, ed. by Bulow. p. 75.
4 Clementi, Gradus, ed. by Tausig. pp. 4, 28, 48, 104, 108.

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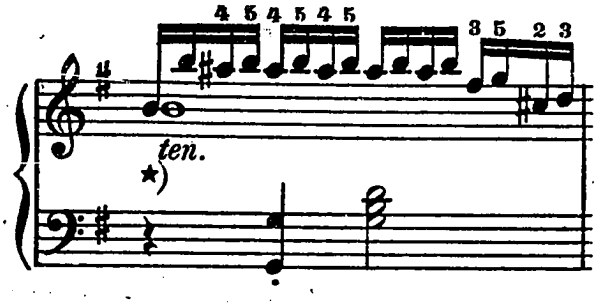
However, at one point in this edition, Tausig writes:

Example 32. Clementi, Gradus (Tausig), p. 13.[1]



★) Die äusserste Präcision im Zurückziehen des Fingers der rechten Hand, namentlich des dritten, ist in diesem, wie in allen analogen Takten unerlässlich.

★) Extreme precision in drawing back the fingers of the right hand, especially the 3d, is absolutely necessary in this and all analogous measures.

A further point which supports the possibility that Liszt used smaller, flexing motions of the fingers basically from the second and third joints in his playing is the fact that such motions are virtually demanded in the playing of scales with fingerings in which the thumb falls on black keys.[2] Liszt strongly recommended the use of such fingerings to advanced players.[3]

At this point, a few remaining comments concerning Liszt's physiological approach to the piano will be presented.

The following quotation from William Sherwood, describing Liszt's playing of the left hand part of a concert waltz, seems to be important. However, no two readers of this quotation will necessarily agree on exactly what touch or manner of playing Sherwood is describing. It is submitted

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1 Clementi, Gradus, ed. by Tausig. p. 13.

2 In The Technique of Pianoforte Playing, Joseph Gat writes that the use of the thumb on black keys in the playing of scales forces the other fingers to use much smaller motions than would otherwise be the case. See Gat, page 237.

3 See the preceding chapter.

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here for the reader's interest:

> He played with an elastic bounding stroke of the forearm at the wrist, with comparatively fixed, rigid fingers. The frame of the hand was somewhat arched and rounded out, almost in the shape that he would have been obliged to assume had he been holding a large orange in his hand. The sensibility of touch for each individual finger was not in the least impaired by the rigidity of that part of the finger next to the hand. The palm of the hand averaged two or three inches above the keyboard, maintaining the positions for the fingers, meanwhile tolerably close to the keys, while bounding the wrist up and down within a range of perhaps from two to six inches. I speak of these mechanical matters, as used by Liszt in this kind of technic, for the reason that they were unusual. As far as my experience goes, the elastic use of the forearm at the wrist joint, combined with rigid or fixed positions of the fingers, was not taught in any of the conservatories at that time. 1

The following anecdote quoted by Arthur Friedheim may be of little significance; but again, it may convey a valuable idea to some readers.

> Once I made a slip in a very simple passage on the white keys. Liszt said, "You ought to be ashamed of this."
>
> I murmured in a rage, "Those damned white keys are a nuisance."
>
> The old man chuckled, and, raising a warning finger, exclaimed with comical pathos, "Beware of their edges, beware of their edges!" Such remarks taught me more than volumes of the average technical wisdom. 2

Friedheim writes that in his opinion Liszt used "weight-playing."[3] Rudolph Breithaupt, one of the most important names connected with "weight-playing," claimed that the principles of his system of playing the piano were identical with those used by Liszt in his playing.[4] Martin

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1 Sherwood, "Student Days," p. 285.
2 Friedheim, "Recollections," p. 559.
3 Ibid., p. 559.
4 Arthur Elson, "Modern Piano Methods," International Library, III, p. 77.

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Krause, who was with Liszt in his final years at Weimar and claimed that his system of teaching was based on observing what Liszt had done in his playing, also stressed"weight-playing" in his teaching to a large degree. Recommending "weight-playing," however, was so fashionable at the turn of the twentieth century, that such generalizations must be viewed with caution. Logically, one might well conclude that Liszt used a combination of independent finger action, weight-playing, and a host of other techniques, some of which have been touched upon here.

According to Joseph Gat, Liszt did approve of the practice of certain muscular motions away from the piano and recommended such exercise in his teaching at the Budapest Conservatory during the final years of his life. However, Gat goes on to say that there is no record today of what these exercises were specifically.[1] The following quotation from Carl Lachmund shows that Liszt also suggested such exercises in his teaching at Weimar:

> He once said to Guiseppe Ferrato, an Italian pupil who was a talented composer and pianist, 'Many students of piano run up and down scales for hours every day, thinking they will reach the heaven of technical attainments, but athletes develop their muscles and get resistance and control of them by exercises which are based on sudden expansion and contraction. These principles should apply also to students of piano who should also formulate exercises for sudden expansion and contraction of the muscles of their hands and arms.' [2]

However, once again there is no indication of what these exercises were.

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1 Gat, Technique, p. 249.
2 Lachmund, "Liszt at First Hand," p. 39.

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CHAPTER IX

SPECIAL SKILLS AT THE KEYBOARD

Sight-Reading

Carl Czerny wrote of his student, Franz Liszt:

> Since I made him learn each piece very rapidly, he finally became such an expert sight reader that he was capable of publicly sight reading even compositions of considerable difficulty and so perfectly as though he had been studying them for a long time. 1

At the age of ten or eleven, Liszt astonished a group of musicians at a music store in Vienna by easily playing at sight a new concerto by Hummel which had just been published.[2] Throughout his life, Liszt spent a great deal of time sight-reading, largely because of his great interest in new works which were just published.

William Mason recorded several instances of Liszt's remarkable sight-reading ability. Mason writes of a visit to Weimar by Johannes Brahms, at that time an unknown young pianist and composer acting as accompanist to Liszt's friend and student, the Hungarian violinist Remenyi.[3] While waiting for Liszt to come downstairs to greet his visitors, Mason noticed a pile of manuscripts by the young Brahms lying on a table and glanced through the top piece, a Scherzo in E flat minor. Mason writes:

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1 Czerny, "Recollections," p. 316.
2 Weitzmann, History, p. 182.
3 Mason, Memories, p. 127.

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As I remember, the writing was so illegible that I thought to myself that if I had occasion to study it I should be obliged first to make a copy of it. Finally Liszt came down, and after some general conversation he turned to Brahms and said: "We are interested to hear some of your compositions whenever you are ready and feel inclined to play them."

Brahms, who was evidently very nervous, protested that it was quite impossible for him to play while in such a disconcerted state, and notwithstanding the earnest solicitations of both Liszt and Remenyi, could not be persuaded to approach the piano. Liszt, seeing that no progress was being made, went over to the table, and taking up the first piece at hand, the illegible scherzo, and saying: "Well, I shall have to play," placed the manuscript on the piano-desk.

We had often witnessed his wonderful feats in sight-reading, and regarded him as infallible in that particular, but, notwithstanding our confidence in his ability, both Raff and I had a lurking dread of the possibility that something might happen which would be disastrous to our unquestioning faith. So, when he put the scherzo on the piano-desk, I trembled for the result. But he read it off in such a marvelous way -- at the same time carrying on a running accompaniment of audible criticism of the music -- that Brahms was amazed and delighted. . . Liszt also played a part of Brahms' "C Major Sonata, Op. 1." 1

Mason records another example of Liszt's remarkable sight-reading ability:

Raff had composed a sonata for violin and pianoforte in which there were evervarying changes of measures and rhythm; measures of 7/8, 7/4, and 5/4 alternating with common and triple time, and seemed to mix together promiscuously and without regard to order. Notwithstanding this apparent disorder, there was an undercurrent, so to speak, of the ordinary 3/4 or 4/4 time, and to the player who could penetrate the rhythmic mask the difficulty of performance quickly vanished. 2

After practicing the work for a time, Raff and Pruckner played it for Liszt. Mason continues:

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1 Mason, Memories, pp. 127-28.
2 Ibid., pp. 142-43.

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> Pruckner, of sensitive and nervous organization, found the changes of measure too confusing, especially when played before company, and broke down at the first page. Another and yet a third attempt was made, but with the like result. Liszt, whose interest was aroused, exclaimed, "I wonder if I can play that!" Then, taking his place at the instrument, he played it through at sight in rapid tempo and without the slightest hesitation. He had intuitively divined the regularity of movement which lay beneath the surface. 1

The accounts of Liszt's reading at sight of compositions brought to him in manuscript are numerous. Bettina Walker wrote:

> His sight-reading of difficult manuscript compositions, which were brought to him on different occasions, was simply marvelous. He would listen to the player for a minute or two with a smile which betrayed a sort of scornful sense of absolute mastery, and then he would sit down and execute the most intricate passages with as much ease as if it were the ABC of a language every syllable, every word of which was familiar to him. What astonished and impressed me most was, not so much that his fingers were responsive to every motion of his mind; I wondered at the mind, which one felt instinctively was gifted with the power of taking in at one rapid glance every possible variety of passage which has ever been written for the pianoforte. His glance seemed to be at once penetrative and all-embracing. 2

With such legendary prowess, it is a pity that Liszt did not give more advice regarding sight-reading. As it is, Madame Boissier leaves what appears to be the only explicit instructions Liszt gave on this subject:

> Again he urged Valerie to do some sight reading every day and try to look at the text as a whole and not in small details. He himself sight reads all the time, which probably accounts for his phenomenal knowledge of the musical repertoire, recent or old. 3

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1 Ibid., pp. 143-144.
2 Walker, Memories, p. 108.
3 Boissier, "Liszt Pedagogue," trans. by M. Dumesnil, Piano Teacher, July-Aug., 1961, p. 14.

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That Liszt read far ahead of where he was playing is suggested by Amy Fay, who wrote after she had turned pages for him while he read through some chamber music he had just received:

> Gracious! How he does read! It is very difficult to turn for him, for he reads ever so far ahead of what he is playing, and takes in fully five bars at a glance, so you have to guess about where you think he would like to have the page over. Once I turned it too late, and once too early, and he snatched it out of my hand and whirled it back. 1

At this point it is of interest to note that the habit of looking at a piece of music to determine its accentuation increases a player's sight-reading ability at once, for this procedure trains the eye to fall on larger sections of a piece than would otherwise be the case. Of course, Liszt's sight-reading was developed to a stage far beyond observing mere accentuation. He probably saw phrases and entire periods at a glance.

Furthermore, Liszt spent a great deal of his time practicing a type of reading which must have made piano scores seem ridiculously simple to him. This was his reading of orchestral scores at the piano.

Score-Reading

The pianist who attempts to read orchestral scores, however crudely and haltingly at first, will find that his

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1 Fay, Music Study, pp. 215-16.

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sight-reading ability improves almost immediately. In reading orchestral scores the eye is forced to fall on such a large area merely to play a single chord divided between the instruments, that afterward to read a simple two-clef piano score seems considerably easier. Once the eye has been trained to see so much vertically, as it must in reading an orchestral score, it tends to transfer its skill to piano scores (where the large vertical expanse does not exist) by grasping large horizontal sections.

Liszt spent a great deal of his time reading orchestral scores. As director of the Weimar orchestra, he regularly read through orchestral scores. In addition, his publishers sent him much new music as it was published. He also received such a large amount of music through the mails from "hopeful" young composers that he resorted to placing ads in various European journals stating that he would not examine compositions sent him without his request.

On numerous occasions throughout his life, composers, often completely unknown even in their own time, called on Liszt in person, bringing him orchestral scores to examine, which he read through at the piano at sight. The American composer, Otis B. Boise, who studied in Europe with Moritz Hauptman (the teacher of C. F. Weitzmann) and Ernst Wenzel, visited Liszt at Weimar in the late 1870's, bringing the manuscript of an overture he had written. When Liszt invited Boise to play his overture on the piano, Boise hesitated, worrying that his keyboard ability might damage the

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impression he hoped his composition would make. Boise writes:

> He evidently noticed my worry and relieved me at once, by saying,"I think after all that I should obtain a better idea of details if I play it myself." Accordingly he seated himself, glanced at the instrumental scheme, turned the successive pages to the end, tracing my themes and procedures and then, with this flash negative in his mind, began the most astoundingly coherent piano rendering of an orchestral score that I had heard and such as I have never heard since from any musician. Those who have attempted such tasks know that the ten fingers being inadequate to the performance of all details, it is necessary to cull such essentials from the mass of voices as will clear the line of development. Liszt did this instantaneously. No features of the workmanship, contrapuntal or instrumental, escaped his notice and he made running comments without interrupting his progress.1

Finally, it is obvious that Liszt's ability in score-reading enabled him to have a knowledge of music literature far beyond the confines of that written for the piano.

Transcribing

During his long life, Liszt made numerous transcriptions for the piano of works originally written for other instruments. Liszt's transcriptions achieved two purposes: first, they enabled him to produce a body of literature for the piano in which he carried virtuosity and pianistic effects to a height unequalled before his time; and second, they made music written for instruments other than the piano available to pianists. This practice can be considered "obsolete" today, due to the invention of various recording devices, but the act of transcribing many works enabled Liszt to become immeasurably more familiar with them, down to their most minute

1 Boise, Liszt, p. 320.

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details, than would be possible from "listening" to them. Liszt gave the composers Borodin and Boise, among others, detailed advice on how to arrange their orchestral works for four hands, a practice which was almost a necessity at that time if a composer wanted his works to become widely known.

Liszt's early opera paraphrases are not literal transcriptions but rather fantasies based on the themes of these works. His later transcriptions, for example, those from the operas of Wagner, are more literal, attempting only to capture the impression of the actual sound of these works in their original form as nearly as possible. Liszt's remarkable ability to transfer orchestral color to the piano can be appreciated only when a work such as his transcription of Wagner's Liebestod from Tristan and Isolde is played by a master pianist. Ernest Newman wrote of Liszt's transcription of Berlioz' Symphonie Fantastique, which Liszt published in 1833, "If any young musician wants to get the innermost secrets of this art I recommend to him the close study of Liszt's piano arrangement of Berlioz' 'Symphonie fantastique' -- a masterpiece, if there ever was one, not only of poetic understanding, but of technical ingenuity."[1] Johannes Brahms, of all people, spoke of the admiration he had for the genius Liszt displayed in his operatic transcriptions.[2]

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1 Hill, Liszt, p. 33.
2 Friedheim, "From Brahms to Einstein," Etude, Jan., 1932, p. 19.

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Liszt wrote in a letter to Breitkopf and Härtel concerning his transcriptions of the Beethoven Symphonies for the piano:

> While initiating myself further in the genius of Beethoven, I trust I have also made some little progress in the manner of adapting his inspirations to the piano, as far as this instrument admits of it; and I have tried not to neglect to take into account the relative facility of execution while maintaining an exact fidelity to the original. Such as this arrangement of Beethoven's Symphonies actually is, the pupils of the first class in the Conservatoires will be able to play them off fairly well on reading them at sight, save and except that they will succeed better in them by working at them, which is always advisable. What study is deserving of more care and assiduity than that of these chefs d'oeuvre? The more one gives oneself to them the more one will profit by them, firstly in relation to the sense and aesthetic intelligence, and then also in relation to the technical skill and the attaining of perfection in virtuosity -- of which one should only despise the bad use that is sometimes made. 1

Liszt knew the music of every genre thoroughly. He was intimately acquainted with the literature of the organ and transcribed several of Bach's organ preludes and fugues for the piano. He also made numerous transcriptions of chamber music works, including many of the Beethoven Quartets. Liszt once said that he considered the transcribing of the last quartets of Beethoven for the piano the most difficult task any transcriber could face. Liszt claimed he had never been satisfied with his transcriptions of these works. Later Tausig spent much time at this task and Liszt pronounced these transcriptions of the last quartets an improvement over his own and "masterly." 2 Tausig also made a piano score of Wagner's

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1 Liszt, Letters, II, pp. 56-57.
2 Ibid, II, pp. 208-09.

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Meistersinger which Liszt praised highly. Liszt's student, Karl Klindworth, was widely known during the nineteenth century for his piano scores of several of Wagner's operas.

The consideration of what combinations of tones on the piano will most closely approximate the original effect of a work being transcribed results in a heightened awareness and consciousness of sound on the part of the transcriber. There is no doubt that Liszt's occupation with the literature of music far beyond the confines of music written for the piano, and his hours spent in transcribing these works, gave him a very different outlook and perspective regarding music from that of most present-day pianists.

Transposing

In the nineteenth century one of the basic requirements of musicianship for pianists was the ability to transpose. All pianists received a thorough training in this skill. Liszt told his American pupil, F. W. Riesberg, that in his youth, "my father daily required of me to play and transpose six Bach fugues as dessert."[1] C. F. Weitzmann stresses the importance of this in Liszt's training in his History of Pianoforte Playing and Pianoforte Literature.[2]

Max Meyer Olbersleben describes a class where a girl played several etudes of Liszt, which she had prepared.

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1 Riesberg, "Gala Days," p. 738.
2 Weitzmann, History, p. 182.

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When she finished, Liszt sat down and played the etudes one after another, transposing each to a different key.[1] Meyer Olbersleben writes:

> All of his pupils can relate wonderful instances of "prima vista" transposition. He seemed at home in any key at any time, and music written in one key he could apparently play in any other key at will. 2

It is obvious that Liszt impressed the importance of transposition upon his best pupils. Bülow writes in the preface to his edition of the Cramer Etudes:

> . . . a modern virtuoso of the genuine caliber must be able to perform Beethoven's opus 57, for example, as conveniently in F# minor as in F minor. 3

Oscar Beringer writes of his teacher, Carl Tausig:

> As a matter of fact, Tausig could play all of the 48 Preludes and Fugues of Bach in any key one chose to ask of him, using the same fingering in every key. This is not a case of "ben trovato." I have heard him myself transpose some of the most difficult ones into the most unearthly keys. 4

This quotation from Beringer reveals that the basis then, of the transposition practiced by Liszt and his pupils, was partly pianistic, "using the same fingering in every key." The resulting use of the thumb on black keys has already been discussed in Chapter VII.

Improvisation

Finally, it must be added that Liszt was thoroughly trained in the art of improvisation. At their first meeting,

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1 Olbersleben, "Recollections," p. 372.
2 Ibid., p. 372.
3 Cramer, Etudes, p. ii.
4 Beringer, "Fingering Facts," p. 369. "Ben trovato" is literally "with invention." (Italian).

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he astonished Carl Czerny with his ability in this area. As a child, Liszt closed all of his public concerts with an improvisation on any theme given him by the audience. At times he improvised in the concerts he gave as an adult, although less frequently than he had as a child.

Several of Liszt's students report that when in the mood he would improvise during his classes. He did this often when playing his own works. Amy Fay writes of a lesson where he played his own Au bord d'une source:

> As he neared the close I remarked that a funny little expression came over his face which he always has when he means to surprise you, and he took an unexpected chord and extemporized a little poetic end, quite different from the written one. 1

Carl Lachmund writes of a class where Liszt played Chopin's Prelude in E Major:

> As he came to the last measure, he looked up and away from the music and began to improvise, enlarging upon the grand theme to the extent of three times its length or more. This time he was serious; he soared like an eagle -- it was glorious. 2

Max Meyer Olbersleben wrote:

> In improvisation Liszt was absolutely unequalled. I remember upon another occasion that he played a mazurka of Chopin and at the end he commenced a free paraphrase of the themes. To this day all of the wonderfully beautiful variations and arabesques with which he ornamented this theme still ring in my ears. 3

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1 Fay, Music Study, p. 220.
2 Lachmund, "Liszt Speaks," July-Aug., p. 3.
3 Olbersleben, "Recollections," p. 372.

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CHAPTER X

STYLES

The object of Liszt's playing was to project each work he played as he envisioned it to have appeared originally in the mind of the composer. In order to arrive at this ideal, Liszt used the notes of a work as written by the composer as his basis, but beyond this he also used his own musical intelligence and knowledge to help determine what he thought the composer was trying to indicate by these signs.

In his teaching, Liszt devoted most of his time to helping the students arrive at a better understanding of the works brought to lessons. Numerous students testify to this. Arthur Friedheim wrote of his lessons with Liszt, "Interpretation was the thing. The inner meaning of the composition must be found, the spirit brought out."[1] Moritz Rosenthal wrote:

> What made his instruction so particularly interesting was the wonderfully clear exposition of the musical structure of a composition, the development of hidden beauties and the intensely interesting manner in which he explained the historical relationship of a piece with the advance of the art of music. He saw everything with the eyes of a master interpreter as well as those of the creator. 2

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1 Friedheim, Life and Liszt, p. 52.
2 Rosenthal, "Franz Liszt as I knew Him," p. 817.

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Liszt's philosophy of interpretation is set forth very clearly by Alfred Reisenauer in an interview with James Francis Cooke. When asked about Liszt's teaching, Reisenauer said:

> You ask me whether he had a certain method. I reply, he abhorred methods in the modern sense of the term. His work was eclectic in the highest sense. In one way he could not be considered a teacher at all. He charged no fees and had irregular and somewhat unsystematic classes. In another sense he was the greatest of teachers. Sit at the piano and I will illustrate the general plan pursued by Liszt at a lesson. 1

Cooke then sat at the piano and began to play Chopin's Waltz in Ab, opus 69, number 1. Cooke later recorded:

> In the meanwhile, Reisenauer had gone to another room and, after listening patiently, returned, imitating the walk, facial expression and the peculiar guttural snort characteristic of Liszt in his later years. Then followed a long "kindly sermon" upon the emotional possibilities of the composition. This was interrupted with snorts and went with kaleidoscopic rapidity from French to German and back again many, many times. Imitating Liszt he said,
>
> "First of all we must arrive at the very essence of the thing; the germ that Chopin chose to have grow and blossom in his soul. It is, roughly considered, this:

> Chopin's next thought was, no doubt:

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

> Now consider the thing in studying it and while playing it from the composer's attitude. By this I mean

1 Cooke, Great Pianists on Piano Playing, p. 227.

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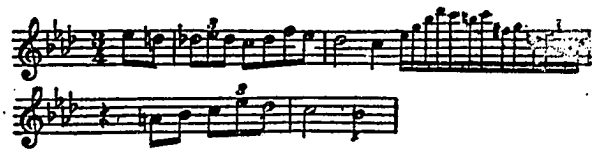
that during the mental process of conception, before the actual transference of the thought to paper, the thought itself is in a nebulous condition. The composer sees it in a thousand lights before he actually determines upon the exact form he desires to perpetuate. For instance, this theme might have gone through Chopin's mind much after this fashion:



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

"It is not so much the performer's duty to play mere notes and dynamic marks, as it is for him to make an artistic estimate of the composer's intention and to feel that during the period of reproduction he simulates the natural psychological conditions which affected the composer during the actual process of composition. In this way the composition becomes a living entity—a tangible resurrection of the soul of the great Chopin. Without such penetrative genius a pianist is no more than a mere machine and with it he may develop into an artist of the highest type." [1]

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1 Ibid., pp. 228-29.

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With such a definite philosophy of interpretation, Liszt was bound to develop certain attitudes toward the styles of various composers. In the case of composers who preceded him, Liszt inherited from Czerny a definite tradition upon which to build. (Czerny, it will be remembered, was a pupil of Beethoven, and made an edition of the keyboard works of Bach). Liszt had personal contact with most of the composers who were his contemporaries, in addition to his study of the music itself.

The available material reflecting these various aspects of Liszt's attitudes and relationships consists once again of bits and pieces: a few sentences from letters, interviews, and writings of Liszt and his students. Material which might be revealing in this context has often been touched on in this volume. It would seem worthwhile, however, to focus directly on a few remaining examples of evidence in light of the present discussion.

Bach and Beethoven

Carl Lachmund writes:

> Liszt was always more painstaking with Bach and Beethoven than with his own works. When something by either of these composers was played, he would straighten up, seat himself next to the piano with serious mien, and follow all details meticulously. 1

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1 Lachmund, "Liszt Speaks," March-April, p. 5.

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Numerous students record the importance Liszt attached to the keyboard works of Bach as a basic part of the development of any pianist. He once advised a group of students, "Bach is wholesome food for pianists."[1]

As has already been demonstrated in the course of this volume, Liszt considered a thorough study of the Well-Tempered Clavier a vital part of any pianist's background. Carl Lachmund writes of a class at Weimar:

> We were not through with Bach. Wishing to impress us with the importance he attached to this composer, he trudged into the adjoining library and brought out a book of the Well-Tempered Clavier. Placing this on the rack he asked one after another of us to play at sight a prelude or fugue. 2

Lachmund wrote of Liszt's playing of Bach, "There was none of the stiffness of rhythm or dryness of tone one often hears in Bach."[3] Liszt told Valerie Boissier to play fugues without any undue freedom of rhythm, but with "shadings" and "expression."[4] William Mason describes an ideal of Bach-playing which was evidently prevalent among many nineteenth century pianists, including Mason's teacher, Ignaz Moscheles. Mason wrote:

> Each and all of the voices received careful and reverent attention, and were brought out with due regard to their relative as well as their individual importance. Nuances were never neglected, neither were they in excess. 5

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1 Ibid., p. 6.
2 Ibid., p. 5.
3 Ibid., p. 5.
4 Boissier, Piano Teacher, July-Aug., 1961, p. 14.
5 Mason, Memories, p. 59.

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William Sherwood's description of Liszt playing fugal works has already been quoted in Chapter VI. On another occasion, Sherwood again described Liszt's approach to fugue playing:

> At a given interval one voice should frequently have an accent where another voice should not; one should have a sustained tone and another staccato; one loud, another soft; one crescendo, another diminuendo, simultaneously, and so on ad infinitum . . . . I heard Liszt play fugues and he did not miss any of these effects. 1

Carl Lachmund writes that at one class at Weimar Liszt sat at the piano and illustrated his basic approach to the playing of Bach.

> Then rising from his seat, he added significantly, as though he wished it to go on record, "That is the way I should play Bach -- and I do not think Bach would chastise me for it if he were here." 2

The few remaining comments by Liszt concerning the works of Bach include the following:

Liszt once said to a student who played a mordant rather poorly, "Do you know that mordant is derived from a word meaning 'biting'? You should snap it off with a smart accent."[3] At one lesson Liszt said that although Bach never marked his works with tempo indications, "If one truly feels the music, one will hit the correct tempo."[4] When a student played a work by Bach in which the main sections were interrupted several times by restful interludes, Liszt

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1 Sherwood, "Musical Europe," p. 159.
2 Lachmund, "Liszt Speaks," March-April, p. 5.
3 Ibid., p. 4.
4 Riesberg, "Gala Days," p. 738.

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described the interludes as "Nebensachen (side issues) intended to rest the mind for a moment, and if you play them with no pretense of expression, the reentry of the theme will have a refreshing effect."[1]

Liszt was renowned for his playing of Beethoven. His prowess in this area is attested to by Ignaz Moscheles, a friend of Beethoven and a member of the generation of pianists before Liszt's time. Moscheles once discussed Liszt's playing of Beethoven with William Mason. Mason writes:

> Moscheles has always been an acknowledged authority as to Beethoven, and he once told me during a lesson that he considered Liszt an ideal, or perhaps his word was a "great," Beethoven player. 2

Liszt came by this naturally, for his teacher Czerny was a pupil of Beethoven. Czerny himself had very definite ideas about playing Beethoven and probably gave Liszt much information which he had secured directly from Beethoven himself with regard to the performance of Beethoven's works. Another pupil of Czerny, Theodore Leschitizsky, said of Czerny's teaching of Beethoven:

> Naturally, as a pupil of Beethoven, he was a great admirer of his works and taught many of them. His idea was that Beethoven should be played with great freedom and great emotion. Academic, stiff performances of his works angered Czerny very much indeed. 3

Czerny's philosophy of Beethoven as reported by Leschitizsky is certainly reflected in Liszt's own words

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1 Lachmund, "Liszt Speaks," March-April, p. 5.
2 Mason, "Paderewski," p. 17.
3 Leschitizsky, "How Czerny Taught," Etude, July, 1920, p. 454.

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to his student, Wilhelm von Lenz. In 1852, shortly after receiving a copy of Lenz' book, Beethoven and His Three Styles, Liszt wrote to Lenz:

> For us musicians, Beethoven's work is like a pillar of cloud and fire which guided the Israelites through the desert -- a pillar of cloud to guide us by day, and a pillar of fire to guide us by night, "so that we may progress both day and night." His obscurity and his light trace for us equally the path we have to follow: they are each of them a perpetual commandment, and infallible revelation. Were it my place to categorize the different periods of the great master's thoughts, as manifested in his Sonatas, Symphonies, and Quartets, I should certainly not fix the division into three styles, which is now pretty generally adopted and which you have followed; but simply recording the questions which have been raised hitherto, I should frankly weigh the great question which is the axis of criticism and musical aestheticism at the point to which Beethoven has led us -- namely, in how far is traditional or recognized form a necessary determinant for the organism of thought? --
>
> The solution of this question, evolved from the works of Beethoven himself, would lead me to divide this work, not into three styles or periods, -- the words style and period being here only corollary subordinate terms, of a vague and equivocal meaning, -- but quite logically into two categories: the first, that in which tradition and recognized form contains and governs the thought of the master; and the second, that in which the thought stretches, breaks, recreates, and fashions the form and style according to its needs and inspirations. Doubtless in proceeding thus we arrive in a direct line at those incessant problems of authority and liberty.[1]

Liszt took the matter of Lenz' study of Beethoven seriously enough to invite Lenz to Weimar, where Liszt wrote that they could:

> . . . discuss pieces in hand, the meaning, value, import, of a large number of ideas, phrases, episodes, rhythms, harmonic progressions, developments, artifices; - - I

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1 Liszt, Letters, I, pp. 151-52.

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> should have to have a good long talk with you, in fact, about half-notes, quarter-notes, eighth-notes, and sixteenth-notes, -- not forgetting the rests which, if you please, are by no means a trifling chapter when one professes to go in seriously for music, and for Beethoven in particular. 1

It is evident from the above quotation that Liszt placed great importance on the most minute detail in the works of Beethoven. On another occasion Liszt wrote:

> The more intimately acquainted one becomes with Beethoven, the more one clings to certain singularities and finds that even insignificant details are not without their value. 2

This approach to the works of Beethoven is taken by Bülow in his edition of the Beethoven Sonatas, and by Christiani in discussing Beethoven in his book. Both Bülow and Christiani constantly strive to find significant inner voices, motivic references (however slight), and other such fine points.

History too often regards Liszt as a performer whose interest lay heavily in virtuoso pieces of slight musical substance. What has been overlooked is Liszt's great importance in giving early performances of works which have since become part of the piano's most important literature. He was indeed a pioneer. For example, it is not generally known that Liszt gave the first public performance of Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata, opus 106. This took place in a Paris concert in 1836 during Liszt's rivalry with Thalberg.

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1 Ibid., I, p. 148.
2 Ibid., II, p. 43.

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In an article entitled "Some Nineteenth Century Consequences of Beethoven's 'Hammerklavier' Sonata, Opus 106," William S. Newman spends a large amount of space describing Liszt's connection with this work.[1] Newman writes:

> As far back as 1821 or 1822, at the ripe age of 10, Liszt already had a go at this work, playing it "very badly, no doubt," as he himself recalled more than a half-century later, "but with passion, (and) without anyone teaching it to me. My father wasn't equal to that and Czerny hesitated to subject me to such a diet."[2]

Liszt's 1836 Paris performance of Beethoven's opus 106 was reviewed by Hector Berlioz, who wrote of the work:

> . . . this sublime poem that until this day was but the riddle of the sphinx for nearly all pianists. (A) new (young) Oedipus, Liszt has solved it in a way that the composer, if he could have heard it, must have trembled with joy and pride in his grave. Not one note was left out, not one note added (I followed the score closely), not one change was made in the tempo that was not indicated in the editing, not one inflection, not one idea was sacrificed or diverted from its true sense. Above all, in the adagio, in the performance of the wondrous hymn that the spirit of Beethoven seems to have sung by itself while soaring in the immensity, he (Liszt) steadfastly kept up with the level of the composer's thoughts . . . [3]

The Russian author and composer, Serov, heard Liszt play this work at Weimar in 1858. Serov wrote that Liszt, "himself deeply moved, moved (others) to tears." Serov remarked on the great speed of the fugue and also noted that on the final page of the finale Liszt changed the cadential trills from their original single note form into interlocking

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1 Newman, "Nineteenth Century," Piano Quarterly, Spring, 1969, number 67, p. 12-13.
2 Ibid., pp. 12-13.
3 Ibid., p. 13.

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octaves for a more sonorous effect.[1] This effect is recorded by Bulow in his edition of this work.[2]

Liszt had a special attachment to Beethoven's opus 106 and considered it one of the greatest tests for any pianist. He demanded that anyone who attempted it have a pianistic and artistic ability equal to that required to play the work. William Mason describes an occasion when a Hungarian pianist visited Weimar and played this work for Liszt:

> He sat down and began to play in a conveniently slow tempo the bold chords with which the sonata opens. He had not progressed more than half a page when Liszt stopped him, and seating himself at the keyboard, played in the correct tempo, which was much faster, to show him how the work should be interpreted. "It's nonsense for you to go through this sonata in that fashion," said Liszt, as he rose from the piano and left the room.[3]

Liszt often chose to play one of the late sonatas of Beethoven at gatherings of musicians he respected. For example, he did so at the home of Wagner, and at his Sunday matinees at Weimar where such musicians as Tausig, Anton Rubinstein, Bülow, and Saint-Säens were all present. Berlioz, Wagner, Bülow, D'Albert, and numerous other important musicians have left enthusiastic and awed accounts of Liszt's playing of these works. Many sources mention Liszt's particular fondness for the slow movement of the "Hammerklavier" Sonata.

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1 Ibid., p. 13.
2 Beethoven, Sonatas, ed. by Bulow, II, p. 614.
3 Mason, Memories, p. 104.

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As might be expected, many of Liszt's better students, including Bülow, Tausig, and D'Albert, specialized in the playing of the music of Beethoven, especially the last five sonatas. In fact, Bülow's favorite program was the last five sonatas of Beethoven, which he often ended by playing the finale of opus 106 again as an encore. Tausig had a special fondness for Beethoven's opus 101, and Wilhelm von Lenz describes Tausig's comments on this work in detail.[1] Eugene D'Albert duplicated Bülow's feat of playing Beethoven's last five sonatas in a single recital. On at least one occasion, D'Albert closed such a program by playing the "Appassionata" as an encore.

As might be assumed, Liszt was extremely strict in his teaching of the works of Beethoven. Carl Lachmund reports:

> Ever devout when it came to a Beethoven Sonata, his anger was quickly aroused when anyone disregarded the simple signs of expression. At a repetition of such an offense the book was peremptorily closed, while the Master, with eyebrows contracted in anger, shouted: "To observe the dead letter is the least one can do in playing Beethoven." 2

Amy Fay writes:

> When one of the young pianists brings Liszt a sonata, he puts on an expression of resignation and generally begins a half protest which he afterwards thinks better of. - - "Well, go on," he will say, and then he proceeds to be very strict. He always teaches Beethoven with the notes, which shows how scrupulous he is, for, of course, he knows all the sonatas by heart. 3

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1 Lenz, Great Virtuosos, pp. 82-83.
2 Lachmund, "Franz Liszt," p. 785.
3 Fay, Music Study, p. 238.

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A strange comment Liszt made at the end of his life concerning the works of Beethoven reveals that in his very last years his tastes must have undergone some change. Right up to the end of his life Liszt taught and inspired his students in the performance in the works of Beethoven. (The comments in the Beethoven edition of Eugene D'Albert, who was at Weimar during Liszt's final years, indicate this.) However, when his former student, Amy Fay, visited Liszt on a trip to Europe she made shortly before his death, Liszt pointed to a book of the Beethoven Sonatas lying on a table in his study and said, "I respect all that, but it no longer interests me."[1] At this time Liszt was involved in the composition of his final works, which in some cases point strongly toward techniques and idioms of the twentieth century.

Chopin

Liszt often came into contact with Frederick Chopin during his years spent in Paris, and for a time the two were close friends. Later their friendship cooled, and in the final years of Chopin's life the two had little association with one another. However, shortly after Chopin's death, Liszt published a book on him, revealing the admiration he held for Chopin.

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1 Fay, "From Beethoven to Liszt," Etude, July, 1908, p. 427.

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Although Chopin did not respect Liszt's ability as a composer (it must be remembered that he had only Liszt's earliest compositions to judge), on several occasions Chopin expressed his approval and even envy of Liszt's playing of his (Chopin's) works. However, Chopin felt that no pianist could equal him in his specialty -- pianissimo playing. Liszt's pupil, Alexander Siloti, relates that Chopin once revealed his feelings to Liszt, saying that Liszt could not equal his playing of his Etude in F minor, opus 25 number 2 (the epitome of Chopin's pianissimo style). Liszt immediately suggested that they have a contest playing this etude the next time they met at a soiree in Paris. At this soiree, each man played the etude while the listeners remained in another room, not being told in what order the two had performed. Although the audience, acting as judges, was unable to distinguish between the playing of the two men, Chopin still refused to admit that Liszt's performance was equal to his own.[1]

Liszt heard Chopin play on numerous occasions, and in his teaching, Liszt often attempted to describe to his pupils the remarkable effect of Chopin's playing. William Mason wrote of "that subtle quality expressed in some measure by the German word Sehnsucht, and in English as 'intensity of aspiration.' This quality Chopin had, and Liszt frequently spoke of it."[2]

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1 Siloti, Liszt, p. 19.
2 Mason, "Paderewski," p. 20.

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Numerous comments on Liszt's playing and teaching of specific works of Chopin have been included so far in this volume. Some further examples follow:

Alexander Siloti writes:

> When someone played Chopin, it irritated Liszt when the groups of small notes were played too quickly, "conservatorium-fashion," as he called it. 1

Discussing Chopin's A major Polonaise, Liszt said:

> After the trio in D major I play the first part softly, and the next part again loud. Chopin did not mark thus, but he conceded to my playing it so. He was not at all dissatisfied with it. 2

Moritz Rosenthal writes of his lessons with Liszt:

> Once when I played the Chopin Etude, Opus 10, No. 1, he said to me, "Gounod has taken the first prelude of the Wohltemperierten Klavier of Bach and written a Meditation above it. Some day I shall write a similar counter melody for this Etude, but it will not be a Meditation but a Jubilate." He had unlimited admiration for Chopin.
>
> Once, when we were discussing the romantic composers, he said to me, "Schumann has broader shoulders, but Chopin stands a little taller." 3

F. W. Riesberg writes:

> The class witnessed an unforgettable scene when a young woman performed Chopin's Ab Ballade, which ends with four strongly accented, square cut chords. These she played as arpeggios, with hand tossing and crossing. Dead silence followed; then Der Meister took her by the arm, escorted her to the door, and said, "Go! I never want to see you again." 4

Several students from the final period at Weimar report that Liszt had a special fondness for the Chopin Preludes and was always delighted when a student brought

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1 Siloti, Liszt, p. 11.
2 Lachmund, "Liszt Speaks," Jan.-Feb., p. 8.
3 Rosenthal, "Franz Liszt," p. 817.
4 Riesberg, "Gala Days," p. 733.

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any of them to a lesson. Carl Lachmund writes that Liszt once said of the Chopin Preludes, "There are more musical thoughts in these preludes than in many symphonies of the present-day Kappelmeister composers."[1]

At the very end of his life when he had become rather feeble, and it was apparent that the end was approaching, Liszt was particularly fond of playing the second of Chopin's Trois Etudes written for the Method of Moscheles and Fetis. Arthur Friedheim writes of Liszt's playing of this work:

> Here reign deep repose and blessed peace. The shadows swiftly flitting by should be conceived only as painless, transfigured memories of sorrows long since vanquished; for these tones are borne to us out of a world where al strife ceases and all differences are healed. In its inmost spirit this piece ranks high above No. 19; for the latter, with all its beauty, is still wholly "of this world." Thus we now find it harder to obtain an adequate effect. Beware, first of all, of overhastening the tempo in the slightest; observe a strict legato, with and without pedal, always treat the incidental contrasting parts with quietly expressive effect, and take the single f and the pia f immediately following as heavy sustained accents.
>
> Liszt was very fond of playing this Etude. Indeed, it was the last piece that his friends heard him play, and none then present can ever forget it. It is this impression which the above observations seek to convey.[2]

Schumann

Liszt came into contact with Robert Schumann on several occasions during his years as a touring virtuoso.

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1 Lachmund, "Liszt Speaks," March-April, p. 3.
2 Chopin, Etudes, ed. by Friedheim, p. 9.

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Although Schumann expressed distaste for Liszt's arrogance and other aspects of his personality at this time, Schumann had unreserved admiration for Liszt's playing. Liszt played several of Schumann's works for Schumann, and discussed these works with him. Later, in his teaching, Liszt quoted some of Schumann's own comments regarding the interpretation of his works.

Liszt gave A. Strelezki the following advice on the playing of the first movement of Schumann's Fantasie, opus 17, (which Liszt said were Schumann's own thoughts regarding this work):

> But everyone plays this opening movement in too vigorous a style. It is pre-eminently dreamy, träumerisch, as he expressed it in German, and altogether the reverse of "noisy and heavy." I do not mean, though, that it should be played at all apathetically, for, of course, here and there are phrases which demand vigorous execution; but the whole outline of the movement should preserve more of the dreamy character, than it is usual to depict it. 1

Liszt attempted for a time to promote the works of Schumann by playing them in his public concerts. However, after a time he gave up playing them, coming to the conclusion that he could make no headway with them with the general public. Later, Liszt performed many of Schumann's orchestral and stage works as head of the Weimar orchestra. He regarded Schumann as the epitome of "romanticism" in music.

In passing, it might be of interest to note that Liszt's support of Schumann was constant despite a changing

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1 Beckett, Liszt, p. 64.

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attitude toward Schumann's wife, Clara. At one time Liszt said of the playing of Clara Wieck, "Many make more noise, but few make more music."[1] However, later in life Liszt was not so generous in his comments concerning Madame Schumann, who was strongly opposed to the music of Wagner and Liszt, and for some reason nourished a fierce personal hatred of Liszt. This was eventually reflected by Liszt himself, as is shown by Carl Lachmund's description of a class held toward the end of Liszt's life where a student played the opening of Beethoven's G major Concerto:

> "That's too much like Clara (Schumann)," he said. Then to show us how Clara would play it, he sat somewhat stoop-shouldered with head turned to one side and played with self-centered sentimentality. Since this was not his first crack at Clara, I wondered if it was inspired by pique because Clara had removed from the new edition of Schumann's great Fantasie the original dedication to Liszt. 2

Brahms

Although Liszt expressed respect for certain aspects of Johannes Brahms' ability as a composer, he did not think of him as an inspired composer. Liszt had a definite distaste for Brahms as a person, and Brahms' feelings toward Liszt were similar. It must be realized that Brahms was more than twenty years younger than Liszt and that Liszt died in 1886, before Brahms had written some of his most important works, including

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1 E. B. Hill, "A True Interpreter of Chopin," Etude, Jan., 1905, p. 19.
2 Lachmund, "Liszt Speaks," March-April, p. 5.

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his final set of piano pieces (opus 116, 117, 118, and 119). Liszt judged Brahms by his earliest works, and after examining them he had little interest in looking at any of his works which appeared later.

On the occasion when the young, and at that time unknown, Brahms visited Weimar, Liszt acquired a strong distaste for him.[1] After Liszt had sightread through several of Brahms' manuscripts, when the young Brahms claimed he was too nervous in Liszt's presence to play his works himself, Liszt played his own Sonata in B minor. Brahms, exhausted from his travels as accompanist for the violinist Remenyi, fell asleep during the performance at one of the lyrical, softer sections (it is doubtful if anyone could have slept through Liszt's playing of the louder portions of this work), and Liszt noticed this.

This story has often been told by admirers of Brahms, but the details are always changed in the following manner: that Brahms was already a famous composer at the time of the incident, and that he expressed his "contempt" for Liszt's music by falling asleep so that when Liszt looked up expectantly at the end of the performance, he found Brahms fast asleep.

The correct version of this story, as told by William Mason in his autobiography,[2] reveals that Brahms was a nervous

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1 Mason, Memories, pp. 127-32.
2 Ibid., p. 129.

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youngster at the time of the meeting, and that he dozed off somewhere during the middle of the Sonata and not at the very end, because of his exhaustion and not because of a desire to demonstrate contempt for Liszt's music. Furthermore, Liszt did not have to wait until the end of a performance to look at his listeners, but often glanced at them (at least during his playing at his Weimar classes) while he played. Mason writes:

> A little later some one asked Liszt to play his own sonata which was quite recent at that time, and of which he was very fond. Without hesitation, he sat down and began playing. As he progressed he came to a very expressive part of the sonata, which he always imbued with extreme pathos, and in which he looked for the special interest and sympathy of his listeners. Casting a glance at Brahms, he found that the latter was dozing in his chair. Liszt continued playing to the end of the sonata, then rose and left the room. I was in such a position that Brahms was hidden from my view, but I was aware that something unusual had taken place. I think it was Remenyi who afterward told me what it was. It is very strange that among the various accounts of this Liszt-Brahms first interview -- and these are several --there is not one which gives an accurate description of what took place on that occasion; indeed they are all far out of the way. 1

Mason writes further:

> Shortly after the untoward Weimar incident Brahms paid a visit to Schumann, then living in Düsseldorf. The acquaintanceship resulting therefrom led to the famous article of Schumann entitled "Neue Bahnen," published shortly afterward (October 23, 1853) in the Leipsic "Neue Zeitschrift für Musik," which started Brahms on his musical career. It is doubtful if up to that time any article made such a sensation throughout musical Germany. I remember how utterly the Liszt circle in Weimar were astounded. This letter was at first, doubtless, an obstacle in the way of Brahms, but as it resulted in stirring up great

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1 Ibid., p. 129.

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rivalry between two opposing parties, it eventually contributed much to his final success. 1

After this incident at Weimar, Liszt naturally had little liking for Brahms and it is probable that from this time on he did not care to examine Brahm's later works. Thus Liszt's basic estimation of Brahms was probably formed by his impressions of Brahm's still unpublished Scherzo in E flat minor and his First Sonata, in C major, which Liszt read through at this Weimar meeting. In later years, of course, Brahms was used by the enemies of Liszt and Wagner as the figurehead of their group, who opposed the principles Liszt devoted so much of his time promoting.

Liszt was not enthusiastic when a student brought a work of Brahms to play for him. However, on several occasions he did consent to listen. Both Rosenthal and Frederick Lamond report they played Brahms' Paganini Variations for Liszt. Both Rosenthal and F. W. Riesberg report that Liszt praised the polyrhymic structure of Brahms' Paganini Variations. Lamond writes of Liszt:

> How well I remember him saying to me with the simplicity of a child, after I had played the Brahms Paganini Variations, that this was a finer work than his own variations on the same theme. 2

F. W. Riesberg writes of Liszt:

> Much as he esteemed Brahms for rhythm and mastery of style, he yet found his music unsympathetic. "I was glad that Brahms found certain ideas in my 'Paganini Studies'

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1 Mason, Memories, p. 132.
2 Lamond, "The Indefinable Liszt," p. 419.

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> useful for his own similar transcriptions," he would say sardonically. "He thinks a lot, but has few musical ideas. As to conversing with him -- fifteen minutes is all I can stand." 1

Emil Sauer writes that at one lesson where a student was playing Brahms' Piano Concerto in B flat, Liszt interrupted the performance at a passage which was rather awkwardly written for the piano and:

> . . . threw up his head with an air of triumph and cried, "H'm..rather cheap stuff: h'm . . . we have done better than that!" 2

Brahms' transcription of Chopin's Etude in F minor, opus 25, number 2, was viewed with astonishment and contempt by Liszt and his students. Brahms arranged this work, which is the epitome of Chopin's pianissimo, "whispering" style, into awkward and heavy double notes for both hands, the playing of which would necessarily damage the original conception of the composition. Liszt expressed his contempt for this arrangement at one class at Weimar. [3]

This transcription by Brahms also brought an outpouring of comments from other important pianists. William Mason writes in his autobiography that Brahms had "utterly destroyed the charm of Chopin's opus 25, number 2."[4] William Sherwood holds up this transcription as the epitome of a poor work.[5] James Huneker describes it as "utterly unklaviermässig."[6]

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1 Riesberg, "Gala Days," p. 738.
2 Sauer, "Lessons With Franz Liszt," p. 721.
3 Sherwood, "Some Piano Transcriptions," Etude, Jan., 1910, p. 21.
4 Mason, Memories, pp. 267-68.
5 Sherwood, "Some Piano Transcriptions," Etude, Jan., 1910, p. 21.
6 Huneker, Mezzotints, p. 269.

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Moritz Mozkowski, whose writing for the keyboard has never been surpassed in terms of "idiomatic" writing, expressed his astonishment at this transcription of Brahms.[1] The original etude of Chopin, which Brahms used as the basis of his transcription, was one of Liszt's favorite pieces, and one which he played frequently, both in his public concerts and later after his retirement. The effect of this work, with its whispering effects (which Schumann described as "soft as the song of a sleeping child," after hearing Chopin play it), has to be realized in order to understand the feeling aroused over this "blasphemous" transcription by the pianists quoted.

Liszt

So far in the course of this volume, numerous references have been made to Liszt's advice on the performance of his own works. It remains, however, to examine a kind of general overview with which Liszt regarded his own works. Moritz Rosenthal wrote:

> Nobility of line, purity, and conception that amounted to a sort of religion in itself, and heroism in playing--those were the characteristics of Liszt's music; these were the essentials he taught. 2

The boldness of conception which Rosenthal describes is elaborated on by Carl Lachmund:

> There was much of the heroic in Liszt's nature. In fact, in almost every one of his compositions you find a

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1 Ibid., p. 269.
2 Rosenthal, "Is Culture Progressing in Musical Art?" Etude, Nov., 1931, p. 777.

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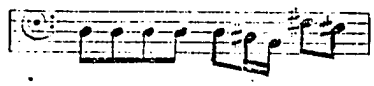
climactic outburst at which one might exclaim: "See, the conquering hero comes!" Once when a young man was interpreting a typical melody of this sort in a rather maidenish manner, the Master cried: "Why, that is one of those melodies, each-note-of-which should be fairly rammed into the ears of the listener." And with this he illustrated the idea with his extended thumb against the young man's ear. Turning to us, he added, sotto voce: "And really one ought to give the listener a kick with each note to make sure he will feel its significance;" then, with a shrug, and as if pathetically to himself, "but one cannot do that." 1

Therefore, it is not surprising that Liszt described the following important motive introduced on the first page of his Sonata in B minor as "hammer-strokes":[2]

Example 33. Liszt, Sonata, motive from meas. 14.[3]



As an old man, William Mason reminisced about the unforgettable, heroic effect Liszt obtained when he played his own Hungarian Rhapsodies. Mason remembered the "clanging rhythms and mad fury. . .such gorgeous, glowing colors, such explosions of tone, and the unbridled freedom of the Magyar."[4]

Borodin writes of a lesson Liszt gave Vera Timanoff on one of his Hungarian Rhapsodies:

Having made several brief, but very practical comments, he sat at the piano and played several passages with his

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1 Lachmund, "Franz Liszt," p. 785.
2 Liszt, Letters, I, p. 190.
3 Ibid.
4 Mason, "Paderewski," p. 20.

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> steel fingers. 'It ought to be like a triumphant procession!' cried Liszt. He jumped up from the stool, took Timanova by the hand and began to walk majestically across the room, singing the theme of the rhapsody. Everybody burst out laughing again. 1

A further basic point which must be understood in the performing of Liszt's virtuoso works is that Liszt himself did not regard them as difficult. When he played these works, his attention was devoted to the overall musical effect. Due to his training and years of practice, he did not think of a musical work in terms of difficulties and "hard spots," but only in terms of the basic musical effect.

Arthur Friedheim pointed to this fact when he said in a discussion of Liszt's compositions:

> His Hungarian Rhapsodies are not correctly delivered today because players have not caught the correct stimmung. They do not subordinate the technical aspects of the music sufficiently . . . . They fail with his opera transcriptions for the same reason and because they overlook all but the technic. In the hands of innumerable pianists the "Don Juan Fantasy" is no longer like champagne but like whiskey. 2

Otto Lessmann, who taught at Tausig's school in Berlin and heard Liszt play several times, agreed with Friedheim when he wrote:

> In Liszt's operatic fantasias, the melody is the chief thing; a pianist who makes it evident that he is playing them for the sake of the virtuoso passages which decorate the themes can never make the right effect with them, the effect which Liszt himself used to make. 3

A final point is that much of Liszt's music is not only programmatic, but programmatic in an idealistic way. To point this out with force, one can consider what today is

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1 Hill, Liszt, pp. 127-28.
2 Friedheim, Life and Liszt, pp. 15-16.
3 Beckett, Liszt, p. 106.

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one of Liszt's most hackneyed pieces, his Third Liebestraum.

Carl Lachmund writes of a description of a class at Weimar:

> When Liszt read the words "Liebestraum No. 3" on the music a young lady had brought, he radiated good nature. This great favorite with amateurs was then new. While Liszt himself had a special liking for the second Liebestraume (inscribed "Blissful Death"), the third is the most played of his original pieces. Yet few who play it are aware of its poetic meaning and content . . .
>
> The piece was inspired by a verse of the poet Freiligrath (who was an intimate friend of Liszt at Weimar), and it begins:
>
> O love, O love, so long as e'er thou
> canst, or dost in love believe,
> The time shall come when thou by
> graves shall stand and grieve. 1

According to Lachmund, this work was intended by Liszt to depict the evolutionary phases of love throughout life. The theme appears four times, at each recurrence in an entirely different setting and mood. Lachmund writes:

> First it is an expression of pure love devoid of passion; then, after a cadenza, it returns indicative of life's restless stress and striving. This grows into the third phase suggestive of triumphant success -- it is "the conqueror on his steed," as the caricaturists liked to portray Liszt. The decline follows, the resignation to a future life in which there is no passion, just a peaceful reminiscence of its former self. 2

Lachmund writes of Liszt's playing of the theme in its final appearance:

> An original point Liszt made here was to lift the hand just before the third C and drop it, tardily, with a limp movement of the wrist onto this C, as though breathing heavily with a sigh. 3

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1 Lachmund, "Liszt Speaks," March-April, p. 4.
2 Ibid., pp. 4-5.
3 Ibid., p. 6.

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CHAPTER XI

PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH

In addition to the musical and mechanical approaches which have been discussed in this volume, there are certain other forces which played an important part in the final result of Liszt's piano playing. Camille Saint-Saëns wrote of Liszt:

> He was a delightful combination of pride, native elegance, and wild tameless energy. These traits lived and breathed in his marvelous playing, in which the most diverse gifts met -- those even which seem to contradict each other, like absolute correctness combined with the most extravagant fancy . . . It is certain that Liszt's prodigious technic was only one of the factors of his talent. It was not his fingers alone which made him such a marvelous performer, but the qualities of the great musician and poet which he possessed, his large heart, and his beautiful soul -- above all the soul of his race. 1

Liszt had heard many gypsy musicians from his earliest years and the impression they made on him had a lasting influence. The best of these musicians, although unschooled in the ways of "civilized" western music, played with a degree of virtuosity and electrical effect on their audiences which few "classical" musicians have equalled. Liszt was so caught up by the gypsies that soon after his retirement from public playing he wrote a book entitled The Gypsy in Music. In the book, Liszt quotes from his friend Count Stephen Fay's des-

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1 Saint-Saëns, "Franz Liszt," International Library, I, p. 242.

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cription of a concert at Eidelin, Hungary, which was suddenly interrupted when a man dressed in rags snatched a violin from one of the orchestra members and began playing as if inspired. Fay writes:

> When this odd stranger had given back the instrument he had so unceremoniously seized, they asked him who he was, and he answered proudly:
>
> "Czermak."
>
> Count Deszöfy had him at once reclothed in a costume more worthy of so great a man; in which he returned, in about half an hour, with the appearance of a real cavalier, but without his expression having undergone any change; for he seemed to regard us all with a kind of disdainful indifference. 1
>
> He refused to play any more, protesting that the Virgin had forbidden him; but we soon got rid of his scruple by giving him some good Tokay wine, after a few glasses of which he took up his violin and began to play.
>
> I can truly say on my conscience that never had I seen Paganini so completely astound his hearers; and still less Rode. He played the piece known under the name of "Csifrâsay" with a perfection and technical ability of which I do not believe Lipinski would have been capable at his best; and the fire of his performance seemed to be associated with a kind of dull despair -- truly Bohemian. 2

Liszt's earliest musical impressions were of similar performers who passed near his home at Raiding in their travels. While Liszt went on to become a "classical" musician and left Hungary at a rather early age, these early impressions were never entirely forgotten. In fact, Liszt even envied the gypsy musicians in some ways. He wrote in a letter to Jozsi the Gipsy, a gypsy violinist whom Liszt had

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1 Liszt, The Gypsy in Music, p. 354. Czermak was a legendary gypsy violinist who had not been heard from for a number of years before this incident.

2 Ibid., p. 354. Liszt writes before quoting Fay that he does not assume responsibility for Fay's "panagyrics," but merely quotes the passage to show the powerful effect such players made on their listeners.

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unsuccessfully tried to train to become a "civilized" musician:

> I could almost envy you for having escaped from the civilized art of music-making, with its limitations and crampings. You Gipsies have at all events fresh and direct enjoyment in life and your performance of music free and hot like the flow of your blood.
>
> No prattle and jargon from pendants, cavillers, critics and all the nameless brood of such can reach you; with your fiddle-bow you raise yourself above everything miserable in the world and play it defiantly away.
>
> Yes, my dear Jozsy, you have done well, not to engage in concert-room torture, and to disdain the empty, painful reputation of a "thorough" violinist. As a Gipsy you remain lord of yourself, and are not reduced (as is the case now with civilized artists) to ask other people for excuse and even for forgiveness when you are only doing right. 1

Certain basic characteristics of the approach of these gypsy musicians were carried over by Liszt in his own playing and approach to music. The first of these was "courage." Carl Lachmund writes:

> First among the Meister's axioms was: "Courage -- above all, courage." Indeed, how can one imagine an Hungarian Rhapsody, one of the great etudes, or his E flat concerto played well without this word as a foregone conviction? 2

It was this quality (in addition to his other remarkable gifts) which Liszt so appreciated in Tausig's playing. Bettina Walker wrote of Liszt:

> I have been told by one or two who knew him well, there was nothing he disliked more than timidity and shyness -- that pluck, and even a little boldness, were passports to his favour. 3

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1 Ibid., p. 148.
2 Lachmund, "Franz Liszt," p. 785.
3 Walker, Memories, p. 99.

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Bettina Walker describes a class at Weimar where a girl student played a piece which contained several glissandos:

> She made a wry face, and Liszt asked what was the matter. She replied that she had broken her nail. He seemed highly amused, and said, as if he really enjoyed the notion of making us all see that a broken nail ought never to be an excuse for pausing in a performance, 'Well, what of that? Go on, my child.' 1

Liszt often gave his students advice on performing in public. Weitzmann writes that Liszt frequently repeated "that the artist 'should not appear before the audience like the accused before his judges, but as a witness to eternal truth and beauty.'"[2] Amy Fay writes:

> He said to us in class one day, "When you come out on the stage, look as if you don't care a rap for the audience, and as if you knew more than any of them. That's the way I used to do. -- Didn't that provoke the critics though!" he added, with an ineffable look of mischief. 3

After attending one of Liszt's rare public appearances in his later years, Amy Fay wrote:

> Liszt subdues the people to him by the very way he walks on to the stage. He gives his proud head a toss, throws an electric look out of his eagle eyes, and seats himself with an air as much as to say, "Now I am going to do just what I please with you, and you are nothing but puppets subject to my will." 4

In a letter to his student, Dionys Pruckner, Liszt wrote:

> It is very essential that you appear frequently before the public, in order to feel at home before it . . .

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1 Ibid., p. 107.
2 Weitzmann, A History, p. 185.
3 Fay, Music Study, p. 270.
4 Ibid., pp. 270-71.

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> In private, our long life through, we have to study, to think out, to ripen while working, and to come as near as possible the ideal in our art. But when we step upon the concert stage, that feeling must not leave us. You must feel that you stand a little higher than the public . . . The artist -- in our sense -- should be neither the servant nor the master of the public. He remains the bearer of the Beautiful in the inexhaustible variety which is appointed to human thought and perception -- and this inviolable consciousness alone assures his authority. 1

Another characteristic admonition of Liszt to his students closely allied to "courage" was his insistence that they project the music strongly. William Mason writes that at his first lesson one of the first things Liszt did was to urge him to put more enthusiasm into his playing. [2] C. F. Weitzmann writes that Liszt did this often in his teaching, ". . . repeating emphatically, that to be effective, the style must be full of soul and character . . ." [3]

Liszt relied heavily on extra-musical symbolism in his teaching. He often tried to stimulate the imagination of his pupils by making analogies to the material world in reference to certain musical examples. Amy Fay wrote of Liszt, "Music is such a real, visible thing to him, that he always has a symbol, instantly, in the material world to express his idea." [4]

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1 H. T. Finck, "The Piano in Liszt's Letters," Etude, Dec., 1893, p. 253.
2 Mason, Memories, p. 99.
3 Weitzmann, A History, p. 185.
4 Fay, Music Study, p. 223.

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Laura Kahrer reports that Liszt made up programs for each of the twenty-four Chopin Preludes.[1] For the G major Prelude, Liszt said that the continuous left hand figure represents the unsteady hovering of a guardian angel over the crib of a sleeping baby. The right hand melody represents the angel's whispering into the ear of the infant Heine's poem "Du Bist Wie Eine Blume" (Thou Art Like a Flower), the words of which fit this melody exactly. The words "Betend, dass Gott Dich erhalte, so rein, so schoen, so hold" (Praying that God may keep thee, so pure, so beautiful, so sweet), fit measures 16 to 21. The upward arpeggio at the end represents the vanishing of the angel.

For the B flat minor Prelude, Liszt gave the following program: The opening represents the jaws of Hell opening up. A group of imps are released, who run wildly about in the open air, finally fitting back into the abyss at the stretto (when the two hands play in unison an octave apart). The next part of the work represents the movement of a single imp who reappears. At the long B major scale upward and the following downward arpeggio he takes a long leap into the air and falls again. In the upward rush at the very end (two hands in unison an octave apart) the others follow him. The final chords represent the jaws of Hell closing upon the scene.

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1 Sidney Silber, "Chopin's Preludes As Interpreted By Liszt," Etude, March, 1926, pp. 179-180.

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On numerous occasions Liszt made references to nature with regard to the interpretation of works played for him by students. In his own transcription of the Tarantelle from Auber's La Muette de Portici, Liszt drew such parallels. Carl Lachmund writes of a class where Arthur Friedheim played this work:

> In the middle section where the octaves come rolling like a mighty thunder, Liszt said, "Ah, here comes the storm." Then at the delicate part a little later, his face beaming in approbation of the interpretation, he commented, "Now the rain begins to patter." 1

Several of Liszt's works are intended to depict various aspects of nature. These include the Orage (The Storm), Au lac de Wallenstadt, Au bord d'une source, and Les Jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este from the Années de pèrlinage. Other such works include his Harmonies du soir and Waldesrauschen. Liszt's Legende de Saint Francois de Paule marchant sur les flots, a work which he often played, is very obvious in its depicting of nature. But Liszt's references to nature were not limited to the interpretation of his own works. Laura Kahrer writes that he drew such allusions in several Chopin Preludes, describing the D minor Prelude as a "storm," with the upward scales being "electrical displays" which illuminate the entire landscape, while the downward arpeggios represent trees being felled. The downward chromatic scale in thirds represents a "cloud-burst" and on the

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1 Lachmund, "Liszt Speaks," March-April, p. 3.

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last page, "Trees are uprooted, the thunder peals, lightning continues," until "Everything is annihilated."[1]

Amy Fay writes of a class at Weimar where a student from the Stuttgardt conservatory sat down to play Beethoven's "Appassionata,":

> It was a hot afternoon, and the clouds had been gathering for a storm. As the Stuttgardter played the opening notes of the sonata, the tree-tops suddenly waved wildly, and a low growl of thunder was heard muttering in the distance. "Ah," said Liszt, who was standing at the window, with his delicate quickness of perception, "a fitting accompaniment." 2

In summary, when one views Liszt's overall impact as a performer and teacher, one must come face to face with the fact that the final result of his playing involved forces that went far beyond any consideration of mere "piano-playing" and the basic elements of musical performance. In summing up Liszt's playing, Saint-Saëns pointed to a certain intangible quality which made Liszt's playing different from that of other pianists:

> Power and delicacy and charm, along with a rightly-accented rhythm were his, in addition to an unusual warmth of feeling, impeccable precision, and that gift of suggestion which creates great orators, the leaders and guides of the masses. 3

One of the basic characteristics of Liszt's playing which separated it from that of other pianists was an air of spontanaeity with which he always invested his performances.

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1 Silber, "Liszt," p. 180.
2 Fay, Music Study, p. 229.
3 Saint-Saëns, Outspoken Essays, p. 78.

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H. R. Haweis, an American friend of Liszt, wrote that Liszt and Paganini were the greatest performers he had heard. Haweis wrote: "They were great not merely because they could play better than others, but because they created what they played."[1] This was also the view of the Englishman Oscar Beringer, who concluded that Liszt's playing "was not a reproduction -- it was a recreation."[2]

C. F. Weitzmann writes that in the playing of Liszt and his pupil Tausig, the motives and themes of the work by Beethoven, Schumann, and Chopin came to life and stood out vividly as any character portrayed by a great actor in a play of Shakespeare, Goethe, or Schiller.[3] Similarly, Amy Fay wrote of Liszt:

> There is such a vividness about everything he plays that it does not seem as if it were mere music you were listening to, but it is as if he had called up a real, living form, and you saw it breathing before your face and eyes. It gives me almost a ghostly feeling to hear him, and it seems as if the air were peopled with spirits.[4]

Liszt himself once indicated that his goals went far beyond a mere physical application when he wrote:

> To express everything one feels, one must be wholly unimpeded. One must have the fingers so developed, so supple, with such a variety of expression ready at their tips, that the emotions may be given full play with no obstacle being presented by the fingers. [5]

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1 Haweis, Memories, p. 251.
2 Beringer, Fifty Years' Experience, p. 38.
3 Weitzmann, Der letzte der virtuosen (Leipzig: C. F. Kahnt, 1868), p. 17.
4 Fay, Music Study, p. 214.
5 Charlotte Reed, "How the Young Liszt Taught," Etude, March, 1929, p. 179.

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A British reviewer pinpointed this feeling exactly in an account of Liszt's concerts during his touring days:

> . . . his effects seem rather like a flight of thought rather than the result of mechanical exertion, thus investing his execution with a character more mental than physical . . . 1

Moritz Rosenthal once tried to explain to an interviewer the basic approach to piano playing he had gained from his study with Liszt. He said:

> Now piano playing goes deeper than a mere matter of sitting down before a piano and touching the keys. It is, rather, an expression of the sum total of the player's spiritual powers. The person who thinks and feels grandly, will also play grandly. The person who thinks and feels practically, will play practically. That is the entire difference. One cannot possibly practice a piece for three months, thinking only of one's technic, one's comfort, the impression one hopes to make, and the chances for future success, and then expect to appear one fine evening upon the concert stage and suddenly begin to play with inspiration. 2

Although Liszt looked into the specific details which go to make up a musical performance to a remarkably thorough degree, and went through technical studies perhaps more thoroughly than any other pianist, his thoughts were directed far above any consideration of these points in the act of performing. Arthur Friedheim illustrates this when he writes:

> I recall one of my later lessons with him in the Villa d'Este, in Tivoli, not far from Rome. Late one afternoon I sat at the piano to play Liszt's Harmonies du Soir.

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1 Beckett, Liszt, p. 134.
2 Rosenthal, "The Grand Manner," p. 301.

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Before I had time to begin he called me to the window. With a wide sweep of the arm he pointed out the slanting rays of the declining sun which were mellowing the landscape with the delicate glamor of approaching twilight. "Play that," he said. "There are your evening harmonies."[1]

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1 Friedheim, Life and Liszt, p. 52.

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CHAPTER XII

SUMMARY

Liszt's approach to piano playing was based on an understanding of the music he played and a projection of this understanding to his listeners. There were certain concepts on which he put particular emphasis, and although these may have been used by other performers and teachers of his time, Liszt's uniqueness lies in the fact that he considered these points so very fundamental. A summary of these points is as follows:

1. Accentuation. The use of a device known as "accentuation" was an important aspect of Liszt's projection of the various points he wished to emphasize in each composition he played. In criticizing the playing of others, the first essential Liszt insisted on was a clear understanding and control of the basic time in a piece being performed. This was achieved by accentuation. Once the basic keeping of time was present, Liszt then suggested the use of temporal freedom and off the beat accentuation for expressive purposes, but only within the basic fundamental strength of solid metrical rhythm. The degree of this freedom was dependent on the various styles of works performed. Liszt's use of accentuation and slight freedom of time (the two are sometimes inseparable) to indicate significant points with regard to melody, harmony, form,

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and any other points he wished to project was one of the most important characteristics of his own playing.

2. Sonority. A consideration in playing the piano from the point of view of "sound" was paramount in Liszt's approach to the instrument. His playing had a great concentration on dynamic levels, crescendo and diminuendo, with absolute control over these, and often operating simultaneously at several levels. Careful balance between melodic, harmonic, and contrapuntal elements was essential in his approach. Similarly, the use of the pedal played an important part in many of the effects Liszt got from his instrument.

3. Technique. Liszt did not regard the "technical" side as an isolated aspect of piano playing, but only as inseparably bound to musical and expressive values, such as considerations of dynamics and some type of rhythmic definition. Indication of the concentration on the "musical" in Liszt's approach is the fact that the "two-finger exercise," which he considered the most basic and valuable of all technical exercises, and which he recommended to his students, is an example of phrasing in its simplest form. A possible clue to Liszt's unusual facility may be found in his delight and interest in the use of a very light and often non-legato touch for passagework and rapid passages in general. His technical approach to piano playing was characterized by a freedom from methodology, with particular inventiveness

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regarding fingering, as compared with standard practices of the day.

4. Psychology. From a psychological analysis, Liszt's approach embraced confidence, courage, and concentration on the goals he set for himself. Although he gave the most careful and thorough attention to technical and musical aspects of piano playing, in actual performance his thoughts were directed far beyond consideration of these points. In fact, at this stage, Liszt often concentrated heavily on extra-musical imagery.

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