



THE
LISZT SOCIETY

Newsletter

www.liszt soc.org.uk

Nº 106 April 2012

NEWS

Alan Walker to receive Knight's Cross from Hungary

The award of the Knight's Cross of the Order of Merit to Dr. Alan Walker, Professor Emeritus of Music at McMaster University, Canada, by the Government of the Republic of Hungary was announced towards the close of the Liszt Bicentenary Year of the composer's birth.

The bestowal of the award took place on Tuesday, January 17th 2012, by His Excellency, László Pordány, at the Hungarian Embassy in Ottawa.

Dr. Walker is internationally renowned as the author of the three-volume biography of Franz Liszt, a task involving research over 25 years and countless air-miles and library hours. A further volume, *The Death of Liszt*, was based on the unpublished diary of Liszt's pupil, Lina Schmalhausen. The biography of Liszt's greatest pupil, Hans von Bülow, is another highly acclaimed book from Alan Walker's pen. It has more than a maestro-pupil link. Hans von Bülow was Liszt's son-in-law, the musician whose future he proclaimed with the words, "I do not consider him my pupil but rather my heir and successor."

Throughout 2011 Alan Walker visited numerous universities, conservatories of music and conferences in North America and Europe, giving lectures on Liszt and his music. In association with McMaster University and the American Liszt Society, he is Artistic Director of the biennial Great Romantics Festival held in Hamilton, Ontario.

J. Audrey Ellison

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

NEW LISZT SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

Volume 12: The Complete Music for Violin and Pianoforte
Franz Liszt, edited Leslie Howard

A 200-page volume of original music by Liszt for violin and piano? It is scarcely credible that such a significant body of work by such a major composer should have remained in total obscurity for so long. In fact, these extraordinary pieces have never before been issued

These are followed by the Two Elegies. Katsaris plays these with a profound simplicity which is ideally suited to them and constantly brings out the wistful, reflective and funereal character of these pieces.

Liebesträume No. 3 is given a most beautiful rendition. Katsaris creates something fresh and enchanting from a piece that one has come to think of as hackneyed and done to death.

Slightly confusingly, the sleeve notes then refer - without reference to keys, S numbers or dates - to Klavierstück No. 2 followed by Klavierstücke Nos. 1-5. In fact, the first of these turns out to be the A flat major Klavierstück (1845) - the theme of which can also be found in a variety of album leaves - as well as forming the principal opening theme of Ballade No. 1. The Klavierstücke Nos. 1-5 are all late pieces - with No. 5 more commonly referred to as just *Sospiri*. Katsaris superbly captures the simplicity and strangeness of these late works.

The first disc ends with a sparkling and immensely exciting live recording of the A major Concerto. Both Katsaris and the Berlin Symphony Orchestra seem to be on top form.

Most of the second CD is given over to late pieces: Trauervorspiel und Trauermarsch; Unstern; Nuages Gris; La lugubre gondola I and II; R.W. - Venezia; and Am Grabe Richard Wagners. These, to my ears, are all wonderfully played with a tremendous feeling of profound introspection and grief. I found these interpretations deeply moving. Special mention must be made of Katsaris' interpretation of R.W. - Venezia. Towards the end, where Liszt writes a sequence of delicate descending motifs, Katsaris plays the first of each pair in the sequence *forte* (almost fortissimo!) and then plays the second *pianissimo* whilst keeping the peddle down. The effect is like a clanging bell with its following faint echo. As far as I know, this reading is not to be found in the score but it is undeniably effective, though not to everyone's taste perhaps. I loved it!

The set ends with a live performance (privately recorded) of the Sonata. I wish I could be as enthusiastic about this performance as I have been about the rest. Unfortunately, I cannot. To start with, the recorded sound is of poor quality and gives the piano a very "clangy" effect which becomes wearing quite quickly. As for the performance, it is one of extraordinary technical brilliance. However, too often passages seem frenetic and, at times, hysterical, the notes rushing by in a blur, with extremes of loud and soft. This may be a product of adrenalin during a live performance but, if so, a studio recording might have displayed Katsaris' remarkable technique to better advantage. Quieter passages, on the contrary, seem rather drawn out on occasion and the performance does not seem to add up to a consistent whole. None the less, it is undeniably a very exciting experience and well worth hearing although not, I think, a recording for repeated listening.

Overall, though, I think if one wanted to choose a two-disc set to give to someone who had never heard a note of Liszt, one could hardly do better than this. It gives a comprehensive survey of the quality and variety of Liszt's original works for solo piano (as opposed to the transcriptions and suchlike) and provides an enormous amount of playing that one can only marvel at. Highly recommended!

Jim Vincent

Diana Damrau sings Liszt; Haselböck's *The Sound of Weimar*; Janina Fialkowska plays Liszt; Liszt music for violin and piano; Solti conducts Liszt

The January issue of Gramophone this year was almost a Liszt issue! Diana Damrau's and Helmut Deutsch's recording of Liszt Lieder was selected as Record of the Month and two pages were devoted to discussing it. Amazingly, four of the top ten recordings of the month were Liszt recordings. In addition to the lieder disc, the magazine included two new recordings of the Piano Concertos - by Daniel Barenboim with the Staatskapelle Berlin conducted by Pierre Boulez, and Stephen Hough with the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Andrew Litton - as well as a reissue of Alfred Brendel's early Liszt recordings - including the Christmas Tree Suite (his 1951 recording debut), the Paganini Studies, *Réminiscences de Lucia de Lammermoor* and the *Miserere du Trovatore*.

The issue also includes very favourable reviews of Volumes 2 and 3 of Martin Haselböck's *The Sound of Weimar* (on NCA), each featuring three of the symphonic poems. Haselböck has been performing all of Liszt's orchestral works on original instruments at concerts in Raiding (Austria) through 2011 and into 2012, as part of an ongoing Liszt Festival, and the recordings reflect the programmes of each of those concerts.

Janina Fialkowska's imaginatively programmed Liszt recital featuring Soirée de Vienne No. 6 (after Schubert), *Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude*, Six Chants polonais (after Chopin), Gretchen (from the *Faust* Symphony) and the Waltz from Gounod's *Faust*, is also reviewed. What a pleasure to hear a Liszt piano recital where the B minor Sonata doesn't take up the bulk of the playing time! This disc includes the most beautiful of Liszt's compositions written on a large scale, namely the *Bénédiction* (16'27) and Gretchen (19'28). The former is played a little faster than usual in the outer sections, where the wonderful melody doesn't always shine through; nor does the dotted rhythm in the D major section always convince. I missed the superfine nuances of Stephen Hough. The musical highpoint of the disk lies elsewhere - in the absorbing account of Gretchen - which is almost 4 minutes longer than Leslie Howard's version. Orchestral accounts of this movement can vary by up to 6 minutes. Fialkowska holds the attention throughout with her admirable awareness of dynamics, polyphonic textures, tonal shifts, rhythmic quirks and harmonic felicities. The Faust Waltz that follows is played with plenty of flair and stylish virtuosity. This recital on ATMA classique comes ten years after Fialkowska's recording of the Transcendental Studies and it is a good to see that arm surgery in the meantime has not impaired her virtuosity.

I have also heard the Damrau/Deutsch recording. The nineteen lieder recorded are wonderfully varied and the performances superb. This disc provides a highly recommendable entrée into this still neglected repertoire, though the volume control needs to be turned up a bit to get full value. The only works on the disc not in German are the Petrarch Sonnets (which are, of course, in Italian). Damrau has a wonderful feeling for both languages and her colouring of the words adds much to her communicativeness. She has wanted to record these songs for ten years and they benefit greatly from her operatic experience. Her placement of top notes is ravishing and Deutsch supports her impeccably. Four of the songs are famous in their subsequent versions for solo piano: the Petrarch Sonnets and *O lieb*, otherwise known as Liebesträume No. 3 (not No. 1 as the booklet would have it). Given how sympathetically Liszt wrote for the voice, the original songs are well worth knowing in their own right, and in any case are not identical to the piano versions. I was delighted to discover the beautiful *Bist du!* and the first setting of *Freudvoll und leidvoll* - so different from the better known one of five years later and yet an equally valid response to Goethe's text. In the words of Richard Wigmore's review, "Liszt's songs demand operatic glamour. With her diamantine tone, dramatic flair and free-soaring top notes, Diana Damrau provides it in spades". Released the day after Liszt's 200th birthday, this CD was an important contribution to the bicentenary year.

Another important contribution was the appearance of the second volume of Liszt's Works for Violin and Piano performed by violinist Friedemann Eichhorn and pianist Rolf-Dieter Arens, on Hänssler Classics. The first volume appeared in 2009. The performances are mostly based on Leslie Howard's authoritative edition of the complete works (published by the Liszt Society in conjunction with the Hardie Press - see page 2). Both recordings and performances are splendidly vivid and the repertoire fascinating, although the second volume has the more varied programme. Slow, meditative pieces predominate the first. Each volume has as its centrepiece a major virtuoso work composed in 1835 and unknown in any other guise. At that time Liszt was benefiting from his association with the French violinist, Charles-Philippe Lafont, who composed the song at the basis of the Grand Duo concertant (volume 1). This piece would make an exciting conclusion to any duo recital. The other virtuoso duo (on volume 2) is a fantasy based on Polish themes, one of them by Chopin, and is Liszt's longest, meatiest work in the medium, demanding virtuosity of the highest order from both players. Liszt performed the work on several occasions, though never prepared it for publication. Now, thanks to Howard, Eichhorn and Arens, it stands revealed as a major contribution to the violin and piano repertoire of the 19th century and one of its most formidable challenges. Volume 2 concludes with *Walther von der Vogelweide* for tenor and piano with violin obligato - the beautiful violin part being added to the song shortly after it was composed in 1873.

The other works on these two pioneering discs are known in other guises, but the differences are on occasion remarkable. I was surprised at the way Liszt expanded his characterful song *Die drei Zigeuner* to produce what is in effect a paraphrase with very idiomatic writing for violin. Hungarian Rhapsody No. 12 differs from the versions for solo piano, orchestra and piano duet to such an extent that it can be called a recomposition. Most surprisingly, Liszt builds to a terrific climax to bring back the second theme (in E major), but then truncates the Friss section. He also varies piano textures that he could have taken over literally from the solo version. Joseph Joachim helped him work out the colourful violin part. *Die Zelle in Nonnenwerth* (volume 2) is a hauntingly beautiful version of an original song. The shuddering violin textures and added heartbeats at the end of *La notte* (volume 2) make for a compelling version of this orchestral funeral ode derived from the piano piece, *Il Penseroso*.

Decca Eloquence has issued a budget-priced double CD presenting Solti's recordings with the LPO and the Orchestre de Paris of five symphonic poems together with Mephisto Waltz No. 1 (recorded 1975/78), and Iván Fischer's stylish account with the Budapest Festival Orchestra of the six orchestral Hungarian Rhapsodies (1998). Excellent value (except for the fact that the end of the last Rhapsody won't play in my copy), they provide ample evidence of the mastery Liszt attained in writing for orchestra. Solti even manages to make me forget the piano version of Mephisto Waltz No. 1, at least until the coda. But a caveat! Four tracks are misidentified: it is *Festklänge* that opens disc 2 - not *Tasso* - which closes disc 1. Very confusing for anyone who doesn't know the repertoire!

Christopher Horvat

So Sweet a Melody - The Hildegard Choir

SOMM 0102

I have recently been sent this disc as it contains a Liszt rarity - a choral version of *Hymne de l'enfant à son reveil*. This is more familiar in its piano version from the *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* and it is good to hear it performed here by the Hildegard Choir, a girls' choir based in Oxford, England, conducted by Gulliver Ralston. Liszt wrote four versions of this piece for choir and, rather oddly, the notes accompanying the disc do not explicitly identify which version is sung here - although it appears to be the first, written in 1845.

In addition to the Liszt work, the disc contains works by Berlioz, Britten and Vaughan Williams plus some less well-known composers such as Joseph Rheinberger and Vladimir Godar, a contemporary composer.

The Liszt piece is the most substantial work on the disc lasting almost nine minutes. It is most beautifully sung by the Hildegard Choir which achieves just the right child-like quality - innocent and pure and unaffected. I doubt very much whether an adult choir could achieve the same. Accompaniment is provided by harmonium and harp. The work is a setting of words by the French poet Lamartine, and extends to no less than fourteen verses. Its length, coupled with the fact that the tenor of the piece remains very much the same throughout, can, if one is not careful, lead to a sense of outstaying its welcome. But not here! The performance is so sensitive and charming that I was captivated and remained so until the final bar.

The remainder of the disc is also highly enjoyable, the various pieces being accompanied by a variety of instruments - organ, harp, flutes, harmonium, harpsichord and so on.

Do not be put off by the fact that this is a girls' choir and not a professional adult choir. The technical proficiency of this choir is quite outstanding and the charm that they bring to every piece quite magical.

Jim Vincent

***Depictions - Warren Mailley-Smith plays Liszt* Sleeveless Records**

This disc begins with a very clean account of Mephisto Waltz No. 1 - played in about the usual amount of time taken to perform this work. One thing I noticed early on is the use of tiny ritenutos throughout; these do not harm the musical argument and are very well done. He also has a sparing use of the pedal which shows up especially in the glissandi runs near the beginning of the piece (bar 201 in my edition). There then follows a nicely balanced recording of Liebesträume No. 3. Although not as impassioned as some recordings, this performance is lovely. The light use of the pedal here allows the listener to hear all of the notes without too much running together (a common fault with many recordings). The ending is suitably introspective and almost sad. Next is a very cerebral performance of *Gnomenszenen*. This pianist obviously thinks a great deal before committing his recordings to disc. These are sinister, creepy sounding little gnomes in this recording which I also enjoyed a great deal.

Next follow two of the three Concert Studies published in 1849 - the first one, *Il Lamento* (mis-named on the back cover as *Il Lament*), and the third, *Un Sospiro*. (It is a shame that the second, *La Leggerezza* was not included.) Again, both of these are very nicely recorded and I think *Il Lamento* is probably the finest I have heard on CD in a long time. The third contains more understated brilliance in the playing and almost pious use of one of Liszt's later cadenzas for the work. Lovely stuff yet again.

Next follows a work that I had guessed, even before hearing, would suit this pianist's mental outlook - *Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este* from the third volume of the *Années de pèlerinage*. My assumption was correct and the piece certainly evokes a semi-religious atmosphere in its depiction of the cascading waterfalls at the Villa d'Este - as prefaced in the score with a quotation from the scriptures. The clarity of the playing and pedalling is very evident here in the sparkling trills and tremelandos.

Then we have the famous and frequently played paraphrase on the quartet from *Rigoletto*. I don't think that I have heard such clarity in a performance before - especially noticeable in the section marked *con somma passion* in which the crispness of the repeated notes is abundantly obvious. There is obviously much intelligence in this recording as well as the humour also stands out in this section. As I said earlier, this pianist obviously thinks a great deal about the music he is playing.

We then have the Consolation No. 3 from the set of six (erroneously described on the back as being in A flat - it should be in D flat). It is played in a lovely, almost distant way in which the right hand floats effortlessly above the left. I'm not quite sure how this fits into the *Depictions* title of the disc but it is very well played and shows more of the features I have already remarked upon.

Lastly, we have Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 in C sharp minor. The rhythms here are accented in a very Hungarian manner and the whole piece is very well played. There is no cadenza at the end but this does not affect the overall structure of the piece. Again, this is an excellent recording.

I do have a few minor things to point out but these do not affect the quality of the playing on display - as that is marvellous. It takes a rare pianist to make me listen to the *Rigoletto* Paraphrase afresh. Anyway, there are no catalogue numbers given on the back or in the slim cover notes but this is a minor thing. In addition to those little typos I have already mentioned, there is also one on the back of the case which relates to the time taken to perform the Hungarian Rhapsody: 14 seconds would make it the fastest on record (excuse the pun) by a huge amount. It should actually read 9'04"! Again, this is a minor thing and just me being overly pedantic. Lastly, I wonder if maybe the 'Sleeveless' part of the record label name refers to the lack of notes?

To sum up, I recommend that you buy this disc. It really is a fantastic recording from start to finish and I look forward to more Liszt from Warren Mailley-Smith in the near future.

Jonathan Welsh

Forthcoming Releases

Member Steven Isserlis mentions to me that he has recently recorded some Liszt pieces with Thomas Ades for inclusion in a Hyperion Records disc to be issued later in 2012. I understand that Steven has recorded the *Romance Oubliée*, *Die Zelle von Nonnenwerth* and *La Lugubre Gondola*. Unfortunately, at the time of writing the Hyperion website does not give full details of this forthcoming release but it is clearly one to look out for!

Jim Vincent

CONCERT REVIEWS

Béla Szakcsi Lakatos Jazz Concert - Budapest, 17th October 2011

Well-known Hungarian jazz pianist Béla Szakcsi Lakatos recently performed an all-Liszt programme as part of Liszt's Bicentennial celebrations in Budapest. After a long and arduous search I was lucky enough to hunt down a ticket for this sold-out event. The concert took place at the Festival Theatre at the impressive Palace of Arts in Budapest five days before Liszt's 200th birthday. What was truly fascinating was that the programme featured jazz versions of Liszt's compositions!

I've often wondered what Liszt would think of jazz. He himself was a wonderful improviser, and the epitome of jazz is, of course, improvisation. Liszt was also a harmonic innovator, comfortably sitting at the compositional frontier, and in the Liszt literature you will often find the quoted line regarding Liszt hurling his proverbial musical javelin into the future.

The Palace of Arts programme for this performance noted the following: "Liszt was considered the finest improviser of his time. Whatever the genre, from opera arias to a Hungarian

melody, he was able to dazzle an audience at the piano with the assurance of a virtuoso. A large part of his adaptations and paraphrasing of operas are simply written records of these improvisations. Today, jazz is the real home of improvisation. This concert showcases Hungary's finest jazz pianists - Liszt's modern-day successors - who will demonstrate that when adapted to jazz, Liszt's favourite themes can provide an endless platform for improvisation. As Liszt was open to anything, there is no doubt he would have turned his hand to jazz if he were alive today - and it is fun to imagine how the maestro himself would have played".

So, what would Liszt think of jazz? And if he appreciated the genre, as I feel he would have, who would he particularly admire? Would Liszt have related to the unrestrained fluidity to be found in the piano virtuosity of traditional jazz giants such as Oscar Peterson or Art Tatum? Would he have warmed to the introspective ruminating in the gorgeous piano meanderings of Bill Evans? What about the forward-thinking eclectic tangents found in the pulchritudinous piano playing of Gonzalo Rubalcaba? How about the merging of international jazz borders contained in the mind-boggling playing of Dominican Republic virtuoso Michel Camilo, or Cuban piano whiz Chucho Valdes? Would Liszt have appreciated the iconoclastic avant garde dissonance of Cecil Taylor? Would he have revelled in the dense clusters apparent in the pianism of McCoy Tyner? Interesting to contemplate. Interesting to consider that all of the diverse inflections mentioned above were tied together by the all-encompassing performance of Béla Szakcsi Lakatos, who merged seamlessly a manifold array of genres into a cohesive whole at the Palace of Arts in Budapest.

For those who aren't familiar, Szakcsi started playing the piano at age nine, dreaming that he would become a famous composer and an outstanding interpreter of classical music. However, while he attended the Béla Bartók Conservatory, he became acquainted with jazz, and this experience was profound enough to divert him from further classical studies. He has performed at the most prestigious festivals - from Zurich to Warsaw, from Nuremberg to Belgrade, and from North America to Asia. From the beginning of the 1970s he taught at the Jazz Piano Department of the Béla Bartók Conservatory, where he put great emphasis on blending jazz and classical music. Szakcsi has recorded many albums, both with his own combo formats, plus collaborative efforts with several diverse artists.

For several of the pieces in the Liszt concert, Szakcsi was complemented by a second pianist, fellow Hungarian Kalman Olah. They were additionally joined by members of a quintet for several of the pieces: flautist Zoltan Gyöngyössi, oboist Bela Horvath, clarinetist Csaba Klenyan, horn player Gabor Bizjak, and bassonist Attila Janko.

The concert began with Liszt's Ballade No. 2 in B minor, played by Benjamin Lakatos, who is a student at the Music Academy in Budapest. This was followed by two premieres of brilliant new Lisztian-inspired compositions: Kalman Olah's *Reflections on a Theme of Liszt's Faust Symphony*, and Szakcsi's *Tale of Three Notes - Quintet for Woodwinds on a Theme of Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 1*. Captivating performances of exciting original works. The audience was then treated to two new improvisations for two pianos: *Hommage à Liszt* and *Improvisation on Liszt themes*. These were followed by a duo featuring Kalman Olah and Csaba Klenyan, who played *Improvisations on Themes of Valse Oubliée*, and *Consolation* (arranged by Olah).

All amazing musicianship throughout, and it was obviously very interesting to hear jazz versions of Liszt's pieces, played in a variety of combos. They performed for over two hours.

So, back to the primary question, would Liszt have loved jazz? I think he would have revelled in the improvisation, the amalgamation of a vast array of disparate styles, the inherent virtuosity, the harmonic experimentation, the hurled javelin. Yes, Liszt would have loved jazz. Extending the thought, quite simply I think Liszt would have loved the Béla Szakcsi Lakatos performance. It was a most fitting tribute in the week of Liszt's Bicentennial. A

unique, wonderful and captivating performance, in a venue with sensational acoustics, featuring jazz versions of Liszt's compositions and pieces inspired by Liszt's works, impeccably played, which will always be remembered by those fortunate enough to have experienced it, myself included.

Oh, and it was filmed. Now, if only they'll release the DVD!

Noel Hart

Stephen Hough / London Philharmonic Orchestra - London, 8th October 2011

Stephen Hough, undoubtedly one of the world's top pianists, gave thrilling performances of Liszt's E flat major and A major piano concertos on Wednesday 8th February 2012, with the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Marin Alsop. Hough really has the measure of these works. His sense of poetry is ideally suited to the many lyrical passages in these pieces (particularly noteworthy was the beautiful interchange between piano and cello in their exquisite 'duet' in the second concerto) and his dramatic and powerful virtuosity is equally suited to the almost superhuman demands that Liszt makes in other parts of these concertos.

Speaking of superhuman demands, I cannot quite believe that Hough intended to launch into the final peroration of the first concerto with quite such abandon and speed. It felt as though, having started at such a phenomenal pace, there was no option but to continue to the end at the same pace. Amazingly, he just achieved it but it seemed to border on the impossible. I suspect the adrenalin was pumping pretty freely by that point in the performance!

The LPO under Marin Alsop also played magnificently. Liszt makes pianist and orchestra equal partners in these compact and taut works and there was an enormous amount to admire in the lovely playing of all sections of the orchestra, especially the woodwind.

I have often wondered whether the famous (possibly notorious) triangle part in the first concerto is a success or a mistake. I think I have now made up my mind. Although the triangle was played accurately and sensitively, I have to admit that I would have preferred to hear the piece without it! To my ears the triangle is barely a musical instrument at all and to use it to such excess as Liszt does here (and as Brahms does in his fourth symphony) is, I fear, a mistake. (What do other members feel? – please write to the editor with your views.)

Another point: halls of this size were largely unknown before the 20th century and Liszt and his contemporaries and predecessors would have played in far smaller venues. That said, I personally feel that concertos (whether for piano, violin, cello or whatever) are simply unsuited to these enormous spaces. Although nobody could wish for finer performances than those given by Stephen Hough on this occasion, and although I was personally seated quite close to the platform, nevertheless I felt acutely that I was missing something in terms of excitement and personal involvement. It all just sounded too far away! The previous occasion on which I had heard the Liszt first concerto was in a hall seating perhaps a maximum of 300 people and it sounded magnificent - the whole audience felt completely involved. The same applies, of course, to piano recitals. I nowadays avoid almost entirely large venues of this kind for these sorts of programmes (unless I want to hear the Berlioz Grande Messe des Morts or Mahler's 8th Symphony where the Royal Albert hall, London, is the only place to be!).

Incidentally, the programme on this occasion also included Martinu's Symphony No. 6 and Dvorak's Symphony No. 8. Both were played splendidly, especially the Dvorak. I have never heard a more charming, exquisite and uplifting performance of it - full of birdsong, summer breezes and echoes of the Bohemian countryside.

Jim Vincent

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Thursday 3rd May 2012, 7.30pm - Royal Festival Hall, South Bank Centre, London

Simon Trpceski - piano Philippe Jordan - conductor Philharmonia Orchestra
programme to include Piano Concerto No. 2 in A major

Tuesday 22nd May 2012, 7.30pm - Royal Festival Hall, South Bank Centre, London

Arcadi Volodos - piano programme to include Sonata in B minor

We would be very happy for Liszt Society members to inform us of any events which might be of interest to fellow members. Please e-mail details of such events to memsec@lisztsoc.org.uk so that they can be listed in future newsletters.

MEMBERS' LETTERS

Dear Sir,

Members may be interested to hear the following amusing anecdote.

In the 1950s, a retired clergyman came to live in a church cottage at Ifield (England) where my family's country home "The Old Rectory" stands. His name was George Severne and he was directly descended from the Anthony Severne who looked after the poet Keats in their home in Italy, not far from the Villa D'Este.

The Rev. George Severne told us how an aunt of his, as a youngish girl, had been sent out to look after their Italian home while *her* aunt came back to see friends in England for a month. This was in about 1880.

The young houseminder was given instructions on how to deal with the servants, local tradespeople and neighbours. Finally, her aunt said, "At this time of year the Abbé Liszt will call. Give him a big glass of cognac but make sure the piano is LOCKED! The last time he came he broke a string!"

John Farmer

Dear Sir,

Wishing recently to read a good biography of Liszt, I bought a copy of Adrian William's "Portrait of Liszt" which had been recommended on the Society's website. What a find! This is a really magnificent book which I would heartily recommend to other members if they have not yet read it. The book is almost entirely made up of excerpts from contemporary letters and reviews dating from Liszt's early childhood to his death. Every page gives illumination to the extraordinary character of Liszt and his music. It is a book to read once and then dip into ever afterwards.

It is impossible to give more than the merest hint of the scope of this book by quoting a single excerpt but I shall do so nonetheless:

From a letter by Berthold Kellerman one-time pupil of Liszt

'His piety sprang from deep inner conviction and, accordingly, he was never blinded by dogma. He did not bother too much about the views and demands of the Church with regard to details, in contrast to Princess Wittgenstein who was a downright bigot. When we once came to speak about papal infallibility he

exclaimed: “What? Infallible? Fiddlesticks! Why, even I am not infallible.” Whereupon, taking his seat at the piano, he played a difficult passage, intentionally allowing himself to land on a few wrong notes. Then, calling out: “But I, at least, can always at once put matters right again!” he played a passage of still greater complexity, including a sequence of hair-raising skips, his fingers this time striking every note with flawless accuracy.’

M.C.Smee

The Society welcomes letters from members with news and views from across the world. Please send these by e-mail or post to the membership secretary (contact details below).

2012 MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

May I remind members that membership subscriptions for 2012 fell due on the 1st January 2012. If you have not yet paid your subscription please will you do so as soon as possible as this will save the Society having to go to the expense of sending out individual reminders to members who have not yet paid up.

Subscription rates and payment details are as follows:

UK - £30 GB Europe - £35 GB Rest of the World - £40 GB Students - £10 GB

Payment should be made preferably by PayPal using the destination e-mail address treasurer@lisztsoc.org.uk (overseas members please quote the destination currency as £GB). If paying by PayPal please add a brief note identifying the payment as “2012 subscription”.

Alternatively, payment may be made by cheque, payable to The Liszt Society, addressed to Jim Vincent, Membership Secretary, 3 Offlands Court, Reading Road, Mouslford, Oxfordshire OX10 9EX England.

Members who wish to pay by standing order or online bank transfer should contact me for details of the Society’s bank account.

Thank you.

Jim Vincent
Membership Secretary
memsec@lisztsoc.org.uk

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