



THE  
**LISZT SOCIETY**

*Newsletter*

[www.lisztsoc.org.uk](http://www.lisztsoc.org.uk)

**N° 112 September 2013**

**The Liszt Society Annual Day  
Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2013  
Goldsmith's College, Deptford Town Hall, London SE14 6AF**

I am pleased to be able to give advance notice of this year's Annual Day, the centrepiece of which – for the first time – will be the finals of the Liszt Society Piano Competition (see the back page of this newsletter for full details). Formal invitations to the AGM and Annual Day will be sent out to members nearer the time but I hope that you will put the date in your diary and keep the day free as this promises to be a most rewarding and exciting event.

The proposed programme will be as follows:

- 12 noon** - Annual General Meeting  
**1.00pm** - Lunchtime Recital by Masataka Goto  
(Winner of the 2011 Utrecht Liszt Piano Competition)

All-Liszt programme:

**Années de pèlerinage – Première Année – Suisse, S160  
No. 4 Au bord d'une source**

**Grande Paraphrase de la Marche de Giuseppe Donizetti composé pour Sa  
Majesté le Sultan Abdul Medjid-Khan, S403**

**Harmonies poétiques et religieuses, S172  
No. 3 Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude**

**Hexaméron – Morceau de concert – Grandes Variations de bravoure sur la  
marche des Puritains de Bellini par MM. Liszt, Thalberg, Pixis, Herz,  
Czerny et Chopin, S392**

- 2.30pm** - Finals of the Liszt Society Piano Competition  
**5.30pm** - “Liszt and the Étude” – talk by Mr Melvyn Cooper  
**7.30pm** - Evening Concert

As always, guests and members of the public are very welcome to attend. Entry will be free of charge although a suggested donation of £10 may be made at the door.

Jim Vincent

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### Joint Society Dinner and Concert

Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2014

6.30pm for 7pm

At The Forge Arts Centre and Restaurant

3-7 Delancey Street, Camden Town, London NW1 7NL

The many members who came to last year's very successful dinner/recital at The Forge – and those who *weren't* able to come – will be delighted to know that another dinner and concert will be held in January 2014, again at The Forge. As before, the event will be a joint event involving the Liszt, Wagner, Berlioz and Alkan Societies. The programme will, of course, reflect the joint nature of the event and will include:

Berlioz/Liszt: Bénédiction et Serment [Benvenuto Cellini] [piano duet]

Berlioz: 2 songs with tenor, cello & piano

Le jeune pâtre breton

La captive

Berlioz/Thalberg: Grand Caprice sur la marche de l'Apothéose de la Grande Symphonie funèbre et triomphale [piano solo]

Alkan: Fantaisie sur Don Juan [Mozart] pour piano à 4 mains

Liszt: Die Zelle in Nonnenwerth [cello and piano]

Wagner/Liszt: O du, mein holder Abendstern – for cello and piano

Wagner/Tausig: Kaisermarsch [piano solo]

Plus various Wagner arias [soprano and piano] to be announced

Invitations to this event and further details of timings and final programme will be issued in due course. I hope you will ensure that this date is noted in your diary as this was a hugely enjoyable event last January and I am sure will be so again.

### My admiration for Liszt

Those who come to hear Richard Black performing my piano music at Burgh House, Hampstead, London on the 25<sup>th</sup> September 2013 (see [www.liztsoc.org.uk](http://www.liztsoc.org.uk) for more details) may occasionally be struck by a Lisztian phrase or passagework.

Considering the enormous amount of music written by Liszt, and its great variety, it is not surprising that composers after him should sometimes adopt a similar sounding chordal progression or melodic line. The first to do this was his son-in-law the great Richard Wagner, who was even on occasion prepared to acknowledge his indebtedness (although sometimes not!). If my music should at any time strike the listener in a similar fashion then I am happy to include myself in such exalted company!

Liszt was the most modern of the romantics; indeed he may be unparalleled in his drama and inventiveness. Many of his pieces are monothematic, featuring development by thematic transformation. His bold chromaticism uses many augmented and diminished chords, especially augmented seconds in the minor-scale of his 'gypsy' music. I have a great affinity for such features. My shorter pieces tend to have a pictorial 'image' like Liszt's character pieces, expressing ideas, emotions and impressions. However one difference is that, unlike him, I do try to write difficult passages that are somewhat easier to play than they sound! This may stem from my own inadequacy at many futile attempts to play much of his music over the years, including, as a younger man, struggling with pieces such as the 'Mephisto

Waltz no. 1! People who listen to my music may think that linking myself with such an exalted composer as Liszt inappropriate; and I am certainly conscious of this myself. However, I do use his style of monothematic transformations in my longer pieces; one such theme being played in several quite different arrangements which, with Richard Black's help, I shall demonstrate before the recital in September.

I do listen to, and often enjoy, 'modern' music, meaning the atonality which began with Arnold Schoenberg and all that which followed. However, when composers such as Krzysztof Penderecki and Witold Lutoslawski started turning away from such overt 'modernism' and returned to a degree of tonality I, for one, was most pleased. There is nothing like a good 'tune'! If Elgar's 'Salut d'Amour' may perhaps be too gooey for modern listeners to admit to liking, I am sorry; I do like it! And of course his Pomp and Circumstance 'Land of Hope and Glory' and Charles Parry's great 'Jerusalem' may be among the grandest tunes in the English romantic repertoire. While it would be foolish and pretentious of me to claim my music inhabits the same territory, nevertheless I would be proud if on occasions it did.

Some of my vocal music (which will be the subject of my next CDs, directed by Ben Woodward and to be released early in 2014) does have real 'tunes' which I would like to think are memorable. In a less overt way so, hopefully, does some of my piano music, although I could not claim it ever rises to the sublime heights of such as Liszt's 'Liebesträume'. When I was young I used to write 'musique concrète' – but then I threw all that away deciding that there was still so much more to be said using traditional harmony, rhythm and melody; which, if combined imaginatively, can create emotion and passion in the listener that atonal music cannot. That has been my aim. Of course many people may consider that my music sounds trite and 'old-hat'; but I am unrepentant. It is difficult to write a piece that when heard for the first time is sufficiently interesting for the average classical music lover to want to hear it again. If I am at all successful in doing that then I do consider myself successful as a composer. Hopefully, enough people will like my music sufficiently at the first hearing to want to buy the CD\* and listen to it again more than once!

Robert Mansell. June 2013

\*Footnote: The CD of my piano music will be available this August and the two CDs of my secular and religious vocal music early next year. They are being self-published on Sforzando Records (SFFZ 001-003) and will be for sale on Amazon, iTunes, and my own website at £12 each. No samples of my music are online yet other than from my stage musical 'Willm-S', from which a short soundbyte can be found on my website: [www.robertmansell.com/page7.htm](http://www.robertmansell.com/page7.htm)

### **Julian Saphir plays....**

Members may possibly remember that I wrote a glowing account, in Liszt Society newsletter no. 104, of Liszt Society member Julian Saphir's all-Liszt recital given at the Jacqueline Dupré Music Room, St. Hilda's College, Oxford, on the 20<sup>th</sup> May 2011. Two of the pieces that impressed me most were Julian's renditions of Les Jeux d'eau à la Villa d'Este and Funérailles.

I am delighted to say that Julian has now posted performances of these two works on Youtube and I can strongly recommend these to other members.

Jim Vincent

## **EVENT REVIEW**

### **The Petrarch Sonnets by Franz Liszt Friday May 31<sup>st</sup> 2013**

#### **A Lecture Recital at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama**

In a series of programmes entitled 'Words becoming Music', presented by the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, the third programme which took place on Friday 31<sup>st</sup> of May focussed on Franz Liszt's three Sonnets by Petrarch for solo piano. Devised and directed by Paul Roberts, a professor of piano at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, it explored the relationship between the text and the music and how the poems informed the performance of the pieces.

The Lecture-Recital was introduced by Paul Roberts, and presented in collaboration with three postgraduate students, Michael Leach, Erika Gundesen and Hunter Noack. They began by each reading English translations of the three love poems which Petrarch wrote to 'Laura' and Liszt set to music in 1838, composing the versions for piano solo the following year. It is generally believed that Laura was a figment of Petrarch's imagination and not a real person, but there is some evidence that she was the wife of a French nobleman, who Petrarch could only worship from afar. Prof. Roberts suggests that, whereas it is essential to read the poems first, these pieces should not be interpreted as piano versions of the songs still governed by the words, but that each poem should be absorbed as a whole and interpreted as a human experience; the first as the intoxication of first love; the second as the agony and frustration of love; the third as the resignation to a love that cannot be requited.

Erika Gundesen then read an essay she had written on the strong affinity that Liszt had felt with Petrarch, even though there were five centuries separating them. Both were famous in their time, Petrarch becoming, in 1341, the first Poet Laureate in Rome for centuries. Both were independent and controversial in their thinking, Petrarch being one of the first to embrace the concept of Humanism. Both lived to be over seventy and turned to religion in their latter years. The lecture ended with a second reading of the poems followed by a performance of the three sonnets beautifully played by Michael Leach, Erika Gundesen and Hunter Noack.

Elgin Ronayne

## **CD REVIEW**

### **Magic Fire and other Wagner Transcriptions**

**Risto-Matti Marin - piano**

**Alba Records ABCD 353**

I have already raved about both of the Finnish pianist Risto-Matti Marin's on-going series of CDs of Liszt Symphonic poem transcriptions by August Stradal on the Toccata label. Here it is nice to find a CD of him playing transcriptions other than of Liszt! This disc is on the Alba label and the total playing length is 71'39" and comprises Wagner transcriptions by Jukka Nykänen, Liszt, Ernest Schelling, Louis Brassin, Tausig and Busoni.

I had never heard of Jukka Nykänen before hearing this disc and I was surprised to find that he is only in his late 30s and is well known for composing music for various historical BBC series. This is not an atonal paraphrase with odd added harmonies, as you might perhaps expect but, as the notes say, it is in a similar vein to the sort of thing that Liszt would have written, had he written a Paraphrase on the themes of the Flying Dutchman. This is a phenomenally difficult piece and starts off with the same music as the beginning of Wagner's overture. This is translated magnificently to the piano and the whole piece works very well on the piano. After the initial outburst, things calm down getting gradually quieter and then

leading into various other themes from the opera. The pace gradually picks up before a suitably loud conclusion, played superbly by Risto-Matti Marin.

Next on this disc comes Liszt's transcription of the Spinning song from the Flying Dutchman (S440). This is played very fast indeed but certainly spins along very nicely. This is a lovely piece, again excellent played and recorded.

Track 3 is a real rarity – Ernest Schelling's transcription of the Prelude to Tristan and Isolde (incidentally, this can also be found on u-tube). This is a very difficult transcription with the transcriber making extreme demands on the pianist who, in this case, manages perfectly!

The last few items (except for track 10) are all transcriptions of various parts of the Ring by various composers. Firstly we have Liszt's valedictory transcription of Valhalla which again is played at a terrific pace but with every detail crystal clear. Louis Brassin made several transcriptions of so-called "bleeding chunks" from Wagner's operas, the "Siegfried's Lovesong" was never really especially popular either in recital or on recordings which is a shame because it is a lovely little piece, replete with some horribly difficult piano writing. Brassin's other pieces recorded here are the "Magic Fire music" (from which the disc takes its title) and also the "Forest Murmurs". Both of these pieces are extremely well played and the detail in the treble in the Magic Fire transcription is amazing. Interestingly, of the three Brassin transcriptions played here, this is the only one I have heard before and apparently it was once popular in recital so it is nice to hear other works by this much neglected composer and transcriber. In all cases, Risto-Matti Marin copes admirably with Brassin's very difficult and detailed piano writing.

The most amazing piece on this disc is the infamous Tausig transcription of "The Ride of the Valkyries". This is phenomenally difficult as Tausig throws just about every requirement for virtuosity at the performer. Here, Risto-Matti Marin even manages to outdo Michael Ponti's famous recording (now on Vox) in terms of speed and accuracy. The interleaved "Liszt Octaves" at the end are incredible and I cannot believe someone can play that fast or accurately.

The penultimate item on the disc is Busoni's superb transcription of Siegfried's Funeral March from *Götterdämmerung*. Here, the virtuosity is not absent (there is an awful lot of leaping about in order to get all the details in) and there is a sense of mournful power tinged with a heroic edge. Risto-Matti Marin manages to convey the vast orchestral pallet from the original and makes a splendid job of the whole piece.

Lastly is Liszt's transcendental transcription of the overture to *Tannhäuser*. Here, Liszt throws everything at the performer and here Risto-Matti Marin manages to get through the piece in roughly the same time as Cziffra did in his EMI and Hungaroton recordings (having said that, Cziffra always adds a few extra notes for good measure!). Anyway, the opening Pilgrims Chorus section is taken at a stately *Andante maestoso* before things really get going. As before, the interleaved octaves towards the end (again in the Pilgrims Chorus music) are jaw dropping in the speed and accuracy on this recording. It's not all about speed though, in the central section where there are instructions such as "quasi trillo", there is a clarity which is lovely to hear. This is a remarkable recording, well worth a listen.

Overall, this is a magnificent disc, fantastically recorded and it will appeal especially to lovers of jaw dropping virtuosity and those with an interest in slightly out of the way Wagner transcriptions.

A quick word about the not very encouraging review on Amazon – I don't know whether the person who wrote that review got a faulty copy of the disc or not but, to my ears, there is nothing wrong with the sound balancing on this recording!

Jonathan Welsh

## LISZT AND FINLAND

*“We have already made frequent mention of a name that is inseparably linked with everything that is new, significant and great, with everything associated with the notion of the development of music in the present century. No other artist has in this sense occupied so central and so dominant a position as Franz Liszt. By the age of thirty he was already widely recognised as the greatest performing artist of his time, a generation later also as one of its most prominent creative artists, admired, loved and adored as a person who expended all his influence not for himself, but for the benefit of others. Chopin, Berlioz and, especially, Richard Wagner could have much more to say about this.”*

In such enthusiastic tones the Finnish composer Martin Wegelius (1846–1906) wrote about Liszt in his history of music published in 1892. To Liszt he devoted 22 pages with illustrations and musical examples. And it was thanks to Wegelius and his teacher, a German-born organist and conductor Richard Faltin (1835–1918) permanently resident in Finland, that the name of Liszt became known in Finland. Though Faltin had been educated at the ultra-conservative Leipzig Conservatory, he became an admirer of Liszt and Wagner and the New German School of composition. He also suggested that Wegelius should study in Leipzig; Wegelius took up his suggestion and was assigned to Salomon Jadassohn, a former student of Liszt, as his teacher in instrumentation and counterpoint.

Faltin and Wegelius often visited Germany and met many of the most famous musicians of their time. In 1872 they saw Liszt at a music festival in Kassel and heard his St. Elizabeth oratorio. In August 1876 they travelled to Bayreuth to be present at the first ever performance of Wagner’s complete Ring Tetralogy. They also attended the Festival dinner, at which Wagner thanked Liszt for all his support. “Without the support of this man, you would never have heard a sound from me,” Wagner said, as Wegelius reported to a Finnish newspaper.

Faltin was also invited to Richard and Cosima Wagner’s home, where he heard Liszt play. As he described it: “And now he began... the gods seem to have lent him eternal youth... as soft as an echo from the utmost distance, and he gradually built up an enormous crescendo that culminated in a mighty Forte alla Marcia, and now fireworks sparked beneath his fingers and there seemed to be no end to the surprises.”

Martin Wegelius was the founder of Finland’s first music institute, in Helsinki, in 1882. This was later to become the Sibelius Academy. The piano was, for Wegelius, the most important subject. To teach it he wanted to hire only the very best musicians, who were also expected to perform at concerts. During the institute’s first twelve years, all the main piano teachers were pupils of Liszt, except for the period 1888–1890, when the post was held by the young Ferruccio Busoni.

The first of Liszt’s students to teach in Helsinki was a German, Carl Pohlig, though he left after only one year to continue his studies with Liszt. The next was an American, Ludwig Dingeldey, who stayed for four years and who was apparently the first in Finland to perform Liszt’s Sonata in B minor. In October 1886 he played the Concerto in E flat at a concert in memory of Liszt. Dingeldey was followed by Carl Schuler, who was nevertheless relieved of his post after only six months. The last of Liszt’s pupils to teach in Helsinki was another American, William Humphreys Dayas, who had been one of the torch bearers at Liszt’s funeral. He often performed in Helsinki, playing great repertoire not only by Liszt but also by Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, Schumann and Brahms. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century many of Liszt’s other pupils, such as Hans von Bülow, Sophie Menter, Vera Timanova, Eugen d’Albert and Alfred Reisenauer also gave recitals in Finland. The first Finnish pianist to be hired as the main teacher at the music institute was a pupil of Busoni and Dayas, Karl Ekman (1869–1947).

The only Finnish pianist known for certain to have played for Liszt was Alie Lindberg (1849–1933). After studying in Finland, she continued in Dresden and with Carl Tausig in Berlin, where she also gave recitals. She played for Liszt in Weimar in the summers of 1870 and 1871. An article by Otto Lessmann about the second occasion was published in the *Neue Berliner Musikzeitung*. He writes: “Miss Alie Lindberg, who last winter won her first laurels in Berlin, began the programme with Chopin’s Sonata in B minor. I had heard this talented artist performing this work many times before, but never with such perfection. The brief period during which she has been able to enjoy the Master’s tuition has given her interpretation greater maturity, and the solemnity of the moment maybe had something to do with this. Liszt was delighted – and delightful.” Alie Lindberg was the first Finnish pianist to make an international career. In addition to Germany she performed in England, Sweden, Norway and Italy.

As we can see, Franz Liszt, who never visited Finland himself, influenced Finland’s burgeoning musical life through many people and thus had a major impact on the development of Finnish pianism.

Ari Helander

## MEMBERS’ LETTERS

Dear Sir,

In case it may be of interest to other members and worth including in the next newsletter, may I mention the book *Caroline de Saint-Cricq Franz Liszt - Un amour impossible* by Marie Baulny-Cadilhac. It was published in September 2011 by Cercle Historique de l’Arribere, [www.bearndesgaves.fr/char](http://www.bearndesgaves.fr/char). It is a reasonably priced paperback with numerous illustrations, black and white, and colour.

There is a howler on page 10, obvious to British readers, where our King George V is mentioned, when it should be King George IV. Otherwise it is a well researched book of some 180 pages and with plenty of background on Caroline de Saint-Cricq and her forebears.

John Ball

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Dear Sir,

A friend of mine recently attended a student masterclass, given by Pierre Boulez, of Boulez’ own piano music. During the masterclass it became clear that Boulez himself is no mean piano player and a member of the audience asked him what piano music he liked to play for his own pleasure when at home. Boulez replied – slightly sheepishly, my friend thought – “at present I mostly play Liszt!” Quite a surprise!

Jim Vincent

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Dear Sir,

Did you know that the American “minimalist” composer, John Adams, is a Lisztian? A few weeks ago I heard his orchestration of *La Lugubre Gondola No. 2* on BBC Radio 3 – it was marvellous!

Colin Hargreaves

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Dear Sir,

No doubt all members will be very familiar with Liszt’s marvelous transcription of Wagner’s “Liebestod”. I wonder how many members may also have encountered the “transcription” by Clement Doucet entitled “*Isoldina*”. It is a far cry from Liszt’s version but, to my ears, equally enjoyable – in fact the humour and the joy of the thing makes me laugh out loud!

One can hear Doucet himself playing the piece on Youtube, taken from an old 78rpm record, as well as a number of other pianists, including the splendid Marc Andre-Hamelin.

E. M Scrieber

## **News from Other Societies**

### **Wagner Society lecture**

In association with the Wagner Society, a lecture will be given by John Deathridge on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> October at the Goethe-Institut, 50 Prince's Gate, Exhibition Road, London SW7. All at 7.30pm, tickets £12/£6 students.

More details and tickets: [www.wagnersociety.org](http://www.wagnersociety.org) and [ticketsecretary@wagnersociety.org](mailto:ticketsecretary@wagnersociety.org)

### **Articles and Letters for the Newsletter**

The newsletter depends on members submitting articles, reviews and letters for publication, so if you feel inclined to write an article, review or letter on any subject which would be of interest to other Liszt Society members then please do not hesitate to put pen to paper or send an e-mail to me at the address below.

## **CONTACT DETAILS**

Articles and letters for the Newsletter, Membership Applications, Renewals, and Enquiries:

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# **The Liszt Society Piano Competition**

**Open to pianists of all ages and nationalities**

## **Dates**

Entries for the 2013 competition closed on 1<sup>st</sup> September

Four finalists will be chosen to compete in the final round at Goldsmith's College on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2013. [It is expected that all entrants chosen to compete in the final are able to be present in London on the afternoon of 9th November 2013.]

## **Jury**

Leslie Howard (chair), Coady Green, Tristan Lee, Christopher Smith

The jury will take imaginative and enterprising repertoire choice and programming into account in their selection of the finalists and the making of any awards.

The jury's decision shall be final and irrevocable.

## **Programme**

A CD recording of a free choice of works [including original compositions, transcriptions, fantasies or paraphrases] by Liszt with a maximum duration of 35 minutes. Finalists will repeat the same programme as that on their recordings. The CD must be an attested genuine recording made by the entrant. Each must be presented in a single unedited take.

## **Prizes**

The first prize winner will receive a series of professional engagements in 2014 including a recital in London at the Liszt Society Annual Day 2014 and a week long tour of the north-east with Master Musicians.

All chosen finalists will receive free Liszt Society memberships for the calendar year 2014.

Other engagements may be organised with the first prize winner and other finalists at the discretion of the Liszt Society Council.

## **Entry fee**

£10 for Liszt Society members and £20 for non-members

Prospective entrants should apply by email in the first instance to Coady Green, The Liszt Society, coadygreen@googlemail.com. Acceptance will then require payment of the entry fee to the Liszt Society via Paypal.