

LISZT SOCIETY Newsletter

THE

www.lisztsoc.org.uk

Nº 116 September 2014

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Leslie Howard Piano Recital 28th September 2014 at 4pm Wigmore Hall, London

Works by Sibelius, Glazunov and Liszt

Liszt Society Annual Day and International Piano Competition 15th November 2014 starting at 12 noon

Deptford Town Hall, Goldsmiths University, London

To include Annual General meeting, Lunchtime Recital, Liszt Society International Piano Competition and lecture

Dinner Recital [in association with the Wagner, Berlioz and Alkan Societies] **27**th **January 2015**

The Forge Music and Arts Centre 3-7- Delancey Street London NW1 7NL

An evening recital of four separate short programmes, each society providing its own independent programme and performers, followed by dinner. This will be the third in what has become a highly successful and enjoyable annual series.

Formal invitations to the Annual Day and the Dinner Recital will be sent out to members shortly.

BOOK REVIEW

Chopin's Prophet The life of Vladmir de Pachmann

by Edward Blickstein and Gregor Benko ISBN 978-0-8108-8496-0 (UK publisher Rowman and Littlefield)

This is the first biography ever to be written about the Russian Pianist Vladimir de Pachmann (1848-1933) and has taken the writers, Edward Blickstein and Gregor Benko more than fifty years to finally publish. Unfortunately this remarkable artist is largely remembered today for his eccentric personality and extremely bizarre behaviour on the platform rather than his unique style of playing and magic velvet touch. This very interesting and readable biography does much to explain and rehabilitate an extraordinary man and to reinstate him as a great musician and pianist of the 19th and early 20th century.

The American pianist and music historian Edward Blickstein first heard of him in the 1950's from his teacher George Halpin, who had experienced Pachmann at first hand and had been bowled over by his playing, thereby arousing his interest in finding out more about him.

Vladimir de Pachmann had been born in Odessa where his father, a keen amateur musician who played both violin and cello, decided that Vladimir, the youngest of his thirteen children should learn the violin. He started giving him lessons when he was six years old and turned a deaf ear to Vladimir's request to learn the spinet, which his father had acquired and was very proud of. Vladimir had to continue with the violin until he was ten, when his father finally relented and let him start learning the spinet. His natural talent for the keyboard was immediately obvious and experimenting with sound became an obsession. At a time when the piano was developing so rapidly the need to constantly modify his touch would occupy him all his life.

Vladimir was sent to study the piano at the Conservatoire in Vienna. As his teacher Joseph Dachs was largely interested in technical prowess he developed a tremendous technique at the expense of expressiveness. In 1870 he happened to hear Carl Tausig and was so impressed by the grandeur of his performance that he decided to model his own playing on Tausig's. This proved to be a disaster at his debut in St Petersburg in 1872, where the notices were unfavourable and not a single concert agent showed any interest in him. He was by nature a miniaturist and the grand heroic style was alien to him.

Bitterly disappointed he went home to Odessa and spent the next seven years trying to find his voice. It was a long time to be away from the concert platform and when he returned to it he was crippled with nerves. The only way he could overcome this was to start each concert by chatting to the audience. He had a ready wit which some of the audience found endearing. The ones who didn't put up with it for the sake of the beautiful playing that followed. Pachmann began to enjoy these 'warm-up' sessions and so they became a feature of his concerts. In later years they became grotesque and damaged his reputation as a serious artist.

Although Pachmann had a way with the ladies, his predilection was predominantly for his own sex. Nevertheless, when he was thirty-six he married a beautiful Australian pianist called Margaret (Maggie) Okey, who was sixteen years his junior and bore him three sons, one of whom died in infancy. She was his only pupil and used to join him on tours, playing works for two pianos with him.

The book contains a wealth of information including concert reviews, anecdotes – some of them concerning familiar figures from Liszt biographies - and 29 pages of photographs, many of them intimate ones taken by his secretary and amanuensis for 28 years, Francesco Pallotelli. Pachmann did meet Liszt, who was impressed by his playing, but was never a pupil of his although he admired him deeply and believed that Liszt's philosophy and example freed him from the constriction of his own musical upbringing.

The writing of this biography involved several trips to Europe, to Rome to meet Pallotelli and to Paris to meet Pachmann's son Leonide, a professor of piano and composition at the Conservatoire. The book proved particularly difficult to write as Pachmann himself was notorious for the unreliability of his stories about meetings with composers and great performers — what started as 'embroideries' later became sheer inventions! Even the addition of 'de' to his name denoting aristocratic ancestry was suspect as he only started to introduce it in 1879 and no-one else in his family used it.

Pachmann lived to, what at that time would be considered, the great age of eighty-four. Unfortunately the last recordings made by him in 1925, which are nowadays the most easily accessible, do him less than justice and so his reputation as a 'charlatan' continues to dog him. In his prime he was much admired by his peers, Leopold Godowsky being one of his special friends. His playing of Chopin, particularly the Mazurkas and the f minor Piano Concerto was regarded as unmatched, hence the title of the biography.

Elgin Ronayne

CD REVIEW

Liszt's 'Christus' for solo piano – Nicolas Horvath

Hortus, catalogue no. 1000

I often look through the new releases section on various websites on the hunt for recordings of obscure works by Liszt and, while doing this early last year, I discovered a rather strange sounding recording. It was a CD of a solo piano version of 'Christus' (S3) played by Nicolas Horvath. This somewhat perplexed me because, as far as I knew there were only four sections of this work that Liszt had prepared for solo piano. Added to this that this CD was a single disc, how could it possibly be the entire work? Anyway, after looking at the track listing in more detail online, I ordered the disc and waited to be enlightened.

The disc arrived some days later and, although it wasn't the whole of 'Christus'. It was more than I had hitherto expected. There were eight parts of 'Christus' on the disc, mostly composed of sections taken from the vocal score which includes the sections which Liszt arranged and I was aware of ('Einleitung', 'Pastorale', 'Hirtengesang an der Krippe', 'Die Heiligen drei Könige – Marche' and 'Das Wunder',) plus newly discovered transcriptions of 'Die Gründung der Kirche', 'Tristis est anima mea' and 'O filii et filiæ'. The first of these newly discovered sections has an interesting genesis – it was also transcribed by the composer for organ and harmonium with the piano doubling the singers and therefore playable as piano solo (albeit with some demands on the pianist!)

After reading the interesting and informative cover notes by the pianist, it turns out that our president helped out with tracing the manuscripts of this work and lent them to the pianist so that the recording could be made! The pieces which I was aware of and (obviously) recorded by Leslie Howard before were familiar and are very well played here, as are the unfamiliar tracks which are particularly interesting due to their unfamiliarity.

The 'Einleitung' (Introduction; S498c/1a, track 1) is a very complicated piece with lots of different tunes going on all over the keyboard. Despite the structure of the piece being quite labyrinthine, an atmosphere of tranquillity pervades the whole section.

Next follows the peaceful atmosphere in the 'Pastorale' (S498c/1b; track 2) which is maintained despite a lot of movement around the keyboard.

'Hirtengesang an der Krippe' (S498b/1, track 3) is also peaceful despite lots of octave leaps!

Next is 'Die Heiligen drei Könige – Marche' (S498b/2, track 4) with its jolly bouncing rhythms and virtuosity. This is again very well played with the rhythms being extremely well delineated; this is especially obvious if you have the score to follow! Also excellently done is the contrast between the march section and the middle section (subtitled "Et ecce stella, quam viderant in oriente, antecedebat eos...", bars 140 – 179) and the later transition to the Adagio section at bar 224 and the outbreak of spontaneous joy that leads to the end of the piece. The more difficult ossias that Liszt wrote are used here which are interesting to compare with the four-hand version (recorded on a Phoenix CD by Elisabetta Dessi and Francesco Giammarco which I reviewed several years ago). Despite these differences in tempi, the whole piece holds together very well.

Track 5, 'Die Gründung der Kirche' (also called Tu es petrus; S3) is an evolution of L'Hymne du Pape (S530) in a different key and also with amendments to the musical argument. (Please note I don't have absolute pitch so it may be E major as well but it is vastly different to the earlier piece). Again, this is splendidly played and very powerful.

'Das Wunder' (also from S3, track 6) is a powerful storm of a piece, well worth hearing and very virtuosic indeed. Again here, there is an awful lot of work for the pianist to do to bring the piece off properly and Nicolas Horvath succeeds magnificently. Before the end, the piece descends into tranquillity and the link between these two moods is extremely well done.

Track 7 ('Tristis est anima mea', incidentally also set by Lassus and Gesualdo; again from S3) is concerned with the death of Christ and is some of the most chromatically disturbing music that Liszt wrote, even more so than many of the pieces composed when he was well into old age. This starts in a quiet and melancholy way (the cover notes compare it to Scriabin) before an outburst of pain at about 3'23". From here onwards, the piece gains momentum and becomes more disturbed and disturbing with whole tone rows and powerful chords in the base and leaps into the higher registers, especially around 6'00" where the music becomes particularly anguished. Things quieten down again and the last third of the piece returns to the Scriabin-esque world of the beginning and finally settles into something resembling tonality for the last three minutes of the piece. Something about this piece reminds me of sections of the second half of the symphonic poem 'Hunnenschlacht' but I am unsure why!

The work ends on a similar note to which it began with *O filii et filiæ* (from S3) which is again similar to the *Einleitung* and is subtitled "Easter Hymn". This is very simple, plainly presented music and fantastically well played.

Overall, this is an amazing disc of very interesting music, extremely well played and deserves to be more widely heard. Rather annoyingly, it does not seem to be available in the UK from any of the usual outlets. I ordered mine from JPC in Germany who often have obscure discs not available in the UK. Having heard this disc and thoroughly enjoyed it, I wonder if a similar project is possible using the vocal score of 'The Legend of Saint Elizabeth' – I have a copy of the vocal score if anyone wants to try!

Jonathan Welsh

CD REVIEW

Transcendence - Jean Muller

JCH productions no. 2014/01

I received this CD recently 'out of the blue', posted to me by the production company. It is a recording by the pianist Jean Muller and comprises Liszt's Mephisto Waltz no. 1 and the complete set of Transcendental Studies. I have to admit that first impressions were not encouraging. For a start, the cover design for the CD case is one of the most absurd I have ever come across and does not lead one to take the contents seriously. Nor, I am afraid, does the awful title — "Transcendence". Furthermore, some of the translation from French to English on the inside cover is extremely 'clunky'. For instance, Liszt's noble words:

"Mon piano c'est moi, c'est ma parole, c'est ma vie...Il a la faculté de résumer et de concentrer en lui l'art tout entier."

are translated as:

"My piano that's me, that's my words and that's my life...it has the ability to concentrate and to sum up art in it entirely."

So it was with some misgiving that I sat down to listen to the CD itself. But the old adage "one should never judge a book by its cover" proved to be very apt in this case. Muller's performance of the studies is of the very highest quality and is enthralling and riveting throughout. Just listen to no. 2 for example: wonderful lightness of touch and accuracy, coupled with breathtaking excitement – in fact, the most exciting version of this piece I think I have ever heard. This is followed by a beautiful and poetic performance of *Paysage*. My ears took a little getting used to what feels like a slight distortion of rhythm at times but nonetheless this is very fine.

Then *Mazeppa*. What more could one ask for? It is all here – controlled virtuosity, clarity, a very beautifully played lyrical middle section, and an ending more profound and moving than I have heard before. Put simply, one of the finest accounts of this piece I have encountered. *Feux Follets* is equally superb, played with a wonderful fleetness of touch and delicacy and not recklessly fast. I felt that this was exactly as Liszt would have imagined it. One almost begins to run out of superlatives by this stage. *Eroica* and *Wilde Jagd* are both tremendous, played with a great deal of personal feeling and individuality but without any trace of idiosyncrasy. *Ricordanza* is exquisitely poetic, no. 10 energetic and sparkling, and no. 11 magical. And as for *Chasse Neige*, this was something of a revelation. I always imagine this piece as being, in the main (apart from the obvious stormy passages), of a quiet, mystical nature, representing the softly falling snow but Muller creates something entirely different – a bleak, jagged, freezing, unforgiving winter landscape – and I must say that I found it utterly compelling.

As mentioned above, the CD begins with the Mephisto Waltz no. 1 - "but not as we know it". It turns out to be an arrangement of the work by Busoni, yet further adapted by Horowitz! Personally I do not feel that this bowdlerized version adds anything to Liszt's original, wonderful conception — on the contrary, it rather diminishes it. But I suppose Muller may have felt, with some justification, that as the original has been so much over-played and over-recorded that there was room in the recording catalogue for this novelty. Personally I'd have preferred to have heard the original!

This minor quibble aside, I can wholeheartedly recommend this inspiring and inspired disc which sheds new light on what can sometimes seem over-familiar pieces. It is a triumph!

Since writing the above I have learnt more about Jean Muller and explored more of his repertoire on Youtube.

He hails from Luxembourg and was born in 1979. He has won numerous prizes including 1st place in the Concours Poulenc in France. The Chairman of the jury on that occasion, Jean Claude Pennetier, said of Muller "It is all there – fingers, head and heart". He has received a number of "rave" reviews in the musical press, notably from Bryce Morrison writing in the Gramophone (edition 2012/04) when his earlier Chopin disc was Gramophone's "Critics' Choice".

There are some splendid examples of his playing on Youtube. His posture and demeanour at the keyboard remind me of Marc Andre-Hamelin – quiet, undemonstrative and achieving miracles of virtuosity with apparent relaxed ease. I would be very surprised if we do not hear a lot more of this pianist in years to come.

And, finally, I note from Muller's website that he will be performing the Transcendental Studies in concert at Cadogan Hall, London on the 27th October 2014.

Jim Vincent

MEMBERS' NEWS

I am sure fellow-members will be interested to know that British Liszt Society members Shay Loya and Michael Short have been jointly awarded the 2014 Alan Walker Book Award, an award funded by the American Liszt Society.

Shay Loya's book Liszt's Transcultural Modernism and the Hungarian Gypsy Tradition, reviewed in Volume 37 of the 2012 edition of the British Liszt Society Journal, is published by the University of Rochester Press. Michael Short's translation of the Correspondence of Franz Liszt and the Comtesse Marie d'Agoult is published by Pendragon Press.

Congratulations to both members!

The following article was kindly sent to me by LaWayne Leno, one of our American members. Fellow Liszt Society members may recall that LaWaynes's book about Liszt pupil Adele aus der Ohe was reviewed in a previous newsletter. Although the following does not relate to Liszt, it has been considered appropriate to include it in our newsletter as I feel sure that it will be of great interest to all lovers of piano music in general, and of Beethoven's piano music in particular. Liszt, of course, was a huge admirer of Beethoven (one might almost say 'worshipper') so I hope he would have approved!

Jim Vincent

A VIEW FROM ACROSS THE POND

I recently endured something that probably no human should attempt. I heard, at the University of California, the Canadian pianist, Steward Goodyear, perform ALL of Beethoven's 32 piano sonatas IN ONE DAY. Since this was his fourth reading of the "New Testament" (Mr. Goodyear had already performed this series in Toronto, Dallas, and Princeton University) I assumed that by now the guy knew what he was getting himself into. I decided that if he was still brave/foolish enough to perform them, then I would be brave/foolish enough to listen.

The playing was near miraculous. To my utter amazement, there never was a genuine memory slip the entire day. Maybe one or two passages disappeared into a pedal-induced haze, and maybe once or twice the left hand opted to sit out a bar or two, but on the whole it was an astonishing feat. One could argue that a few (but really very few) of the sonatas were still a bit "green around the edges" but considering that Mr. Goodyear is a mere 35 years old, he can easily be forgiven those few needing a bit more ripening. The big surprise of the morning was the fact that, with Op. 49 and 79 exceptions, all repeats of all sonata-movement expositions were omitted; a move that had the purists up in arms, but it was a necessary compromise, and all quibbles aside, this was monumental piano playing.

At 10 a.m. sharp, Stewart Goodyear walked on stage, quickly disposed of the Op. 49 gems, and then got down to serious business, playing all three Op. 2 sonatas back to back, without even leaving the stage. These are great compositions, deeply satisfying to listen to, and remain to this day powerful introductions to the young Beethoven's genius.

Almost exactly four hours later the first segment of this three part series ended. As we applauded Mr. Goodyear off the stage and headed into the beautiful California sunshine to devour our pre-purchased lunches, I was stunned that we still had so far to go. We were only up to Op. 22 and had only had one of the "named" sonatas, the "Pathetique", Op.13.

It is easy to forget that there are 11 of these early sonatas - fully 1/3 of Beethoven's total output - and all are masterworks; but it was only during this performance that I fully realized their immense significance. These were the works that formed, and then transformed the young composer. These sonatas are long, complex, highly inspired, and the product of great effort. I realized just how very hard Beethoven worked to perfect his craft.

Our one hour lunch break ended all too soon, and at precisely 3 p.m. Stewart was back on stage to commence Part 2, and it was time for the "money" sonatas; "Moonlight", "Pastoral", "Tempest", "Waldstein", "Appassionata". This was also the part that drew the largest audience, nearly twice the size of the opening portion, and there is good reason that these are Beethoven's most popular works. They exude (maybe sometimes even overflow with) energy, enthusiasm, optimism, grandeur, and heroism, as well as dazzling pyrotechnics. These are sonatas that proclaim achievement and triumph, even as they struggle through difficulty and adversity. With each one Beethoven carries us farther and farther along on his journey into uncharted territory.

By the time Beethoven's sorcery and Stewart Goodyear's fingers catapulted us through the final presto of the "Appassionata", I was exhausted. It took real stamina to stay alert and focused through these intensely driving, emotionally charged pieces. I have no idea how Mr. Goodyear was holding up, but I definitely wondered if I was going to make it.

The dinner break lasted a merciful two hours; but promptly at 8:30 p.m. now more than 10 hours into our mutual marathon, Goodyear was back on stage and we were back in our seats. That was when it all began to make sense, and I started to understand the real point of this exercise. Despite this all-but-super-human feat of physical endurance and mental acuity; it was the journey itself that was the ultimate accomplishment, and we were not yet at our destination. Like so many of the early explorers in America, it did not matter that we had already come a thousand miles. The Rocky Mountains still had to be crossed before we could arrive at our Pacific Paradise; and the messy business of mountain climbing was about to begin.

As Op. 101 unfolded I realized just how much this piece is a continuation of the Op. 57 "Appassionata" and how much that sonata is a continuation of the Op. 53 "Waldstein". Each is an ongoing disintegration (for lack of a better word) of all that had come before. In each sonata the harmonies are bolder and more dissonant, the rhythms more jagged, the dynamic changes

more abrupt and disruptive. Despite our fatigue, it was no longer difficult to stay alert and focused. It was almost as if we were watching in fear and uncertainty as some narrowly-averted catastrophe unfolded before our eyes.

Stewart accepted our Op. 101 applause, and, without even leaving the stage, returned to the keyboard, and with an almost rashly wild abandon launched into "THAT ONE" - the "Hammerklavier", Beethoven's Götterdämmerung, his apocalypse. This massive and powerful culmination of concepts that had, in truth, already revealed themselves in Op. 2 No 1, had reached climaxes of grandeur in Op. 53 and 57, and had accelerated in Op. 101, were now irreversible. The first movement at least made an attempt to put on a powdered wig and satin trousers, but they clearly no longer fit and were quickly cast off as completely irrelevant. By the end of the slow movement we were no longer even on earth, and the fourth movement fugue was so super-humanly astonishing in every way that we could only sit with mouths agape, as Beethoven (aided in no small part by Mr. Goodyear's impressive musicianship) hurled us through outer space — to God-Only-Knows where.

At the close of Op. 106 we were granted one final intermission and I suspect everyone, maybe even the performer, wondered how it would be possible to regroup and return to somehow bring this massive project to culmination. I cannot say exactly when Op 109 began, for it emerged out of complete silence, and I believe I saw Mr. Goodyear's fingers move before I heard any sound, as he nudged the slightest bit of vibration out of the piano strings, just enough to create audible music.

Op. 109, 110, 111 – we sat transfixed. Was there ever a quieter audience? Forget about moving, we hardly dared breathe. Was this how Columbus felt as he sighted land, how Neil Armstrong felt as he stood on the moon? The journey was complete, the goal had been reached, life had been lived.

As the clock neared midnight and the final notes of Op. 111 faded away, Steward Goodyear sat motionless, hands in mid-air, and there was total silence. He then put his hands in his lap and bowed his head, and still there was silence. At that moment anything could have happened. We all could have begun floating in air and I don't think anyone would have been surprised.

But we did not start floating in air. Eventually the spell was broken and the ovation began. But rest assured, we had been shown a glimpse, however fleeting, of the "great beyond" and it was beautiful.

LaWayne Leno

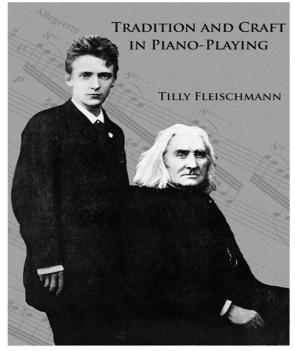
MEMBERS' LETTERS

Dear Sir,

Re: "Tradition and Craft in Piano Playing" by Tilly Fleischmann.

In Volume 12 of the Liszt Society Journal, Elgin Stub-Ronayne reviewed an abridged version of the above-mentioned book. In May of this year the complete version was published by Carysfort Press (Dublin).

In addition to Tilly Fleischmann, four other people were heavily involved: Dr Ruth Fleischmann, Dr Patrick Zuk (both of whom did the editing), Dr John Buckley (who did the musical typesetting) and Dr Gabriela Mayer (the pianist on the included DVD).



TILLY FLEISCHMANN

TRADITION AND CRAFT IN PIANO-PLAYING

EDITORS: RUTH FLEISCHMANN, JOHN BUCKLEY DVD RECORDINGS: GABRIELA MAYER

Carysfort Press, Dublin, 7 May 2014, 297p.

This book by the Irish pianist Tilly Fleischmann, written 60 years ago, now published in full for the first time, documents an oral tradition of continental pianism going back to the 19th century. From 1901–5 the author studied at the Royal Academy of Music in Munich with two pupils of Franz Liszt; she records what she learnt from them about Liszt's interpretations of the piano music of his contemporaries and of his own works. The many illustrations from the classical repertoire have been played and video-recorded by Gabriela Mayer on the DVD accompanying the book.

Case bound: €50; Paperback: €30 Distribution by the printer: Eprint Bookstore 35 Coolmine Industrial Estate, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15; http://www.eprint.ie

Tilly Fleischmann was a pupil of Bethold Kellerman and Bernhard Stavenhagen at the Royal Academy of Music in Munich from 1901 to 1905.

There are approximately 280 large format (A4) pages with nearly 300 musical examples, in 20 chapters: Technique and Practice (Chapters 1-7 pages 5 to 45), Interpretation (Chapters 8-15, pages 46 to 155), Interpretation and Tradition (Chapters 16 to 20). Chapter 19 is on Chopin (pages 179 to 220) and Chapter 20 is on Liszt (pages 221 to 242).

More information can be gleaned from the Carysfort Press website at: www.carysfortpress.com/categories/music.htm

The book could, I feel, be of considerable interest to some members of the Liszt Society. I hasten to add that I have no personal connection with the author or publisher!

Best Wishes,			
James Ward			

Dear Sir,

I am writing on behalf of The Dvořák Society and have a query concerning your late president Louis Kentner. I wonder whether any of your long-standing members might be able to offer advice.

The composer, conductor and teacher Vilém Tauský CBE (1910 – 2004) was a hands-on Vice President of our society until his death. The Dvořák Society has been able to acquire a number of fragile acetate off-air transcription recordings, mostly conducted by Tauský, which have been digitized and which we are issuing in CD format. So far we have issued complete English language performances of Janáček's Jenufa and Smetana's Dalibor. Much work remains to be done researching the other, shorter recordings available to us. One of these is of Tauský's own composition Rhapsody for Piano and Orchestra on themes by Smetana written in 1945 for Louis Kentner. The recording we have lasts for about 18 minutes but there are no spoken introductions to help us identify the date of the recording nor the identity of the orchestra and conductor (although we assume that Tauský was in charge). An analysis of Tauský's "black book" in which he recorded all his Manchester performances between 1952 and 1956 notes three performances of this work, probably all with the BBC Northern Orchestra, but we do not know whether the recording we have relates to one of those performances.

If any of your members have any information of relevance to the three performances mentioned or to the recording I should be very glad if they will contact me. A composer's programme note for the Rhapsody would be particularly interesting. Please either contact me by e-mail at randmbeith@btinternet.com or by post at 7 Corum Place, Blackford, Auchterarder, Scotland PH4 1PU.

Many thanks,

Richard Beith The Dvořák Society

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