



THE
LISZT SOCIETY

Newsletter

www.liszt soc.org.uk

N° 117 December 2014

2015 SUBSCRIPTIONS

May I remind members that subscriptions for 2015 are payable on or before the 1st January 2015. I shall be most grateful if members will make payment, preferably by Paypal using the payee address of treasurer@liszt soc.org.uk, or by cheque direct to me at 3 Offlands Court, Reading Road, Moulsoford, OX10 9EX, UK (cheques payable to **The Liszt Society**, please).

Subscription rates remain unchanged from 2014:

UK members	£30.00GB
European members	£35.00GB
Rest of the World members	£40.00GB
Students	£10.00GB

Each year I receive a certain number of double payments from enthusiastic members who have forgotten that they have already paid for the year in question. For the sake of avoiding this I felt it might be useful if I listed members who have already paid for 2015. They are: John Cawsey, Jutta Fagan, John Farmer, Dr James Holden, Andrew Mears, Prof. R. Pfeiffer-Rupp, Peter Roberts and Giacomo di Tollo. Many thanks to them! This list does not, of course, include honorary and life members who do not pay an annual subscription in any event.

The Society does incur quite a substantial postage cost in sending out 'chasers' to members who forget to pay their subscriptions on time so I would be extremely grateful if all members will pay their 2015 subscriptions promptly as this is of enormous help both to myself and the Society.

It only remains for me to wish all our members a very happy Christmas and New Year wherever in the world they may be!

HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

Jim Vincent

FORTHCOMING EVENT

Joint Society Dinner Recital

Tuesday 27th January 2015

We are delighted to announce that the annual joint society dinner recital for 2015 will be held on the 27th January at the Forge Music and Arts Centre in London. As usual the event is being held in association with our sister societies, the Wagner, Alkan and Berlioz Societies. For the first time, members of the Gustav Mahler and Richard Strauss societies have also been invited.

This is always a very popular and enjoyable event and demand is likely to be high. Please see page 7 of this newsletter for full details of the programme, venue, and how to book tickets.

EVENT REVIEW

The Liszt Society Annual Day 2014

The Liszt Society hosted a series of events at Goldsmiths, University of London, on Saturday 15th June.

After the preliminary official business of the day was done – the Annual General Meeting of the Society was despatched within 20 minutes – Alastair Hardie, of The Hardie Press, Edinburgh [the Liszt Society's publisher] launched the revised Liszt Society Publications volume 3, with newly edited, completed and annotated scores of a number of piano pieces, including much material not present even in the great *Neue Liszt-Ausgabe* from Editio Musica Budapest.

The lunchtime piano recital, given in association with The Keyboard Charitable Trust, featured the splendid Italian pianist Stefano Severini. His programme offered the complete first book of the *Années de pèlerinage* in compelling and rich performances that captured on every occasion the precise character of these nine masterly works: his *Chapelle de Guillaume Tell* was grave, noble, and orchestral in its range of tone colour. The innocent simplicity of the four smaller pieces was done to a turn, whilst the mock ferocity of *Orage* was properly outclassed by the stunning storm amidst *Vallée d'Obermann*. *Au bord d'une source* was given with the later extended coda that Liszt wrote for Giovanni Sgambati – a little bit of magic! *Les cloches de Genève* had just the right balance of delicacy and fervour. This first-class account of one of Liszt's finest inspirations brought great audience acclamation, which was rewarded with a sparkling account of Liszt's *Gnomenreigen*.

The final of the competition for the Liszt Society Piano Prize – the next event of the day – presented seven candidates each of whom had something to say, and all of whom demonstrated both technical accomplishment and a serious, enquiring spirit into Liszt's music. So we were treated to a very imaginative programme of more than three hours of music, in which, extraordinarily, only one piece was duplicated. For some reason, there were no British competitors, but we heard three Italians, and one each from Australia, Germany, Spain and Russia. Daniele Buccio (Italy) gave us a solid account the rare *Second Mephisto Waltz* and the even rarer *Valse de concert* based on themes by Véggh; Primavera Shima

(Australia) offered heartfelt performances of the 2nd Ballade and the ever-popular transcription of Schumann's *Widmung*; Jens Hagen Wegner (Germany) gave a truly poetic rendition of *Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude*; Darío Llanos Javierre (Spain) gave a magisterial reading of the three pieces from the third *Année de pèlerinage* inspired in part by the Villa d'Este in Tivoli, where Liszt spent much of his time in his later years; Maria Kustas (Russia) found great variety of colour in her playing of *Harmonies du soir* and the devilish Scherzo and March; Alessandro Marano (Italy) gave the 2nd Ballade and the *Rienzi* paraphrase with appropriate élan, and Pier Francesco Forlenza (Italy) brought proceedings to a grand conclusion with a well-thought and articulate execution of the Sonata.

Whilst the jury retired, Professors David Sutton-Anderson and Avril Anderson gave an illustrated lecture celebrating the life and work of one of the Liszt Society's founders, and himself a great Liszt scholar, Humphrey Searle. The talk gave a fascinating insight into the work of a composer whose compositions range from experiments in twelve tone music to splendidly imaginative film music. Pianist Sally Mayes gave an excellent account of Searle's piece 'Vigil' which was much more accessible than some members of the audience had anticipated.

During the jury's deliberations it was noted that several of the young performers did not immediately gauge the acoustics of the excellent venue (Deptford Town Hall), nor how to control the propensity of the fine Steinway D piano to twang at pedal releases, especially at endings and in moments when the *una corda* pedal was employed. Some did not always achieve a complete range of dynamics over a piece, or within a texture. In the decisions, which were straightforward and unanimous, the two pianists to whom prizes were awarded were Darío Llanos Javierre (the Liszt Society Prize, in the form of a future London recital for the Liszt Society), and Jens Hagen Wegner (a short recital tour in the north of England, offered and managed by Mr Ernie Scott). The jury consisted of Stefano Severini, Coady Green (who organised the whole competition), Christopher Wayne Smith, Mark Viner, Melvyn Cooper and the present writer.

Leslie Howard

CD REVIEW

Valentina Lisitsa plays Liszt

Decca 0289 478 5352 7 CD DDD

It is funny how things work out sometimes. In newsletter No. 115, Jim Vincent mentioned Valentina Lisitsa and her recent CD of music by Liszt. Several months ago, I bought a Naxos CD of music played by Ms. Lisitsa which includes an amazing performance of the solo piano version of *Totentanz*, S525. In this performance, she alters the ending slightly so that it more closely matches the familiar piano and orchestral version and the effect is quite startling as well as being ridiculously virtuosic! I have also observed several of her performances online via YouTube and have been impressed. So, when I was investigating a certain online retailer recently and I saw her Liszt CD on the Decca label for a reasonable price, I decided to order it (as well as the Caetani CD, which was also mentioned in the last newsletter, but that's another story!)

Ms Lisitsa starts off with a rather fast-paced rendition of Liszt's transcription of Schubert's *Ave Maria* (S558/12). As I said, this is rather fast but it really is beautifully played and the interplay between the hands is lovely and well demonstrated by the clarity of the recording.

Next on the disc is the 2nd Ballade, S171. Looking at the timing of this piece (usually lasting 14 or so minutes in performance), Ms Lisitsa takes 16 minutes to play this which seems quite long. The main reason for this is that Ms Lisitsa pulls the tempo about and plays the slow sections very slowly (but plays them wonderfully) and the faster sections very fast indeed. She also adds octave doublings about 9 minutes in which seem to my ears to make it somewhat "overcooked" and sadly rather spoils the drama of the piece. Thirdly, we have another transcription, this time from Verdi's *Aida*, the *Danza sacre e duetto finale*, S436. This is very well played even though quite fast. The piece is played exactly as it should be and she copes very well with the demands placed upon the pianist.

The "ferociously difficult and rarely recorded" (as it says at the top of the CD) *Rondeau fantastique sur en theme espagnol – El contrabandista*, S252 – follows next and is one of the main reasons for me wanting to buy this disc. This is phenomenal and excellently played. The ending is rather odd as she slows right down in the last few bars which spoils it very slightly. Nevertheless, this is a rarely recorded piece so it is nice to have another version in the catalogue. Ms Lisitsa has been known to describe the piece as "three *La Campanella* on top of one another" and I can hear why.

There then follows a series of Schubert transcriptions: *Gute Nacht* (S563/2), *Das Madchens Klage* (S563/3), *Erlkonig* (S558/2) and *Der Muller und der Bach* (S565/2). All are played very fast and the interplay between the left and right hands in *Gute Nacht* is extremely well done. The only slight disappointment for me is *Erlkonig* which can be barnstormed through but, for some reason here, isn't quite barnstorming and terrifying enough. The central section (where the Erlkonig is calling to the child) is taken at such a pace that it just sounds speedy but it should also sound chilling. The characterisation required by the pianist should be the same as for the singer in the original lied – it should sound like four separate voices (narrator, child, father and the Erlking) and not quite so uniform. At the end she also loses the dramatic tension by waiting for what seems an age for the final chord. *Der Muller und der Bach* fares much better and is fantastically well played.

Lastly is the famous Hungarian Rhapsody No. 12, S244/12. There is some very evocative playing here but, again, she is very fleet fingered in the 'friska' and fractionally too slow in the 'lassan' section. She also pulls the tempo about which comes as a surprise to those familiar with more conventional recordings. I think this brings across the improvisatory quality of the music (which Liszt was aiming for). I rather like her interpretation of this piece! It would be interesting to hear what she does with the remainder of the set.

Overall, I would say this is a mixed bag of a recital. Certain works are played absolutely splendidly but others are pulled about and over emphasised in such a way that they lose their effectiveness. The cover notes are rather short but interesting and the recorded sound is crystal clear – emphasising every detail (especially in *Ave Maria*).

Jonathan Welch

BALLET REVIEW

Member Barry Elliot has brought to my attention the following review from the magazine 'Dancing Times'. It is a review by David Mead, of a new ballet, based on the relationship between Franz Liszt and Marie d'Agoult, which was performed in Northampton, UK, on October 1st 2014. The review is printed courtesy of David Mead and 'Dancing Times'.

When Franz Liszt was at his peak, the hysteria demonstrated by his female fans (known as 'Lisztomania') was not dissimilar to that shown towards popular celebrities of today. One young lady in particular became obsessed with him - Countess Marie d'Agoult - and it is this relationship that Martin Lawrance plays out in his new *Burning*, the highlight of Richard Alston Dance Company's latest programme.

Lawrance doesn't tell the narrative of their meeting and their years together but rather dips into the personalities and emotions that lie behind it, always deliciously responsive to the composer's rhetoric in his *Dante Sonata*. Playing live, pianist Jason Ridgeway coaxed every ounce of feeling out of the score. The use of modern dress also gives the work a timeless quality.

From the off, Liszt's persona is clear. Liam Riddick's opening solo is packed with dramatic rolls and expressive, expansive dance that fills the stage whilst also suggesting an inner conflict. He never overtly encourages his female admirers but neither does he push them away as they swarm over him, echoing how they reportedly used to fight over his handkerchiefs and gloves.

The temperature ratchets up when Nancy Nerantzi appears as Marie. Showing the strength of will and zest for life that she was known for, she dances out her feelings for him. At first Riddick doesn't look, maybe not wanting to acknowledge she is different. Outwardly the composer appears to treat her as just another woman, but inwardly that is clearly not the case.

After their eyes meet, Liszt seems a different man, calmer, frequently allowing his head to be cradled. A recurring motif sees Marie shielding his eyes; trying to stop them wandering towards other women perhaps.

Lawrance constructs two striking duets. The first starts in a softly romantic mood. Liszt seems torn between being a reluctant partner and surrendering himself completely. Eventually the emotions burst forth, climaxing in a breathtaking sequence of rolling unison movements that sweep across the stage in a tidal wave of energy. Afterwards, when Marie lies in front of him, he again seems unsure and turns his head away.

The second duet is fiery and passionate. Marie's raw emotions are laid bare as Nerantzi leaps into Riddick's arms with abandon again and again. He swings her round and she clings to him as they twist and swirl with an urgency that is almost MacMillanesque in intensity. Suddenly, however, the composer's insecurities return. As he pulls away, Marie looks, decides she has had enough, and leaves.

Jim Vincent

MEMBERS' LETTERS

Members may be interested to hear that on the 14th March 2014 the Epsom Choral Society gave a performance of Liszt's very-rarely performed *Missa Choralis* at St.Michael's Church, Epsom (UK). The subsequent review in the Epsom Choral Society Magazine, written by Lynda Chang, expressed some surprise that Liszt had written such restrained, devotional music – a far cry from the traditional view of Liszt as the 'showy, high-living womanising composer'.

The review mentions “the thrilling fortissimo of the *Kyrie*”, “the whispered marvel of *descendet de coelis et incarnatus est*”, “the tortuous chromaticism of *crucifixus pro nobis*” and “the joy of *et resurrexit*”.

How good to see an audience introduced to another, profounder side of this multi-faceted composer!

Paul Gregory

As we all know, Liszt wrote vast quantities of music in his long life. However, like many composers, he left quite a number of small pieces which have been published by the Liszt Society as “album leaves” which are incomplete. These were often written as gifts for dignitaries and for admirers. Some of these are parts of larger compositions and others appear to have no finished or published works associated with them.

I decided, following the publication of the Liszt Society journal in November 2013 which included some of these album leaves, to try to write a piece to complete two of these unfinished fragments. The introduction section comes from an Albumblatt, S166/n which is only 2 bars long and in G minor and is of uncertain date. It was simple to extend this piece and move it up an octave to make a suitable introduction for the work. The tonality is ambiguous so it makes a good introduction to my finished piece, additionally, it is similar (but not the same) as the introduction to the piece *Petite valse favourite*, S212, which after several revisions, evolved into the *Valse-Improptu*, S213. I thought it wise to put some hints of the later themes from the other main album leaf before the larger fragment gets started. After the initial statement of this introduction, it returns in a different guise as a precursor to the tonality of the other album leaf (E flat major). I'd originally intended to write a virtuosic cadenza prior to the second album leaf but after playing this, I decided it wasn't quite in keeping with the remainder of the piece. This second album leaf (S166/r) is in E flat major but changes key rapidly in a way which makes me think that it might be a piece from Liszt's later years (the fragment is undated). I completed the piece with a small section in A minor before settling into the home key of E flat major and ending quietly.

I do intend to record this little piece and will post the finished result on YouTube once I have done so!

I also intend at a later date to complete another Albumleaf – the one which is on the main theme from *Cantique d'amour* from the *Harmonies Poétiques et Religieuses*.

Jonathan Welch

JOINT SOCIETY DINNER RECITAL

hosted by the Berlioz Society

Registered Charity Number 1124443

President: David Cairns Chairman: Alastair Aberdare

in association with the

Liszt Society, Alkan Society and Wagner Society

Tuesday 27th January 2015

6.30 for 7pm (recital), 8.30pm (dinner)

The Forge, 3-7 Delancey Street, London NW1 7NL

(near Camden Town station)

Tickets £45, including dinner and wine – advance booking essential

The dinner menu (including a vegetarian option) will be sent in response to each booking – as we will need your choices in advance.

This will be the third of these dinners, hosted by the four societies above. They are popular and are fast becoming a tradition. This year we include friends from the Mahler and Richard Strauss Societies in our invitation.

The recital programme will be:

Alkan

Introduction au no.5 des caprices [op.13/2] (ms. dated 12/5/43); Trois Andantes Romantiques pour piano; 2e Livre de Caprices op.13/2 Andante con moto; performed by Mark Viner, piano
Saltarelle, finale de la Sonate de concert pour piano et violoncelle op.47, arrangée pour piano à quatre mains, performed by Coady Green & Christopher Wayne Smith, piano

Berlioz

Two Songs from Les Nuits d'Eté; La mort d' Ophélie; Zaïde, performed by Keri Fuge, soprano, with Matthew Fletcher, piano

Liszt

Quatre Valses oubliées, S215, performed by Leslie Howard; Tcherkessenmarsch aus Glinkas Oper Rußlan und Ludmilla for piano duet, S629, performed by Coady Green & Leslie Howard

Wagner

"Abendlich strahlt der Sonne Auge", Wotan's soliloquy from the end of Das Rheingold; "Die Frist ist Um", the Dutchman's aria from Der Fliegende Holländer, performed by Paul Carey Jones, baritone, with Coady Green, piano

To: Simon Jones, Secretary, Berlioz Society, 450 Lea Bridge Road, London E10 7DY
sqing@btinternet.com

Please send me _____ tickets @ £45 for Tuesday 27th 2015.

I enclose a cheque for £_____ payable to The Berlioz Society, **and an SAE.**

Name.....

Address.....

Phone.....

E-mail.....

CONTACT DETAILS

Letters and articles for the Newsletter, Membership Applications and Renewals, and Enquiries:

Jim Vincent
The Membership Secretary
The Liszt Society
3, Offlands Court
Moulsford
Oxon OX10 9EX
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0) 1491-651842
memsec@lisztsoc.org.uk

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