



The Liszt Society Newsletter

No. 24 - SUMMER 1985 : Edited by ADRIAN WILLIAMS

INTERNATIONAL LISZT PIANO COMPETITIONS.

International Liszt Piano Competitions are being promoted by the Liszt Ferenc Társaság of Budapest between 8 and 24 September, and by the Dutch Liszt Society between 31 May and 15 June, 1986. Full information and a brochure may be obtained from: Interkoncert Festivalbureau, Budapest P.O. Box 80, H-1366, Hungary, for the Budapest competition, and from: International Franz Liszt Piano Competition, Secretariat Liszt Concours 1986, Postbus 550, 3500 AN Utrecht, The Netherlands, for the Dutch competition.

SHEET MUSIC.

New Liszt Edition: Series 1, Vol. 14 - Dances, Marches and Scherzos 11 is now available in hardback.

Vols. 13 and 18 of the Series are due to be published this year, and will complete Series 1. Series 11, Transcriptions and Fantasies for Pianoforte, will come out from 1986 onwards.

Technical Studies. The recently-published Editio

Musica edition, in three volumes, is available from Boosey & Hawkes. In the present edition, the Technical Studies are published in their complete form for the first time, containing even those studies, single bars and free cadences (? cadenzas) which were not taken over from the autograph manuscript in the first edition. Current prices are £.7. 50 for Vols. 1 and 2 and £4. 75 for Vol. 3.

BOOK.

Ernst Burger of Munich is preparing an exciting addition to the Liszt literature, a publication

which will contain some 1,000 pictures altogether. The first part will be a "Biographie in Bildern" (Biography in Pictures), with approximately 500 pictures, a biographical summary, catalogue of works, and an exact concert chronology. The second part will present a Liszt Iconography (another 500 pictures), with material that Herr Burger has been collecting for 15 years. A great many of the pictures have not hitherto been published. Both parts may appear in one volume.

The book will be published by Hirmer Verlag of Munich in 1986, the Liszt Centenary Year. Further details will appear in the Newsletter in due course.

STAMPS.

"Music on Stamps" is the title of a set of books on the subject, from the pen of Sylvester Peat.

Part 3 deals with Liszt, and may be obtained from: Picton Print. Chippenham, Wilts. Price: £2. 50.

NEW MUSIC.

Liszt Society member Istvan Horvath-Thomas of Schwäbisch Hall in the Federal Republic of Germany announces the publication of a new composition of his. Entitled "Sports Scenes", it consists of six humoresques for piano solo:

1. Table Tennis.
2. Wrestling.
3. Weight Lifting.
4. 100 m sprint (10 sec.)
5. Swimming (dolphin).
6. Fencing.

Published by: Süddeutscher Musikverlag Willy Müller, Heidelberg.

Distributed by: Novello, Borough Green, Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 8DT.
Tel: Borough Green 883261 (STD 0732). Telex: 95583.

FRANCE CLIDAT.Keith Fagan writes:

Our patron France Clidat made a series of recordings of Liszt's music for French Decca some years ago which I reviewed for the Liszt Society, but which are now unfortunately hard to get or unavailable since French Decca went out of business.

Luckily, however, she has now started recording again, this time for Forlane, whose issues are distributed in this country by Harmonia Mundi, 19-21, Nile Street, London N1 7LR. The address of Forlane themselves is Forlane/UMIP, 15, rue de l'Ancienne Mairie, 92 100 Boulogne Billancourt, France.

I am glad to see that Clidat is not now confining herself exclusively to recordings of Liszt, for it does not assist the reputation of any artist to be type-cast as experienced in the music of one composer only. She has recorded a fine performance of the Rachmaninoff 3rd Concerto with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Zdenek Macal (UM/UMK 3535), and there is a delightful recital record (UM/UMK 3526) devoted to popular piano works by various composers including Liszt, Chopin, Debussy and Granados. These I have heard, but not her recent Forlane recordings of other works by Tchaikowsky, Grieg and Satie. Nor have I yet heard her re-recordings of the two Liszt Concertos on UM/UMK 3516.

But the most impressive recording featuring France Clidat that I have so far heard is a Liszt concert with the Radio-Tele Symphony Orchestra of Luxembourg conducted by Jean-Claude Casadesus. Part of the glory of this issue is that it is recorded in magnificent digital sound and is now even available on compact disc (16516), though the record number is UM 6516 and the cassette number (the version I actually possess) is UMK 6516. The orchestra plays Les Préludes and the 1st Mephisto Waltz as the opening and closing items, and in between Clidat gives us Totentanz and the Hungarian Fantasia.

The Luxembourg orchestra plays the orchestral pieces as brilliantly and convincingly as any of the better-known orchestras with better-known conductors who have recorded them, and France Clidat brings all her experience and musicianship to the two works for piano and orchestra. It is a frankly popular concert of "pot-boilers", but tuneful and well-written pot-boilers by a great composer who also happened to be, so far as the 19th century was concerned, the emperor of pot-boilers. I have listened to this cassette time and again. Given superb performances and just about the finest sound quality it is possible to achieve these days, I find it irresistible and recommend it with the warmest enthusiasm.

ELENA VARVAROVA.Frank Daunton writes:

The Newsletter of December 1984 reported high recommendation by the French Liszt Society's M. Roch Serra of a new recording of Liszt's music by the Russian-born pianist Elena Varvarova. I have now been able to listen to the record and can endorse his good opinion.

The choice of works is interesting because the Sonata in B minor is dedicated to Robert Schumann, and the Grandes Etudes de Paganini to Clara Schumann. They are well chosen to exhibit the pianist's quality, for extreme demands are encompassed both from the point of view of interpretation as well as technical accomplishment.

The Etudes are brought off most attractively with many felicitous touches, but of course the Sonata is the really big test. This is given a straightforward and well justified account which testifies to Varvarova's sound musical judgment. Mephistopheles is given less of his due than in more vivid performances, but everything is in proportion. At no time is the player less than equal to the demands made upon her, and the execution throughout shows the assured ease of the true virtuoso.

Elena Varvarova was born in 1950, her teachers in Moscow included Neuhaus, and she now lives in Paris. On the evidence of this record, she is a player to be reckoned with. The sound quality of the recording, Stefanotis PAM 602, is excellent. Imported by Conifer Records, Horton Rd, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 8JL.

LISZT CHICKERING RECORDING. Works by Liszt have been recorded on one of his own Chickering pianos. The pianist is Dag Achatz, and the pieces performed are: Side A: Consolation No. 3; Hungarian Rhapsody No. 3; Liebestraum No. 3; Ballade No. 2 in B minor. Side B: Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este; Nuages gris; En rêve; La lugubre gondola (second version); Am Grabe Richard Wagners.

Described as a World Première Recording, the record may be obtained from: Grammofon AB BIS, Våringavägen 6 S-182 63 Djursholm Sweden.

The interesting sleeve note by János Kárpáti contains the following remarks:

In the 19th century the Chickering firm was one of America's most important piano factories. It was founded at Boston in 1823 by Jonas Chickering, but initially only square and upright pianos were manufactured. A great impetus was given to the factory by the invention patented by Jonas Chickering in 1843: application of the cast-iron frame which gave the piano solidity and permitted higher tension of the strings.

With his pianos of a powerful sound and rich timbre, Chickering achieved success in Europe too. Out of the four gold medals awarded at the Paris World Exhibition in 1867, the Chickering took one, as well as Napoleon III's légion d'honneur. It was then that the fame of the Chickering grand pianos was at its peak. Around the turn of the century, however, the firm began to decline and in 1908 it merged into the American Piano Co. (today's Aeolian American Corporation).

Jonas Chickering's son and heir, Charles Francis, was induced not only by his ambition as a piano maker but also by his good business sense to crown the Paris success by co-operation with the greatest virtuoso of the day. He wanted to win over Franz Liszt for this purpose, but since the master was then spending most of his time in Rome, he had the award-winning piano transported thither and presented it to Liszt.....

However, it did not stay in Rome for long. Since its large size caused problems, at Carolyn Wittgenstein's suggestion it was housed at the home in Szekszárd of Liszt's friend Baron Antal Augusz, with whom Liszt often stayed during his visits to Hungary..... After the master's death, the Augusz family donated the piano to the Budapest Academy of Music, where it now adorns the Principal's room.

But yet another instrument bears witness to the connexion between Liszt and the Chickering firm. The Boston factory presented a second grand piano to Liszt at the end of the 1870s, at the time when it was manufacturing its best instruments and competing successfully with the Steinway factory; and after a dedication "Chickering & Sons à F. Liszt" had been engraved on its fallboard, the piano was forwarded to Budapest. We do not know the exact date of its arrival, but we do know the letter written by Liszt - concerning the housing of the instrument - to Ferenc Erkel, Director of the Academy of Music (Liszt himself was its President), from Weimar on 21 May 1881:

"Hochgeehrter Herr Director, lieber alter Freund. Wie schon gesagt soll der amerikaner Flügel Chickering's - gewiss ein herrliches Instrument - in dem Musik-Saal der Königlichen, ungarischen Landes Musik Akademie gestellt werden und dort bei ausnehmlichen Gelegenheiten seine vorzüglichen Dienste leisten."

Liszt's flat was also in the building of the Academy of Music..... His salon had a door opening directly on to the stage. There was a Bösendorfer grand piano in the salon, but on exceptional occasions - as the letter mentions - Liszt used the Chickering grand piano standing on the stage. And the master also made provisions for the future of the instrument, as he wrote to Ábrányi, Secretary of the Academy:

"Nach meinem baldigen Ableben gehört dieser Flügel, sowie meine ganze Budapester Besitznahme, der königlichen ungarischen Landes-Musik-Akademie."

The Chickering grand piano dedicated to Liszt is one of the most valuable treasures of the Liszt Collection at the Academy of Music. The recording was made on this instrument in the Great Concert Hall of the Academy. It deserves attention not only as a Liszt relic but also as an outstanding concert piano of the 1870s.....

SAINT ELISABETH AT ESZTERGOM. Malev (Hungarian Airlines) announce:

Il y a 120 ans, le 15 août 1865, Franz LISZT revenait dans son pays pour diriger personnellement, à l'occasion du 25^{me} anniversaire de l'Ecole Nationale de Musique, la première exécution de son oratorio La Légende de Sainte Elisabeth.

Cet été, en prélude à l'année LISZT, la Hongrie a décidé de commémorer cet événement en organisant le 15 août dans la Basilique d'ESZTERGOM une grande journée de festivités, au programme de laquelle figurera de nouveau La légende de Sainte Elisabeth.

Georges CZIFFRA clôturera cette journée en donnant quelques pièces de LISZT en l'honneur de son prestigieux compatriote.

LISZT PAINTING. The painter Charles Morrison writes:

I am a professional copyist of Old Master paintings, and have recently completed a portrait of Franz Liszt.

This is derived from the original by Henri Lehmann in the Musée Carnavalet, Paris, painted in 1839; it is an oil painting on linen canvas, size 30" x 24", and I think makes an impressive and decorative picture in its own right, as well as being a striking portrait of the Master when young.

In the ordinary way I should probably dispose of this through a dealer, but I thought that your Society, or one of its members, might like to have first refusal before I do so. I would expect the trade price to a customer to be at least £350, but I would be pleased to arrange a very substantial discount to ensure that it went to an appreciative home, and also, possibly, to benefit your Society's funds in some way.....

Mr. Morrison, whose address is: 39 Woodlands Road, Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 6NR (Tel: 01-560 3478), also offers portraits, after originals, of: Berlioz, Handel, Mozart, Purcell, Schubert, Verdi (Giuseppe and Margherita, separately), Wagner, Puccini; Maria Callas, Maria Malibran, Jenny Lind, Giuditta Pasta, Enzo Pinza.....

CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS
IN HUNGARY.

In Hungary, preparations for the Liszt Centenary celebrations continue apace. Among the events being planned are these:

Budapest, Spring 1986: A meeting of the I. S. C. M., one of whose main topics will be the late works of Liszt.

Szeged, 31 July (the exact centenary of Liszt's death): Liszt's Legend of St Elisabeth will be performed at the town's annual summer festival.

Budapest, 7 September: Opening of the former Academy of Music, and Liszt's flat therein.

Budapest, 8 to 24 September: As already mentioned, the International Liszt Piano Competition will be held between these dates.

Budapest, 25 September to 26 October: The Budapest Music Weeks, whose special feature is the music of Liszt, ending with a performance of Christus.

Budapest, 20 to 22 October: Liszt Symposium.

21 October: The Liszt Grand Prix for outstanding recordings of Liszt's music.

Budapest, 22 October (the 175th anniversary of Liszt's birth): Unveiling of a new Liszt statue (I have no information at present of site); and in the evening the concert, conducted by Doráti, with the Faust Symphony and 1st Piano Concert (with Kocsis); and an official speech by the Hungarian Minister for Cultural Affairs.