



# The Liszt Society Limited

## Newsletter

No. 31 - SUMMER 1987 : Edited by A. Williams.

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### MR. LOUIS KENTNER, CBE

His many friends and admirers throughout the world will be sad to learn of the death, at the age of 82, of our President, Mr. Louis Kentner, CBE. An appreciation of his life and work has been published recently in the little book "Kentner: a Symposium" edited by Harold Taylor, and there is no need to repeat it here. It will suffice to say that Kentner was born in Silesia on 19 July 1905 and after many travels, made his home in London in 1935. He became a British citizen in 1946. He joined the Committee of the Liszt Society at its formation in 1951 and accepted the invitation to become its President in 1965.

Kentner was always a fearless champion of the music of his compatriot, Ferenc Liszt. He performed his music in public at a time when it was regarded by most critics as "tawdry and meretricious", and to play Liszt in the concert hall of the 1930's was simply "not done". The understanding of Liszt's real stature as a composer that has come about only in recent years can be attributed, in appreciable measure, to the work of Louis Kentner.

Kentner's musical interests were, however, catholic. His repertoire was immense. He combined a sensitive ear with astonishing memory for detail, and was capable, in emergency, of performing at short notice works which he had not played in public for more than ten years. However, to me, the outstanding feature of his performances was his complete grasp of the formal and harmonic structure of the piece he was playing, without which music degenerates into a jumble of meaningless notes. He also had a gift for conveying the underlying emotional content of the work with sensitivity, yet without sentimentality. He was always good in the concert hall: he was even better when playing before a smaller group; and his many recitals after the Society's Annual General Meetings are something whose memories we shall always treasure.

Kentner was a working President, never a mere figurehead. Until quite recent years he attended most of our Council meetings and contributed actively to the discussion, enlivening it with his considerable sense of humour and balance. He was ever available for help and advice; and whenever I asked him on behalf of the Society whether he would be willing to play to us again, the reply was always: "Of course." And these recitals were as carefully prepared as anything he ever delivered.

Although acquainted with Kentner for many years, I did not know him well. We were trained in different disciplines. Like many others, I regarded him with a mixture of awe, admiration and affection.

I visited Kentner on the afternoon before his operation. He was alone at the time and greeted me cordially. He seemed in high spirits. Yes, he knew he had cancer. He knew that he might not recover from the operation which he was to undergo in a few hours' time. He knew that, even if the operation were successful, he might not live long. But what of it? There were more important things to talk about. And talk we did, in a most natural manner. I have never met a man who, with Death twitching his ear, was so completely serene and prepared for whatever might be in store for him.

I tried first to thank him for all the pleasure and instruction which he had given so many of us over the years. We went on to discuss the Liszt Society, of the work that had been accomplished and of what remained to be done. We talked about the complex character of Liszt himself, of the strange fact that so many artists and composers remain unknown and unappreciated until they are "discovered" by a few individuals, and of the many who may have been forgotten because nobody has "discovered" them. The conversation turned on modern music and whether the gift of absolute pitch is necessary for its understanding. He inquired of my own musical training and interests and assured me that there was useful work which the amateur could do in the musical world. We discoursed on the relation between music on the one hand, and physics and mathematics on the other.

We could have gone on much longer, but Griselda's quiet presence told me that my time was up. I looked at my watch. Incredibly, more than an hour had gone by. It had seemed like five minutes. I took my leave of him with a warm handshake.

When I entered Brompton Hospital that afternoon, I knew already that Louis Kentner was a great musician and teacher. When I left the hospital I had gained the certain knowledge that he was something much more important. He was a Great Soul.

Vernon Harrison

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Mr. Kentner died at his home in London on Tuesday, September 22nd, a few days after undergoing an operation for cancer of the throat. His funeral took place at Putney Vale Crematorium, Roehampton Vale, London SW15, on Monday, September 28th, in the presence of many of his friends. We shall miss him greatly, and our sympathy is extended to his widow, Griselda, at this sad time.

E.M.

LISZT RHAPSODIES  
FOR PIANO DUET.

The pianists Kathron Sturrock and Piers Lane will give a recital at the Wigmore Hall on Tuesday, 29 September, at which three of Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies will be performed in the little-known versions for piano duet.

The programme will be:

Milhaud:	Scaramouche	two pianos
Liszt:	Hungarian Rhapsodies 12, 5 and 2	piano duet
Bartók:	7 pieces from Mikrokosmos	two pianos
Schubert:	Rondo in A	piano duet
Mozart:	Sonata for 2 pianos in D major	two pianos

The recital is due to begin at 7.30 p.m. Tickets, at £2, £3, £4, £4.50, may be obtained by ringing 01 935 2141.

LISZT'S EDITION  
OF THE  
BEETHOVEN  
PIANO SONATAS.

At a gathering of members of the South Pacific Liszt Society earlier this year, Professor Maurice Hinson (of Louisville, Kentucky, United States of America) talked about the little-known Liszt edition of the Beethoven piano sonatas. "The significance of the edition, published only once by a minor German publisher in 1853, lies in the fact that it is almost an Urtext edition - something rarely found in 19th-century publications. Liszt added fingerings and pedal markings, and three notes to the final variation of Op. 109, correctly foot-noted. The only place where Beethoven's pedalling was changed is in Op. 31 No. 2, in the long recitative passages. Liszt was very famous in 1853, and an edition with his name as editor could be expected to sell well. The edition deserves re-publication, so that present-day performers can see how Liszt pedalled and fingered these masterpieces." (South Pacific Liszt Society Newsletter, April '87)

BOOKS.

Our Spring Newsletter gave brief details of sundry new books on and around Liszt. Here are a few more:

Franz Liszt Tagebuch 1827, edited by Detlef Altenburg and Rainer Kleinertz. Paul Neff Verlag, Vienna. 2 vols. The diary - or, as it might more properly be called, commonplace-book - kept by the 15-year-old Liszt in 1827. The first volume reproduces the entire diary in facsimile. The second prints Liszt's original French on each left-hand page and a German translation on the facing right-hand page. The volume is rounded off with a little background essay by the well-informed Detlef Altenburg.

Revolution & Religion in the Music of Liszt by Paul Merrick. Published by Cambridge University Press @ £35.

A paperback version of Alan Walker's Franz Liszt: the Virtuoso Years: 1811-1847 will be published in the United States of America this autumn.

Franz Liszt's Estate. 1. Books by Maria Eckhardt. Published Budapest, 1986. A catalogue and study of the books belonging to Liszt which were inherited by the Academy of Music, Budapest, on Liszt's death. Fascinating information about Liszt's own pencilled markings and annotations, reflecting his musical and extensive extra-musical interests. An excellent and invaluable book.

Kentner - A Symposium by Harold Taylor. Now available from the publishers, Kahn & Averill, 21 Pennard Mansions, Goldhawk Road, London W12. Also available in bookshops. Price £4.50. Royalties donated to Musicians Benevolent Fund.

Musica, details of which were given in a notice to members circulated before the Annual General Meeting in July, may now be obtained from The Librarian, Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea Library. Price £4.50.

SUB.

A reminder to members who have not yet forwarded to the Secretary a remittance for their £10 annual subscription to the Liszt Society, that it was due on July the 1st last.

SECRETARY.

A reminder that our Secretary is now Mrs. Audrey Ellison, whose new address - 135 Stevenage Road, Fulham, London SW6 6EP - will be valid by the time this Newsletter is out.

KING LEAR.

Liszt Society Publication Vol. 8 - L'Ouverture du Roi Lear by Berlioz, transcribed by Liszt - may be obtained (at a price of £7.50 plus postage) from Mrs. Ellison at the above address.

Leslie Howard (who was elected to the Council of the Liszt Society at the recent Annual General Meeting) will perform the King Lear overture at his Wigmore Hall recital on 10 October.

PIANO PIECE  
IN A FLAT, NO. 1.

This almost unknown work of Liszt's, dating from 1835-36 when the composer was 24, was given its first performance on 22 June last by our member William Wright, in a recital broadcast by the BBC in Scotland. Mr. Wright, who discovered the work in a piano magazine published in 1935, has sent the Liszt Society a copy, which we hope to publish. The MS is thought to be in a private collection. It was sold at Sotheby's by its former owner, Canon Cooke, in 1949, but Mr. Wright has not so far been able to trace its present owner.

LISZT WALTZES.

Leslie Howard's recording of Liszt's Waltzes for piano solo has now been issued by Hyperion Records Ltd., P.O. Box 25, Eltham, London SE9 1AX. No.: Hyperion A66201.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS,  
USA.

Under this heading on page 3 of our last Newsletter we notified members that they could obtain a catalogue of the music manuscripts, first editions and correspondence of Liszt in the Library of Congress, United States of America, free of charge by writing to the address given. Unfortunately, it now transpires that printing and production of the catalogue has been delayed in or by the United States' Government printing-office. The Music Division of the Library of Congress will, however, distribute it as soon as it becomes available.

NEW LISZT SOCIETIES.

A new Liszt society, the DEUTSCHE LISZT GESELLSCHAFT, was founded at Augsburg, West Germany, on 1 December 1986. President of the society is the Hungarian pianist Erika Lux, now living in Germany, Vice-President is our member Dieter Muck (whose initiative it was to found the society), and the Secretary is Helga Muck. The Deutsche Liszt Gesellschaft already has 60 members, and its inaugural concert took place successfully on 26 July. We warmly reciprocate the greetings and best wishes sent to us by this new Liszt society.

According to the latest edition of "Hungarian Music News", Liszt societies were also founded in Madrid and Buenos Aires last year.

A.W.

THE 1987 INTERNATIONAL MUSIC SEMINAR IN WEIMAR.Elgin Bonayne writes:

It is astonishing, considering its size, what a large variety of conferences are held in Weimar every year. The Elephant Hotel in the market place, which existed in Goethe's time and is the only hotel available to visitors from the West, seems to be able to adapt itself effortlessly to whatever society or nationality it plays host to. Had you wandered into the dining room last Easter, you would have imagined yourself suddenly transported to the Randolph Hotel in Oxford, as you heard those cultured English voices celebrating Shakespeare, whose statue stands in the Goethe Park, smiling and melancholy, depending on which side of it you happen to be standing. Most of the year there are daily busloads of tourists, from Eastern as well as Western Europe, who wish to see the town where, over the centuries, everybody who was anybody seems to have lived for a time. All this activity reaches its peak for two weeks every July, when the Franz Liszt Music Academy opens its doors to some 600 music students and teachers for the most intense, exhilarating and ultimately exhausting International Seminar. This year was the 28th such occasion and my fifth attendance at it. The students come from Bulgaria, Rumania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, West Germany, Iceland, China, Japan, Australia, Switzerland - to mention just some of the countries - and up to now Great Britain has been represented solely by myself and my son, who has been studying there for the past two and a half years and is no longer regarded as "foreign". This year, however, two more British Passports turned up in the box being taken to the police station for the obligatory stamp, and the excitement in the Organisations Büro was so great that I received a message informing me of the event and telling me that, in case he did not speak German, they had arranged for the young man (a conducting student from Edgware) to have the room next to my son's in the Student Home. This was typical of the effort made by the organisers to make everyone feel as happy as possible. The other British Passport belonged to a pianist from the Royal College of Music, whose grandparents turned out to be living only a few streets away from our house in Wimbledon!

A marble bust of a comparatively young Franz Liszt stands in a niche in the entrance hall of the Music School, facing the stairs where the newly arrived students race up and down locating their Course rooms and desperately trying to find somewhere to practise. Liszt would have been delighted by all this, for the Music School was his brainchild. Such institutions were concerned in his day solely with the training of soloists, mainly pianists, violinists and singers; but he was far-sighted enough to see the necessity for a school for orchestral players, and as early as 1855 he started to try to persuade the Grand Duke Carl Alexander to sponsor such an institution. The vociferous and not entirely disinterested support he received from Wagner proved less than helpful, for the King of Saxony, who had to be consulted on all matters involving money, still regarded Wagner with great suspicion because of his participation in the ill-fated Dresden uprising a few years earlier, and therefore any cause he supported as probably potentially subversive. Liszt succeeded in the end, however, and in 1872 Germany's first Orchestral Music School was opened in Weimar. At first it was housed in the Wittumspalais, a small palace which had belonged to the Duchess Anna Amalia, the Grand Duke Carl August's widowed mother; but under its energetic and imaginative Director, Carl Müller-Hartung, it soon needed more space, and the neighbouring Granary and the old church belonging to the Franciscan Monastery upon whose site the Wittumspalais had been built, were converted for the purpose. Giving his wholehearted support to Müller-Hartung's endeavours, Liszt presented the school with three valuable grand pianos and a 3-manual pedal harmonium. Hans von Bülow also contributed by giving lecture-recitals, conducting the orchestra, and donating, over a period of time, more than 5,000 Marks for scholarships. In 1885 an Opera School was added, also the first of its kind, and both flourished in this building which is still in use today. In 1950 the school was given

permission to take over the Administration Building belonging to the Government of Thuringia, which had moved its seat to Erfurt; but it was not until 1956 that the school finally received the name Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt.

As a Summer School of Music the Seminar in Weimar is the most extensive in Europe, perhaps in the world. Every year there are courses for piano, strings, chamber music, singing, and a variety of wind instruments. This year these included the clarinet and trombone; previously, in 1984 for instance, there were courses for flute, oboe, trumpet and horn. Every other year there is a course for conductors, in which members of the Jena Philharmonic Orchestra participate. They are on hand daily from 9.30 until 1 o'clock (excluding Sundays). This year their patience nearly reached breaking point when they were obliged to embark on a play-through of the third movement of the Eroica Symphony for the 30th time in one morning!

All the students have to state on their application forms whether they wish to be active or passive. The active ones have to audition to their chosen professor on arrival, and he selects ten or a dozen to play in the public Master Classes, held every morning from 9.00 until 1 o'clock. The unsuccessful applicants join the passive ones as audience. There is much to be said for being passive, as one has more time and opportunity to visit other courses, whereas the active ones often find themselves having a lesson every other day and have to practise a great deal. The professors are well-known performers who have been invited from all parts of the globe. This year the pianists were Jacob Lateiner from America, Bernhard Ringeisen from France, Detlef Kraus from West Germany, and Amadeus Webersinke, a much revered pianist and teacher from Leipzig. The other main courses also had three or four visiting artists each, some coming from China, the USSR and Finland. Every evening one of the guest-professors gives a concert in the Weimarahalle. At the opening concert this year, Lateiner played Beethoven's 5th Piano Concerto with the Jena Philharmonic Orchestra; at the closing one Ringeisen played Chopin's Concerto in F minor. Kraus gave a recital on a "Fantasy" theme, in which he played Bach's Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue, Mozart's Fantasy in D minor, Schumann's in C, Brahms' Seven Fantasies, Op. 116, and Chopin's Fantasy in F minor. Webersinke gave a recital entirely devoted to Bach. Towards the end of the Seminar there are also concerts in the afternoons, at which the more gifted students perform. These take place in the Saal am Palais, an attractive and intimate concert hall belonging to the old Music School.

Apart from the obvious stimulus of meeting students from so many different countries, the personal contact with international performing artists is also very valuable. Many of them come regularly, and so it is possible for those students who attend the Seminar more than once to get to know them well. Lore Fischer, a well-known singer and teacher from West Germany, has been coming every year since 1963. The recent Seminar saw the first visit from a Chinese guest-professor, who gave a special course in teaching the violin to children. However, my vote for "Guest Professor of the Year" would go to the American 'cellist Nathaniel Rosen, who gave a brilliant but highly controversial performance of Haydn's Concerto in D. The American style of showmanship is an unfamiliar experience for most Eastern European audiences. A winner of the Tchaikovsky Prize and a phenomenal instrumentalist, Rosen breezed through his lessons, blowing away some cobwebs in passing, which the students thoroughly appreciated after they had recovered from the initial shock of his apparently irreverent attitude to music-making.

By the final concert I had reached saturation point and could not have taken in another note. At 8.00 the next morning all the students travelling to the West assembled at Weimar's station for the train to Frankfurt am Main, many of them still half asleep after a night of farewell parties in the Student Home. I found myself in a compartment with two of the conducting students, who, with much waving of arms, went over their entire course. The other passengers in our compartment were obviously convinced we were complete lunatics, but as the train was full there was no possibility for them to find other seats, and so they frequently escaped into the corridor to smoke a tranquillising cigarette. Never before have I sat in a smoking compartment which remained totally unpolluted for five whole hours!