

# LISZT SOCIETY

## Newsletter

N° 89-90

September 2006

People matter most. We make no apology for replacing the usual Editorial section with sad news: obituary notices of people to whom we owe much for their support and friendship over the years.

### PAULINE POCKNELL

The death of Pauline Pocknell on 11 August 2006 is a great loss to Liszt research and a personal sadness for many of us who knew her.

In volume 1 of his 3-volume biography of Liszt, *Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years: 1811-1847*, Alan Walker paid tribute to Pauline with the words "To Pauline Pocknell, my loyal assistant, who holds with Blake the 'holiness of the minute particular' and has saved me from many an inconsistency, I extend my warmest personal regards." In further tribute to her, in volume 2 he wrote "My warmest words of praise must be reserved for my faithful assistant Pauline Pocknell, who has been the recipient of a dazzling array of enquiries across the years, has dealt with a great deal of correspondence on my behalf, and has often burned the midnight oil while preparing synopses, transcriptions, translations, and commentary on foreign-language material of all kinds related to my work. I admire the way she swims so elegantly through the boiling ocean of Liszt research while I am merely buffeted by its waves. Her support has been exemplary, and it is a pleasure to acknowledge it here." And in the third and final volume he acknowledges her support "... in a myriad of ways, but especially through translations, transcriptions, and archival work. She treated my book with the same respect as if it were her own. Without even realising it she also provided me with a bonus, for she fulfilled one of Liszt's own best maxims: 'Create memories!'" In 2000, Pendragon Press published Pauline's own *Franz Liszt and Agnes Street-Klindworth: A Correspondence 1854-1886*. This 452-page fascinating volume is not only an important contribution to Liszt research, but also

testimony to Pauline's painstaking research in the cause of understanding Liszt and his music.

But those of us that had the pleasure of knowing Pauline and enjoying her company feel keenly the loss of her as a person. She enjoyed life in spite of some of the misfortunes it dealt her—and her willingness to share her enthusiasm for all things Lisztian, for her adopted homeland of Canada and the environs of Hamilton which she generously introduced to several of us, endeared her to us. Above all, her enthusiasm for life makes it all the harder to accept that she is no longer with us. We are grateful for the legacy she has left Lisztian research and for the delightful memories she has left with those who knew her.

JH

### ELSIE HARRISON

We are also saddened to record the death at the age of 97 of Elsie Harrison, widow of the late Vernon Harrison who was the prime stimulus for the creation 55 years ago of the Liszt Society. Elsie was a delightful person and supportive of Vernon in his activities for the Society as one-time Treasurer and, later, Chairman. We were pleased that she had kept in touch with the Society and, in particular, that she had attended our 50<sup>th</sup> year anniversary recital at which we paid tribute to Vernon. Without her unassuming support, it is doubtful if the Society would have come into being and flourished so quickly. The Society was represented at her funeral by Vice-President Paul Gregory.

### NOEL COLEMAN

We also have to announce with regret the death of Dr Noel Coleman who was born in the UK, but emigrated to Australia several years ago. Noel was an ardent Lisztian and accomplished pianist who joined the Society in 1989. He last visited the UK a year ago when he met up with Chris Srawley, a good friend from their schooldays. He took the opportunity kindly to donate to the Society the two volumes of the reconstructed edition of *Harmonies Poétiques*, edited by member Albert Brussee and a CD played by Albert of the same work.

## JOURNAL 2006

The Society has given top priority in the last several months to the production of the current (2006) *Journal*. We have for the last couple of years told you of our hope and ambition to bring its publication back into the year of its title and, thanks to the dedication of our Chairman, Elgin Ronayne, taking on the role of Editor we will be achieving this goal shortly.

As we write, the 2006 *Music Section* has been printed, thanks to our President, Leslie Howard, who has produced it with help from Michael Short and Ken Souter. The ms for the *Text Section* is with our Printer and we expect publication to be at about the time of our Annual Day (20 October).

The 2006 *Text Section* (106 pages) comprises:

### Editorial (Elgin Ronayne)

*The Hexameron: Wishful Thinking, Stylistic Rivalry and Lisztian Conquest in 1830s Paris* (Karl Lutchmayer)

*Liszt and the Boissiers: Notes on a Musical Education* (John Rink)

*Memories of Franz Liszt* (Count Gèza Zichy edited by Elgin Ronayne)

*Conventions, Genres, Practices in the Performance of Liszt's Music* (Ian Pace).

The 2006 *Music Section* (58 pages) comprises:

### Music for solo pianoforte

*Soirées de Vienne—Valses-Caprices d'après F. Schubert n° 6* (original version S427/6i) and Version for Sophie Menter (S427/6ii) \*

*Mélodies hongroises d'après Fr. Schubert n° 2: Marche hongroise* (version for Sophie Menter) (S425/2iv) \*

### Choral Music

#### *Das Deutsche Vaterland!*

(first setting) for men's choir and orchestra—Liszt's version for men's choir and piano (S74bis)

(first setting)—Liszt's correction sheet to the eighth verse \*

(second setting)—for men's choir *a capella* (S74a) \*

\* first publication

## ANNUAL DAY and ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This year's Annual Day will be held at the Royal College of Music, Prince Consort Road, South Kensington, London SW7 2BS on **Friday, 20 October 2006 13:00**.

### Programme

- 13:00 recital by Karl Lutchmayer \*
- 14:30 masterclass given by Leslie Howard for students of the College
- 17:30 Break for refreshments
- 18:15 Annual General Meeting:  
Apologies for absence  
Minutes of the previous meeting  
Presentation of Report and Accounts  
Subscriptions 2007  
Election of Members of Council  
Appointment of Auditors
- 19:15 Concert given by students of the College
- 20:30 end of concert

[all times after 14:30 are approximate]

\* the programme for the recital is as follows:

Liszt/Verdi	<i>Réminiscences de Simon Boccanegra</i>
Humphrey Searle	<i>Piano Sonata op21</i> **
Liszt et al	<i>Hexameron</i>
Liszt	<i>Introduction</i>
Bellini—Liszt	<i>Tema</i>
Thalberg	<i>var 1</i>
Pixis	<i>var 3</i>
Liszt	<i>Interlude 1</i>
Herz	<i>var 4</i>
Czerny	<i>var 5</i>
Liszt	<i>Interlude 2</i>
Chopin	<i>var 6</i>
Liszt	<i>Interlude 3</i>
Liszt	<i>Finale</i>

\*\* The Searle *Sonata* is based on the structure of the Liszt sonata, and as such is in one movement with a number of sub-sections. However, as a number of these are rather short, to print out all the microcosmic structural designations, would probably be rather more confusing here. Karl Lutchmayer will instead introduce it with a few words, as he will also for the *Hexameron* and possibly the Liszt/Verdi).

We are pleased that we will be joined for this recital by Fiona Searle, wife of the late Humphrey Searle.

## Karl Lutchmayer

Member Karl Lutchmayer studied with Peter Wallfisch and John Barstow at the Royal College of Music and subsequently with Lev Naumov at the Moscow Conservatoire, Gyorgy Sandor, and Martino Tirimo. He is a high profile lecturer, and has created the 'Conversational Concert' format of public lecture-recitals. He has guest-lectured at the Juillard and Manhattan Schools in New York and frequently gives masterclasses.

He was awarded the prestigious Constant & Kit Lambert Fellowship by The Worshipful Company of Musicians, following which he returned as Fellow to the Royal College of Music, where he created a piano repertoire course, lectured on the Masters Degree programme, coached contemporary piano music and designed, established and delivered the pioneering Performance in Perspective series of lecture-recitals. He is now Professor of Performing Practice at Trinity College of Music. He has given a number of public talks on music, including being a key-note speaker at the Incorporated Society of Musicians' Annual Conference and regular pre-concert talks at the Wigmore Hall.

A passionate advocate of contemporary music, he has given numerous premières, and had works written for him by Julian Anderson, Richard Causton, and Kenneth Hesketh. He regularly performs with his own chamber collective, Dialogos, as well as the Continuum Ensemble, with whom he has appeared as chamber musician and soloist. He has also been the soloist in several performances of Messiaen's *Turangalila Symphony*, and he took part in the Stockhausen festival at the Barbican Centre.

## LISZT AT EXMOUTH

by James Vincent

At first sight one might be surprised to learn that Liszt, even at the height of his fame, performed, at times, in relatively obscure backwaters. One imagines that this was the lot of most travelling virtuosi of the day—presumably an inevitable consequence of the slow rate of travel of that period. No jetting between, say, Paris and London for Liszt! And if one had to travel for three or four days between major venues why not play at minor watering holes along the way? The returns, no doubt, were modest, but enough, perhaps, to cover overnight expenses.

Some musician friends of mine—Martin Jones, a pianist, and his wife Frances, a versatile player of many instruments—were intrigued to find, whilst staying at a small hotel in Exmouth, a plaque

indicating that Liszt had played there in 1840. Martin and Frances have since been piecing together some fascinating material about Liszt's visit which I summarise here:

The event was advertised in Trewman's Exeter Flying Post, n° 3899 dated 13 August 1840:

Ewen's Beacon Hotel, Exmouth. Grand Morning Concert, Monday, August 24th. Great Attraction, M.Liszt. Mr Lavenu has the honor to inform the Nobility and Gentry that he has succeeded in engaging M. Liszt, who will on this occasion perform his Grand Galop Chromatique, also a grand duet with Mr Mori. Mlle de Varny, Prima Donna of La Scala, Italian Opera, Paris, and Her Majesty's Theatre, London, will sing some of her most popular Arias and Duos, Miss Louisa Bassano of the Nobility's Concerts will sing some of her admired Airs and Ballads. Mr J. Parry will sing some of his latest and most admired compositions. Mr Lavenu will preside at the Piano forte. Family tickets to admit four, 21s., Single ticket 6s., to be had at Ewen's Beacon Hotel and Mr Nicks, Exmouth.

The hotel still exists as the Manor Hotel and has a function room that appears to date back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and is presumably where Liszt performed at 1pm on the 24 August 1840. It has so far proved impossible to establish whether Liszt played anything apart from the *Galop* and the "grand duet with Mr Mori". Unfortunately there appears to have been no review of the concert in the local press. Can any member shed further light on the programme? As an interesting aside, the *Galop* was very likely the most popular piece in Liszt's repertoire in the early 1840s. He is known to have performed the piece at least seventy times in Germany alone between 1840 and 1845.

In a letter to Marie d'Agoult dated 17 August, Chichester, Liszt gives a colourful account of the other personalities travelling with him:

The programme always remains the same, of course; for the curiosity of the thing I enclose one with this letter. Throughout the week we shall be giving two concerts almost every day. The party consists of Mlle de Varny who has just married the editor of *L'Alliance*, a new French newspaper published in London. She is more good than bad; French in appearance and manners...Prima Donna assoluta, which is to say, absolutely detestable. Miss Bassano (who has nothing in common with the Duke) is a pleasant, unpretentious woman. Mori and I reckon on buying her a cloak, for her present one is hideous. John Parry, whom you met in London, is our Grazioso. Then there are Lavenu and Frank Mori.

Mori was Lavenu's 20-year-old brother-in-law and business partner, whose only (!) musical function was to partner Liszt in piano duets. Lavenu mainly accompanied de Varny and Bassano. John Parry did comic songs (such as "The Musical Husband", "Wanted a Governess" and "The Inchcape Bell" plus selected arias from opera.

Lavenu, in addition to "presiding at the piano" was the tour promoter. Liszt clearly had some

doubts as to his competence in this latter respect, writing home to Marie:

Lavenu is losing a fair amount of money at present. The overheads are huge. For the past two days we were equipped with four horses and two postillions. Everywhere we stay at the best hotel. In this respect nothing could be more satisfactory. But I am sorry he has not been able to handle the business side more efficiently. To be fair, we have been only in minor places up to now (with the exception of Southampton) and he is counting upon Bath, Exeter, Plymouth etc to recoup. The countryside through which we have passed recently is charming. Sidmouth and Exmouth, whence I am writing, seem especially fine. Everywhere there are admirable parks...for myself, I simply enjoy the pleasure of rapid (!) travel, and fortunately we have only the very best postillions.

In another letter Liszt was pleased to report:

The audiences and the English newspapers are unanimous in their praise of me. ... I am everywhere honoured by requests for an encore and all the people are much pleased. Takings are still mediocre."

Liszt was in sporadic correspondence with Marie d'Agoult throughout the tour, but had been unable to write to Marie as regularly as she had hoped and he had promised, owing to ill-health. On the day of the Beacon Hotel concert, however, he was able to write:

Thanks to British religiosity I was able to stay in bed all day yesterday, and I am feeling better. I believe—rare thing—that I have found a reasonably good doctor who has promised to get rid of the fever without using extreme methods.

In the evening of the day of the Beacon Hotel concert, the party was due to perform at the Assembly Rooms in Teignmouth. It was deemed too far to travel to Teignmouth via Exeter, making a long circuit around the Exe estuary, and accordingly the party "drove" across the sands at low tide, presumably by way of horse-drawn carriage. On the basis of the topography of the estuary at that period this appears to be almost impossible! Certainly, very low tides can occur in that area but, even so, the shallowest parts of the main Exe channel, according to an 1857 survey map, are recorded as nine feet deep. What is more it seems the party were carrying with them a travelling piano! It is hard to believe that the extent or height of the sandbanks could have been significantly different in 1857 than when Liszt and his companions crossed the estuary in 1840. How then did the party "drive" across to Dawlish and then on to Teignmouth? Can any member shed any light on this?

The record of this journey includes an interesting detail. At one point the party witnessed an enormous beached fish—"all mouth" according to Mr Parry, who made a sketch of it. So closely did they examine this phenomenon that they were

considerably late in arriving in Teignmouth (Mr Parry later acknowledges that the audience was "tired of waiting").

The 1857 survey map shows a large sandbank named as "Monster Sand". It is tempting to believe that this might be a reference to the sighting of the "enormous beached fish" seen by Liszt and his companions.

So ended Liszt's one and only (as far as I am aware!) visit to Exmouth.

## APPENDIX

### Liszt's Use of Alphorn Melodies

As an appendix to these comments, members may be interested to know that Frances Jones is a rare exponent of the alphorn. This instrument was traditionally played in the Swiss Alps for the purpose of communication and also to lead the cattle up to the summer pastures. During the winter months strolling alphorn players travelled from village to village giving impromptu recitals. Liszt, of course, made use of a number of these traditional folk tunes in various of his own compositions and alphorn melodies appear throughout the three books of his *Album d'un voyageur* dating from 1836 (S156): in, for instance, *La Chapelle de Guillaume Tell* (Book 1, several of the *Fleurs mélodiques des Alpes* (Book 2) and the *Paraphrases 'Un soir dans les montagnes'* (evening being the time when the lone herdsman typically played for the villagers far below to signal "All's well!") and *Ranz de vaches* from Book 3. 'Ranz' is the Swiss dialect word for the annual procession of animals to and from the high summer meadows.

Frances has tracked down the original folk sources of these tunes and performs them on occasion. May I suggest that a real "coup" for a future Liszt Society event might be to request Frances to play the original themes on the alphorn to be followed by the related Liszt pieces on the piano (played by a willing member!)?

Apart from the musical interest, this would also be a visual treat. Frances' alphorn was made in 2005 by Swiss maker Roger Zanetti and is approximately fourteen feet long! It is made of carbon fibre, is telescopic and can be set up in a number of different tonalities. It weighs just two and a half pounds and is hand-painted with a traditional Swiss design by Margaret Rees.

Those interested in learning more will be intrigued by Frances' website: [www.amazingalphorn.com](http://www.amazingalphorn.com). The site includes a detailed history of the alphorn and many more instances of works in which composers have incorporated alphorn melodies.

Finally, I add my personal thanks to Frances and Martin for providing me with so much fascinating new material.

JV

### NEW MEMBERS

We are pleased to welcome new members:

Gerard Fitzpatrick (Wigan, Lancs)  
Colin Hargreaves (Northampton)  
Simon Hurley (Coleford, Glos)  
David Jones (Wrexham)  
Karl Lutchmayer (London SW110)

### LIBRARY

We are delighted by and most grateful to Kenneth Souter for the donation to the Liszt Society Library of scores of 17 works by Liszt.

We are still awaiting a volunteer to catalogue our modest but expanding library of books, scores, LPs and CDs.

### CD REVIEW

by Jonathan Welsh

Liszt Piano Recital by Leif Ove Andsnes

*Après une lecture du Dante. Fantasia quasi sonata (Années de pèlerinage 2<sup>e</sup> année, Italie); Valse oubliée n° 4; Ballade n° 2 in b minor; Mephisto Waltz n° 2; Andante lagrimoso (Harmonies poétiques et religieuses n° 9); Mephisto Waltz n° 1.* EMI 7243 5 57002 2 3.

Here we have a disc, released in 2001 on the EMI label of Leif Ove Andsnes playing assorted pieces by Liszt from his middle and later years.

The disc begins with a blisteringly fast reading of *Après une lecture de Dante, Fantasia quasi Sonata* (from the second book of the *Années de Pèlerinage* – Italy; S161/7—final version). Despite being played at a terrific pace, the piece is very well done. The beginning is suitably evocative of the descent into hell and the later sections, depicting moments of calm are beautifully phrased and pedalled—Leif Andsnes has shown elsewhere in recordings his ability to impart feeling to themes and here manages especially well in these slower, more romantic sections. There is also no lack of virtuosity in the more difficult passages!

After this, he launches into the *Valse Oubliée* n° 4 (S215), written towards the end of Liszt's life. Here there is much evidence of lightness of touch, especially at the beginning, and no shortage of power when called for later in the score. This piece at the end trails off into nothing and he copes well with this technique, which Liszt seems fond of in his later works. This is another excellent performance of a strange little work.

Next follows the fourth and final *Mephisto Waltz* (S696), left incomplete (but playable) at the composers' death. This is again well played, phrased and suitably sinister in its outlook.

The fourth piece on the disc is the fourth version of Liszt's song after a poem by Lichnowsky, about the retreat he visited on the Rhine with Marie d'Agoult and their children – *Die Zelle in Nannonwerth* (S274 / 4). The original version was for soprano and piano but Liszt was obviously fond of the piece and so arranged it later for solo piano. This is the latest version subtitled *Elégie* which dates from Liszt's last years. This is a very mournful little piece, not often played but deserving of a place in the repertoire. Leif Andsnes obviously feels at home in this piece, as the result is beautiful and very sad at the end.

He then plays the *Second Ballade in B minor*, S171, which is probably one of Liszt's best-known pieces. The beginning is suitably mysterious, with the chromatic rumblings in the base leading later on to a lovely section in F sharp major. The *Allegro deciso* section is played almost without any pedal and comes across very fast and clear. The piece goes through several changes of mood and key all of which gel together very well in this performance. The ending is suitably romantic despite the storms that took place earlier in the piece!

After this, we find the Second of the *Mephisto Waltzes* (S515), the one dating from 1880–81 and also, like n° 1, originally for orchestra. This is a decidedly odd piece and the contrasting elements of it hold together very well here and Leif Andsnes follows some of the (alternative) *ossia* readings towards the end (a little disconcerting if you are used to the standard text!). An excellent performance again of another little-known piece.

The penultimate track on this CD is the *Andante lagrimoso* from the final version of *Harmonies Poétiques et Religieuses* (S173/9). For me this is the least convincing track on the CD—it just did not seem *lagrimoso* enough! However, it is superbly played and suitably impassioned in the middle where the key settles down to C major (as opposed to B major in which it starts). Also, the ending seemed to happen too suddenly for my liking.

Finally, we have the *First Mephisto Waltz* (S514) certainly one of Liszt's well-known pieces. As with the *Dante Sonata*, this is terrifically fast, where indicated, and the middle, more romantic section is beautifully phrased and played. When the speed picks up again, towards the end, the effect is amazing—the clarity in the upper notes is superb! The very ending (after a short cadenza like section) is a whirlwind of notes with a suitably rousing conclusion.

Overall, an excellent disc with some useful (if short) notes which give instances of how the pieces are connected to one another as well as some information about other pieces from the cycles and about the man himself.

JW

## MY FIRST ENCOUNTER(S) WITH THE MUSIC OF LISZT

by Mikael Rasmusson

Some time ago we started an irregular series on the subject of 'How I came to know the music of Liszt'. We are pleased to continue the series with the following from Mikael Rasmusson and invite other members to send in their recollections.

This little collection of memories is possibly not presented in a strict chronological order, but I first found out about Liszt and his music in the early eighties. It was of course on TV (I was in my early teens), where they showed a programme about music of the romantic period.

Liszt was mentioned very briefly, and they showed him as an old man and played excerpts from the *Liebestraum* (n° 3 of course) and the *Second Hungarian Rhapsody*. I do remember that I enjoyed *Second Hungarian Rhapsody*, but the *Liebestraum* was a very strange piece. Funny (Quirky) harmonies and the melody based on only one note (C) in a low register! I think I dismissed the *Liebestraum* at that time.

About two years later I got my own radio with a cassette deck. I started to record music from the radio. It was mostly pop, but I also recorded Nielsen's *Fourth Symphony*, Liszt's *Les Preludes* and *Aus der Wiege bis zum Grabe*.

During that same period I heard the *Second Piano Concerto* live. What a strange piece! Is this romantic music like Tchaikovsky or Brahms? Eventually, I acquired one LP with the Piano Concerti and another one with the *Dante Symphony*. The *Dante* was easy to grasp, but it took me a year or so before I understood the Concerti to some extent.

Since then, my Liszt addiction has only increased. By 1986, I was prepared for big celebrations, but not much happened (at least in Sweden) or was reported in Swedish media. Now it is 2006 and I have endured some poor recordings among the good ones (many live performances have often been worse), but I still have not lost my passion for Liszt's music. *Preludes et Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* was a fantastic discovery (for me at

least), and it showed yet another side in Liszt's overwhelming musical personality.

MR

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

Please note that renewal of membership will be due on 1 January 2007 and may be made at the Annual Day meeting.

Cheques etc should be made payable in pounds sterling (£, GBP) to 'The Liszt Society' not to individual officers of the Society.

Current rates: £15 UK, £20 Europe, £22 elsewhere, Full-time students: *concessionary rate on application*.

## LISZT THE MAN 23

...Emperor Nicholas having said to Liszt: 'I appreciate your great talent, but two things displease me about you: your political opinions (at that time Liszt was a fervent admirer of Father Enfantin) and your long hair; the pianist replied coldly:—'I regret that my hair displeases Your Majesty; as for my political opinions, they would be dangerous only if I had at my disposal an army to make them respected.

recalled by Agnes Street-Klindworth and quoted in  
*Franz Liszt and Agnes Street-Klindworth: a Correspondence, 1854–1886* by Pauline Pocknell  
(Pendragon Press 200)

## STOP PRESS: EVENT

We have just learned of a forthcoming event: a soirée at the home of Dave Butt on Saturday 28 October 2006 15:00. a flyer about this is enclosed.

Names of members normally appear throughout in bold  
Any references to 'the Secretary', unless otherwise indicated, refer to the Secretary of the Liszt Society at the address below.

The Society does not necessarily agree with or endorse any opinions expressed in the *Newsletter*.

❖ available on loan to UK members

Membership subscription rates (1 January - 31 December)  
UK £15, EU £20, elsewhere £22

Further details are available from the Secretary at the address below.

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