



LISZT

OPERA AND SONG FOR SOLO PIANO

GÁBOR FARKAS



STEINWAY & SONS

GÁBOR FARKAS graduated from the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, Budapest where he finished his DLA studies in 2014 under the mentorship of Zoltán Kocsis. He was also a student of Prof. William Grant Naboré at the International Piano Academy Lake Como. He won the International Liszt Piano Competition in Weimar in 2009, the Hungarian National Radio's Piano Competition in 2003 and the Béla Bartók Piano Competition in Baden bei Wien in 2000. In 2012 he won the Franz Liszt Award (highest Hungarian State Award).



He made his debut at Carnegie Hall in 2016 as the winner of the 2015 prize from New York Concert Artists & Associates. He has performed worldwide at Teatro la Fenice, BOZAR, Konzerthaus Berlin, Auditorio Nacional de Música Madrid, NCPA Concert Hall Beijing, Seoul Art Center, Oriental Art Center Shanghai and Bunka Kaikan Tokyo, among others.

He has worked with such well known conductors as Zoltán Kocsis, Ádám Fischer, Olli Mustonen, Philippe Bender, George Tchitchinadze, Olaf Henzold, Kobayashi Ken-Ichiro and Tamás Vásáry. His debut recording, *An Evening with Liszt* won the Grand Prix award as best Liszt recording of 2009 presented by the Franz Liszt International Society. His second album was a recording of the Official Opening Concert of the Liszt Year, 2011 with Zoltán Kocsis and the Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra. He has recorded for Brilliant Classics and Hungaroton Records. This release is his debut album on the Steinway & Sons label.

He is Professor at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, Budapest and regularly gives master classes at the Tokyo College of Music, Japan. He is a jury member at the PTNA International Piano Competition, Tokyo.


LISZT LISTENING (OR: KNOW THYSELF!)

As Alfred Brendel wrote in “Musical Thoughts and Afterthoughts”: “It is a peculiarity of Liszt’s music that it faithfully and fatally mirrors the character of its interpreter. When his works give the impression of being hollow, superficial and pretentious, the fault lies usually with the performer, occasionally with the (prejudiced) listener, and only rarely with Liszt himself.”

That makes Liszt something akin to Albert Schweitzer’s Jesus: We see in him who we are; a musical mirror of the soul. Perhaps that explains to some degree why Liszt is — assuming this is true because it certainly *feels* true — of greater fascination to performers than listeners. In any case, for one of the best-known composers by name, he seems fairly seldom listened to. He is massively recorded, but rarely programmed in concert... except by pianists, where a select few types love him. He is the ultimate challenge: To face — and to know — oneself as a musician.

There is also the technical aspect, of course: The prowess Liszt demands, the ability that can be shown performing him, the challenge it presents, the reward it brings, and the simple fact that Liszt really knew how to write for the piano. Especially when he took the time, effort, and care to revise his works meticulously. Such revisions as he made, to my knowledge, were always away from bombast; away from showmanship and towards greater inwardness.

This shows a side of Liszt that is not just drawing-room virtuosity, quick runs, swooning ladies, double octaves, and jealous husbands. That is, so claim the likes of Alfred Brendel or Robert Schumann or Claudio Arrau, the *real* Liszt. Not the



composer whose own relatives — especially the Wagner branch — still felt embarrassed to acknowledge as a composer. It shows Liszt's profundity, sincerity, depth of feeling, and great nuance both of tonal color and imagination. If, that is, the performer plays along and doesn't consider Liszt a convenient "vehicle for... mere manual ability [lacking] any deeper musical insight." (Brendel)

Only because we live in an age where no one would readily admit that they do not take Liszt seriously as a composer (a stance perfectly acceptable in polite society just two, three generations ago), that does not mean we *do* all take him seriously nowadays. It therefore pays as much as ever to listen closely to the music, even if Liszt is 'only' re-arranging other composer's works or transcribing his original self as in the concluding work on Gábor Farkas' recital, Liszt's *Totentanz*.

This 'danse macabre', whether inspired by Hans Holbein's picture "Der Todtentanz" or a mural in the hall of Pisa's Campo Santo or Berlioz' "Song d'une nuit du Sabbat" (*Symphonie fantastique*, which similarly weaves the Dies irae into the music), asks the pianist not only to supply tonal colors and characterization for his part, but also simulate the orchestra that accompanies the piano in the original version. It's like a sandbox of color for a pianist to play in, and if the transcription with the (Humphrey) Searle number "525" were not so overshadowed by the reasonably popular piano-and-orchestra original (S.126/2), it would be considered one of Liszt's more important original works for solo piano.

— Jens Laurson

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was recorded at Steinway Hall, New York City, March 7-9, 2016.

Executive Producers: Eric Feidner, Jon Feidner

Producer: Jon Feidner

Engineer: Lauren Sturm

Mixing and Mastering: Daniel Shores

Editing: Kazumi Umeda

Equipment: Pyramix using Merging Technologies Horus Converters;
mixed and mastered through Merging Technologies Horus Converter

Microphones: AEA N8, Schoeps MC6/MK2

Painting: *Faust and Mephistopheles* by Eugène Delacroix

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Piano: Steinway Model D #519960 (Hamburg)

Piano Technician: Lauren Sturm

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GÁBOR FARKAS

Hungarian virtuoso Gábor Farkas performs a stunning recital of opera and song by Verdi, Wagner, Gounod, Chopin and Schumann in formidable arrangements by Franz Liszt for solo piano.

1 Paraphrase on a Waltz from Gounod's "Faust", S 407 10:57

2 Paraphrase on themes from Verdi's "Aida", S 436 11:25

Polish Songs for Piano (Chopin), S 480:

3 Frühling (Spring) 2:43 | 4 Mein Freuden (My Joys) 4:02

5 Isolde's "Liebestod" from Wagner's "Tristan", S 447 7:04

Lieder von Clara Schumann for Piano, S 569

6 Warum willst du andre fragen? 2:15 | 7 Ich hab' in deinem Auge 2:08 | 8 Geheimes Flüstern hier und dort 3:12

9 Widmung (Schumann) for Piano, S 566 3:54

10 Totentanz, S 525 16:06

Playing time 63:46



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