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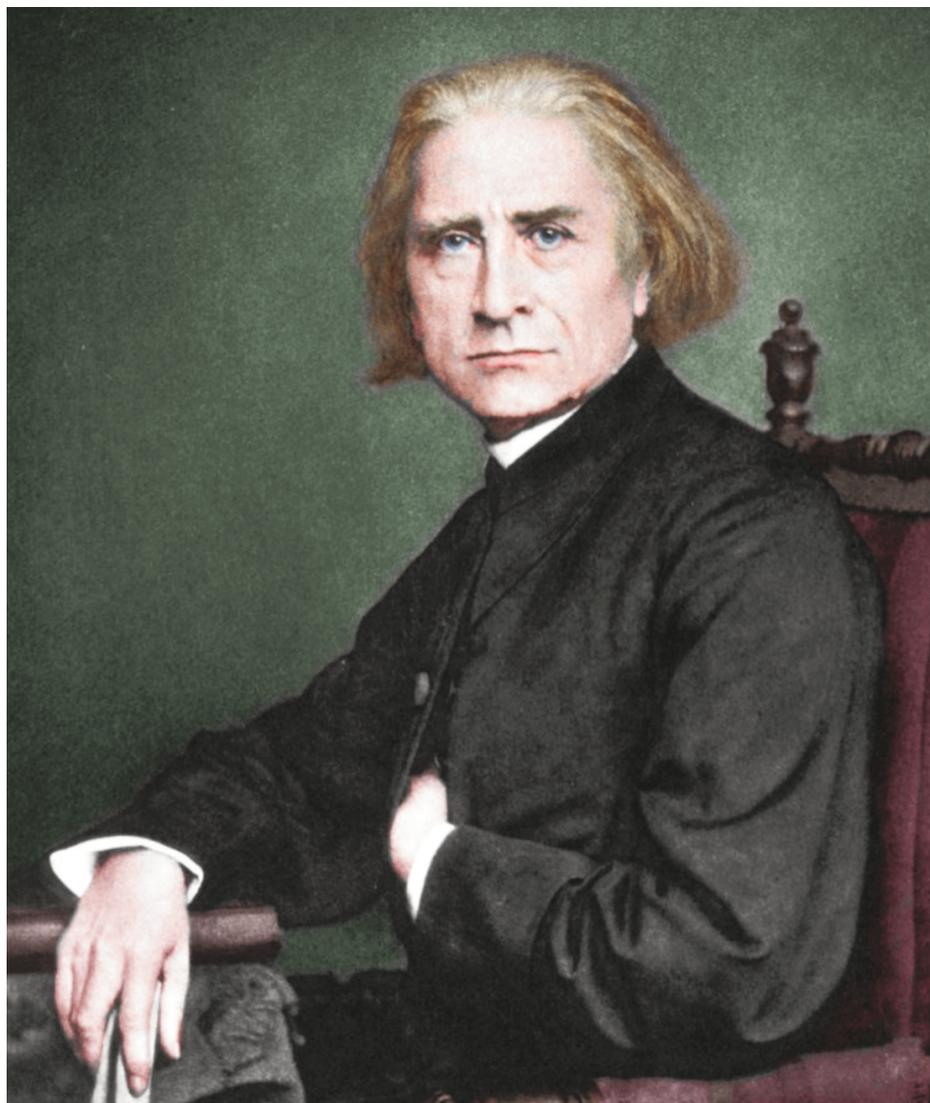


VOLUME
67

FRANZ LISZT

March Transcriptions

Paul Williamson, Piano



Franz Liszt (1811–1886) March Transcriptions

Franz Liszt was born in Raiding (Doborján) on 22 October 1811 and died in Bayreuth on 31 July 1886.

As a child Liszt showed such immense musical talent that his family moved first to Vienna in 1822, where he studied piano with Carl Czerny, and then, despite Czerny's reservations, to Paris in 1823. Mixing within artistic circles, his playing probably became more controlled as he encountered luminaries such as Lamartine, Hugo, Heine, Berlioz and Paganini. Compositions during this period included *Grande fantaisie di bravura sur La clochette de Paganini* (1832–34).

A long-term liaison with the already married Countess Marie d'Agoult, begun in 1832, saw them relocate to Switzerland and Italy to avoid scandal. Their three children, Blandine, Cosima and Daniel, were born during the next seven years. Liszt recommenced touring internationally as a virtuoso from 1839 for the next eight years. It was during this period his fame reached the epic proportions of so-called *Lisztomania*, with his deliberate cultivation of a stage presence representing the performer as hero. Works from this period include his *Hungarian Rhapsodies* (1846–47).

Liszt ended his stage career in 1848, urged on by his new partner Polish Princess Carolyne zu Sayn-Wittgenstein, and took on the role of Kapellmeister for Grand Duke Carl Alexander in Weimar. Composition became a priority, along with championing causes such as the New German School and Richard Wagner. However, vehement criticism of his works such as the symphonic poem *Les Préludes* (1849–55) and setbacks including the deaths of Blandine and Daniel caused him to retreat to Rome and take minor religious orders from 1862 to 1867.

Thereafter, he gradually re-emerged, assuming an active role as musical elder statesman, travelling regularly between Weimar, Budapest and Rome. Finally, the reception of his compositions had become enthusiastic, and he enjoyed wide popularity. Works such as the oratorio *Christus* (1872) typify this final period.

Marches during Liszt's lifetime could symbolise national identity or indeed national ambitions, and Liszt constantly arranged, transcribed and extended well-known marches and march themes. They could also engender not only the heroic but also reflective mourning in the case of funeral marches and dramatic scenarios from operatic works.

Marches and other patriotic music frequently occupied the final place in Liszt's recitals, often emphasising the Hungarian cause, which Liszt supported. They also could have contributed to the previously mentioned mood of *Lisztomania*.

It is therefore unsurprising that marches are to be found in Liszt's compositions and arrangements throughout his lifetime. They are represented here with works from around 1830 to 1879, all arrangements of other composers' music, which, in Liszt's hands, achieve artistic heights only found infrequently elsewhere. Given the common practice of the era for performer-composers to play their own music, Liszt could, through the inclusion of an arrangement of a well-known march, acknowledge others' music, and also pay respect to the culture of wherever the concert was taking place.

In an era when recordings were not possible, piano arrangements of orchestral and vocal works were commonplace. Liszt cultivated this medium particularly successfully, creating arrangements of, for example, Beethoven symphonies and paraphrases of stage works by Russian composers such as Glinka. Arrangements heard here of marches by Beethoven, Giuseppe Donizetti, Glinka, Massenet, Meyerbeer, Rossini, Schubert and Széchenyi, indicate the breadth of Liszt's programming for his time.

Einleitung und Ungarischer Marsch von Graf Imre Széchenyi (Bevezetés és Magyar induló Gróf Széchenyi Imrétől), S573/R261

In 1872 Liszt was a guest at the Széchenyi estate in Horpács (Hungary) where he transcribed Count Széchenyi's *Introduction and Hungarian March* for solo

piano, dedicated it to him and premiered it in 1873. Liszt's transcription is extraordinarily evocative, using the piano's timbres to suggest the Hungarian cimbalom and harmonies that include so-called Hungarian scales. The work closely resembles Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies* in construction.

Grande paraphrase de la marche de Giuseppe Donizetti composée pour Sa Majesté le Sultan Abdul Medjid Khan, S403/R157

Giuseppe Donizetti, brother of the more famous Gaetano Donizetti, composed his *Grande Marche* for the coronation of Sultan Abdul Medjid Khan in 1839. Liszt wrote his paraphrase when he was decorated by the Sultan at Istanbul-Büyükdere in 1847. A *maestoso* main theme dominates the first section in G minor, while a capricious *animato* theme in E flat major occupies the second section. In the final G minor/G major section both themes are presented, ending with pianistic fireworks.

Revive Szegedin, marche hongroise de Szabady transcrite pour piano d'après l'orchestration de J. Massenet, S572/R260

Jules Massenet's orchestral score *Marche hongroise de Szabady* was performed at a benefit concert in Paris for flood victims of Szeged (Hungary) in 1879. Dedicatee Franz Liszt rapidly produced the piano transcription heard here. The virtuoso piano version is almost an octave study. Utilising Hungarian scalic patterns the three sections are completed when the main theme returns in a triumphant A major. Key changes are frequent throughout the whole work.

Introduction des variations sur une marche du Siègne de Corinthe de Rossini, S421a

The partial score of this work was only discovered in 1976, containing just an introduction, heard here, with no sign of the variations to follow. A brief, dramatic chordal opening leads to the main cantilena theme in F minor, and echoes of Chopin's inimitable *cantabile* style are abundant. A more energetic dotted rhythm march-like passage soon appears, with frequent key changes engendering a mood of excited anticipation. The final quiet half-close cadence is in F major, and the music finishes in mid-air.

Marche funèbre de la Symphonie héroïque de L. van Beethoven. Partition de Piano par F. Liszt, S464/R128 (first version)

Liszt's first piano transcription, heard here, was part of a volume including works by eminent composers of the era in aid of a Beethoven monument in Bonn during 1845. By 1865, Liszt had completed his piano transcriptions of all Beethoven's symphonies including a revised version of the *Funeral March* from *Symphony No. 3*. Liszt commences with the A and B (trio) sections of conventional ternary form but greatly extends the returning A section by inserting a fugue and a thunderous *Dies irae*-like development section before the music almost disintegrates at the end.

Marche militaire (Franz Schubert) – Grande paraphrase de concert, S426a

Based on the first of the *Trois Marches militaires, D. 733* by Schubert, which was written for piano four hands, Liszt's solo paraphrase makes small harmonic and decorative changes to Schubert's quite Classical march and trio score, giving a Romantic flamboyance to the work. In particular, at the end Liszt impishly adds a coda in his own style, as if revealing himself as the master of ceremonies.

Tscherkessenmarsch aus Glinka's Oper: Russlan und Ludmilla, S406/R164 (first version)

In 1843 Liszt composed two versions of a paraphrase for solo piano, and one for piano duet, of the villainous Chermonor's march from the fourth act of Glinka's opera *Russlan und Ludmilla*. Despite perhaps less sophistication than the second version, the first, heard here, has a certain simple directness that makes a strong statement as each variation builds the drama and energy. In both versions, Liszt composes a coda to complete the composition, where Glinka abruptly breaks off in the opera.

Grande paraphrase de la marche de Giuseppe Donizetti composée pour Sa Majesté le Sultan Abdul Medjid Khan, S403/R157 (simplified version)

The year following Liszt's original paraphrase, he created a simplified version. Perhaps the jaunty E flat major trio theme retains its original character more convincingly than

the remainder in this version. Nevertheless, the simplified version still contains a good deal of panache and its clear how such simplifications satisfied a need from amateur pianists of the time.

**Festmarsch zu Schiller's 100jähriger
Geburtstagsfeier von G. Meyerbeer, S549/R226**

Both Meyerbeer and Liszt shared an admiration for Schiller's work. Liszt frequently worked in Schiller's home

town of Weimar, and in 1860 he produced this piano arrangement of Meyerbeer's *Festmarsch* written for the 100th anniversary commemorations of Schiller's birth in 1759. This is not a military march but rather a celebratory procession, with returns of the sedate main theme interspersed between others before a final triumphant return of the main theme, followed by an energetic coda.

Rodney Smith



Paul Williamson

Included in CBC Music's 2017 edition of 30 Hot Canadian Classical Musicians under 30, Paul Williamson has established himself as one of Canada's promising young pianists. He received First Prize at both the 2014 Canadian National Music Festival and the 2017 Canadian Federation of Music Teachers' Association National Piano Competition in addition to three semi-final awards. He is also a prizewinner of the 2020 WMC McLellan Competition and received Third Prize at the 2022 Shean Piano Competition and the 2023 Bader and Overton Canadian Piano Competition. Currently enrolled in the Doctor of Musical Arts degree program at Northwestern University, Williamson also holds degrees from the Colburn School (AD, MMus) and the University of Manitoba (BMus). He has studied under James Giles, Fabio Bidini and David Moroz. Williamson is grateful to have his career supported by the Luminarts Cultural Foundation and the Amron-Sutherland Fund Grant for Young Pianists from the Colburn School.

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|----------|---|--------------|
| 1 | Einleitung und Ungarischer Marsch von Graf Imre Széchenyi (Bevezetés és magyar induló Gróf Széchenyi Imrétől), S573/R261 (1872) | 7:54 |
| 2 | Grande paraphrase de la marche de Giuseppe Donizetti composée pour Sa Majesté le Sultan Abdul Medjid Khan, S403/R157 (1847) | 7:20 |
| 3 | Revive Szegedin, marche hongroise de Szabady transcrite pour piano d'après l'orchestration de J. Massenet, S572/R260 (1879) | 3:19 |
| 4 | Introduction des variations sur une marche du <i>Siège de Corinthe</i> de Rossini, S421a (1830?) | 3:57 |
| 5 | Marche funèbre de la Symphonie héroïque de L. van Beethoven. Partition de Piano par F. Liszt, S464/R128 (1841) (first version) | 16:59 |
| 6 | Marche militaire (Franz Schubert) – Grande paraphrase de concert, S426a (1870?) | 5:55 |
| 7 | Tscherkessenmarsch aus Glinka's Oper: <i>Ruslan und Ludmilla</i>, S406/R164 (1843) (first version) | 5:24 |
| 8 | Grande paraphrase de la marche de Giuseppe Donizetti composée pour Sa Majesté le Sultan Abdul Medjid Khan, S403/R157 (1847) (simplified version, 1848) | 6:15 |
| 9 | Festmarsch zu Schiller's 100jähriger Geburtstagsfeier von G. Meyerbeer, S549/R226 (1860) | 10:03 |

Paul Williamson, Piano

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