MAURICE HINSON (U.S.A.):

The Liszt Edition of the Beethoven Sonatas

As one investigates nineteenth century music one realizes how all pervasive was the vast, benign shadow cast by Beethoven over the whole century. In various ways that shadow pervaded the creative lives, not only of the more conservative masters like Mendelssohn and Brahms, but also the more progressive masters like Berlioz, Liszt, and Wagner. With special regard to Franz Liszt, Beethoven's influence was longer lasting and broader than that of any of the composers who most influenced Liszt, including Paganini, Berlioz, Chopin, and Wagner. We should remember how strong that influence was during most of Liszt's long career, starting with his early studies and ending only with his death. I am greatly indebted to W. S. Newman for his help on this topic. Newman is completing a major study on performance practices in the piano works of Beethoven. His research in this area, which includes a careful investigation of the Beethoven-Liszt relationship, is exemplary, and hopefully will be made available soon.

Beethoven's Importance to Liszt

Liszt entered Beethoven's own sphere before he was nine, in 1809 when his father brought him to Vienna to study piano with the indefatigable Czerny and theory with the aging Salieri. The lessons lasted for more than one year, in 1820-1821. They were followed by at least one actual encounter with Beethoven in 1823, if we believe what Liszt recalled 52 years later, in 1875 as "the palladium of my whole career as an artist," although the reports of Beethoven's reaction ranged widely from a dislike of prodigies to a fervent kiss on the

lad's brow for his inspired playing. Liszt had already studied several of Beethoven's works while he was with Czerny, but the latter hesitated to coach a ten year old on the "Hammerklavier" Sonata which, as Liszt recalled 55 years later, in 1875, he had played at the time, "very badly, no doubt, but with passion, and without anyone teaching it to me." He must have been playing works not quite so difficult three years later, at 13, when his father wrote Czerny suggesting that "you would be perfectly satisfied with the boy if you heard how correctly and neatly he plays a Sonata by Dussek, Steibelt, or Beethoven. We often have visitors of the highest rank, who come to hear a Sonata by Beethoven."

In the following year, the young Liszt soon built up the moderate Beethoven portion of his piano repertoire that he was to use often in the more than 350 public recitals that he gave before he renounced public performance late in the 1840s as well as in the numerous private performances before and after that dividing point and at least a dozen more public performances that followed it. He played not only the ten sonatas of Beethoven to be mentioned shortly, but a few of his other works including the "Archduke Trio," the "Emperor" Concerto (first in Paris in 1828), and the "Kreutzer" Sonata. Both of the latter he played in the Paris concert of 1841 that he shared with Berlioz on behalf of the proposed Beethoven monument. His important help with the promotion of that monument from 1839 to 1845, his pride in inheriting Beethoven's own Broadwood piano from the Vienna publisher Carl Anton Spina in 1845 and eventually bequeathing it to the National Museum here in Budapest, his widely known transcriptions of Beethoven's nine

symphonies for piano solo (1837-64), and above all his significant contributions as a conductor of Beethoven's symphonies and other larger works, all give some idea of the breadth of Beethoven's mark on Liszt and the respect of Liszt for him. Equally important but often less tangible are the derivations from Beethoven in Liszt's own music, whether conscious or unconscious, obvious or subtle. But these would supply more than enough materials for a quite different study.

The importance of Beethoven in Liszt's artistic life is reflected not only in the extent and scope of Liszt's attention to Beethoven, but in the ways he approached his great predecessor.

A few words on Liszt's interpretation of the Beethoven sonatas is appropriate at this point.

Liszt's Playing

Liszt's performance of Beethoven's sonatas needs to be viewed in the broader context of his playing in general. From a consensus of contemporary reviews and other firsthand reports, many of them effusive and verbose, and some of them conflicting, one may abstract the most characteristic traits, at least prior to 1850 and the end of his main public performing. Liszt conquered all technical difficulties with unmatched facility as in the many passages he himself invented with rapid leaps and successive tenths made easier by his flexible hands. His communication of pulse, meter, and familiar dance rhythms was the essence of vitality. He was variously dramatic, searching, fiery, poetic, virtuosic, or spiritual, but always intensely so. His stylistic intentions were most precise often to the point of pronounced mannerisms even though he never could be counted on to interpret the

piece twice in the same manner. Nearly every contemporary mention of his playing includes reference to liberties he took with the music, often with the qualification that he alone had the genius to carry it off in this fashion. In part, these liberties must have reflected his immediate involvement in the music. They took the form especially of rhythmic freedom or what Berlioz called "excessive rhythmic fluidity," of changes in the composer's editorial advices or additions to them, and of enrichment of the texture and scoring for reasons of virtuosity or fuller sonority. In the numerous comparisons made between Liszt and his closest competitor, Thalberg, Liszt characteristically was given the nod for his virtuosity, warmth of feeling, improvisation, originality, and boldness; Thalberg for his singing tone, classic purity, grace, learning, and lack of affectation. Clara Wieck was called the most introspective of the three.

With particular reference to his playing of Beethoven, some commentators seemed to have regarded Liszt as unsurpassed at his best, including such notable judges as Berlioz, Glinka, Chopin, and Wagner. There is no doubt that he treated Beethoven with special reverence. It is significant that among the works of his favorite composers, he did no rescoring or other arranging, at least in his published edition of the Beethoven sonatas such as he did, for example, in editions of Schubert's and Weber's sonatas. Even in his published reductions and solo performances of Beethoven's symphonies, "nobody complained about lack of faithfulness," as a reviewer in Prague remarked in 1840. Liszt' approach to Beethoven was judged as something unique. If he departed from the original substantially, he still offered something

new. Sometimes, one observer recalled a half-century later, he "performed the work in such a free, improvisatory manner that he seemed to be composing before the very eyes of the hearer." As a result, to quote another reviewer, writing in 1842 of five Beethoven sonatas Liszt played in ten Berlin recitals, ". . . He makes a totality of them, a beautiful totality. Indeed, even where one might prove that Beethoven had wanted this or that different from the way Liszt plays it, there still always remains the energetic fire and the enthusiasm with which he carries out his concept, as something much higher and much more powerful than the performance of the same works, perhaps faithful but coldly calculated, that we find [given] by many other pianists."

But Liszt's liberties did not always win favor when he performed Beethoven. The locale itself seems to have been one determinant, with more tolerance for the liberties, for example, in Vienna and Berlin than in Leipzig and Hamburg. But it is probably to the credit of the reviewers and other commentators that most of them questioned these liberties on the grounds of taste, primarily, rather than purism for the sake of purism alone. Therefore, it appears that the tolerance depended largely on individual judgments of what was good taste. For instance, when Liszt and Ole Bull played the "Kreutzer" Sonata together in London on June 8, 1840, one reviewer found the interpretation to be in good taste--"A brilliant and affluent fancy, when it carries out, not contradicts the original idea"--whereas another was less content, finding that "the system of amplification and embellishment pursued in general, was quite sufficient to blur the composer's intention . . .." When Liszt played that same year in Leipzig a different violin sonata

by Beethoven, Opus 30, No. 2 in C minor, the reviewer had mixed reactions on the question of taste, finding the Allegro movements "commendable, for their strong color effects such as Mr. Liszt likes," but the Adagio less so, because its "quiet and classic beauty" was lost in the "agitated performance." The poet Rellstab, who had known and idolized Beethoven, demured a bit before accepting Liszt's liberties. As Rellstab wrote in 1842: "Much in Beethoven [he] takes out of the realm of simplicity [and] quiet depth into the realm of his excessively unsettled, stormy passion . . . And yet he exhibits perfection in details! What could surpass the charm of his embellishments . . . What the power of his arpeggiated passages . . . What the dizzying, fast octave passages, the chord chains of two- and three-tone clusters in both hands, impossible to follow, and the gracefulness of his melodies . . . ?"

Anton Schindler resisted much more. Yet it is interesting that even he, who was prejudiced anyway by his master's dislike of Czerny's increasing extravagances as well as by the image of all prodigies like the young Liszt, could not fail to see the extraordinary portrait and authentic spirit in some of Liszt's playing of Beethoven.

Among the Beethoven piano sonatas that Liszt actually performed, ten can be cited that he played publicly at least twice. They are Opera 26, 27/2, 31/2, 57, and 90 and all of the last five sonatas--Opera 101, 106, 109, 110, and 111. These are generally the more imposing sonatas, the ones that were most popular then and the ones that continue to be so today. In fact, some credit undoubtedly goes to Liszt for making them the most popular ones. Liszt found three sonatas

to have been the most popular of several by Beethoven that were admired when he began to play piano: Opera 13, 27/2, and 57. But, as he recalled 55 years later, "It was not the custom then" to play Beethoven in public; Hummel and Moscheles dominated the performer's repertoire. For that matter, only two instances are known of a sonata by Beethoven being played in public during the composer's lifetime, and neither of those was his own performance nor in his own city. Liszt certainly knew all of the "thirty-two" and taught some that he himself did not play publicly, provided he was not asked to hear any to which he had taken a disliking. Opus 53 is most conspicuous by its absence from the sonatas Liszt performed. There is evidence that he taught the work, but no report, that I can locate, of his ever having performed it, privately or publicly. Surprising, too, for Liszt is the fact that but one report has been discovered of a public performance of Opus 13--in 1876 here in Budapest, where he had also played Opus 27/1, once, three years earlier. The sonatas he seems to have played most of all, in order of frequency, are Opera 27/2 (far in the lead), 31/2, 26, 57, and 106. The presence of Opus 106 in this group must surprise those who appreciate the daring of playing so forbidding a work publicly at a time when playing any of Beethoven's sonatas publicly was still daring. But it will not surprise those who would expect the giant among pianists to have welcomed the challenged posed by the giant among sonatas. As for the daring, Liszt did at least as much when he dared to include as many as five Beethoven sonatas in several series of six or more recitals in Vienna, Berlin, and other main centers.

We have a full report of Liszt's playing of Opus 106 by Berlioz of a performance in Paris in 1836, in which occurred the first known performance of this work in public. Proceeding almost as if he were defending Liszt against charges of excessive liberties, Berlioz began by calling the work

> ...this sublime poem that until this day was but the riddle of the Sphinx for nearly all pianists. A new young Oedipus, Liszt, has solved it in a way that the composer, if he could have heard it, must have trembled with pride and joy in his grave. Not one note was left out, not one note was added (I followed the score closely), not one change was made in the tempo that was not indicated in the editing, not one inflection, not one idea was sacrificed or diverted from its true sense. Above all, in the adagio in the performance of this wondrous hymn that the spirit of Beethoven seems to have sung by itself while soaring alone in the immensity, Liszt steadfastly kept up the level of the composer's thought....

Further reports of subsequent performances of Opus 106 are all in much the same glowing tone, though several include mention of liberties Liszt did take. He played the work in 1853 in Basel for Wagner, who had long been seeking a pianist able to master it. Strongly enthusiastic in spite of the mediocre instrument Liszt had to use, Wagner made a special point to the effect that Liszt was not merely reproducing the sonata but making a creatively new production out of it. The Russian writer and composer Serov heard Liszt play Opus 106 in Weimar in 1858, and found the performance overwhelming, adding that

Liszt "sang in the adagio as if transfigured by a heavenly apparition; as an eyewitness of a world lying beyond the grave. Himself deeply moved, he moves others to tears . . .. Of the fugue, this terrible turmoil of voices, played in a hardly believable tempo, not even the smallest note was lost, and the trills at the end Liszt played in octaves."

Liszt's Discussion of the Sonatas

Liszt wrote very little that bears directly on his interpretation of Beethoven's piano sonatas, but he did have a number of things to say, both in his letters and in other writings, that provide interesting background for the liberties he took in that interpretation.

From Liszt's writings, Wagnermée quotes a statement published in 1837 that is almost an apologia for Liszt's liberties.

> I frequently played the works of Beethoven, Weber, and Hummel, either in public or private . . ., and I confess to my shame that in order to extract bravos from a public ever slow to perceive things of beauty, I had no scruples about changing the tempo and the editing. I even went so far, insolently, as to add a lot of tricks and organ points that, in bringing me the stupid plaudits, led me unfailingly into a wrong path, from which fortunately, I soon extricated myself. You will never believe how much I deplore those concessions to bad taste, those sacrilegious violations of the spirit and the letter, for now the most complete respect for the masterworks of the great masters has replaced in me the former need for novelty and the egotism on the part of a youngster still

close to childhood. At present I can no longer separate any composition at all from the period in which it was written, and the pretense of decorating or modernizing the works of earlier schools seems to me as absurd to a musician as it would be for example, to an architect putting a Corinthian capital on the columns of an Egyptian temple.

Judging by later reviews of his playing already quoted here, Liszt's confession at the age of 26 was still a bit premature. But its reasoning undoubtedly did underline the ultimate turn to more authenticity in his style of playing.

In a letter dating probably from the spring of 1857, Liszt speaks of a preference on his part for the last three sonatas of Beethoven over a good many sonatas (by other composers, presumably) published before and after these. There is no doubt that the later works in Beethoven's output came to have a special significance for him.

Liszt's Editing

Liszt prepared an edition of Beethoven's "Complete Sonatas for Piano Solo" as a part of a projected "first complete edition of the collected works" of Beethoven, which edition, however, failed to reach completion. In the spring of 1857 he was correcting possibly the proofs of the last three sonatas, shortly before the two volumes containing the "thirty-two" appeared. The publisher was Ludwig Holle in Wolfenbuttel. Holle evidently supplied "original" or first editions from which Liszt worked. Liszt's same edition was republished later in the century by Bosworth of London, and Hachette of Paris. It is scarce today in any version.

No statement by Liszt of editorial policy in the Holle edition has been found, but statements do exist by him on other editions that he made, statements that are as interesting for policies not adopted in the Holle sonata edition, as for policies that did operate in that edition as well. In letters from Rome in 1868 and 1870, he wrote the following to Lebert of the Bülow-Lebert edition to be mentioned shortly:

> My responsibility with regard to Cotta's edition of Weber and Schubert I hold to be: fully and carefully to retain the original text together with provisory suggestions of my way of rendering it, by means of distinguishing letters, notes and signs . . . . In the various readings, you probably will find some things not inappropriate;--I flatter myself that I have thus given performers greater license and have increased the effect without damaging or overloading Weber's style . . . . And as I have now got into the way of revising, I should like at once to prepare this Schubert volume and submit it to you, before the end of November, the result of many years of most delightful communion with Weber's and Schubert's pianoforte compositions, with fingering, marks for pedal and expression, and various readings . . .. With regard to the deceptive Tempo rubato . . . . [:] a metronomical performance is certainly tiresome and nonsensical; time and rhythm must be adapted to and identified with the melody, the harmony, the accent and the poetry . . . but how indicate all this? I shudder at the thought of it.

Liszt's actual changes are very easy to see in the Cotta edition to which he referred, because they are always added on separate staffs

above the original. Sometimes they border on new creations, thus opening vistas outside the scope of our present topic. At other times they qualify as nineteenth-century concert transcriptions and "modernizations." But these last are really outside the scope of our present topic, too, at least so far as Liszt's editing of Beethoven is concerned and except to the degree that they point up once more the special reverence in which Liszt seems to hold the works of Beethoven, not the least his sonatas. Even among Liszt's relatively few so-called transcriptions of Beethoven's works, only a small number of piano pieces and songs might qualify as concert transcriptions and those are decidedly conservative, as Liszt's transcriptions go.

By nineteenth-century standards, Liszt's edition of the Beethoven Sonatas for Holle is, in fact, a virtual Urtext edition. Although he left no policy statements like those quoted for his edition of Weber and Schubert, one could almost apply a brief statement in another letter to Lebert, written in 1879, this time concerning his edition of the three last piano concertos by Beethoven: "As a matter of course I have not altered a single note of Beethoven's original version . . . and have only added a tolerable amount of indications for pedal and fingering, for the convenience of pupils and teachers." But except for the final three sonatas, he made even fewer changes in the Holle edition. In fact, aside from a few details of the sort to be mentioned, he seemed to have treated the first twenty-nine sonatas perfunctorily, for the most part simply passing the original editions on to the publisher to be re-engraved under Liszt's name as editor. The fingering, about half a dozen instances in all, is only that generally

supposed to have been supplied by Beethoven himself for the original editions. There are no solutions to ornaments or to technical problems, no ossias, and no wider-ranged alternatives where Beethoven seems clearly to have been limited by his narrower-ranged keyboard. In Opus 27, No. 2, there is no modification of Beethoven's initial request to raise the dampers throughout the entire first movement, even though Czerny had already recognized the need for more frequent pedaling on the more sonorous pianos of a later generation. But Liszt did reduce Beethoven's request for a single pedal throughout the Largo recitatives near the end of the first movement of Opus 31, No. 2, to one lasting only through the initial chord in each instance. See examples Ia and b. He inserted a very few metronome marks--in all movements of Opera 90 and 101 and the first movement of Opus 14, No. 1--and retained the only ones Beethoven himself supplied, in Opus 106, except that he slowed the eighth-note from 92 to 84 in the slow movement, and the sixteenth-note to an eighth-note at 76 in the slow opening to the finale, the latter probably by error.

Liszt's "editing" of the last three sonatas in the Holle edition, Opera 109, 110, and 111, does show much more concern--in fact, many meticulous refinements of details in the dynamics, accents, articulation, phrasing, and pedaling. Representative is his continuation of the alto voice in the seventeenth measure before the end of Opus 109 so that it repeats the pattern established in the three previous measures. See examples IIa and b. All of these changes help to confirm Liszt's deep penetration into the later works of Beethoven and his own remarks regarding articulation, declamation, phrasing, and flexibility of rhythm, mentioned earlier.

Within the whole range of Liszt's interpretive approach, the Holle edition must be viewed as overly cautious. Much more in harmony with that approach was the edition that was to become the most widely used of Beethoven's piano sonatas to this day--that is, the one prepared by Sigmund Lebert and Hans von Bülow, first published in five volumes by Cotta in Stuttgart in 1871. Bülow's share of the editing was only the last two volumes, from Opus 53 on, except for Opera 13, 26, 27/1, 27/2, and 31/3. For the rest, Bülow respected Lebert's editing but wanted to be dissociated from the first three volumes. It is primarily Bülow's share in the edition that is of interest to us.

Liszt's connections with the Bülow edition were considerable. Recall, first, the background. Bülow studied with Liszt in Weimar in the early 1850's, proving to be the most important of all Liszt's pupils and certainly the most important Beethoven performer among them. It was also Bülow who introduced Liszt's own great Sonata in B Minor--and the Bechstein piano--to the public in 1857, the year in which he became Liszt's son-in-law. Liszt wrote and spoke in the highest terms of Bülow's playing of Beethoven--for example, "he is the true Beethoven player and thinker, the one who has the knowledge and ability." It is noteworthy that he singled out Bülow's playing of Opus 106, in particular the Adagio Sostenuto, for which he himself had been so highly praised. Bülow dedicated his edition, from the Opus 53 on, "To Master Franz Liszt, the world's most unattainable connoisseur of Beethoven, as the fruit of his instruction." After the edition appeared, Liszt wrote and spoke of it, too, in the highest terms. Thus, in a letter to the editor of the Gazette de Hongrie of

February, 15, 1881, he wrote:

> You want my impression of Bülow's concert last evening. It is yours and that of all the intelligent public of Europe. Here it is briefly in two words: admiration, enthusiasm. Bülow was my student twenty-five years ago, as I was twenty-five years earlier the student of Czerny, my very honored and dear master. But Bülow has the stuff necessary to fight and last better than I. His admirable Beethoven edition is dedicated to me as "the fruit of my teaching." In it, the professor can only learn from his pupil and Bulow goes on to teach the world--as much by his prodigious virtuosity at the piano as by his immense musical knowledge . . ..

After Bülow's edition appeared, Liszt evidently preferred to use it with his students rather than his own edition. At least, Amy Fay tells us this in her famous book on page 238 (Music Study in Germany. Chicago: Jansen, McClurg & Co., 1885).

This much confirmation of Liszt's complete endorsement of the Bülow edition is needed because, as mentioned, the Bülow edition I regard as being more representative of Liszt's ultimate aims in interpreting Beethoven than is his own overly cautious edition. In the present purist age, the Bülow edition is no longer in good repute. Indeed, only sixteen years after it had appeared Bülow had to recognize a growing chorus of opposition to its policies. But those policies did seem valid within the Romantic view of Beethoven--and that means Liszt's view as much as any other musician's. An illuminating statement is made by Lina Ramann, a Liszt idolator, near-contemporary, and (with his blessing) his pioneer biographer. Referring first to Adolf Bernhard Marx in his Introduction to the Performance of

Beethoven's Piano Music, she wrote:

> . . . he attempted on the basis of the spirit of Beethoven's works to set forth the performance of Beethoven's melody and accompaniment, his rhythmic and rhetorical accents, his freedom from rigidity of the beat, but in doing so he [Marx] neglected to mention that Liszt already had recognized all these performance characteristics in the 1830's, and--as major interpreter of the German master--had employed them and taught them in his studio. [Marx also failed to mention] that indeed it was with reference to these characteristics that the attacks were concentrated that had been lodged against Liszt in the battle between the romantics and representatives of the Classics. These [characteristics or principles], challenged and attacked during the time, today stand inviolable and find their expression in the edition of the Beethoven piano sonatas by his [Liszt's] pupil, Hans von Bülow . . . .

The nature of Bülow's editing is well known today, especially since many of us were brought up on it, especially in the United States. The very methods and policies that may invalidate it today are largely those that validated it then. At least a summary of those methods and policies should be helpful. They include much that is largely concerned with the mechanics of playing the sonatas, especially the facilitation of difficult passages through redistribution of the notes, renotation of the rhythms, and new, often ingenious fingerings (some of them presumably passed on to Bülow by Liszt). They become a little more venturesome when they include "improvements" or suggested

improvements in details of the music itself, including extensions of high or low ranges where Beethoven's smaller-ranged pianos forced compromises, a number of passages that do seem to need some polishing or finishing, and changes in the editing not always distinguished from the original as in the marks for articulation and phrasing. They become highly controversial in the many suggestions for tempo changes, both local and large-scale. And they become unabashedly romantic in the copious programmatic suggestions in the footnotes, often based on orchestral or scenic images and viewed as absurd by many present-day musicians. Three derivations from Liszt actually acknowledged in Bulow's footnotes are the recommendations for certain rhythmic subgroupings at the start of the coda in the first movement of Opus 57, for the elaborated trills at the close of Opus 106, and the continuation of the alto voice in the seventeenth measure before the end of Opus 109 (mentioned earlier), and included on your sheet of examples.

We can still be grateful for what the Bülow edition offers and it is easily available in the U.S.A. from G. Schirmer and Theodore Presser. What would be very helpful is to have the Liszt edition made available again. Perhaps we will be fortunate and find a publisher here in Hungary who is willing to undertake the project. It is eminently worthy.

Thank you very much.

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