

# Franz LISZT

**THE COMPLETE SYMPHONIC POEMS  
TRANSCRIBED FOR SOLO PIANO BY AUGUST STRADAL  
VOLUME FOUR**

CE QU'ON ENTEND SUR LA MONTAGNE  
SIX SONG TRANSCRIPTIONS  
LISZT TRANSCR. MARIN  
VON DER WIEGE BIS ZUM GRABE

**Risto-Matti Marin**

# LISZT SYMPHONIC POEMS, TRANSCRIBED BY AUGUST STRADAL, VOLUME FOUR

## Part 1: An Overview

by Malcolm MacDonald

The pianist, composer and writer August Stradal was born on 17 May 1860 in Teplice, Bohemia. His father was a lawyer and a member of the town council. Stradal attended the grammar school in Litoměřice and then studied at the Vienna Conservatoire, where his teachers were Anton Door, Theodor Leschetisky, Gustav Nottebohm and Anton Bruckner. In September 1884 he went to Weimar to become a disciple of Franz Liszt, whom he also accompanied to Budapest and Bayreuth in 1885 and 1886. After Liszt's death Stradal returned to Teplice, where he was active as a music teacher until 1893, when he joined the staff of the Horak School of Piano Studies (later the Horak Konservatorium) in Vienna. He also toured extensively.

In later life he wrote copiously about both Bruckner and Liszt, for whom he is an important biographical source, and published a memoir of the latter (*Erinnerungen an Franz Liszt*<sup>1</sup>). He received the Czechoslovak State Music Award in 1928. Stradal died on 13 March 1930 at Krasna Lipa, north of Prague.

Stradal was considered a leading interpreter of Liszt's music and made many transcriptions – some sources reckon over 250 – of orchestral and chamber works for the piano, in repertoire stretching from the Baroque era<sup>2</sup> to the late nineteenth century. Notable among these are his transcriptions of Bruckner's First, Second, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Symphonies and his String Quintet (he also made a two-piano version of Mahler's Fifth Symphony). Stradal also arranged a huge number

<sup>1</sup> Peter Haupt, Bern and Leipzig, 1929.

<sup>2</sup> Meilin Ai recorded his complete Buxtehude transcriptions on Toccata Classics TOCC 0534.

of Bach's works, many excerpts from Wagner's operas<sup>3</sup> and most of Liszt's orchestral works, including the *Faust* and *Dante* Symphonies and twelve of the thirteen symphonic poems, his versions of which were published around the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.



*The older Stradal*

<sup>3</sup> The first and second of a scheduled three volumes of Stradal's Wagner transcriptions have been recorded by Juan Guillermo Vizcarra on Toccata Classics rocc 0151 and rocc 0192.

It is a feature of Liszt's essential genius that he inhabits in his music a multitude of *personae*, which range from Mephistopheles to St Francis of Assisi, as in his life he ranged from Byronic wanderer to the apparently pious and orthodox man of the cloth who wrote the late choral works. The forms cultivated by the great Classical composers gave Liszt scant precedent for this free play of imaginative affinity. His new forms – notably the thirteen symphonic poems – sprang from his desire for a more immediately dramatic conflict and interconnection of ideas, at the surface, than allowed by the fundamentally architectural, tonal contrasts of classical sonata-structures. He found instead in Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* the principle of the *idée fixe*, the symbolic idea recurring in different guises in different movements, which led him (and Wagner after him) to develop leitmotivic technique. In Schubert's 'Wanderer' Fantasy (which he orchestrated) he discovered the concept of transformation applied to the rhythmic and expressive characters of entire sections. From these hints he evolved his own structural principles of thematic metamorphosis, usually combined with a programmatic element derived from literature or painting.

Liszt's musical forms did not ape those of his extra-musical models: rather, the model provided him with what he called psychological motifs which he then worked out in his own terms. These motifs are seen at work in the symphonic poems, and especially in his supreme achievements in the field of orchestral music, the *Faust* and *Dante* Symphonies.

Twelve of the symphonic poems were completed in the decade 1848–58, when Liszt was living in Weimar with the honorary position of court Kapellmeister,<sup>4</sup> and some of them have remained among his most famous and most characteristic works. All twelve were dedicated to the Princess Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein. Taken together, they give a graphic impression of the sheer versatility and many-sidedness of Liszt's personality, as well as his astonishing creative range.

Liszt himself routinely made four-hand transcriptions of his symphonic poems, either for two pianos or piano duet, but he tended not to make solo-piano versions, adding to the interest and value of Stradal's efforts. Even so, Stradal's solo-piano versions of the Liszt symphonic poems were not the first of their kind, for eleven of the Weimar

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<sup>4</sup> The thirteenth and last, *Von der Wiege bis zum Grabe*, is a much later work dating from 1881–82.

twelve had previously been arranged by Carl Tausig (1841–71), sometimes referred to as the greatest of Liszt’s pupils. A child prodigy, Tausig was born in Bohemia and in his short life he showed a remarkable talent for transcription. His versions of the Liszt symphonic poems were made by 1858, when he was seventeen years old. These remained unpolished drafts, unpublished in his lifetime, and some of them have been lost, though others have been performed and recorded with success in recent years. Stradal’s versions were, by contrast, both polished and published. They have not enjoyed wide currency, because of their truly transcendental difficulty, but they are fascinating ‘readings for the keyboard’ of some of Liszt’s boldest orchestral inventions.

In his transcriptions Stradal scrupulously indicates the instruments playing in the orchestral score at any given time, and devises many ingenious solutions to representing their sound in terms of the keyboard. He also, in some passages, will give a simpler *ossia* alternative. But there is no doubt that he intended his versions only for players of transcendental technique, and some passages – for example, his liking for very rapid parallel octaves, rather than the broken octaves that less demanding transcribers might have opted for – may seem virtually unplayable. Nevertheless, Stradal’s versions do transform these revolutionary orchestral compositions into viable and effective piano works, faithfully preserving their masterly musical substance.

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## Part 2: Stradal and Liszt's Symphonic Poems – A Closer Look

by William Melton

With his profusion of devoted students, Liszt did not lack for would-be arrangers, but the intimacy that August Stradal developed with both Liszt the man and Liszt's creations made him perhaps uniquely qualified to make solo-piano transcriptions of the symphonic poems. After taking leave of Vienna and his much-admired professor Anton Bruckner, Stradal arrived in Weimar in the autumn of 1884. He wrote of his audition in Liszt's drawing room:

Standing upon a thick carpet were a Bechstein grand covered with published music and manuscripts almost a metre high, an Ibach pianino, Liszt's desk, a bust of Beethoven, and a small table. The salon was decorated as simply as possible. Outside the three high, wide windows was a fine view of the magnificent Grand Ducal Park, with its large trees whose leaves were resplendent with autumn foliage.<sup>1</sup>

The room was occupied by Liszt and a group of his pupils (whom Stradal suspected of wishing him ill). 'I played with clarity and without obvious blemish, for despite understandable nervousness the fingers continued unimpeded; but my inner turmoil at the evil reception meant that power of expression was lacking.'<sup>2</sup> Stradal tearfully approached Liszt to ask for another hearing. This boon was granted and his later performance of Liszt's *Variations on a Theme of Bach* (G180) was well received: 'The ice was broken and I was accepted by the Master, who sensed that I was a promising artist who adored him and truly appreciated the greatness of his works.'<sup>3</sup> In the words of Hildegard Stradal, over the next two years her future husband

<sup>1</sup> August Stradal, *Erinnerungen an Franz Liszt*, Haupt, Bern and Leipzig, 1929, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

accompanied the Master thenceforth on all his excursions and journeys, during this time profiting from his teaching and his friendship. He became acquainted with nearly all of the leading artists and personalities who associated with Liszt or whom Liszt would visit, which had a tremendously influential influence on Stradal's receptive young spirit.<sup>4</sup>

Liszt depended on his pupil-secretary to see manuscripts through to publication, and rewarded him with the dedication of the nocturne *En rêve* (G207). At Liszt's death, Stradal (whose father had drowned in a sailing accident just a few years before) wept at the casket in Bayreuth 'as if he had lost his father once again.'<sup>5</sup>

Liszt's death did not dampen Stradal's involvement with his teacher's music. Over the next decades Stradal edited Liszt's organ works and his Wagner transcriptions, and produced solo-piano arrangements of much more: an album of the songs, the *Missa solemnis*, the *Coronation Mass*, the *Faust* and *Dante* Symphonies, and, with one exception, the symphonic poems. He also presented Liszt to the world as an enthusiastic performer ('At the piano sat August Stradal, the well-known full-blooded Lisztian who would actually like to outdo Liszt'<sup>6</sup>). His concerts included many four-hands performances of the symphonic poems – on one Linz programme given in August 1887 Stradal and August Göllerich alternated on the first and second parts in no fewer than six of the works.<sup>7</sup> Such immersion in Liszt's music would produce a slew of transcriptions of the highest quality.

### *Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne, s95*

The Symphonic Poem No. 1, *Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne* ('What One Hears on the Mountain'; often referred to in German as the *Bergsymphonie*), s95 [1], is based on a poem of the same name from Victor Hugo's *Feuilles d'automne* of 1831. Liszt's first attempt in the genre was approached with care, and saw four revisions between 1847 and 1857, the first of them given orchestral garb by Joachim Raff and premiered in Weimar by Liszt at the end of February 1850. Later variants featured many personal

<sup>4</sup> Hildegard Stradal, *August Stradals Lebensbild*, Haupt, Bern and Leipzig, 1934, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> Johann Georg von Woerz, 'Concerte', *Wiener Sonn- und Montags-Zeitung*, Vol. 34, No. 45, 9 November 1896, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> The two performed *Die Ideale*, *Hunnenschlacht*, *Orpheus*, *Mazeppa*, *Tasso: Lamento e Trionfo* and *Festklänge* (Anon., *Aufführungen: Linz, Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 54, No. 83, 24 August 1887, p. 389).

touches by the composer, and letters to Caroline von Sayn-Wittgenstein from March 1854 display Liszt's continuing involvement with the evolving score: 'Perhaps I will also write the motif that I will attach to my "Mountain";<sup>8</sup> and a day later, 'Tomorrow I would like to get back to serious instrumentation of my "Mountain", because I simply have to make some music in my own way.'<sup>9</sup> The final version was premiered on 7 January 1857 and published by Breitkopf & Härtel of Leipzig in the same year. The preface to the first edition gives the essence of the Hugo poem:

The poet discerns two voices; the one immense, glorious and disciplined, roaring its jubilant hymn of praise towards God: – the other dull, full of pain, and swollen with weeping, blaspheming and cursing. One spoke of nature, the other of humanity! Both voices grapple closer, opposing and mingling, until they finally rise and fade in sacred reflection.<sup>10</sup>

*Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne* is a huge binary structure that Carl Dahlhaus saw as housing two, intimately related sonata forms.<sup>11</sup> An introduction opens in common time with *ppp* semiquavers in the bass [1]. Two bars later, muted strings begin the syncopated semitone quavers of the nature motif, *misterioso*, the individual voices emerging from the initial confusion of noise. A pastoral motif in falling and rising quavers is the next theme to be introduced (bars 40 and again at 61), preceding the 'hymn of praise' (bar 97) which begins the exposition [2]. Then two doleful motifs that represent humanity (bars 157 and 209) are presented in opposition to the earlier nature themes. The E flat major home key of the exposition makes its way via peripheral keys through the development (bar 309) [3] and recapitulation (bar 402) [4], before settling into G major preceding the *Andante religioso*, a chorale in low brass (bar 479) [5], where the two forces provisionally find peace. 'With the song of the Anchorites,' Liszt remembered of the chorale,

<sup>8</sup> Letter from 29 March 1854, in *Franz Liszt's Briefe an die Fürstin Caroline Sayn-Wittgenstein, Franz Liszt's Briefe*, Vol. 4, ed. La Mara (Marie Lipsius), Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig, 1899, p. 185.

<sup>9</sup> Letter from 30 March 1854, *ibid.*, p. 214.

<sup>10</sup> Franz Liszt, Preface to *Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne*, Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig, 1857, unpaginated.

<sup>11</sup> 'Liszt's Bergsymphonie und die Idee der symphonischen Dichtung,' *Jahrbuch des Staatlichen Instituts für Musikforschung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Merseburger, Kassel, 1975*, p. 114.



I thought of the reclusive monks of the mountains, Carthusians near Grenoble in the south of France. [Victor] Hugo did not have the prayer in his poem. I felt the need for it.<sup>12</sup>

The second half of the binary scheme sees each of the above sections return. Similar to the beginning of the work, the *ppp* semiquaver nature motif [6] of Introduction 2 occurs this time in G major (bar 521). Previous motifs follow in Exposition 2 (bar 633) [7], and jostle one another in quick succession in Development 2 (bar 743) [8]. Recapitulation 2 (bar 796) [9] occurs in E flat major. At *un poco rallentando il tempo* (bar 813) Liszt's rich orchestra (here missing only timpani and bass clarinet) has disparate motifs in multiple octaves in winds and strings clashing *sempre fff*, an obvious challenge for the piano transcriber (though by carefully dovetailing entries Stradal manages to suggest all of it). The struggle between nature and humanity is finally resolved with the chorale of *Andante religioso* 2 [10], also solidly in the home key of E flat major (bar 948).

Liszt's *Bergsymphonie* was a revelation to many of his contemporaries. Franz Brendel wrote of 'Ecstatic rapture that leads to the heights of the ideal in the Mountain Symphony',<sup>13</sup> and Franz Pohl insisted plainly that 'this Mountain Symphony is the largest and most epoch-making of all of Liszt's symphonic poems.'<sup>14</sup> Arthur Hahn observed:

Through its gripping characterisation of objects, through its wealth of captivating mood-painting, through the depth of feeling in the description of mental processes and through boldness and verve in the overall execution, the work should evoke in every receptive listener an impression of the greatest power.<sup>15</sup>

Modern commentators have been far less convinced of the work's success. 'If the Mountain Symphony aspired to be a watershed work,' noted Berthold Hoeckner, 'it failed to enter the canon.'<sup>16</sup> Manfred Kelkel questioned whether in grasping for a religious (chorale) solution, 'the future Abbé Liszt tripped up the composer Franz Liszt and

<sup>12</sup> August Göllerich, *Franz Liszt*, Marquardt, Berlin, 1908, p. 155.

<sup>13</sup> F. Liszt's symphonische Dichtungen', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 49, No. 13, 24 September 1858, p. 134.

<sup>14</sup> 'Correspondenz: Weimar', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 46, No. 4, 23 January 1857, p. 42.

<sup>15</sup> Franz Liszt, *Symphonische Dichtungen*, Schlesinger, Berlin, 1909, pp. 43–44.

<sup>16</sup> "'Liszt's Prayer', Programming the Absolute', *Nineteenth-Century German Music and the Hermeneutics of the Moment*, Princeton, 2002, p. 155.

prevented him from climbing the summit of the perfect form in the *Bergsymphonie*.<sup>17</sup> Norbert Miller concluded:

The discomfort with *Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne* remains, not because Liszt's first symphonic poem contained the shards of a more naive musical conception or because he had sought a mechanical balance with the symphonic tradition, but because his extreme focus, rigid consistency and excessive trust in the possibilities of musical imagination had run into the limits of thought.<sup>18</sup>

### Song Transcriptions

Though Liszt composed 87 Lieder for voice and piano across nearly five decades (and revisions brought the total to at least 127),<sup>19</sup> Rena Mueller maintained that 'Liszt's Lieder are an unjustly overlooked part of the song repertory in the nineteenth century, a kind of missing link which in some ways provides a more natural transition between Schumann and Wolf than do the Lieder of Brahms.'<sup>20</sup> Stradal's piano arrangements of Liszt's Lieder were undoubtedly an attempt at exciting more interest in the originals, and Liszt himself was a model for the technique of transcription – he had famously made piano transcriptions of Schubert's songs. Stradal remarked:

Liszt arranged a large part of the songs in his own unprecedented way for piano two-hands. An artistic transformation took place, an amalgamation of the natures of Schubert and Liszt in such a way that the main building remained Schubert, but from all the windows of this monumental construct the glorious eye of Liszt gazes out, sometimes ardently enraptured, sometimes monstrously demonic.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> 'Wege zu "Berg-Symphonie" Liszts', *Franz Liszt und Richard Wagner. Musikalische und geistesgeschichtliche Grundlagen der neudeutschen Schule*, Kongressbericht Eisenstadt 1983, Liszt-Studien 3, Katzschneider, Munich, 1986, p. 81.

<sup>18</sup> Norbert Miller, 'Elevation bei Victor Hugo und Franz Liszt. Über die Schwierigkeiten einer Verwandlung von lyrischen in symphonische Dichtungen', *Jahrbuch des Staatlichen Instituts für Musikforschung Preussischer Kulturbesitz*, Merseburger, Berlin, 1975, p. 159.

<sup>19</sup> Ben Arnold, *The Liszt Companion*, Greenwood, Westport (Connecticut), 2002, p. 403.

<sup>20</sup> *The Cambridge Companion to the Lied*, ed. James Parsons, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004, p. 183.

<sup>21</sup> *Franz Liszts Werke*, Kahnt, Leipzig, 1904, p. 8.

Still, Liszt's song-style had to be approached in its unique aspects. 'It is a mistake,' wrote Stradal,

to speak of an accompaniment in Liszt's songs. The piano reproduces the mood of the poem in the most exacting, explicit manner – as a conveyor of mood it is quite equivalent to the singing voice. Pianist and singer must become one entity, and the accompaniment is no accessory, but a partner of the singer. Within this partnership I am inclined to refer to the piano as the symphonic component of the song.<sup>22</sup>

Songs selected by Stradal for transcription were published in the collection *12 Lieder und Gesänge von Franz Liszt* (Kahnt, Leipzig, 1903), as well as in single publications. The well-known *Es muss ein Wunderbares sein* ('How wonderful it must be'), s314 [11], was set to poetry by Oscar von Redwitz on 13 July 1852 and originally published by Schlesinger of Berlin in 1859 (later Kahnt, Leipzig). A simple Schumannesque setting just 32 bars in length, the song makes only modest vocal demands and features an austere, chordal piano contribution.

*Ich möchte hingehn* ('I would like to pass on'), s296 [12], is a setting of Georg Herwegh from the 1840s, published in 1859 by Schlesinger, Berlin (later Kahnt, Leipzig). The song, an increasingly dark contemplation of death, is remarkable for presaging a notable chromatic phrase from *Tristan und Isolde*. Stradal wrote, 'The dark setting of Herwegh's sombre poem "Ich möchte hingeh'n" bears a dramatically singular ending: the poor human heart breaks piece by piece.'<sup>23</sup> This breakdown is portrayed in harmonic and rhythmic instability:

Liszt does not hesitate to alter the key-signature half-a-dozen times during the course of a song if the changing mood of the verses makes it an artistic necessity. In the song *Ich möchte hingehn* there are seven changes of key-signature. With alterations of the time-signature Liszt is even more liberal in some cases; the same song shows no less than fifteen changes between the  $\frac{4}{4}$  in which it begins and the  $\frac{3}{4}$  in which it ends.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>24</sup> Edwin Hughes, 'Liszt as Lieder Composer', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 1917, p. 398.

*Wieder möcht' ich dir begegnen* ('I would like to meet you once more'), s322 [13], was composed to a text by Liszt's protégé and friend Peter Cornelius on 9 October 1860 and published that year by Kahnt of Leipzig. Cornelius was responsible for the fine German translations of other Liszt songs, and Liszt set this tribute to an absent beloved with both reserve and *ff* outbursts of passion before the *ppp* ending.

From the Rhenish poet Heinrich Heine, whose lyrics attracted Liszt repeatedly, came *Du bist wie eine Blume* ('You are like a flower'), s287 [14]. This song was written in the early 1840s, published in 1844 (Eck, The Hague) and revised in both 1860 (Schlesinger, Berlin, then Kahnt, Leipzig) and 1878 (Tonger, Cologne). In Stradal's transcription the original, slightly monotonous rhythm of the minim-and-crotchet accompaniment is transformed into flowing arpeggio quavers in counterpoint to the melody. Also by Heine was *Im Rhein, im schönen Strome* ('In the Rhine, in the beautiful river'; in another version *Am Rhein* ('On the Rhein')), s272 [15]. This Lied was dedicated to Princess Augusta of Prussia and went through three versions: 1843, 1856 (both Schlesinger, Berlin) and 1860 (Kahnt, Leipzig). Ben Arnold commented:

Liszt's revised setting of *Im Rhein, im schönen Strome* illustrates in its three stanzas the river Rhine and a picture within the Cologne cathedral that is suggestive of the narrator's beloved. The triplet sixteenth notes establish the Rhine from the beginning but also refers to the *Wildnis* (wilderness) of the narrator's life. The tuneful melody mellows strikingly as the narrator explains how the picture shone friendly [*sic*] upon him. When the text turns to flowers and angels, the piano figuration becomes softer, higher, and more delicate. The sixteenth-note figurations in the piano stop at m. 34 as the text turns to the narrator's acknowledgement that the woman in the picture has eyes, lips, and cheeks that resemble his own beloved's features. In the brief coda that follows, Liszt overlays the text, describing his lover with the opening Rhine motive to unify the end of the song. This piece ranks as one of Liszt's most performed songs because of how masterfully he portrays Heine's elegant poem.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *The Liszt Companion*, op. cit., p. 422.

Peter Raabe saw Liszt's *Im Rhein* as a forerunner of Impressionism:

From a purely musical point of view we see here a resolute abandonment of the lyrical effect in favour of a pictorial process created only by the imagination. Anyone who is unable to form this image will find that the rhythmic shifts, the sudden silence of the accompaniment, especially the pauses, which after the words 'Exactly the same as loved ones' constantly interrupt the melody, contrived and unnatural. To name what has been under-emphasised, an important characteristic of this kind of musical impressionism is that it – much more than, say, programme music – presupposes from the listener subconscious agreement with the creator. [...] The 'impression' that caused Liszt to silence the accompaniment, breaking the flow of the music arbitrarily, is the coming to life of the Madonna picture, which does not actually emerge from Heine's words, but arose in Liszt's fantasy. If the listener cannot achieve this degree of exaltation with the composer, then the impressionism of this passage will also be missed.<sup>26</sup>

The last song transcription in this recording is *Oh! Quand je dors* ('Oh! When I Sleep'), s282 [16], a Victor Hugo setting of 1844, revised in 1859 (both published by Schlesinger, Berlin, and later Kahnt, Leipzig). Stradal felt the piece was 'one of Liszt's most passionate songs. In the middle of the song is a tremendous climax, which exhibits perhaps more fervour and intensity than has ever been contained in song form.'<sup>27</sup>

Stradal's virtuoso piano transcriptions of his teacher's songs, wrote Vernon Spencer, replaced voice and text 'with the application of modern technical means,' creating works 'that could be performed alongside Liszt's Rhapsodies. [...] Cadenzas are written entirely in the spirit and style of Liszt, and the figuration is appropriate and effective.'<sup>28</sup> Spencer amplified these thoughts:

These arrangements by Liszt's former pupil are so beautiful and interesting that they deserve a detailed review. Such labour demands a very special talent and aptitude that

<sup>26</sup> Peter Raabe, *Franz Liszt*, Vol. 2, *Liszt's Schaffen*, Schneider, Tutzing, 1968, pp. 199–200.

<sup>27</sup> *Franz Liszt's Werke*, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>28</sup> Vernon Spencer, 'Die Klavierbearbeitungen Liszt'scher Lieder von August Stradal', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 99, Nos. 29/30, 22 July 1903, pp. 416–17.

August Stradal seems to possess to a great extent. The essential must be distinguished from the insignificant, especially when it comes to the accompaniment; the melody has to be kept in a position corresponding to the mood of the song, yet the resultant whole must be pianistic and effective. That is why the original musical idea often has to be entwined with figurations, cadenzas and imaginative reworking, and this is where it is very difficult to find tasteful changes and embellishments that correspond to the content of the song or those that do not only have an external effect. August Stradal knew how to overcome these difficulties and to make everything tasteful and piano-like. [...] Suffice it to say that Stradal has attended closely to Liszt's manner and is totally at home in his style. On the whole, the songs are more like intimate improvisations by an enthusiastic musician, created in moments of inspiration, and that is their effect – in a word, ingenious.<sup>29</sup>

### *Von der Wiege bis zum Grabe, s107*

Liszt's Symphonic Poem No. 13, *Von der Wiege bis zum Grabe*, s107, was composed long after the others, in 1881–82, with the score published in 1883 by Bote & Bock. The work was inspired by the gift of an ink drawing by Count Mihály Zichy. 'Celebrated painter!', responded Liszt, 'You have given me a great gift. Your drawing "Du berceau jusqu'au tombe" is a wonderful symphony. I will attempt to put it into music and will dedicate the work to you. In friendly devotion. Fr. Liszt'.<sup>30</sup> As noted by Keith T. Johns,<sup>31</sup> the painting, like the following musical work, is divided into three parts: a lower section (a cradle with mother and child; a casket with mourners), a middle section (allegorical musical figures) and an upper section (angels). These correspond in Liszt's work to three divisions (the first two moving *attacca* onwards), within which Johns identified five major motifs: the cradle, struggle, grief, lullaby and heaven. The first section, 'Die Wiege' ('The Cradle') [17], begins with an expository lullaby, and is orchestrated modestly for violins, violas, two flutes and harp. The second part, 'Der Kampf um's Dasein' ('The Struggle for Existence') [18], is developmental in its contrasting clashes of motifs

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 413 and 417.

<sup>30</sup> Letter to Mihály Zichy, 12 April 1881, in Lina Ramann, *Franz Liszt als Künstler und Mensch*, Vol. 2, Part 2, Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig, 1894, p. 466n.

<sup>31</sup> *The Symphonic Poems of Franz Liszt*, ed. Michael Saffle, Pendragon, Stuyvesant, New York, 1997.

taken from the first section and is scored for full orchestra. The third portion, ‘Zum Grabe: die Wiege des zukünftigen Lebens’ (‘To the Grave: the Cradle of Future Life’) [19], sonically transcendent, is scored minus piccolo and trombones, and ends with solo cello. ‘If one orientates oneself on the motivic-thematic material, the large-scale layout of the work can be described as arch form ABA’ with a clear reprise character in A’, Jürgen Schläder proposed; ‘The formal structure of the composition corresponds to the poetic idea.’<sup>32</sup> Patrick Boenke elucidated:

The final movement functions as a thematic recapitulation and synthesis, which, however, is no longer staged as an emphatic breakthrough, as in earlier works, but rather as a process of dismantlement preceded by a dramatic collapse at the end of the second movement. The demonstrative break with the concept of a final apotheosis relates back not only to the source of inspiration for the work, but also to a transformation in the composer’s aesthetic viewpoint.<sup>33</sup>

The reception of *Von der Wiege* has been fraught from the outset. Theodor Müller-Reuter reported that ‘The so-called “Symphonic Poem” was performed only when styled as Liszt’s last instrumental work; musical value alone could not justify it.’<sup>34</sup> Humphrey Searle noted that the work

was inspired by what is apparently a very bad painting by Count Michael Zichy, and is divided into three parts, ‘The Cradle’, ‘The Struggle for Existence’ and ‘To the Tomb: the Cradle of the Future Life.’ The scheme suggests the worst type of Victorian melodrama; but the originality of the music makes it a very interesting work. The first part is tender, delicate and beautifully written; the violent central section is admittedly rather more conventional, but at any rate acts as an effective foil to the outside parts; while the final

<sup>32</sup> ‘Der schöne Traum zum Ideal. Die künstlerische Konzeption in Franz Liszts letzter Symphonischen Dichtung’, *Programmmusik: Studien zu Begriff und Geschichte einer umstrittenen Gattung*, ed. Constantin Floros, Hans Joachim Marx and Peter Peterson, Laaber Lillienthal (Bremen), 1983, p. 51.

<sup>33</sup> ‘Collapse and Dismantlement: On Form and Dramaturgy in Liszt’s Late Symphonic Poem From the Cradle to the Grave’, *Studia musicologica*, Vol. 54, No. 4, 2013, p. 431.

<sup>34</sup> *Lexikon der deutschen Konzertliteratur. Ein Ratgeber für Dirigenten, Konzertveranstalter, Musikschriftsteller und Musikfreunde*, Kahnt, Leipzig, 1909, p. 339.

part combines the themes of the two previous sections and uses them to suggest a curious, transitional atmosphere which is exactly in keeping with the subject.<sup>35</sup>

Elsewhere, Searle called the piece ‘a restrained and austere work that looks towards the future both musically and in its subject matter’.<sup>36</sup> More recently, Michael Saffle concluded that ‘Carefully constructed but emotionally understated and somewhat indistinct expressively, *Von der Wiege* is nevertheless an interesting piece, although one that has never found much favor with concert audiences’.<sup>37</sup>

Through his last years, Stradal continued his labours on behalf of his master teachers, Liszt and Bruckner. His projects inevitably slowed in the face of illness, and Stradal failed to complete transcriptions of important pieces by each composer before his death. The outer movements of Bruckner’s Seventh Symphony and the first two of his Ninth went undone, as did Liszt’s last symphonic poem. In 2020 Risto-Matti Marin made his own transcription of *Von der Wiege*. He commented:

Liszt’s own piano version is rather sparse and skeleton-like. I have used it as a starting point but included all the thematic material Liszt has written for the 3rd stave, and then elaborated and ‘orchestrated’ some things, especially in the second movement. Also, I have changed certain things from one register to another, to create a more lively and musically satisfying result. I have done all this trying to maintain the subtle simplicity and fragility of Liszt’s late style.<sup>38</sup>

*William Melton is the author of Engelbert Humperdinck: A Life of the Composer of Hänsel und Gretel (Toccata Press, London, 2020) and The Wagner Tuba: A History (edition ebenos, Aachen, 2008) and is a contributor to The Cambridge Wagner Encyclopedia (2013). His four-decade career as an orchestral horn-player in Aachen/Aix-la-chapelle was preceded by graduate studies in music history at UCLA. Further writings include articles on lesser-known Romantics like Friedrich Klose, Henri Kling and Felix Draeseke, and Melton has researched and edited the scores of the ‘Forgotten Romantics’ series for the publisher edition ebenos.*

<sup>35</sup> *The Music of Liszt*, Williams & Norgate, London, 1954, p. 116.

<sup>36</sup> ‘Liszt, Franz,’ *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, op. cit., p. 45.

<sup>37</sup> ‘Orchestral Works,’ *The Liszt Companion*, op. cit., p. 275.

<sup>38</sup> E-mail dated 16 October 2020.



**Risto-Matti Marin** (b. 1976) has been hailed in the Finnish press as being ‘in the absolute top class of all Finnish pianists’. He has recorded many solo-piano discs and several of chamber music. He has also made a number of recordings for the Finnish Broadcasting Company, Yle. His repertoire varies from the cornerstones of Classical/Romantic piano works to rare pieces, transcriptions and contemporary music. He earned his doctoral degree in 2010 from the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki. In addition to his work as a recitalist and chamber musician, he lectures on piano music and teaches at master-classes in Finland and abroad. He also works as a part-time teacher in the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki. As a soloist, as well as a chamber musician with classical saxophonist Olli-Pekka Tuomisalo, he has premiered many Finnish contemporary works, by Eero Hämeenniemi, Sebastian Fagerlund and Matthew Whittall, among others. He was the co-dedicatée, along with Angela Hewitt, of Whittall’s piano concerto *Nameless Seas*, of which he gave the European premiere in November 2017 as soloist with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Olari Elts. Recently he has made a series of first recordings of unknown Finnish piano repertoire. A contemporary-music disc, *Sixth Sense*, was released in 2018, and first recordings of Romantic Finnish piano music *Hidden Treasures* was released in September 2019. Both of these discs were nominated in the ‘Best Classical Album’ category of the Finnish Emma Awards. With this Liszt-Stradal album he becomes the first pianist to have recorded the complete August Stradal transcriptions of Franz Liszt’s symphonic poems.



Photograph: Heikki Tuuli

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Recorded on 15 and 16 June 2020 in the Kangasala Hall, Kangasala, Finland

Recording, editing and mastering: Matti Heinonen, Pro Audile Oy

Producer: Risto-Matti Marin

Assistant producer: Sofia Riippi

Instrument: Steinway D-274 598661

Piano technicians: Harri Mikkola and Harri Lehtonen

I would like to thank a number of people, institutions and generous foundations for supporting me during this project to record the entire Liszt-Stradal symphonic poems: Martin Anderson, Paul Forsell, Teppo Koivisto, Donald Manildi, Jiří Primas, Matti Raekallio, Erik T. Tawaststjerna, the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts, MES, the Pro Musica Foundation, Finnish Cultural Foundation and Arts Promotion Centre Finland.

*Risto-Matti Marin*

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# LISZT Symphonic Poems, transcr. Stradal/Marin, Volume Four

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## Symphonic Poem No. 1, *Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne*, s95 32:23

transcribed by August Stradal (1904)

1	Introduction –	1:08
2	Exposition –	9:50
3	Development –	2:12
4	Recapitulation –	2:05
5	<i>Andante religioso</i> –	2:09
6	Introduction 2 –	3:49
7	Exposition 2 –	2:03
8	Development 2 –	1:22
9	Recapitulation 2 –	4:24
10	<i>Andante religioso</i> 2 –	3:21

### *Lieder und Gesänge*

11	<i>Es muss ein Wunderbares sein</i> , s314 (c. 1920)	4:15
12	No. 34 <i>Ich möchte hingehn</i> , s296 (1903)	8:17
13	No. 37 <i>Wieder möcht' ich dir begegnen</i> , s322 (1903)	3:37
14	No. 13 <i>Du bist wie eine Blume</i> , s287 (1903)	2:21
15	<i>Am Rhein, im schönen Strome</i> , s272 (1925)	2:11
16	No. 18 <i>Oh! Quand je dors</i> , s282 (1903)	5:15

## Symphonic Poem No. 13, *Von der Wiege bis zum Grabe*, s107 14:29

transcribed by Risto-Matti Marin (2020)

17	I Die Wiege –	4:38
18	II Der Kampf um's Dasein –	2:49
19	III Zum Grabe: die Wiege des zukünftigen Lebens	7:02

Risto-Matti Marin, piano

TT 72:49

FIRST RECORDINGS