

LISZT

Duo Sonata on Polish Themes
The Three Gypsies • 2 Elegies
Grand duo concertant on
Lafont's 'Le marin'

Voytek Proniewicz, Violin • Wojciech Waleczek, Piano

Franz Liszt (1811–1886)

Music for Violin and Piano

Franz Liszt was born in 1811 at Raiding (Doborjan) near Ödenburg (Sopron) in a German-speaking region of Hungary. His father, Adam Liszt, was a steward in the employment of Haydn's former patrons, the Esterházy Princes, and an amateur cellist. The boy showed early musical talent, exhibited in a public concert at Ödenburg in 1820, followed by a concert in Pressburg (the modern Slovak capital Bratislava). This second appearance brought sufficient support from members of the Hungarian nobility to allow the family to move to Vienna, where Liszt took piano lessons from Czerny and composition lessons from the old Court Composer Antonio Salieri, who had taught Beethoven and Schubert. In 1822 the Liszts moved to Paris, where, as a foreigner, he was refused admission to the Conservatoire by Cherubini, but was able to embark on a career as a virtuoso, displaying his gifts as a pianist and as a composer.

On the death of his father in 1827 Liszt was joined again by his mother in Paris, where he began to teach the piano and to interest himself in the newest literary trends of the day. The appearance of Paganini there in 1831 suggested new possibilities of virtuosity as a pianist, later exemplified in his *Paganini Studies*. A liaison with a married woman, the Comtesse Marie d'Agoult, a blue-stocking on the model of their friend the novelist George Sand (Aurore Dudevant), and the subsequent birth of three children, involved Liszt in years of travel, from 1839 once more as a virtuoso pianist, a rôle in which he came to enjoy the wildest adulation of audiences.

In 1844 Liszt finally broke with Marie d'Agoult, who later took her own literary revenge on her lover. Connection with the small Grand Duchy of Weimar led in 1848 to his withdrawal from public concerts and his establishment there as Director of Music, accompanied by a young Polish heiress, Princess Carolyne zu Sayn-Wittgenstein, the estranged wife of a Russian nobleman and a woman of literary and theological propensities. Liszt now turned his attention to new forms of composition, particularly to symphonic poems, in which he attempted to translate into musical terms works of literature and other subjects.

Catholic marriage to Princess Sayn-Wittgenstein had proved impossible, but application to the Vatican offered

some hope, when, in 1861, Liszt travelled to join her in Rome. The marriage did not take place and the couple continued to live separately in Rome, starting a period of his life that Liszt later described as *une vie trifurquée* (a three-pronged life), as he divided his time between his comfortable monastic residence in Rome, his visits to Weimar, where he held court as a master of the keyboard and a prophet of the new music, and his appearances in Hungary, where he was now hailed as a national hero.

Liszt's illegitimate daughter Cosima had married the pianist and conductor Hans von Bülow, whom she later deserted for Wagner, already the father of two of her children. His own final years were as busy as ever, and in 1886 he gave concerts in Budapest, Paris, Antwerp and London. He died in Bayreuth during the Wagner Festival, now controlled, since her husband's death, by his daughter Cosima, to whom his appearance there seems to have been less than welcome.

In his long career Liszt wrote a great deal of piano music, songs, choral works, and orchestral compositions, but relatively little chamber music. His *Duo Sonata, S127/R461*, based on Polish themes, was written relatively early in his career, between 1832 and 1835. In February 1832 Chopin had made his début in Paris, and, befriended by Liszt, was gradually drawn into the latter's circle. In 1835 Liszt eloped with Marie d'Agoult, so that contact between Chopin and Liszt clearly became more limited. The sonata for violin and piano is a tribute to Chopin, its four movements based on Chopin's *Mazurka in C sharp minor, Op. 6, No. 2*, and in this sense monothematic, although other Polish material finds its way into the work. The piano starts the sonata, introducing what is broadly a sonata-form first movement that brings moments of tempest. The second movement allows the violin to introduce the theme, followed by the piano and then a series of variations with moments of display for both players. The third movement is dominated by the violin, at times lyrical and at times virtuosic, with a final cadenza. The work ends with a Rondo, concluding in a grand climax.

The *Epithalamium for the Wedding Celebration of Eduard Reményi* was written in 1872 for the Hungarian violinist

Eduard Reményi's marriage to Gizella Fay. Reményi, who had chosen a Hungarian name rather than the original Hoffmann, had been involved in the Hungarian disturbances of 1848 and forced to take refuge abroad. In 1852 he had joined the young Brahms in a concert tour that had taken them to Weimar, where Liszt held court. Reményi profited from the meeting with Liszt, who gave him great encouragement, while Brahms, if winning no favour from Liszt, met Joseph Joachim and then the Schumanns. Reményi enjoyed a varied career. After spending time in Weimar he was appointed soloist to Queen Victoria, a position he later held, after the amnesty of 1860, under the Emperor Franz Joseph. His marriage took place in Pest in February 1872, when Liszt was best man, and six days later performed with him the piece written in his honour. Reményi settled for a time in Paris and then in the United States, touring widely. He died during a concert he was giving in San Francisco in 1898. Liszt's wedding present for Reményi is a piece of graceful charm, a hint of what might have been, had Liszt written the violin concerto for Reményi that he had once intended. It ends with a short violin cadenza.

Die drei Zigeuner (The Three Gypsies) was first a setting of a poem by Lenau in which a weary traveller sees three gypsies resting in a field, one playing the fiddle, one smoking and the third sleeping. As he goes on his way, the traveller reflects on the freedom of gypsy life. Liszt set the poem in 1860 and in 1864 composed a paraphrase of the song, intended for Reményi. A later arrangement was made for voice and orchestra. The Hungarian gypsy style, as then understood, is an essential element of the original work, which is well suited to the violin, with moods varying from the meditative to the rhapsodic.

Liszt's first *Elegie* was written in 1874 for piano and was in memory of Madame Moukhanoff-Kalergis, née Countess Marie Nesselrode, a pupil of Chopin and a leading figure in Liszt's circle. The piece, with the explanatory title *Schlummer-*

lied im Grabe (Lullaby in the Grave), was issued in various arrangements and in 1876 in a version for violin and piano arranged by Liszt and Reményi's former pupil, the violinist Nándor Plotenýi. The pervasive falling interval of a semitone imbues the piece with melancholy, with a final beam of hope in the last bars. The second *Elegie* was written in 1878 and dedicated to Lina Ramann, Liszt's biographer, in an attempted but later troublesome collaboration with Princess Sayn-Wittgenstein. Lina Ramann made a reputation for herself as a teacher through her text-book on the basic principles of piano technique and through the school she headed in Nuremberg. The *Elegie* includes a gently lyrical passage marked *dolcissimo amoroso*, which leads to a passionate climax, before all ends in evocative simplicity.

The great Hungarian violinist Jenő Hubay created a characteristic piece of violinistic artistry in his arrangement of Liszt's *Valse-Improptu*, a piece originally written for piano in 1850-1852 and revised by the composer in 1880. Hubay dedicated his idiomatic and demanding violin and piano version of the piece to Yehudi Menuhin

Liszt's *Grand Duo concertant sur la Romance de M. Lafont 'Le marin'* was written in 1835, based on a piece by the French violinist Charles Philippe Lafont, a prolific composer of such romances. Liszt revised the piece during his early years in Weimar. Introductory passages lead to the theme on which the rest of the work is based, an unpretentious *Andantino*. There follow a series of variations, the first for the violin and the second mainly for the piano, accompanied by the pizzicato notes of the violin. The third variation, marked *Allegretto pastorale*, makes equal demands on both players, ending with a violin cadenza. The fourth variation is a *Tarantelle* leading to the *Animato marziale* conclusion of a work that makes no concessions to either player.

Keith Anderson



Voytek Proniewicz

Voytek Proniewicz graduated from the Fryderyk Chopin Academy of Music in Warsaw and has performed at the National Philharmonic in Warsaw, Rudolfinum Philharmonic in Prague, Simon Bolivar Concert Hall in Caracas, Wrocław Philharmonic, Rzeszów Philharmonic, Baltic Philharmonic, Lublin Philharmonic and the Silesian Philharmonic. He has given concerts in Vienna, Paris, Brussels, Bonn, Vilnius, Catania, Palermo, Kaliningrad, Shanghai and Hong Kong. His recordings include *Pupils of Chopin* for Naxos [8.572460] and music for the film *Chopin – The Space Concert*, awarded the main prize at the 2012 International Film Festival in Monaco. In 1998 Polish television produced and broadcast a film entitled *Violin Impression* which was devoted entirely to the young violinist. His achievements include third prize at the Beethoven International Competition in Hradec nad Moravicí, in the Czech Republic (1998), first prize at the Fifth Stanisław Serwaczyński National Violin Competition in Lublin (2002) and a distinction at the Karol Szymanowski International Competition in Łódź (2005).



Wojciech Waleczek

Wojciech Waleczek graduated from the Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice in the class of Zbigniew Raubo. Awards include third prize at the Second International Piano Competition “Arthur Rubinstein in memoriam” in Bydgoszcz (1996), first prize at the Fourth Ferenc Liszt National Piano Competition in Wrocław (1997), third prize at the Seventh Ferenc Liszt International Piano Competition “Premio Mario Zanfi” in Parma (2000), and third prize at the Third Ferenc Liszt International Piano Competition in Wrocław (2005). He has performed as a soloist with the orchestras of Kalisz, Karlovy Vary, Kielce, Koszalin, Lublin, Łódź, Opole, Bydgoszcz, Rzeszów, Toruń, Szczecin, Wrocław, Zabrze as well as with many others, including the Sinfonia Iuventus Orchestra, Polish Chamber Philharmonic Sopot, Capella Bydgosciensis, Beethoven Academy Orchestra, Elbląg Chamber Orchestra, Kaposvar Symphony Orchestra, National Chamber Orchestra of Moldova and the Amman Symphony Orchestra. He has appeared on stage in most European Union countries, Switzerland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Russia, Jordan, Palestine, Iran, Canada, Japan and the United States.

Franz Liszt wrote relatively little chamber music in his long and illustrious career. The *Duo Sonata* is a tribute to Chopin, drawing on one of his famous Mazurkas as well as other Polish themes. The gracefully charming *Epithalamium* was Liszt's wedding present to the great violinist Eduard Reményi, for whom the gipsy style of *Die drei Zigeuner* was also intended. The two lyrical *Elegies* commemorate the passing of members of Liszt's circle, while the demanding virtuoso variations of the *Grand Duo concertant* make no concessions to either player.



Instytut im. Balassiego
Węgierski Instytut
Kultury w Warszawie

**Franz
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(1811–1886)



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| Duo Sonata (sur des thèmes polonais), S127/R461 (c. 1832–c. 1835) | 22:04 | 7 Elegie No. 1, S130ter/R471c (1876) | 5:36 |
| 1 Moderato | 6:35 | 8 Elegie No. 2, S131bis/R472 (1878) | 4:56 |
| 2 Tema con variazioni | 4:33 | 9 Valse-Improptu, S213/R36 (1850–1852, rev. 1880) (arr. Jenő Hubay, 1858–1937) | 6:38 |
| 3 Allegretto | 5:12 | 10 Grand duo concertant sur la Romance de M. Lafont 'Le marin', S128/R462 (1835) | 15:30 |
| 4 Allegro con brio | 5:44 | | |
| 5 Epithalam zu Eduard Reményi's Vermählungsfeier, S129/R466 (1872) | 4:38 | | |
| 6 Die drei Zigeuner, S383/R469 (1864) | 10:07 | | |

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