“One cannot compare him to anybody: his shining is unique on the sky of arts.”

(1 January 1876)

(Quoted by la Mara 1893, p.122-123)
The Connection of Chopin and Liszt
The third picture is taken from a placard exhibition organized by the Hungarian and Polish Cultural Institutions, currently exhibited in Budapest and in the next weeks in Warsaw, Poland.

**LISZT'S LETTER TO L. RAMANN**

Right at the beginning of Ernst Burger’s famous and well-known book about Liszt I found a quotation from a letter written by Liszt to Lina Ramann August 30, 1884. It starts with the following sentence:
2nd = desultory studies and creativity in Paris, for a time in Genova and Italy [...] in Vienna, the success of which launched me on my career as a virtuoso.

When Chopin was 20 years old he made his first concert tour to Austria and Germany. Before he left Poland on November 2, 1830, he already had a lot of concerts among them he played his two piano concertos in F minor and E minor, which were composed in this year in the spring and in the autumn. He wrote a number of important works, Rondo de Concert, Fantasie in A major, several Etudes from op. 10, Mazurkas, Polonaises

November 29, 1830 in Warsaw an armed uprising against the long lasting rule of the Tsar’s in Poland broke out. There was a revolution during the whole year. In September 1831 Chopin was in the midst of the tour of Austria and Germany when he heard of the fall of Warsaw and he found himself abruptly cut off his native land. He did not want to remain in Austria and could not go back to Poland. He decided to go into France and he wandered into Paris in the autumn of 1831, in a mood of bitter despair. He was destined to remain in Paris except for brief intervals, for the rest of his life.
Almost as soon as Chopin entered Paris, Liszt made his acquaintance. From that time they became friends and remained for some years tied by bonds of true friendship [...] At the beginning Chopin and Liszt had a lot of common friends too: Berlioz, Hiller, Meyerbeer, the writers Dumas, V. Hugo, Balzac, Lamartine, the painter Delacroix.

After arriving in Paris Chopin made already efforts to perform in public. His first concert was organised by Kalbrenner at Salle Pleyel. Liszt was present at Chopin’s first concert at the Salle Pleyel on February 26, 1832. Of course at the concert Kalkbrenner, a reknown pianist himself played too.

„At the concert Chopin played from his own compositions: Concerto in E minor op. 11. It was accompanied by a quintett. He played his Variations in B flat major op. 2, Mazurkas and Nocturnes. The concert was a great Chopin success. It was attended among others by Mendelssohn, who made a concert tour between 1830-32 in England, France and Italy and spent this winter in Paris.”

„And here is what Liszt wrote about the concert in his book about Chopin, published in 1852:’I remember his first performance in the Salle Pleyel where our more enthusiastic applause was an inadequate expression of our utmost admiration for his talent, which revealed a new era of artistic sensibilities and happily introduced innovations into the form of his creative work.’ “
At the first part of the thirties Chopin and Liszt were in a very good friendship. Based upon careful studies of the literature we may say that they met virtually every day. They performed together many times at public concerts and private parties. They gave a common concert in the Salle Pleyel on April 3, and December 15, 1833. Chopin cemented these early connections by dedicating to Liszt his newly published set of Twelve Studies, Op. 10. What Chopin thought of Liszt’s performance of these pieces was expressed in a letter dated in June 20, 1833 to one of their friends, Ferdinand Hiller the following way:

CHOPIN’S AND LISZT’S JOINT CONCERTS IN PARIS
During the 1832-33 concert season Hiller, Liszt and Chopin joined forces in a performance of the Allegro from Bach’s Concerto for three pianos. Not long afterwards Jaques and Henri Herz came together with Liszt and Chopin, and a concerto for eight hands on two pianos – rotating positions between movements, after the fashion of the day - were performed. In December 1834 they played together the Grand Duo by Liszt which was written for two pianos (probably on themes of Mendelssohn: Lieder ohne Worte) and Moscheles Grand Sonata Op. 47.

In 1835 they played on a concert (April 5,) which was given for Polish refugees.

The most creative was the concert that took place in the spring of 1837 at which Liszt, Chopin, Czerny, Pixis, Thalberg and Herz improvised on a theme selected by princess Belgiojoso from the Puritans by Bellini. The result was a joint work composed by them called „Hexameron”, which was many times performed later by Liszt on his concerts.
“As opposed to Liszt, Chopin performed at public concerts infrequently. He preferred to play for small audiences consisting of friends at the salons of Polish and French aristocracy.”

“[…] Chopin has played no part in the exaggerated competitiveness which performing artists all over the world are wont to indulge in at each other’s expense. He has always been surrounded by loyal disciples, enthusiastic pupils and devoted friends, who have protected him from unwanted conflicts and have never tired of spreading abroad their admiration for his name and works. […]” – wrote Liszt after Chopin’s concert on April 26, 1841 in his critic.

Chopin played in public fewer than a dozen times in his life. His intensely nationalistic music, his aristocratic aloofness and his utterly original approach to keyboard set him apart from the Paris virtuoso school and with the passing years he transformed him into a unique figure. As his frame was slowly ravaged by tuberculosis, all thoughts of performing career were abandoned.

Chopin’s general contempt for most of his colleagues, including Liszt and Berlioz, is well documented.
From 1835 the relations between Chopin and Liszt were gradually becoming less and less cordial:
Different motivations have been taken into consideration as causes of Chopin’s change of attitude towards Liszt. Chopin was upset by Liszt’s haughty and condescending manners.
But the apparent cause was Marie Pleyel, the recently estranged wife of Chopin’s friend Camille Pleyel. Liszt is said to have used Chopin’s apartments in the rue de la Chausse d’Antin for a tryst while Chopin was out of Paris, and on his return Chopin felt himself compromised.
The growing rift between them was compounded by petty intrigues and gossip spread by Countess d’Agoult and George Sand, the companions of Liszt and Chopin.  

In June 1835 Liszt had moved to Genova, and thereafter to Italy, so the two musicians rarely met.
Liszt and Marie arrived back into Paris more than a year later, on October 16, 1836 and installed themselves in the fashionable Hotel de France at 23 rue Lafitte. Lamennais, Rossini, Meyerbeer, Berlioz and Chopin came to see them and they were surrounded by a host of old companions. Among the brilliant men were Balzac, Heinrich Heine, Victor Hugo too. Marie invited George Sand to join them. That was the time when Chopin first met her. Shortly afterwards Liszt and Marie took Sand to see Chopin in his apartment. Chopin gave an evening and the highlight of this evening was a performance by Chopin and Liszt of Moscheles’s Sonata in E-flat major for four hands, with Chopin playing the secondo part and Liszt the primo.
Among Chopin’s contemporaries there were several critics who at first had little idea of the importance and originality of Chopin’s music, and most of them would have found it unbelievable that he would one day be placed among the musical giants of his age. Critics did their bests to obstruct Chopin’s career by issuing a series of carping criticism agains him over the years. I would just like to mention two of these critics: John Field described him as „a sickroom talent”

Later Davidson – who was a critic of Times in England - wrote that „the entire works of Chopin present a motley surface of ranting hyperbole and excruciating cacophony”, a phrase which serves to remind us that musical criticism, then as now, was helpless when confronted by new and unexpected.¹⁸

Liszt after Chopin’s first concert immediately recognised that he is a genius and in his performance and compositions what made him most enthusiastic were exactly the most daring, original, the most modern ideas.¹⁹ He already in 1837 confessed to Robert Schumann, that „he could really enthuse only for Chopin’s and Schumann’s compositions.”²⁰
Chopin gave a concert on April 26, 1841, and Liszt wrote a highly poetical review, which was published in Gazette Musicale, May 2, 1841.

Let me read a brief excerpt from the review:

„Last Monday at 8 o’clock, the salon Pleyel were festively lit. A large grand piano stood open on a platform. People flocked around it, eagerly bent on obtaining a seat as close as they could. They all sat down, no other thought in their heads not to miss a single chord, a single note or nuance, a single thoughts of him, who was now to take his seat up there. And how fitting it was that these people were all so expectant, attentive, and reverential; for the man whom they were awaiting, whom they whished to see and hear, to admire and owerwhelmed with acclaim, was not only a brilliant virtuoso, a pianist skilled in the art of the keyboard, not only an artist of great fame and reputation – he was all this and more: he was Chopin. Thus this extraordinary celebrity, truly great and toweringly pre-eminent, has always remained unassailable. All criticism of him is silenced, as though posterity had already spoken. And the glittering audience, which flocked to the concert to hear the poet who for far too long had been silent showed no opposition, no reservations: unanimous praise was on everyone’s lips.
A wild and volatile element from his native land finds expression in daring dissonances and strange harmonies, while the tenderness and grace of his personality are revealed in the countless nuances and embellishments of his inimitable imagination [...] Since his playing addressed itself to a select gathering rather than to the general public, he was able to reveal himself as he really is, as an elegiac poet, profound, chaste, and visionary. Even with his very first chords he established close contact between himself and his listeners. Two Etudes and Ballade had to be repeated”

After this review „Chopin’s bitterness is reflected in his father, Nicolas Chopin’s letter,” because according their opinions Liszt described the social elite in attendance rather than Chopin’s works and performance, and Chopin took it as an insult.

II
1838-1845

Concert tours: Paris, London, Berlin, Petersburg etc.: fantasies, transcriptions, living like a lord

On April 9, 1837 before his departure from Paris Liszt gave his „farewell concert” a grand concert in the Salle Erard. He played a group of Chopin’s newly composed Studies, Op. 25 too and his arrangement of Hummel’s Septet.

Liszt for his part never lost interest in Chopin’s music and during his virtuoso tours, he frequently included his compositions in his programmes, particularly the polonaises, studies, and mazurkas. During his concert tour in Poland in 1843 he had a visit at Chopin’s family home in Warsaw. It is unfortunate that there is no resonance of this visit.

In 1850 he composed a Mazurka brillante, using his own thematic material. In his latest of piano pieces Christmas Tree, final version 1882 the last movement is „Polish” again.

During a lesson on July 6, 1884 he himself said that during the last 50 years „he knew by heart the Etudes op. 10 which Chopin dedicated to him.”

After 1842 „Lisztomania” swept Europe, and the reception accorded the pianist can only be described as hysterical. …Sober-minded musicians like Chopin, Schumann and Mendelssohn were appalled by such vulgar displays of hero-worship and gradually came to despise Liszt because of them. Was Liszt to blame for the unrestrained conduct of his audiences?- asks A. Walker in his
book on Liszt „The Virtuoso Years” That is rather like asking whether Niagara Falls is to blame for such many suicides. Liszt was a natural phenomenon, and people were swept away by him. And there were many witnesses to testify that his playing did indeed raise the mood of the audience to a level of mystical ecstasy.²⁷

Chopin frankly disliked Liszt’s theatricality, his playing the grande seigneur, and he came to regard Liszt the composer as a mere striver after effects. Liszt, it should be remembered, had not yet found his true direction and hardly came into his own until after Chopin’s early death.²⁸ There are proofs that in later years Liszt tried to contact Chopin.

As we know Liszt outlived Chopin for almost 40 years. After Chopin’s death (in October 1849) Liszt was the first to write a book about him which had an important influence on the reception of Chopin’s works until the end of the century.

When Liszt decided to write the book he made an attempt to get to the “source” of certain facts from Chopin’s life. He sent a questionnaire to Chopin’s sister Ludwika Jedrzjewich with 12 questions in order to acquire basic information for his book.
The questionnaire was accompanied by a letter from Liszt to Ludwika Jedrzejewicz – Chopin’s sister - written in Pilsen on November 14, 1849: “Madame, My long-lasting friendship with your brother, my sincere and deep admiration for him as one of the greatest masters of our art has in some measure, made it a duty of mine to write several pages to cherish his memory. It will probably develop into a pamphlet of 3-4 pages. In order to apply all necessary precision to his work, may I as a close friend of his ask you a number of questions concerning his life. I would be infinitely grateful if you could provide your answer in the margin.

Ludwika never answered the questions enclosed with the letter. She regarded Liszt’s approach as tactless, and the questionnaire was filled in by Chopin’s pupil Jane Stirling.

Stirling did not answer all of the questions. The answers were not based on documents, some of the answers were very brief. They referred to well known facts from the composers life and to Chopin’s general image which she wanted to defend against Liszt’s prying. Liszt was later criticized for not checking certain facts.

Jane Stirling writes about it in her letter to Ludwika dated July 2, 1852: “you need not be sorry that you have not written the notes; Liszt would have used them at random and later the whole responsibility for it would have been yours.”

Before Liszt’s study on Chopin appeared in book form, it was published in 17 installements in *La France musicale* from February 5, to August 17, 1851. An expanded book edition appeared on New Year’s Day 1852. It consists of 7 chapters.

The first one is an Introduction presenting the rationale of the book. The second and the third concern Polonaises and Mazurkas. The fourth and the fifth are devoted to Chopin’s playing and his physical and spiritual characteristics. The biographical part of the study, chapter 6, is based on information from third parties. It contains erroneous information which was criticized by Chopin’s family and his school-mate The seventh chapter is an epilogue, Liszt again gives his reasons for writing the book on Chopin.

Until 1939 (?) the family of Ludwika Jedrzejewicz kept the texts of questions and answers written in the hand of Stirling.

From Liszt’s book emerges a model of reception of Chopin’s works which is full of admiration for his metier as a composer, but which also generates certain controversies.
Nevertheless, when Liszt was planning a new edition of the book, he confessed in a letter dated January 1, 1876 to Princess Wittgenstein that in the previous one he had not been able to fully assess Chopin’s genius. Liszt’s opinion on Chopin is best expressed in a letter written January 1, 1876 to Carolyne Wittgenstein: „In 1849 I didn’t quite understand yet the inner beauty of Chopin’s last works, of the Polonaise Fantasy, the Barcarole. Now I fully appreciate and admire them. More than just being very remarkable, they fully express the genius of Chopin.”

„One cannot compare him to anybody: his shining is unique on the sky of arts.”

(Quoted by la Mara 1893, p.122-123)

„The first translation of Liszt’s book into Polish made by Falensky is not exact: it contains alterations and omissions. In 1924 a second translation by Maria Pomian was published by Altenberg in Lvov and it was also imperfect. The third translation by Maria Tarczewska from the original edition of 1852 with a preface was published by Polish Music Publishers in 1960.”

The book was translated into Hungarian at first in 1873, then in 1922, and some details in 1959.

Liszt was planning a German translation and edition of his book, but at first he couldn’t realize this plan. Later he re-wrote and expanded the book. The first German translation in 1880 by La Mara used this later version.
**CHOPIN** (biography) *Published in*

French 1851, 1852  
English 1877  
German 1910

*(information from E. Burger’s book)*

Polish 1873, 1924, 1960  
Hungarian 1873, 1922, details in 1959.  
German 1880.

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**LISZT**

**AS ONE OF THE EDITOR OF CHOPIN’S WORKS**
Due to the shortness of time let me mention just a few facts on this important topic.

Liszt was first asked to participate in edition of Chopin’s works late 1875 by the Schlesinger Company in Berlin, but he refused. Later, early 1876 the Leipzig Company Breitkopf and Hartel asked him to help with a complete edition of Chopin’s works. This time he agreed editing the etudes and preludes. However, the publisher already gave the etudes to a different person, so ultimately Liszt edited only the preludes. Of course he once again tried to obtain the original manuscripts but he didn’t receive them. Unfortunately the publisher asked in vain Chopin’s sister to send the manuscripts: Brancinska left the request unanswered. Later, once the notes were printed she received an honorary copy, she immediately asked for money. In contrast when the publisher wanted to pay honorarium to Liszt for his work he sent the money back with the accompanying letter:

„Highly Regarded Gentlemen,
While thankfully acknowledging it please forgive me for sending back my honorarium due for editing Chopin’ Preludes. Please accept my small effort as a favor from an old client and sincere devotee of yours”

Franz Liszt
August 24, 1878. 35
Anyone, who is even remotely familiar with the general style of both composers knows that they lie far apart and are connected through externals only. One can find certain common features in the artistic attitudes and work of Chopin and Liszt, but there are more opposing, individual factors. Chopin did not think highly of Liszt’s work’s, but of course he was incapable of hearing his later compositions. Liszt was forty five years old when he stopped giving concerts. „...He has already enjoyed an unprecedented two decade triumph as Europe’s virtuoso superstar – but at tremendous cost to his physical and emotional resources. He created after this period some of his most beautiful, moving and significant works…”

The question of Chopin’s influence on Liszt has often been debated. He had taken over from Chopin a sense of form, which somewhat tamed his imagination (Badura-Skoda 1962, p.62) in the fields of harmony, ornamentation, figuration richness of the use of rubato.

For a time, though, Liszt lay under the spell of certain individual compositions of Chopin; in particular the ghosts of Chopin’s A-flat major Polonaise (Op. 53), the F-minor Study (Op. 10) the Berceuse later turned up to haunt some of Liszt’s middle-period works. A close inspection of Liszt’s F-minor Transcendental
Study reveal some intriguing similarities to Chopin’s own F-minor Study. But as we know it today, the F-minor is an outgrowth of the juvenile version that Liszt composed as a youth of fifteen, long before he had heard a note of Chopin. Liszt, in other words often received more from himself, than he received from others.  

Chopin’s music is largely derived from his early experience of opera, the rhythms and harmonies of native polish dances, and Bach, as Ch. Rosen states in his book „The Romantic Generation.”  

Liszt invents wonderful pianistic illusions of orchestral instruments and of the interplay between voices and instruments: even his most extravagant versions retain at the heart a certain fidelity to the original sound. P. Badura-Skoda stresses the fact that Chopin has learned from Liszt the fullness of tone and an orchestral treatment of sound.  

In an etude Chopin focuses on a single technical problem. It has a uniform texture and a complex form with balanced proportions. Liszt in his transcendental and concert etudes synthesized the achievements not only of Chopin, but also of Paganini and others, links various techniques and types of texture in each of his etudes. He uses the entire scale of the instrument throughout, climaxes, places of figurations.  

Those two gods standing on their two separate suns” – as Chopin and Liszt were called in a critique of the Polish translation of Liszt’s book „Frederic Chopin.” They were closest to each other in their youth, parting later in life with each one going his separate way.  

At the end of his life writing to his family from Scotland, Chopin did not hesitate to call (the composer Josef Dessauer and) Liszt his and the singer Adolaeide Sartoris’s friends.  

Liszt paid hommage to Chopin with his 6 Chants polonais, a virtuosio transcription of Chopin’s songs.
LISZT’S TEACHING

Let me quote a few examples from Liszt’s pupils’ memories
Let me quote a few examples from Liszt’s pupils’ memories

Chopin’s works had an extremely important place in the repertoire of Liszt’s students. Some of them kept diaries (Göllerich, Lachmund, Gottschlag) which have been published and tell us not only about what was played from Chopin’s oeuvre in Liszt’s classes, but they describe also the master’s remarks and ideas about how to play Chopin.

The tradition was imparted by Liszt’s students also to later generations; Tilly Fleischmann, a pupil of Bernhard Stavenhagen and Berthold Kellermann who published a book about The Aspects of Liszt Tradition, devotes her very first chapter - in about 45 pages - to Chopin’s works. 43

In his Weimar masterclasses, held during the seventies and eighties Liszt constantly encouraged his pupils to play Chopin, and his remarks on this repertoire show that his admiration for it remained undiminished.

… Liszt called Chopin the only pianoforte poet, and always said that each note of his music was „a pearl dropped from the skies.” 44

During the lessons that he gave in the years 1884-86 he saw to it that the interpretation of Chopin’s works should be approached with appropriate reverence. 45
I read this book and went through the lessons. I gathered the pieces taught by Liszt, recorded by one of Liszt’s student, August Göllerich.

1884. WEIMAR

Nocturne No.8, c-moll
Etude Op. 10, C-dur
Barcarola Op. 60
Nocturne cis-moll Op. 27 No. 1
Berceuse Op. 57
Concert-Allegro in A-dur Op.46
Ballada As-dur Op. 47 No.3, Fis-moll Prelude Op. 28 No.8
G-dur Prelude Op. 28, Fis-dur novturne Op. 15, No. 2
Scherzo h-moll Op. 20
Walzer As-dur Op. 42
Polonaise Op. 44
Concert e-moll Op. 11, I. Satz *
Fis-dur impromptu Op. 36
Rondo
f-moll Ballade No. 4, Op. 52
Fantasie e-moll Op. 49
Polonaise-Fantasie Op. 61
F-dur Prelude Op. 28, No 23
Etude E-dur, Op. 10, No. 3
Etude e-moll op. 25, No.5

1885. WEIMAR

Etude F-moll
Etude F-moll
Barcarolle op. 60

1885. WEIMAR

Nocturne G-dur, Op. 37, No. 2
Fantasie-Impromptu cis-moll, op. posth. 66
h-moll Sonate Op. 58 (without Adagio)
Fis-dur Impromptu Op. 36
Adagio, h-moll Sonate zweites Concert f-moll Op. 21
Ballade f-moll, Op. 52
h-moll Sonate I. Satz, and Scherzo Op. 58 *
Etude f-moll. Op. 25
h-moll Sonate Op. 58., Finale
Etude a-moll Op. 25., No. 11, h-moll No. 10
Anfang der Sexten –Etude mehrmals zur Übung
Etude f-moll Op. 25 (?)
Etude c-moll Op. 25, No. 12, As-dur Op. 10., No. 10
Barcarolle Op. 60.
Variations brillantes Op. 12
Nocturne E-dur, Op. 62..., No. 2
f-moll Ballade Op. 52., No.4
Etude As-dur Op. 10. no.10, Es-dur Op. 10, No. 11
Scherzo op. (?) (nicht das Gouvernanten)
Fantasie, Scherzo und Marsch Op. 72., Nr. 2
H-moll Sonate Op. 58
(Motta)
Cis-moll Nocturne Op. 27., No1.

ROM
1886. 11. November – 12. Jänner

Polonaise c-moll Nr. 4., A-dur Nr. 3.
As-dur Polonaise
As-dur Prelude, Op. 28., nr. 17.
As-dur Polonaise
C-moll Nocturne Nr. 8
Barcarolle Op. 60
Nocturne I. Der Meister!
Scherzo h-moll (nicht das „Gouvernanten-Scherzo“)
Preludes C-dur, Des-dur
Nocturne cis-moll Op. 27, No. 1
f-moll Fantasie Op. 49
Polonaise, c-moll

PEST
1886 18. Februar – 25. Februar

Harpeggien Etude Es-dur, Op. 10, Nr. 11
Chopin-Liszt: Meine Freuden (Chopin: 6 Chantes polonais Op. 74)

PEST
1886 Vor dem 2. Marz – 6. Marz

Mazurken
Nocturne cis-moll Op. 27, Nr. 1
H-moll Sonate Op. 58, I. und Scherzo
H-moll Sonate, Adagio und Finale

WEIMAR

C-moll Polonaise Nr. 4
Grand Polonaise es dur Op. 22
Lieder (6 Chants polonais Op. 74)
Barcarolle Op. 60
Fis-dur Impromptu Op. 36

Liszt died in the night in Bayreut on Juli 31, 1886.

LISZT’S REFLECTION
ON TWO COMPOSITIONS OF CHOPIN

Preludes

In his book on Chopin, Liszt summarises his impression of the Preludes as follows: "No work of the master affords better insight into the astonishing richness of his thought than the Preludes. Tender and often quite miniature in form, they are so intense in mood that it is scarcely possible, when hearing them, not to be aroused by poetic ideas which begin throng the mind. Though intended to suggest musical material rather than to develop it, they conjure up lively images, or if you will, spontaneous poems, which seek to give equivalent expression to the feelings and emotions which have been awakened.”

Tilly FLEISCHMANN:

It is worth hearing Charles Rosen’s opinion on the Preludes:
It is clear that a complete performance of Op. 28 was not thinkable during Chopin’s lifetime, either in the salon or in the concert hall; nor is there any evidence that Chopin played the whole set privately for friends or pupils, as Bach is said to have played the entire first book of the Well Tempered Keyboard for a student. Geffrey Kallberg has argued eloquently that only individual preludes or small groups of preludes were intended by Chopin as effective presentation, and this was, indeed, the way that Chopin himself actually performed them. Today’s fashion of playing them as an entire set
does not allow us fully to appreciate the extraordinary individuality of the single numbers.

About rubato in general

Of all the faults committed in the performance of Chopin’s music or of romantic music in general, exaggerated use of rubato is the most frequent, and the most fatal. If the listener becomes conscious of the rubato, if the rhythm is distorted rather than gently and imperceptibly swayed, the result is not expressive playing, as the pianist may fondly imagine, but a caricature.

According to Stavenhagen an excellent illustration of rubato was once given by Liszt to a pupil who had been unsuccessfully trying to play his Nocturne in A flat. Liszt was living in the Hofgärtnerei in Weimar at the time, and the window of his music room looked out on a park. It was a stormy day.

„Observe that tree“ he said, „sometimes the wind sways it gently, sometimes violently to and fro, sometimes the whole tree is bent in motion, again it is quite still. Or look at this cornfield in the distance, over which the wind sweeps with an undulating rhythm. That is perfect rubato, the tempered movement of the corn, the reluctant yielding of the tree, but when you play rubato, your corn, your tree is smitten to the ground!“. Chopin himself was outraged by exaggerated rubato with which pianists played his works, and as a result he would often forbid his pupils to use rubato at all, forcing them to play in strict time. The exaggerations he suffered from are probably as rampant nowadays as ever, foremost among them being the habit of making such sudden ritardandos and accerelandos that the actual note-values are altered.

Sonata in B flat minor, Op. 35

The Finale is popularly supposed to represent the wind sweeping over the graves of cemetery after the departure of the funeral procession.

This was a view that at least one contemporary interpreter, Liszt, rejected with indignation; he remarked on hearing Anton Rubinstein’s performance of this Sonata (which, as described by Moritz Rosenthal, resembled Rachmaninov’s recording – obviously Russian tradition) that it was the unfortunate result if imposing a literary reading on pure music.
The effect of wind over graves is generally achieved with heavy wash of pedal: Rosenthal, however, who had studied with Chopin’s pupil, Mikuli and with Liszt, claimed that this movement should be played entirely without pedal, except in the final bar. Chopin’s indication of pedal are very often heavy, but he directs pedal here only in the last measure. It should be added, nevertheless, that wind is traditionally represented in music by the kind of rapid chromatic motion found in the finale, but in any case Chopin always repudiated programmatic interpretations of his works, and there is no reason to think he would have made an exception for this movement.

Ch. Rosen p. 298

Liszt used to play the whole movement in a breathless pianissimo, except for one big crescendo and diminuendo from bars 13-16 inclusive (as reproduced in the Klindworth edition), and for the sudden thunder of the final tonic chord. One should use the una corda pedal throughout, without any sustaining pedal, and the right hand should dominate slightly over the left. Above all the player should aim at securing an uncanny spectral effect. Then only will the Finale make a telling end to the Sonata as a whole. Chopin himself said of the Finale that „the left hand unisono with the right hand are gossiping the March.”

Fleischmann p. 52

Schumann made a generous attempt to appreciate what he felt was „more like an irony than a kind of music.” He wrote „that from this musical line without melody and without joy, there breathes a strange, horrible spirit, which annihilates with its heavy fist anything that resists it, and we listen with fascination and without protesting until the end - but without, nevertheless, being able to praise: for this is not music.”

Ch. Rosen p. 283.

Mendelssohn too, hated this finale of Chopin, but then he detested many of the Mazurkas as well.

Ch. Rosen p. 284

MORE ABOUT LISZT’S LESSONS BY HIS STUDENTS

Between 1870-1880

A wealth of testimony from his Weimar master classes held during the 1870s and ’80s suggests that he was bored by technique, never taught it and was singularly unimpressed when his young „matadors of keyboard” displayed it.

A. Walker: The Virtuoso Years p. 302

„Mein Vater hielt mich an, taglich mittags zum Nachtisch sechs bachsche Fugen zu spielen und zu transponieren“.

„Die Octaven, das ist so eine Sache! Wenn Chopin sie schreibt, sind immer geistreich…“.

„Mit Chopin kann man kein Schulbutterbrot verdienen!“55

Franz Liszt, 1908 p. 16
Arthur Friedheim
Liszt’s class lessons at Weimar in the eighties took place in the small, two storied Hofgartnerei and were given late in the afternoon on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Often a buffet followed the lesson. There might be as many as thirty or forty students and „recording hearers” at these gatherings. Only two compositions were rejected regularly Chopin’s B-flat minor Scherzo, which he called the „Governess Scherzo” because „every Governess plays it well”, and his own Second Hungarian Rhapsody. Both works were played too much, he said.
Everything else by Chopin found permanent favor with Liszt, and particularly the Preludes.
He would draw attention to the structure and proportions of the opus and point out its leading moments of eloquence and climax. If a phrase was unsatisfactory in tone or expression, if the attack and execution of a passage did not please him, he would have the pupil repeat three or four times until the desired effect was gained.56

Alexander Siloti
„In the course of my life I have come across many charming personalities among musicians, but never – either before or since – have I seen anyone as impressive as Liszt. You had only to say good morning to him to know instantly
and instinctively, that there was something majestic, god-like, in him—
to feel that he was a great, all-embracing spirit.”

A. Siloti

“The lessons took place three times a week. Anybody who wished could come
and have a lesson without paying a farthing. Liszt remembered his own
desire, than quite a boy to enter the Paris Conservatoire and the refusal to admit
him from the part of the director (Cherubini) because he was a foreigner. This
refusal, he said made such an impression on him, that he vowed to himself that
if ever he became a great musician he would give lessons without taking any
payment. It was particularly a condition that men should came to the lessons, not
in frock coats, but wearing long jackets, and that ladies would be simply dressed
— the idea being that the poorer pupils should not feel uncomfortable beside the
richer ones...”

“I was forty five years old when I stopped giving concerts” Liszt said.
“Everybody was indignant, and insisted that it was too soon, but, in fact, I acted
prudently. I did not wish to hear afterwards that I had gone on playing too long
which is what many people are now saying of Rubinstein. It was very hard for
me to leave the concert platform, for it needs a strong effort of will to make a
decision of that sort. But although I no longer played professionally I still gave
my services for charity, as performances of that order are never criticised.”

A. Siloti

In speaking of Chopin he once told us: „We were great friends. Both as a
musician and as a man he was fragile and delicately constituted. He liked me
very much as a pianist but considered that he played some things as for instance
his Study in F sharp, Op. 25 - better than I did. I suggested having a bet on it.
We were to invite a party of our friends to hear us both, play this Study. They
were to sit in an adjoining room where they could hear without seeing us, and
were than to decide which of us had played first. Chopin accepted the bet, and
our friends came. We each played the Study as arranged. I played first, than
Chopin. When we put the question to our audience they unanimously decided
that Chopin had played first. Chopin would not give in, however. 'You played it
differently quand meme’ he insisted.

A. Siloti

„After Liszt’s death we were scattered to all quarters of the globe, but even from
another sphere the spell of his wonderful personality still bonds us. Arthur
Friedheim, who for fifteen years had neither seen me nor written me, sent me a
postcard in the sixteenth year which began: „Long live our 'Old Man’ and our
friendship!” And when I saw Felix Mottl after a lapse of twenty years, we had to
realized that while we talked or listened to each other it seemed as if the 'Old Man’ were standing between us; that during all those years, whenever anything has happened to us we always remembered to stop and think what the 'Old Man’ would say and what he would advise us to do. And this influence, this presence of Liszt in our midst pervades even our music, because we approach it in the same manner as our master. It would seem as if our last and happiest remembrance before we die must needs be of our 'Liszt days’. Only now in the downhill of our life do we understand whom we saw, whom we had with us, who it was that remained the guiding star of our whole life. I could envy myself for having lived through such an epoch, and shall thank providence until I draw my last breath for giving me the bliss of seeing, knowing, and hearing this great man. "\(^57\)

**LISZT PLAYS CHOPIN, MENDELSSOHN, GRIEG etc...**

*Chopin’s C-minor Etude*\(^58\)

“Everybody was looking with tension […] at Liszt approaching the piano […] when he raised his hands to take charge of this instrument, unparalelled under his fingers. Chopin sat down nearby and listened to his Etude in C minor, which under Liszt’s left hand thundered like a storm, while his right hand expressed utmost pain and despair. Liszt’s face radiated with flaming enthusiasm and Chopin’s face turned pale under such powerful rendition. This time Liszt’s talent has conspired to make the strongest impression upon us because he allowed us to listen to the most eloquent composition.
Mendelssohn\textsuperscript{59} was making his first visit to Paris and had just become acquainted with Liszt. The two musicians went to Erard’s showroom, where Mendelssohn showed Liszt the manuscript of his newly composed Concerto in G minor. Though it was hardly legible, Liszt sat down and played it at sight. Mendelssohn rushed back to Hiller and exclaimed: „A miracle, a real miracle!“. He assured his friend that he knew of no one else who could have performed such a feat."

\textbf{E. Grieg}\textsuperscript{60} described his second meeting with Liszt in a letter to his parents of April 9, 1870:

„I had the good fortune to have just received back from Leipzig the manuscript of my piano concerto ( A minor, Op. 16), so I took it with me. As well as myself there were present Winding, Sgambati, and a German Lisztian unknown to me. […]Winding and I eagerly waited to see whether he really would sightread my concerto. For my part I considered it impossible, but Liszt took a different view. ‘Would you like to play it?’ he asked me. ’No, I can’t’, I replied at once: ‘I haven’t yet have a chance practise it.’ Picking up the manuscript, he went to the piano and said to the assembled guests with his characteristic smile: ’Very well, now I’ll show you that I can’t either.’ With that he began to play. I must confess
that he took the first movement too fast, so that the beginning sounded confused. But later when I have found an opportunity to indicate the correct tempo to him, he played it as only he could. It is significant, that he played the cadenza – in the other words the most difficult section – best of all. [...] At the end he handed back the manuscript and said, with unusual warmth: 'You must go on in the same vein – you are cut out for it. And don’t allow yourself to be discouraged!’ This last injunction meant a very great deal to me. There was something about the way he spoke that made his words sound like a kind of blessing. I intend to recall his words whenever I am overcome by disappointment and bitterness, and the memory of that hour will have a wondrous power to sustain me when times are bad."
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