

Abstract of DLA Dissertation  
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Liszt in Debussy's Piano Works.  
Techniques, methods, effects  
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## I. Antecedents of the Research

I have long been interested in features appearing in Debussy's piano works that seem to show connection and possible influence of Liszt. Many of these aspects display a tangible, practical relationship which the performing pianist can clearly sense. While the connection between the two composers is acknowledged by musicologists, I have not been able to find detailed works of analytical comparison discussing this topic.

It seems particularly interesting that many of these features are more accessible to the performing pianists, than to musicologists, as they become much more obvious during the learning process. The goal of my research was to find and identify these similarities and to show the wide array of common elements between Liszt's and Debussy's piano pieces, through the eyes of the performer.

Alan Walker's publications were essential. Besides his writing, Miriam Gómez-Morán supplied very useful answers to my Liszt-related questions during the research. The books and articles written on Debussy by Edward Lockspeiser, Roy Howat, Roger Nichols and Mark DeVoto were indispensable. Apart from these important publications, the dissertation materials of Maria Metaxaki

were very interesting, allowing deeper access and insight into Debussy's pedaling.

## II. Sources

Due to the nature of my approach, the research categories were supplied by the compositions themselves. They emerged by the connections discovered during the actual playing process. Organizing the various phenomena into groups, I searched additional pieces representing further analogies and continued researching scholarly studies upon those subjects. These articles were mostly available in the English language.

My primary source for examining the Liszt piano pieces was the *Editio Musica Budapest Complete Edition*. It did become necessary to consult other published versions during the research process of the three-staff writing. The majority of these sources were available at the Franz Liszt Academy's Research Library. My reference edition for the Debussy pieces was also the *Editio Musica Budapest*. However, knowing the importance of the Durand editions, I consulted those scores, as well as the digitally available autograph manuscripts. In the examination of Debussy's pedaling, very interesting data emerged from the dissertation study of Maria

Metaxaki. She notated Debussy's original use of pedal, based upon his own playing. The sources of these recordings were the original Welte-Mignon rolls located in Sydney, Australia, where the only complete collection can be found, owned by Denis Condon.

## III. Method

By the means of approaching the subject matter from the performer's view, I had the opportunity to experience and examine such areas, that may remain hidden from the eyes of the musicologist initially. I made my discoveries along the path of playing the compositions. The central part of my dissertation is made up of the analysis of specific features, arranged by the various aspects. The comparative analysis is illustrated with musical examples, serving as visual aid to better understand the highlighted similarities. The dissertation examines the use of pedal by Liszt and Debussy, discusses their similarities in notation, as well as the conscious intention of visual arrangement of the score. It also deals with the question of parallel textural treatments in detail, examines virtuoso works of the two composers and mentions special melodic connections, with examples of Liszt's melodies returning in Debussy's music.

The unique approach the study presents is in its method: comparing the two composers' piano compositional thought process from the angle of the performing artist's perception.

#### IV. Results

The ultimate aim of my dissertation was to map out piano-related compositional ideas and techniques between Liszt and Debussy. The existence of similarities was never a question for me, even at the beginning of my research. However, the process of the developing dissertation brought much wider results, than what I originally had hoped for.

The comparison of pedaling is already very apparent from among the examining categories and can be noticed well from the illustrative quoted score examples. The parallel tendencies in visual score arranging can also be well proven, including the exciting moments of three-staff design elements.

The most extensive part of this research study is the chapter dedicated to analytical comparison of textures. Twelve sub-chapters were necessary to explore the compositional features appearing in Debussy's piano music, that can be linked to the technique already seen in Liszt's works. In addition to the use of various technical

elements so unique to the piano, I was also able to discover coinciding compositional devices.

Matching characteristic features appeared to be present in a number of areas: open-texture writing, three-staff editing design, use of tremolo and arpeggio, parallel fifths and other parallel movements, the taking advantage of opportunities offered by free pedalpoint, unexpected use of chords, ideas stemming from the third-relationships, the ability of variants, and textural developments.

The virtuoso elements and influence of piano playing mechanics of Liszt are discussed in a separate chapter, which highlights the important connection in the use of ostinato between the two composers. It was a special treasure to discover adapted melodies, and to recognize musical echoes of Liszt in Debussy's music.

Upon examining the two composers' piano works, the many layers of connecting points, their noticeably frequent use all seem to prove my initial presumption regarding the music of Liszt and Debussy. From the performer's view the significance of these connections are considerable.

## V. Documentation of dissertation-related activity

Since my years at the Franz Liszt Academy, I have been teaching and performing both mentioned composers' works regularly, as they represent an important part of piano repertoire. My opportunity for studying Debussy's piano works more thoroughly came by the preparation process for the 3rd International Yvonne Lefébure Piano Competition (Paris, Saint-Germain-en-Laye). While preparing for this competition, I had the chance to thoroughly look through Debussy's piano pieces. Later, during my studies in Bloomington, I have attended Jane F. Fulcher's seminars, that offered great scholarly insights about Debussy and French music. Liszt's *Les jeux d'eau à la Villa d'Este* I have performed on the Luzerne Faculty Artist Series (USA, NY) on June 21, 2017. I have also programmed it previously, along with several Debussy and Liszt compositions for my solo recital at the Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires (1997), as well as the concerts at the Consulates in Washington and Buenos Aires and the Hilton Head International Piano Competition.