

Liszt Academy of Music
Doctoral School (7.6 Musical art)

Péter Bozó

From *Buch der Lieder* to
Gesammelte Lieder: The First
Four Volumes of Liszt's Collected
Songs and Their Predecessors

PhD Theses

RESEARCH DIRECTOR: LÁSZLÓ VIKÁRIUS
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1. Antecedents of the Research

The secondary literature on Liszt's song output seems at first sight to be considerable. It is surprising, however, to find the works that explore and evaluate the composer's songs approach this part of the oeuvre in quite contrary ways. Peter Raabe (*Liszt's Schaffen*, 1831), Hans Joachim Moser (*Das deutsche Lied seit Mozart*, 1937), and in his much gentler way Reinhold Brinkmann (*Handbuch der musikalischen Gattungen*, Bd. 8, 2, 2004) conclude that Liszt's songs do not belong to the canon of masterpieces of the genre. Yet, like his oeuvre in general, they do not lack advocates, as the comments of Ronald Turner ('A comparison of the two sets of Liszt–Hugo songs', *JALS*, 1979), Eleni Panagiotopoulou ('An evaluation of the songs of Franz Liszt and commentary on their performance', *The Liszt Society Journal*, 2000) and Ben Arnold (*The Liszt Companion*, 2003; 'Visions and revisions', in *Analecta Lisztiana* III, ed. Michael Saffle and Rossana Dalmonte) show.

Some of course opine that Liszt's importance to the history of the genre lies less in his own compositions than in his activity on behalf of works by other song composers. That seems to be the view taken by Peter Jost (in the 'Lied' entry of the *MGG* encyclopaedia, vol. 5, 1996) and Eric Sams and Graham Johnson (in the 'Lied' entry of the latest edition of *Grove*, vol. 14, 2001). Others, however, assign great significance for the history of the genre not only to Liszt's song transcriptions but to his own song compositions, so much so that they class them as the 'missing link' between Schumann and Hugo Wolf. It is hardly surprising that the representatives of the latter view are Liszt specialists: Alan Walker (*Franz Liszt*, vol. 2, 1989) and also Ben Arnold. Another example of such a high estimate comes in the recently published Lied volume of the *Cambridge Companion* series (2004, ed. James Parsons), where Rena Charnin Mueller interestingly assigns Liszt, the polyglot song composer, a separate chapter, for the only other 19th-century composers who receive such honours in the same book are the German-speaking classics of the genre (Schubert, Schumann, Brahms and Wolf).

Though Liszt has understandably received far more scholarly attention as a composer of piano and symphonic works than as a song composer, it remains astonishing how little his song oeuvre has been explored. The studies of them available usually emphasize two aspects: their linguistic and stylistic heterogeneity, in line with Liszt's cosmopolitanism, and the steady revisions made of the works, resulting in different versions of some songs remaining extant. Opinions are divided, however, on why Liszt kept revising them, and those opinions mask contrary aesthetic judgements as well. Usually the scholars who explore Liszt's song oeuvre each trace the revisions to a particular factor. Humphrey Searle (*The Music of Liszt*, 1954) and Sams and Johnson relate the revisions to his development as a composer, Monika Hennemann (*The Cambridge Companion to Liszt*, ed. Kenneth Hamilton, 2005) to change in the composer's aesthetic views and taste, and Mueller

and Arnold to Liszt's 'pluralist' thinking and his 'developing vision', respectively.

This makes it even more surprising that nobody has attempted so far to classify the composer's song revisions and song versions, though the venerable attempts to catalogue Liszt's œuvre—Raabe (1931), Searle (1954), Winklhofer (1985), Eckhardt and Mueller (2001), Short and Howard (2004)—show disquieting anomalies in this respect. Researchers, apart from Mueller in his 1988 study ('Reevaluating the Liszt chronology', *19th-Century Music*, 1988), seem almost oblivious to the fact that Liszt mainly published his songs not separately but in various song collections or cycles, being engaged not only in revising the pieces but in anthologizing them.

This is due to the fact that the lists of works at our disposal focus on the connections between different versions of the songs. They number each separately, while mostly failing to mention the existence of the collections Liszt himself compiled. Moreover most of the musical sources remain to be explored, despite the merit Mueller has earned in this regard (*Liszt's Tasso Sketchbook: Studies in Sources and Revisions*, PhD dissertation, 1986). The three volumes of the old 'complete' edition containing Liszt's songs (Bd. VII, 1–3, ed. Peter Raabe) are far from complete, and although work on the complete edition launched by István Gárdonyi and Istvány Szelényi has been in progress for four decades (1970 ff.), it has yet to publish the group of works in question. Nothing demonstrates better the small degree of exploration of the composer's song œuvre than the recent discovery of a hitherto unknown Liszt song in the Music Department of the Munich Bavarian State Library (*Wenn die letzte Sterne bleichen*, ed. Rolf Griebel, Sigrid von Moisy and Sabine Kurth, Munich: Henle, 2007).

2. Methods

The current state of the research has determined to a significant extent the methods chosen for the theses as angles of inquiry. The subject in the strict sense is that part of Liszt's song œuvre which seems appropriate for demonstrating all the viewpoints felt to be important: the first four volumes of the collection entitled *Gesammelte Lieder*, published in 1860, and their predecessors. For these four volumes consist of revised, assorted and regrouped versions of songs originally published in the first period of Liszt's song œuvre, in the 1840s, as parts of other, mixed collections. By predecessors of the 1860 collection is meant the earlier song publications whose pieces were reused by Liszt in his *Gesammelte Lieder*. This is not an exhaustive survey of Liszt's entire song output: it does not cover his later activity as a song composer. Thus it does not detail, for example, the late, French edition of the collected songs (increased to eight volumes by the 1880s) or the revisions related to that newer publication.

As for the composition process of the collection, study of the first four volumes of the *Gesammelte Lieder* and their predecessors seemed appropriate for discussing and evaluating the various types of versions and revisions and for demonstrating Liszt's approaches when compiling anthologies. The second and third parts of the dissertation ('Versions and revisions: typology and terminology' and 'Cycle and collection') examine the repertory from these two points of view, while the first part ('Language, genre and style') seeks to sketch the historical context and aesthetic background of Liszt's songs (especially in the chapters 'Liszt and German unity', 'The plan for the German *Année de pèlerinage*' and 'The genre of the song as an aesthetic compromise') and attempts to formulate more general statements about the song's stylistic and genre attributes, particularly in relation to 19th-century national musical traditions (especially in the chapter 'Language and style'). The latter side seems all the more reasonable in the light of the probing into the 'national character' of this repertory found so often in the reception history of Liszt's song oeuvre. The work of Móric Csáky inspired me to study Liszt's songs in their historical context: his *Ideology of Operetta and Viennese Modernism* (1996), in which he set out to show how 'consequences about contents of consciousness determining the life of a certain European region can be drawn from recontextualising a musico-theatrical genre of ill reputation, the operetta (i. e. putting it back into wider social, political and cultural context)'.

The basis for this work was systematization of the primary musical sources to hand—a hypothetical chronology and the lacunae of these sources appear in Appendix I in the form of stemmata. Since Liszt's most active period as a songwriter was spent in Weimar (1848–60), most of the sources are now preserved in Weimar collections (Stiftung Weimarer Klassik, Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv/Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek). Therefore the backbone of the research was study of the Weimar source materials in the field, during a research trip in October 2005. The remaining Liszt sources studied are kept in other libraries of the world in reproductions. The intention while examining the source material was completeness, as far as possible, but the great number and geographical dispersal of the sources, and the absence of an adequate work catalogue or critical edition, coupled with knowledge of the lacunae in the source stemmata, meant that further manuscripts would almost certainly turn up after the dissertation was completed. The study of the musical sources was complemented by examination of other period documents (Liszt's correspondence with his circle, music reviews of the time, and recollections of his contemporaries).

3. Findings

Study of the primary sources revealed that the beginnings of Liszt's song œuvre—if his lost juvenile vocal works are ignored—can be dated to the turn of the 1830s and 1840s. Variation in language and genre was found from the outset. In all probability, his first song for solo voice with piano accompaniment was a romance in Italian, while his print debut was with a *mélodie* in French, and his first more extensive collections contained German *Lieder* as well. The diversity of his songs is in accordance with his complicated national and cultural identity.

Having noted Liszt's much-emphasized, self-declared Hungarian national affiliation and his French language and culture, it is striking to find his song œuvre reflecting an orientation towards the German musical culture of his day. It turns out in the chapter 'Liszt and German unity' that this vocal repertory and Liszt's works for male-voice choir cannot be studied out of the historical context of their origins in the German national aspirations of his period and of his activity in Germany. As the plans for a German *Année de pèlerinage* show, there is a documented connection between certain of Liszt's early songs and the Franco-German political conflict of 1840, as a result of which the Rhine songs came into fashion. Hence the 'decisive German influence' on Liszt's songs posited in earlier German literature (Vogel, Wenz, Raabe) has grounds, if not in the way Raabe, later a National Socialist, and some of his German predecessors and contemporaries tried to present, through the prism of their political prejudices. Certainly Liszt's efforts for German musical culture (and concessions to German nationalism) mirror his personal aspirations to be a symphonic composer and his efforts as a cultural policy-maker. The publication practice with his songs, paradoxically, exemplifies the complexity of the composer's national identity, the cosmopolitan character of his activities, and his concurrent orientation towards Germany.

However, the stylistic diversity of Liszt's song output is an important attribute, which German nationalist historiography to some extent neglected and to some extent blamed. It turns out in the analytical section of the dissertation that the references to non-German characteristics in Liszt's songs are well founded: some contain cadenzas, like the Italian and French musical stage works, and the text set to music is often treated like an opera libretto, especially in the final section of a piece.

All this serves as a reminder of how dangerous and misleading a partial presentation of Liszt's activity can be, mirroring only the national aspect. Liszt scholars cannot confine themselves to textual criticism of his works, while ignoring the historical and music-historical context of his œuvre, which is an aspect of equal importance.

The second part of the dissertation hopefully manages to show that the various versions and revisions of his vocal compositions, like the question of

Liszt's national identities and the 'national character' of his songs, cannot be interpreted in a partial manner. While earlier secondary literature usually traced the origin of the revisions to a specific aspect, an examination of some characteristic types of revision and the various extant versions shows that all of these aspects and additional motives may well have played an instigating role.

The simplifications of playing technique in the piano accompaniment and vocal part of Liszt's juvenile songs and the abbreviations of the musical form and text repetitions of the works result, in several cases, in real improvement of his songs. According to the interpretation of Searle, Sams and Johnson, rather than that of Arnold, quotations from Liszt's statements after 1850 and from his correspondence with Louis Köhler, the reviewer of his songs, suggest that Liszt himself came to acknowledge the deficiencies of composition in those juvenile works. As he looked back on them, in his Weimar period, he regarded the songs written in the 1840s as invalid and became discontented with their standard. All these circumstances question to some extent the justifications of Liszt's songs by some apologists and the statements of those who compare them with those of the classics of 19th-century German song.

However, the alternative versions of some of the composer's songs or the different musical settings he made of the same poem also exemplify that Liszt was indeed a composer who was pluralist in his thinking. The various versions of the Liszt songs for different voice types, the versions for solo piano, and the revised versions with orchestral accompaniment indicate that certain performers and performance activities could play a no less important role in the birth of some versions than compositional deficiencies in early songs and ignorance of some of the conventions of the German *Lied* genre.

The chapters on thematic transformation as a method of song revision shed light on some attributes of Liszt's compositional thinking. The variation principle played a central role in his output, but it is typical that he was drawn to the kind of metric transformation that changed the character of the theme, to alteration of timbre, texture and type of accompaniment, and to tonal variation of the strophes, while keeping the melody mainly unchanged, as a kind of *cantus firmus*. Analysis of the song revisions show that this characteristic principle of musical construction in Liszt's symphonic works was important also in genres divorced from the German symphonic tradition. So the composing technique of thematic transformation—in contrast to Dahlhaus's assumption ('Liszt's Idee des Symphonischen', 1981) and in agreement with the theses of Hansen (*Variationen und Varianten in den musikalischen Werken Franz Liszts*, PhD dissertation, 1987) and Batta (*Az improvizációtól a szimfonikus költeményig* [From improvisation to the symphonic poem], PhD dissertation, 1987)—was not just an answer to a compositional challenge typical of the symphonic genre. Liszt in his symphonic poems and

programme symphonies was adapting an established method, used also in improvisation and composition in his early years and in other genres as well.

In the third part of the dissertation I examine the order of volumes I–IV of the *Gesammelte Lieder* and the predecessors of them, in the context of 19th-century song cycles, to seek signs of conscious arrangement of the songs or signs implying a cycle. As I demonstrate—among other things through the example of the collection-like and cyclic arrangement of the Schubert song transcriptions, Liszt was attracted by the *attaca* connection of single movements. Thus the analysis of the Schiller songs indicates that in composing a song cycle he followed the Beethovenian tradition and wrote an *attacca* song cycle with thematic reprise. I was able to prove about Liszt's song opuses of the 1840s that they were very varied collections in all ways, born independently of each other and with different intentions. They are thoroughly heterogeneous collections in their poets, the voice type of their singers, the literary merit of the poems set to music, and what is more, the language of the texts. When it came to the first four volumes of the *Gesammelte Lieder*, Liszt clearly found a better arrangement than the one he had used in his song collections published in the 1840s, by compiling and selecting his earlier song compositions and bringing them into a new order by poets. Yet unlike the Schiller songs, the first, second and fourth volumes formed a collection rather than a cycle. Indeed it turns out from the documents concerning the genesis of the *Gesammelte Lieder* that Liszt struggled a lot with the arrangement of his songs and that protracted labour had preceded their eventual publication in 1860.

4. List of Publications

a) Studies

- “‘Mehr Malerei als Ausdruck der Empfindung’ – Széljegyzetek Liszt Beethoven-recepciójához’ [‘More Painting in Sounds Rather Than Expression of Feeling’: Some Remarks on Liszt’s Beethoven Reception], *Magyar Zene* 47/3 (2009. augusztus), 261–282.
- ‘Liszt és a német egység, avagy zene és nemzeti identitások’ [Liszt and German Unity: Music and National Identities], in *A Virtuális Intézet Közép-Európa kutatására (VIKEK) évkönyve 2009* [Yearbook of the Institut for Central European Studies 2009], ed. by Gulyás László (Szeged–Kaposvár: VIKEK, 2009), 207–213.
- ‘*Couleur locale* és *cadenza ad libitum* – Liszt változatai Victor Hugo egy költeményére’ [Couleur locale and cadenza ad libitum: Liszt’s Variations on a Poem by Victor Hugo], in *Zenatudományi Dolgozatok 2008*, ed. by Kiss Gábor (Budapest: MTA Zenatudományi Intézet, 2009), 135–157.
- ‘Liszt és a német egység – a zeneszerző daltermésének történelmi kontextusához’ [Liszt and German Unity: To the Historical Context of His Song Output], 1. rész: *Muzsika* 51/11 (2008. november), 20–26; 2. rész: *Muzsika* 51/12 (2008. december), 10–13.
- Choufleuri úr szalonjában, avagy A Théâtre-Italien görbe tükré’ [In M. Choufleuri’s Salon or The Crooked Mirror of the Théâtre-Italien], *Magyar Zene* 45/2 (2007. május), 183–199.
- ‘Fragmente nach Dante, Lamenti nach Tasso: Beiträge zur Genese des italienischen Jahrganges der *Années de pèlerinage*’, *Studia Musicologica* 48/1–2 (March 2007), 61–78.
- ‘Supplément a *Zarándokévek* második kötetéhez’ [Supplement to the Second Volume of *The Years of Pilgrimage*], *Magyar Zene* 44/2 (2006. május), 177–214.
- ‘Liszt’s Plan for a German *Années de pèlerinage*: “Was ist des Deutschen Vaterland”’, *Studia Musicologica* 44/1 (March 2006), 19–38; in Hungarian: “Was ist des Deutschen Vaterland” – Liszt német *Zarándokévek*ének terve’, *Magyar Zene* 43/3 (2005. augusztus), 281–300.
- ‘Liszt mint Bach közreadó?’ [Liszt Editing Bach?], *Magyar Zene* 40/1 (2002. február), 27–37.

b) Musical edition

[with Adrienne Kaczmarczyk:], *Franz Liszt: New Edition of the Collected Works*, Series II, vol. 13 (Budapest: Editio Musica, 2005).