

Zeitschrift: Basler Jahrbuch für historische Musikpraxis : eine Veröffentlichung der Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, Lehr- und Forschungsinstitut für Alte Musik an der Musik-Akademie der Stadt Basel

Herausgeber: Schola Cantorum Basiliensis

Band: 24 (2000)

Artikel: The missing link : Franz Liszt the conductor

Autor: Bowen, José A.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-868932>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 17.02.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

THE MISSING LINK: FRANZ LISZT THE CONDUCTOR*

by JOSÉ A. BOWEN

Liszt is rarely remembered as a conductor. His importance to the history of conducting, however, stems from both his interpretative ideas and his new techniques for engaging them. While Liszt was too busy to edit his many essays and articles into a handbook, he taught and disseminated a detailed theory on the role of the performer. Unlike Wagner, who rarely used his left hand and who communicated his interpretation to the orchestra largely using words, Liszt invented the gestural language of facial and body movement which eventually became the mainstay of modern podium demeanor. It was also Liszt who made the conductor's personal charisma an essential and expected part of the job.

Liszt's influence on conducting is arguably as great as Wagner's. While Wagner's activity as a conductor decreased rapidly after he was forced to flee Dresden in 1848,¹ Liszt spent the next ten years (from 1848–58) as a resident conductor.² After his last hurrah in London in 1855, Wagner limited his tour repertoire largely to his own music and the odd numbered Beethoven symphonies, while Liszt spent most of his post-1848 time conducting everything from Mozart to the most difficult modern repertoire (including a number of Wagner premieres). Liszt had far more students than Wagner, and by the 1860s, many of his early students already occupied major conducting positions.³ Bülow, regarded as Wagner's first protégé, was deeply influenced by the years he spent with Liszt, where he studied interpretation, instrumentation and the sonatas

* This research was funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), in Washington, DC.

¹ Wagner conducted the Zurich opera a few times between 1850 and 1851 and conducted twenty-two of the Zurich Music Society concerts between 1851 and 1855 where he featured Beethoven most often (conducting the Third three times, the Fifth four times, the Pastoral twice, the Seventh five times and the Eighth three times). After his first appearance in London in 1855, his activities were limited to four further tours of mostly Wagner and Beethoven. For details, see Warren A. Bebbington, *The Orchestral Conducting Practice of Richard Wagner* (Ph.D. dissertation, State University of New York 1984).

² Liszt was appointed „Hofkapellmeister im außerordentlichen Dienst“ in Weimar in 1842, but only arrived to take up his residency in 1848. He resigned during his tenth season in 1858 after a noisy demonstration following the premiere of Peter Cornelius's *Barbier von Bagdad* (on December 15th). He remained in Weimar until 1861, but limited his musical duties to teaching piano students. Liszt also conducted at many of the large German music festivals, appearing at the Beethoven Festival in Bonn (1845), the Herder Festival (1850), the Ballenstedt Festival (1852), the Karlsruhe Festival (1853), the Congress of the Music Festival of the Elbe (1856), and the Lower Rhine Festival (in Aachen 1857).

³ The Wagner students, Seidl, Richter, Mottl, Nikisch, and Levi didn't really begin to assemble until the 1870s at Bayreuth. See the final section of this essay for more on Liszt's students.

of Beethoven.⁴ While Wagner theorizes more extensively on the role of the conductor, Liszt first voiced many of the Romantic ideas of interpretation; their thinking and contributions are certainly more intertwined than is generally assumed.⁵

In September 1847, at the age 35, Liszt retired from the piano and spent the remaining 39 years of his life devoted to bringing the music of the future before the public. (Over half of the 43 operas he conducted were contemporary.) Liszt's conducting career, however, has never been taken seriously, largely because he remained a pianist in many minds. And, of course, Liszt wasn't just any pianist. He was lauded, ridiculed and eventually pigeon-holed as the world's greatest virtuoso. No charge could have been more damaging for what Liszt felt was his true calling. This conflict between his reception and his theory of interpretation and performance is crucial to understanding both why he gave up his lucrative life as a virtuoso and his legacy to the history of conducting.

*Liszt's Theory of Art and the Artist*⁶

Liszt's generation had been optimistic about the possibilities for art to change the world. In particular, the ideas of Saint-Simon on the artist-priest as the person who mediated between God and the people had a deep and lasting effect on Liszt.⁷ But the enthusiasm Liszt felt for this priestly role assigned by Saint-Simon and Lamennais quickly waned as Liszt faced the challenges of a touring virtuoso. His letters and articles alternate between the joy of discovering such a divine message and the despair of being unable to deliver it.

⁴ This influence is rarely discussed. Galkin, for example, says nothing of Liszt as a conductor and his discussion of Bülow says nothing of his relationship to Liszt. See Elliot W. Galkin, „A History of Orchestral Conducting“, in: *Theory and Practice* (New York: Pendragon Press 1988), 607–611.

⁵ Detlef Altenburg („Franz Liszt and the Legacy of the Classical Era“ in *19th-Century Music* XVIII/1 (Summer 1994), 46–63) explores Wagner's importance to Liszt, but there is no large study of Liszt's influence on Wagner's theory.

⁶ Liszt's theory of art and the artist can be found in a vast number of essays, articles and letters. See my „A Lisztian Theory of Interpretation“ (forthcoming) for a more complete description. For summaries of the mostly finished debate about Liszt's authorship of these essays and articles see „Liszt as Author“ in Franz Liszt, *Lettres d'un bachelier ès musique 1835–1841* translated and annotated by Charles Suttoni as *An Artist's Journey*. (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press 1989), Appendix E, 238–245, and Alan Walker, *Liszt: The Virtuoso Years 1811–1847* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1983), 20–23.

⁷ Many of the main arguments of his 1835 essay „On the Situation of Artists and on Their Condition in Society“ demonstrate his closeness to Saint-Simonian thought. See Ralph P. Locke, *Music, Musicians and the Saint-Simonians* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 1986) 104–105. Liszt's essay was initially published as 6 articles in *Revue et Gazette Musicale* from May 3 to November 15 1835 and first appeared together (translated into German) in Franz Liszt, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 6 vols., ed. (with German translations) Lina Ramann (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel 1880–83); repr. (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, and Hildesheim

And when I reflect seriously on my life, I blush with shame and confusion to pit your dreams against my realities;--the heavenly flames with which your poetic fancy encircled my brow, against the earthly dust my steps raise on the mundane road I travel; your noble presentiments, your beautiful illusions about the social effects of the art to which I have dedicated my life, against the gloomy discouragement that sometimes seizes me when I compare the impotence of the effort with the eagerness of the desire, the nothingness of the work with the limitlessness of the idea;--those miracles of understanding and regeneration wrought by the thrice blessed lyre of ancient times, against the sad and sterile role to which it is seemingly confined today.⁸

For all of his first-hand experience with the social problems, however, Liszt also recognized the problem of the artist as phenomenological. Even as the artist perceives the divine, „he knows full well that he will not be able to give other men an account of the celestial banquet“.⁹

How wretched, how truly wretched we artists are! We experience momentary flashes when we seem to have an intuitive grasp of the divine, [...] but as soon as we want to flesh out our sensations, to capture these evanescent flights of the soul, the vision vanishes, the god disappears, and a man is left along with a lifeless work, one that the crowd's gaze will quickly strip of any last illusions it held for him.¹⁰

Musicians especially have a harder time than those who practice the plastic arts, because music „can never have an unconditional effect, since its effect depends to a large extent upon its performance“.¹¹ Liszt also thought sculpture more accessible because of its basis in the human body. This discovery led to a theory.

All the arts are based on two principles: reality and ideality. Ideality is perceptible only to cultivated minds but the reality of the sculptor can be perceived by everyone because its prototype is the human form, familiar to all [...] Each person is equally capable of appreciating the degree of fidelity in the statue's representation of the

& New York: Georg Olms Verlag 1978) II 1–112. Thirty years later it finally appeared together in *French in Franz Liszt, Pages romantiques*, ed. Jean Chantavoine (Paris/Leipzig: 1912), an edition which has many omissions and cuts.

⁸ Letter to George Sand, Geneva, November 23 [1835], *Revue et Gazette musicale*, December 6 1835, 397–400; cited from *Franz Liszt, Lettres d'un bachelier*, 4–5. Sources are generally given in the original language, except in the some cases where there is a more easily available or reliable book, as in this case where the only complete collected text is this English translation. See the previous note.

⁹ „The Saint Cecilia of Raphael“ Letter to Joseph d'Ortigue, (December 1838–early 1839), published in *Revue et Gazette musicale*, April 14 1839 115–17; *Franz Liszt, Lettres d'un bachelier*, 162.

¹⁰ Liszt's letter to Louis de Roncaud, September 20 1837, published in *Revue et Gazette musicale*, July 22 1838; *Franz Liszt, Lettres d'un bachelier*, 66.

¹¹ „The Perseus of Benvenuto Cellini“ Letter from Florence, November 30 1838, *Revue et Gazette musicale*, January 13 1839 14–15; *Franz Liszt, Lettres d'un bachelier* 156.

human body. This, however, is not the case with music: it has not reality, so to speak; it does not imitate, it expresses. Music is at once both a science like algebra and a psychological language that is intelligible only to the poetic consciousness. Hence, like science and art, music remains almost entirely inaccessible to the crowd. The passions and feelings that it is meant to convey certainly exist in the heart of Man, but not in the hearts of all men, while all men can find themselves physically reproduced in a statue. That is why there is a lot more misunderstanding between the public and the musician than between the public and the sculptor.¹²

Like Schopenhauer and Hegel, Liszt leaves exactly what music „expresses“ or represents a little vague here: „passions and feelings“.¹³ Still, it is an idealist theory in the grand German tradition and it is as consistent as anything Wagner ever wrote (and certainly more succinct): not bad for a travel letter.

The important question for the artist is how to ensure that the public connects the reality with the ideality. Having already spent many years as an artist-philosopher trying to lead the public to the Platonic ideal, Liszt was forced to find other solutions.

First, he decided that the composer might serve as Descartes' God and guarantee (or at least point out) the connection between the reality of sound and its meaning. Noting that contemporary books often had long prefaces, Liszt proposed a „symmetrical scheme“ for music, where the composer might give „a brief psychological sketch of his work, for him to say what he intended“.¹⁴ In this quasi-religious view of art, the role of the music critic is not to appraise the sound of the music as sound, but rather to determine if it is an appropriate vessel for the musical content. It would seem logical that criticism of the performer would follow the same tack; the performer should be judged not by sound but by content.

Liszt's second idea was that music could combine with one of the other art forms. He was drawn to the „purer“ content of the plastic arts and thought they were more accessible than music; the literary works which attracted him were generally poetic and epic rather than dramatic: Dante, Goethe, and Petrarch, for example.¹⁵ So where Wagner saw a renewal of music with drama and the theatre,

¹² Ibid. 156–157.

¹³ In other letters it is „intimate understanding of nature and the feeling for the infinite“. Letter to George Sand April 30, 1837, published in the *Revue et Gazette musicale* July 16 1837, 339–43; *Franz Liszt, Lettres d'un bachelier*, 34. Or it is „beautiful self-sacrifice, the heroic determination, the fortitude, and the humanity of their peers“. Letter to Adolphe Pictet, Chambéry, September 1837, published in *Revue et Gazette musicale*, February 11 1838, 57–62; *Franz Liszt, Lettres d'un bachelier*, 50.

¹⁴ Letter to a Poet-Voyager [George Sand] from Paris, January 1837, *Revue et Gazette musicale*, February 12 1837, 53–56; cited from *Franz Liszt, Lettres d'un bachelier* 18–19.

¹⁵ In addition to the obvious Dante sonata, and the Faust and Dante symphonies, there are the three sonnets by Petrarch (47 104 and 123) which were set both as songs for voice and piano (*Tre Sonetti di Petrarca* 1838–39) and later as piano pieces (1844–45) and which were revised for inclusion in the *Années de pèlerinage: Italie*.

Liszt's goal became „renewing music through its most intimate alliance with poetry“.¹⁶ Liszt hoped that music could gain the „ideality“ of the plastic arts but still be a language like poetry.

The inner and poetic sense of things, that ideality which exists in everything, seems to manifest itself pre-eminently in those artistic creations that arouse feelings and ideas within the soul by the beauty of their form. Even though music is the least representational of the arts, it nonetheless has its own form [...] music has its hidden meanings, its sense of the ideal, which the majority of people, truly speaking, do not even suspect, because where a work of art is concerned, they rarely rise above the comparison of externals, the facile appreciation of some superficial skill.

The more instrumental music progresses, develops, and frees itself from its early limitations, the more it will tend to bear the stamp of that ideality which marks the perfection of the plastic arts, the more it will cease to be a simple combination of tones and become a poetic language.¹⁷

Thus, much as it was for Hegel, the externality of the plastic arts and music was ultimately a handicap which must be transcended in poetry. For Liszt though, music somehow emerges as the ideal art form (for Hegel it is poetry). Liszt didn't explain how, but it is clear that music „progresses“ to become a poetic language which can express a broader range of ideality than either sculpture or poetry.

This emphasis on poetic rather than dramatic content leads Liszt to chose rather different compositional projects from Wagner. But however they disagree about the exact nature of musical content, both Wagner and Liszt make it clear that the music of the future has content; musical works are not simply „about music“. Both of them make it clear that this affects compositional decisions, although Liszt is again more consistent and to the point.

All purely musical considerations, while by no means ignored, are subordinate to the plot of the given subject.¹⁸ Liszt is thinking here of form in compositions; in Classical music the deployment of themes is preordained by arbitrary rules, but in program music the form is determined by „the relationship of the motives to a poetic idea“¹⁹ but it has ramifications in the interpretation of these works.

¹⁶ Letter to Agnes Street-Klindworth, 16 November 1860, *Franz Liszt Selected Letters*, trans. and ed. Adrian Williams (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1998), 523.

¹⁷ Preface to the first edition of Liszt's *Album d'un voyageur* (Vienna: Tobias Haslinger 1842), cited from Franz Liszt, *Lettres d'un bachelier*, 201–202.

¹⁸ Quoted from Altenburg, „Franz Liszt“, 58. *Liszt, Gesammelte Schriften*, IV, 81: *Berlioz und seine Harold-Symphonie*.

¹⁹ Liszt, *Harold*, 69: „Bei der sogenannten klassischen Musik ist die Wiederkehr und thematische Entwicklung der Themen durch formelle Regeln bestimmt, die man als unumstößlich betrachtet [...] In der Programm-Musik dagegen ist Wiederkehr, Wechsel, Veränderung und Modulation der Motive durch ihre Beziehung zu einem poetischen Gedanken bedingt“; Altenburg „Franz Liszt“, 58. In practice, of course, it was Liszt and not Wagner who accepted the classical forms as a base and attempted to preserve them while expanding the idea of a symphony.

If purely musical considerations are subordinate to the plot in this music of the future, then perhaps purely musical considerations (like fidelity to the score) might be subordinate to expression of this plot in performance. Liszt's students emphasize that this was indeed Liszt's position.

Unlike most teachers of the age, Liszt had no technical method and, in fact, rarely paid any attention to technique at all. He despised the mere „finger virtuoso“.²⁰ Rather, all of Liszt's students agree that lessons concentrated on „the true expression of the character of the piece and on expression“.²¹

These few words were characteristic of Liszt. The poetical vision always arose before his mental eye, whether it was a Beethoven sonata, a Chopin nocturne, or a work of his own, it was not merely interpreting a work, but real reproduction.²²

Liszt „insisted on a poetical interpretation, not a ‚salon‘ performance“.²³

Just as he would as a conductor, Liszt had to develop new methods for teaching the inner spirit of the work. Again, Liszt proved an innovator.²⁴

Liszt's teaching cannot be codified, he strove for the spirit of the work; and music, like religion, has no language; he taught as Christ taught religion, in an allegorical way, or by metaphor.²⁵

While student memoirs vary slightly in their descriptions of exactly how verbal Liszt was, they seem to agree that Liszt was not very verbal during lessons. Lachmund gives the example of a passage where he had not played „sparklingly enough“. Liszt responded: „Without uttering a word or interrupting me, he swung his right hand to and fro, snapping his fingers in a lively manner, as he had done at the last lesson when he wished more sprightliness in van Zeyl's playing“.²⁶ Siloti places more emphasis on Liszt's facial expressions, claiming Liszt sat or stood „opposite to the pupil who was playing, and indicated by the

²⁰ William Mason, *Memories of a Musical Life* (New York: The Century Co. 1901); rept. (New York: Da Capo Press 1970) 116.

²¹ Lloyd-Jones, David, „Borodin on Liszt“, *Music & Letters* 42 (1961) 120.

²² Frederic Lamond, *The Memoirs of Frederic Lamond* (Glasgow: William MacLellan 1949), 68.

²³ Alexander Siloti. „Meine Erinnerungen an Franz Liszt. Aus dem Russischen übertragen von Sophie Korsunskaja“, *Zeitschrift der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft* 14/9 (June 1913), 294–318; *My Memories of Liszt* Authorized Translation from the Russian (London: Breitkopf & Haertel, & Edinburgh: Methven Simpson Ltd. 1913) 18.

²⁴ Liszt's format was as new as the content of the lessons. Both are discussed at length in my „Liszt the Teacher and Romantic Interpretation“ (forthcoming) which includes an extensive list of new sources for Liszt's lessons.

²⁵ Carl V. Lachmund, *Living with Liszt, Diary of Carl Lachmund: An American Pupil of Liszt 1882–1884*, ed. Alan Walker (Stuvesant NY: Pendragon Press 1995) 14.

²⁶ Lachmund, Liszt, 53.

expression of his face the nuance he wished to have brought out in the music“.²⁷ This path of innovation is largely echoed in his conducting.

The job description

When Liszt arrived in Weimar he had done little orchestral composing, but had already conducted over a dozen concerts and most of Beethoven's symphonies. His was not the typical route to the podium, but in 1848 training and expectations for conductors was far from standardized. Liszt did not rise through the ranks of the orchestra, but neither did Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Berlioz, Moscheles or Wagner. This was in part a reflection of the tradition that the person who sat at the keyboard was the conductor.

Under the old system, leadership was truly divided with the „leader“ taking principal responsibility for setting the tempo and keeping the band together while the „conductor“ corrected wrong or absent notes. (Until Spohr's appearance in 1820, the London Philharmonic simply labeled this person „At the Pianoforte“ in the programme.²⁸) By 1828, the conductor was also beating time at the piano as Salaman reports of Clementi's last appearance as a conductor.

He sat at the piano – as conductors used to do in those days – waving his right hand rhythmically as he followed the score in front of him, while one of the first violins, acting as „leader“ for the occasion, beat the time with his violin bow – not always synchronising exactly with Clementi's wave! This practice, by the way, must have become obsolete very shortly afterwards, for certainly I remember Mendelssohn, in the following year, standing at a desk, facing the orchestra, and directing the performance with a baton, according to modern custom.²⁹

²⁷ Siloti, *Liszt* 17 resp. 299: „Er saß entweder neben dem Schüler oder stand vor ihm, und sein Gesicht drückte alle Nuancen aus, die er zu zeigen wünschte“. Amy Fay also notes how „his face changes with every modulation of the piece, and he looks exactly as he is playing“. Amy Fay, *Music Study in Germany from the Home Correspondence of Amy Fay*, ed. Mrs. Fay Pierce (Chicago: Jansen, McClurg & Co. 1880); Germany trans. 1882; 18th edn. 1909; rept. edn. (New York: Dover Publications 1965); New York: Macmillan 1900, 1908); rept. edn. (Da Capo Press 1979) with introduction by Edward Downes and index by Roy Chemus, 214. For anyone who has ever struggled for words to explain a passage of music to a student, Liszt's solution to the ineffability of music will make some sense; in many ways all writing and talking about music is allegorical. The down side of this method, however, is that it substitutes one hermenutic circle for another. If a student did not understand how to interpret Liszt's facial expressions as musical phrases, he became unteachable: „Liszt told me that he could explain nothing to pupils who did not understand him from the first“. Siloti, *Liszt* 18 resp. 299: „Liszt sagte mir, daß er denjenigen, welche von Anfang an nichts verstehen, auch nichts erklären könne“.

²⁸ See Cyril Ehrlich, *First Philharmonic: A History of The Royal Philharmonic Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1995) 14.

²⁹ Charles Salaman, „Pianists of the Past: Personal Recollections by the late Charles Salaman“ *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 170/1031 (September 1901), (Edinburgh: William Blackwood; London: T. Cadell and W. Davis 1817–1905), 308.

Actually, when Mendelssohn conducted in 1832, he was confronted by both a violin-leader and a clavier-music director. London lagged a little behind the continent, with both the leader and the conductor positions rotating among a number of members until 1846. When Mendelssohn returned in 1844, he was the first conductor to preside over five concerts in a row; the leader still changed for every concert.

Liszt was the first musician to move from a virtuoso career to a conducting career. He brought to the podium not only a deep experience of exciting an audience and managing all of the business end of a performance, but also a fully developed theory of performance. Mendelssohn and Berlioz had both molded their conducting styles to the needs of their own works, but Liszt no doubt modeled his conducting style on the style of his performances.³⁰

Liszt began conducting just as it was beginning to be expected that a conductor might do more than just beat time. Orchestras and, perhaps more importantly, violin leaders were finally ceding sole control to the conductor:

There has certainly been progress since we first knew the Philharmonic orchestra:—there are dawns of intelligence as well as displays of mechanical readiness — there is a disposition to submit to authority, without conceiving independence fatally periled thereby. Still — as any one must be aware who has paid minute attention to the rehearsals — the band is far from recognizing the functions of the conductor; and, it may be emphatically asserted, that till this is reformed—till, in short, a spirit of harmonious subordination for Art's sake can be assumed — all prosperity must be transient.³¹

Chorley's description of the London Philharmonic Society in 1844 demonstrates that this was an especially difficult orchestra to conduct because of its liberal history of dual and rotating leadership. But when Mendelssohn was given more than the usual run-through rehearsal on Saturday morning, the results were universally praised by the London musical press corps. The technical advantages were the easiest to see. In an era when getting all of the notes in the right places was neither expected nor commonplace, many critics went out of their way to note their profound satisfaction with „the correct and careful entry of the instruments in their respective solos[!]“³² The increase in conductor control, however, also opened the door for even more remarkable improvements:

A mezzo piano was more than once accomplished, a rallentando brought to pass in allegro of the Beethoven Symphony; a brilliance and spirit infused into the execution

³⁰ For more on Mendelssohn and Berlioz, see José A. Bowen „Mendelssohn, Berlioz and Wagner as Conductors: The Origins of ‚Fidelity to the Composer‘“ (*Performance Practice Review* 6 (1993), 77–88; (reprinted in the *Journal of the Conductors Guild* Vol. 18, No. 2, Summer/Fall 1997), 76–84. See also D. Kern Holoman, „Berlioz als Dirigent“ in this volume.

³¹ *Athenæum* (London), July 13 1844.

³² *Spectator* (London), June 1 1844.

which told of the unslumbering activity of the conductor [...] These are all points of progress gained.³³

This was clearly a period of rapid improvement in orchestral standards. In Germany too, Mendelssohn's performances began to be noted for his new authority on the podium and the resultant discovery of new details of expression.

Den zweiten Theil des Concerts bildete Beethoven's B dur-Symphonie, welcher mit einer damals selbst in Leipzig noch unerhörten Präcision gegeben wurde. Dafür hatte sie M. selbst auf das sorgfältigste einstudirt und dirigirte sie auch selbst, eine damals noch neue aber gewiss höchst natürliche und zweckmässige Einrichtung. Bis dahin waren die Symphonieen immer nur vom Concertmeister und ersten Vorgeiger von seinem Pult aus dirigirt worden, wobei sich allerdings der damals schon sehr leidende Concertmeister Matthäi um die feinere Auffassung namentlich Beethoven'scher Symphonieen, durch welche sich schon vor Mendelssohn das Leipziger Orchester auszeichnete, grosse Verdienste erworben hatte. Aber von dieser feinen Schattirung, dieser sorgfältigen Berücksichtigung jedes einzelnen Instrumentes, diesem exacten Zusammenspiel, wie es aus Mendelssohn's Direction hervorging, hatte man doch noch keinen Begriff.³⁴

Both dynamics and tempo fluctuations were a common part of solo performance at this time (where the entire standard was much higher), but orchestras were not usually unified enough to accomplish them. This new precision was a direct result of improved discipline and control as Charles Kenney notes:

We ought not to take leave of this concert without noticing the marked improvement in the discipline and general effect of the orchestra in the short time since Mendelssohn has become the conductor and assured the absolute control over it.³⁵

This new orchestral unity, however, went beyond mere technical improvements. Critics began to hear „spirit“, „animation“, „zeal“ or „inspiration“.

Er vereinigt die widerstrebende Masse, beseelt sie zu einem organischen Ganzen und bewegt durch seine einnehmende Höflichkeit, durch seinen schlagenden Witz wie

³³ *Athenæum*, (London) June 1 1844.

³⁴ Wilhelm Adolf Lampadius, *Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy. Ein Gesamtbild seines Lebens und Wirkens* (Leipzig: F.E.C. Leuckart 1886), 207. Lampadius is writing about a performance in Leipzig in 1844.

³⁵ *Times* (London), May 28 1844. Believing that journalism and even criticism were a form of objective writing, Victorian reviews were almost always unsigned. I have been able to identify most of the critics at the major papers and the table of suspects can be found in my „Reviewer Index“ in Appendix 1 of my *The Conductor and the Score; The Relationship between Interpreter and Text in the Generation of Mendelssohn. Berlioz and Wagner* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Stanford University 1994) and in the forthcoming book of the same title.

durch den überall hervorspringenden Reichthum von Sachkenntniß selbst die Lauesten zu hellem Eifer, die Widerhaarigsten zur Ausdauer und Aufmerksamkeit.³⁶

The language of such appraisals is key; Mendelssohn creates both zeal and attention.³⁷ The London critics agreed that Mendelssohn's greatness was related to this special spark.

The effect of Mendelssohn's presence as conductor on the music of the evening is scarcely conceivable, except by those who experienced it [...] so obvious was the increased vigour, animation and attention of the orchestra.³⁸

Mendelssohn was one of the earliest conductors to be praised for adding „spirit“, „vigour“ or „animation“, but Berlioz was also experimenting with ways of increasing his control over an orchestra performance.

Berlioz's music was also much harder, so in order to make any progress at all, he needed extra rehearsals. Even that wasn't enough and he was quickly advocating a new type of „partial rehearsal“. ³⁹ The „sectional“ rehearsal, of course, also paid dividends in other composer's music. While Habeneck was in the habit of deleting the basses from the beginning of the scherzo from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony because it was too difficult, Berlioz attempted this same passage with 36 double basses.

We must have gone over it 18 or 20 times. This would not have been possible if the whole orchestra had been there. That is the beauty of sectional rehearsal.⁴⁰

Berlioz was after more than simply greater precision, as his writings make clear.

³⁶ Elise Polko, *Erinnerungen an Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy* (Leipzig 1868) 101.

³⁷ Hiller spoke of Mendelssohn's improvements in similar terms: „Aber der Geist und das Leben, welche, von Mendelssohn ausgehend, das Orchester durchdrangen, seine vollständige Hingabe an die Sache, seine Freude an glücklich Gelungenem, welche sich in seinen ausdrucksvollen Zügen malte und auch auf das Publicum elektrisch wirkten, ließen die kleinen Mängel einzelner Leistungen gänzlich in den Hintergrund treten“. Ferdinand Hiller, *Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Briefe und Erinnerungen* (Köln: M. Du Mont-Schauberg'schen Buchhandlung 1874); 2nd edn. (Köln 1878) 139.

³⁸ *Spectator* (London), May 18 1844.

³⁹ Hector Berlioz, *A Treatise of Modern Instrumentation and Orchestration to which is appended The [sic] Chef d'orchestre*. trans. Mary Clarke (London and New York: J. L. Peters 1858); rev. ed. Joseph Bennett (London & New York: Novello, Ewer and Co. 1882), 257. He seems to have first tried this at a Paris concert of 1840, which contained a long and difficult program with movements from the Requiem, Triumphal Symphony and Romeo and Juliet. Berlioz writes that he supervised the entire rehearsal process himself going from a chorus rehearsal to a sectional rehearsal for the orchestra „the strings from eight in the morning till midday, the wind from midday till four. I was on my feet, baton in hand, all day“. Hector Berlioz, *Mémoires* (Paris: 1870); trans. David Cairns (New York: W. W. Norton 1975), 259.

⁴⁰ Berlioz, *Memoirs*, 358. The concert was in Paris on August 1 1844.

When a new work is studied for the first time, the conductor and his musicians should, first of all, try to understand it; and afterwards to perform it with scrupulous fidelity united to inspiration.⁴¹

Berlioz was also the first conductor to theorize that a conductor needed more than just musical gifts. He needed „other almost indefinable gifts“ in order to establish an individual link with his players so that

the performers should feel that he feels, comprehends, and is moved; then his emotion communicates itself to those whom he directs, his inward fire warms them, his electric glow animates them [...]⁴²

Berlioz repeatedly reminds the conductor that enthusiasm, inspiration, or even expression⁴³ are also essential to a good performance. During this period of rapid improvement in conducting and orchestral standards, many critics and performers were also coming to realize that a conductor needed „almost indefinable gifts“ in addition to musical skills. George Hogarth called it the need for „the imaginative glow of the poet“.⁴⁴

During the 1840s it became increasingly common to note how the conductor was increasing control over the orchestra, and thereby the ability to effect nuance, in a way comparable to that of a soloist playing an instrument.

He [Berlioz] was indeed, enthusiasm personified[...]. He was the most perfect conductor that I ever set eyes upon, one who held absolute sway over his troops, and played upon them as a pianist upon the keyboard.⁴⁵

As Liszt began to conduct in the 1840s, conductors were just beginning to inspire „enthusiasm“. Who better than Liszt to bring the orchestra to life as he had done with the piano? But as the conductor's power to „interpret“ increased, the debate about the role of the interpreter shifted from the piano to the conductor. In many ways, the debate about the role of the conductor

⁴¹ Hector Berlioz, „Address to the Members of the Institute“, in: *A travers chants*, 1862; Mozart, Weber, and Wagner, with Various Essays on Musical Subjects. Translated by Edwin Evans (London: 1918), 99.

⁴² Berlioz, *Treatise*, 245.

⁴³ Berlioz writes that „it is just as disagreeable to sing falsely from the point of view of expression as it is to sing falsely from the point of view of pitch“ in fact, it is even more „damaging to the work in question“. Berlioz, *Memoirs*, 400.

⁴⁴ *Illustrated London News*, June 12 1852. By the 1850s, this quality began to be noticed in Berlioz's conducting as well: Davison wrote „Berlioz has the secret of conciliating the members of orchestras and enchanting their attention. This was proved incontestably last night by the marvelous precision with which his work was played by the band“. *Times* (London), March 25 1852.

⁴⁵ Charles Hallé, *The Autobiography of Charles Hallé with Correspondence and Diaries*, ed. Michael Kennedy (London: Paul Elek Books 1972), 86.

in the 1840s was a replay of the debates about the role of the virtuoso in the 1830s in which Liszt had already played a prominent part.

As a pianist, Liszt was set apart from other musicians, but not so much for his technique as for his taste and poise: „To do justice to the performance of Master Liszt is totally out of our power; his execution, taste, expression, genius, and wonderful extemporaneous playing, defy any written description“. ⁴⁶ Liszt wasn't an ordinary virtuoso; his performances came to life.

All playing sounds barren by the side of Liszt, for his is the living, breathing impersonation of poetry, passion, grace, wit, coquetry, daring, tenderness and every other fascinating attribute that you can think of! ⁴⁷

Even his critics agreed that Liszt infused his performances with life or fire, although it might be labeled overgrown or destructive. ⁴⁸ One critic allowed that while Liszt played the notes of other people's compositions properly, „the animating spirit was his own“. ⁴⁹ While Liszt is too often remembered only for his technical innovations, it was his spiritual innovations which truly captured his own century:

Listening to Liszt, one went through soul stirring experiences; one had risen to emotional heights never known before; one had suffered, hoped, triumphed with the player. He was not so much a pianist as he was a magician at the piano. ⁵⁰

It was the Machine Age and while virtuosos were routinely compared to performing machines, Liszt was singled out as the one master who could bring the piano, the most complicated machine of the age, to life. „Like all great pianists, he expressed in his playing every mood of his temperament; under his magic touch, the piano became, as it were, a passionate human thing“. ⁵¹ Chorley said Liszt was „more of a poet than a musician or a mechanist!“ ⁵²

The rivalry with Thalberg brought this into stark relief. While Ludwig Rellstab (who so disliked the sound of the instrument that he had to „comprehend the

⁴⁶ *Morning Post* (London), June 7 1824.

⁴⁷ Fay, *Music Study*, 222.

⁴⁸ The *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, for example, wrote, „Es ist mehr Geist als Herz in Liszt's Schöpfungen. Das Feuer seiner Leidenschaft ist kein erwärmendes, belebendes, sondern ein vulkanisches, prachtvoll glänzend, aber zerstörend“. *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 15 (1841) 191.

⁴⁹ „Liszt spielt eigentlich nur die Noten fremder Compositionen, der sie belebende Geist aber ist sein eigen; dadurch gestalten sich natürlich die Musikstücke ganz anders, als sie in der Seele des Componisten aufgegangen sein mögen, so daß dieser wohl manchmal Mühe hätte, seine eigenen Kinder in solcher Gestalt wieder zu erkennen“. *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 15 (1841) 199.

⁵⁰ Constantin von Sternberg, „The Foundation of Liszt's Teaching: A Letter to the Editor of The Musician“, *The Musician* 15/11 (1910), 725.

⁵¹ Salaman, „Pianists“, 315.

⁵² *Athenaeum* (London), June 13 1840

artist more through the intellect than through direct sensation⁵³) compared Thalberg to a machine, Liszt passes into the higher „psychic“ state.

Thalberg's Kunst ist eine harmonisch ausgebildete, wunderschöne Körperlichkeit, überall Ebenmaß, Haltung, Ruhe, Grazie, Kraft; doch jener Reiz, der aus erhöhten Seelenzuständen auf den Körper übergeht, ist ihm wenig, oder doch der Kunst Liszt's so viel mehr eigen, daß wir diese geradehin, im Gegensatz zu jener, eine beseelte nennen möchten. [...] [Liszt's] Kunst ist eine dichterische, sie gehört höheren, geistigen Elementen an, deshalb durften auch wir uns eher zu dem Versuch berechtigt halten, sie in dichterischer Weise zu schildern, als kritisch zu zerlegen.⁵⁴

Chorley reiterates virtually all of these themes and imagery in his own appraisal. Liszt is not merely an interpreter, he goes beyond the mechanical (where everyone else stops), and he is a poet who simply uses the piano as a means of utterance.

Liszt rises up above his mates as something of a different world, to every one else who has handled the piano. He is not to be considered among the great composers also pianist – who have merely treated their instruments as an interpreting medium for creation. In mere mechanical skill, after every one else has ended, Liszt had still something to add – he could carry every man's discovery further: could exhibit it in new forms.⁵⁵

While composers had previously been called poets, this was the first time that a performer had been singled for the honor.

Liszt conducting

Thus Liszt arrived in Weimar having already transformed the performer's relationship with the audience. Having improvised on opera themes, transcribed

⁵³ Cited from Adrian Williams, *Portrait of Liszt by Himself and His Contemporaries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1990) 178. „Referent hatte keinen günstigen Platz; er saß dem Flügel zu nahe, [...] so daß ihm der eigentliche Ton-Eindruck, der sich in einer gewissen Ferne so wesentlich verschönert, größtenteils verloren ging. Er bekennt daher aufrichtig, daß er während der ersten drei Musikstücke den Künstler mehr durch den Verstand, als durch die unmittelbare Empfindung auffassen mußte [...]“. Ludwig Rellstab, *Musikalische Beurtheilungen*, Leipzig: Brockhaus 1848, 352 (Gesammelte Schriften, Zwanzigster Band).

⁵⁴ Rellstab, *ibid.*, 355, „Thalberg's art lies in a harmoniously cultivated and very beautiful material skill; never does it fail to display regularity, composure, repose, grace, and strength. Yet that charm which passes to the physical state from a higher, psychic one he possess in such small measure, or Liszt so much more, that in comparison with the former's we could call the latter's an inspired art [...]. His [Liszt's] art is a poetic one, belonging to higher, spiritual elements, and accordingly we too consider ourselves justified in attempting to describe it poetically rather than analyse it critically“. (*Ibid.* 177).

⁵⁵ Henry F. Chorley, *Modern German Music*. 2 vols. (London: 1854); repr. (New York: DaCapo Press 1973), II, 247

Beethoven symphonies, dueled with Thalberg, introduced Beethoven sonatas and the solo „recital“, and added „life“ to performance, Liszt had already divided the musical world and his reviews were mixed. While Liszt's success as a pianist could never be doubted, his detractors were able to take advantage of his conducting mistakes: „the vilest conductor we have seen“.⁵⁶ But Liszt, like Berlioz, was often trying to get an unknown orchestra to learn a new and difficult piece with pitifully few rehearsals. In many cases, it was more than one choir or orchestra. For the celebrations in Eisenach (on the 800th anniversary of the building of the Wartburg) Liszt was to conduct his *Die Legende von der Heiligen Elisabeth* using choirs from Weimar, Jena, Eisenach and Leipzig. „The rehearsal was a long one: it was a terrible task for Liszt to get the different choirs and the orchestra to come together in harmony. Although such excellent performers were taking part, a single rehearsal is very little“.⁵⁷ The well-known Beethoven disaster in Karlsruhe (in 1853) was almost certainly due to limited rehearsal time. From Rosa von Milde (who sang in the St. Elisabeth performance just noted), we learn that given time, Liszt would rehearse the details to a degree unknown today.

Es mußte alles bis auf das minutiöseste zusammengehen, eher setzte er die Probe nicht fort, und es konnte geschehen, daß er eine Stelle, die ihm z.B. die Bläser nicht zu Dank gespielt hatten, eine halbe bis dreiviertel Stunden mit diesen allein probierte, bis der Zusammenklang tadellos herauskam.⁵⁸

Still, one of Liszt's strengths seems to have been an ability to pull things together under pressure. At the Ballenstedt Festival of 1852, Liszt had three days to teach an extremely modern program of Wagner (*Tannhäuser* Overture), Berlioz (*Harold* Symphony), Beethoven (Choral Fantasy with Bülow and the Symphony No. 9), Liszt (*Die Macht der Musik* with Rosa von Milde) and Raff. The orchestra was a combination of players from Bernburg, Sondershausen and Weimar with a few local players added. The vocal forces came from the Societies of Bernburg and Cöthen, the Leipzig Students' Vocal Society, a chorus from Halle and stray singers from Berlin and Leipzig. The second day's program had to be delayed by a few hours to do extra rehearsals. A young Bülow served

⁵⁶ *Morning Post* (London), August 16, 1845. Unlike his many years of solitary piano practice, his conducting practice was (then and now) largely done in public.

⁵⁷ Adelheid von Schorn cited from Williams, *Portrait*, 420.

⁵⁸ „Everything had to work right down to the minutest detail before he would allow the rehearsal to continue, and it might happen that if the woodwind, for example, had not played a passage to his satisfaction he would rehearse that passage with them for between half and hour and three quarters of an hour“. Franz von Milde, *Ein ideales Künstlerpaar. Rosa und Feodor von Milde, ihre Kunst und ihre Zeit* (Leipzig 1918), I, 26. Cited from Ernst Burger, *Franz Liszt: A Chronicle of his Life in Pictures and Documents*, trans. Stewart Spencer (Princeton University Press, Princeton 1989) 122. Rosa von Milde was a leading soprano in Weimar and the first Elsa.

as musical adjutant and while he notes that fatigue and limited rehearsal time allowed only the two middle movements of the Berlioz, he was amazed that Liszt could bring this together so quickly.

Liszt hat wahrlich Wunder gewirkt – in drei Tagen Proben war alles im Geleise und die von so verschiedenen Orten her versammelten, unter sich fremden Mitwirkenden (Chöre und Orchester zusammen beliefen sich wohl auf 300 Personen) so eingespielt, als gehörten sie alle einem Institute an; Liszt's Persönlichkeit im Dirigiren hatte Alles begeistert und fortgerissen.⁵⁹

While the critics did not generally approve of Liszt's conducting, the festival was a success and the Tannhäuser overture had to be repeated again at the end. Wagner was also impressed when he saw Liszt rehearse two new works to a point of masterly perfection, „despite the extreme limitations of the instrumental resources available“.⁶⁰

Still, even Liszt's friends gave him mixed reviews. Mason says Liszt was „not one of the highest class“.⁶¹ Chorley, however, thought that Liszt brought the best elements of his piano playing to the podium: „His conducting is the union to a wish, of spirit and steadiness, of musical science and the power to inspire confidence“.⁶² Despite all of the interference from circumstances and personal relationships, it is clear Liszt was attempting to move conducting into a new realm.

Technique

Technique was extremely variable when Liszt started conducting; there were almost infinite varieties of where and how to stand. While the same is true of the beat patterns, it was generally accepted that the conductor was supposed to keep the various parts of the ensemble together by making patterns in the

⁵⁹ Hans von Bülow, *Briefe, 1. Band 1841–1853*, hg. von Marie von Bülow, Leipzig 1895, 454. „Liszt really worked wonders; in three days' rehearsals everything was in trim, and the orchestra, which was brought together from all parts, and the members of which were all strange to one another – chorus and orchestra numbered some 300 persons – was so thoroughly inducted into the work that it seemed as if they all belonged to one Society: Liszt's personality in conducting had inspired them and carried them away“. Letter to his Father, June 28 1852, Weimar, *Hans von Bülow, The Early Correspondence of Hans von Bülow*. ed. by his widow, sel. and trans. Constance Bache (New York: D. Appleton and Co 1896); rept. edn. (New York: Vienna House 1972) 118. The previous summary of forces is also taken from this letter.

⁶⁰ Richard Wagner, *My Life*. trans. Andrew Gray, ed. Mary Whittall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1983), 542. „Die von Liszt im Spätsommer des vergangenen Jahres in das Werk gesetzte Aufführung des ‚Lohengrin‘ auf dem weimarischen Theater, hatte Folgen gehabt, wie sie bisher von Aufführungen mit so beschränkten Mitteln unmöglich zu erwarten gewesen. Dies konnte nur das Ergebnis des Eifer's eines so mannichfach reichbegabten Freundes wie Liszt sein“. Richard Wagner, *Mein Leben, Zweiter Band*, München 1911, 551.

⁶¹ Mason, *Memories* 120.

⁶² *Athenæum* (London), August 16 1845, 815.

air. Liszt, however, went on record as being opposed to this practice and most of the appraisals of his conducting focus on this unique element. He wrote that time-beating was „a senseless, brutal habit which he would like to forbid in all his works. Music is a sequence of notes which demand to enfold one another, not something to be chained together by thrashing the beat“.⁶³ He asked conductors to „scarcely mark the beat“⁶⁴ and hoped this would not be converted to the „mechanical, measured, chopped up beating up and down which is customary in many quarters“. Instead, he asked conductors to concentrate on „particular accents and the shaping of melodic and rhythmic nuances“.⁶⁵ And this, by all accounts is precisely what he himself tried to do with rather mixed results and reactions.

The uncertainty of the composer's baton deranged the time and confused the singers.⁶⁶

Liszt taktiert nicht, er bezeichnet nur die Akzente; ein Orchester, das ihn nicht kennt und seiner musikalischen Aufgabe nicht vollkommen Herr ist, möchte wohl kaum unter Liszts Direktion zurechtkommen.⁶⁷

Liszt seemed aware that his lack of patterns made him harder to follow and told the orchestra of the Concerts Spirituels in Vienna that „it is not necessary for me to conduct but merely to indicate the rhythm, the phrasing and to cue the entries. Of course, such behavior could very easily confuse a lesser orchestra“.⁶⁸ Witnessing Liszt almost 40 years later, Siloti made a similar observation.

⁶³ Cited from Hugh Macdonald, „Liszt the Conductor“ in *JALS* 38 (July-December 1995), 94. „[...] bei dem Eintritt des Chors ‚Ein Wunder hat der Herr gethan‘ soll das Orchester wie verklärt erklingen [...] und da dies gesagt, sei noch hinzu bemerkt, dass der Komponist das übliche Taktschlagen als eine sinnwidrige, brutale Angewohnheit betrachtet, und es gern bei allen seinen Werken verbieten möchte- Musik ist eine Folge von Tönen, die sich einander begehren, umschliessen – und nicht durch Taktprügel gekettet werden dürfen“. Theodor Müller-Reuter (ed.), *Die Legende von der Heiligen Elisabeth*. Oratorium für Soli, Chor und Orchester von Franz Liszt. Neues Textbuch, Leipzig: C.F. Kahnt Nachfolger o.J.

⁶⁴ Ibid. „Der Dirigent wird gebeten den Takt kaum zu markieren“.

⁶⁵ From a March 1856 preface to the symphonic poem *Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne*, cited from Macdonald, „Liszt the Conductor“, 94.

⁶⁶ *Morning Post* (London) August 16 1845.

⁶⁷ Figaro February 18 1843, cited from Peter Raabe, *Franz Liszt: Leben und Schaffen*, 2 vols (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger 1931) fn. 165, p. 254.. Liszt had conducted Beethoven's Overture to *Coriolan*, Weber's „Overture“ to *Oberon*, selections from *The Huguenots* and choral piece by Liszt at the „Akademie für Männergesang“ in Berlin on February 16 1843

⁶⁸ Alan Walker, *Liszt: The Weimar Years 1848–1861* (1989); (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1993), 281 (fn 32).

Ich habe Liszt auch als Dirigent gesehen. Wenn er als Dirigent reiste oder in Weimar dirigierte, übten die örtlichen Dirigenten das Stück gleichzeitig mit dem Orchester fast auswendig ein; während Liszt dirigierte, standen sie irgendwo in der Nähe, um dem Orchester und dem Chor im gefährlichen Momente Hilfe zu bringen. Und solche gefährlichen Momente fanden sich auf Schritt und Tritt, weil Liszt den größten Teil des Stückes fast fast gar nicht dirigierte.⁶⁹

Siloti suggests that the orchestra needs to be trained by someone else before Liszt takes over, but he confirms that Liszt was more interested in the grand effect than in the technical basics. This seems entirely in keeping with his method of teaching the piano, where he also disdained the technical and concentrated on bringing out the character of the music. Of course Liszt was interested in piano technique, just not in the conventional sense. He thought everyone's technique was unique and that there was no use teaching a one size fits all model. Perhaps he took the same approach to conducting.

To Liszt's enemies, an orchestra's only hope was to close its eyes and plunge ahead: „The [Beethoven] symphony in C minor, went smoothly, in consequence of the band never by any chance looking at Liszt, who conducted“.⁷⁰ But Vincent d'Indy watched Liszt conduct a rehearsal of some new Russian music in Weimar with his tiny Grand-Ducal orchestra, who presumably understood his style for,

[s]ure of his players, he contented himself with indicating the rhythm of the opening bars with his fingers; then folding his arms, letting the orchestra continue alone, making no more conducting gestures save at pauses or at changes of tempo.⁷¹

D'Indy thought the orchestra read „this very difficult music perfectly“, but is clear that „Liszt's manner of conducting this reading was still more original than the pieces being performed“.⁷²

The Weimar singer Adelheid von Schorn confirms that Liszt's gestures and lack of time beating was only difficult to the uninitiated.

⁶⁹ Siloti, *Liszt*, 43 resp. 307: „I once saw Liszt conduct an orchestra. He was not in any sense an ordinary conductor. Whether [th]is was at Weimar, or further afield, the orchestra had first to study the things they were going to play with their one conductor until they knew them almost by heart. The conductors were also near at hand to help the orchestra or chorus in ‚dangerous‘ moments while Liszt was conducting, such moments being not infrequent, for the greater part of the time, Liszt could hardly be said to conduct at all.“

⁷⁰ *Morning Post* (London) August 16 1845.

⁷¹ Vincent D'Indy, „Franz Liszt en 1873“ in: *S.I.M. Revue musicale mensuelle* (September 1891), 6–10 cited from Williams, *Portrait*, 494. Macdonald also cites the passage as it was originally written in his journal on the day itself: „As for Liszt's conducting, it is quite remarkable. He indicates the opening bars clearly, then scarcely beats at all, just marking the changes of tempos. Sometimes he even turned his back on the orchestra and folded his arms, while the orchestra, carried away by his earlier indications, continued bravely on without turning a hair and without any need for a beat“. D'Indy family archives, Les Faugs, France, Macdonald, „Liszt the Conductor“, 88.

⁷² *Ibid.*, Williams, *Portrait*, 493–494.

Liszt war den meisten aus dem Chor und manchem aus dem Orchester fremd, sie kannten seine Eigenheiten nicht. [...] Wir Weimeraner kannten seine Art durch die Proben schon gut genug, auch im Orchester hatte sich die Tradition – durch manchen, der noch unter ihm gespielt – erhalten; aber die Fremden wußten nicht, was sie anfangen sollten, und sahen schließlich mehr auf ihre eigenen Direktoren, die sich inmitten der Chöre aufgestellt hatten.⁷³

Given the infant state of conducting technique throughout Europe, it should perhaps not be too surprising that individual choirs felt more comfortable watching their own conductor: each may have had a unique style as well as beat patterns. Still, it is quite clear that Liszt's stood out in his desire to avoid giving out the basic pulses of every bar.

In the days when conducting was just beginning to create a uniform technique, it was an enormous step to abandon this new precision in search of something else. Liszt, as usual, was way ahead of his time and was simply the first of the many conductors to make line the measure of all things. Discussions of the history of interpretation so often focus on the objective/literalist (Mendelssohn-Toscanini, Stravinsky-Reiner-Norrington) vs the subjective/Romantic (Wagner-Furtwängler-Walter-Barenboim) battles that it is easy to overlook the legacy (Karajan) of the „big-line“. Liszt's enemies, of course, thought this evidence of his incompetence.

Nicht allein, daß er überhaupt nicht den Takt (im einfachsten Sinne des Wortes und in der einmal hergebrachten Weise, der sich bis jetzt die größten Meister gefügt) schlägt – er bringt durch seine barocke Lebhaftigkeit das Orchester in stete und oft sehr gefährliche Schwankungen. Er tut nichts auf seinem Direktionspulte, als den Direktionsstab abwechselnd in die rechte und linke Hand nehmen, zuweilen ganz niederlegen, dann abwechselnd mit der einen oder anderen Hand, oder auch mit beiden zugleich, in der Luft Signale geben, nachdem er vorher die Mitwirkenden ersucht, „sich nicht allzu streng an den Takt zu halten“. (Liszts eigene Worte in einer Probe.⁷⁴

⁷³ Ibid., 107. „Most of the people in the chorus [in Eisenach] and many in the orchestra did not know Liszt, and were unaware of his singularities [...]. We Weimarians already knew his manner well enough from the rehearsals [as the Weimar chorus was only one of many], and the traditions had been maintained in the orchestra too, by those who had played under him. But the outsiders could not make him out at all, and by the end they were giving more attention to their own conductors, who had placed themselves amongst the choirs“ Schorn cited from Williams, *Portrait*, 421.

⁷⁴ *Niederrheinische Musik-Zeitung* 1 (October 29 1853) 140–141; cited from Raabe, vol. 1, 137. „It is not just that he generally gives no beat (in the simplest meaning of the word such as it has been understood hitherto from the example of the greatest masters), his strange vivacity constantly causes the most severe vacillation in the orchestra. On the podium he does nothing but shift the baton from his right hand to his left, sometimes putting it down altogether, swapping it from one to the other or even clutching it with both hands, giving signals in the air in accordance with his earlier instructions to the players „not to take too much notice of his beat“ (these were Liszt's very words at rehearsal); cited from Macdonald, „Liszt on Conducting“, 92.

Despite Hiller's incredulity, he seems to be reporting accurately; Liszt did give cues with both hands and he was interested in greater rhythmic flexibility. Liszt's response to this attack, one of the few documents on conducting he produced, gives the clearest indication of why he was opposed to beating time. In fact, it is largely a manifesto on the need to move beyond and even away from beating time.

Liszt's „Manifesto“

It must have been easy for Liszt's critics to amuse themselves by thinking he had nothing he could reply, but Liszt argues that this supposed „inadequacy“ was deliberate and he pledged „an inner conviction which will never allow me to sink to the level of a time-keeper“.⁷⁵ For this he gives two reasons. First he argues that unlike most conductors, he is performing new music. While he mentions the extra difficulty that these pieces are „new to almost all the performers“, it isn't the thrust of his argument. Rather, the difficulty comes because the new music requires a different style of conducting and Liszt is again adamant that he will not compromise „either in my choice of the works to be performed or in the manner of their interpretation and conducting“.⁷⁶ The implication here that some of the critics were hostile to him simply because of his repertoire was correct. Gradually though, Liszt works himself toward his even more shocking conclusion that it is time for conductors to move beyond the mechanical to the poetic.

Diese Werke, von denjenigen an, welche man jetzt gewöhnlich als dem Stile der letzten Periode Beethovens angehörig bezeichnet [...], erfordern meinem Urteile nach, von seiten der ausführenden Orchester einen Fortschritt – dem wir uns jetzt zu nähern scheinen, der aber noch weit entfernt ist, allerorten seiner Verwirklichung entgegen zu gehen – einen Fortschritt in der Betonung, in der Rhythmisierung, in der Art, gewisse Stellen im Detail zu phrasieren und zu deklamieren, und Schatten und Licht im Ganzen zu verteilen: mit einem Wort einen Fortschritt im Stil der Ausführung selbst. Dieser knüpft zwischen dem spielenden und dirigierenden Musiker ein Band von anderer Art, als das, welches durch einen unverwüstlichen Taktschläger gekittet wird. An vielen Stellen möchte selbst die grobe Aufrechterhaltung des Taktes und jedes einzelnen Takteiles | 1, 2, 3, 4 | 1, 2, 3, 4 | einem sinn- und verständnisvollen

⁷⁵ Franz Liszt „Letter on Conducting“ to Richard Pohl in Dresden, from Weimar, November 5, 1853. „[...] und zwar prinzipiell und einer inneren Überzeugung folgend, welche mich niemals zu der Rolle eines Takt-Profes herabsinken lassen wird [...]“. Written in French to Pohl (*Franz Liszt, Briefe*, ed. La Mara [Marie Lipsius]. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel 1893), I/142–5 Letter No. 104), it first appeared in Pohl's German translation in his pamphlet *Das Karlsruher Musikfest im Oktober 1853 unter Liszts Leitung* (Leipzig: Bruno Hinze 1853) published under the pseudonym „Hoplit“. It has been reprinted in German in Richard Pohl, *Gesammelte Schriften über Musik und Musiker, Vol 2: Franz Liszt* (Leipzig: Bernhard Schlicke 1883). 46–49. References are given to both the French and German text. I 144; 48.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, I 145; 48–49.

Ausdruck entgegenarbeiten. Hier, wie allerwärts, tötet der Buchstabe den Geist – ein Todesurteil, das ich nie unterzeichnen werde [...].⁷⁷

For Liszt, the music of the future requires a style of the future. Like Berlioz, Liszt is suggesting that standards of playing have risen enough so that we can begin to aim not merely for accuracy, but expression of the musical content (just as Liszt had already done on the piano). Liszt also argues that Beethoven's music has changed forever our conception of what music can express and so our style of performance must now reflect not simply the new surface features of the music, but its new ability to express content. He even hints that music before Beethoven might need it too.

Für die Werke von Beethoven, Berlioz, Wagner sehe ich noch weniger als für andere die Vorteile ein (die ich auch anderwärts mit Überzeugung bestreiten möchte), welche daraus entstehen können, daß ein Dirigent die Funktion einer Windmühle zu der seinigen macht, und im Schweiß seines Angesichts seinem Personal die Wärme der Begeisterung mitzuteilen sucht. Da namentlich, wo es sich um Verständnis und Gefühl handelt, um ein geistiges Durchdringen, um ein Entflammen der Herzen zu geistiger Gemeinschaft im Genusse des Schönen, Großen und Wahren in der Kunst und Poesie: da dürfte die Selbstgenügsamkeit und handwerksmäßige Fertigkeit der gewöhnlichen Kapellmeister nicht mehr genügen, sondern dürfte sogar mit der Würde und erhabenen Freiheit der Kunst in Widerspruch stehen!⁷⁸

Here again it is clear that Liszt is not advocating poor timekeeping, he just objects to timekeeping as the entire object of conducting. He is even willing to admit that there are times when the primary job of the conductor (creating a „meaningful and intelligible form of expression“) overrides that of keeping

⁷⁷ Ibid., I 144; 47–48: „These works are among those which are generally described as being „in the style of Beethoven's last period“, [...] they demand of the players who perform them a level of skill which we now appear to be approaching, but which is still far from being realized in every quarter: what is required is advancing skill in accentuation, in rhythm, in the detailed way of phrasing and declaiming certain passages, and in distributing light and shade across the whole; in a word, in the style of the performance itself. In this way a bond is forged between the musicians at their desks and the musicians placed in charge of them, but a bond unlike that which is struck by imperturbable time-beaters. For there are certain passages where simply to maintain the beat and each individual part of the beat | 1, 2, 3, 4 | 1, 2, 3, 4 | very much runs counter to a meaningful and intelligible form of expression. Here, as elsewhere, the letter kills the spirit – a death sentence which I would never sign [...].“

⁷⁸ Ibid., I 144–45; 48. „For the works of Beethoven, Berlioz, Wagner, etc., I see less than ever the advantages (which I would dispute in fact even elsewhere) of having a conductor assume the function of a windmill, seeking by the sweat of his brow to communicate the warmth of his enthusiasm to the players in his charge. For when it is a question of understanding and feeling, of a firm intellectual grasp, and of inflaming hearts in a spiritual communion intended for the enjoyment of all that is beautiful, great, and true in art and poetry, the *self-sufficiency* and basic skills of ordinary conductors can no longer suffice, and may even conflict with the dignity and sublime freedom of art!“

the music together. Liszt summarizes this view in his pithy „Nous sommes pilotes, et non manoeuvres“. The new baton-waving conductors have only just solidified their exalted place as the guardians of steady time and correct entrances, but Liszt argues that these basic engineering tasks are simultaneously no longer sufficient and superfluous; the conductor should now aspire to a higher function. Both this notion of a higher calling and the resulting need occasionally to sacrifice the role of the timebeater, became central to the ideology of conducting for at least the next one hundred years. (Today we largely expect both, although thanks to recordings, have largely lost our ability to forgive minor inaccuracies as the price of poetry.)

Gestures

By 1842 Berlioz could pronounce that the Kapellmeister „always conducts with a baton“.⁷⁹ Liszt also generally seems to have used a baton, and most of the photographs show him with a fairly solid-looking brown stick grasped near the bottom. There are, however, enough drawings and reports about a lack of a baton to put the matter in doubt. Hiller reported that he sometimes put „it down altogether“.⁸⁰ Siloti and others report that „He used no bâton“.⁸¹ Liszt probably didn't care. Most observers agree that Liszt used his body and face in a new way and if the baton wasn't being used for timebeating, he could just as well put it down.

Critics and supporters agreed that Liszt used his body on the podium. George Smart called it „plenty of twisting of the person“.⁸² Siloti left a more poetic rendering. „In the soft parts he would beat time almost imperceptibly or not at all. When he had to make a big crescendo he would suddenly spread out his long arms like an eagle spreading his wings, and the effect was so morally uplifting that you felt impelled to rise from your seat“.⁸³ Siloti only knew Liszt at the very end of his life, but his description is very similar to one made virtually at the beginning of Liszt conducting career. After only his fifth conducting appearance, a critic in the Berlin Figaro wrote:

⁷⁹ Berlioz, *Mémoires*, 264.

⁸⁰ *Niederrheinische Musik-Zeitung* 1 (October 29 1853 140-141. Cited from Macdonald, „Liszt the Conductor“, 92.

⁸¹ Siloti, Liszt, 44 resp. 307: „Er hatte keinen Taktstock in der Hand; [...]“ Walker reports that he conducted a performance of Flotow's *Martha* on May 8 1853, without using a baton at all. Alan Walker, *Liszt: The Virtuoso Years 1811-1847* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1983) 278, fn 23.

⁸² H. Bertram Cox and C. L. E. Cox, *Leaves from the Journals of Sir George Smart* (London: Longmans Green & Co. 1907); (New York, Da Capo 1973), 301. Smart wrote this after seeing the rehearsal for Liszt's cantata at the Beethoven Festival, but even after seeing Liszt conduct Beethoven, Smart had nothing else to say about Liszt's conducting.

⁸³ Siloti, Liszt, 44 resp. 307: „[...] während der mehr oder weniger ruhigen Stellen schlug er den Takt mit der Hand fast unbemerkt (oft auch gar nicht)“.

Liszt am Dirigentenpulte gewährt einen eigentümlichen Anblick. In jedem Augenblicke, fürchten wir, werde er, hingerissen von der Gewalt der Musik [...] Sein ganzes Wesen zittert und pulsiert, seine Arme reichen oft beide sehnsüchtig hinüber in die lockende Flut, sein Auge flammt, sein Antlitz überfliegt bald heiteres Lächeln, bald trübes Sinnen, bald das tiefste Weh – dann zuckt wieder triumphierend die Flamme der Begeisterung darüber weg und verklärt ihn zu einem orpheischen Bilde.⁸⁴

References to his face are even more consistent: „His agile face reflects all feeling, interpreting the joys and sorrows of the sounds, and his lively eyes flashing everywhere must kindle unaccustomed energy in every orchestra“.⁸⁵ Another observer saw „all his thoughts and impressions are reflected in his face“.⁸⁶ Students made similar observations about his face.⁸⁷ For D’Indy, „Liszt was virtually conducting with his looks alone“.⁸⁸

Liszt no doubt cultivated this theatricality and many descriptions of his conducting begin with the imposing figure he cut in his long black robes.⁸⁹ Some observers emphasize Liszt’s great mobility while others describe his imposing, but stationary presence.⁹⁰ Both must have been true and one of Liszt’s opponents even describes him as alternating between a windmill and a pillar of salt.⁹¹ While it isn’t something Liszt articulates himself, many critics began to postulate that all of this movement and gesture had a further purpose.

⁸⁴ *Figaro* February 18 1843, cited from Raabe, Liszt, fn. 165, p. 254.

⁸⁵ *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 46 (March 6 1844), col. 164. Pohl also cites this passage (Pohl, Liszt 141) and suggests the writer is probably Johann Christian Lobe. „Sein bewegliches, alle Gefühle abspiegelndes Antlitz verdolmetscht die Freuden und Leiden der Töne, und sein energisch herumblitzendes Auge muß jede Kapelle zu ungewohnter Thatkraft entzünden“.

⁸⁶ From the diary of Albertine de la Rive-Necker, R. Bory, *Une Retraite romantique en Suisse* (Lausanne 1930) cited from Williams, Portrait, 79.

⁸⁷ „Much of his teaching was by symbolism, by gesture, or even by grimace“. Lachmund, *Liszt*, 48

⁸⁸ D’Indy’s original journal entry: D’Indy family archives, Les Faugs, France, cited from Macdonald, „Liszt the Conductor“, 88

⁸⁹ Siloti writes: „His appearance at the conductor’s desk was wonderfully imposing. His long, tightly buttoned abbé’s cassock, his bushy mane of white hair, and his air of spirituality all combined to give him an unearthly appearance as of a being from another world“. Siloti, *Liszt*, 43–44. resp. 307: „Liszt’s äußere Erscheinung vor dem Dirigentenpult war wunderbar imposant: das lange, fest geschlossene Gewand, das er als Abbé trug, die üppige Mähne seines weißen Haares, seine begeisterte Gestalt – das alles gab ihm den Anschein von etwas Überirdischem, Weltfremdem“.

⁹⁰ Georg von Schultz, who visited Weimar in 1857, even reported that Liszt slept through parts of *Lohengrin*, quickly adding that they were generally proud to have „so energetic a conductor“. Georg von Schultz, *Briefe eines baltischen Idealisten an seine Mutter 1833–1875*, Leipzig 1934, 144–47, cited in Williams, Portrait, 337.

⁹¹ „J.B.“ in „Die Opposition Süddeutschland“, *Niederrheinische Music-Zeitung*, II. Jg., No. 4 (January 28 1854), 29, Cited from Macdonald, „Liszt the Conductor“, 96.

The Spirit of the Work in Movements

While good conductors were gradually becoming associated with (1) making the content comprehensible and (2) inspiring the players, it was not clear how this might be done or if there was a connection between the two. Liszt's unique new vocabulary of gestures was a way of accomplishing both at the same time. This *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* critic (probably Lobe) is clear that Liszt has the gifts needed to inspire, but he also hints that Liszt has found a new way of „articulating“ the spirit of the work through his conducting. Liszt did just this.

Er besitzt die Hauptgabe des echten Dirigenten, den Geist des Werkes in vollem Glanze aufleuchten zu lassen. Jede feinste Nüance versteht er allen Ausführenden erkennbar in seinen Bewegungen auszuspägen, ohne in carikirtes Herumfahren auszuarten [...] Liszt ist die verkörperte Musikseele. Hell wie eine Sonne strahlt er sich aus, und wer in seine Nähe kommt, fühlt sich erleuchtet und erwärmt!⁹²

This is a bit vague and reminiscent of Berlioz's idea that a conductor should „inspire“ his players with simple warmth and brilliance, but it is recurrent theme in the „friendly“ reports of Liszt's conducting. Schorn also connects the spiritual quality of Liszt's conducting to his gestures (even to his fingers) and especially to his facial expressions.

Er war kein Taktschläger, sondern ein geistiger Führer, dessen Taktstock nicht dirigierte, sondern an dessen ganzem Gesichtsausdruck, ja jeder Fingerbewegung man seine Wünsche ablas. [...] auf seinem schönen Gesicht spiegelte sich jede Empfindung ab, man brauchte ihn nur anzusehen, um immer das Richtige zu treffen.⁹³

Hermann Uhde's report on Liszt's Beethoven Ninth in 1870, however, is much more specific. He begins with the usual description of Liszt's long black robe and tells us: „Liszt's Energie und Geist war es, der alle durchdrang, alle mit Feuereifer beseelte“.⁹⁴ He then goes on to tell us how Liszt communicates this spirit through a unique vocabulary of gestures and movements.

Weit entfernt vom gleichmäßigen Schwingen seines Taktstockes, deutet er in Gebärden und Gesten auf einzige Art den Geist des Tonwerkes an. Jeden frappanten Einsatz irgend eines Instrumentes markiert er scharf, oft durch leises Aufstampfen mit dem

⁹² *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (Leipzig), 46 (March 6 1844), col. 164.

⁹³ Adelheid von Schorn, *Zwei Menschenalter. Erinnerungen und Briefe aus Weimar und Rom*, zweite, veränderte Auflage, Stuttgart 1913, 107. „He was no time beater but a spiritual leader, who did not merely conduct with a baton but made his wished known with every expression of his face, indeed, with every movement of his fingers [...], his beautiful face reflecting every emotion: at any given moment one had only to look at him to know what was appropriate“; cited in Williams, *Portrait*, 420.

⁹⁴ Hermann Uhde wrote this in 1870 after Liszt conducted the Beethoven Ninth: *Musica sacra* 11 (1910) 131. Cited from Raabe, *Liszt*, fn. 165, p. 254.

Füße; bei Motiven von sangbarem Charakter schwebt die feine weiße Hand in langen, langsamen Linien durch die Luft, sausst aber plötzlich zur Fault geballt nieder, wenn ein entscheidender Akkord einfällt. Bei bewegten Rhythmen geht der Taktstock im Tempo oft mit jedem Sechzehntel mit, wenn er ihn nicht gerade aus der Hand gelegt hat, was sehr häufig der Fall ist. Geht es zum Schlusse in sich steigernden, breiten Akkorden, so erhebt er beide Arme und breitet die Hände weit aus; tritt ein Piano ein, so scheint die ganze Gestalt zusammenzusinken, während sie umgekehrt riesig wächst, wenn ein Crescendo eintreten soll; Liszt erhebt sich dann oft auf die Zehen so hoch er kann und reckt die Arme über den Kopf. Die Partitur braucht für ihn gar nicht dazusein; er sieht sie kaum an, blickt überhaupt bei Momenten, welche sich von selber machen, wie z. B. ein länger andauerndes Thema in langsamem Tempo und leichter Taktart, sinnend vor sich nieder, bewegt kein Glied und kreuzt die Arme über dem Rücken. Dann ist er ganz Ohr, sich voll erfreuend an dem majestätisch daherrauschenden Strom der Melodien, bis er dann plötzlich wieder emporschnellt, um kühn und energievoll einzugreifen.⁹⁵

To modern readers, this vocabulary of conducting gestures is thoroughly familiar, but for the writer, this vocabulary of movement is so „original“ that „many find it strange“.

Das ist originell, und mancher mag es barock finden; aber man muß es beobachtet haben, wie der Geist, der diesen Dirigenten beseelt, jedwedes Instrument hinreißt! Ein belebender frischer Quell der Anregung geht, wie von jeder bedeutenden Persönlichkeit, so auch von dieser aus.⁹⁶

Uhde recognizes that charisma is part of this animating force, and just as Liszt made it a requirement for the piano virtuoso, he has certainly helped to make the conductor into a stage personality.

Equally important, however, was the idea that a conductor should „animate“ the music by movement and gesture. Liszt's vocabulary of motions, from the low crouch, hands over the head and the clenched fist (Bernstein) to the curving hands (Ozawa) and the downcast eyes and folded arms (Karajan) is immediately recognizable as the current lexicon of conductor choreography. While body movements and facial expression are still considered by some to be anathema to good conducting, they were a new technique for inspiration in the 1850s. For better or for worse, Liszt should be given the credit for introducing them into the repertoire of conductors.

Conclusions

As a pianist, Liszt was accused of taking too many liberties, but Liszt made a distinction between the deliberate excesses of a virtuoso paraphrase and the obligations when performing Beethoven. In fact, it was Liszt who pioneered both this „difficult“ „classical“ repertoire on stage and the proper new interpretative

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

stance for playing it. After hearing Liszt in London as a virtuoso, Davison could imagine that Liszt would apply the same excess to Beethoven, but „instead of altering and exaggerating almost every passage, he altered but few and exaggerated none. Instead of giving way to gestures and affectations of manner, he was remarkably quiet and unassuming“.⁹⁷ Beethoven required a performer with greater expressive power and it was here that Liszt's special ability to clarify the inner content of music and bring it to life were most noticed.

A sudden transformation came over the great pianist's features; one would have said that he could see before him the spirit of the sublime Beethoven himself. The expressive power of his playing [...] did not take long to produce an electric effect upon his audience. What has been said of translators can equally well be said of musicians: an author's thought can be rendered only in so far as it can be understood; to translate Pindar, Byron's wings are needed; to render Beethoven's inspirations, one must be Liszt [...]⁹⁸

Critics were often deeply suspicious of Liszt playing Beethoven, but often came to find Liszt the ideal Beethoven performer after hearing him play it.⁹⁹

The same applied to his move from the piano to the podium. For those who would always think of Liszt the virtuoso, his conducting was doomed from the start. Others found his conducting as inspired as his piano and he had a much-underestimated influence on the next generation of conductors. Many of Liszt's piano students migrated to the podium. Five of his most famous Altenburg piano students, Alexander Ritter, Theodor Ratzenberger, Karl Tausig, Hans von Bülow, and Karl Klindworth were dispatched across Europe to conduct the music of the future. By the late 1850s they were conducting in Stettin, Düsseldorf, Vienna, Berlin and London respectively.¹⁰⁰ Joining them was the violinist Leopold Damrosch, who was soon conducting Liszt, Wagner and Berlioz at the Breslau Philharmonic Society (1860–62), the Orchesterverein of Breslau (1862–71), and then in America.¹⁰¹ Arthur Nikisch, Felix Weingartner and Felix Mottl all came under Liszt's spell during their early lives.

⁹⁷ *Musical World* (London), Thursday, October 2 1845, 470.

⁹⁸ Spanish poet Juan Florán writing in *Le Monde* February 5 1837, Williams, *Portrait*, 86

⁹⁹ This article has largely skirted issues of fidelity, but Liszt had suffered unnecessarily on this score. For more on this (and for the evidence on Liszt's tempos and tempo modulations) see my „From Piano to Podium: Liszt and the History of Interpretation“ (forthcoming). For more on Liszt and Beethoven see my forthcoming article „Liszt, Beethoven and Fidelity“.

¹⁰⁰ Ratzenberger was the last to leave in 1860, when he was appointed conductor of the opera in Düsseldorf. James M. Tracy, „Two Lessons with Liszt: How I Became a Pupil of Liszt, Who Comprised His Class, and the Routine of His Lessons“, *The Musician* 15/11 (November 1910) 724.

¹⁰¹ In New York, Leopold Damrosch founded the Oratorio Society and the Symphony Society. He was a conductor of the Philharmonic Society and of the German opera at the Metropolitan Opera. His first son Richard (after Wagner) died in infancy, but his second son Franz (after Liszt), later Frank, became a conductor, teacher and chorus master (at the Met) while his youngest and most famous son Walter (1862–1950) succeeded his father in virtually all of his roles (Oratorio, New York Symphony and Philharmonic Societies and the Met).

The combination of not wanting to beat time and to use his face and body as the living embodiment of the music didn't always work. The body language was clearly a distraction at times and having just become used to watching for the beat from the conductor, orchestras were not always able to manage creating their own rhythmic pulse again. But Liszt made a deliberate attempt to pantomime the musical content. Liszt the performer made the conductor into a performer and things were never the same again.