

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.

Please note that late entry or reentry of the West Building after 6:30 pm is not permitted.

For the convenience of concertgoers, the Garden Café remains open for light refreshments until 6:00 pm on Sundays.

Music Department
National Gallery of Art
Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC

www.nga.gov



The Seventieth Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
2,850th Concert

Hanson-Kong Piano Duo

October 23, 2011
Sunday, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

COVER: Wilhelm von Kaulbach, *The Battle of the Catalaunian Plains (Battle of Chalons): The Romans against Attila the Hun*, 1837, oil on canvas, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart, Germany
Photo Credit: bpk, Berlin/Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart/Art Resource, NY

Program

Music by Franz Liszt (1811–1886)

From *Weihnachtsbaum* (Christmas Tree) (1882)

Psallite (Sing Psalms)

Die Hirten an der Krippe (The Shepherds at the Manger)

Adeste fideles (Come, Ye Faithful)

Gleichsam als Marsch der heiligen drei Könige

(In the manner of “The March of the Three Holy Kings”)

Scherzoso (Playfully)

Man zündet die Kerzen des Baumes an

(Lighting the Candles on the Tree)

Carillon (Chimes)

Schlummerlied (Slumber Song)

Altes provenzalisches Weihnachtslied

(Old Provençal Christmas Song)

Abendglocken (Evening Bells)

Ehemals (Old Times)

Polnisch (Polish)

Symphonic Poems, transcribed for two pianos by Liszt

Festklänge (Festive Sounds) (1853)

Orphée (Orpheus) (1853–1854)

Hunnenschlacht (Battle of the Huns) (1857)

The Musicians

PAUL HANSON AND JOANNE KONG

With their distinguished and diverse backgrounds as solo and chamber keyboardists, pianists Paul Hanson and Joanne Kong have received critical acclaim for their musicianship, mastery of tone color, and exacting ensemble. This concert is one of a number of all-Liszt programs that the Hanson-Kong Duo has been presenting across the country in honor of the Liszt bicentennial.

Acclaimed for his “dexterous authority” (*Los Angeles Times*), “relentless tension and drama” (*The Virginian-Pilot*), and “tender singing line, intelligent phrasing, and total magisterial command” (*San Antonio Express-News*), Paul Hanson holds degrees from Washington State University, the University of Southern California, and the University of Oregon, and has studied with Daniel Pollack, Leonard Stein, and Victor Steinhardt. A music faculty member at the University of Richmond, he has a special interest in contemporary music, reflected in his performances of the complete solo music of Schoenberg as well as repertoire of Pierre Boulez, Charles Ives, and Karlheinz Stockhausen, among others. During the 2008–2009 season he gave several performances of Elliott Carter’s *Night Fantasies* in honor of the composer’s centennial and was a guest artist and faculty member at the New England Conservatory’s Summer Institute for Contemporary Performance Practice.

Joanne Kong’s performances have been praised for “great finesse and flexibility” (*The Washington Post*), “utmost keyboard sensitivity and variety of tone” (*Richmond Times-Dispatch*), and “remarkable technical ability” (*The Oregonian*). She has the distinction of being the first musician to release on one recording J. S. Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*, played on the harpsichord, and Beethoven’s *Diabelli Variations*, played on the piano. Kong also premiered Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Michael Colgrass’ solo keyboard concerto *Side by Side* in the dual role of pianist and harpsichordist. A laureate

in the 1983 National Beethoven Foundation Fellowship Auditions, recipient of three Ruth Lorraine Close Fellowships, and winner of the Irl Allison Grand Prize in the 1985 International Piano Recording Competition, Joanne Kong is currently the director of the accompanying and chamber music programs at the University of Richmond.

Program Notes

During the past few years the classical music world has celebrated the bicentennials of notable nineteenth-century Romantic composers Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847), Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849), and Robert Schumann (1810–1856). This year, the Liszt anniversary honors a musician whose contributions have had a profound impact on the musical arts. General audiences are most familiar with Liszt the pianist—he raised the standard of piano technique to new heights of virtuosity, performing over one thousand concerts from 1839 to 1847 as the first international touring artist. Despite the astounding celebrity status he had achieved, at age thirty-six Liszt turned his attention to composing. Many of his piano works are infused with an all-encompassing orchestral sense of varied textures and sonorities, in addition to groundbreaking technical demands over the full range of the keyboard. Some of the late works (notably *Nuages grises*) display tonal ambiguity and chromaticism that anticipates the harmonic developments of the early twentieth century. In the orchestral realm, Liszt is credited with inventing the symphonic poem, and he set the convention for modern conductors to dictate the interpretation of a performance rather than merely marking beats.

The suite of pieces titled *Weihnachtsbaum* is one of many works from Liszt's late period that reflect a preoccupation with religious themes. Many of these compositions display a concentrated or even austere quality, in marked contrast to the bravura style of earlier years, but *Weihnachtsbaum* is an expression of joyful feelings of the holiday. The suite, in its original form as a work for solo piano, is dedicated to the composer's granddaughter Daniela (from daughter Cosima's marriage to conductor and pianist Hans von Bülow). *Psallite*, *Der Hirten an der Krippe*, and *Adeste fideles* are fairly straightforward arrangements of traditional Christmas songs. *Scherzo* and *Carillon* are sparkling miniatures that call for crisp articulation and nimble technique. These are beautifully contrasted with the pieces that follow, *Schlummerlied*, with its

subtle harmonic shifts over a rippling accompaniment, and *Altes provenzalische Weihnachtslied*, a playful adaptation of two French carols. *Abendglocken* displays the impressionistic textures that Liszt adopted in some of his late works, and the nostalgia of old age is represented by *Ehemals. Polnisch*, the final piece, brings the set to an exuberant and boisterous conclusion.

After Liszt retired from concert touring, he held the position of Kapellmeister in Weimar from 1848 to 1861 and composed, among numerous landmark works, the first twelve of his thirteen symphonic poems. While musical works drawing inspiration from literature, art, or historical subjects were already an established norm by Liszt's time, he expanded the genre with lengthy musical narratives of unprecedented originality and range of emotion, unified through cyclic principles and thematic transformation. Composing them initially for orchestra, Liszt also arranged the symphonic poems for two pianos four hands and piano four hands. Motivated in part by publishers' demands to disseminate works to a growing middle-class for whom the piano was an important outlet for entertainment, Liszt created piano transcriptions of nearly half of his works for other instruments and ensembles. That need has passed, but today these arrangements still stand on their own as unique compositions, expanding the boundaries of Romantic pianism and sonority. *Festklänge* was written to celebrate Liszt's impending marriage to Carolyne zu Sayn-Wittgenstein, an event ultimately thwarted by legal issues concerning her first marriage. Inspired by an Etruscan vase at the Louvre marked with an image of Orpheus and his lyre, Liszt created a work to celebrate the healing and ennobling power of art. Of all Liszt's symphonic poems, *Hunnenschlacht* is the most highly charged and programmatic, evoking the fifth century (451 A.D.) battle between Attila's Huns and the Romans. Multiple battle effects are exchanged between the two pianos, and the *Crux fidelis* theme, representing the victorious Christians, brings the work to a triumphant close.

Program notes by Joanne Kong

Next Week at the National Gallery of Art

Genova and Dimitrov Piano Duo

Music by Franz Liszt

October 30, 2011
Sunday, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court



Monadnock Music Trio

Music by Bogdanović, Garner, Norman, Lindroth, and Simpson

Presented in honor of *The Gothic Spirit of John Taylor Arms*

November 2, 2011
Wednesday, 12:10 pm
West Building Lecture Hall



Baroque Transformations and Altered States in the Music of Franz Liszt

DAVID GARIFF



ABOVE Jean-Jacques Feuchère, *Dante Meditating on the "Divine Comedy"*, 1843,
pen and brown ink with brown wash and watercolor over graphite, heightened
with white gouache, National Gallery of Art, Gift of the Christian Humann Foundation

COVER Giulio Cesare Procaccini, *The Ecstasy of the Magdalen*, 1616 / 1620,
oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Patrons' Permanent Fund

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

TRASUMANAR SIGNIFICAR PER VERBA NON SI PORIA
(TO GO BEYOND THE HUMAN IS NOT POSSIBLE IN WORDS)

Dante, Paradiso, I, 70-1

MUSIC EMBODIES FEELING WITHOUT FORCING IT TO CONTENT
AND COMBINE WITH THOUGHT...

Franz Liszt

For the nineteenth-century Romantic, feeling was everything. The desire to explore and to understand the subjective experience was paramount to the painter, poet, composer, and novelist. These subjective states took many forms: dreams, ecstasy, inspiration, but also darker moods such as delirium, melancholy, grief, and a penchant for the morbid and the grotesque. The greatest triumph for the Romantic artist was to awaken emotions in the viewer, reader, or listener. The concepts of transformation and transfiguration reside at the heart of such thinking, what today might be called "altered states." Franz Liszt (1811–1886) was a composer committed to feeling. His inspirations included Beethoven, Byron, Dante, Goethe, and Shakespeare. He shared this attitude with his contemporaries Chopin, Schumann, and, most especially, Hector Berlioz. As a prominent figure in the progressive New German School in Weimar, Liszt also recognized this trait in the music of Richard Wagner (1813–1883).

Liszt aspired to convey in music what he felt emanated from the art and architecture of the great masters. In a letter from Italy to Berlioz dated October 2, 1839, he writes:

Day by day my feelings and thoughts gave me a better insight into the hidden relationship that unites all works of genius. Raphael and Michelangelo increased my understanding of Mozart and

Beethoven; Giovanni Pisano, *Fra Beato*, and *Il Francia* explained *Allegri*, *Marcello*, and *Palestrina* to me. Titian and Rossini appeared to me like twin stars shining with the same light. The Colosseum and the Campo Santo are not as foreign as one thinks to the *Eroica* Symphony and the *Requiem*. Dante has found his pictorial expression in *Orcagna* and *Michelangelo*, and someday perhaps he will find his musical expression in the *Beethoven* of the future.

In Liszt's *Years of Pilgrimage* (*Années de pèlerinage*), a set of three suites for solo piano that he worked on intermittently between 1858 and 1883, sections are devoted to musical evocations of works by Raphael and Michelangelo. Liszt's taste in visual art extended to most of the great names in the Louvre. He remarked that his ambition was to give a piano recital in the Salon Carré of the Louvre surrounded by the canvases of Correggio, Giorgione, Leonardo, Raphael, Rembrandt, Tintoretto, Titian, and Veronese.

Liszt's predilections toward the flamboyant and the dramatic led him logically to baroque art as a source of inspiration. Seeking to convey "altered states" of emotion meant embracing the mystical and the visionary as well as the sublime and the beautiful. Indeed, the sublime often resided within the confines of these more visceral and nonclassical modes of expression. In this regard, Liszt shares much in common with Berlioz.

Emerging out of the composer's own suffering after a failed relationship, Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* (1830) broke this ground for Romantic composers in both its formal and thematic languages. Its full title describes "An Episode in the Life of an Artist." Berlioz's notes for the symphony's program refer to "morbid disposition," "powerful imagination," "sickness of the soul," "jealous fury," and "volcanic love," all brought about in the young artist who "poisons himself with opium in an attack of despairing passion." To convey

such strange and hallucinatory effects, Berlioz pushes the traditional limits of the orchestra into new realms of color, sound, and programmatic structure.

Liszt, who attended the premiere of the *Symphonie fantastique*, also mingles the grotesque with the voluptuous, the sacred with the profane, the divine and the diabolical. In 1877 he writes, "Music is at once the divine and satanic art that more than all other arts leads us into temptation." Liszt and Berlioz capture the essence of Romantic delirium—seeking sensations and expressing their transformative power through music. Berlioz and Liszt introduce, reconfigure, and restate leitmotifs to achieve thematic transformations. This practice finds its parallels in the ecstatic themes and formal characteristics of baroque art. In the same way that baroque painting and sculpture represent a more dynamic and expressive alternative to earlier classical models, so too does the idea of thematic transformation in music expand the possibilities of the classical sonata form in favor of a more painterly and dramatic language.

The aesthetic theories of *correspondances* and synesthesia play a major role in any discussion of the relationship between music and painting in the nineteenth century. The belief in the interrelatedness of the arts captured the imaginations of most artists of the time. Music that evoked colors and paintings that aspired to the conditions of music were the goals. From Eugène Delacroix and Carl Maria von Weber to Gauguin and Debussy, color and sound comingled to provide the highest gratification of the senses, even to evoke scents and perfumes. This was nowhere more evident than in the writings of the French poet, essayist, and art critic Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867), whose influence in this regard was far-reaching.

Liszt was himself a synesthete. As a conductor, he employed an expressive array of facial gestures and body movements (familiar today in modern conducting, but new with Berlioz). In speaking to

the orchestra, however, Liszt used painterly analogies, referring to tones as colors, and asking members of the orchestra to play a bit “bluer,” or to make a note more “violet.”

Liszt believed in the cross-fertilization of the arts. He numbered among his friends such luminaries as the painters Delacroix and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, the writers George Sand and Victor Hugo, and the poets Heinrich Heine and Alphonse de Lamartine. His tone poems, symphonic poems, and program music attest to this on the simplest level. Liszt was not trying to *represent* a poem or a painting however. On this, he is clear when he writes in 1837:

It is obvious that things which can appear only objectively to the perception can in no way furnish connecting points to music; the poorest of apprentice landscape painters could give a few chalk strokes a much more faithful picture than a musician operating with all the resources of the best orchestra. But if these same things are subjectivated to dreaming, to contemplation, to emotional uplift, have they not a kinship with music, and should not music be able to translate them into its mysterious language?

Liszt's romantic image as a fiery virtuoso and demonic personality overshadows the religious aspects of his life and art. As a young man, he expressed an interest in becoming a priest. His father had briefly been a Franciscan monk and his mother was devout and inclined to mysticism. Many of the themes in his music deal with aspiration and transfiguration. His love of Dante was, in part, a reflection of such concerns. As a youth, he read Christian literature including *The Lives of the Saints* and Thomas à Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*. He describes his heart as “entirely filled with the mystical feelings of love and religion.”

Sacred music comprises an important part of Liszt's oeuvre. He is a musical mystic. He writes, “Is not music the mysterious language of a faraway spirit world whose wondrous accents, echoing within us, awaken us to a higher, more intensive life?”

Among Liszt's own favorite piano pieces was the *Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude* written in 1847, the year he retired from public performing to begin a more reclusive life in Weimar. Lamartine's poem of the same name inspired the composition. Its themes of religious solitude, contemplation, ecstasy, and the role meditation plays in elevating one's soul to the divine were close to Liszt's heart. Such beliefs echo the Discalced Carmelite teachings of both Saint Teresa of Ávila and Saint John of the Cross, frequently portrayed in baroque art.

In October 1861, Liszt moved to Rome. On July 31, 1865, he was ordained an abbé (a semi-lay position)—the Catholic (and specifically Franciscan) traditions of his childhood had reasserted themselves. Aside from its religious significance, however, this new status reinforced Liszt's beliefs in the divinity of art and the role of the artist as priest and “‘the Bearer of the Beautiful,’ an intermediary between God and man.”

Alan Walker has written eloquently about the Franciscan tradition in Liszt's family and the composer's personal devotion to Saints Francis of Assisi and Francis of Paola (Calabria). While in Rome, Liszt completed his *Franciscan Legends* for piano: *Saint Francis Preaching to the Birds* and *Saint Francis of Paola Walking on the Waters* (1863). Liszt referred to Saint Francis of Assisi as “the glorious poor servant of Christ.” He considered both men his patron saints. In *Saint Francis Preaching to the Birds*, Liszt found inspiration in the anonymous fourteenth-century text, *The Little Flowers of Saint Francis of Assisi*:

He lifted up his eyes and saw the trees which stood by the wayside filled with a countless multitude of birds; at which he marveled, and said to his companions: 'Wait a little for me in the road, and I will go and preach to my little brothers the birds.' And he went into the field, and began to preach to the birds that were on the ground; and forthwith those which were in the trees came around him, and not one moved during the whole sermon; nor would they fly away until the Saint had given them his blessing.

Contrary to Liszt's sentiment quoted earlier, in these two works he *does* set out to imitate various effects of nature: the chirping and tweeting of birds and a storm at sea.

Contradiction and complexity lie at the heart of Franz Liszt's life and art. The quintessential Romantic, he was also a man of deep religious and mystical beliefs. Reconciling the passion of Byron with the piety of Saint Francis, he reveled in his celebrity status but also required long periods of solitude and monastic contemplation. Virtuoso, composer, conductor, public icon, and religious cleric, he was nourished by fame yet recognized the wisdom in Nicolas Chamfort's belief that "Celebrity is the punishment of talent and the chastisement of merit."

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