

Années de Pèlerinage, Deuxième Année – Italie: An Informed Lecture Recital Terry McRoberts

Description of the Project

The music of Franz Liszt shows a multitude of influences. He had a musical career of great variety, including substantial work as a virtuoso pianist, composer, conductor, and teacher. His circle of friends included important musicians, visual artists, and writers, including Berlioz, Wagner, Delacroix, Victor Hugo, and George Sand. The influence from all of these areas can be seen in his works. His piano works certainly include their share of flash and brilliance as well as orchestral effects, yet even his most difficult his works are playable if one develops sufficient technique to play them. Many of his works had literary influences, while others were inspired by works of visual art. Liszt's time in the late 1830's living and performing in Italy including time in Milan, Venice, Florence, and Rome influenced his composition of *Années de Pèlerinage, Deuxième Année – Italie*.

This work is a group of seven pieces composed by Liszt, and possesses a variety of Italian influences. *Sposalizio* was inspired by a painting by Raphael in Milan, while *Il Penseroso* was inspired by a sculpture by Michelangelo in Florence. *Canzonetta del Salvator Rosa* is named after an Italian painter, but now it is known that someone else composed the original melody. The *Tre sonetti di Petrarca* are arrangements of pieces Liszt originally composed for voice and piano of settings of sonnets by Petrarch. (The original settings were for tenor and piano, and these were reworked for baritone and piano.) *Après une Lecture du Dante – Fantasia quasi Sonata* is named after a poem by

Victor Hugo, and both of these were inspired by *The Divine Comedy* by Dante. Rather than being musical postcards, these works are sound impressions of the spirit of Italy. The initial work on the pieces started during his time in Italy in the 1830's. Some of the pieces went through various forms, as is typical of the output of Liszt. The final version of the pieces was not published until 1858.

Stuart Gordon stated in his book, *A History of Keyboard Literature*, that there are some pieces in all three sets of *Années de Pèlerinage* that are unjustly ignored. (Page 314) The proposed research will include preparing the entire group of pieces for performance, helping to rectify that situation. (All of this is new repertoire for the researcher, with the exception of Sonetto 104 del Petrarca.) In preparation for this the researcher will read *The Divine Comedy* by Dante, Petrarch sonnets, and the *Après une Lecture du Dante* by Hugo all in translation. The researcher will also travel to Italy to see the sights that inspired Liszt to compose these works, including multiple viewings of Spozalizio and Il Perseroso.

This lecture recital will include a performance of the entire *Années de Pèlerinage*, *Deuxième Année – Italie*. The lecture will include a discussion of the literary and visual arts influences of these works. Important musical features, such as form, harmony, melodic structure, texture, and pianistic patterns will be discussed, as well as how they relate to the non-musical influences. The lecture recital will be presented on campus, and probably at the Festival of the American Matthey Association. The researcher will pursue presenting all, or parts, of the lecture recital at other venues.

Review of the Literature

Since the major goal of this project is a performance supported by a lecture, the review of the literature is different from a project in which the primary product is a written document. Karen Sue Wilson's dissertation *A Historical Study and Stylistic Analysis of Franz Liszt's "Annees de pelerinage"* indeed discusses the historical influences of these works, and analyzes them. However, Liszt research has advanced substantially since 1977, and a new look at these works is certainly in order. Biographies of Liszt, and especially the one by Alan Walker will provide valuable background information. There have been numerous recordings of these works, including the fine one by Ciccolini. All of these provide wonderful background material for this researcher.

Time Frame for the Completion and Dissemination of the Project

March 1, 2004: The literary works, pertinent scholarly documents, and recordings will be assembled by this date.

April 1, 2004: Completion of scanning of sources to determine if additional resources need to be secured.

May 1, 2004: Travel arrangements to Italy will be completed.

June 2004: Reading, research, and learning of the pieces.

July 2004: Travel to Italy, as well as continued reading, research, and learning of the pieces.

August 15, 2004: Completion of initial phase of research. Pieces will be memorized, and reading and research will be completed.

Fall 2004: Refinement of research into lecture, polishing of pieces. Submission of proposals to present lecture recitals at professional meetings.

February 2004: Presentation of lecture recital on campus.

Budget

Study Materials:	800.00
Airfare to Italy:	1100.00
Lodging:	2000.00
Other expenses:	600.00
Total:	4500.00

Integration of Faith, Research, and Performance

It is my belief that God is Lord of all of my life, not just of Sunday morning. Belief in God affects the way I think, live, work, study, and perform. God calls me to a consistent life in which I try to make words and actions compatible. The way I approach a piece of music to study and perform is influenced by the presence of God in my life.

My approach to integrating my Christian faith to research comes from the belief that all truth is God's truth. God has revealed himself to countless people in the Bible and throughout history. As God reveals himself to us, we can more fully understand his truth, and realize that when we conduct research we can gain further insight into his nature. It is the sacred obligation of the Christian scholar to walk in the way of Christ. When he does this, God will help to lead him in the right direction, and assist him in integrating this new knowledge into a Christ-centered worldview.

My Christian faith influences my performing as it relates to the approach to the musical score and the goal of creating a performance of beauty. In Philippians the Apostle Paul encourages believers to think upon those things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and good report (KJV, Philippians 4:8). As a performer I feel that it is my duty to recreate the score in a way that is honest and true to the composer's original intention. In Psalm 27 verse 4, the psalmist states his desire to behold the beauty of the

Lord. As a Christian performer it is my sacred obligation to provide beautiful sounds that move people's souls, and give them a slight glimpse of beauty and majesty that may help them to contemplate God.