

SMALLER PIANO WORKS OF FRANZ LISZT

It is often assumed that Liszt wrote almost exclusively for the virtuoso, or at least only for the very advanced pianist. However, there are a large number of his works which contain very few notes and are only a few pages long, if even that. After 1865, he wrote 100 or so works for solo piano, relatively few of which demand significant virtuosity. Most of these pieces deal with retrospection, resignation, death, religion, and Hungary, or are transcriptions. Many evidence a compositional vision which is absolutely extraordinary and decades ahead of their time. Even more important, the depth of feeling of the greatest of these pieces is as powerful as anything in the piano literature. (To gain a deeper understanding of what lies behind these works one should read volume 3 of Alan Walker's magnificent definitive biography, Franz Liszt: The Final Years, 1861-1886)

I believe the greatest of the smaller works were written in this later period of Liszt's life. But there are also many smaller scale works from earlier periods and I have only recently realized how large the number of these is, though some are longer on charm than deep feeling.

For those with a sufficient musical budget and a desire for the most comprehensive, urtext collection of the smaller works of Liszt, various volumes of the Editio Musica Budapest (Presser) Liszt Klavierwerke can be purchased. But much less expensive collections of smaller pieces of Liszt can be found.

A collection of 21 works, only from Liszt's late period, is G. Schirmer volume 1845, (published 1968) Joseph Probst, editor, Franz Liszt: The Final Years (Piano Compositions of the Late Period) \$18.00. While many of the works in this collection make only limited technical demands, others are rather demanding.

The most comprehensive (23 pieces) single volume of smaller Liszt pieces is G. Schirmer volume 2028, Franz Liszt Keyboard Essentials: A Collection of Easier Works for Piano (published 1999) \$11.95

Joseph Banowetz has, over the past 40 years, edited 4 volumes of smaller Liszt works. Two are apparently out of print, but two others are available and are published by Kjos (Kjos GP 430, published 1997, Franz Liszt: An Introduction to the Composer and His Music. \$5.95 and Alfred (Liszt 21 Selected Piano Works #26191, 14.95 with a CD). They each contain prefatory information on Liszt and have background information on each piece.

Maurice Hinson has also edited two or three volumes of smaller Liszt works.

I look forward to sharing some of these unjustly neglected Liszt pieces at future gatherings and I believe every pianist should have some of these volumes in his/her music library and should devote at least a little time to exploring these works. I hope those that do will derive even a portion of the satisfaction, fulfillment and meaning that I am experiencing as I get to know more and more of these works. Many pianists can find at least some of the pieces to be technically accessible, and while every piece may not appeal to everyone, there are some which every experienced pianist can come to treasure.