

“Hungarian Identity” and the Music of Franz Liszt

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1. Liszt in Germany

Franz Liszt's first visit to Weimar was actually in 1840, according to “*Gästebuch des Goethehauses (1832-1842/1866-1911)*. GSA 150/Goethe-Nationalmuseum 200, S.96”.¹ Having been appointed Court Conductor (*Hofkapellmeister*) in 1848 after the death of Johann Nepomuk Hummel, the previous Hofkapellmeister in Weimar who had died in 1837, Franz Liszt settled semi-permanently into Weimar for several reasons, quitting his travels in Europe as a great Virtuoso. (He settled into Rome in 1861. However gradually from the late 1860's he lived moving mainly from Weimar to Budapest via Rome. It was the so-called “*vie trifurquée*” (life trifurcated).²) It was clear that he intended to worship the German greats, because he not only held the “Goethe-Festival” (1849), “Herder-Festival” (1850), and music festivals such as “Wagner-Week” (“*Wagnerwoche*”) and “Berlioz-week” in the context of “The New German School”, but also wrote writings such as “Goethe-Foundation” and “Tannhäuser and Lohengrin”, and works such as “Faust-Symphony” and the so-called “Goethe-March.”³ In addition, he donated a lot of money to the monuments of Beethoven as well as Goethe-Schiller. On one hand, he tried to identify himself with Western-Europe, since his adolescence in Paris. On the other hand, he saw himself as a non-Western-European, i.e. a Hungarian.

One of Liszt's best friends, Prince (*Fürst*) Felix Lichnowsky, was so conservative that he was murdered on 18 September, 1848 after being tortured.⁴ This incident was shocking enough to have a strong political influence on Liszt.⁵ Based upon this matter, Liszt came not to hesitate to occupy himself with political matters in Paris. In addition, he was so spiritually influenced by both Lamennais and Saint-Simonianism, that he had already written a manifesto - titled “About the Situation of Artists and their Condition in Society” (*De la situation des artistes, et de leur condition dans la société*).⁶

Liszt not only composed some orchestral works (symphonies and symphonic poems)

and piano works, but also conducted and played these works as *Hofkapellmeister* in Weimar. Yet at the same time, Liszt attempted to create a German nation in the forthcoming “German” society by virtue of the arts. He wrote to Hereditary Grand Duke (*Erbgroßherzog*) Carl Alexander in a letter titled “*Denkschrift zur Goethe-Stiftung*” (petition for the Goethe-Foundation):

The solemnity - with which the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Goethe was celebrated - has presented a happy opportunity to take some respite from the political preoccupations that still agitate all the spirits of the Germans, distracting them from the perilous questions which absorb them towards other questions, not less important but more serene ones, the influence of which can only be beneficial to soften the caustic passions caused by the civil war of the people, [and drawing them] towards these questions of art, and of poetry, of aesthetics, and of moral philosophy, which diminish at least the confusions of the melee, spreading more light.⁷

The transcript of an official letter from Liszt, perhaps written down by August Conradi (1849) in the French language, showed us Liszt’s sheer terror during the 1848 revolutions. Liszt and Lichnowsky were bound together by heartwarming friendship. Liszt was a German national activist, insofar as people at that time understood *Goethe-Stiftung* to be a German national foundation presenting a cultural solution of the “German Question” (i.e. the unity of Germany).⁸

Liszt, in Paris as a French Romanticist and as a marginal man, attempted to break not only some established concepts and frames but also the hierarchy and hierarchism, and thought about the future of artists’ social status and church music as well.⁹ In Weimar he was to create a “public sphere” (*Öffentlichkeit*) in the forthcoming “German” society by virtue of not only monuments, festivals, concerts and essays and books, but also a foundation and associations (such as the New-Weimar-Association (“*Neu-Weimar-Verein*”), Goethe-Foundation (“*Goethe-Stiftung*”), and later New German School (“*Neudeutsche Schule*”) and All German Music Association (“*Allgemeiner Deutscher Musikverein*”). In consequence, he was to bind people together gently and simply.¹⁰ Liszt came to compose vocal works for this purpose, for example, “*Die Legende der heiligen Elisabeth*,” “*Christus*”. Insofar as social relief and improvement were concerned, there was no difference between “program music” and “absolute music.” Finally he overcame

his first morganatic love affair which failed due to the rules of the class system, and conquered his origin as a pauper, and came to render a lot of social services through music of sweetness and nobility, for the benefit of the cultural, sophisticated, intellectual, even-tempered and elevated people in the society. After all, he brought reconciliation between not only among the people but also between people and society. Even though Liszt did not intervene in politics, he was surely convinced of the ethical power of the arts (Altenburg, personal communication, 10. 2012.).

After the French Revolution, contributions to society through the arts were required first of all, by reason of “the social interaction in the theatrically coded society”, for individual leisure, serious and academic pursuits in civil society in the second place, as a replacement for religions in the third place, and as an antithesis of industrialization (i.e. request of humanity) in the fourth place. At that point, artists of the fine arts began to create and act not for the mass market (like Franz Liszt), but against “the social” and “the world” (like Gustav Mahler), keeping up with the demand for the upcoming citizens (like Ludwig Beethoven). Needless to say, communication in civil society is desirable to “face to face”, even if through the performance of music and applause between the stage and the audience. Culture is nourished and matured when communication is done “face to face.” At such times only, each person's individualities interoscultate, and in consequence, the convergence of individualities to commonality takes place. In other words, people interact and affect each other, particularly in higher associations, and artistic and scientific institutions.

2. Liszt's identity as a Hungarian

Franz Liszt was born in Raiding. His name was written in the Hungarian language as Liszt Ferenc (Ferencc), and his surname had originally been spelled as “List”. His father Adam Liszt added a “z” to their surname in order that it is not pronounced “*lischt*” by Hungarians. (In Hungarian, “Liszt” is pronounced “*list*”, while “List” is “*lischt*”.) Their surname had been spelled as “List” in German orthography (without the “z” of the Hungarian orthography, which makes “s” pronounced as “*sch*”, “s” pronounced as “*s*”), since the ancestors of Liszt were of German descent, and pronounced “*list*”.¹¹ Because of the foregoing, the “z” of “Liszt” was due to his Hungarian environment in childhood, but at the same time, its German pronunciation of “*list*” revealed his German descent.

On the other hand, after his monumental and triumphal return to Hungary in 1839-

1840, Liszt became aware of his non-Western-European, that is, Hungarian identity. Since he accepted his origin and sublimated it into his music, he held a lot of charity concerts for Hungarian people wearing the national dress. In Budapest, there is a great music academy which still retains the name, concept and spirit of founder.¹²

Liszt had almost always been influenced by many nations. As for music, he had been influenced by Chopin, Paganini, the Gypsy's scale (G – A – flat – C sharp – D – E flat – F Sharp – G), the “*bel canto*” of Italian composers (Bellini, Rossini, Donizetti and Verdi) and “German” composers (Bach, Beethoven, Schubert and Wagner). As for literati, he had been influenced with French writers (Chateaubriand, Senancour, Lamartine and Hugo), German writers (Goethe and Schiller), Italian writers (Dante, Tasso, Petrarch), and British writers (Byron, Shakespeare), but no Hungarian (Altenburg, personal communication, 09.2012.).

Liszt's interest in Hungary had a lot to do with his origin and biography. Raiding was part of the Kingdom of Hungary. Since Hungary had nearly no tradition of art music or epics, he wanted to contribute to a specifically Hungarian tradition of instrumental music. His Rhapsodies were meant as a collection of Hungarian folk music, brought by him into a cyclic form which is crowned by the “Rákóczi March”, the symbol for Hungary released from the suppression of the Habsburg Monarchy. For Liszt, this was no different from the concept of World Literature (*Weltliteratur*). By his arrangements of the rhapsodies, they became part of the European tradition of instrumental music (Altenburg, personal communication, 10.2012.).

For Liszt, (German and Hungarian) national identity and cosmopolitanism were not at odds because Goethe's idea of World Literature (*Weltliteratur*) in itself was an open-minded concept of literature. The national idea in this case has a lot to do with the language of his youth. By translation, for example, the literary works of Shakespeare and Voltaire became part of the repertoire of literatures in Europe as a whole. In a similar way, by adopting Hugo for his symphonic poems (i.e. “*Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne*”, “*Mazeppa*”)¹³, they became part of the European repertoire of symphonic works (Altenburg, personal communication, 10.2012.).

3. Liszt's identity as a Musician

Liszt's attempts to identify with a particular nation were intentional and strategic.

Liszt's time, especially in the first half of the nineteenth century, was precisely when the nation and nation state were being built. In other words, what Germany and Hungary indicate was questioned, so that they were neither unchangeable nor fixed.

It is often pointed out that it was not for patriotism or national identity that Liszt performed his Hungarian works virtuosically, but to attract and exhibit his skills to audiences. Nonetheless, his sincerest passion toward Hungary can never be doubted. A clarification of the relationship between his Hungarian works and his national identity is indispensable, and reveal that there was a conflict (*Auseinandersetzung*) between his obligation to be successful as a musician of "Hungary" and his *amor patriae* of Hungary whose nationalism was growing in the nineteenth century.

Did Liszt emphasize "Hungary?" In fact, Liszt composed many Hungarian works, as shown in Appendix.

It was the case that his *amor patriae* was towards Hungary, and his birthplace of Raiding. Even if Liszt's personal identity had been Hungarian, the fact that he could not speak the Hungarian language would have influenced those who knew that fact to see Liszt as not a Hungarian. In Weimar, as a European as well as a German, Liszt had indeed imagined and recognized "Hungary," and this continued to be "the seed" of his creativeness. The image of Hungary for Liszt since his childhood, was gradually reformed through his Hungarian visits in 1839, 1856, 1865 and 1867.¹⁴ That Liszt was never able to speak Hungarian fluently only inflated his Hungarian national identity all the more (i.e. "nationalism towards an alien/distant place"). Liszt was a musician first and foremost, so that his long-distanced Hungarian musical identity was the most important aspect for him. Where "music" and "Hungary" met, Liszt showed what he was really made of. Hence, Liszt had no political intention, but nonetheless, his musical works, performances and arrangements had some political and national meanings in the diverse and complex context of society, culture, and politics. In addition, whilst Liszt has been labeled in many ways until now, in fact Liszt himself had a complicated identity. The substance of Hungary for him had been out of his reach until his revisit to Pest and Raiding as an established musician, but the book written partly by him titled "On the Gypsies and their Music in Hungary" was controversial enough to have a strong influence on the people at that time.¹⁵ Since Liszt was acclaimed as a successful musician in 1839-1840, he was bound to represent the "Hungarian nation" as well. As far as Liszt was concerned, there was no contradiction between his music's involvement with other

languages and nationalities and his activities as *Hofkapellmeister* in Weimar.

Notes

- 1 Liepsch, Evelyn, „Liszts erster Besuch in Weimar – unbemerkt und unspektakulär“ in: *Europa in Weimar: Visionen eines Kontinents*, hg. von Hellmut Th. Seemann, Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2008, S.350f.
- 2 Gut, Serge, *Franz Liszt*, zweite, korr. Auflage, Sinzig: Studio Verlag, 2011, S.765-793.
- 3 In fact, a lot of similarities have been pointed out as to “Faust-Symphony” and “Piano Sonata”. Main motifs in both works symbolized the famous three figures in “Faust” written by Goethe, describing intricately intertwined the Faustlegend.
- 4 Müller, Frank Lorenz, *Die Revolution von 1848/49*, 4. Auflage, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2012, S.113f.
- 5 Gut, Serge, *Franz Liszt*, zweite, korr. Auflage, Sinzig: Studio Verlag, 2011, S.123f.
- 6 Moysan, Bruno, « Liszt et le politique : Action, langage et représentation » , in *L'institution musicale*, 2011, pp. 106f.
- 7 « La solennité avec laquelle on a célébré le centième anniversaire de la naissance de Goethe, a offert une heureuse opportunité d'amener quelque répit aux préoccupations politiques, qui agitent encore tous les esprits de l'Allemagne, en les détournant des questions périlleuses qui les absorbent vers d'autres questions, non moins hautes mais plus sereines et dont l'influence ne peut être que bienfaisante en adoucissant les âcres passions que soulèvent les luttes intestines des peuples: vers ces questions d'art, et de poésie, d'esthétique, et de philosophie morale, qui en répandant plus de lumière diminuent au moins les confusions de la mêlée.»
(Liszt, Franz, *Sämtliche Schriften, Band ,3 Die Goethe-Stiftung*, hg. von Detlef Altenburg, Wiesbaden/Leipzig/Paris: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1997, S.163)
- 8 Altenburg, Detlef, „Das Projekt einer Goethe-Stiftung“, in: *Franz Liszt: Ein Europäer in Weimar*, Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2011, S. 194-196.
- 9 Moysan, Bruno, « Liszt et le politique : Action, langage et représentation » , in *L'institution musicale*, 2011, pp.105-106.
- 10 Quinn, Erika J. *Composing a German identity: Franz Liszt and the Kulturturn, 1848-1886*. Ph.D. diss., Davis: University of California, 2001, pp.92ff.
- 11 Wamser, Heinrich E., „Abstammung und Familie Franz Liszt“ in: *Liszt-Gedenkheft (=Burgenländische Heimatblätter 5)*, Eisenstadt, Mai 1936.
- 12 Although it was the year before of his monumental and historic return, Liszt wrote to Lambert Massart in 1838,
[...]

« It was these emotions, these feelings that revealed the meanings of the word “homeland” to me.» I was suddenly transported to the past, and upon looking inside myself, I, to my indescribable joy, found there the full, pure treasury of my childhood memories. A magnificent landscape rose before my eyes: it was the familiar forest, ringing with the hunter's cries; it was the Danube, tumbling along its course among the rocks; it was the vast plain where the docile

flocks freely grazed; it was Hungary, that robust and fertile soil that has borne such noble children. «It was, in brief, my homeland, because “I too,” I cried, in a spate of patriotism that would have made you smile, “I too belong to that ancient and noble race. I am one of the sons of that primitive, indomitable nation, which seems destined for better days!”...»

That race has always been proud and heroic. Noble sentiments have always found a comfortable place in those ample breasts. Those lofty brows were never made for ignorance and servitude. More fortunate than others, their ears have never been dazzled by false promises. They have not strayed along false paths. Their ears have been deaf to false prophets. No one has ever said to them, “Christ is here, He[*sic*] is there....” They sleep...But let a powerful voice awaken them, and oh! how[*sic*] their brawny arms will defend it! A glorious future awaits them, for they are strong and good, and nothing has sapped their will nor dimmed their hopes.

Oh, my wild and distant homeland! Oh, my unknown friends! Oh, my vast family! your[*sic*] cry of suffering has summoned me to you! My heart has been moved with compassion, and I have bowed my head in shame for having neglected you so long....Why, then, does a stern destiny restrain me? —Another cry of pain, faint but having all power over me, makes me trouble. It is the voice that I hold dear, the only one that will call to me in vain. ...Oh, my grieving homeland! I leave you once come — but this time it is not with the thoughtlessness of a child chasing after novelty, that enticing sprite that seduces and betrays him. I leave with a troubled heart and lowered eyes, because I now know how many pious wishes and noble intentions have been blunted by the pressures of a self-serving, frivolous society, and how many holy thought have been swept away by the wind of separation. All I hope to do is to gather my life together again in your virgin solitudes, to strengthen it once more in the simplicity of country life, and to purify it in the oblivion of the crowd, so that I can go to my grave a little less burdened by those shameful lapses that living heaps on a man’s head.

[...]

(Liszt, Franz, *An Artist's Journey: Lettres d'un bachelier és musique 1835-1841*, trans. Charles Suttoni, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago, 1989, pp. 139-140.)

[...]

Ce fut par ces émotions, par ces élans, que le sens du mot *patrie* me fut révélé. Je fis un retour subit sur le passé; je descendis dans mon cœur, et j’y retrouvai avec une joie inexprimable le trésor intact et pur des souvenirs d’enfance. Un paysage grandiose s’éleva devant mes yeux: c’était la forêt bien connue, retentissant du cri des chasseurs; c’était le Danube précipitant son cours à travers les rochers; c’étaient les vastes prairies où paissaient librement les troupeaux pacifiques; c’était la Hongrie, ce sol robuste et généreux qui porte de si nobles enfants: c’était mon pays enfin; car moi aussi, m’écriai-je dans un accès de patriotisme qui vous fera sourire, moi aussi j’appartiens à cette antique et forte race; je suis un des fils de cette nation primitive, indomptée, qui semble réservée pour de meilleurs jours!...

Elle fut toujours héroïque et fière, cette race. Les grands sentiments furent toujours à l’aise dans ces larges poitrines. Ces fronts altiers ne sont point faits pour l’ignorance et la servitude. Plus heureux que d’autres, leur intelligence n’a point été éblouie de leurs trompeuses; ils n’ont point égaré leurs pieds dans de fausses voies; leur oreille n’a point écouté de faux prophètes. On ne leur a point dit: «Le Christ est ici, il est là...»Ils dorment...mais qu’une voix puissante les

réveille, oh! comme[*sic*] leur esprit s'emparera de la vérité! comme[*sic*] ils lui feront dans leur poitrine un redoutable asile! comme[*sic*] leurs bras nerveux sauront la défendre! Un glorieux avenir les attend, parce qu'ils sont bons et forts, et que rien n'a usé leur volonté, ni fatigue vainement leur espérance.

O ma sauvage et lointaine partie! ô mes amis inconnus! ô ma vaste famille! un cri de ta douleur m'a rappelé vers toi; mes entrailles se sont émues de compassion, et j'ai baissé la tête, honteux de t'avoir si longtemps oubliée... Pourquoi donc un destin sévère m'arrête-t-il? _Un autre cri de souffrance, un accent affaibli mais tout-puissant sur moi me fait tressaillir. C'est la voix qui m'est chère la seule qui ne m'appela jamais en vain ... Je m'éloigne encore, ô ma patrie regrettée! mais cette fois, ce n'est plus avec l'insoucieux contentement de l'enfant qui court audevant de la nouveauté, cette fée charmante qui le séduit et le trompe; c'est avec le cœur trouble les yeux obscurcis, car je sais maintenant combine de pieux vœux, de nobles résolutions, ont été balayées au loin par le froissement d'une société égoïste et frivole, combine de saintes pensées ont été balayées au loin par le vent de la dispersion, et je n'aspire plus qu'à recueillir ma vie dans tes vierges solitudes, à la retremper dans la simplicité des mœurs rustiques, à la purifier dans l'oubli de la multitude, afin de descendre au tombeau un peu moins chargé de ces coupables ennuis que l'expérience amasse sur la tête de l'homme.
[...]

(Liszt, Franz, *Sämtliche Schriften, Band 1, Frühe Schriften*, hg. von Detlef Altenburg, Wiesbaden/Leipzig/Paris: Breitkopf und Härtel, 2000, S.199f.)

Cf. Lee, Shaw, "Franz Liszt's National Identity from Viewpoint of His Activity in Weimar Era – Was He Actually a German Nationalist?" *Proceedings of Comparative Literature and Culture* 29 (2012): 5-7.

- 13 *Tasso, Lamento e trionfo*: according to Goethe and Byron.

Les Préludes: according to Lamartine.

Die Ideale: according to Schiller.

Hamlet: according to Shakespeare.

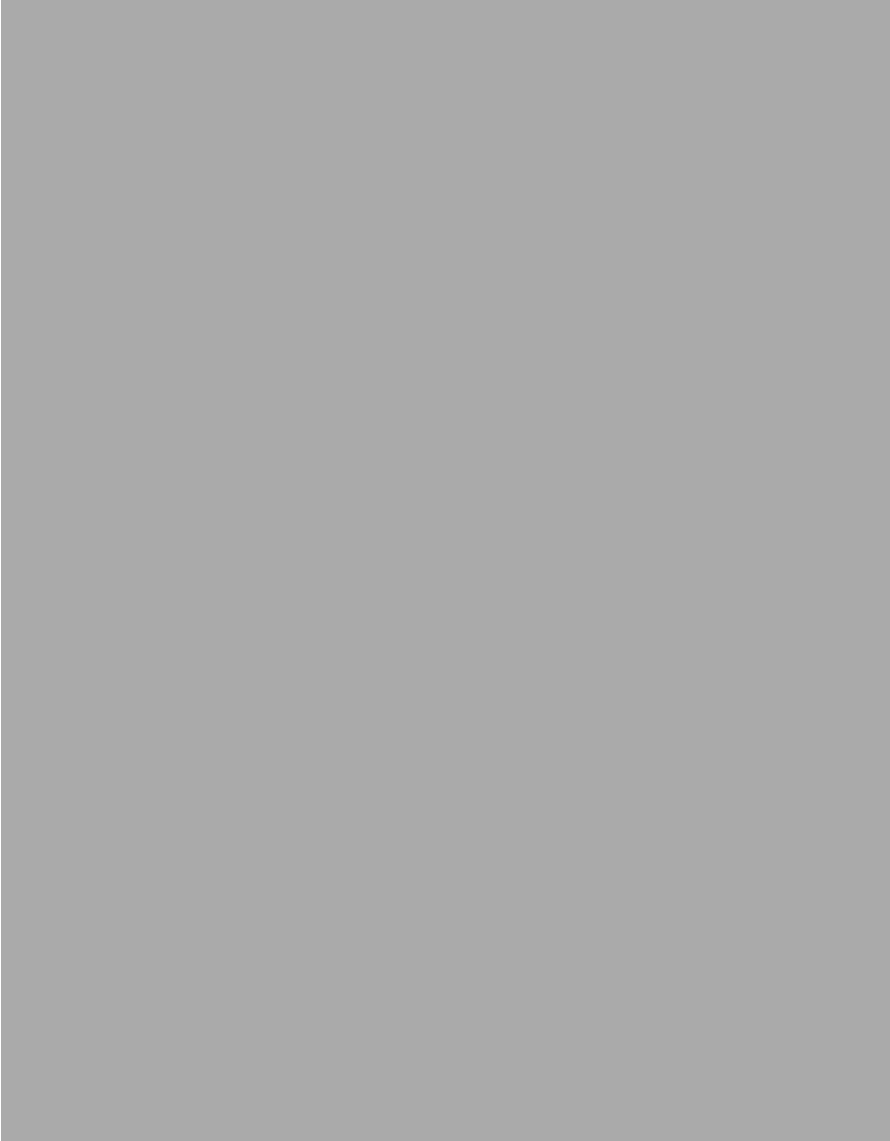
- 14 Gut, Serge, *Franz Liszt*, zweite, korr. Auflage, Sinzig: Studio Verlag, 2011, S.752-767.

- 15 The book, "Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie" was first published in Paris, and later translated into German as "[Über] die Zigeuner und ihre Musik in Ungarn", also into English by Edwin Evans as "The Gipsy in Music : The result of the Author's Life-long Experiences and Investigations of the Gipsies[*sic*] and their Music ". The second edition in Paris may have been written partly by Fürstin (*Princess*) Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein, for example, articles about Jewish music.

Cf. Hamburger, Klára, „Franz Liszt und die Zigeuner“, in: *Liszt und die Nationalitäten*, hg. von Gerhard J. Winkler, Eisenstadt 1996, S. 63f.

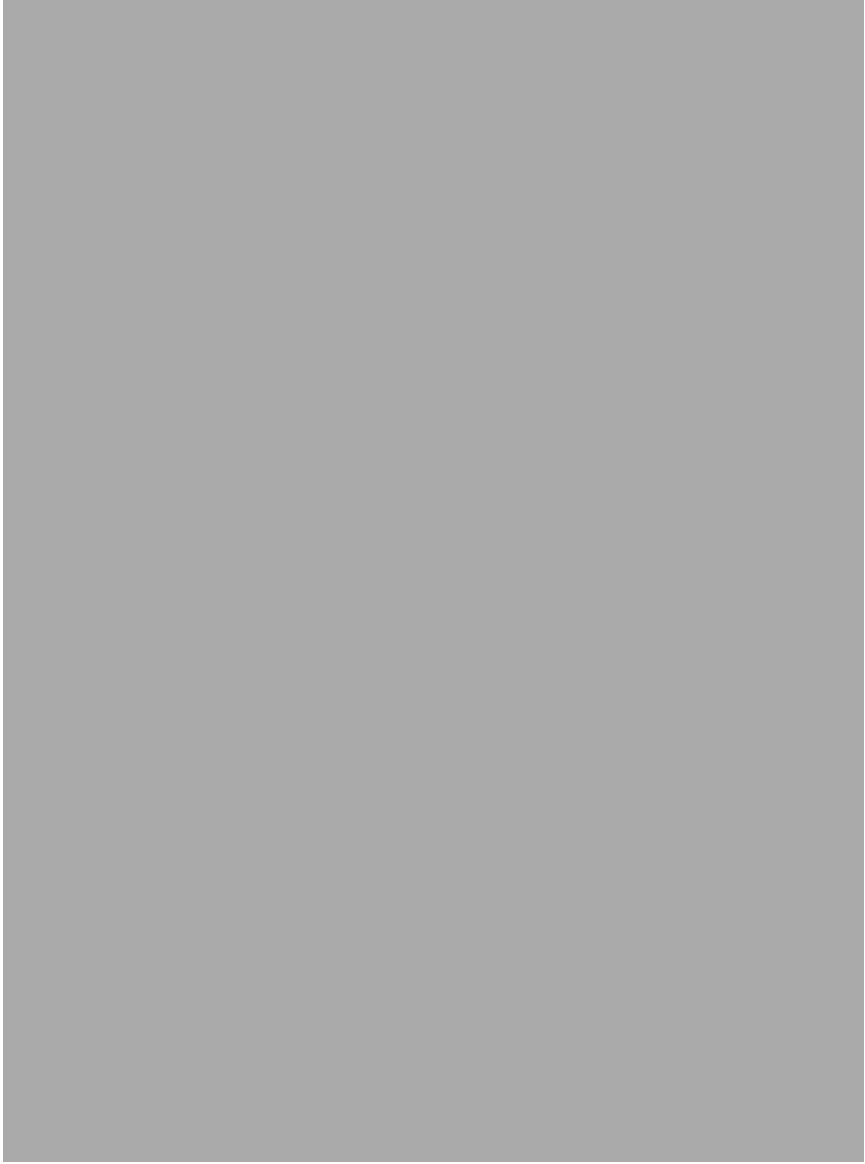
Hamburger, Klára, *Franz Liszt*, Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2010, S88, S.132f.

図の公開許諾未確認のためマスキング



*<Denkschrift zur Goethe-Stiftung> (GSA 59/2, h1), Anfang der Abschrift eines offiziellen Schreibens von Liszt an Carl Alexander in französischer Sprache, S.1, Abschrift wahrscheinlich von August Conradi (1849).
(Stiftung Weimarer Klassik, Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv, Weimar)*

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<Denkschrift zur Goethe-Stiftung>(GSA 59/2, h1), Anfang der Abschrift eines offiziellen Schreibens von Liszt an Carl Alexander in französischer Sprache, S.2, Abschrift wahrscheinlich von August Conradi (1849).

(Stiftung Weimarer Klassik, Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv, Weimar)

図の公開許諾未確認のためマスキング



*<Denkschrift zur Goethe-Stiftung>(GSA 59/2,h2),Schluß der autorisierten Übersetzung, Reinschrift von Joachim Raff mit Liszts eigenhändiger Datierung und Unterschrift.
(Stiftung Weimarer Klassik, Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv, Weimar)*



Clockwise from upper right, <Liszt's statue in Ilm-park in Weimar> <Hummel's bust in Weimar> <Bach's bust in Weimar> <The statue of Goethe and Schiller in front of the National Theater in Weimar>

Appendix

Title	Datum	Searle's num.	Raabe's num.	New Liszt Ed.	Gut's book's num.
<i>Zum Andenken. Zwei Ungarische Stücke</i>	1828	241	107	2/1	116
1.Ungarische Nationalmelodien (hrsg. 1840)	1839-40	242	105a	1/18	117a
4.Ungarische Nationalmelodien	1840-46	243	105d	1/18	117d
Historischer Marsch im Ungarischen Styl	1840	231	53	1/13	32
Ungarischer Sturmmarsch	1842	232	54a	-	42
Marche hongroise	1844	233b	-	1/13	41b
2.Rhapsodies hongroises (hrsg. 1847)	1846-47	-	105b	1/18	117b
3.Ungarische Rhapsodien	1846	-	105c	1/18	117c
<i>Glanes de Woronince</i>	1847	249	101	2/8	123
Ungaria-Kantate	1848	83	553	-	254
<i>Fantasie über ungarische Volksmelodien</i>	1849-52	123	458	-	150
Ungarischer Romanzero	1853	241a	-	2/10	119
Hungaria	1854	103	420	-	159
Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth	1857-62	2	477	-	186
Ungarischer Marsch. 1.Ausg. (Liszt Society of Journal 2004)	1859	229a	-	-	60a
Ungarische Krönungsmesse	1867	11	487	-	203
Ungarischer Geschwindmarsch	1870-71	233	56	1/14	74
Ungarischer Marsch zur Krönungsfeier am 8. Juni 1867 in Ofen-Pest	1870	118	438	-	172
<i>Pusztá-Wehmut / A Pusztá Keszerve</i>	1871	246	113	2/13	120
5 Ungarische Volkslieder (hrsg. 1873)	1873	245	108	2/13	119a
Ungarns Gott	1881	339	635	-	345
Ungarisches Königslied	1883?	340	636	-	346
Historische Ungarische Bildnisse	1885	205	112	1/10	19
RHAPSODIES HONGROISES	1846-53(1-15)	244	106	1/3(1-9)	118
	1882-85(16-19)			1/4(10-19)	