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Four character pieces from the Romantic era: A performer's exploration of compositions as influenced by biographical events and compositional environment in preparation for performance: Frederic Chopin, Scherzo in B flat minor; Charles Griffes, Scherzo; Franz Liszt, "Consolation III"; Franz Liszt, Etude in D flat major

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FOUR CHARACTER PIECES FROM THE ROMANTIC ERA: A PERFORMER'S EXPLORATION OF COMPOSITIONS AS INFLUENCED BY BIOGRAPHICAL EVENTS AND COMPOSITIONAL ENVIRONMENT IN PREPARATION FOR PERFORMANCE

FREDERIC CHOPIN, SCHERZO IN B FLAT MINOR
CHARLES GRIFFES, "SCHERZO"
FRANZ LISZT, CONSOLATION III
FRANZ LISZT, ETUDE IN D FLAT MAJOR

A Treatise

Presented to the

Department of Music

Faculty of the Graduate College

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Music

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by

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TREATISE ACCEPTANCE

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INTRODUCTION

When studying the works of the masters, it is undeniably important for composers and performers to have a comprehension of their lives, styles, characters, personalities, and the periods in which they composed. In all, the more we know about composers' lives, the historic and cultural environment in which their works were written, the more understanding we have of how to communicate their works. It is the purpose of this treatise to examine the lives of three composers in preparation for performance: Frederic Chopin, Franz Liszt, and Charles Griffes, leading up to and including four selected works: Scherzo in Bb Minor Op. 31 by Frederic Chopin, Scherzo Op. 6, No. 3 by Charles Griffes, "Consolation" No. III by Franz Liszt, and Concert Etude in Db Major, "Un Sospiro," by Franz Liszt.

Chapter I

FREDERIC CHOPIN

SCHERZO in Bb MINOR, Op.31

1.

Life

The exact date of Frederic Chopin's birth is unknown (Grove). March 1, 1810 is however the most accepted date (Grove). He was the son of Nicolas Chopin who was born in France. Nicolas left France in 1787 at the age of 16 and went to Poland to live. After leaving France he completely cut himself off from any connections to his homeland and later his children were never told of their French relatives. He identified completely with Poland, learned its language, and became a great patriot. Nicolas taught French in homes of the nobility where he met TeklaJustyna Krzyzanowska, a well-educated woman but quite poor. They were married in 1806 and she bore four children, one of which was Fryderyk Chopin (who later changed the spelling of his name to Frederic). The family moved to Warsaw in 1810 shortly before Chopin's birth.

As a child he was extremely precocious and was writing poetical verses by the time he was six. His musical talents made it clear he was destined for

greatness. Until the age of seven he was mostly self-taught and therefore was never bound to strict traditional playing (Grove). "The mechanics of playing took you little time,' his father wrote to him,'it was your mind, not your fingers, that kept busy" (Grove). At the age of seven he began his musical studies with formal piano lessons. "His aptitude for the piano was extraordinary and he was particularly adept at improvising. His inventiveness and ingenuity were highly notable"(Grove). Soon his first piano composition, a Polonaise, was published. At the age of eight he played a charity concert in Warsaw. During the first six years of piano lessons, the aristocrats became aware of the prodigy and opened their doors to him, thus he, at an early age was in contact with elegance and grace. Being of delicate temperament, Chopin readily fit into the aristocratic environment (Grove).

At the age of twelve he became a composition pupil of Jozef Elsner. Elsner was the director of the Warsaw Conservatory. While in high school Chopin continued his studies with Elsner. Chopin's composing flourished. He was highly influenced by his father's great patriotism. Even though he used the french spelling of his name (Frederic), he was extremely devoted to his native Poland. It is notable that at this time (1825) his letters contained indications of his interest in folk music of his native Poland. This would in time greatly influence his compositions.

More public appearances and compositions followed and in 1825 he played before Tsar Alexander I who, in appreciation and admiration, gave him a diamond ring. During this early part of his life, Chopin was full of hope and his life was full of

promise. Unfortunately in later years, he would find himself in a world clouded with unhappiness.

After high school Chopin became a full-time student at the Warsaw Music Conservatory (1826 - 1829) and spent three more years studying with Elsner: two years spent on theory, harmony, and counterpoint, the last year spent on composition. All forms of composition were covered, but Chopin's real interest and love was in piano performance and composition. It is at this time that his first piano sonata, Sonata in C Op. 4, B 23, was composed in 1828 and published in 1851. Chopin composed all three of his piano sonatas during this time and these piano sonatas represent his contribution to the large forms of "absolute" works.

He found it extremely difficult to follow accepted rules and norms in writing music. Qualities that characterized his compositions were evident when he followed his natural bent and disregarded rules. Eventually Elsner recognized this genius and stopped trying to impose his style and compositional techniques on Chopin. During this period of study at the Conservatory, Chopin was first and foremost a pianist and had some successful public appearances in Poland. The Polish aristocracy were very complimentary of Chopin but unfortunately made no move to help him financially.

2.

Influences

After finishing at the Conservatory in 1829, Chopin temporarily went to Vienna to seek further experience and to hopefully build his future and fortune. In April of 1829, Chopin performed in Vienna and was highly acclaimed. It was at this concert that he performed an improvisation on a Polish folk song. It was very well received. He concertized extensively and toured. After a successful long tour of Italy and Germany, Chopin was encouraged to compose nationalistic music and to exploit his own personal, unique piano style. After the tour and making a name for himself in the music world, Chopin returned to Poland. At this time, it was his claim that a brief, secret, unfulfilled love affair, was his inspiration for writing many of his present, and some future compositions (Grove). After a brief stay in Poland, Chopin left his homeland in November of 1830, never to see it again. Having found success in Vienna, he returned there. Shortly after his arrival there came the disquieting news of an uprising in Warsaw. The Russians had stormed his homeland. Chopin was thrown into a state of increasing unhappiness and uncertainty as he was deeply attached to his homeland. This is when he composed the Revolutionary Etude in C minor (Grove). This second stay in Vienna was severely disappointing. His reception was considerably less favorable than it had been before and he was extremely upset about his homeland. In a letter to a friend in 1831, Chopin refers to his own personal internal conflicts: "In feeling I am always in a state of syncopation

with everyone...I am gay on the outside...but inside something gnaws at me..." (Kirby 275)

Late in the summer of 1831, Chopin left Vienna and went to Paris where he settled, but his career turned. He ceased giving concerts to large public audiences, but did give some thirty recitals, many of them before private aristocratic audiences of his friends. It was at this time that he met Aurore Dudevant, the French novelist, who used the pseudonym George Sand in her work. A love affair of long duration, he lived with her for ten years, 1837-1847. After Chopin separated from Sand, his health deteriorated rapidly and his career again turned. He concentrated on composition. He became closely associated with some of the leading aristocratic and artistic people of this time. He was close to Franz Liszt, Felix Mendelssohn, Hiller, Berlioz, Paganini, Rossini, Bellini, and Schumann. He, knew literary figures and visual artists: de Musset, Balzac, Delacroix, Heine; also the poet Adam Mickiewicz.

The relationship of composition to literature during this time is of notable importance. Many composers of this time wrote music set to old folk poetry and ballads. Literature is said to have greatly influenced Chopin as well.

His music became increasingly somber and passionate, and the elegant grace of the concertos gave place to the fierce intensity of the Bb Minor Scherzo, 1837. Later, even composing did not interest him. He spent most of the remainder of his life in Paris. In 1849 he fell quite ill and he died in October, 1849, at the age of 39. His request was that Mozart's Requiem be performed at this funeral.

Having a working knowledge of Chopin's life gives us an understanding of the circumstances in which the Bb Minor Scherzo was composed: his formation, education, and psychological state, and the atmosphere of the historical period were major influences on his style, form, and technique. This information is vital when preparing to perform the works of Chopin.

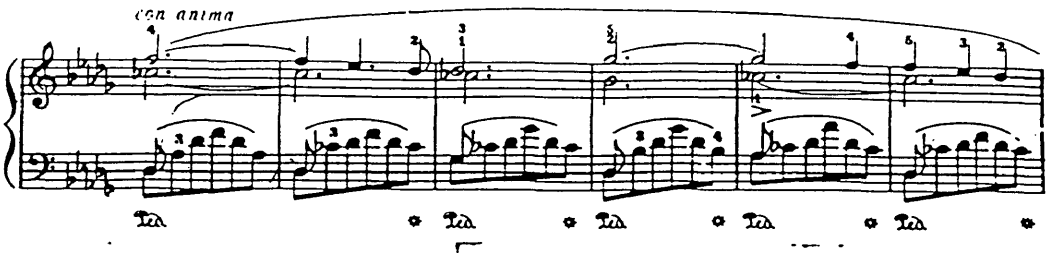
3.

Style

In general, Chopin was a free spirit and shaped his compositions according to his whims, inspirations, and passions. "Chopin must be allowed to achieve remarkable things within the framework chosen by himself; the listener is swept along by a flow of music that sounds like a fiery improvisation or rhapsody" (Hedley 169). Again, Chopin's melodies are, for the most part, lyrical, periodic, (eight measures long), and basically diatonic. Chopin was skilled at improvisation and preferred "thematic variation rather than fragmentation as a developmental tool" (Kirby 277). He widely used chromaticism to vary and develop his themes. In his music there are grace notes, passing tones, and ornaments in abundance. He was adept at weaving melody into and around melody" (Kirby 278). Accurate pedaling is vital when performing Chopin. Tempo rubato is an important and innovative characteristic of this composer. Chopin's own explanation of his use of the term is: "The hand playing the accompaniment adheres to strict tempo; the hand playing the melody relaxes the

tempo, then unobtrusively accelerates it in order to resume synchronization with the accompaniment" (Kirby 238).

For example this is seen in the second, "con anima" section of the Scherzo in Bb Minor:



a. measures 63-69

In much of his music, his rhythms are connected to dances. No doubt this is derived from his love for his native Poland and his Polish folk-music.

Chopin often mentioned inspiration as the motivation for his work. To him, composition should be spontaneous and very natural. "Chopin even went so far as to compare musical composition to childbirth" (Kirby 275).

He used modal scales, quintuple meter in the slow movement of the early Sonata in C Major, Op.4, and unusual rhythmic combinations in the Nouvelles etudes. With respect to harmony, dissonances are found in his etudes: Andante in E-flat, Op. 10, and Vivace in E Major, Op. 25. In these last two was found a strong use of the appoggiatura. At the time, critics accused him of composing and playing "ear-splitting discords, forced transitions, harsh modulations, ugly distortions of melody and rhythm" (Kirby 298).

Chopin created many different forms of composition. They include preludes, sonatas, ballads, scherzi, nocturnes, polonaises, etudes, waltzes, mazurkas, and variations to name only some.

4.

Scherzo

A scherzo is generally fast and light hearted in nature. It is usually written in a triple meter. As to it's origin, the term originally appeared at the beginning of the 17th century as "one of the many fanciful titles used to describe a vocal madrigal of the balletto type" (Grove). In 1607, Monteverdi first used the term Scherzi. Monteverdi's so called Scherzi Musicali were "at first frivolous in tone and not ambitious in scope, but around 1632 they became more substantial and varied" (Grove). There is a single scherzo in Bach's works, also "light, rather frivolous in tone" (Grove). The admission of the scherzo into the vocabulary of regular usage dates around 1781 with Haydn's quartets. The term later applied only to instrumental pieces. The traditional minuet movement was replaced by the scherzo. At this time the use of scherzo was not necessarily associated with music that sounded lighter or more humorous but Haydn did use the lighter scherzo spirit in the finales of some of his works (Grove). It was Beethoven who established the scherzo as a classic movement type as an alternative to the minuet heretofore used. The Beethoven scherzi were of a different character. They were stormy and traumatic. Mendelssohn

revealed another new aspect of the scherzo: that it was dazzling and brilliant. The establishment of the scherzo as an independent type of composition apparently is related to the neglect of the sonata and to the practice of pulling out separate movements as individual compositions, and to the outgrowth of the development of the Romantic character piece. The scherzo, as an independent form, was different, however, than the sonata scherzo. The main difference is mostly the size. The independent scherzo was composed on a larger scale than would occur in a sonata. All parts of the independent scherzo were elaborated and lengthened.

5.

Chopin Scherzi

Chopin composed four magnificent scherzi: Scherzo in B Major Op. 20, composed in 1831-1832 and published in 1832; Scherzo in Bb Minor Op. 31, composed and published in 1837; Scherzo in C-sharp Minor, Op.39, composed in 1839 and published in 1840; and lastly, Scherzo in E Major, Op. 54, composed in 1842 and published in 1843. Chopin's biographers are invariably puzzled by his four scherzi. For example, why did Chopin call them scherzi? Despite their title, these scherzi contain little that resembled other scherzi. Apart from the fact that Chopin's scherzi are in 3/4 time and have very fast tempos, they possess only a kindship with the original sonata form. "He must have used the term in its most capricious and

unbridled connotation" (Maier 25). The scherzo was first no more than a fast minuet and showed the typical form of a minuet, a rounded binary form. The scherzo in the hands of Chopin became larger than it had been, but the form that he employed was clearly an outgrowth of the scherzo as a movement in a sonata. Again, all of the Chopin scherzi have the same formal plan: the scherzo proper, a middle section called "trio," followed by the repeat of the scherzo. This is evident in the Scherzo in B Minor and in the Scherzo in E Major. In the other two scherzi this plan is not as clear. They do not sound humorous and they are self-contained works. As has been stated, they have huge dimensions which no sonata scherzo has heretofore had. They are among his most powerful works. They are dramatic and passionate in nature. Writers describe these scherzi as "fiercely scornful," "frenetically agitated," and other fanciful terms (Maier 25).

Chopin began every one of his Scherzi with presto or presto con fuoco. "They seem to explode with a writhing and leaping, spinning and crashing. They seem to have conflict and strife. Their moods seem to be supernatural, not of the earth, and their proportions epic. Chopin is more dissonant in his scherzi than in most of his other compositions" (Maier 25). The first sections are contrasted with peaceful themes. "Yet these themes are not 'personal' or 'romantic,' like those of his Ballads, but contrasting, intermingling, peaceful sections that seem impersonal, remote, and yet are pervaded with a celestial calm" (Maier 25). The scherzi seem to be filled with "jagged crags, torment, pain, dizzy heights, and bemoanful depths. They seem to be

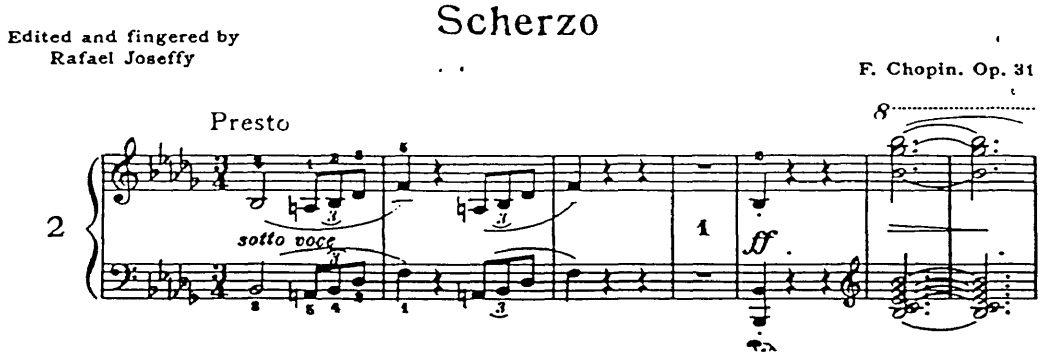
driven by the universal battles between good and evil, light and shadows, furiousness and peace (Maier 384)." This is, no doubt, why they are so difficult to play. As one joltingly moves from one section to another, the drastic changes of technique and mood need be felt and expressed by the performer. It can be emotionally overwhelming by both the audience and the performer. Chopin's style in the scherzi can also be graceful, sensitive, expressive, and romantic. Proper performance of them demands of the player impeccable technique and touch which changes rapidly and often.

6.

Scherzo in Bb Minor

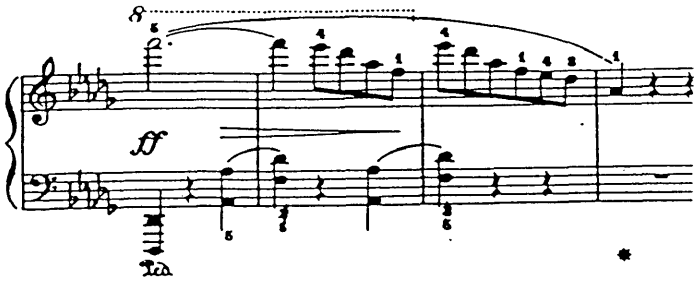
The Scherzo in Bb Minor, also "has a highly remarkable quality of lyricism. It is a composition that soars one's imagination, and envelops the ear" (Kirby 276). It is filled with anticipation and drama, "a whispered motive, an expectant pause, the answer in ringing chords; and then one of those soaring melodies of which Chopin had the secret"(Hedley 170).

First, there is the upward moving triplet run that is repeated three times and followed by full chords in dotted rhythm:



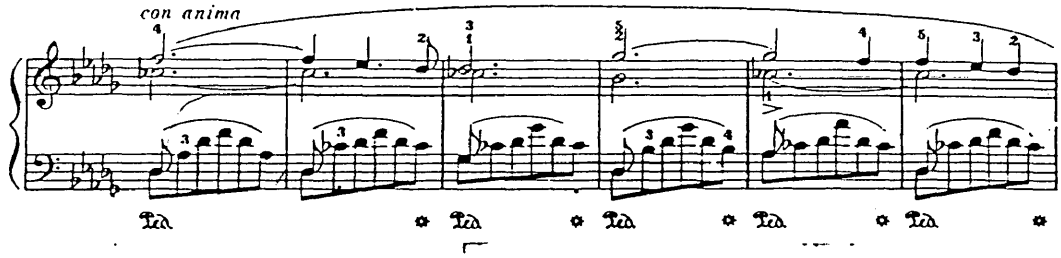
b. measures 1-7

then a brilliant descending figure:



c. measures 47-50

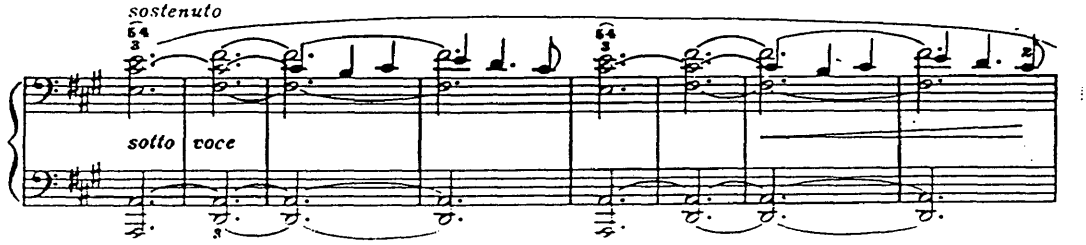
then, a lyrical phrase accompanied by rapid broken-chords, which rises, attains a climax, and passes to a section of closing theme character, figural runs, and chords:



d. measures. 63-68

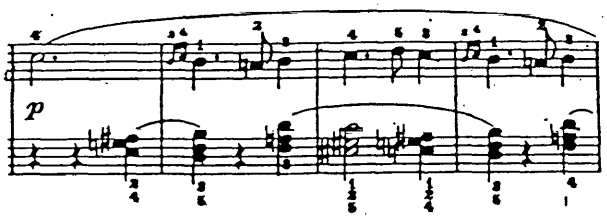
Thereafter, the whole theme is repeated with variations and omissions.

The trio of the Scherzo in Bb Minor is elaborate. This trio exhibits a extensive variety. There is a simple melody which makes use of repeated notes accompanied by chords:



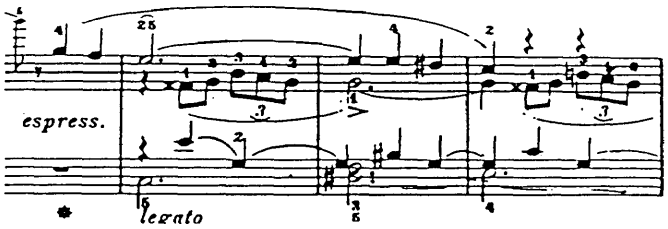
e. measures 262-269

and then a more motivic section using figuration:



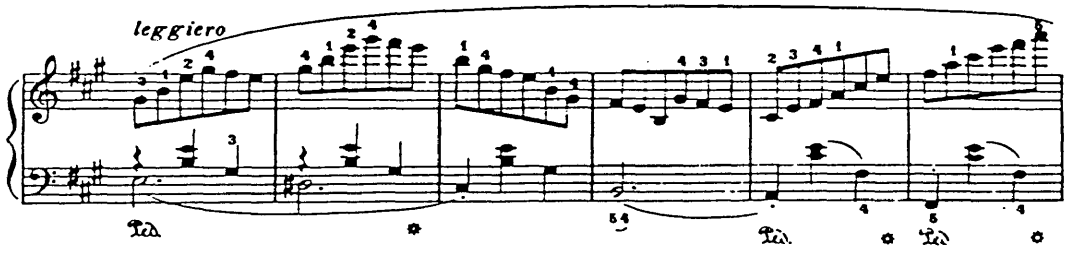
f. measures 274-277

As the trio proceeds it changes some by drawing thematic material from the A section (scherzo proper) and becomes similar to a development section:



g. measures 306-309

Highly notable is the manner in which the quiet, gorgeous motive from the intermezzo is used in the development section:



h. measures 331-337

The motive reaches a level of excitement, and then it calms down to a quiet peaceful

tone. The last time we hear this lyrical melody, it achieves completion not heard the first time. At the end all the drama is brought together in a triumphant ending, full of thrust and excitement which might be considered inspired.

The Scherzo in Bb Minor is set in the form of a sonata movement with a trio placed before the 'working-out' section. But, again it is much larger than a scherzo in a sonata. Along with this increase in length goes an elaboration of all parts of the work. The repetitive themes are present. Several themes are stated, and then the entire section repeated. The trios also exemplify repetitive plans that would connect them to the rounded binary form as it existed in the piano sonata.

7.

Conclusion

Chopin, alone among the composers of the nineteenth century, concentrated solely on writing for the piano. Involving himself in the experimentation in the capacities of the instrument, he invented new harmonies and different ways of composing for the piano. This aroused attention at the time, but not always favorable. Chopin's works are now a mainstay of the pianist's repertory.

Chapter II

CHARLES TOMLINSON GRIFFES

SCHERZO, Op. 6 No 3

1.

Life

Charles Tomlinson Griffes was born in Elmira, New York, September 17 1884. He was an American composer. His father, Wilber Griffes, was one of six children, and early learned to make his own way in the world. Wilber owned his business and successfully sold gentlemen's apparel. Wilber never had the money for college, but was an incessant reader and pursued his education in his leisure time on his own. He studied the piano and even composed one piece called Falling Leaves. Although Charles' father died early on, Charles still was able to attend school but managed at the same time to contribute to the support of his mother and sister.

In 1873 Wilber married Clara Louise Tomlinson. After a term at the Misses Galatian's private school where she learned the proprieties indispensable to the well bred and a short term in Elmira College where she was exposed to poetry and painting, she had to stop her formal education to attend to an invalid mother. This, however, was not before she had received an intensive cultural education. Clara

received a piano for her tenth birthday and attained some proficiency at the piano. She was God-fearing and pious, and was known to have a sweet deposition (Maisel 7) and was noted for her generosity. Charles was the third of four children born to the couple. The Griffes home was a happy one. His father often took the children on long walks through the woods. Griffes' high sensitivity to nature can be attributed to this early contact with the natural world.

Charles left for Germany in 1903 at age 19. He was pursued a career as a concert pianist at the Stern Conservatory in Berlin. In June of his 20th year, Griffes performed as a piano soloist at a Conservatory concert. He was highly acclaimed, but soon became more interested in composition. The next year, against the wishes of his mentor Selena Groughton, Griffes left the Conservatory to study with someone more technically progressive in composition, Engelbert Humperdinck. Humperdink, being terribly busy at the time, had only a few lessons to afford Griffes. So in June 1906, Griffes, 22, restarted lessons with Galston and taught piano and harmony privately. He appeared as a soloist and accompanist a few times. During his four years in Berlin he was active as a composer.

As a man Griffes was fastidious. He was sensitive, modest and somewhat shy. He was always interested in people and had close and lasting friendships (Grove). He pursued his interest in painting and was considered to be talented in this medium. He loved the theater. He always clung to the ways of a small town boy.

Griffes returned to the USA in September 1907, and was appointed director of

music at the Hackley Boys School in Tarrytown, New York, a post he held until 1920. Some felt it a loss to have had Griffes teaching rather than composing, but Griffes was considered an excellent teacher, and was highly regarded and esteemed by his students and peers.

During the fall semester of 1914 at Hackley, Griffes had five songs accepted for publishing. Spurred on by this, Griffes began 1915 with a splurge of composing. On January 15th he started his piano arrangement of "Les Parfums de la Nuit," from Debussy's Iberia. At this point "Griffes, unlike many of his contemporaries, no longer found Debussy, Ravel, and Schonberg very revolutionary "(Maisel 147). In January of 1915 he finished the composition of this chapter's focus, Scherzo Op. 6 No. 3.

2.

Influences

One friend of the Griffes family, Jack Raynes, lived with them when Charles was a young boy. He played the piano, arranged, and composed. Jack taught Charles all the popular tunes of the day. After Raynes left, Charles took his first piano lessons from his sister, Katherine. He exhibited an unmistakable, "though unconventional" musical talent (Maisel 15). It was not until he was eleven years old that he showed his real genius in music and began studies with Selena Groughton, piano instructor at Elmira College. It was Selena Groughton who had the most profound influence on

his personal and musical development. She not only taught him piano, but suggested and financed his music studies in Berlin.

While studying at the German Conservatory, he studied piano with Ernst Jediczka and Gottfried Galston, composition with Philippe Rufer and counterpoint with Max Lowengard and Wilhelm Klatte.

When Griffes returned to the United States, the compositions he brought back with him and the compositions he first wrote were of German influence. His first works were published in 1909. "His songs are harmonically conservative, and show the influence of Strauss and Brahms"(Grove). He was intensely sensitive to text and mood. "He exemplified an uncommon gift for melody, also had a marked skill in creating accompaniments with exquisite rhythmic vitality and refined workmanship. These skills he was to develop to perfection in his later works" (Grove). There were several premieres of his compositions which helped to establish him eventually as one of the major American composers of the time. While teaching at the Hackley School for Boys, he spent his free time and summers composing and promoting his music.

3.

Style

At an early age young Charles had an exceptional fondness for color. "This trait assumes special importance as harbinger of the composer's preoccupation with color in its relation to music" (Maisel 11). As a composer he associated certain colors with

certain keys in music. The key of Eb Major, for example, was yellow or golden. C Major was an incandescent white, filled with brilliance and was known to be his favorite key (Maisel 11). "The unfamiliar tonalities of which acrimonious critics complained in some of his music were often the product of an artist's natural absorption in scraping and mixing precise colors" (Maisel 11). As one critic said of one of his compositions, "It is undeniable that in this song--perhaps as in no other--we see Griffes' power in painting with elemental colors" (Maisel 11).

In 1911 his works began to change. He pulled away from the German school. His compositions from this time until 1917 are in free form and are very colorful and express impressionism. Impressionistic devices used by Griffes from 1911 on included whole-note scales, parallel chords, augmented triads, ostinato figures across the bar-line, etc. Songs from this period include the "Tone-Images" and "Four Impressions." They clearly reflect impressionism, Griffes' style.

His piano pieces are pictorial descriptions and are inspired by poetic texts and titles. But he gave his compositions their text and titles after he finished writing them. His tone poems, Op. 9, on the other hand, are dissonant, tonally obscure, and stylistically experimental (Grove).

For a time, beginning in 1916 and 1917, Griffes music reflected his lifelong interest in the oriental culture. Griffes composed some voice and piano settings with an oriental influence. They were based on the five and six-tone scales. They were called "Five Poems of Ancient China and Japan," Op. 10 and "Sho-Jo." This was

the beginning of what we might call his oriental period. He became acquainted with a famous Japanese dancer and Eva Gauthier, a soprano, who gave Griffes some Japanese melodies. These he used for a Japanese pantomime ballet, The Pleasure-Dome of Kubla Kahn.

After 1917 Griffes' style changed again. His Sonata, for example, was uncompromisingly dissonant, and had no poetic program and no descriptive title. His earlier piano pieces were set in one movement free form, but the Sonata is cast in three movements in a recognizable sonata structure. He also composed some compositions based on the American Indian culture. Griffes' last completed compositions, the Three Preludes for Piano (1919), mark still another example of his individuality. "They keep the abstract harmonic idiom of the Sonata but show Griffes as a miniaturist, writing within the confines of 32 bars or less. At the end of his career he adopted a stark, abstract idiom bordering on, atonality" (Grove). His creative career only lasted 13 years, but he composed a surprising number of memorable works. Some of these, and a majority of his lesser works, are still unpublished.

4.

Scherzo Op. 6 No. 3

Griffes originally composed the "Scherzo" in 1913, but revised it in 1915 (Anderson 153). On the 24th he began his "Notturno," and it was completed in three days. Before the end of the month he brought his Fantasy Pieces, the "Barcarolle," "Notturno," the "Scherzo" and "Lake at Evening" into Schirmer's publishing firm. Griffes played them for Kurt Schindler. Schindler pointed out that "they could have little popular success and criticized him for writing too subjectively "(Maisel 147). They were rejected.

He found a combination of verses from Fiona Macleod. The "Barcarolle" has a combination text from two poems by William Sharp. Griffes stated at the time, "The 'Notturno' has verses from Paul Verlaine and the 'Scherzo' a couple of prose sentences of my own. After that I took the mss. over to Schirmer's to their editor" (Maisel 153). The prose sentences written by Griffes for the "Scherzo" were: "From the Palace of Enchantment there issued into the night sounds of unearthly revelry. Troops of genii and other fantastic spirits danced grotesquely to a music now weird and mysterious, now wild and joyous" (Maisel 153).

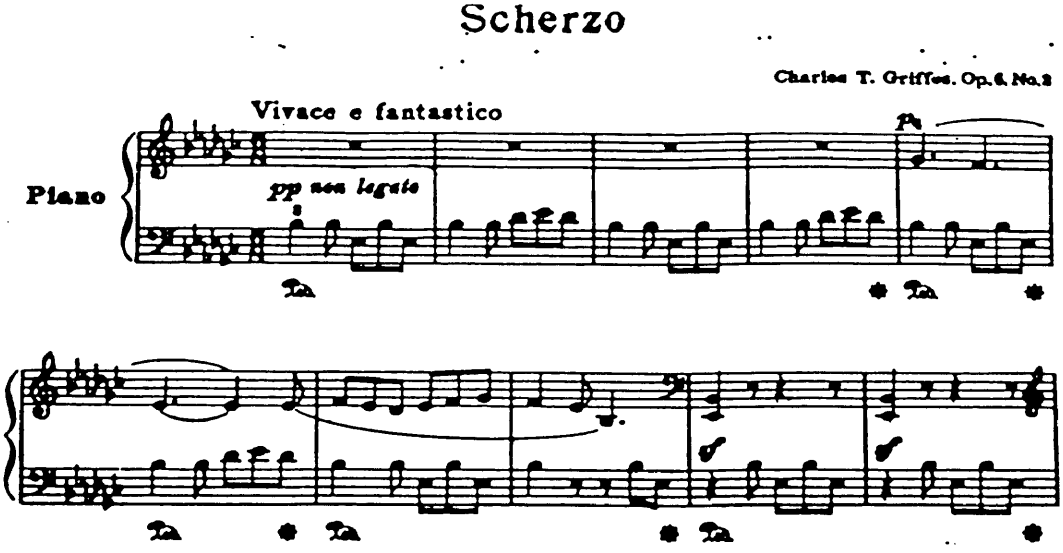
After a five year period in which no works by Griffes were published, Schirmer finally accepted his first piano pieces. The first performance was by George Clifford Vieh in Elmira, January, 1916. They were well received by pianists (Anderson 206). Walter Kramer reviewed the piano pieces favorably in Musical America, which was

an important major review for Griffes. Kramer stated, concerning the Fantasy Pieces, "The pieces are not obvious; they are subtle and there will always be plenty of opposition to the utterance of a man who refuses to follow beaten paths...This composer is a modern...He has no desire to write fluent, pretty pieces. And I know few native creative musicians who can compare with him for proficiency in doing so"(Anderson 207).

Schirmer's 1915 edition of the "Scherzo" includes the Griffes prose sentences. The 1943 edition does not. The one existing autograph manuscript does not include any poem either (Anderson 253). The manuscripts were accepted for publication. Griffes later arranged the "Scherzo" for orchestra with the title, Bacchanale (1919)

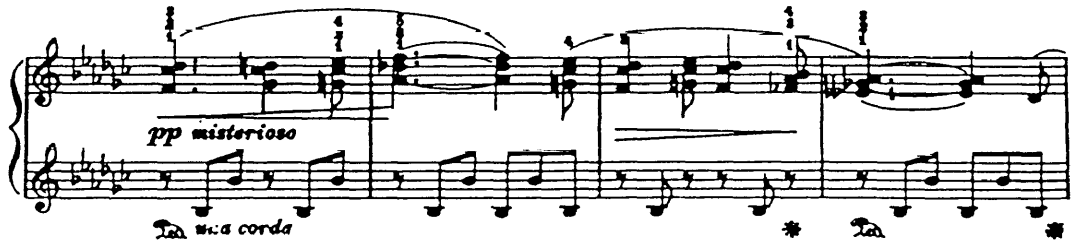
The Griffes "Scherzo" is a wild, virtuoso dance, propelled forward by concise, infectious rhythms." (Maisel 207). It contains many contrasting moods.

It begins with a wild left-hand pattern (Vivace e fantastico):



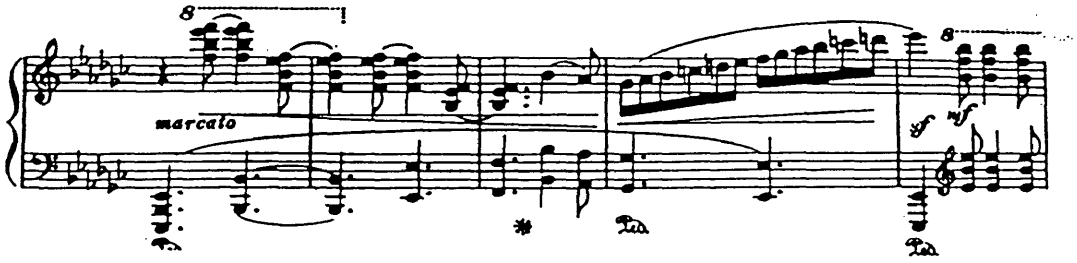
i. measures 1-10

and moves to a pianissimo misterioso section:



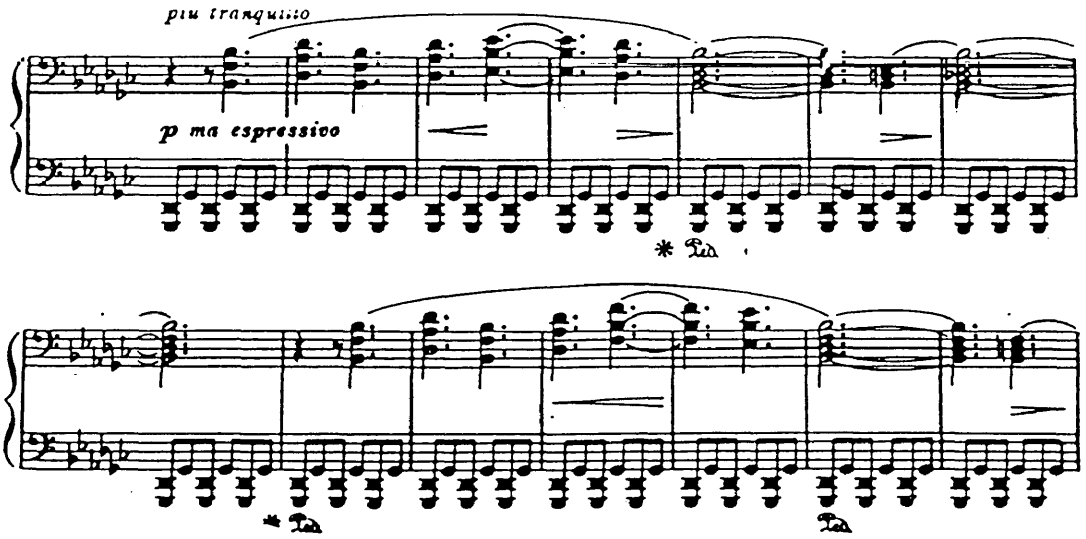
j. measures 61-64

then builds to a faster fortissimo, marcato section:



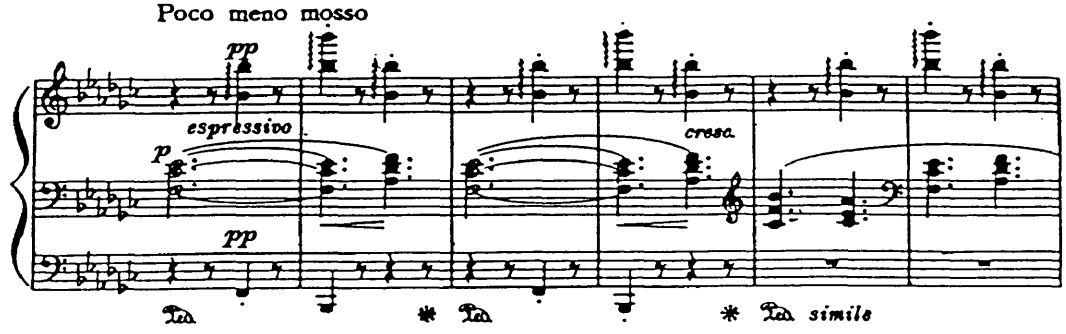
k. measures 94-98

This then changes to piu tranquillo ma espressivo:



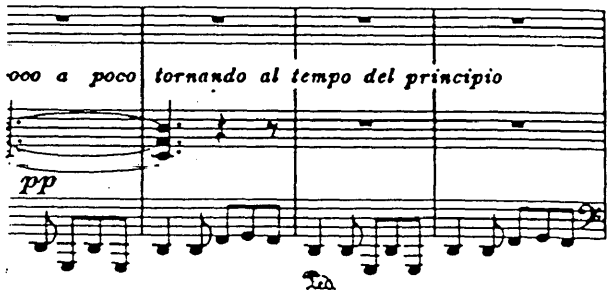
l. measures 112-125

then a slower subdued pianissimo:



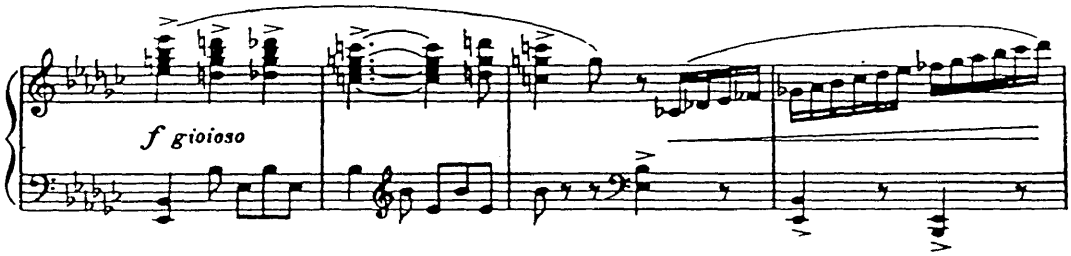
m. measures 160-165

followed by a repeat of the first section beginning softly:



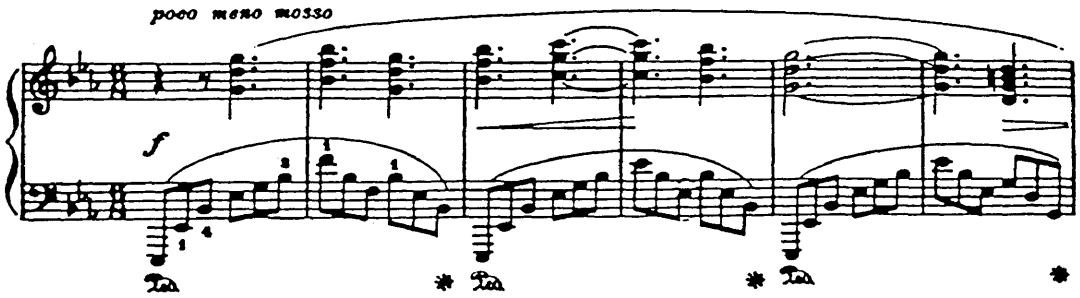
n. measures 204-207

and again building to the original wild tempo and mood.



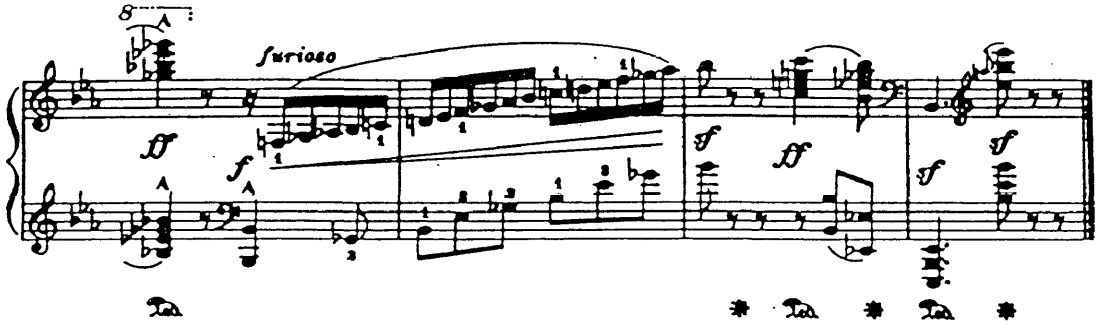
o. measures 236-239

It dies down again right before the ending:



p. measures 260-265

The ending reminds one of each section visited and then ends in a fury.



q. measures 297-300

The "Scherzo" is filled with rhythmic vitality. It is also moody and filled with coloristic variety. Griffes had a gift for melody. One hears unfamiliar tonalities and dissonances for this time in compositional history. Stylistically he was experimental.

5.

Conclusion

Griffes spent his life in a search of a musical language that was uniquely his. Griffes was a self-made artist (Anderson 39). He was not exclusively shaped by any one person or any one musical style. He was inspired by all of the other periods and styles, but never allowed himself to be dominated by any of them. Griffes said, "influence creates nothing: it awakens. An influence is like a divining rod that allows us to discover our inner wealth" (Anderson 40).

Chapter III

FRANZ LISZT

CONCERT ETUDE IN Db "UN SOSPIRO" "CONSOLATION" NO. III

1.

Life

Franz Liszt was born in Raiding, near Sopron, Hungary in October of 1811. He was known as an Hungarian pianist, composer, and teacher. Franz Liszt's father was Adam Liszt. He was an official who worked for Prince Nikolaus Esterhazy and was considered a talented amateur cello player in the court orchestra. His mother was Anna Laager of south German origin. His ancestors were peasants but he knew little of them. His family was thought to believe, however, that they were descendants of nobility (Grove 29).

Adam early recognized his son's unusual talent and began giving him lessons at the age of seven. During Franz's eighth year he began composing and played in a public concert. At the age of nine he performed concerts at Sopron and Poszony, Hungary, after which he was offered a sum of money by local magnates to provide for his musical education.

At the age of 11, Franz and his family moved to Vienna. Franz began studying

piano with Czerny and composition with the famous Salieri. In 1822, at the age of 12, he gave his first public concert in Vienna after which was acclaimed a huge success. His reputation and career escalated. In 1823, at the age of 13, his family moved to Paris where Liszt was very successful in Parisian society. That spring they moved to London and he first played on the New Grand Piano Forte, invented by Sebastien Erard. The next year, at age 14, he toured France and then back to London where he played for King George IV. At the age of 15 and 16, 1825-1826, Liszt's compositional ability rapidly developed and this was the beginning of his compositional career. In 1827, age 17, Liszt had been consistently touring. It affected his health. It was at this point Liszt first had serious thoughts that he had a vocation to the religious life. This was, however, set aside and he went to better his health, in Bologna, France. His father, who was seriously ill, accompanied him to France and soon died of typhoid. Liszt returned to his mother in Paris, gave up touring, and began piano teaching.

In the early 1830s, Lisz fell in love with Countess Marie D'agoult, who was already married. In 1835, the Countess left her husband to join Liszt. They had two daughters and one son. Due to religious beliefs, they never married. It was during this time with the Countess that Liszt published some essays in the Paris Revue et Gazette Musicale. "It is probable that most of the articles published under his name during this period were actually the work of the countess" (Grove). Nevertheless, in these articles he is said to have argued for the "raising of the status of the artist,"

which up to this time had been that of a kind of 'superior servant" to a respected member of the community. Liszt's influence along this line expanded all over Europe. For the next eight years he toured extensively and eventually separated from the Countess in 1844. After separating with the Countess, Liszt experienced his most brilliant period as a concert pianist (Grove). He continued to compose and embarked on an extremely successful tour of the whole of Europe. To his fame as pianist, conductor, and composer were added the honors showered upon him all over Europe and the glamour of several well-publicized love affairs with ladies of high position. At this time he is known to have had several mistresses.

In 1847 Liszt performed in Kiev where he met Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein. She was to dominate most of the rest of his life. Carolyne was married, but left her husband. Carolyne, in 1848, requested a grant for her divorce from her previous husband but was denied. At this, she persuaded Liszt to stop performing and concentrate on composition. His work in composition then dominated his efforts. For the next twelve years he had ample time to compose and wrote most his well-known works.

In 1842 Liszt was appointed Grand Ducal Director of Music Extraordinary at Weimar. He took up his position at Weimar as his full time job in 1848 and moved there. The citizens of Weimar objected to he and Caroline living together and not being married. Liszt's younger daughter had an affair with Wagner and bore him two illegitimate children. He also aligned himself with his friend Beethoven politically

which was unpopular. He composed a number of stage works, including Tannhauser, Lohengrin, Schumann's Genova, and incidental music to Manfred, Berlioz's Benvenuto Cellini, and operas by Verdi and Donizetti. He also directed many of his own compositions and attracted many famous pupils. Liszt was so innovative that his compositions were highly criticized, especially by the more traditional musicians. Weimar became the Mecca of the avant-garde movement in Germany, "known as the 'New German school' or the 'futurists'" (Grove). Eventually, in 1858, he resigned his position. As a result of his time in Weimar, Franz Liszt arose as the virtuoso overriding all of his contemporaries in significance (Kirby 312).

In 1861, Liszt left Weimar and traveled to Berlin and Paris. In October, the year of his 50th birthday, the Pope revoked the sanction of Carolyne's divorce to her previous husband. At this time he and Carolyne occupied separate residences.

For the next eight years Liszt lived mainly in Rome and wrote mostly religious music. In 1865, Liszt took four minor orders of the Catholic Church, but never became a priest. In 1869, Liszt was invited back to Weimar to teach, and the same in Budapest. In 1886, Liszt, age 75 set out on his last tour. It was on this tour that he became very weak and the doctor diagnosed him with dropsy. On July 31 of that year his illness developed into pneumonia, and he died.

2.

Influences

Included in the influences were his mother and father and his Hungarian heritage. The Hungarian influence is exemplified not only in his compositions based on or inspired by national melodies, but also in his fiery, dynamic, and impulsive personality. Adam, Liszt's father, exerted a considerable influence on his life. Adam had been in the Franciscan religious order at the age of 19, but had been dismissed. During his youth Liszt developed strong religious convictions as a result. At six years of age, Liszt listened intently to his father play the piano and showed, even then, an interest in music of the gypsies, and sacred music. These two interests, Hungarian cultural, folk, and gypsy music plus religious convictions stayed with him throughout his life and is to have influenced most of his works: the Hungarian Rhapsodies, Apparitions, Harmonies Poetiques et Religieuses, Legendes, Elegies, etc. to name a fragment. In 1830, at the age of twenty he was inspired by the 1830 Revolution to compose The Revolutionary Symphony. When his father died he lost interest in life, but the composition of this Symphony inspired him to have more interest in life.

At this point, he met Berlioz. Berlioz and his music made a strong impression on him and spurred him on. He is thought to have inherited from Berlioz the "diabolic quality" of many of his works (Grove).

Chopin entered Liszt's life at this time and a friendship was formed which affected him deeply. "At this time his style was actually based on Chopin's"(Grout,

Palisca 690). During the anxious days, in 1851, when Princess Carolyne was convalescing, Liszt was much interested and involved in the life of Chopin. This was the period that he and Carolyne were working on the text of the biography of Chopin by Liszt. "It was an almost unprecedented tribute from one major composer to another" (Walker 147).

In 1831, when Liszt was in Paris, it is noteworthy to mention another powerful influence. One of the greatest artists of nineteenth-century music was the Italian violinist Niccolo Paganini (1782-1840). Liszt heard Paganini play and was awed by the violinist's technical ability. He was inspired to transfer Paganini's fantastic virtuoso effects to the piano. Liszt's Transcendental Studies are generally regarded as his equivalent to Paganini's brilliant and unprecedented displays on the violin. Eventually there were three versions. The first version of these Etudes was composed in 1826, Etude Pour le Piano en Douze Exercices. In 1839 Liszt published a version titled Grandes Etudes. Liszt found particular inspiration in Paganini's celebrated Caprices published in 1820. This is especially noticeable in Liszt's Six Etudes D'execution Transcendante D'apres Paganini (1838-39). These six were transcriptions of Paganini Caprices. Each time he revised them they became more and more difficult. He revised these studies in 1851 because he wanted to title ten of these studies and to modify some extremely difficult passages that, he feared, rendered the studies unplayable (Perenyi 58). The final form of the studies was largely achieved when Liszt's fame as a virtuoso pianist was at it's height. Liszt

deliberately followed the practice of Paganini, who would excite the audience to the suggestion that he was in possession of demonic powers. The use of a black costume was of great value in giving this effect, along with exaggerated postures, elaborate gestures, and other grand mannerisms. Liszt and Paganini are both known to have "pushed the technique of the instrument to its furthest limits both in his own playing and in his compositions" (Grout, Palisca 691).

Also included in his influences were his background of early Viennese training and the heavy influence of the literary Romanticism of Paris at this time. An important part of the aesthetic thinking of the time had to do with art work as the individual unique expression of the soul of the composer or performer, or as the expression of one's individual emotions. The view of art that arose in the eighteenth century was: "if the realm of art is taken as supersensible or even divine, then the artist becomes a person set off from other men as one who has insights that they lack, as one in intimate contact with a higher realm of which they know nothing" (Kirby, 300). In Liszt's case, the connection between music and poetry and nature ("Un Sospiro") was uppermost. As he put it, "the renewal of music is through its inner connection with poetry" (Kirby 311). Or, as he said it himself in the preface to his early collection, the Album d'un Voyage, he was working with a "rarefied art form, not for the many but for the few, in which the attempt is made to put into music the impressions of nature upon his soul" (Kirby 311). Or, the soul is deeply influenced by one's connection with nature. There was a power attributed to music;

that of being able to "express the unspeakable, to express the subtlest and most powerful emotions of the human soul more directly than any other artistic medium"(Kirby 230). Liszt had a great deal to do with the extension of this thinking. To Liszt, composition was something instinctive and natural. Liszt is even noted to compare composition with childbirth (Kirby 276).

There was a preoccupation during this period with piano virtuosity. In the Romantic period, the arts and artist were highly prominent. In fact, the artist or composer, poet, etc., were considered to be set apart from other men as "supermen," demonic, or even divine; to have insights that ordinary men lacked. In particular, the performer of music would be easily led to extravagant shows of virtuosity. Out of the Romantic ideals Liszt emerged triumphantly. Liszt's virtuosity was considered awe inspiring, even supernatural or demonic. Virtuosity was exploited by Liszt and most other performers to make a "hit" with the audience.

3.

Style

Many diverse factors entered into the formation of Liszt's style. Liszt, in his performing style, and technic and compositional techniques is looked upon as an important precursor to the 20th century ideas and methods of composition. Liszt invented lots of firsts, but among them was his style of composing for the piano and

the way he performed at the piano. For example, Liszt was the first to give a solo concert by himself. He did so in London in 1840 (Stolba 699). This established the term "recital" in it's modern meaning. Liszt explored the capabilities of the rapidly developing new instrument in new fashions: new tone colors, new chromatic harmonies, and new use for the crescendo. "He sought to capture in his music an almost satanic energy, a strange, gloomy, dreamlike moodiness" (Alberti 195). He used rapid and coloristic changes of register, use of full chords, wide leaps, octave passages in all ranges, arpeggio-vibrato figurations, arpeggios of the full keyboard, scales in thirds and sixths, diatonic and chromatic chords, elaborate cadenzas and recitative-like passages, with melodies in the middle.

Liszt was innovative in his composition methods. In some of these later works Liszt experimented with harmonies that were forerunners of the twentieth century developments. He was one of the first ones to use augmented triads. Even during the twelve years he was living in Weimar and conducting the Weimar orchestra, he was not only widely productive but also compositionally innovational.

Along with his innovations in composition came the development of a musical form called the "character piece." The character piece was closely bound up with the Romantic ideal of the art work as the subjective emotional expression of it's composer and that such a view gave rise to an elevation of the importance of inspiration as the source of all art; "the extent to which this quality can be captured by thc artist is thc measure of the quality of his compositions" (Kirby 275). Liszt wrote many character

pieces. They were usually shorter compositions, written in a simple ABA form, in which the B section sharply contrasts the other two.

Music, then, during this time became associated with expressing or characterizing extra musical ideas. The Romantics, but Liszt in particular, wished to give expression to extra musical subject matter. Pieces of this type were given a "programmatic" or a title indicative of what emotion they were to express. A composer or performer was rated on his ability to do this. Almost everything that Liszt composed has an explicit programmatic title (Etude in Db, "Un Sospiro" - the spring, and the six Consolations). In his composition of character pieces Liszt found poetry, emotions, and his character and personality from which to draw inspiration.

It was during his stay at Weimar that he became interested in large-scale orchestral works. He was not, however, interested in the conventional form of the Classical period with its carefully worked out sonata form and its noticeable separation of movements. Liszt and his contemporaries, like Berlioz, were already looking to break with the past and to create a modern music with a much freer form. They were trying to compose music that they called, Zukunftsmusik, "Music of the Future"(Grove).

One of the directions that Liszt took toward the future was the inventing of the symphonic poem and tone poem. The symphonic poem was an orchestral work, generally shorter than a symphony, played without separation of movements, without interruption, with a minimum of unifying material. The composer was free of a

pre-set form. He called them poems because he conceived of these works"Liszt's exploration of the piano composition led him to create innovative pianistic effects that reinforce the pastoral image: frequently the melody is surrounded by widely spaced pedal points, suggesting an openness that we associate with nature" (Todd 386). Chopin's influence can be felt" (Todd 386).

Once again, Chopin's romantic and poetic style of composing and performing is said to have highly influenced Liszt's style. Liszt became engrossed in musical forms used exclusively by Chopin: the polonaise, the mazurka, the verceuse, and the ballade. While Chopin was alive, Liszt never touched these forms(Walker 147). But when Chopin died in 1849 he felt free to incorporate some of Chopin's leading characteristics into his own works, at least temporarily. He is said to have used Chopin's "later repertoire of pianistic effect-adding new ones of is worn-as well as his lyrical melodic qualities, his manner of rubato playing, and his harmonic innovations, which Liszt further extended" (Grout, Palisca 691). These influences can be readily heard in the two Liszt compositions important to this paper: Un Sospiro and the third of the six Consolations.

4.

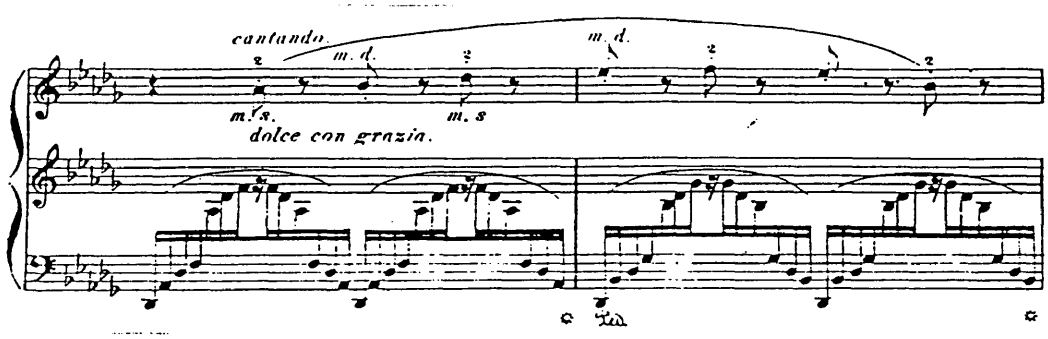
Concert Etude in Db Major, "Un Sospiro"

A final completed set of twelve Etudes D'execution Transcendante (Transcendental Studies) published in 1852 show clearly Liszt's command of brilliant, technical writing for the piano. The most difficult elements of his piano technique are contained in these etudes. It was his deliberate intention to call them "transcendental" because they were more difficult than any other studies of the time (Kirby 304). Structurally, these etudes are divided into sections and in a basic ternary plan. But within the ternary plan is the extensive use of thematic alteration. For example, the middle section often uses the same thematic material as the first and last parts. Liszt grouped his studies in pairs of major and relative minor keys. As a whole the studies are much more than a technical display. The Transcendental Etudes use a style typical of Liszt which consists of a melody that has cantabile elements in it moving slowly and steadily while accompanied by extremely rapid virtuoso figurations (Kirby 304). When Robert Schumann heard the 1839 version, he commented: "The new version provides a criterion for the artist's present more intense way of thinking and feeling; indeed it affords us a glimpse into his secret intellectual life" (Todd 385). The studies show clearly how Liszt incorporated poetic ideas into his conception of the etude. They offered intensely emotional passages, some lyrical, some grandiose, some ominous. "The melodics of somc with their graceful turns, contribute to a dreamlike, contemplative mood. The influence of

nature is also felt" (Todd 385).

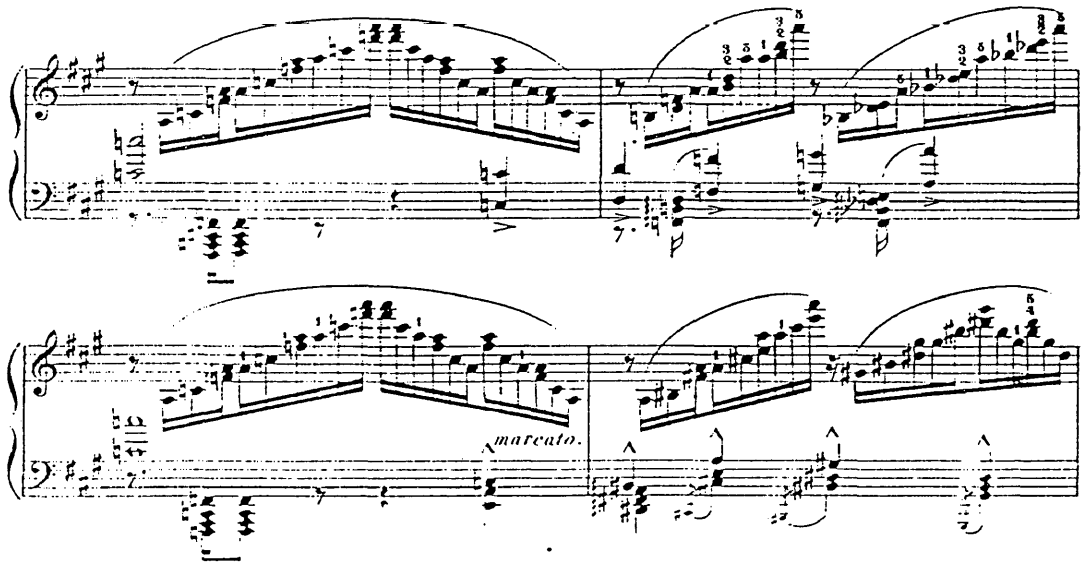
It was in 1848, that Liszt composed his three concert studies, Trois Etudes de Concert published in 1849 as Trois Caprices Poetiques with titles: "A Capriccio in A flat," 'Il Lamento,' "A Capriccio in F," 'Le Leggierezza,' and "Allegro Affetuoso in D flat," 'Un Sospiro.' These are three of the six transcribed from Paganini's caprices for solo violin, published in final shape in 1851. The first two etudes exhibit Chopin's influence (Searle 56). This set of studies, includes one first written as an exercise for the piano method of Fetis and Moscheles, and two for the method books of Lebert and Stark. It becomes confusing, as Liszt had a habit of reworking the same piece and including different versions in various collections, sometimes keeping the title and sometimes using a new one.

In "Un Sospiro" there is a series of variations on a melody. It is a study in cantabile playing with a short phrase in even notes repeated with many ornamental variations. Successively different moods are established:



r. measures 3-4

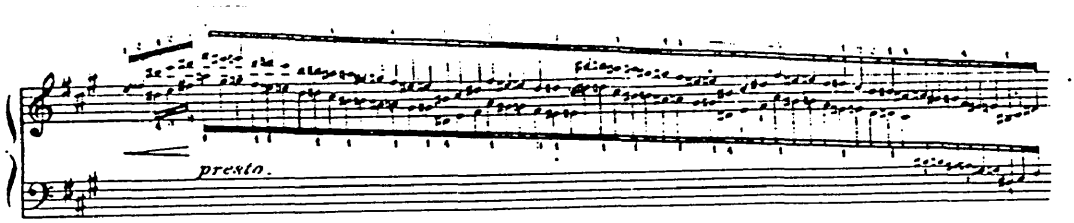
A typical texture is that of widely spaced chords in both hands sounding the foreground melody and harmonic progression, which are sustained by the pedal,while both hands fill in the middle range with passing chromatic progressions:



s. meausres 31-34

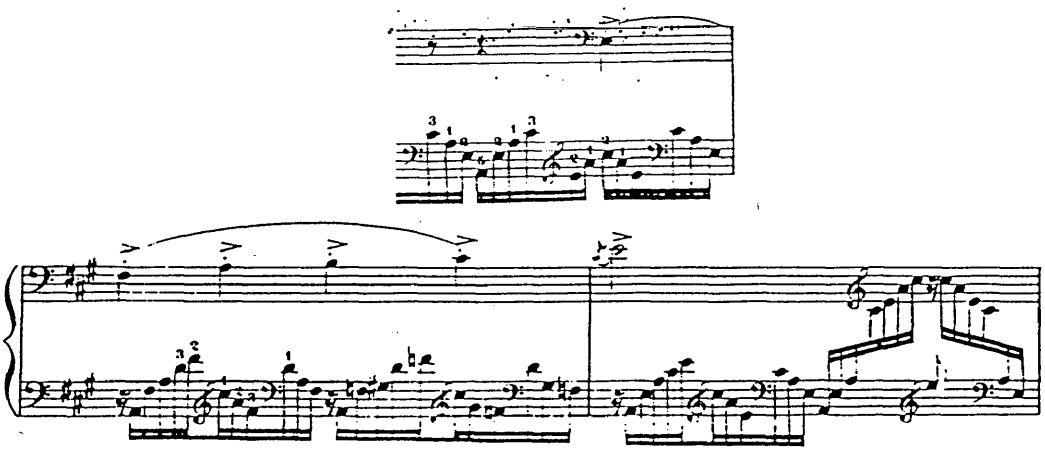
Another texture is that of sixths in both hands spaced in parallel motion:

This passage is in the style of a cadenza borrowed by Liszt from the concerto style.



t. measure 36

A third device demands that the player reach for the melody over arpegiated chords:



u. measures 22-24

5.

Consolation, No. III

As has been stated, throughout Liszt's piano compositions, programmatic ideas taken from human experience do occur. One theme that dominates is man's reflections on spiritual existence, in both this life and the after life. It involves man's search for spiritual consolation, especially through religion. This theme is especially evident in the major piano cycles that Liszt wrote between 1837 and 1885. beginning with the Annees de Pelerinage: books 1, 2, and 3. They are Annees de Pelerinage (the first two composed before 1850 and the third in 1867-77), a set of six Consolations composed in 1840 and published in 1850), and Harmonies Poetiques

et Religieuses (1852).

In books 1 and 2, many of the pieces are variation structures. However, musically pleasing and effective these pieces are, their use of procedures for variations seems to be independent of any musical purpose. They seem almost improvisational and are filled with lyricism. They each have one basic theme or motive. The variations contrasted texture and harmony and were tranquil or sad. They revealed a thoughtful Liszt expressing his innermost feelings. Liszt's most expressive use of the variation procedure is shown when he integrates it with a more complex structure, such as the Dante Sonata. This, then showing the romantic's need for "isolated reflective moments" (Todd 357).

This need for isolated reflective moments, as has been stated, is shown in a cycle of a smaller compositions called his Consolations. The six pieces in this set were evidently grouped under the general title Consolations from an 1830 collection of poems entitled Consolations by the great critic Sainte-Beuve that expresses "themes of hope as yet unfulfilled" (Todd 365). They are six, short, charming, and original pieces; lyrical miniatures that stand apart from Liszt's other piano music. "Each piece is derived from one basic theme or motive; whatever contrasts occur they are generally contrasts in the texture or harmony" (Todd 365). The set is tied together by certain tonal emphases and common melodic movements or gestures. Although a common sense of lyricism pervades all the Consolations, Liszt saw that thcy had distinctive characteristics. Nos. I and IV share a contemplative and prayer like

feeling. No. III is a nocturne evidently based on Chopin's Op. 27 No. II, also in the key of DbM. No. V has a character similar to one of Schubert's impromptus (Todd 365). The third, in Db is widely known and is perhaps the most beautiful. In the midst of many distractions in Liszt's life he still found time to compose his Consolations which he said helped to restore his tranquillity.

The Consolations had a reflective, self-communing character which revealed a very thoughtful Liszt: "This is music tinged with a secret sorrow" (Walker 145). The uniqueness of Liszt's music, shown clearly in the Consolations, lies in its ability to convey not the surface of human experiences, but rather in it's innermost essence, spiritual and emotional. The Consolations help to eradicate the idea, the all-too-common impression, of Liszt as a bravura, fiery, composer and performer. It is widely held that these pieces found germination in the tragedy of his impossible marriage to Carolyne. The third Consolation in DbM has rightly earned a place for itself in the permanent repertory (Walker 145). Many have noticed tat this Consolation bears a strong resemblance to certain Chopin works (Walker 145). The variety of Liszt's compositions, is shown in many of his separately published short piano pieces and in these collections of his tone pictures.

6.

Conclusion

There is a duality about Liszt. On one hand his religious influence and on the other his romantic temperament. He was in his performances thought to be demonic, while all the while being very religious very much the romantic in every way. One might say he was a mass of contradictions. His triple character as gypsy, Franciscan, and original creator was symbolized by his travels between Budapest, Rome and Weimar in the last years of his life. Liszt's essential qualities of personality were his "romantic abstraction and other-worldliness, combined with elegant, worldly manners, a diabolism, and a feeling of magic" (Grove). But he nevertheless remained "a unique and comprehensive personality with a strength of vision that lasted all his life. With his intellectual restlessness, he could also be a purist" (Grove).

Liszt was a very generous man. He was a selfless friend to other artists. He helped countless composers and performers. He was not always well off, but he helped them financially and artistically. He never took payment for his teaching. At the last of his career, his concerts were mostly performed for charity. He continued to give praise to former friends who had drawn apart from him. He suggested that his later more experimental works would not be published so as not to annoy the public. Franz Liszt "overrode all his contemporaries in significance in virtuosity and was the most outspokenly Romantic genres of music composition" (Kirby 301).

CONCLUSION

The wealth of knowledge to be had about great composers, their lives, characters, works, styles; the periods of history in which they live, serves, not only to aid us in the performance and study of their works, but also serves to inspire us as creative artists.

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