Interpreting Liszt’s Piano Compositions Through Orchestral Colours

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts
Graduate Department of Faculty of Music
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Abstract

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The piano compositions of Franz Liszt are often viewed as a body of work that allows pianists to demonstrate their virtuosity at the keyboard. What is often neglected is that in addition to this element of virtuosity, his piano compositions also require one to listen in an orchestral way. This dissertation explores how Liszt utilized specific compositional techniques to create orchestral sonorities and colours, especially in the piano works of the Weimar period. The first chapter introduces Liszt as a pianist, a conductor and a composer. Chapter two reviews various treatises on orchestration written during and since Liszt’s time. This discussion considers the different timbres and playing techniques associated with each orchestral instrument. The third chapter focuses on Liszt’s transcriptions of his own work, Mazeppa, and Wagner’s Overture to Tannhäuser as well as Liszt’s concert paraphrase on Verdi’s Rigoletto. Through these short analyses, I indicate how Liszt translates the orchestral idioms onto the keyboard. Based on the observations from chapter three, the following two chapters take up two of Liszt’s piano works: Ballade No.2 in B minor and Rhapsodie Espagnole. Within these two detailed analyses, I provide possible technical and interpretive solutions on the keyboard through the imagination, understanding and hearing of orchestral colours. The concluding chapter discusses the changes of performance practice since the nineteenth century and encourages experimenting with various possibilities of orchestral colours at the
piano to create more individual interpretations. Having studied and performed many of Liszt’s piano works, I have come to realize the importance of understanding the music from an orchestral approach, and I aim to share this in the dissertation.
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Chapter 1

Liszt in Weimar: A pianist, a conductor and a composer

When Franz Liszt relocated to Weimar in 1848, he had decided to devote his time primarily to composing, instead of performing. Although the true reason behind his decision to abandon his career as a professional pianist may be unclear, in a letter to his friend Adolphe Pictet, he stated that he will not “abandon the study and development of the piano until [he has] accomplished everything possible with it” (Hamilton, 3). The letter was written and published in the Gazette Musicale on February 11, 1848. Moreover, upon the completion of his B Minor Sonata and the first two sets of Années de pèlerinage, he wrote another letter in mid-1854, stating that he was finally ready to move onto orchestral composition. These statements may suggest that he was satisfied with his development as a pianist, and was ready to seek further challenges in other musical fields. In addition to being a dedicated composer during his years in Weimar, Liszt also conducted frequently. Nevertheless, his role as a conductor is often neglected, possibly because people have “never been able to accept that a person may do more than one thing supremely well” (Walker, Weimar, 296). Seeing this significant change, it is worthwhile to explore Liszt's piano compositions before and after his involvement in conducting. Did his compositional style change in order to produce various orchestral colours? Were there more details in regards to voicing? In addition to studying both his piano and orchestral works, evidence of Liszt's newly developed
musical ideas and influence may be even more apparent after understanding how he evolved from being a pianist, to a conductor and composer.

**Liszt as a Pianist**

As a pianist, since "the age of twenty-six, [Liszt's] fame was universal and unchallenged" (Hedley, 22). The foundation of his amazing facility at the piano was developed at an early stage, when he studied with Carl Czerny for fourteen months, who taught Liszt to always *think* about his playing. Czerny was the teacher who also made him understand that the importance of practice is to establish and develop new mental and muscular controls at the piano. By understanding the essence of developing technique, "his fingers became and stayed obedient to his slightest volition" (Hedley, 24). Henry Chorley, an Englishman in Paris in 1837, described Liszt's superiority at the piano:

In uniform richness and sweetness of tone he may have been surpassed. His manner of treating the piano—his total indifference to wood and wire in his search for effect, could hardly fail to preclude uniform care and finish. But his varieties of tone are remarkable; and as far as I have gone, unsurpassed. He can make the strings whisper with an aerial delicacy or utter voices as clear and as tiny as the very finest harp notes. Sometimes the thing becomes a trumpet and a sound is extracted from the unwilling strings as piercing and nasal as the tone of a clarion (Hedley, 25).

Many pianists during the 1830s in Paris were acknowledged as virtuosi. Everyone wanted to win the hearts of the Parisians; each had a different style and almost all had a specialty in piano technique. These pianists included Ignaz Moscheles, the bravura artist of the classical tradition, Henri Herz with rapid finger work and Adolf
von Henselt who stretched an easy twelfth in both hands. A typical virtuoso of that period was Felix Dreyshock, who specialized in octaves. He was famous for playing the left hand part of Chopin's “Revolutionary” etude in octaves. Heinrich Heine, a great admirer of Dreyshock, once wrote to Liszt, "Go hang yourself, Franz Liszt! You are but an ordinary god in comparison with this god of thunder" (Wilkinson, 49). However, Chorley retorted that Liszt was "the real diamond among much that is paste—the real instrumentalist among many charlatans" (Wilkinson, 49).

Some of Liszt’s great contemporaries had also made various judgments on Liszt’s playing. Chopin noted to a friend: “I write to you without knowing what my pen is scribbling, because at this moment Liszt is playing my etudes and transporting me out of my respectable thoughts. I should like to steal from him the way to play my own etudes” (Wilkinson, 54). It must be one’s highest praise to admit that another musician portrays his own composition better than the composer himself. Moreover, it is harder for pianists to have an immediate connection with the instrument itself, compared to string or woodwind players. String players’ fingers can express the feelings directly on the strings through means of vibrato. Woodwind players can use their own breath in different ways to produce the desired intensity within the music. Pianists only have access to hard and cold wooden keys that vibrate the strings through the action of hitting, and not caressing. Nonetheless, Felix Mendelssohn had a great respect for Liszt’s musicality for he “[had] not seen any musician in whom musical feeling ran, as in Liszt, into the very tips of the fingers and there streamed out immediately” (Wilkinson,
Clearly, this percussive instrument did not prevent Liszt from sharing his musical feelings wholeheartedly.

However, despite all of the admiration from his contemporaries, Ferdinand Hiller, German composer and conductor, expressed that Liszt “played things best the first time, because [the music] gave him enough to do” (Wilkinson, 55). The reason behind this statement was because Liszt constantly embellished other people’s music. Joseph Joachim had the opportunity to play with Liszt in a chamber setting. However, he noted that “at the second or third performance, Liszt could not refrain from playing quite simple passages in octaves or thirds, converting ordinary trills into sixths, and indulging in fiddle-faddle of this kind even in such a work as the ‘Kreutzer’ Sonata of Beethoven” (Wilkinson, 56). Moreover, although we may have seen Chopin’s praise of his etudes earlier, he also confronted Liszt by saying: “If you cannot play the music as it is written, it would be better that you did not play it at all” (Wilkinson, 56). It is also very interesting to see the contrast of Mendelssohn’s praise and his criticism towards Liszt. As discussed earlier, he thought extremely highly of Liszt’s musicality. Conversely, when asked about his inclination of adding personal embellishments to others’ music, Mendelssohn did not think twice to state that he “could have listened to many a middling pianist with more pleasure” for Liszt’s performances of Beethoven, Bach and Handel had many “lamentable misdemeanors” (Wilkinson, 56).

Despite the mixed reviews from critics, pupils and contemporaries, the true musician within him “emerged after he had forsaken the public stage [and] the Liszt who played in private was the real man” (Wilkinson, 60). During the earlier years, he
had felt the necessity of competing with other pianists and demanding the audiences’ attention. It was hard for Liszt not to strive to become an actor, or someone who would be widely recognized and appreciated by the general public. However, deep down, it wasn’t the showmanship that was most important to him, but the musicianship. Liszt once wrote: “You see my piano is for me what his frigate is to a sailor, or his horse to an Arab – more indeed: it is my very self, my mother tongue, my life. Within its seven octaves it encloses the whole range of an orchestra, and a man’s ten fingers have the power to reproduce the harmonies which are created by hundreds of performers” (Wilkinson, 43).

One of the first accounts of his ability to bring orchestral colours to the piano was his astonishing performance of Hector Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique*. Sir Charles Hallé, who lived in Paris, was in the audience during that performance, and gave the following account:

> At an orchestral concert given by [Liszt] and conducted by Berlioz, the Marche au Supplice from the latter’s *Symphonie Fantastique*, that most gorgeously instrumented piece, was performed, at the conclusion of which Liszt sat down and played his own arrangement, for the piano alone, of the same movement, with an effect even surpassing that of the full orchestra, and creating an indescribable furore. The feat had been duly announced in the programme beforehand, a proof of his indomitable courage (Walker, “Liszt’s Musical Background”, 43).

The recital in Elisabetgrad, in September 1847, was when Liszt, at the age of thirty-five, announced his intention of retiring from the concert platform. Since then, he never played in public again for personal monetary earnings. Although we may never know the true reason behind his decision in abandoning his concert career at its height, “he kept the legend of his playing untarnished” (Walker, *Virtuoso*, 442).
**Liszt as a Conductor**

Liszt relocated to Weimar in February 1848, to take over the *Kapellmeister*’s baton. The stability of life in Weimar and the orchestra available to him also allowed him to devote more time to composition. His Weimar years became the period in his life when he wrote his greatest piano and orchestral works. Moreover, not only did this appointment provide a stable income, Liszt held private rehearsals to test out his symphonic poems. These experimental sessions “were held to test new effects [and] sectional rehearsals were called to master them” (Walker, *Weimar*, 270).

Liszt, without doubt, became “the first of [a] new race of great conductors, [where] he set new standards of discipline and performance and laid the foundation of the modern orchestra as we think of it today” (Wilkinson, 87). He believed that orchestras could create unlimited possibilities of colour, incomparable to any single instrument, including the piano. Thus, he saw conducting as one of the most significant interpretative arts of the future for he was able to produce new colours that he could not fully create with only one instrument. It is possible to comprehend Liszt’s brilliance as a conductor by evoking a phrase once said by Lina Ramann, an early Liszt biographer: “Liszt, at the head of an orchestra, is the continuation of Liszt at the piano” (Friedheim, 109). Eduard Genast, a German composer, made a notable remark in 1844, after his first observation of Liszt as a conductor: “No mere metronome stood on the conductor’s podium, but a leader full of fire and energy, who knew how to discover all the musical refinements and display them effectively” (Walker, *Weimar*, 276). A decade later, Richard Pohl, German music critic, echoed as such: “When he conducts Beethoven,
Berlioz, and Wagner, he is the composer himself; he enters completely into the world of ideas of those spirits who are kindred to him. He plays on the orchestra as he plays on the piano” (Walker, *Weimar*, 276).

Instead of merely providing beats for the players, Liszt was interested in musical interpretation, nuance, phrasing, shading of colours, balance of the parts, and most importantly, the use of rubato. This approach was revolutionary at this time; he treated the orchestra as if it were a solo instrument, compliant to every impulse of his. In order to convey these new conducting techniques to the orchestra, Liszt even developed physical gestures to outwardly demonstrate his ideas to the players. He would involve his entire body in conducting, rather than his arms. Sometimes he would abandon the baton and conduct with his hand for he felt this would bring out more expression from each player. He would “shush the musicians, forefinger to lips, if they played too loud, or growl threateningly if they played too soft” (Walker, *Weimar*, 278). In short, every inflection of the music would be reflected in his facial expressions. Nonetheless, with such a unique conducting style on the podium, he was criticized as a conductor without technique. However, Liszt believed that “technique should create itself out of spirit, not out of mechanics” (Walker, *Weimar*, 278). Interestingly, Liszt never called himself a conductor, but a “musician-in-chief.”

In his conducting, Liszt was always sensitive to sound and acoustics. He would even alter his interpretation depending on the instruments’ reverberations within the particular concert hall. As Alan Walker has put it, “no two Liszt performances were ever
the same [and] the only predictable thing about him was his unpredictability” (Walker, Weimar, 278).

Although not as widely recognized, Liszt’s achievements as a conductor are indisputably impressive. Not only did he conduct his own works, he continuously promoted works of his colleagues. Liszt believed strongly in bringing new music to the audience. He once wrote: “There is without doubt nothing better than to respect, admire, and study the illustrious dead; but why not also sometimes live with the living?” (Liszt, 199) He gave concerts that featured symphonies written by his contemporaries, such as Schumann, Mendelssohn and Berlioz. In addition, in the opera house, he produced works by Schumann, Verdi, and one of his closest companions, his son-in-law Wagner. Despite the admirable intentions of supporting new music, Liszt made it difficult for his contemporaries to impartially judge the musical results for they were still tackling the difficulties of the works themselves. Furthermore, sometimes the works were so new that the manuscripts were filled with corrections and players could hardly decipher what was on the page. Not only did they need to make out the handwritten notes, the players had to all somehow incorporate the use of rubato, the way Liszt had demanded.

Liszt and Berlioz

In 1844, Hector Berlioz published his Treatise Upon Modern Instrumentation and Orchestration. This treatise discusses the technical aspects of instruments, such as the tone qualities, ranges and limitations of each. He also comments on expressive
meanings of various instrumental effects. Berlioz refers to the piano as “an orchestral instrument, or as forming a complete small orchestra in itself” (Berlioz, 73). Within his discussion on the piano, he mentions that one should study particularly the compositions by Liszt, to have an idea of “the excellence to which the art of pianoforte-playing has now-a-days attained” (Berlioz, 72). Berlioz and Liszt met in 1830, and became close colleagues thereafter. As mentioned above, one of Liszt’s most famous orchestral transcriptions for the piano was that of Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique*.

Berlioz’s two chapters, “The Orchestra” and “The Orchestral Conductor: Theory of his Art,” may have influenced Liszt’s development as a conductor and a composer. Within discussion on the orchestra, Berlioz specifically mentioned that “the orchestra may be considered as a large instrument capable of uttering at once or successively a multitude of sounds of different kinds” (Berlioz, 240). Furthermore, he adds:

> The performers of all kinds, whose assemblage constitutes it, thus seem to be its strings, its tubes, its pipes, its plains of wood or metal; machines intelligent it is true, but subject to the action of an immense key-board, played upon by the conductor, under the direction of the composer (Berlioz, 241).

It is quite clear that Berlioz was able to view the orchestra as a single instrument, possibly a piano. Liszt shared this view, but vice versa, to see the piano as an orchestra. Not only do we see their common views of the keyboard and the orchestra, but also of conducting. Berlioz believed that the conductor should “see and hear...be active and vigorous” and the orchestra should “feel that he feels [and] comprehends” (Berlioz, 245). Although many have criticized Liszt for his body movements on the podium, he believed those gestures were the only way to communicate his musical interpretations
to the orchestra. If he purely beats the time, he is “no longer a conductor, [nor] a
director, but a simple beater of the time, - supposing he knows how to beat it, and
divide it, regularly” (Berlioz, 245). From these various ideas, it is definitely not difficult
to see how Berlioz and Liszt similarly relate the piano and the orchestra.

**Liszt as a Composer**

Liszt’s earliest attempts in orchestral writing during the 1830s were known to be
unsuccessful: the Fantasia for piano and orchestra on themes from Berlioz’s *Lélio* and
the *Malédiction* Concerto for piano and strings. After Liszt came to his position as
orchestral conductor in Weimar, he began writing for orchestra again, especially when
he had the ability to ‘test’ his innovations. However, he then had two collaborators who
aided him: August Conradi and Joachim Raff. Conradi was a composer of operettas and
known to have “a first-class technical knowledge of orchestra, but does not seem to
have been a man of great imagination” (Searle, Music, 279). Liszt would first sketch his
ideas on a small number of staves, and Conradi would help him develop it into a full
score. Although Liszt had a great respect for him, he still needed someone with greater
imagination. As a result, Raff was hired as his new assistant from the winter of 1849,
until 1854. Liszt didn’t mind that he was less knowledgeable about the orchestra than
Conradi, as Raff’s great imagination provided a source of inspiration for him.

Liszt’s preferred orchestral form was the *Symphonic Poem*, which he himself
created. Liszt had a great passion for program music and he was constantly seeking “to
express the mood that a particular painting or poem evoked in him; or else he
attempted to elucidate some psychological or philosophical problem that concerned him in the language of music” (Wilkinson, 81). His well-known symphonic poems were composed in Weimar, each with a distinct title, which shows its literary influence.

Among his thirteen symphonic poems, he later transcribed five of them into four-hand piano works: *Les Préludes*, *Orpheus*, *Prometheus*, *Ce qu’on entend sur la montagne* and *Mazeppa*.

**Transcriptions for Piano**

Out of Liszt’s one-hundred-and-ninety-three transcriptions for the piano, forty-eight were re-arrangements of his own works and the rest included works from Bach to Wagner. There are two categories: paraphrases and piano arrangements. The first is where the “original work is transformed and freely recomposed;” the latter is where “Liszt faithfully transcribes a work from one medium to another, sometimes not deviating from the original by so much as a single note” (Wilde, 168). The earliest creation of a paraphrase is dated 1829, when he was eighteen. The last example surfaced in 1885, a year before his death.

One of the main reasons Liszt delved into this category of composition was to help make large-scale masterpieces accessible for everyone. He once said: “The name of Beethoven is sacred in art. His Symphonies are now universally acknowledged to be masterpieces...For this reason every way or manner of making them accessible and popular has a certain merit...” (Wilde, 168). In the nineteenth century, a lot of music, especially orchestral works, would be heard once in one’s lifetime for there were no
recordings made. As mentioned previously, throughout his lifetime, Liszt always strived to promote the music of his colleagues as well as older generations of composers. In order to include others’ orchestral works into his solo recitals, he saw the need to transcribe them for the piano. According to Donald Francis Tovey, “[the] arrangements [of Beethoven’s symphonies] ...prove conclusively...that Liszt was by far the most wonderful interpreter of orchestral scores on the pianoforte the world is ever likely to see” (Tovey, 193). In addition to Beethoven symphonies, Liszt had rearranged Bach’s organ works for the piano and made transcriptions for songs and opera.

To further understand his development in writing transcriptions, Liszt explained to Adolphe Pictet in September 1837:

> I applied myself as scrupulously [in transcribing Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique* for piano solo] as if I were translating a sacred text to transferring, not only the symphony’s musical framework, but also its detailed effects and the multiplicity of its instrumental and rhythmic combinations to the piano...I called my work a *partition de piano* [piano score] in order to make clear my intention of following the orchestra step by step and of giving it no special treatment beyond the mass and variety of its sound (Arnold, 132).

Especially in his operatic transcriptions, Liszt explored aspects of piano technique that were revolutionary at the time and are still challenging for present-day pianists, as will be evident in the discussion below concerning his Reminiscences of Bellini’s *Norma*.

Furthermore, in his transcription of *Liebestod*, from Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*, Liszt’s aim was to free the piano from being a percussive instrument. The fortissimos in this work must not sound like hammerblows, but be an overwhelming flood of sound. Liszt found further inspiration in the writing of Chopin, who showed how to imitate
Bellini’s style of vocal writing at the piano. This style of writing accompanies “a melody in such a way as to regenerate the tone of its held notes by feeding them with upper partials from the supporting harmonies, strengthened by the sustaining pedal” (Wilde, 196). The pedal allows notes to continue sounding after their release and leaves other strings free to vibrate in agreement, which is an extremely crucial element in Liszt’s *Liebestod*.

**Orchestral Textures on the Piano**

Liszt wrote various transcriptions for the piano, orchestra and chamber ensembles. His aim was to not merely transcribe, but he was “aware that the true sound was to be discovered not in the exact notes as written in the [original] score, but in the complex of instrumental timbres” (Wilde, 173). For instance, in his operatic transcription of Wagner’s *Tannhäuser* Overture, he does not let the right hand play the exact octaves of the descending string passages in the original score. Liszt treats it differently by “writing an octave followed by a single note in place of each pair of octaves; but the mental ear provides the missing note.” As a result, it is “far more powerful and less strenuous than two complete octaves would be, and the natural gestures, of passing the hand over the thumb, ensures the appropriate phrasing” (Wilde, 183).
One of his most famous operatic transcriptions is the Reminiscences of Bellini’s *Norma*. Within this work, he used various techniques that were not used by other composers of the time, such as Chopin, Schumann and Mendelssohn. These techniques were categorized by David Wilde: “1) Effects dependent on the sustaining pedal, 2) effects dependent on the ‘double escapement’ and involving repeated notes, 3) rapid octave work and leaps and 4) rapidly changing chords and double notes” (Wilde, 184). For example, he used the sustaining pedal to create a great sonority of sound that covered the whole range of the keyboard, while the *Deh! Non volerli vittime* melody is heard in the tenor voice during the B major section of this work. As a result, it is as if the whole string section of an orchestra accompanies a solo instrument.

Example 1.2: Réminiscences de Norma, S.394, measures 220 – 221
Liszt also established the effects dependent on the double escapement action, which was invented by Sebastien Erard in 1821. This invention allowed rapid repetition of a single note, which, for example, can be found in the opening of *Norma*. In the G minor introduction, the bass repeated notes created an intimidating atmosphere.

Example 1.3: Réminiscences de Norma, S.394, measures 1 – 8

One will very often encounter rapid octave work and leaps within Liszt’s piano compositions. We can find this element during the second theme of the opera’s Introductory Chorus *Ite sul colle, e Druidi*.

Example 1.4: Réminiscences de Norma, S.394, measures 89 – 92

Furthermore, while the left hand plays these fast octave passages, the right hand requires the brisk change of chords. All of these can be seen as some of Liszt’s signature compositional elements for his piano works.

Various techniques are often used in his transcriptions, such as marked rolled chords to imitate the harp or tremolos to represent *tremolando* strings. For example, in
"Liebestod" from *Tristan and Isolde*, Liszt carefully marked all of the intended rolled chords, “most often in those places where the harp plays in Wagner’s score.” In the example below, Liszt has omitted to roll one chord, marked with (*), which demonstrates how specific he was when transcribing his colleagues’ work.

**Example 1.5: Isolde’s Liebestod from Tristan und Isolde, mm. 36 – 37**

Moreover, some may criticize his use of tremolos but he “[confined] its use to those places where [the original score] has written tremolando string passages” (Wilde, 197). He used tremolos in many different ways and with great intricacy for they appear in various degrees of intervals or even with three-note and four-note chords. They may be heard in any of the voices and they are “never an added effect, but always an integral part of the musical texture” (Wilde, 198). The example given here shows the tremolos in the form of chords, which is seen at the climax of *Liebestod*:
Example 1.6: Isolde’s Liebestod from Tristan und Isolde, mm. 66 – 67

Another reason why Liszt is a famous transcriber was his ability to “[abstract] the sense and [re-cast the music] in terms applicable to the new medium.” Moreover, this “demands not only a complete knowledge of the works, and mastery of both the orchestra and the piano, but the ability to distinguish between that which is essential to the musical concept, and must be retained, and that which is special to the orchestra, and must be re-thought” (Wilde, 175).

From his transcriptions for the piano, we can see how Liszt incorporated the orchestral sound into the piano through various techniques. Not only did he achieve the goal of promoting and extending great orchestral compositions onto the keyboard, he also opened up a wide range of possible piano techniques. During Liszt’s mature years, after having had the experience as a pianist and a conductor, his compositions incorporated new ideas, both technically and tonally. Pianists may very well benefit from studying his piano works through both a pianistic and an orchestral approach.

This dissertation explores how Liszt utilized specific compositional techniques to create orchestral sonorities and colours, especially in the piano works of the Weimar period. In this chapter, Liszt was introduced as a pianist, a conductor and a composer in
this chapter. The next chapter will present various treatises on orchestration written during and since his time. There will be discussions of the different timbres and playing techniques associated with each orchestral instrument. The third chapter focuses on Liszt’s transcriptions of his own work, *Mazeppa*, and Wagner’s Overture to *Tannhäuser* as well as Liszt’s concert paraphrase on Verdi’s *Rigoletto*. Through these short analyses, the musical examples will specify how Liszt translates the orchestral idioms onto the keyboard. Based on these observations, the following two chapters will present detailed analyses of Liszt’s *Ballade No.2 in B minor* and *Rhapsodie Espagnole*. Through them, this dissertation will present possible technical and interpretive solutions on the keyboard through the imagination, understanding and hearing of orchestral colours. Lastly, the concluding chapter will address the changes of performance practice since the nineteenth century and encourage experimenting with various possibilities of orchestral colours at the piano to create more individual interpretations. After exploring Liszt’s works through an orchestral approach, one may very likely open up a different spectrum of sound and colour, one that will surpass the basic percussive element of a piano.
Chapter 2

A Closer Look at Orchestral Timbres

Liszt did not fully explore orchestral writing until his Weimar years (1848 - 1861). During this period, he wrote extensively for the piano and the orchestra, while holding his position as the Kapellmeister at the Weimar court. To develop an aural perspective of an orchestra while executing Liszt's piano works, it is important first to study him as an orchestrator. Moreover, one should also be acquainted with the possible timbres and colours of each orchestral instrument and how they sound as a unit. To expand one’s imagination of orchestral sounds at the piano, it is necessary to study the orchestral instruments, their timbres, limitations, special effects, and roles within the orchestra. This chapter undertakes this preliminary inquiry, organized according to instrumental family. The discussion draws on several orchestration treatises, which are briefly introduced below.

First published in 1844, Hector Berlioz's *Grand traité d'instrumentation et d'orchestration modernes* became one of the main sources to examine the history of instruments and orchestral practice. Berlioz wrote this treatise in hopes to guide composers towards writing more expressively through the understanding of the instruments. He explains in the introduction:

Our purpose in the present work is simply to study instruments which are used in modern music and to seek the laws which govern the setting up of harmonious combinations and effective contrasts between them while making special note of their expressive capabilities and of the
character appropriate to each (Berlioz, xiii).

To explore Liszt's piano works through means of orchestral timbre and texture, one should consider finding some inspirations through this treatise for it was highly possible that Liszt may have studied it himself. Moreover, Berlioz specifically stated that the piano should be regarded "either as an orchestral instrument or as itself a complete little orchestra" (Berlioz, 93).

The treatise was categorized into strings, winds, brass, voice, percussion, new instruments, the orchestra and the conductor. Berlioz wrote in detail in regards to each instrument's range limitations and the conventional approaches to composing music for each. However, for the purpose of hearing the piano as an orchestra, only the ideas on instruments' timbres will be studied.

In addition to the study of Berlioz's treatise, it is also beneficial for one to explore Adam Carse's book *The History of Orchestration* (1925). This is the most comprehensive discussion of the development of orchestration and orchestral instruments in the nineteenth century through topics of instrumental ranges, availability of chromatic pitches, timbres and performance practices. Studying these perspectives may further fulfill one's imagination in orchestral sounds and colours when approaching Liszt's piano compositions. In addition, one of the most detailed handbooks on orchestration was written by Cecil Forsyth, printed in 1914. He discusses all orchestral instrumental families in detail, with their individual techniques and colour devices.

Similar to Forsyth, in 1959, Joseph Wagner published *Orchestration: A Practical Handbook*. This handbook focuses greatly on textures, techniques, special effects and
colouristic devices. It is a very useful resource for pianists to understand the various timbres created by orchestral instruments. With its detailed explanations, it may assist one to imagine and explore various sounds and colours.

A less detailed overview of orchestral instruments is that of Charles-Marie Widor’s *Manual of Practical Instrumentation* (1946). Widor’s approach is much more general than Forsyth’s or Wagner’s, but it offers good explanations of how many effects are executed on the orchestral instruments. Furthermore, Henry Brant, an American twentieth-century composer, also published a handbook to discuss orchestral timbres and textures. This work, which appeared in 2009, is no more closely connected to Liszt or the nineteenth century than any other modern orchestration book. Within Brant’s work, he explores various timbre groups and the combinations of tone qualities. Within each instrumental group, such as winds, bowed strings and percussion, he categorizes them into their characters, tone qualities, volumes and range limitations.

The final book to be included in this observation is Kent Wheeler Kennan’s *The Technique of Orchestration* (1952). Although this book can be categorized as an elementary-level treatise for orchestration, Kennan includes precise descriptions of tone qualities and instruments’ special effects. Many modern instruments are discussed, but for the purpose of relating to Liszt’s piano works, only the relevant instruments will be considered.

Although all of the handbooks, except for that by Berlioz, were written after Liszt's time, for the purpose of this research, these texts were studied to explore the various possibilities of orchestral timbres produced by the instruments and
orchestrators of the nineteenth century. The chapter now turns to a consideration of each instrumental family, beginning with strings.

**Strings:**

The string instruments are grouped together based on their similarity in timbre and tone production, but each has a wide spectrum of tone colours. Within the string family, there are also many different ways of playing the instruments, which result in numerous variations of sound effect. Special bowing techniques include louré, détaché, spiccato, martelé, jeté and executing tremolos. Furthermore, coloristic devices include the pizzicato, use of the mute, sul ponticello, col legno, harmonics, and sur la touche. Pianists should strongly consider being familiar with these devices for they create very different timbres.

Although pianists cannot bow the strings of the piano, through the exploration of various violin bowings, they can better imagine how different types of timbres are produced. When violinists articulate each note, the bowing is categorized as louré. It is very much "used in cantabile passages" (Widor, 162), and the most effective "in the medium-to-slow tempos at rather strong dynamic levels" (Forsyth, 36). Détaché is a non-legato bowing that allows each note to be "vigorously articulated" (Wagner, 37). This effect can be "powerful" and "even violent" (Widor, 161). In addition, when the bow is "thrown" at the strings, known as spiccato, the tone becomes light and inexpresseive. Another technique that creates a light and airy sound is called jeté. It requires the string player to bounce the bow onto the strings. This bowing technique is
used when the dynamic is restricted to piano or pianissimo. The *martelé* technique involves playing at the tip of the bow, with "each note being attacked drily, as if with a hammer" (Widor, 162). This bowing is also known as the "hammer-stroke" (Wagner, 38) style. It creates a timbre that is "hard and mechanical, like the strokes of a hammer on an anvil" (Forsyth, 340).

In addition to different bowings, it is also very important for one to understand the various colouring devices on the string instruments. Bass entries may be anticipated for “[c]ellos and basses need time in which to unfold their sound” (Brendel, Musical, 95). One of the commonly used devices is the *pizzicato*, which is plucking the strings with the fingertip. *Pizzicatos* can be played at all dynamic levels. A soft *pizzicato* can be used for accompaniments or if played strongly, it can depict a violent timbre or an abrupt stop in the music. When a piano executes *molto staccato* without the use of pedal, the effect "may be described as more 'metallic' *pizzicato* timbre" (Brant, 168).

While the piano has a soft pedal, the string instruments can also use a mute. Using this clamp, not only is the tone softened, it also creates "a *sotto-voce* effect that is highly desirable for quiet accompaniments with imaginative connotations" (Wagner, 49).

*Sul ponticello* involves playing very close to the bridge, which will in result produce a "painfully glassy and unpleasant" (Forysth, 336) tone. One of the most widely known examples for *col legno* is definitely Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique*. It is when the bow strikes the string with its back, which creates a clicking sound and an eerie effect. Berlioz himself describes the atmosphere created as "horrible" and "grotesque"
When harmonics are used, the texture is very thin and "flutey" (Forsyth, 329) and has "an impressionistic effect" (Wagner, 51). Moreover, the higher the harmonics, it becomes "purer and thinner," producing a "crystalline timbre" (Berlioz, 21). Another technique one should also be acquainted with involves placing the bow over the fingerboard, known as sur la touche. Playing at this position will create a softer and delicate tone.

During the nineteenth century, one of the main orchestral developments was the "increased use of the violoncello as an independent voice" (Carse, 225). The cello finally had the chance to present melodic ideas with or without help from other instruments. An example of such growth can be found in the beginning of the slow movement of Beethoven's Symphony in C minor, where violas and cellos have the melody in unison. Having explored the cello as a melodic instrument, composers have found that its A-string has a very rich, penetrating and brilliant tone quality. Most of the melodies are to be played with the A-string for it "creates the most intense impression" (Widor, 176). Despite the growth in seeing the cello as a melodic instrument, it is not always suitable for it to carry melodies unless "they have something of grief, of passion, or of chivalry [for] they will suffer from an excess of emphasis" (Forsyth, 430).

Another instrument was also included in the family of strings: the harp. Berlioz discussed the techniques to write for harp at length, but also mentioned its timbres: the lower strings are “veiled, mysterious and beautiful” in sound, the top octave has “a delicate, crystalline” sound (Berlioz, 73-74). He stated that the lower register has a sweet sound, which is very often neglected by composers. It must be remembered that
the harp is a plucked instrument, thus, the pianist should imitate it with “round [and] tensed fingers – *sempre poco staccato* – within the sustained pedal” (Brendel, Musical, 96). Moreover, Berlioz then described the higher register as having a “freshness” of sound that makes it “suitable for graceful, fairy effects” and allows “tender melodies [to] whisper their innermost secrets” (Berlioz, 74).

**Woodwinds:**

One of the main developments of the wind instruments in the nineteenth century was that more composers started to appreciate the warm and rounded sound of the clarinets and the lower range of the flutes, which “considerably enlarged the palette of the orchestral tone-painter of the generation which followed immediately after Beethoven and his contemporaries” (Carse, 229).

Carse mentions that the development of the clarinet tone can finally blend into the bassoon, horns and strings, and this combination had "an even more far-reaching influence on orchestration...than the gain of a new solo voice" (Carse, 229). The lowest octave of the clarinet, "known as the chalumeau register," offers an "unusually rich, round tone distinctly apart from other [reed instruments]" (Wagner, 140). The middle register produces a "neutral tone-color" which allows it to be blended "with almost every group in the orchestra" (Widor, 31). The mid-registers are often used to project “the most poetic thoughts and feelings” (Berlioz, 125). Berlioz highly praised the instrument:

This beautiful instrumental soprano, so richly evocative and so penetrating when employed in the mass, gains, when played solo –
in delicacy, elusive nuances and mysterious sensibility – what it loses in force and brilliance. There is nothing so virginal or so pure as the shade of colour bestowed on certain melodies by the tone of the intermediate register of the clarinet in the hands of a skilful player (Berlioz, 125).

The clarinet is often disguised by flute, horn or even bassoon for its sound possesses "an unrivalled power of blending with that of any other instrument" (Widor, 31). It also has a wide dynamic range. In addition to the clarinet, there was also an increase in the usage of the bass clarinet. It "occupies the same position in the clarinet family that the cello does in the string section" (Wagner, 142). Like the cello, it is also seen as an "admirable melodic instrument" and was already explored by Liszt. In bar 286 of the Dante symphony, marked espressivo dolente, "a recitativo melody [is to be] played by a solo bass clarinet" (Shulstad, 221). Moreover, Liszt often assigned dark, funeral motives to the clarinet family, such as the bass clarinet in his symphonic poem, Tasso, or the use of clarinet in Die Ideale.

The oboe became extremely important for its medium register and is very capable of "expressing the human feelings in all their varying shades - from joy to sorrow [or] from tragedy to idyll" (Widor, 20). Berlioz finds the special timbres of this instrument to have the characteristics that convey "candour, naive grace, sentimental delight, or the suffering of weaker creatures" (Berlioz, 104). He also strongly believes that the oboe's bittersweet tone can easily become "ineffective and absurd" but can be expressed marvelously through a "cantabile" melody (Berlioz, 104). In addition to its penetrating tone, it is also "peculiarly fitted for purposes of humorous or sardonic characterization" (Forsyth, 216).
The other double-reed instrument is the bassoon. It is sometimes referred to as "the clown of the orchestra" (Wagner, 150), and Berlioz even described its tone as "completely lacking in brightness and nobility...[with its high range] rather painful and dolorous" (Berlioz, 113). Even though he clearly does not think highly of it, he believes that such an instrument can "sometimes be put to most surprising effect either in a slow melody or in an accompaniment figure" (Berlioz, 114). It often acts as an excellent bass support for the woodwind section. However, when used in a melodic phrase, it can create an atmosphere of "austere, dark melancholy, which is completely unique in orchestral sonorities" (Wagner, 151). As a result, Liszt used this quality of the bassoon to portray his funeral motive in his symphonic poem, *Hungaria*. The highest octave of the instrument has an "almost wailing quality," (Wagner, 151) which can be heard effectively in Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps*.

Finally, there is the flute. It is often heard as a solo instrument or used for "reinforcing the first harmonic of the oboe or the clarinet" (Widor, 12). The lowest octave has a "round, rich tone of genuine poetic beauty" (Wagner, 137) like a contralto voice. Contrastingly, Berlioz viewed the flute as "an instrument almost lacking in expression" and he does not think the flute has the "naive gaiety" of an oboe, nor does it have the "noble tenderness" (Berlioz, 104) of a clarinet. However, even though the middle register of the flute can be quite neutral in tone, its highest octaves can "cut through almost any orchestra texture [and] the tone remains expressively lyric and poetic" (Wagner, 137).
**Brass:**

The horn in F is like the clarinet with its "extraordinary blending qualities" (Wagner, 207). Its open notes have a "rich and poetic quality" (Widor, 58), and compared to other brass instruments, "it is rounder, mellower, and slightly less precise in its attacks" (Wagner, 208). Moreover, it also has two distinct tone-colours: "'stopped notes' and 'overblown notes'" (Widor, 58). The first uses the mute, which is soft, and the latter requires the hand in the bell, which is powerful. The quality of the overblown notes can vary from "a savage bark like that of a wild animal to the dull uncertain sound with which a rout-seat scrages over a parquet-floor" (Forsyth, 113). Berlioz and Wagner were known to be some of the earliest composers to use these techniques. As an example of a possible representation of the cry of an animal, one may refer to Liszt's *Mazeppa*. The horn in F may have been the "last, hoarse cry of the dying Cossack prince in the endless steppe" (Berlioz-Strauss, 260).

The trumpet is often viewed to resemble the military bugle. Their tones are both "brilliant and powerful" (Wagner, 218). It gradually became both a solo and ensemble instrument. After 1850, many symphonic scores started to show composers' awareness of its melodic capabilities. In addition to its powerful and piercing tone, the softer timbres are "rewardingly smooth and well voiced for subdued melodic ideas" (Wagner, 222). Liszt made use of this tone quality in his *Dante* symphony, where the inscription "'Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrare!' (Abandon all hope, those who enter here!), is printed over a recitation tone in the horns and trumpets, as if it could be sung" (Shulstad, 220).
One of the reasons why the brass family can now support harmonies alone without the help of other instrumental groups was the addition of the chromatically capable instrument, the trombone. Composers stopped "treating trombones merely as supporters of choral harmony" because they realized this instrument can create a "broad and strong contrasts of tone colour" (Carse, 248). In addition to the trombone, many French scores also included the cornet into their operatic orchestration. They found it able to help to "give greater fullness and body to the brass harmony of the tutti in scores" (Carse, 249).

**Percussion:**

Each percussive instrument has three elements to be considered: pitch variance, vibrating characteristics and timbres. The instrument may have a definite or an indefinite pitch, its sound may or may not continue after contact and its type of vibrating surface determines its timbre. This family of instrument is often used to reinforce the rhythmic characteristics of other orchestral sections, but if “percussion parts are well placed and spaced, their timbres can add extra dimensions of coloristic nuances that are singularly attractive” (Wagner, 251). Given that the main purpose is to relate various orchestral sounds to the piano, only the relevant percussion instruments will be discussed.

The timpani, also known as a kettle-drum, had gained a lot of interest and importance to composers. It is one of the percussion instruments that “produce definite musical sounds as opposed to mere noise” (Forsyth, 42). This is a contrast to
the previous orchestrations where percussionists were more responsible for hammering at the accented beats. During the classical period, they were often used to support the orchestra in rhythmic figures. In addition, they also excel in “reinforcing crescendos” or “providing excitement...in climaxes by means of rolls” (Kennan, 210). They were often “combined with horns and trumpets as the major means of securing maximum sonority and brilliance” (Wagner, 257). As time advanced, composers start to experiment with various effects produced by the timpani. The different type of sticks is the fundamental element in producing different timbres on them. Wooden-headed sticks were used to produce “very hard” quality of tone that has “very little timbre” (Widor, 101). Although hard, it provides a “sharply percussive quality” (Kennan, 211). The sound can also be muted by “placing a cloth about two inches square on the head of the drum near the edge,” (Kennan, 211) known as *timpani coperti*. Another special effect is the glissando, which is “achieved by changing the pedal while the drum is sounding” (Kennan, 211).

The triangle is “absolutely indispensible in the orchestra” (Widor, 110). This instrument is high-pitched, bright, and its “bell-like tone has piquant charm is used judiciously” (Wagner, 263). One of the most famous parts written for triangle can be found in Liszt’s Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, for “its bell-like, percussive tone becomes an integral part of the overall rhythmic design. Its appropriateness is ideal, as no other instrument in any section could have matched its neutral, percussive effect” (Wagner, 251). However, it should not be used for long duration for “its distinctive tone tends to pall quickly” (Kennan, 227). In addition to its role of beating, it can also sound very “charming” in its *pianissimo* range when “used with soft strings and light wood-wind”
Since Handel and Mozart, the glockenspiel has also become an important definite-pitch percussive instrument in the orchestra. It can be treated like a tiny piano when one plays “with a mechanical action” (Forsyth, 62). One of the most famous examples can be found in Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte*, which was “originally played with a keyboard” (Wagner, 264). It is effective for “short color dabs of single notes or intervals” and for “splashy glissandos on very rapid crescendos” (Wagner, 265). In addition, another of the glockenspiel’s main roles is to “‘brighten the edges’ of a figure or fragment of melody in conjunction with the upper octaves of the orchestra” (Forsyth, 62). When a pianist voices higher-range octaves, one can perhaps consider the top metallic timbre to be that of a glockenspiel.

A good summary of the most important roles of the percussion instruments that pianists can consider is provided in Wagner’s orchestral treatise:

1. Establishing and maintaining rhythmic ostinatos.
2. Outlining melodic ideas and figurations.
3. Coloristic rhythmic effects derived from the design of principal melodic ideas have continuity and interest.
4. Short color splashes
5. As an independent rhythm section with diversified inner rhythmic patterns.
6. For pointing up the apex in tonal climaxes.
7. For the effect of long, sustained percussive sound (Wagner 251 -252).

**19th Century (Second Quarter) Orchestral Developments**

In addition to his ideas upon the developments of the instruments, Carse also mentions the overall change in orchestration of the nineteenth century:
Orchestration by early nineteenth century composers shows thorough appreciation of the value of clearness in dealing with the colours of the orchestra. The tone of each instrument is allowed to be heard in its native state as well as with the admixture of alien tone-colour; solo parts are judiciously accompanied by others whose tone-colour does not detract from or smother the individuality of the solo instrument, and the various groups consisting of instruments of related tone-colour are freely contrasted, as well as combined, one with the other. Monochromatic or neutral-tinted orchestration, the result of too constantly combining strings, wood-wind and horns, was a later growth for which certain German composers were largely responsible. The blank staves in the scores of the earlier composers are more significant than the well-filled staves of Schumann and Brahms, the silence of their parts as telling as the sounds. Over-wrought textures, over-weighted accompaniments, and the use of prolonged composite blend of uniform density, were the products of a later generation, an over-sophistication in the art of blending orchestral tone-colours which cannot be charged against either the Italian, French or German composers, who followed Haydn and Mozart not only chronologically, but also in their conception of the use of an orchestral body which was to them essentially a three-part organization in groups of tone-colour which should be heard separately as well as in combination” (Carse, 230-231).

From his analysis, we can see the growth in the importance of individual tone colours of the instruments. The composers were beginning to explore more combinations of different orchestral timbres at times and writing significant melodies for instruments that were never viewed as a possible solo voice.

After Beethoven’s time in the nineteenth century, more changes in orchestration can be found during its second quarter, before transitioning into Wagner’s period. Some of the main evolutions can be seen in the opera scores, where, for instance, one starts to find parts written specifically for valve horns. Moreover, the operas of this period also “include parts for piccolo, for trombones, very often for serpent or ophicleide (brass instrument), for extra percussion instruments, and not infrequently for one or two harps, cor anglais or bass clarinet” (Carse, 245). Furthermore, one of the
characteristics of French instrumentation during this century is having four bassoon parts. In addition to operatic orchestration, more instruments were also written into the concert works, such as trombones, bass drum, cymbals and triangles. The increase in the use of instruments means more variety of individual orchestral timbres, as well as more combination of tone colors, combined by various instruments.

**Liszt and His Orchestral Writing**

Approximately for a decade of his life, Liszt devoted his time to writing largely for the orchestra. Some of his most well-known orchestral works include the *Faust* symphony, *Dante* symphony and his thirteen symphonic poems. He was viewed as an orchestral composer who was "both conservative and innovative" and often wrote for a conventional orchestra: "woodwinds in pairs, three or four horns, two trumpets, two or three trombones, and tuba, timpani and strings" (Saffle, 236). When he needed a fuller sound, he also added a third part for flute and bassoon respectively, a second harp, chimes and organ.

Similar to many of his piano works, his orchestral compositions are also very pictorial and programmatic. Moreover, especially in his symphonic poems, he focused heavily on his "philosophical and humanistic ideas...and many of which were connected with his personal problems as an artist" (Searle, *Music*, 77). Within his *Faust* symphony, we can see “his whole life reflected upon the work: the first movement, *Faust*, with its many changes of mood, has all the appearance of being a self-portrait; the second movement expresses all his love and admiration for women; and the finale is a supreme
manifestation of that diabolism which is to be found in all periods of his life from the first to the last” (Searle, *Music*, 78). When sketching ideas for his *Dante* symphony, there was already an anticipation of Scriabin’s style “in considering the use of lantern slides projected through some form of diorama, so that the work would be an audio-visual experience.” In addition, there was also thought on “proposing the creation of a wind-machine for the *Inferno* movement” that was later used by Ravel and Strauss (Watson, 279). Although these ideas were eventually abandoned, the symphony is still filled with vivid scenic imaginations with its incorporated effects. To create the terrifying whirlwind of sound, he used the trombones, tuba and double basses. The two main motives of hell are depicted by “a descending chromatic passage in the lower strings against a roll of drums, and a theme given to the bassoons and violas, of hollow, awful, sound, having the effect of a male-alto voice” (Sitwell, 167–168). In contrast, when he wanted to portray the tenderness in the second movement, the music is assigned to harps, flutes and violins.

One of Liszt’s weaknesses in orchestral writing is the “unnecessary redundance” (Sitwell, 169) of the thunderous brass instruments, in contrast to the gentle woodwinds. Although the duration of *fortissimo* may be long at times, to Liszt, it was only important to convey the picture to his listeners and to create a direct impact. It is interesting to consider Carse’s analysis of the *Mazepa*: “[Liszt] sometimes allowed musical matter to grow out of orchestra effect, rather than orchestral effect out of musical matter” (Carse, 282). Following from this idea, musicians should strive to convey the music itself, instead of focusing mainly on technique. Many pianists are inclined to present their
keyboard facility and power of sound through Liszt’s virtuosic works. Perhaps one should reconsider virtuosity as the result of one’s musical intentions and interpretations. In addition to Liszt’s wish to impress his audiences, he should still be credited to “very considerably [have] helped to impart a glow of warmth and colour into orchestration at a time when so many German and Austrian composers were content to follow a path of undistinguished fullness” (Carse, 282).

Although Liszt’s innovative ideas may be unconventional to his time, he was not afraid to be daring. As a result, he created new possibilities of structure and sound imagination. The first movements of the Faust and Dante symphonies “exhibit many possibilities of tonal and thematic organization with a one-movement structure.” His “unconventionality is reflected in differing interpretations of the formal designs” through his symphonic poems (Watson, 267). It may be easier to relate sounds to images within the programmatic symphonic poems. For instance, beginning of Héroïde Funèbre, one hears “the throbbing of drums, the pealing of bells...[that] are maintained until they become unendurable” (Sitwell, 155–156), which immediately creates a canvas of intensity and darkness. Even though Liszt may not have mastered at the skill of orchestration, Debussy still praised his Mazeppa:

This symphonic poem is full of the worst faults; sometimes it is even vulgar. Yet all that tumultuous passion...exerts such force that you find yourself liking it, without quite knowing why...The fire and abandon which Liszt’s genius frequently attains are much preferable to white-gloved perfection (quoted in Watson, 271).

In contrast to some of his contemporaries, "instead of novelty or complexity, Liszt specialized as an orchestrator in transparency" (Saffle, 236). It is worth studying the delicate moments in Orpheus, where “nobility and expressive poise” is achieved
through “delicacy of scoring, luminous, suspended harmonic effects, and unforced, graceful lyricism of the melody” (Watson, 272). Most importantly, Liszt described the final sequence of chords in the preface as such: ‘Tones rising gradually like clouds of incense’ (Watson, 272). Although pianists cannot control the decaying of sound at the instrument, one can listen to its tail end as it evaporates into the air as Liszt had described.

By studying the quality of the orchestral instruments, I hope to widen pianists’ conception and imagination toward orchestral sounds. It is not enough to have the intention of viewing the piano as an orchestra, but one must be able to imagine the eighty-eight keys as any desired instrument. The pianist will need to experiment with variations in the approach to the depressing of the keys, in order to produce the specific timbre one searches for. Concluding his own discussion on the orchestra, Berlioz mentions the various imageries an orchestra can produce:

Its repose would be as majestic as the ocean’s slumber; its agitation would suggest a tropical hurricane, its explosions the fury of a volcano. It would evoke lamentation, murmuring the mysterious sounds of virgin forests, it would sound the clamours, the prayers and the hymns of triumph or mourning of a people whose soul is magnanimous, whose heart is ardent and whose passions are fiery. The very solemnity of its silences would inspire fear, and the most rebellious beings would tremble to watch its crescendo swell and roar like an enormous, sublime conflagration (Berlioz, 335).

If a pianist is to regard the piano as an orchestra, not only should he or she study the sound and colour of each instrument, but to also hear how the orchestra can sound as a whole.
Chapter 3

Transcriptions and Paraphrases

Prior to experimenting and creating orchestral timbres on the piano, pianists should study Liszt’s own transcriptions and paraphrases to observe how he arrived at particular piano textures from various instrumental (and vocal) materials. I will compare the orchestral and the piano scores of *Mazeppa*, the *Tannhäuser Overture* and the *Rigoletto Paraphrase*. By studying them, one will see how Liszt imaginatively translates orchestral elements onto the piano or how he only vaguely hints the melodies to his listeners. Liszt is known for his extensive experience of transcribing orchestral works onto the piano. This experience “undoubtedly influenced his writing for the piano, including the etudes” (Samson, 208). Within his *Grandes Études* and *Transcendentals*, one can hear “references to orchestral instruments,” such as “horn calls, trumpet fanfares, ‘pastoral’ cellos and flutes, bells, rushing scalar strings, brass choir and harp” (Samson, 208). Through the examples, I will show that considering the various timbres of orchestral instruments will affect how one interprets on the keyboard. Despite the fact that the piano is a percussive instrument, it has many shades of colours, depending on how one imagines and approaches it physically and emotionally.

**Mazeppa**

All composed by Liszt himself, the Mazeppa exists in seven different versions: *Étude en douze exercices* (1826), *24 Grandes études pour le piano* (1839), the separately
published Mazeppa (1847), the Études d’execution transcendante (1852), the symphonic poem for orchestra (1851), the orchestral transcription for two pianos four hands (1855), and finally the transcription for one piano four hands (1874). The two-piano and four-hand compositions are transcriptions of the symphonic poem; therefore, one can compare and better imagine the various orchestral instrumental timbres on the piano. Then, one can study the transcendental étude in relation to the previous observations, although one must remember that its musical contents do not entirely correspond to the later symphonic work.

It is interesting to note that only the final piano solo version of the work divides the Mazeppa theme and figurations into three separate staves, which may be evidence of Liszt thinking more orchestrally. Also, the opening four measures of the transcendental étude have the same harmonic progressions as the 1847 version, but rewritten into rolled and more openly scored chords. The more open scoring of these chords gives the listener a wider scope of sound. By comparing the piano versions, one will see that only the 1852 revision contains the opening cadenza, which suggests the fiery opening of the symphonic poem. These examples may indicate Liszt starting to think of the work as an orchestral composition while refining the pianistic elements from the previous piano versions.

The following table compares the four solo piano versions, indicating general differences in length and the number of sections, as represented by meter changes and tempo indications. In table 3.1 below, the four versions are identified by letters:

a. Étude en douze exercices (1826); b. 24 Grandes études pour le piano (1839);
c. Mazeppa (1847); d. Études d’exécution transcendante (1852).

Table 3.1: Comparison of four different versions of Mazeppa

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<tr>
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<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length (measures)</strong></td>
<td>77</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>203</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tempo Indications</strong></td>
<td>Allegretto</td>
<td>Allegro patetico</td>
<td>A capriccio</td>
<td>Allegro Cadenza ad libitum</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Un poco animato il tempo</td>
<td>Allegro patetico</td>
<td>Allegro</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Allegro animato</td>
<td>Un poco animato il tempo</td>
<td>Animato</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Allegro</td>
<td>Allegro deciso</td>
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<td>Più moderato</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Vivace</td>
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The above comparison reveals that Liszt gradually expands the work from seventy-seven measures into more than two hundred. In the beginning, it was a basic study for the keyboard. There was no Mazeppa theme (see Ex. 3.7 below) present nor was there any change to its thematic material. When he revisited it thirteen years later, he added the Mazeppa theme but provided no title. The title first appeared in the piece’s separately published version in 1847. It is also the only version that included Victor Hugo’s poem in its preface, like the symphonic poem, which will be discussed later. In this separately published version, Liszt represented the ‘fall’ of Mazeppa by adding “descending diminished-seventh chords, followed by a dramatic silence” (Samson, 207). Finally, the final transcendental étude version has three staves, an added slow section, more ornamentation, and a cadenza in the opening. The ending was also expanded to depict him lying “[helplessly] on the ground, as he struggles to release.
himself and then to drag himself across the ground” (Samson, 207). There is also a triumphant ending to represent Mazeppa’s return as the ruler.

The story of “Mazeppa” begins with Ivan Mazeppa (1644 – 1709), a “Polish nobleman who was a page in the court of John Casimir, King of Poland (Searle, Orchestral, 293). He is historically accounted as an important Cossack rebel during the supremacy of Peter the Great (1694 - 1725). His story inspired poets, painters and musicians, such as Byron’s poem, "Mazeppa" (1818), Hugo's poem, "Mazeppa" (1829) and of course Liszt's symphonic poem Mazeppa (1852). Byron's poem explains Mazeppa's love affair with a Countess, who was married to an older man. After being discovered, the Count ties Mazeppa naked to a wild horse and sets it loose toward the direction of Ukraine, his homeland. Byron significantly describes the traumatic journey of the hero being strapped to the running horse. Nonetheless, it was Hugo’s poem that Liszt included in the score for his symphonic poem. The poem, as described by Keith Johns in his book The Symphonic Poems of Franz Liszt, suggests that it is “both story and allegory” (Johns, 65). The first section of the poem discusses the story of Mazeppa being tied to the wild horse and becoming the prince of Ukraine after being rescued. The allegory falls into the second part where “Mazeppa himself represents the suffering artist, the horse represents the relentless force of genius, and Mazeppa’s brush with disaster represents death and rebirth” (Johns, 65).

I will first study the symphonic poem’s reoccurring thematic materials. Throughout the discussion, musical excerpts will be taken from the two-piano transcription and their original orchestration will be detailed in the text. The examples
below generally follow the order of the score, unless the material reoccurs later in the music, in which case it may be mentioned earlier.

**Scale passages:**

All of the longer scale passages within this work are played by the strings. They are heard in triplets (Ex. 3.1), eighth notes (Ex. 3.2) and sixteenth notes (Ex. 3.3). These scale passages create a sense of urgency, building intensity and excitement.

Ex. 3.1: Mazeppa, S.100, m. 2

Ex. 3.2: Mazeppa, S.100, mm. 59 – 60

Ex. 3.3: Mazeppa, S.100, mm. 525 – 526
**Opening five-note melody:**

The five-note ascending thematic material (Ex. 3.4) appears in the opening while the strings intensely execute the triplet scale passages. Liszt assigns these five-note phrases to the clarinets and the bassoons, which create a hollow and mysterious atmosphere. Following the ascending melodic line, one will hear the descending five-note melodic answer played by the cellos and the bassoons (Ex. 3.5).

Ex. 3.4: Mazeppa, S.100, mm. 4 – 5

Ex. 3.5: Mazeppa, S.100, m. 20

**Four-note ascending sixteenth notes:**

These ascending four-note sixteenth-note passages often conclude phrases (Ex. 3.6), as if to have the music evaporate into the air. Very often, these groups are given to the flutes, piccolos or upper strings for their high registers will allow them to be heard clearly in the midst of other instruments.
The Mazeppa theme:
Throughout the entire work, this main theme (Ex. 3.7) is played by horns, trombones, tubas, cellos and double basses, to create a majestic and heroic atmosphere.

Sometimes wind instruments double the horns to enrich the sound during tutti sections.

Dialogues:
In this symphonic poem, Liszt writes dialogues for the winds and the brass. In this particular example, the conversation starts with the oboes, English horns, bass clarinets, bassoons and trumpets (Ex. 3.8), which is then answered by the flutes, clarinets, oboes and bassoons (Ex. 3.9). By having the flutes following the brasses, it creates a purity and peacefulness in the sound within the answer. Furthermore, the bassoon can create an
atmosphere of “austere, dark melancholy” (Wagner, 151), as was discussed in the preceding chapter.

Ex. 3.8: Mazeppa, S.100, mm.121 – 124 (oboes, english horns, bass clarinets, bassoons and trumpets)

Ex. 3.9: Mazeppa, S.100, mm. 125 – 128 (flutes, clarinets, oboes and bassoons)

**Constant low repeated note:**

Timpani are often responsible for intensity-building repeated notes, or the opening background beating or of course, the significant material before the Andante section which symbolizes the fall of Mazeppa (Ex. 3.10).

Ex. 3.10: Mazeppa, S.100, mm. 390 – 399
**Tremolos:**

*Tremolo* writing can allow “all registers of the keyboard to remain active,” similar to “the orchestral *tutti*” (Samson, 208). Using *tremolo* with the damper pedal will allow the piano to build up great sonorities, as full and grand as the whole orchestra. In the examples below, the strings at times play tremolos (Ex. 3.11a and 3.11b) in the background to set a new atmosphere for the woodwinds and brasses.

Ex. 3.11a: Mazeppa, S.100, mm. 214 – 220

Ex. 3.11b: Mazeppa, S.100, mm. 434 – 438

**Andante mesto:**

This slower section, “Mazeppa’s near death” (Johns, 65), contains thematic material that will also appear in the solo piano version. Provoked by the ascending dark eighth-note passage of the strings, the woodwinds and brasses painfully answer in descending melodic lines. These short phrases (Ex. 3.12), with slight chromaticism to depict the pain, are presented by bassoons, clarinets and flutes and the horns.
Ex. 3.12: Mazeppa, S.100, mm. 403 – 408

![Image of Ex. 3.12]

**Introduction of the march:**

Before the start of the march, the trumpets take the responsibility of the heroic material of the repeated three-note rhythm typical for trumpet fanfares (Ex. 3.13). They often act as the military bugle for their tones are both “brilliant and powerful” (Wagner, 218).

Ex. 3.13: Mazeppa, S.100, mm. 435 – 441

![Image of Ex. 3.13]

**March:**

The victorious return of Mazeppa is introduced by the trumpets and the strings (Ex. 3.14), and is continued by the horns and woodwinds. The transparent, joyful and fairytale-like theme (Ex. 3.15) is depicted by the upper woodwinds: flutes, oboes, English horns and the clarinets. The timbre of the flutes can easily portray the jubilant melody.
Ex. 3.14: Mazeppa, S.100, mm. 463 – 468

Ex. 3.15: Mazeppa, S.100, mm. 498 – 501

**Solo Piano Version:**

When Liszt wrote his final revision of the étude, he dated it “Eilsen 2 avril 1851” (Samson, 12) but was later published in 1852. The full score of the orchestral work was finished in 1851. The opening of the transcendental étude combines the separately published 1847 version with his symphonic poem. The final version has both the fiery triplets of the orchestral score and the double thirds from the 1840 piano score. The start of the transcendental étude starts with five bars of *fortissimo* rolled chords (Ex. 3.16a) which is like the opening shriek of the symphonic poem (Ex. 3.16b). In the orchestral version, the woodwinds and brasses are responsible for this opening chord. On the piano, it is easy for such a passage to sound overly metallic, dry and abrupt. Therefore, to imitate the resonance of the winds and brasses, the pianist can apply arm-
weight for the chord, with a slight pressure on the fifth finger of the right hand. Also, a touch of the damper pedal is needed, in order for the sonority of the chord to ring.

Ex. 3.16a: Mazeppa, S.139, mm. 1 – 3

Ex. 3.16b: Mazeppa, S.100, m. 1

The addition of the \textit{cadenza ad libitum} is based on the start of the symphonic poem (see Ex. 3.1 above). This cadenza (Ex. 3.17) creates the same effect as the triplets in the beginning of the orchestral version. It builds “a head of tension that strengthens
the sense of arrival, or rather departure, at m. 7, where the reckless journey begins” (Samson, 207). When a pianist carries out this section, instead of focusing solely on finger dexterity, he or she may strive to achieve the fluid bowings of a string player. The contour of the notes will be flowing smoothly if the pianist gently guides the fingers by the arms, similar to the evenness of a string player’s bow arm. This will better portray the canvas of sound, instead of drawing the listener's attention to the amount of notes written.

Ex. 3.17: Mazeppa, S.139, m. 6

\[ \text{Cadenssa ad libitum.} \]

The main Mazeppa theme then appears (Ex. 3.18) with fast-moving sixteenth notes in between. Without hesitation, the heroic material relates to the richness of the horns, trombones, tubas, cellos and double basses. The rich texture of the orchestral version suggests hearing the inner sixteenth-note passages as the strings once again.
Ex. 3.18: Mazeppa, S.139, mm. 7 – 10

The long octave passages (Ex. 3.19 and 3.20) are the replicas of the string section, hence, instead of being concerned over the octaves, one should attempt to hear it as a powerful single-note scale being played by all the string players.

Ex. 3.19: Mazeppa, S.139, mm. 25 – 26
Ex. 3.20: Mazeppa, S.139, m. 61

At m. 63, the melody in the left hand should be heard as the dialogue between the wind and the brass, and the right hand represented by the upper strings (Ex. 3.21). Although the orchestral version expanded the four-bar phrase in the piano score into eight, the melodic element heard here is equivalent to mm. 120 – 151. Liszt very likely extended the note values because other instruments can sustain much longer than the piano through the use of vibrato. However, in the orchestral score, the meter is in cut time and the tempo indication is *Un poco piu mosso, sempre agitato assai*, whereas the piano score only indicates to sing with vibrato. In addition to the shortening of the melody, the tonality is also altered, the étude being in B-flat major but the symphonic poem is in B-flat minor. The pianist should try to create different harmonic canvases for each modulation, instead of focusing on the rapid movements of the hands. For example, B-flat major is first heard from mm. 63 to 65 and then progresses to its diminished seventh chord and resolves back to the tonic triad in m. 66. (In the orchestral version, the B-flat minor tonality lasts from mm. 120 – 123, then the diminished seventh, and finally back to its tonic minor in m. 127.) Although the triads are arpeggiated in the right hand, one should strive to form the same background
foundation as the string section. The left hand should focus on the sound of the thumb
for it creates the main melodic dialogue of the winds and brasses.

Ex. 3.21: Mazeppa, S.139, mm. 63 – 70

Another interesting aspect of this passage is the Italian indication given by Liszt:

“*il canto marcato e vibrato assai.*” In the 1839 and 1847 versions, he only wrote

“*espressivo e un poco marcato il canto.*” He revised his indication by adding the word

“*vibrato,*” which suggests he was scoring more orchestrally with this etude. As

mentioned earlier, the melody in this section is played by the woodwinds and brasses in

the symphonic poem. Thus, Liszt wants the pianist to express these notes as a

woodwind or brass player would play with vibrato (though nineteenth-century

orchestral players used much less vibrato than modern players). Or, because of its tenor

register, one can also imagine a cellist passionately vibrating his strings. Although the
piano cannot vibrate like others, if one releases the pressure from the fingertips after depressing and listens to the vibration of the strings, the tone will ring longer.

The “animato” (Ex. 3.22) Mazeppa theme that follows the pompous string-like octave passages can be associated with the bright sound of the flutes and trumpets in the orchestral score at m. 68. Although dynamically they are very different, the brightness of the trumpet and flute sonorities can be applied to the top melodic notes in the right hand. The grace notes in the piano score are marked as sixteenth notes in the orchestra. Liszt may have rewritten the notation for the orchestra to create more drive towards each note within the theme. He might also have been concerned about the ensemble playing together since each player may have slightly different perception about the length of a grace note.

Ex. 3.22: Mazeppa, S.139, mm. 116 – 119

When the theme reappears at m. 138, because of its fortissimo dynamic range, it can be better compared to the tutti section at m. 331. Also, leading to m. 138, the ascending three-note sequence (Ex. 3.23a) appears in the three bars leading to the orchestra’s tutti (Ex. 3.23b). To better represent the full orchestra executing the Mazeppa theme, more use of the damper pedal and arm weight will be needed. Once
again, the inner grace notes signify the sixteenths in the woodwinds, so they should be fluttering in sound and not heavy.

Ex. 3.23a: Mazeppa, S.139, mm. 135 – 137

Ex. 3.23b: Mazeppa, S.100, mm. 327 – 329

Following the *tutti*, a transformation of the theme can then be heard in the bass (Ex. 3.24a) While the notation does not relate directly to any material in the orchestral work, the sonority can be compared to the lower brasses in m. 261 (Ex. 3.24b). As noted in the previous chapter, the lower brasses “give greater fullness and body” (Carse,
249) to the sound and harmony and have a “rich and poetic quality” (Widor, 58). One must make every effort to elongate the melody and not to be occupied by the right hand arpeggiated octaves.

Ex. 3.24a: Mazeppa, S.139, mm. 161 – 164

As mentioned earlier, the representation of Mazeppa’s near-death appears in both works. In the piano solo version, it is heard towards the end (Ex. 3.25). This mournful chromatic melody should straightforwardly allow the pianist to imagine the piano imitating the timbres of the bassoons, clarinets and horns. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the sonority of the horn in F in this passage may have been the “last, hoarse cry of the dying Cossack prince in the endless steppe” (Berlioz-Strauss, 260).

The three-note fragment that appears from m. 184 to m. 191 is the direct translation of the bassoons and cellos from the "Andante mesto" section in the orchestral version. As a result, the timbre of these notes would be dark and sorrowful.
The D-flat major triads seen in the example can be heard as the pizzicato fragments played by the string instruments. Instead of focusing on the staccato indication, the sound should resonate like a string's pizzicato with slight vibrato on the fingerboard.

Ex. 3.25: Mazeppa, S.139, mm. 180 – 191

Finally, the repeated-note idea in the ending (Ex. 3.26) is undoubtedly representing the trumpets, from the march. One can first imitate the glorious trumpet, which is then joined by the full orchestra at m.196 for the rich majestic ending.
Ex. 3.26: Mazeppa, S.139, mm. 193 – 203

If one approaches the transcendentál étude without knowing the symphonic poem or the poem, it may become overwhelmingly loud. Most of this work is indicated as fast and loud, which may also be the reason why so many pianists choose to perform it. It is easily a concert piece for the performer to showcase virtuosity. However, if one interprets the music from an orchestral perspective, with Hugo’s poem in mind, it will involve more than sheer keyboard technique. For instance, there are different shades of *forte*: Does it represent the full orchestra? Or the brass family? Or only the woodwinds? With careful planning, the piano will be able to create different shades of dynamics and timbres.
Tannhäuser Overture

In 1845, Wagner wrote the overture and his opera, *Tannhäuser und der Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg*, which is commonly known simply as *Tannhäuser*. It is a three-act opera set in the thirteenth century that involves goddesses, nymphs, sirens, knights and fantasy-like characters. The opera illustrates the knightly minstrel, Tannhäuser, and his struggle between spiritual and profane love, which is characterized by the goddess Venus and the angelic Elizabeth. After succumbing to temptation, Tannhäuser abandons his home and leaves for Venusberg. He eventually returns to atone for his sins; however, after joining a band of pilgrims to Rome, the Pope refuses to grant forgiveness to anyone that has left for Venusberg. Elizabeth then dies from despair waiting for Tannhäuser's return. As a result from seeing her funeral cortege, he releases his soul to join her in death.

The overture itself opens with shimmering, dramatic chords that lead into thrilling and expansive themes, which sets the atmosphere for the action in the scene that follows. The chanting pilgrims are represented by the clarinets and bassoons for their tone has “the most poetic thoughts and feelings” (Berlioz, 125). The score calls for three flutes (third doubling piccolo), two each of oboes, clarinets, and bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, triangle, cymbals, tambourine and strings.

Wagner first wrote the overture in 1845, known as the "Dresden" version, which was later revised in 1861 as the "Paris" version, for a special performance by the Paris Opera. In February 1849, Liszt presented the *Tannhäuser* overture in Weimar, it was
"[one] of his first important appearances as a conductor" (Suttoni, 3). Prior to this performance, Liszt wrote his piano transcription of the "Dresden" version in late 1848. Liszt's transcription follows the original version and differs, therefore, from the commonly performed "Paris" version today.

When Liszt finished the composition, he noted "it would find few performers capable of mastering its technical difficulties" (Suttoni, 3). One of the main challenges includes sustaining long singing melodies in the midst of octaves, heavy chords, scale passages or arpeggios. Not only are the technical passages challenging, but also the main melody is extremely difficult to sustain. Similar to Mazeppa, Liszt's Tannhäuser overture requires a lot of volume and velocity of the fingers. The pianist needs great physical stamina and sensitivity to different colours of sound production, so it does not become a burden to the ears of the listeners. With an analysis through orchestral textures, these possible difficulties may become less problematic if one becomes a conductor at the piano, instead of a sole pianist.

The orchestral version begins with the Pilgrims' Chorus, featuring two clarinets in A, horns in E and bassoons. After a sixteen-bar introduction, Wagner adds the full string section with the cello holding the responsibility of the main melody. In the piano version, at m. 16 (Ex. 3.27), Liszt specifically indicates "accentuato espressivo," which is a reminder to express the left-hand melody like a full cello section in the orchestra.
Ex. 3.27: Ouvertüre zu Tannhäuser, S.442, mm. 16 – 18

The music then evolves into repeated triplet chords to build up intensity into m. 38. There is now the full orchestra executing the music, with the violins responsible for the descending short sixteenth-triplets passages and the lower strings illustrating the melodic progressions with the woodwinds and brasses. In comparison, the pianist will need to incorporate all of those elements with two hands. To prevent the melody from disappearing within the triplets, Liszt reminds one to sustain it by stating: "marcatissimo la melodia sempre maestoso e senza agitatione." Also at m. 38 (Ex. 3.28a), it is common to see a pianist neglecting the importance of the main chords at the downbeats, because he or she may be afraid of decreasing the momentum of the music. However, one must realize that in order for a chord to ring through the whole bar, in the midst of notes, one must allow time to provide full weight into the keys for the notes to resonate. If the pianist himself cannot hear the chord half way into the bar, the audience would not either. It is always beneficial if one practices by playing only the melody from m. 38 until m. 69, listening and imagining each chord sustaining like the woodwinds, brasses and lower strings.
Ex. 3.28a: Ouvertüre zu Tannhäuser, S.442, mm. 38 – 39

![Sheet music image]

In this section, to avoid agitation as Liszt indicated, the pianist may accomplish the descending sixteenth with arms as calm as a long-bow gesture of a violinist (Ex. 3.28b). If the pianist executes these two-note sixteenths with abrupt movements, they will easily become agitated and uneven. Nevertheless, this can be prevented if the arm smoothly places the fingers above the keys and focuses on the index finger to provide the new position.

Ex. 3.28b: Tannhäuser, WWV.70, mm. 38 – 39 (violins)

![Sheet music image]

Liszt is anxious of the melody being lost, therefore, in addition to his indication at m. 38, he also adds at m. 62 (Ex. 3.29a), "sempre marcato il canto," and at m. 70 (Ex. 3.29b), "p ma sempre marcato." These may show how he, as a pianist, was aware that pianists would easily neglect listening to the sustaining of the melodic line due to the nature of the piano sound decaying and the preoccupation with executing technical passages. Thus he constantly reminds one to bring out the melody, regardless what
other music elements are required at the same time.

Ex. 3.29a: Ouvertüre zu Tannhäuser, S.442, m.62

![Musical notation image]

Ex. 3.29b: Ouvertüre zu Tannhäuser, S.442, mm. 70 – 72

![Musical notation image]

At m. 81, the new tempo indication for both works is marked "allegro," which is also where Wagner starts adding constant tremolos for the family of strings. To transcribe this element, Liszt had to divide it between the left and the right hands. When the right hand executes the tremolos with sixteenth notes, it is also responsible to deliver the chromaticism in the flute part. Tremolos may be difficult to execute, thus, one should strive to transfer the weight of the fingertips, so the wrist does not tire and cause tension. When one observes a string player executing tremolos, one will find his or her wrist being very relaxed and flexible. Although we do not have a bow to hold in our hands, we can certainly consider the similarity in the physical gesture to help us imitate their timbre more closely. Liszt writes his music in a conventional way for one to play the piano. For example, from m. 81 to m. 83, although the left hand needs to project the melody of the cello, the right hand stays very stationary (Ex. 3.30a). Then, while the right hand has rapid arpeggios and chromatic scales from mm. 84 to 87 (Ex.
3.30b), Liszt allows the left to stay grounded in one position with the tremolo. Once the pianist learns this coordination between the two hands, it would be easier to freely project the melody. If one pictures the different roles of the hands, it will make it easier to allow them to be independent, like the separate roles of instrumentation in the orchestra.

Ex. 3.30a: Ouvertüre zu Tannhäuser, S.442, mm. 81 – 82

Ex. 3.30b: Ouvertüre zu Tannhäuser, S.442, mm. 84 – 86

In addition to the coordination of the hands, it is also interesting to note that from m. 92 to m. 93, the orchestra score does not have the chromatic scales or the arpeggios. Instead of these components, Wagner has the low strings execute their double stops like a tremolo or to have the horns, flutes and clarinets to perform crescendo and decrescendo through a sustained note. Since the tone of a piano cannot
increase its volume after being depressed, Liszt adapts by creating the same dynamic changes through scale passages, which also allows the music to be more effective than to purely repeat notes or to solely sustain them (Ex. 3.31a). As a result of this adaptation, while one descends in these chromatic passages marked *crescendo*, the buildup of volume can be imagined as an instrumentalist blowing more air into the instrument or increasing the pressure of the bow onto the strings (Ex. 3.31b).

Ex. 3.31a: Ouvertüre zu Tannhäuser, S.442, mm. 92 – 93

Ex. 3.31b: Tannhäuser, WWV.70, mm. 92 – 93

Starting at m. 96, Liszt added "*delicatamente ma marcato*" to the score, meaning to delicately project the melody, but with clarity. With chordal melodies, the technique of voicing is extremely important. For example, in m. 96 (Ex. 3.32a), the right hand has
three layers of notes derived from the parts for flutes, oboes and clarinets. Therefore, the top register of each chord must shine through like the flautists. While the right hand becomes occupied with the tremolos at mm. 98 to 99 (Ex. 3.32b) like the violin score, the ear must stay attentive to the flute melody that needs to shine in the high register by applying more weight to the fourth and fifth fingers.

Ex. 3.32a: Ouvertüre zu Tannhäuser, S.442, mm. 96 – 97

Ex. 3.32b: Ouvertüre zu Tannhäuser, S.442, mm. 98 – 99

At m. 113, the right hand continues to imitate the flute melody with the violin tremolos, while the left hand now portrays the melancholies of the violas and the clarinets. There is then a slight difference in tempo indications at m. 124, where Wagner asks the orchestra to slightly slow down with "un poco ritenuto," but not in Liszt's version. However, instead of the constant groups of sextuplet chromatic scales, he rewrote it with alternating patterns in eighth notes, which will naturally feel less
urgent (Ex. 3.33). At m. 133, Wagner then indicates to slightly accelerate the tempo, but Liszt delays this marking until m. 141. In addition, another example of Liszt's solution to prevent the diminishing of the piano tone can be seen in mm. 137 to 139, where he rewrote the orchestra’s long-held notes into fast broken chords. Not only are the harmonies sustained, the volume will also buildup with the help of the pedal (Ex. 3.34).

Ex. 3.33: Ouvertüre zu Tannhäuser, S.442, mm. 124 – 125

![Ex. 3.33: Ouvertüre zu Tannhäuser, S.442, mm. 124 – 125]

Ex. 3.34: Ouvertüre zu Tannhäuser, S.442, mm. 137 – 139

![Ex. 3.34: Ouvertüre zu Tannhäuser, S.442, mm. 137 – 139]

Although octaves genuinely build up volume, the increase needs to be layered properly starting at m. 143, or the long-held melody notes will be covered by the left hand. In comparison to the orchestra score, the right hand is responsible for the sound of the whole orchestra, except the scale passages of the cellos and violas. Thus, the weight must remain in the right, although the left hand remains responsible for maintaining the harmonic support. (Ex. 3.35)
From mm. 158 until 171, Liszt allows the pianist's left hand to switch to the role of the melody, while the right needs to fulfill constant ascending arpeggios. The switch in the register avoids the possibility of overwhelming the listener with constant accompaniments in the bass, and it can allow the left hand to rest after the octave passages. Once again, engineering the hand coordination is very important in these bars. In order to allow the right hand to roam freely within the arpeggios, the left must stay physically very grounded with its melodic chords. By thinking in orchestral terms, the left hand acts as the projecting brasses and wind instruments, while the right is the moving scale passages of the string instruments (Ex. 3.36).

With the climax at m. 172, the middle voices must remain softer than the outer for it is only representing the string tremolos, not the melody (Ex. 3.37). Since the next eight bars are written for tutti orchestra, and the texture is much more dense, one must
strive to resist the fingers and push forward with the whole arm. Without careful physical gestures, the tone will easily become piercing to the ear.

Ex. 3.37: Ouvertüre zu Tannhäuser, S.442, mm. 171 – 173

At m. 191, the whole orchestra calls for a quiet long-held note over two bars.

Once again, one will see that Liszt uses long chromatic passages to sustain the sound on the piano. Three measures later until m. 217, Wagner asks half of the violin section to play with mutes, which will allow the tremolos to sound very faint and distant.

Meanwhile, the left hand is in charge of the mellow tone of a clarinet melody. After the eight bars of the clarinet solo, the right and left hand create the dialogue between the first violins, while continuing the tremolos in the middle register. Nevertheless, at m. 211, the left hand is required to rely on the stable right-hand tremolos, in order to leap back and forth to continue the dialogue of the violins (Ex. 3.38).

Ex. 3.38: Ouvertüre zu Tannhäuser, S.442, mm. 211 – 213

The main climax of this overture occurs at m. 299 when the orchestra now also
includes the tambourine, cymbal, triangle, horns, trumpets, trombones and tubas. Liszt here requires the pianist to produce a triple forte volume. (Ex. 3.39) One must imagine the piano as the whole orchestra, covering ranges between the flutes down to the low ranges of the cello.

Ex. 3.39: Ouvertüre zu Tannhäuser, S.442, mm. 299 – 301

At m. 372, Liszt adds "ben misurato" as a reminder to keep the left-hand chords very measured, in case the tempo rushes due to the rapid arpeggios. From mm. 382 until 420, he also spreads the piano part into three systems, which may yet again be viewed as evidence of his orchestral thinking at the piano (Ex. 3.40). The top system is responsible for the violin passages, the middle for the melody of the woodwinds and brasses and the bottom for the harmonic support of the lower strings. While the pianist performs this ending, he or she must forget the technical elements, and focus on the warm and full tone production of the tutti melodic chords versus the virtuosic scale passages.

Ex. 3.40: Ouvertüre zu Tannhäuser, S.442, mm. 382 – 384
Careful comparison with Wagner's orchestral score of *Tannhäuser* will allow the performer of Liszt's piano work to achieve more varied tone colors and better layering of the texture. When the texture is very dense with volume and notation, one must plan out the importance of each element, so the volume is not constantly overwhelming.

**Rigoletto Concert Paraphrase**

Giuseppe Verdi’s opera *Rigoletto* was completed on February 5, 1851 and premiered a little more than a month after. There are a total of three acts, with a dark story of four main characters: the Duke of Mantua, Rigoletto, Gilda and Sparafucile. The original title of the opera, *La Maledizione* (The Curse), refers to the curse placed on the Duke and Rigoletto by a nobleman, whose daughter had been seduced by the Duke with the encouragement of Rigoletto. Gilda, Rigoletto’s daughter, falls in love with the Duke and sacrifices her life to save him from the assassin hired by her father.

The instrumentation of the opera includes two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, *cimbasso*, timpani, bass drum, cymbals and the strings. The *cimbasso* was commonly used by both Verdi and Puccini. It was Verdi’s solution to the “search for a low brass instrument capable of playing fast passages and also creating the proper blend in the brass section of his operas” (Constantino, 1).

Liszt’s adaptation, titled *Rigoletto*, is a concert paraphrase of *Bella figlia dell'amore*, which is the famous quartet from Act III. A paraphrase is an original work
based on the theme of another. In the opera, the quartet is sung by the Duke, Maddalena (Sparafucile’s sister), Rigoletto and Gilda. The introduction illustrates the duet between the Duke and Maddalena, followed by Gilda and Rigoletto, who were eavesdropping outside the inn. During this quartet, the Duke attempts to seduce Maddalena, who rejects him. Meanwhile, Rigoletto brings Gilda to overhear the Duke’s unfaithfulness to her. The opening segment of the quartet begins with the Duke singing *Bella figlia dell’amore* (Beautiful daughter of love) to Maddalena. It is an extremely legato and longing melody. Maddalena then rejects him with a very short staccato phrase that is no longer than a bar. Immediately following is the entrance of Gilda, singing fast descending passages, expressing her despair. Finally, Rigoletto joins the quartet by singing his concern to his daughter.

Although the four voices sing simultaneously, Verdi kept their individuality throughout the excerpt. The Duke and Maddalena stay as the middle voices while exchanging lines of flirtation, with Gilda and Rigoletto singing the two outer parts. Not only do the voices have their own specific musical element, the type of emotion expressed by each character is also different. Therefore, when one executes Liszt’s paraphrase of this quartet, one must strive to illustrate four separate characters and emotions.

Liszt’s concert paraphrase on *Rigoletto* is six minutes long, which is approximately the same length as Verdi’s quartet. Unlike the *Tannhäuser Overture* transcription, the pianist should think like a vocalist more than an instrumentalist. The human voice is warmer and often more emotional for it is directly produced from our
body. Also, because of the text, we can also consider word paintings to execute a particular emotion based on the context. When the piano imitates the sound of an instrument, one can imagine a specific timbre. When the voice is to be imitated, one may first sing the melody and emotionally feel the text, before translating that experience onto the keyboard.

One of the most obvious difficulties is the execution of the octaves throughout the entire work. Gilda and Maddalena’s vocal parts are represented in octaves for they are doubled with the wind instruments in Verdi’s original score. Furthermore, the pianist must try to imitate the four characters from the quartet and switch between their individual emotions rapidly. To perform this piece, the pianist needs solid octaves, well-planned choreography of the two hands and arms, warm singing tone and, of course, stamina.

The paraphrase begins *Allegro, a capriccio*, which encourages the performer to interpret freely. The introduction in the piano version opens with fragments of Gilda and Maddalena’s vocal lines. Then it evolves into rapid arpeggios and broken chromatic passages that eventually modulate the opening E major into the D-flat major tonality of the main *Andante* section.

The *Andante* begins at m. 18, which is where the quartet commences. Liszt indicates *cantando* for he wishes the right hand to singingly express the Duke’s words:

*Bella figlia dell’amore*
*Schiavo son de’ vezzi tuoi;*
*Con un detto sol tu puoi*
*Le mie pene consolar*
*Vieni, e senti del mio core*
*Il frequente palpitar*
Beautiful lovable girl,
I am a slave of your charms;  
With one word, only one word...
You can comfort my sorrows.
Come and listen to my heart,
How fast it beats... (Paquin, 99 - 100)

This phrase was sung to Maddalena as he tried to seduce her in the inn. While the right hand interprets the warm tone of a tenor voice, the rolled chord represents the flutes, oboes, bassoons and the strings from the orchestra. Although the tone of the piano cannot vibrate like the voice, it is possible for it to ring more expressively if the key is depressed with a heavier arm while the finger melts into it with a flatter tip.

A very interesting element of this opening solo is the use of a tritone (Eb to Bbb) in m. 24 (Ex. 3.41a). When compared to Verdi’s version (Eb to Ab), there is no tritone present in this solo (Ex. 3.41b). Tritones were known as the “diabolus in musica”; Liszt likely has added this dissonant interval to add to the devilish flavor of the Duke’s personality.

Ex. 3.41a: Paraphrase de Concert sur Rigoletto, S.434, m.24
Measures 33 to 40 is a dialogue between the slurred-staccato, or *portato*, octaves of Maddalena’s words and Gilda’s despair through warmer and heavier octaves. Whenever the staccato octaves are present, Liszt accompanies them with wide staccato leaps in the left hand. Since both hands have very short notes to execute, there is often the tendency of becoming and sounding too occupied with the natural jumping motion of the hands.

One should consider the independence of the two hands in this passage. If the right-hand melody is heard vocally, the staccatos will not become overly short or involve too much jumping. Comparatively, the left hand acts as the instrumental accompaniment, where there is more separation between the notes. Distinguishing the different role of the hands, it will reduce the possibility of sounding or looking frantic at the keyboard (Ex. 3.42).

**Ex. 3.42: Paraphrase de Concert sur Rigoletto, S.434, mm. 33 – 34**

Liszt wrote Maddalena’s part in octaves because she doubles with the flautists in the orchestral version. Therefore, not only do the staccatos represent her laughing
gesture towards the Duke, the tone should also be as shimmering as the flutes.

Immediately following are the sorrowful melodic octaves that illustrate Gilda’s desolation after realizing the betrayal of her lover. In Verdi’s quartet, instead of doubling the singer with the flutes, he pairs the soprano with the oboes and the violins. The oboe has the natural tone of sorrowfulness, which is perfect for Gilda’s role (Ex. 3.43).

Ex. 3.43: Rigoletto, Act III, m. 65

Appearing for the first time in m. 37, Liszt transforms Rigoletto’s solo into the left hand and added “appassionato” for this is when he instructs his daughter: “Taci, il piangere non vale” (Be silent; now to grieve is useless). Simultaneously, the right hand cries out Gilda’s pain: “Infelice cor tradito, Per angoscia non scoppiar” (Unhappy me! forlorn, deserted, With anguish how my heart doth ache) (Ex. 3.44).
Ex. 3.44: Paraphrase de Concert sur Rigoletto, S.434, mm. 37 – 38

Following the four solos, the music flourishes into a cadenza-like section from m. 41 to m. 46, allowing all the previous emotions to uproar into turmoil. There are continuous alternating descending patterns during m. 45 and m. 46. In order to ensure evenness, the pianist could allow equal weight to be distributed between the two hands. Measure 47 to m. 74 continue like a cadenza, featuring the dialogue between the duke and Maddalena. However, while keeping these two vocal lines, Liszt writes virtuosic passages that vary from chromatic scales, double thirds and fourths, arpeggios, minor scales or different groupings of sextuplets. Instead of lining up the two hands metrically, one should imagine one hand being a vocalist while the other accompanies like the strings in the orchestra. Whenever one hand is singing the melody, regardless if it is the Duke’s singing tenor line or Maddalena’s laughing octaves, it must physically stay very stable with projected tone and remain close the keys so the other can unreservedly fulfill the virtuosic embellishment. Liszt may have foreseen the possibility of an immense canvas of sound being accumulated by the amount of notes; thus, he added soft and gentle indications such as *una corda*, *tranquillo*, *dolcissimo*, *sempre una corda* and *leggiero*. Likewise, he reminds that the left hand’s tenor melody must be *dolce* or *il canto ben marcato ed espressivo*, meaning to sweetly pronounce the notes
with great expressivity. Also, the right hand’s staccato octaves are required to be very quiet with each note slightly marked (*pp un poco marcato*).

Commencing at m. 73, Gilda’s misery transforms from long descending lines into short two-note phrases as she repeats her previous line: *Infelice cor tradito, Per angoscia non scoppiar* (Ex. 3.45). The two-note fragment can be imagined as the character sighing as she mourns. Here Liszt asks the pianist to interpret her words with great passion (*con somma passione*). In order for the octaves to sound like a voice exhaling, the accent must be placed on the first with the pressure releasing as one lifts off the hand with the second note.

Ex. 3.45: Paraphrase de Concert sur Rigoletto, S.434, mm. 73–74

![Music notation](image)

Nine measures later, the same melody is then embellished by repeated octaves. This may have two different meanings: to create more urgency in the emotion or it could be representing the repeated notes found in both Maddalena and Rigoletto’s parts while Gilda continues her two-note patterns. To produce these lightly repeated octaves, the wrist must be very relaxed to allow the hand to shake like a string player executing *spiccatos* (bowing technique where the bow bounces lightly upon the string). (Ex. 3.46)
Ex. 3.46: Paraphrase de Concert sur Rigoletto, S.434, mm. 81 – 82

The last nine bars of this piece are marked *Presto*, which does not exist in Verdi’s quartet. This is most likely purely a bravura ending that Liszt enjoys adding to his work to showcase the pianist’s virtuosity at the keyboard, such as the ending of his *Paraphrase de concert sur Ernani II* or the *Phantasiestück über Motive aus Rienzi*. To ensure accuracy and evenness in tone, the weight of the arms must be carried through at the bottom of the keys while the arm places the hands above each note. In other words, imagine a long legato line instead of individual octaves.

The *Rigoletto* concert paraphrase is a very different work compared to the *Mazeppa* or the *Tannhäuser* transcription. Both of the latter works require the pianist to think in orchestral terms and mimic various instruments at the keyboard. In comparison, *Rigoletto* will require one to become four separate vocalists, each with a different personality and emotion. Moreover, since it is a paraphrase, the pianist can have more freedom in tempo and interpretation because it does not need to follow the orchestral score like a transcription.

The examples included in this chapter will hopefully provide one with some potential ideas of how orchestral music may be linked to the piano. There is definitely
more than one way to translate certain timbre on the piano, but the more one experiments, the wider range of sound one will develop. The following two chapters will apply such knowledge onto works that exist solely on the piano in hopes to spark new inspiration for performers to explore further at the instrument.
Chapter 4

Ballade No.2 in B Minor

Liszt’s *Ballade No. 2* was written in 1853 and published by Kistner in 1854. In a letter to Hans von Bülow, dated May 12, 1853, Liszt “records finishing the Second Ballade and the B-minor Sonata,” and the findings “in the autograph confirm that the two works were written virtually at the same time” (Mueller, 5). This work was written during his years as a conductor and composer in Weimar (1848 – 1861), which were years “of Liszt’s greatest productivity” (Searle, *Music*, 54). Not only was he appointed as the Kapellmeister Extraordinaire at the Court of Weimar, he was a teacher, writer and composer. The compositions produced during this period were mainly for the orchestra, the piano and the voice; these include his first twelve symphonic poems, the *Faust* and *Dante Symphonies*, major piano works such as the *Sonata in B Minor* and the *Études d’Exécution*, transcriptions and large-scale vocal works. Before turning to the orchestral qualities of Liszt’s Ballade No. 2, I will briefly discuss programmatic associations with Liszt’s Ballade, the revisions to the Ballade’s ending, and the formal structure of the piece. Ballade is often referred to as a setting of a literary ballad or a narrative poem, but it is categorized as absolute music and has a structure often similar to that of a sonata form. Liszt chose to not say if “the music ‘meant’ anything other than itself” for he had previously “aroused a storm of angry protest” from those who “saw in his
‘programme’ music a threat to classical forms, and in his harmonic freedom a threat to disrupt the concept of tonality” (Kentner, 96). The lack of program by the composer has not prevented others from offering programmatic interpretations of the Ballade. Sacheverell Sitwell, a music critic of the mid-twentieth century, rather fancifully wrote the work has “great happenings on the epical scale, barbarian invasions, cities in flames – tragedies of public, more than private, import” (Sitwell, 193). Since the goal of this chapter is to imagine and incorporate orchestral colours and timbres at the piano, it can be beneficial to understand the two literary sources that others have associated with this work.

Although Liszt mentions no program, this work has been connected with the poetic image of Hero and Leander (Watson, 242), which is about “constant love triumphing over the raging elements” (Kentner, 96). Hero is a priestess of Aphrodite, and Leander is a young man from Abydos on the opposite side of the river. Leander falls in love with Hero and would swim across the water every night to see her. However, on a stormy winter night, the waves throw Leander in the sea and the wind blows out Hero’s lamp at the top of her tower. In the end, Leander loses his way and drowns. Hero then throws herself over the tower to die with him. (Shulman, 29).

Another literary association was with Gottfried Bürger’s ballad, Lenore. In this poem, Lenore is a woman who awaits her fiancé, William, to return from war. When he does not return with the soldiers, she complains to God about His unfairness. At midnight, a man who looks like William knocks at her door with a horse and asks her to join him in their marriage bed. She happily joins him on the
horse, but the ride is at a frantic pace, filled with ghostly landscapes. At sunrise, the man is revealed as Death, a skeleton with a scythe and an hourglass. The poem ends with Lenore punished by Death for quarreling with God (Emerson, 112 – 117).

Three different endings have been discovered for Liszt's Ballade. The first two are virtuosic, both with a grand ending in chords marked fff. The first ending (Ex. 4.1a) has the same rhythmic element from mm.113 to 128 (Ex. 4.1b), when the theme was first introduced in a tempestuoso drive. The second ending (Ex. 4.2a) is full of arpeggios and scales, finishing with an additional Allegro non troppo, which has the rhythm of the first ending and the alternating patterns from the Ballade’s climax between mm. 207 to 214 (Ex. 4.2b). The third ending fades away in volume, with the tempo indicated as Andantino, and this version is published in editions seen nowadays (Ex. 4.3).
Ex. 4.1a: Ballade No.2, S.171, First ending

Ex. 4.1b: Ballade No.2, S.171, mm. 119 - 121

Ex. 4.2a: Ballade No.2, S.171, Second ending

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2 The second ending appeared in the appendix of the journal, *Die Musik*, Vol.13, where “it was wrongly referred to as ‘the original, previously unpublished conclusion of the Second Ballad in B Minor’” (Mueller, 5).
(Ex. 4.2a continued)

Ex. 4.2b: Ballade No. 2, S.171, mm. 207 – 208
Ex. 4.3: Ballade No.2, S.171, Finalized third ending

The Sonata in B Minor was finished in February 1853, and later that spring, the Ballade No. 2 was completed as “an extension of his thoughts in the same key of

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3 There is actually no existing manuscript for the published pianissimo third ending. Liszt’s reworked soft ending resembles that of the Sonata in B Minor.
B minor” (Watson, 242). Although smaller in scale, this Ballade is “yet another one-movement drama which re-shapes sonata-form concepts” (Watson, 242). Liszt believes that “content should dictate structure,” and therefore, “form should never become formula” (Watson, 188). This idea results in his creation of thematic transformation, where the theme is altered through modulation, inversion, augmentation, diminution and fragmentation. Another formal device often used in Liszt’s writing “is the repetition of an expository section a tone or a semitone higher: this corresponds to some extent to the conventional classical repeat and Liszt felt that such repetition was justified in the interests of clarity (The Ballade No.2 contains an example)” (Watson, 188). This kind of repetition gave him a bad name as a composer and “a reputation for laziness,” but he was “aiming at a varied form of the repeat marks to be found at the end of the exposition of a classical sonata...[to] add extra variety” (Searle, Music, 56-57).

To better illustrate the structure of the work, the following chart outlines its form:
Ballade No.2 begins with the first subject in B minor and then repeated a semitone lower. In a traditional sonata form, there is a repeat sign at the end of the exposition. To differ from the classical composers, Liszt chose to rewrite the whole opening in B♭, not only is the subject repeated, but perhaps a darker atmosphere.

The transition, marked Allegro deciso, begins with fanfare-like material, gradually becomes agitated and then restates the first subject with chromatic accompaniment,

The transition, marked Allegro deciso, begins with fanfare-like material, gradually becomes agitated and then restates the first subject with chromatic accompaniment.
while showcasing virtuosity. The second subject then enters in D+ with the indication, *a piacere*, encouraging the pianist to freely perform with his or her own interpretation. In comparison to the first theme, it is much more sweet and tender. This is followed by a transformed *Allegretto* theme which had already appeared at the end of the first subject. Before the development starts, Liszt continues the peacefulness of the subject, with a hint of nostalgia by bringing back the material from before.

The Development of the ballade features the first subject and its chromatic accompaniment. To increase the intensity, Liszt begins with the original chromatic scale, then transforms it into a scale in octaves and finally ends with alternating octaves in both hands to create urgency, like *Mazeppa* (Ex. 3.20) or *Tannhäuser* (Ex. 3.40) from Chapter three. Some of the most virtuosic elements are found within the climax of the development, which will be discussed later.

The Recapitulation starts, “unusually, with the second subject” (Kentner, 97), and is followed by another thematic transformation of the *Allegretto*. Finally, the main subject enters in the Coda, transformed. Although volume is then built up after the transformed main theme, it ends with the beautiful material from the *Allegretto*. This manner of a peaceful ending is “a more typical Lisztian touch that is generally admitted” (Kentner, 98).

Overall, there is a great balance between virtuosity and expressivity within the Ballade. Thinking back to the two possible stories, there are definitely musical elements that can easily be related. First, in regards to *Hero and Leander*, the chromaticism can describe the stormy waves and the nostalgic second theme paints
the love between the characters. Similarly, the darkness and agitation of the Ballade can paint the picture of Death galloping through the night with Lenore, in contrast to when she recalls the memories of her and William.

Technically, it may not be as challenging as Liszt’s Transcendental Études, but in the Ballade the performer may encounter issues of balance, evenness of alternating octaves, smoothness of the chromatic scales or dynamically providing different shades of loudness or being able to project a soft but meaningful melodic phrase. From the discussions in the previous chapter, we have compared Liszt’s piano transcription and paraphrase with his or others’ original orchestral works. After observing how he translated orchestral terms onto the piano, we will now discuss how each section of the Ballade might be heard orchestrally.

**The Possible Orchestral Colours**

Even though Liszt did not attach any programmatic element to this work, pianists can experiment with the unlimited possibilities of orchestral sounds within the music to paint his or her own canvas. One of the most fascinating aspects of music is the fact that there is never one correct interpretation. What performers strive to achieve is: how successfully can one deliver and project his or her interpretation to the audience. The following analysis of the Ballade provides some of the possible ways one may relate orchestral elements in the music onto the piano.

In the opening of *Ballade No. 2* its “main subject strides mightily over chromatic waves in the bass” (Kentner, 96). The rumbling bass can be associated with the image of a storm, like the vicious sea in the story of *Hero and Leander*. This
imagery can be created by the low strings in the orchestra: the cellos and basses. The cello can create the low rumbling canvas of the storm while a clarinetist portrays the aching melody of the first subject (Ex. 4). One of the difficulties can be maintaining the evenness of sound and rhythm in the bass, while keeping it murmuring beneath the melody. Instead of thinking of the individual notes as a chromatic scale on a piano, the imagination of the bow arm can be incorporated. If a cellist executes this accompaniment, the bow arm would be fluid in one gesture, instead of a separate bowing for every note. Similarly, the pianist’s left arm can glide up and down like the cellist’s, while transferring the weight between each fingertip.

If the first subject (Ex. 4.4a) is to be assigned to the clarinet, it would be playing in its lowest register, which is the chalumeau register, mentioned earlier in Chapter two (page 25). This register of the instrument offers an “unusually rich, round tone distinctly apart from other [reed instruments]” (Wagner, 140). Liszt often assigned darker motives to the clarinet family, such as the use of solo clarinet in the opening of Die Ideale (Ex. 4.4b) or the bass clarinet in Tasso (Ex. 4.4c). In addition, the inner notes in thirds will match with the sound of the bassoons for it can be “put to [the] most surprising effect either in a slow melody or in an accompaniment figure” (Berlioz, 114). The timbre of a bassoon can create an atmosphere of “austere, dark melancholy, which is completely unique in orchestral sonorities” (Wagner, 151). Liszt used this quality of the bassoon to portray his funeral motive in Hungaria. (Ex. 4.4d). This colour will add onto the ominous atmosphere to this opening.
The balance of the two hands must be considered for the pianist cannot vibrate the melody notes like a wind instrument. If one visualizes a single clarinetist being accompanied by the cello section, it is without doubt that the conductor must ensure the melody is well balanced with the accompaniment. Since the sound of the piano decays naturally, one will need to constantly imagine creating vibrato on each melodic note through the use of arm weight.

Ex. 4.4a: Ballade No.2, S.171, mm. 2 - 7

Ex. 4.4b: Die Ideale, S.106, mm. 12 – 17 (Clarinet in B-flat)
Although the first subject can be associated with the clarinet, the final measures leading to the “Lento assai” will be out of the range of the clarinet. At this moment in the music, since the chromatic passage has stopped, the principal cellist can take over the climax of this subject (Ex. 4.5). Certainly, the idea of a singing vibrato must continue, this time on the cello, and Liszt has indicated *rinforzando molto*.

Ex. 4.5: Ballade No.2, S.171, mm. 17 – 20

The second part of the same theme (Ex. 4.6) then takes over, “gentle, contrasted in character to the first part, yet poetically somehow consistent with it” (Kentner, 97). The wide range of tones will require a variety of instruments to create the complete image. The peaceful atmosphere and the higher range of tone
will need to incorporate the violins and the flutes. The beginning, marked *Lento assai*, will require the cello in the low register, with the violins and woodwinds filling in the voices. Although the flute can easily be drowned out by other instruments, its higher octaves can “cut through almost any orchestra texture [and] the tone remains expressively lyric and poetic” (Wagner, 137). Therefore, it would be suitable to imagine the flutes as the top voice in this section, with the addition of the violins in the *Allegretto* measures to reinforce the *dolce* legato melody. Very often, pianists project the notes within the chords without considering which voice(s) should be more or less important. Through the idea of instrumentation of the chords and understanding the nature of each sound quality, it will conceivably be easier for one to voice accordingly.

Ex. 4.6: Ballade No.2, S.171, mm. 21 – 27

![Ex. 4.6: Ballade No.2, S.171, mm. 21 – 27](image)

Beginning in measure 70 is the fanfare material (Ex. 4.7a), marked *Allegro deciso*. This is the first moment when the music can be technically challenging. Instead of choreographing the hands based on theoretical analysis, we will instead think in terms of projecting different orchestral instruments. In Liszt’s music, the
brass section will always be featured where there is march-like thematic material with dotted rhythm. We have seen such instrumentation in Mazeppa from the previous chapter (Ex. 3.13) where the trumpets take the responsibility of the heroic material for their timbres are “brilliant and powerful” (Wagner, 218). Or, returning back to his Hungaria, we can also observe the distinct use of the trumpets in the opening of the Allegro eroico section (Ex. 4.7b), where eroico literally translates to “heroic.” Likewise, in Les Préludes (Ex. 4.7c), the brass section is once again responsible for the dotted rhythm, in addition to the marcatissimo indication. In between the march-like motive are the ascending scales, which are to be thought of as the upper strings for fluidity. Thus, when one needs to jump from one register to another, instead of rushing to relocate, one can imagine a conductor pointing at different sections in the orchestra. In order to allow the ear to hear clear changes between the instruments, the rests are very important. As a result, instead of thinking the rest as pure silence, one should use the moment to audiate a different sound he or she will next project.

Ex. 4.7a: Ballade No.2, S.171, mm. 70 – 73

Ex. 4.7b: Hungaria, S.102, mm. 208 - 211
At the end of this fanfare section, the *marcato* bass C-sharp with accented half notes (Ex. 4.8) may be the combination of the timpani and the cellos, where the timpani is responsible for the repeated note and bass for the stressed moving bass line. As mentioned in Chapter two, the timpani is one of the percussion instruments that “produce definite musical sounds as opposed to mere noise” (Forsyth, 42). Simultaneously, the violins can articulate the *marcato* melody using the *détaché* bowing, which will allow each note to be “vigorously articulated” (Wagner, 37). The *rinforzando* triads will continue to be the combination of the woodwinds and the violins. To prevent the repeated notes from becoming too apparent, pianists can relate the fingers to the timpanist’s mallets. For them to gently rumble in the bass, the mallets need to stay very close to the skin of the timpani. Analogously, if the fingers stay very close to the keys, it will help to produce a similar sonority.
Starting at measure 96 (Ex. 4.9a), Liszt creates agitation through shorter alternating chromatic-octave motives. Since the melody shifts between the bass and the treble clef, the pianist can imagine a dialogue between the lower and upper strings. Unlike the opening cello accompaniment where the arms are fluid and smooth, the agitation in this passage is created through bow changes. Likewise, the weight between the thumb and the fifth finger must be evenly distributed like a violinist’s up and down bows. Without the evenness in the weight, the octaves will easily sound jagged. While one hand is active like a string player, the other should sink into the keys and strive for the melodic line to vibrate as discussed earlier. If there is no such distribution of responsibilities between the hands, the music can sound overwhelming with the amount of notes and sheer volume.
As we approach the climax, the chords become wider in tone range (Ex. 4.9b), suggesting addition of instruments, likely the brass, to add power.

Finally, at measure 113, tutti should be related to this climactic moment. The first subject appears in fortissimo, in the midst of fast arpeggios and the stormy accompaniment from the beginning. Similar to Mazeppa (symphonic poem) (Ex. 4.9c), the main theme could be played by horns, trombones, tubas, cello and the double basses, to create the majestic and heroic atmosphere (Ex. 4.9d), while the winds and strings continue to execute the scalar motives. However, because the
fanfare dotted rhythm is also incorporated, therefore part of the brass section will be given to those motives. Without thinking orchestrally in this climax, it is difficult to produce different layers of tonal colours. There should be one layer provided by the melodic line, one by the flourishing arpeggios, one for the dotted fanfare rhythm and the last layer for the chromatic passage. By associating different instruments to each layer, the pianist will then focus on emulating a conductor at the piano, painting different colours, instead of executing every note.

The climax ends with the *espressivo* transition (Ex. 4.10a) into the second subject. The writing corresponds to the opening section of the *Lento assai*, and as a result, we can continue to relate the first three measures to the woodwinds and the violins to help with voicing. Nonetheless, beginning in measure 131 to 134, a distinct solo is heard (Ex. 4.10b). Since the melody continues to have a melancholy trait, the oboe can be considered as the related timbre. Berlioz strongly believes that the oboe's bittersweet tone can be expressed marvelously through a “cantabile” melody (Berlioz, 104). Moreover, it has a penetrating tone, which will aid the pianist to really yearn to project this single-note melody.
Ex. 4.9c: Mazeppa, S.100, mm. 36 – 37
Ex. 4.9d: Ballade No.2, S.171, mm. 113 – 115

Ex. 4.10a: Ballade No.2, S.171, mm. 129 – 131

Ex. 4.10b: Ballade No.2, S.171, 131 – 134

The second subject (Ex. 4.11) begins at measure 135, marked *a piacere,* where the performer must interpret more freely. The pianist must allow the melody to sing for Liszt has indicated *cantando* as a reminder. For the nature of this beautiful, yet aching melody, the clarinet may be the instrument of priority. Its mid-register is often used to project “the most poetic thoughts and feelings” (Berlioz).
Relating back to the literary sources mentioned earlier, this melody can either be that of Lenore's love for William or Hero to Leander.

Ex. 4.11: Ballade No.2, S.171, mm.135 – 138

The Allegretto material reappears following the second theme (Ex. 4.12); however, the left hand has been transformed into a small arpeggiated motive. The melody travels between the middle and the high register, and thus one can imagine yet another dialogue between the upper strings and the upper woodwinds. To voice the top effectively, the weight must be given to the fingers delivering the melody. Moreover, the wrist must help to shift the weight from one chord to the other, so the pressure will be passed on gently and evenly. The left-hand motive may be associated with the violas with fluidity of the bow arms, and in this case, the gentle rotation between each fingertip. The sustained pitch would be the cellos or basses. Another possible conception of this passage would involve the use of harp. In this scenario, the orchestration would have a high string melody, low sustained string bass, and the harp would execute the arpeggios in the middle-register. This combination often serves as celestial, or heavenly, music.
The atmosphere in this segment, from measures 143 to 158, is very nostalgic and angelic, like the sun after a storm.

The Development begins like the opening of the ballade (Ex. 4.13), a singing melody with again the chromatic accompaniment. The bass chromaticism should be maintained by the cellos while the first theme can be a combination of the strings and woodwinds. However, instead of the clarinets, the upper line can be given to the oboe for it is very capable of “expressing the human feelings in all their varying shades” (Widor, 20). With the colour of the oboe imagined, the pianist may hear the melodic line penetrate through easier and will not be distracted from the continuity of this line by the rolling of the chords.

Ex. 4.13: Ballade No.2, S.171, mm.161 – 164
As Liszt wishes to have the music become agitated, he transforms the chromatic scales into alternating octaves to increase the intensity (Ex. 4.14), which is passed between the upper and lower registers. Therefore, these sixteenth-note passages should be imagined as exchanges between the upper and the lower strings. Meanwhile, the winds will be responsible for the long melodic line of the first subject.

Ex. 4.14: Ballade No.2, S.171, mm. 176 – 178

The climax of the Development is found from measures 199 to 214, where Liszt asks for stringendo, crescendo molto, fff and rinforzando molto. If we relate back to Lenore, this very possibly is the moment when Death rides ferociously and reveals himself to Lenore; or, it may be the moment when Leander dies in the stormy night and Hero discovers his body. The alternating octaves between the two hands (Ex. 4.15a) at measures 199 to 206 were previously discussed in relation to Mazeppa (Ex. 3.19 and 3.20) and to Tannhäuser (Ex. 3.40) where both of these orchestral works gave these patterns to the string sections. When a string player executes such a passage, the up and down bows will have the same amount of pressure on the strings. As mentioned above, to obtain the evenness, the weight between the left and right hand must be the same. At measure 207, the fanfare material appears again (Ex. 4.15b), which then calls for the whole brass and woodwind section to further build up the sonority, with the strings continuing their
sixteenth-note passages. In conclusion, these sixteen measures should be marked as *tutti* in the pianist’s imagination, in order to imitate the sound of the whole orchestra at the piano. One of the common interpretation pitfalls of such a Lisztian climax is to play as loudly as possible on the piano. If one only considers volume, the tone quality may as a result be harsh and piercing. Thus, by hearing **fff** as the accumulation of sound from the whole orchestra, the tone will become warmer and richer in colours. The half notes will have resonance of the low woodwinds and strings, the triplets will ring like the trumpets and upper winds, and the octaves will be as insistent and driving as the upper strings.

Ex. 4.15a: Ballade No.2, S.171, mm. 199 – 200

![Ex. 4.15a](image)

Ex. 4.15b: Ballade No.2, S.171, mm. 207 - 208

![Ex. 4.15b](image)

As mentioned above, the Recapitulation does not begin with the first subject, but the second (Ex. 4.16). Since the melody has already been stated, and is now fuller in tone and higher in range, the flutes can replace the oboes in the upper line.
By hearing the flutes instead of the oboes, the tone will not be as painful in mood, but perhaps more accepting.

Ex. 4.16: Ballade No.2, S.171, mm. 225 – 227

The *Allegretto* theme is once again transformed from measures 234 to 253. Since Liszt indicates this section as *dolce placido*, meaning sweetly peaceful, the upper strings handling the melody can use the technique, *sur la touche*, to create a softer and more delicate tone. The lower strings will be executing the harmonic elements at the end of each measure (Ex. 4.17).

Ex. 4.17: Ballade No.2, S.171, mm. 233 - 235

The Coda (Ex. 4.18), marked *Allegro moderato*, starts with the first theme transformed, creating a *cantabile* line in the middle voice. Since the melody is in the lower register in this transformation, it would be suitable for the cellos to carry out the phrase. Liszt’s *tenuto* markings suggest more arm weight into each note, so it can sing out and project like the cellists.
At measure 269, the arpeggiated left hand emerges once more as the harp, while the woodwinds join the upper strings executing the second theme (Ex. 4.19). This is very similar to the thematic transformation mentioned in *Mazeppa* from Chapter three (Ex. 3.24a), where the main subject is accompanied by an arpeggiated sixteenth-note passage.

The alternating octaves lead the music into the final dramatic context at measure 284. From this measure onwards until 301, the brass and woodwinds will be crying out the theme, while the strings fill in all the sixteenth-note passagework (Ex. 4.20a). Liszt's *grandioso* marking invites the performer to enjoy the full sonority of each chord before leaping down to the scale passages. In comparison, the conductor will never allow the strings to enter before the audience hears the full tone of the melodic chords.

After eight measures, Liszt writes out two different versions (Ex. 4.20b). Although the pianist has to choose to play either the scales or the repeated chords, it
might be assumed that Liszt would have preferred to have everything played in order to create the *grandioso* climax, marked *fff.* If a full orchestra is pictured, the scales would have been assigned to the strings while the woodwinds and brasses are responsible for the chords like before. Regardless which version the pianist chooses, he or she must keep in mind the sound of the full orchestra, parallel to measure 199. How can both climaxes differ in sound? Liszt did not indicate the additional stave in the first climax, nor did he indicate *grandioso.* He likely heard this section as the main climax of the whole work for he wanted to express the sound of the complete orchestra through longer scale passages, which will accumulate more sound, and more chords of the same tonality are added. With the chords travelling from low to high register, Liszt is adding on different instrumentation at a time on the piano, with the help of the pedal.

Ex. 4.20a: Ballade No.2, S.171, mm. 284–286
Lastly, the *Andantino* ending (Ex. 4.21a) is the last revisit of the previous melody from the *Allegretto* segment. It is comparable to the end of the *Sonata in B Minor* (Ex. 4.21b) for Liszt chose to have both works end in a sacred whisper. The strings will need to use their mutes to blend in with the woodwinds as the music decreases in volume until it reaches *pianissimo* at the very end.

Ex. 4.21a: Ballade No.2, S.171, mm. 311 – 316
If one hears orchestrally throughout the entire *Ballade No. 2*, it will widen the range of tone and colour at the piano. Not only will it have 88 keys, but it will able to reproduce the sound of a timpani, a string, woodwind or brass instrument, or the most exciting of all, a full orchestra. As Berlioz once said, the piano should be regarded “either as an orchestral instrument or as itself a complete little orchestra” (Berlioz, 93). Furthermore, it can also solve technical challenges by wanting to create different sonorities, instead of attempting to execute every individual note. For example, if one plays each note of a scale dutifully, not only is it tiring physically after time, it is also overwhelming to the ears. By contrast, when one accomplishes the passage with a bigger gesture like the arm of a bow gesture, the music will flow easily. Also, playing the climactic sections with pure force often creates only one effect, which is often, loud and harsh. If the entrances and qualities of different instruments are heard, many more shades of colours will be painted onto the sonic canvas.
Chapter 5

Rhapsodie Espagnole

Between 1844 and 1845, Liszt travelled to Spain, Portugal and Gibraltar. He was the first pianist to have ever toured within the Iberian Peninsula. During his visit, he attended many private soirées where “he met local musicians and absorbed many Spanish musical folk idioms” (Watson, 72). While he was travelling, he wrote the transcription of the Marche funèbre from Donizetti’s Dom Sébastien de Portugal and the Grosse Konzert-Phantasie über spanische Weisen. The latter, written in February 1844, published posthumously in 1887 after Liszt’s death, shares one melody with his most famous Spanish work, the Rhapsodie Espagnole (Folies d’Espagne et Jota Aragonesa), which was written some years later, in 1858, and will be the focus of the present chapter.

The Rhapsodie Espagnole is based on two Spanish dances: La Folia and Jota Aragonesa. The melody of La Folia had been used by many composers, such as Scarlatti, Vivaldi, Handel, Bach and most famously in Corelli’s Sonata no.12 in D Minor “La Folia” for the violin (which would, of course, later be an inspiration for Rachmaninoff). Jota is a type of Spanish dance that originated in Aragon, typically in ¾ time, and is found in works by Saint-Saëns, Ravel and Bizet. Another work in relation to Liszt’s Rhapsodie Espagnole is Busoni’s arrangement of it for the piano.
and orchestra, which was premiered by Bartók in Manchester in 1904 (Watson, 73), and to which we will return below.

The structure of the fantasy is constructed with a cadenza opening and bravura transitions and variations connecting three separate themes:

Table 5.1: Rhapsodie Espagnole Structure Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Tonality</th>
<th>Meter</th>
<th>Tempo</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – 12</td>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>c#/ d-</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Lento/ad lib.</td>
<td>Cadenza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 – 44</td>
<td>Theme 1a</td>
<td>c#/ E+</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Andante moderato</td>
<td>Folies d’Espagne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44 – 60</td>
<td>Theme 1b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lyrical theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 – 76</td>
<td>Variation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>March rhythm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76 – 101</td>
<td>Interlude</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chromatic transition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101 – 120</td>
<td>Variation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Octave transition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120 – 136</td>
<td>Bridge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Un poco meno Allegro</td>
<td>Connect theme 1 &amp; 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136 – 169</td>
<td>Theme 2</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>3/8</td>
<td>Allegro</td>
<td>Jota aragonesa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>169 – 193</td>
<td>Transition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3rd’s lead into variation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>193 – 312</td>
<td>Variation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Variation on Jota</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>312 – 337</td>
<td>Theme 3a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Un poco meno Allegro</td>
<td>Melody from Spanish Fantasy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>337 – 380</td>
<td>Theme 3b</td>
<td>F+ / A♭+</td>
<td></td>
<td>con grazioso in 3rd’s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380 – 416</td>
<td>Variation</td>
<td>E+ / E♭+</td>
<td></td>
<td>Variation on Jota</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>416 – 540</td>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>a- / D+</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lead back to theme 3b</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>540 – 635</td>
<td>Variation</td>
<td>B♭+ / D+</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sempre presto</td>
<td>Variation of theme 3b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>635 – 658</td>
<td>Theme 1</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td></td>
<td>Non troppo allegro</td>
<td>Theme 1 ending</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The possible technical challenges in Rhapsodie Espagnole include rapid changes between the registers, alternating octaves or single notes between the two hands, flourishing scale passages, fast chordal passages, finger dexterity within the cadenza and the “Liszt octaves”. The “Liszt octaves” is one of his “most famous keyboard discoveries, [it is] the device of alternating...octaves, with interlocked thumbs” (Walker, Reflections,
Compared to the traditional double octaves, it allows the player to “move at twice the speed with half the effort” and one of its most significant examples can be found in the *Rhapsodie Espagnole*, where “it is used thematically to reinforce the melodic outline of the *Jota aragonesa*” (Walker, *Reflections*, 207) (Ex. 5.1). Musically, one should be familiar with the dances, La Folia and Jota Aragonesa, to bring out the specific Spanish flavor within them. Liszt has also created an enormous spectrum of colours through the different types of musical elements and dynamic changes.

Ex. 5.1: Rhapsodie Espagnole, S.254, mm. 508 – 512 (“Liszt Octaves”)

To interpret all of the contrasts found in this work effectively, the pianist may first listen to Busoni’s transcription, which can inspire him or her to hear the piece orchestrally. Not only was Busoni known for editing and transcribing compositions of Liszt, but he also gave a famous recital series featuring his music. In Busoni’s transcription, the pianist does not need to leap as much because “its brilliances [are] cleverly distributed between [the] piano and orchestra” (Friskin, 377). This is an important difference to consider because the pianist can interpret register changes as separate instrumentations, instead of purely relocating the hands frantically up and down on the keyboard. Particularly valuable is Egon Petri’s recording, made in 1941 with the Minneapolis Symphony, conducted by Dimitri Mitropoulos. Not only was Egon
Petri a specialist in the music of Liszt (and Bach) but he was Busoni’s piano student and therefore likely interprets Busoni’s transcription along the lines imagined by its creator.

An arrangement of the *Rhapsodie Espagnole* was made by Mikhail Petukhov for piano and strings in 1980. Petukhov himself has recorded this work with the Bolshoi Theatre Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Yuri Simonov. The piece is different from Busoni’s because Petukhov adds a string orchestra as a “separate polyphonic pattern in which elements of new thematic material are contrapuntally interwoven.” His idea was to create a work for the orchestra by combining his new musical elements for the strings, in addition to Liszt’s original work, which “reproduces the impression of heavy brass as well as poignant woodwind and resounding percussion instruments.”

Owing to its freedom with Liszt’s music, Petukhov’s arrangement is of less direct interest to the present study.

The objective of this discussion is to allow the pianist to overlook the technical difficulties in Liszt’s *Rhapsodie Espagnole* by thinking and hearing orchestrally. The description of Liszt’s piano composition written by musicologist, Claude Rostand, can be closely associated to this rhapsody:

[Liszt writes] leaps over long intervals, pizzicati, glissandi, tremolos, brilliant double-note phrases, high-trills imitating the cymbalon, dovetailing or cross over of hands and that habit of producing a strong singing inner part by alternating between thumbs...showed himself to be a symphonist of the keyboard. [He] created that style of orchestral piano playing which is one of the characteristics of modern piano playing – a style which brings to the instrument all its potential proportions and repercussions of sound. (Rostand, 106 – 107)

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1 Professor Sergey Proskourin. Preface found in the beginning of Mikhail Petukov’s score to his arrangement of Franz Liszt’s Spanish Rhapsody for piano and strings.
In addition to the comparison of various orchestra compositions by Liszt himself, there will be examples from Busoni’s transcription, to provide possible orchestral ideas within the rhapsody. Also, when relevant, excerpts from Liszt’s original *Grosse Konzert-Phantasie über spanische Weisen* will also be included to indicate the first ideas he had of this Spanish work.

The opening of the *Rhapsodie Espagnole* is a cadenza featuring chords, tremolos and arpeggiated passages. The use of pedal in measures 1 and 3 is often interpreted differently by various pianists. In the example below (Ex. 5.2a), the pedal is indicated to sustain through the whole measure, but on our modern piano, without doubt, the harmonies would be blurred, and the rhythm would not be clear. If one compares the rhythmic element with the opening of the *Folies d’Espagne* (Ex. 5.2b), it is more logical to separate the pedal so the emphasis is placed more on the second beat. If we were to consider Liszt’s piano during the time of the composition, it may not yet have the same structure as our modern grand piano. The iron frame, which allowed greater string tension, was invented in 1825 but was not incorporated into a grand piano until 1840 by the Chickering piano company (Palmieri, 283). Liszt owned two Chickering grand pianos, one was made in 1867 and the other in 1879, both on display at the Budapest Franz Liszt Museum in Hungary. If both of the Chickering are dated after the work was composed, he may have used a piano that allowed him to pedal through the first bar without any clashing of the harmonies or blurring of the texture. In addition, Busoni’s transcription ensures a complete silence after the violins execute the first chord.
Ex. 5.2a: Rhapsodie Espagnole, S.254, mm. 1-2

Ex. 5.2b: Rhapsodie Espagnole, S.254, mm. 12 -13

From measures 9 to 12, if Liszt were to orchestrate these passages, he would have very likely assigned them to the harp. We can compare this opening (Ex. 5.3a) with the harp part written in his symphonic poem, Les Préludes (Ex. 5.3b and 5.3c) or the rolled chords in the left hand with the ending of the Elegy No.1 for harmonium, harp, piano and cello (Ex. 5.3d).

Example 5.3a: Rhapsodie Espagnole, S.254, m. 9
Example 5.3b: Les Préludes, S.97, mm. 20 - 21

Example 5.3c: Les Préludes, S.97, mm. 80 – 81 (harp)

Example 5.3d: Elegy No.1, S.196, mm. 101 – 102 & mm. 122 – 123 (harp)
As noted in Chapter two, Berlioz described the high resister of the harp as having a “freshness” of sound that makes it “suitable for graceful, fairy effects” and when the range also extends into the lower octave, it creates the “veiled, mysterious” (Berlioz, 74) sound. Nonetheless, this opening cadenza is meant to be played *forte*, and thus the “fairy effects” will not be a suitable colour, but one can imagine how a harpist would let these passages flow under his/her gliding fingers.

The Folies d’Espagne starts mysteriously in the lower register. This range is very suitable for cellists to execute this opening melody. As stated in Chapter two, one of the main orchestral developments was the “increased use of the violoncello as an independent voice” (Carse, 225). During Liszt’s years in Weimar, he wrote a lot of solos for the cello, such as in his Piano Concerto No. 1 and No. 2. One of the most prominent cello solos can be found in the second concerto when it is accompanied by the piano and carries out the transformed opening theme in the *Allegro Moderato* section (Ex. 5.4a). From measures 19 to 44 of the Rhapsody, Liszt gradually increases the layers of sound until he reaches the lyrical theme. With this textural consideration, the pianist should first plan the *crescendo* so the climax is delayed until *tutti*-like measures. Also, when the hands relocate their registers, one can interpret the movement as a conductor indicating the entrances of the instruments, instead of focusing entirely on the movement of leaping from one position to another. Looking at Busoni’s orchestral version, the half notes from measures 19 – 25 (Ex. 5.4b) are given to the lower woodwinds, brass and strings. Then as the melody transforms into dotted rhythm in measure 28, it becomes a dialogue between the clarinet and the cello as the motive
changes registers (Ex. 5.4c), accompanied by strings and lower woodwinds. As the
music thickens in texture, brasses and the upper strings are added to create a *tutti*
sonority by measures 42 and 43 (Ex. 5.4d).

Ex. 5.4a: Piano Concerto No.2, S.125, mm. 225 – 232 (cello)

Ex. 5.4b: Liszt-Busoni Spanish Rhapsody, mm. 18 – 23

Ex. 5.4c: Liszt-Busoni Spanish Rhapsody, mm. 28 – 31 (Tenor:Clarinet; Bass: Cellos)
Ex. 5.4d: Liszt-Busoni Spanish Rhapsody, mm. 42 – 43 (Brass added – tutti)

The *espressivo* octave scales of the lyrical theme in measure 44 can be difficult in terms of setting an atmosphere of serenity. The descending passages in the right hand may be compared to the smoothness of one bowstroke gesture that lasts for two full measures. Simultaneously, the French horns may be heard in the left hand, which whispers the melody of the Folies d’espagne (Ex. 5.5a). They have the quality like the clarinets, with its “extraordinary blending qualities” (Wagner, 207) and have a “rich and poetic quality” (Widor, 58) to their tone. As the lyrical motives enter the lower register in measure 52 (Ex. 5.5b), the cellists can take over the melody as an answer to the upper strings.

Ex. 5.5a: Rhapsodie Espagnole, S.254, mm. 44 – 45
Ex. 5.5b: Rhapsodie Espagnole, S.254, mm. 52 - 53

Note that Liszt never neglects the indication of *espressivo* when he really wants a motive to be projected expressively.

The march from measures 60 – 76 (Ex. 5.6a) is typical Lisztian writing, creating a heroic moment. The rhythm is usually dotted and marked either as *animato* or *marcato*. We can find similar style of marches in *Mazeppa* (Ex. 5.6b), mentioned in the previous chapter, in his *Scherzo und Marsch* (Ex. 5.6c) or the *Allegro deciso* section that was mentioned in the *Ballade No. 2* in Chapter 4. In a march, the tightness of the rhythm is one of the most important elements for its style. Since timpani were often used to support the orchestra in rhythmic figures, as discussed in Chapter 2, it would be a good support here in the lower voices. Busoni assigns the march to the full orchestra, and he also adds the timpani to this section. Furthermore, the use of trumpet fanfares from measures 68 to 75 (Ex. 5.6d) can be compared to the one that appeared in the *Ballade No. 2* (Ex. 5.6e). Trumpets are often viewed to resemble military bugle because of their “brilliant and powerful” (Wagner, 218) tones.
Ex. 5.6a: Rhapsodie Espagnole, S.254, mm. 60 - 65

Ex. 5.6b: Mazeppa, S.100, mm. 498 – 501

Ex. 5.6c: Scherzo und Marsch, S.177, mm. 292 - 295

Ex. 5.6d: Liszt-Busoni Spanish Rhapsody, mm. 68 – 69 (tutti with timpani in the bass)
Thus, when the pianist arrives at this march in the *Rhapsodie Espagnole*, the left-hand staccatos should resonate and bounce like the mallets on the timpani and the right-hand dotted rhythm should be as crisp as a clear articulation of the trumpets or the down-up bows of the string instruments. At measure 68, when the fanfare begins, the outer octaves should ring and pierce through the texture like the trumpets, while the inner chords resemble the subtle bow gestures. By thinking about the sound of trumpets, the voicing will be clearer and by assigning different instrumentation, there will be distinct timbres, creating a sense of a whole orchestra, instead of purely forcing as much sound as possible out of the piano.

The chromatic transition at measure 76 is difficult technically because the touch needs to remain *portato* to voice the top notes expressively, but it also needs to be light, soft and agitated, all at the same time. A possible relation would be with the *jeté*
articulation on the violin, as mentioned in Chapter 2, where the string player bounces
the bow onto the strings, creating a light and airy sound. It is “slower and more
controlled” (Nardolillo, 60) than ricochet or spiccato. Nonetheless, since the top voice
still needs to be expressive, it can be brought out by the tonguing articulation of a flute.
In the midst of these staccato chords, one must not forget to project the lower melody
entering at measure 83, as singing cellists (Ex. 5.7).

Ex. 5.7: Rhapsodie Espagnole, S.254, mm. 82 – 84

Busoni arranged measures 101 – 115 intelligently because instead of having the
pianist travelling up and down the keyboard frenetically as the original (Ex. 5.8a), he
distributes the register changes between the pianist and the orchestra (Ex. 5.8b). Since
the two-piano version of the Busoni score is easily accessible, one should try playing the
two separate parts first, to have a better sense of the different register or
instrumentation. Then, when playing from the original score, the mind will better
organize the music so it will not feel as frantic as it might otherwise seem.
Within the *Allegro animato* transition that connects the Folies d’Espagne with Jota Aragonesa, Liszt writes ascending chordal leaps and rapid rocket-like scale passages in between the stable Spanish rhythm. The pianist should not rush between the motives or else the steady pulse of the dance will be disturbed; thus, maintaining the role as a conductor at the piano remains crucial at *tutti* moments as such (Ex. 5.9). It is
interesting to note that Busoni's version adds the use of tambourine in this section, to add to the Spanish flavour.

Ex. 5.9: Liszt-Busoni Spanish Rhapsody, mm. 120-123

Jota aragonesa begins with a non legato fast sixteenth-note melody, while the left hand provides the foundation of the 3/8 rhythm (Ex. 5.10). Furthermore, the bass is an ostinato on D until measure 143, which is the tonic of the new established D major. The flourishes of ascending ornamentation would typically be assigned to the piccolo, which is what Busoni had done, because of its high register and projection. Due to the passage's repetitive nature, the pianist may consider dialogues of different instruments like before, in the opening of La folia. Busoni even added castanets to once again increase the Spanish aroma within the music.

Ex. 5.10: Rhapsodie Espagnole, S.254, mm.136 - 143
The *con grazia* section is a transition that will bring the music into the variation on the *jota* in measure 169 (Ex. 5.11). The music here is much lighter and filled with happiness within simplicity. The upper voices should project like the flute, which can “cut through almost any orchestra texture [and] the tone remains expressively lyric and poetic” (Wagner, 137).

Ex. 5.11: Rhapsodie Espagnole, S.254, mm. 169-173

When the variation begins, Liszt indicates the touch to be *leggiero e staccato* in the accompaniment. This indication might suggest the touch of the *pizzicatos* on the string instruments, which are often used as accompaniments at a soft dynamic level (Chapter 2, page 23). As Busoni likewise suggested in his orchestral score, these can be represented by the *pizzicatos* on the lower strings, to maintain the rhythm of the dance in the background (Ex. 5.12). The following section can be very effective if the dynamic changes are carried across as a conversation between the orchestra and the soloist (Ex. 5.13). When a pianist merely produces different volume at the piano, the music can lose its spontaneity. By contrast, feeling the change of texture as a new instrumentation can easily create an interesting dialogue between the musical ideas.
Ex. 5.12: Liszt-Busoni Spanish Rhapsody, mm. 193-198 (pizzicato accompaniment)

Ex. 5.13: Liszt-Busoni Spanish Rhapsody, mm. 216-223

Following the *tutti* enters a treacherous technical moment for pianists: interlocking single-note melodies (Ex. 5.14a) and execution of double thirds while the other hand carries out arpeggios (Ex. 5.14b). To ensure the interlocking notes project clearly, one must equally transfer the weight between the two hands, to sound as articulated as woodwind players and their double-tonguing technique. According to Liszt himself during a lesson, the thirds should “not [be] too fast...but instead play them in a distinguished and moderate way” (Göllerich, 159).
Ex. 5.14a: Rhapsodie Espagnole, S.254, mm. 248-250

Ex. 5.14b: Rhapsodie Espagnole, S.254, mm. 265-267

The jota then ends in soft tremolo-like effect and the music disappears into silence after the last pianissimo chord (Ex. 5.15), with crystallized tone like a piccolo once again, for its register indication. To ensure evenness of the tremolos, the hands must remain very close to the keys and the weight must be even, like the string players keeping their bows very close to their strings (Chapter 3, page 62). Also, instead of thinking purely of rapid playing, it may be smoother to focus mainly on one note in each hand, the highest note of the left hand and the lowest note of the right, and feeling them smoothly connected to each other like a slur.
Ex. 5.15: Rhapsodie Espagnole, S.254, mm. 305-311

The last theme (Ex. 5.16a) appears in measure 312, with the tempo marked *Un poco meno Allegro*. The left-hand chordal accompaniments are written as staccatos in the soft dynamic, which will relate us back to the string *pizzicato* touch again. Since the melody will appear again in measure 337 in a contrapuntal texture, the violin may first introduce this new melody as a solo introduction. It is also worthy of note that this melody is derived from *Grosse Konzert-Phantasie über spanische Weisen* (Ex. 5.16b).

Ex. 5.16a: Rhapsodie Espagnole, S.254, mm. 312 – 336
Theme 3 is further developed from measures 337 to 380 by increasing harmonic texture or the melody travelling between different registers. As it modulates from F major into E major, Liszt adds different layers of timbres and moves the melody between the registers like how he treated the Folies d’Espagne from measures 19 to 44.

As suggested earlier, we should treat register changes as differences in instrumentation. The increasing layers of sound would indicate addition of instruments. From measures 337 to 340 (Ex. 5.17), woodwinds may start the melody in the upper voices, while the lower strings answer expressively from measures 340 to 344. Finally, the addition of upper strings creates a fuller conclusion of this four-bar motive from measures 344 to 349.
Ex. 5.17: Rhapsodie Espagnole, S.254, mm. 337 – 349

From measures 367 – 379 (not shown), Liszt adds in ascending scale passages, tremolo-like thirds and long trills in the high octaves, while the left hand continues to sing out the third theme in chords. Based on the register indicated, it is only logical to assign the right-hand ornamentation to the flutes and piccolos for their ability to cut through other textures of sound. A similar passage was seen earlier in Chapter three, from Mazeppa (Ex. 5.18).

Ex. 5.18: Mazeppa, S.100, mm. 21 – 23
The music now enters the variation of the jota dance theme. It is still light and soft and continues all the previous technical elements of rapid descending thirds and the alternating of the hands. A new dark transition (Ex. 5.19a) then appears at measure 416, with jota aragonesa being transformed into different intervallic relations and phrases shortened. The use of short chromatic motives (Ex. 5.19b) creates urgency, while the longer passages (Ex. 5.19c) provide the effect of a crescendo like the *Tannhäuser Overture* from Chapter three (Ex. 5.19d). One of the obvious difficulties of this transition would be the leaping of the hands, between the A-octave and the low rapid passages. The octaves are like woodwinds and percussions that help to set the rhythmic outline of the phrases, while the strings execute the fast fluid scales. It is important to note how Liszt continues to emphasize beats one and three, to continue the rhythmic element of the jota dance, which he had already set in measure 136 in the left hand (Ex. 5.10 above).

Ex. 5.19a: Rhapsodie Espagnole, S.254, mm. 416 – 419

Ex. 5.19b: Rhapsodie Espagnole, S.254, mm. 425 – 427
As we approach the ending of this rhapsody, Liszt starts to increase the tempo gradually. The difficulty now increases because although the passages and leaps are similar as before, he now requires the pianist to move even faster. From measures 448 to 476, one of the solutions of maintaining control would be using the left hand as the rhythmic foundation, like the timpani to the orchestra. Or, one can think of the left hand as strings accompanying the melodic line. The right hand changes from the soft thematic material of the jota, to the rocket-like ascending scale (Ex. 5.20). Once again, the most effective way of conquering these leaps would be to stay as the conductor who firmly indicates entrances of different instruments. A prominent conductor would not frantically show the entrances; likewise, the pianist should mentally provide enough time to relocate the hands to provide a different sonority.
When the dynamic level increases to *ff* and *fff*, it can be Liszt hinting to start hearing the orchestra as a whole. Especially with the chords from measures 504 to 508 (Ex. 5.21), the range of the notes covers almost the full keyboard, which means we can allocate the notes to the orchestral instruments from the basses and cellos up to the piccolo and flutes. The reason to hear these chords as *tutti* is to avoid them sounding harsh and metallic, which is caused by hitting the piano keys with great force. In order to create the warm and full tone of a full orchestra, the pianist will need to push into the keys from the back muscles with firm fingertips and relaxed wrists, to allow the timbres to be round and lifted upwards.

Ex. 5.21: Rhapsodie Espagnole, S.254, mm. 504 – 508

After more alternating octaves at the speed of *Vivace*, Liszt moves into a *scherzando* version of the third theme with the use of one last chromatic passage. The scherzo section (Ex. 5.22) is marked *leggiero* and *staccato* with a soft dynamic range
again; however, due to the speed, it will be clearer to hear the part divided amongst upper woodwinds instead of purely string *pizzicatos*.

Ex. 5.22: Rhapsodie Espagnole, S.254, mm.560 – 572

Beginning at measure 598 (Ex. 5.23), the third theme is yet again transformed and placed into the bass. The pianist should bring out the melody by hearing it being executed by the lower brass and bassoon while the strings are responsible for continuing the sixteenth-note passages. This will help to create a different touch for the melody to project amidst the intricate texture.

Ex 5.23: Rhapsodie Espagnole, S.254, mm. 598 – 606

The melody continues in the lower register while the right hand becomes slurred tenth (Ex. 5.24a). As we have seen in the *Tannhäuser Overture* (Ex. 5.24b), the slurred octaves are played as a one-bowstroke gesture in the strings, while the melody
continues to be brought out by the lower woodwinds and brasses. Moreover, Liszt specifically indicated *staccatissimo* for the melody, which can be related to the use of tonguing on the woodwinds and brasses.

Ex. 5.24a: Rhapsodie Espagnole, S.254, mm.615-616

Ex. 5.24b: Ouvertüre zu Tannhäuser, S.442, mm.158 – 161

The final twenty-four measures of the rhapsody slow down to *non troppo allegro* for a *grandioso* ending with full volume. At this point, the Folies d’Espagne theme returns with the rhythm of the march. This time (unlike in measure 12), the pedal in measure 635 has three separate indications (Ex. 5.25a), due to the moving bass line which would otherwise be terribly muddy even with pianos of the mid-nineteenth century. At measure 647, the theme switches back to the third lyrical theme with rumbling tremolos in the bass (Ex. 5.25b). Without question, these tremolos are to be heard with the timpani, instead of the upper winds which we heard earlier in the piece.
In conclusion, although Liszt’s *Rhapsodie Espagnole* is technically challenging and requires a great amount of physical stamina, it can become easier if one organizes and hears the music orchestrally. One of the most common difficulties is the leap of the hands. Usually, a pianist practices aiming at specific notes or using a metronome to make sure he or she arrives at the new position in time. However, if one thinks like a conductor and conducts the hands to relocate to produce different instrumentation, the leap will become more meaningful than a quick physical gesture. The mind and the ears should naturally relocate the hands because they want a different timbre to be created, not because Liszt asks for specific keys to be played. Another familiar Lisztian writing is
the indication of \textit{f, ff or fff}. Most often, when a pianist wants to produce a loud volume on the piano, he or she tries to inject as much physical power as possible into the keys. One needs to realize that by audiating the sound of a full orchestra, it will be more likely to naturally produce a warm and full sound of colours, instead of a harsh metallic tone. The \textit{Rhapsodie Espagnole} has a simple structure of three themes and their variations, which can be a good repertoire for pianists to train themselves to be creative with repetitive elements. When music repeats itself, it is up to the performer to create variety, in phrasing and in colours. In this particular work, one can experiment with different orchestral instruments, which will create numerous possibilities of interpretation. With such creativity in mind, hopefully it will inspire one to become a true conductor at the piano.
Chapter 6

Conclusion

The piano compositions of Franz Liszt are often assessed as a body of work that allows pianists to demonstrate their virtuosity. What is often disregarded is that in addition to this element of virtuosity, his piano compositions also invite one to listen in an orchestral way. This dissertation explored how Liszt created orchestral sonorities and colours within his piano works, especially those of his Weimar period. The objective was to present an approach to performing Liszt’s piano works that seeks to create orchestral sonorities at the piano and thereby assist to overcome the technical and interpretive challenges in these compositions.

The dissertation began by introducing Liszt’s move to Weimar in 1848, when he decided to become a conductor and devote more time to composing, instead of performing. Nevertheless, his role as a conductor is often neglected, possibly because people have “never been able to accept that a person may do more than one thing supremely well” (Walker, Weimar, 296). The majority of his famous works were produced during this period, such as: Sonata in B Minor, Dante Symphony and the first twelve symphonic poems. This chapter considered Liszt as a pianist, a conductor and a composer.

Liszt, as a pianist, was known widely for his amazing facility. The teacher who introduced Liszt to thinking at the piano was Carl Czerny, who taught him for fourteen
months. He also made him understand the importance of practice is to establish and develop new mental and muscular controls at the piano. By understanding the essence of developing technique, “his fingers became and stayed obedient to his slightest volition” (Hedley, 24). Although it was hard for Liszt not to strive to become an actor, or someone who would be widely recognized and appreciated by the general public, he cared much more about musicianship over showmanship. Liszt once wrote: “You see my piano is for me what his frigate is to a sailor, or his horse to an Arab – more indeed: it is my very self, my mother tongue, my life. Within its seven octaves it encloses the whole range of an orchestra, and a man’s ten fingers have the power to reproduce the harmonies which are created by hundreds of performers” (Wilkinson, 49). Not only was Liszt known for being a great virtuoso at the piano, he also had the ability to bring orchestral colours to the instrument.

Liszt’s opportunity to become a conductor occurred in February 1848, when he decided to take over the baton of Weimar’s Kapellmeister. Becoming a conductor meant he had a steady income, and he was able to hold private rehearsals to test out his own symphonic poems. These experimental sessions “were held to test new effects [and] sectional rehearsals were called to master them” (Walker, Weimar, 270). He strongly believed that orchestras could create unlimited possibilities of colour, incomparable to any single instrument, including the piano. Therefore, he viewed conducting as one of the most significant interpretative arts of the future for he was able to produce new colours that he couldn’t fully create with one single instrument. As a conductor, Liszt cared much more for musical interpretation, nuance, phrasing,
shading of colours, balance of the parts and the use of rubato, instead of purely providing the beats for the players. This was a revolutionary approach for he treated the whole orchestra as one solo instrument. Like how he was at the piano, Liszt was always sensitive to sound and acoustics. He would even alter his interpretation depending on the instruments’ reverberations within the particular concert hall (Walker, *Weimar*, 278).

As a composer, Liszt’s earliest attempts in orchestral writing during the 1830s were, based on the critics, known to be unsuccessful. However, after being able to test his innovations with his orchestra in Weimar, he definitely became much more successful. In addition, he had two collaborators helping him: August Conradi and Joachim Raff. Conradi would help him in developing the first sketches into a full score and Raff’s great imagination would provide a source of inspiration for him. During this period of his life, Liszt also created the orchestral form known as the symphonic poem. Among his thirteen symphonic poems, this dissertation looked at *Mazeppa*, which has a piano solo version and was also later transcribed into a four-hand piano work by Liszt himself.

The first chapter elaborated how Liszt gave up his performing career and focused more on conducting and composing. After having had the experience as a pianist and a conductor, his compositions incorporated new approaches. The following chapters then discussed orchestral sonorities, and how to study his piano works with an orchestral approach to open up a wider spectrum of sound and colour at the piano.
Chapter two investigated the different orchestral instruments and their timbres. This is very important for many pianists often neglect the importance of understanding the sound and colours of each orchestral instrument. One must first be acquainted with each instrument’s timbres, limitations and special effects, to be able to create the different sonorities at the piano. The treatises mentioned in this chapter included: Berlioz’s *Grand traité d’instrumentation et d’orchestration modernes*, Carse’s *The History of Orchestration*, Forsyth’s *Orchestration*, (Joseph) Wagner’s *Orchestration: A Practical Handbook*, Widor’s *Manual of Practical Instrumentation*, Brant’s *Textures and Timbres: An Orchestrator’s Handbook* and Kennan’s *The Technique of Orchestration*. Although many modern instruments are discussed within these treatises, only the relevant instruments to Liszt’s works were included in this dissertation.

Despite the fact that all of the handbooks, except for the one by Berlioz, were written after Liszt’s time, for the purpose of this research, these texts were studied to explore the various possibilities of orchestral timbres by the instruments and orchestrators of the nineteenth century. As mentioned in the opening chapter, since Liszt and Berlioz were acquainted, one should consider finding inspiration through Berlioz’s treatise for it was highly possible that Liszt may have studied it himself. Moreover, Berlioz specifically stated that the piano should be regarded “either as an orchestral instrument or as itself a complete little orchestra” (Berlioz, 93).

This chapter first reviewed the different types of articulations on the string instruments. The different bowings and techniques on the strings create a great variety of colours. During the nineteenth century, one of the most important developments
was the “increased use of the violoncello as an independent voice” (Carse, 225). We later saw how the sound of the cello can often be realized on the piano through many of Liszt’s melodies in the lower registers. The greater and more varied use of the woodwinds became an important development in this era. Composers started to appreciate the warm and rounded sound of the clarinets and the lower range of the flutes, which “considerably enlarged the palette of the orchestral tone-painter of the generation which followed immediately after Beethoven and his contemporaries” (Carse, 229). Also, the oboe became known to be very capable of “expressing the human feelings in all their varying shades – from joy to sorrow [or] from tragedy to idyll” (Widor, 20). Since many of Liszt’s programmatic works require the music to convey profound expressions, such instruments became very significant in the orchestra. Brass is extremely important in Liszt’s orchestral works for he often uses this section of the orchestra for heroic and majestic moments. In the later chapters, it was demonstrated how this awareness can help a pianist to properly voice Liszt’s big chordal sections on the piano. Finally, the percussion family was examined, which is also important in Liszt’s music, since he often incorporates the timpani and the triangle.

The goal of studying the timbral qualities of the orchestral instruments was to widen pianists’ conception and imagination toward orchestral sounds. It is not enough to have the intention of viewing the piano as an orchestra, but one must be able to imagine the eighty-eight keys as any desired instrument. Moreover, the pianist should experiment with a varied approach to depressing the keys, in order to produce the specific timbre one desires.
The third chapter of this dissertation reviewed three different transcriptions and paraphrases by Liszt himself: *Mazeppa*, the Overture to *Tannhäuser* and the *Rigoletto* paraphrase. *Mazeppa*, original to Liszt, has four different piano versions. The discussion compared the revisions with the symphonic poem version to explore how Liszt may have translated orchestral elements onto the piano. *Tannhäuser* is a transcription of Wagner’s own overture and the *Rigoletto Paraphrase* is a piano work that is inspired by Verdi’s opera *Rigoletto*.

Through the study of *Mazeppa*’s final piano version, we saw how Liszt incorporated elements from his symphonic poem and from his own earlier piano versions. On the piano, it is easy for the work to sound merely fast and blaring. Also, loud chords have the tendency to sound overly metallic, dry and abrupt. Based on the study of the preceding chapter, one can imitate the resonance of the winds and brasses, applying more arm-weight for the chords with a touch of the damper pedal, in order for the sonority of the chords to ring warmly. This approach applies the knowledge of orchestral sonorities at the piano to help conquer the issue of producing a dry metallic tone. Similarly, fast passages may sound very busy and full of notes. A solution to this matter is to envision the fluid bowings of a string player. The contour of the notes will flow smoothly if the pianist gently guides the fingers by the arms, similar to the evenness of a string player’s bow arm. This will better portray the canvas of sound, instead of drawing the listener’s attention to the amount of notes written.

One of the most interesting indications that Liszt often incorporates in his piano scores is: “*il canto marcato e vibrato assai.*” This indication not only requires the pianist
to sing and project the melody, but also asks to have vibratos added onto the notes. How is this possible on the piano? In the symphonic poem, this melodic moment is played by the woodwinds and brasses, who would be able to play with vibrato, or possibly the strings. Although the piano cannot vibrate like others, if one releases the pressure from the fingertips after depressing and listens to the vibration of the strings, the tone will ring longer. To summarize, if one doesn’t create different shades of dynamics and timbral colours, *Mazeppa* may become overwhelmingly loud.

The *Tannhäuser* transcription is useful to study to observe how Liszt transcribes the orchestral parts onto the piano. Very often, there will be orchestral writing that cannot be translated directly on the keyboard, so Liszt will have to rewrite to create the same type of sonority and effect. For example, since the tone of a piano cannot increase its volume after being depressed, Liszt adapts by creating the same dynamic changes through scale passages, which also allows the music to be more effective than to purely repeat notes or to solely sustain them. Whenever there are tutti moments, or volumes at triple *forte*, one can imagine the piano as the whole orchestra, covering ranges between the flutes down to the low ranges of the bass, in addition to pushing into the keys with arm weight. Careful comparison with Wagner’s orchestral score will allow the performer of Liszt’s piano work to achieve more varied tone colours and better layering of the textures. When the texture is very dense with volume and notes, the importance of each element must be planned, so the volume is not constantly overwhelming to player and listener alike.
Since *Rigoletto* is a paraphrase, not a transcription, Liszt incorporated more of his own musical ideas to further develop the original melodies written by Verdi. Liszt based his paraphrase on the famous quartet from Act III, *Bella figlia dell’amore*. Unlike the overture, the pianist should think and listen as a vocalist more than an instrumentalist. The human voice is warmer and often more emotional for it is directly produced from the body. Also, from the text, we can consider word paintings. When the voice is being translated onto the keyboard, one may first sing the melody and experience the text, before imitating the sound onto the keyboard.

The comparisons and examples given in this chapter provide one with some ideas of how orchestral music can be linked to the piano. Although many of the ideas are speculative and abstract, the more one experiments with the different touches on the keys, the wider range of sound one will develop. The following two chapters provided detailed analyses of solo piano works that Liszt never transcribed for the orchestra. Orchestral inspirations and timbres were explored based on comparisons and observations with his other orchestral works, including those examined in chapter three.

Chapter four explored Liszt’s *Ballade No.2 in B minor*. One of the important elements in this work that often appears is the stormy bass line. This can be created on the cello with the fluidity of the bow arm as mentioned in the second chapter. Preserving the fluidity of these stormy scale passages prevents the listener from feeling there are a lot of individual notes being executed. Most of the melodic elements in this work are in the lower register, and thus they are compared to the sonority of the
clarinets and cellos. The fanfare moments will undoubtedly include the use of trumpets, for its representation of a military bugle. The fast alternating octaves are among the most technical passages in the work. To conquer this challenge, one must distribute an evenness of weight between the two hands like how a string player executes the action of the bow. Not only can orchestral sonorities be rendered at the piano, how an instrumentalist articulates may also help the pianist to overcome technical difficulties. As for the tutti moments, once again, playing with pure force often creates only one effect, which is often loud and harsh. If the entrances and qualities of different instruments are heard, many more shades of colours will be painted onto the sonic canvas.

Chapter five investigated the elements found within Liszt’s *Rhapsodie Espagnole*. Some of the technical challenges in this Rhapsody include rapid changes between the registers, alternating octaves or single notes between the two hands, flourishing scale passages, fast chordal passages, finger dexterity within the cadenza and the “Liszt octaves”. Once again, the objective of the chapter was to allow the pianist to overcome the technical difficulties by thinking and hearing orchestrally.

One of the interesting elements found in the beginning of this piano work is the use of pedal. Although Liszt has indications to sustain a whole measure at times, it is merely impossible to execute such pedaling on a modern piano for the harmonies will be extremely blurred. At times like this, we will need to consider the piano being used in Liszt’s time, which still did not have the same structure as our grand piano. Therefore, pianists in our time should interpret the music by imagining how Liszt would
have heard it with his piano. Similar to the Ballade, there are low melodic passages that can be related to the clarinets and cellos, and the heroic moments with addition of the trumpets and horns. The opening cadenza, however, can also incorporate the idea of a harpist to add to its fluidity. One of the most technically demanding passages requires a portato touch to voice a soprano line, while the rest of the chords needs to be light, soft and agitated. Passages such as these can be related to the articulation of jeté on the violin, where the string player bounces the bow onto the strings, creating a light and airy sound.

Busoni’s transcription of the work for piano and orchestra was included in the discussion because he intelligently rewrote the music so the pianist does not need to leap from one register to another. With this idea in mind, when playing the solo piano version, one must not focus on the leap but instead imagine the conversation between different instruments. With this distinction in mind, the leaping movement becomes the conductor’s baton, which indicates the various entrances of the different instruments. Since this work involves numerous register changes, it is the best opportunity for the pianist to explore the idea of producing different instrumental sonorities at different parts of the keyboard. Moreover, because the Rhapsodie Espagnole has a simple structure of three themes and their variations, it can be a good repertoire for pianists to train themselves to be creative with repetitive elements. When music repeats itself, it is up to the performer to create variety in phrasing and in colours. With such creativity in mind, hopefully, it will inspire one to become a true conductor at the piano.
Researching how Liszt is viewed as a pianist, conductor, and composer as well as how his piano works in the Weimar period tie in with orchestral elements has opened up a new world of interpretation for me as a performer. Prior to understanding the possibility of thinking orchestrally at the piano, I found Liszt’s piano works extremely difficult. Not only was it difficult technically to execute the notes at the required speed, but it was a big challenge for my stamina to produce the volume that is often required to be sustained throughout almost the whole work.

One of my very first orchestral inspirations on the piano came from listening to Stravinsky’s *Petrushka*, as orchestral ballet music and then as a solo piano work. I then realized that the piano can actually imitate an orchestra in many ways. Applying this idea onto Liszt’s music made my practice sessions become much more engaging and enjoyable. The piano is fundamentally a percussive instrument because the strings are being hit by hammers. However, the role of a pianist is to transform the instrument’s percussive nature into the singing tone of a vocalist or an instrumentalist. It is extremely challenging because the keys are already present for one to depress to create a sound. The way one depresses a key determines how the note will sound. For example, if the tone of a timpani is needed, comparatively, the finger becomes the stick and the tip becomes the mallet head. Moreover, even the arm gesture needs to be compared to the arm of a timpani player. Or, if a triangle is considered, the pianist will need to release the intensity of the fingertip to allow the upper register to resonate in the air.
To better understand the significance of being imaginative as a piano performer, one can consider looking back at the evolution of performance practice since the nineteenth century. The nineteenth century was an era that “valued color, contrast, and variety above all else” (Winter, 19). Starting from the 1820s, the piano’s “repetition action” was perfected and the “metal braces” were introduced by English and French makers to “accommodate increases in range and tension,” which made a new style of playing possible (Todd, 6). Ever since this development, pianists were then able to “employ the weight of their arms and shoulders for added intensity and resonance” (Todd, 6). Considering the timeline, Liszt experienced the change of the piano as he performed during his virtuoso years. By 1848, when he focused more on his compositions, the pianos he used were already closer to our modern pianos, in terms of resonance and action of the keys. In 1836, a reviewer, Henri Blanchard, documented the development of the piano based on Thalberg’s performance: “No one has ever sung at the piano like Thalberg. The sound is sustained with nuances added through rinforzando, such that you believe you are hearing the expressive bow of [Alexandre] Batta, gliding gracefully over the strings of his cello, or the sweet horn tones of [Jacques-François] Bally, penetrating your being with a gentle melancholy” (Todd, 6). Two years later, Liszt wrote “[The piano] embraces the range of an orchestra...We make arpeggios like the harp, prolonged notes like wind instruments, staccatos and a thousand other effects which once seemed the special prerogative of such and such an instrument” (Winter, 17). This evidence denotes how Liszt has already started to envision himself as a conductor at the piano by 1838.
Musicians today—even more so than in the middle of the twentieth century—strive for individuality, to stand apart from the crowd. How successful are they, in terms of uniqueness, in comparison to the performers of the nineteenth century? With the easy access to concerts, CDs or even YouTube, we are exposed to countless performances. Thinking back in history, how often does a pianist hear another perform? Ever since the technology has advanced, it has become much more difficult for one to interpret music without the influence of others, for it is nearly “impossible to banish the smothering effect of countless recordings from our collective memory” (Winter, 51). In contrast, one can surmise that pianists from the distant past often interpreted music with an unbiased imagination of sound. Why can’t the pianist in the present day also experiment with such a mindset? Perhaps one way of freeing the modern pianist interpretively is to listen to orchestral works and possibly their transcriptions, if any. As mentioned above, it was Petrushka that brought me into a new mindset of piano performance. One of the most exciting facts is that there is never only one way to interpret music. There are countless possibilities for one to discover, listeners may “judge a performance on how well the interpretation was carried out,” but never “the validity of the interpretation itself” (Winter, 22).

Many elements need to be considered to create different tones on the piano, and there are countless combinations to be explored—this is what makes piano performance irresistible and full of excitement. No one performer will play exactly the same as another. Even the performer himself or herself will not sound identical from one day to another. The music will resonate differently to the listener, depending on
what the performer wishes to convey. This dissertation explores and advocates for the idea of transforming the piano into an orchestra and the pianist into a conductor. Not only should one be able to execute all the notes written by the composer, but a wide range of sonorities should be produced to paint a colourful picture on the canvas for the listener.
Bibliography


