

THE 14TH ANNUAL CONCERT TO BENEFIT THE
LYTLE SCHOLARSHIPS AT THURGOOD MARSHALL COLLEGE

LISZT-O-MANIA

CECIL LYTLE, PIANO SOLO

PROGRAM

I. *Années de Pèlerinage* (Years of Pilgrimage)

First Year: Switzerland (1855)

1. *Chapelle de Guillaume Tell* (William Tell's Chapel)
2. *Au Lac de Wallenstadt* (At Lake Wallenstadt)
3. *Pastorale*
4. *Au Bord d'une Source* (Beside a Spring)
5. *Orage* (Storm)
6. *Vallée d'Obermann* (Obermann's Valley)
7. *Eglogue* (Poem)
8. *Le mal du pays* (Homesickness)
9. *Les cloches de Genève* (Nocturne: The Bells of Geneva)

INTERMISSION

II. *Première Valse Oubliée* (1883)

III. *Bagatelle sans Tonalité* (1885)

IV. *Grand Galop Chromatique* (1838)

FRANZ LISZT

Born 1811, Raiding, Hungary; Died 1886, Bayreuth, Germany

Like Leopold Mozart a generation earlier, Adam Liszt shared a father's neurotic obsession about his son's career. He knew that young Franz had a remarkable gift for music as early as five years of age. He also knew that he could not develop his son's prodigious talent in the backwaters of Hungary, where he was business manager for the sheep herds of the Estarhazys.

In 1821, as Napoleon met his end on a desolate wind-swept island in the South Atlantic, Adam and Anna Liszt prepared to take their nine-year-old son, Franz, to Vienna from the provincial town of Raiding, along the Austrian/Hungarian border. Vienna was full of infant prodigies in the tow of obsessive 'stage parents'—all making their desperate leap for fame and fortune. Despite their humble origins (or, perhaps because of them), the Liszt family wanted to be near and to acquire the levers of aristocratic power. They arrived destitute but resolved.

Both fathers exploited every opportunity to put their precocious offspring in front of those who could make the difference between an undiscovered talent and a lucrative future. Adam wasted little time in presenting Franz to the most famous teachers in town. Within a short period of time, Adam had secured theory and composition lessons for Franz from the Italian Kapellmeister of the Imperial Court of Vienna, Antonio Salieri. Yes, the same Salieri made infamous in Milos Forman's 1984 portrayal of him in the film, *Amadeus*.

Salieri met with the youngster two or three times a week for instruction in the music of J. S. Bach and the rigorous terms of counterpoint. Very soon, the Italian master became an admirer of the child's skill and quick mind. For a piano teacher, there was only one choice—Carl Czerny, piano pedagogue. Indeed, it was Carl Czerny that started to hone and define the youngster's ability as a pianist. Himself a child prodigy, Carl Czerny was born in Vienna in 1792, the year of Mozart's premature and ignominious death. A lifelong bachelor and prolific composer, he never gained the notoriety he sought with over 1,000 compositions. His brilliant but tedious habits were better suited to

understanding the technical intricacies of modern piano playing.

Both masters taught young Liszt without charge—a generous tradition Franz Liszt would continue with his own students decades later. Little is known of how young Liszt profited by the music theory and composition lessons from Salieri. But it is the case that later he would attribute his dazzling approach to the art of piano playing to that brief period of study with the celebrated Viennese piano pedagogue. However, Adam became dissatisfied with the deliberate instruction Czerny provided and wanted his son to earn money performing as Europe's newest *wunderkind*. His disenchantment led him to realize that young Liszt's future and the family's fortune did not lie in the Old Europe of Vienna—but in Paris, the New Europe. In less than two years, Adam packed up the family once again, and set out for Paris and fame.

Along the way to Paris, Franz was booked to perform in Munich, Augsburg, and his beloved city of Pest, beside the Danube River. Not coincidentally, the trip resembled a concert tour that Leopold Mozart had planned for his precocious son. This concert in the Hungarian homeland was a special triumph, as Franz was welcomed almost as a conquering hero—or, at least, that's what Adam had painted on the posters that lined the streets. And then, on to Paris.

Paris was a city quite literally on fire; its revolutionary impulses in politics, literature, as well as dress, continued to cause quite a stir. Once in Paris, young Liszt soon became regarded as Europe's greatest piano virtuoso. But Adam's sudden death in 1827 left the sixteen-year-old and his mother adrift. Adam had been more of a manager than mentor, more of an impresario than father. In search of paternal guidance, Franz sought comfort in various religious cults, opium and drink, and in the bosoms of beautiful women. Along with other leading French writers, philosophers, and musicians, he soon became a darling of the French Salon movement. There, he was introduced to a beautiful, young and unhappily married socialite named Countess Marie d'Agoult.

ANNÉES DE PÈLERINAGE

Their passionate romance soon became the subject of Parisian tabloids and salon chatter. Fearing the scandal that their openly adulterous relationship might cause, Franz and Marie, with great secrecy

and subterfuge, fled Paris in June of 1835, on what would become a four-year, on–again/off–again journey across Europe. Theirs was more than a love affair, it was an adventure, inspired by their desperate love and the literary images of Byron’s *Childe Harold*. Liszt’s reputation as a virtuoso pianist grew while d’Agoult bore him three children out of wedlock. All of the children (Blandine, born 1835; Cosima, born 1837; and, Daniel, born 1839) were, by today’s standards, immediately neglected. As soon as one was born, they would place the child with a guardian for extensive periods while they continued their odyssey. Although he eventually placed the children under the loving care of his mother, Anna Liszt, in Paris, and always provided for their financial and educational needs, there were long periods of up to eight years when the children only knew of their famous father through the rave reviews and accounts of his whereabouts and exploits in the press.

The opening suite today, *Années de Pèlerinage* (Years of Pilgrimage), is the first of three large suites that musically depict the sights and natural wonders encountered on Franz Liszt’s many travels as a concert artist. This first set is particular to the sights and natural wonders of Switzerland. Although first conceived as early as 1835, the suite underwent several revisions before it was published in 1855.

1. *Chapelle de Guillaume Tell* (William Tell’s Chapel) reveals Liszt’s emerging sense of social conscience. The motto most closely associated with the legend of William Tell, “One for all, all for one,” captured the composer’s imagination. Throughout his long life, Liszt performed benefit concerts and made direct contributions to numerous charitable and historic efforts—striking miners in Poland and flood victims along the Danube. He founded the first museum dedicated to Ludwig van Beethoven and selflessly premiered and published new works by struggling composers like Fredric Chopin, Robert Schumann, Richard Wagner, and Camille Saint-Saens.

2. *Au Lac de Wallenstadt* (At Lake Wallenstadt) is likely the first published example of true impressionistic music for solo piano and the first example of “water music.” Claude Debussy is reported to have met with Liszt at least three times. Remarkably, it was at the second of these meetings that the elderly pianist performed this piece for the youngster who was to become the French master of impressionistic music in the 20th century.

*Franz composed for me a melancholy piece,
imitative of the sighing of the waves and the rhythm of the oars,
that I have never been able to hear without weeping.*

—Marie d'Agoult, Lake Wallenstadt

3. *Pastorale*, as its name suggests, speaks for itself!

4. *Au Bord d'une Source* (Beside a Spring) takes its Byronic cue from a passage of Schiller's poem, *Der Flüchtling* (The Fugitive):

In the rustling coolness begins the play of young nature.

5. *Orage* (Storm), too, shares a literary reference from Byron:

*But what of ye, O tempests, is the goal?
Are ye like those within the human breast?
Or do ye find, at length, like eagles, some high nest?*

(from *Childe Harold* by Lord Byron)

6. *Vallée d'Obermann* (Obermann's Valley) is the longest piece of the set and does not describe a place as much as a state of mind, depicted in Etienne Pivert de Sénancour's *Obermann* (1804), a popular romantic novel of the time. It is a novel without a plot, rather a collection of letters written by an imaginary character steeped in remorse and melancholy. Liszt includes a quotation in the score:

*What do I want? What may I demand of nature?
...I feel, I exist only to exhaust myself in untamable desires,
To drink deep of the allurements of a fantastic world,
Only to be finally vanquished by its sensuous illusion.*

7. *Eglogue* (Poem)—here too, Liszt provides the score with a quote from Byron:

*The morn is up again, the dewy morn
With breath all incense, and with cheek all bloom,
Laughing the cloud away with playful scorn
And living as if earth contain'd no tomb.*

(from *Childe Harold* by Lord Byron)

8. *Le mal du pays* (Homesickness) is the simplest of the nine pieces and relies almost entirely on short, gasping phrases to impart the traveler's sense of abandonment.

9. *Les Cloches de Genève* (Nocturne: The Bells of Geneva) is dedicated to Blandine and is the most intellectually generous piece in the set because of its more complex structure. Geneva's churches are evoked, inspiring this musical pilgrim to seek a deeper resonance in his life:

I live not in myself, but I become

Portion of that around me. (from *Childe Harold* by Lord Byron)

GRAND GALOP CHROMATIQUE

It is music like this that gives Liszt a bad name! The *Grand Galop Chromatique* was composed in 1838, and soon became the “war horse” that Franz Liszt used to cement his reputation as a virtuoso. Because of its difficult runs, octaves, and fingerings, he usually closed his performances with the romp and brought down the house. His first world tours started in Berlin where poet Heinrich Heine, a witness to the rapture and swooning caused by an appearance by Franz Liszt, first coined the term “Lisztomania” to describe audience reaction to the exotic virtuoso.

Prior to and during his relationship with Marie, Liszt had become a central figure attending the salons of Paris. This short whirlwind piece is dedicated to Countess Christina Apponyi, wife of the Austrian Ambassador to France. But nothing is ever as simple as it seems!

By virtue of his position in diplomatic circles, Count Apponyi was often at the center of international intrigues and social contrivances. While Liszt was away from Paris in the company of Marie d'Agoult, Apponyi and members of his particular social circle championed a newly arrived virtuoso to Paris, Sigismond Thalberg. During his time in Paris, Liszt had become associated with the leading figures of the 1830 French revolt and offended the Austrian Habsburgs who had clandestinely augured for a return of the French aristocracy. Liszt and Thalberg had been on friendly terms. Yet, support for one virtuoso or the other—Thalberg or Liszt—took on larger political overtones. The hubbub did, however, touch Liszt where he lived—his ego. Assisted by the poison pen of Marie d'Agoult, he wrote a scathing review of Thalberg's compositions.

In response, Francois-Joseph Fétis (1784-1871), a Belgian musicologist and critic living in Paris at the time, mounted a very public

campaign against Liszt as a composer and pianist. Milanese Princess Christine Belgiojoso, a prominent Parisian socialite who favored Liszt, cobbled together support declaring him as the greatest living pianist. It was a high-class school yard fight challenge, pitting one bully against another. The famous piano duel took place on March 31, 1837 in the opulent salon of Princess Belgiojoso. Those who bought tickets to the spectacle and entered the room supporting Thalberg left the affair with the same appraisal; those who brought tickets endorsing Liszt's supremacy, left without their minds changed.

The *Grand Galop Chromatique* captures the ruckus and commotion of what these salon gatherings must have been like—grand social events attended by Victor Hugo, Alfred Musset, George Sand, Fredric Chopin, ambassadors, generals, and anyone else wanting to be seen or noticed.

BAGATELLE SANS TONALITÉ

To ask in 1885, “Is this work truly atonal?” was tantamount to asking in 1491, “Is the earth truly round?” or asking today, “Is there life elsewhere in the universe?” Liszt's *Bagatelle sans Tonalité* is a curious piece of music and a stunning intellectual exercise for its time.

Throughout his life, Liszt wrote articles, reviews, and critiques about the future of music. While concentrating on conducting duties as “Kapellmeister Extraordinaire” at Weimar, Germany (1848-1861), he encouraged the writing of, and premiered the new works of the budding young composers of the day—Wagner, Schumann, Berlioz, and others. Published one year before Liszt's death in 1886, *Bagatelle sans Tonalité* is actually the fourth of his celebrated *Mephisto Waltzes*—adding to the devilish curiosity of the piece.

The life expectancy of a man born in Hungary in 1811 was approximately 43 years. The fact that Franz Liszt nearly doubled that expectation hints of a Faustian bargain that permitted him to enjoy the influences of two different centuries. He was the student of Antonio Salieri (Mozart's great rival) and lived long enough to muse about the absence of tonality in music.

I will hurl my lance into the boundless realms of the future.

—Franz Liszt

CECIL LYTLE

Before joining the UC San Diego Music Department faculty in 1974, Cecil Lytle was an assistant professor at Grinnell College in Iowa. By then, he had established himself as an interpreter of the piano music of Franz Liszt. He won First Prize at the Franz Liszt International Piano Competition in Budapest, Hungary in 1970 and had received numerous National Endowment for the Arts awards in performance.

Lytle was appointed Visiting Professor of Music at the Beijing Conservatory of Music in 1986. He served as Senior Fulbright-Hays Scholar to the United Kingdom and as Artist-in-Residence at the Darmstadt Contemporary Music Festival. His six-CD set of *The Complete Piano Music of George Ivanovich Gurdjieff/Thomas DeHartmann* won CD of the Month in *Stereo Recording Magazine* in West Germany, November 1986. The range of Lytle's recordings covers everything from ragtime, jazz, Beethoven, and Scriabin, to Chopin, Liszt, tangos, and gospel music.

The Lytle Scholarships were endowed in 1996 to recruit and support outstanding first-year students at UC San Diego's Thurgood Marshall College. Lytle scholarships are awarded to graduates of the Preuss School UCSD attending UC San Diego. Recipients are selected on the basis of high academic achievement, first in their family to attend college, financial need, and a record of community service.

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- 2004 — **HYMNS**, WITH MICHAEL MORGAN
- 2003 — **CLASSICISM / IMPRESSIONISM**, CHARLES CURTIS & ALEX KARIS
- 2002 — **FRANZ SCHUBERT RECITAL**
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- 2000 — **LISZT RECITAL**
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- 1998 — **CHOPIN RECITAL**
- 1997 — **GERSHWIN AT 99**
- 1996 — **BEETHOVEN RECITAL**

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