

"I sat near [Liszt] so that I could see both his hands and face. For the first time in my life I beheld real inspiration—for the first time I heard the true tones of the piano. He played one of his own compositions—one of a series of religious fantasies. There was nothing strange or excessive about his manner. His manipulation of the instrument was quiet and easy, and his face was simply grand—the lips compressed and the head thrown a little backward. When the music expressed quiet rapture or devotion a sweet smile flitted over his features; when it was triumphant the nostrils dilated. There was nothing petty or egoistic to mar the picture."

George Eliot

Walker, Alan. Franz Liszt: v.2, The Weimar years,
1848-1861. Cornell, 1989 p 248

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UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND DANCE

Franz **Liszt**
BIRTHDAY
celebration

Organized by the Oregon Chapter of
the American Liszt Society

This performance is dedicated to
the memory of Thomas Mastroianni
(1934-2014), president of the
American Liszt Society.

Beall Concert Hall
Wednesday, October 22, 2014 | 7:30 p.m.



Harmonies Poétiques et Religieuses, S. 173 Franz Liszt
(1811-1886)

1. **Invocation**
Nikolai Valov
2. **Ave Maria**
Weihang Xu
3. **Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude**
Ednaldo Borba
4. **Pensée des morts**
Qiuya Ke
5. **Pater Noster**
Lin Zhong
6. **Hymne de l'Enfant à son réveil**
Julianne Shepard
7. **Funérailles**
Eduardo Moreira
8. **Miserere, d'après Palestrina**
Priscilla Dantas
9. **Andante lagrimoso**
Olga Oseth
10. **Cantique d'amour**
Rex Darnell

performed by
Alexandre Dossin's piano studio

Biography

The Hungarian composer Franz Liszt was the foremost piano virtuoso of his time, mastering technical innovations that greatly expanded the expressive range of the instrument. He influenced and exploited musical expression of the nineteenth century, and though his imaginative approach to musical form, harmony and structure, he anticipated and inspired later composers. In addition to being a master pianist and composer, Liszt was also a teacher, conductor, author, and benefactor. In 1847 Liszt met Princess Carolyne zu Sayn-Wittgenstein, whom he intended to marry in 1860. (This marriage would never take place due to the Roman Catholic authorities disapproval of the union). In 1848, Liszt gave up the life of a touring virtuoso, traveling to Weimar, where he would remain until 1861. It is during this time he wrote the *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* in addition to several other pieces including the Piano Sonata in B minor, 15 Rhapsodies Hongroises, and 12 Poemes symphoniques. Liszt retired to Rome in 1861, joining the Franciscan order in 1865, receiving the tonsure and four Minor Orders of the Catholic Church (Porter, Lector, Exorcist and Acolyte). From 1869 until the end of his life, the Abbé Liszt divided his time between Rome, Weimar and Budapest. He died in Bayreuth on July 31, 1886 as a result of pneumonia which he contracted during the Bayreuth Festival hosted by his daughter, Cosima.

The Abbé Liszt

Important to the *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* is the understanding and comprehension of the Abbé Liszt. Throughout his life, Liszt was deeply religious - faith was an intrinsic part of his

being. It is impossible to separate the man from his religion, and thus any examination of his compositional genius must examine the importance of religion. At an early age he displayed signs of intense mysticism, a special kind of devotion and reverence for his faith. Much of this desire can be traced back to his father. Before he was a father and husband, Adam Liszt attended the Franciscan monasteries hoping to become a priest. Adam eventually left the order; however, he was so faithful that he named his son Franciscus in honor of the monks. As a child Liszt visited the Franciscans often, experiencing from a young age a deep spirituality. The yearning to experience religion on a clerical level never left Adam, and indeed, he passed along this desire to his son. By 1863 Franz Liszt had suffered the deaths of two children, he was unable to marry the woman he loved, and he began thinking seriously about entering the lower orders. On April 25, 1865 Liszt received the tonsure. This transformation into the Abbé Liszt brought only serenity and happiness into Liszt's life. Religion and music formed an strong alliance and Liszt regarded the role of the artist as "the bearer of the beautiful". The sacred devotional value of music became one of the driving forces behind his compositions.

Harmonies poétiques et religieuses (Poetic and Religious Harmonies), S.173 are ten pieces that were composed between 1847-1852. This was the first major collection of piano pieces to be completed after Liszt abandoned his career as a concert virtuoso to take up the post of kapellmeister in Weimar. This set is an expression of Liszt's intense devotion to Catholicism; a set now free from any consciously demonstrative virtuosity. Rather, Liszt combines his deep spirituality with his natural piano bravura technique to create compositions that are complex, pious reveries.

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We sense in these compositions a more mature Liszt, one who now demonstrates a greater depth of seriousness and a need to express the darker emotion of the soul. While *Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude*, and the *Cantique d'amour* reach for ecstatic climaxes, the rapture experienced in these selections is offset with musings of death and sorrow as seen in *Pensée des morts*, *Funérailles*, and the *Andante lagrimoso*. Liszt combines pieces inspired by a simple choral style (*Ave Maria*, *Pater noster*, and the *Hymne de l'enfant à son réveil*) next to works that are more similar to his large scale romantic symphonic poems (*Bénédiction de Dieu*) as well as pieces that are more contemplative such as the *Miserere d'après Palestrina*. Liszt exploits the magnificent range of the keyboard, expressing his growing religiosity as he turns to his final compositional period that is characterized by a newfound gravity and austerity.

Whence comes to me, O my God, this peace that
overwhelms me?
Whence comes this faith in which my heart abounds?
To me who just now, uncertain, agitated, and on the
waves of doubt buffeted by every wind,
Sought goodness, truth, in the dreams of the wise,
And peace in hearts resounding with fury,
When barely on my brow a few days have slipped by,
It seems that a century and a world have passed;
And that, separated from them by a great abyss,
A new man is born again within me and starts anew.

Alphonse de Lamartine

published as preface to Liszt's
'*Bénédiction de Dieu dans la Solitude*'

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