

From Voice to Piano: Liszt's transcriptions of Ständchen and Widmung

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Abstract

This research highlights a historically overlooked subgenre of Franz Liszt's piano works: the song transcriptions. Although often neglected in performance, research and recording, Liszt's song transcriptions offer insight into his experience as accompanist and as a composer of songs. The song transcriptions are more intimate in nature compared to Liszt's operatic paraphrases and demonstrate Liszt's compositional abilities in a way not evident in his other piano works. A detailed examination of their genesis followed by a side-by-side comparison of both *Ständchen* by Schubert and *Widmung* by Schumann with Liszt's transcriptions will provide better insight into how they represent Liszt as a composer, pianist and lover of Lieder.

In 1936 Breitkopf and Härtel published the largest collection of music to date by the Hungarian composer Franz Liszt, a daunting task that took over thirty years and was completed upon the fiftieth anniversary of Liszt's death. Despite the overall comprehensiveness of the collection, the editorial team chose to ignore one particular set of Liszt's works: the song transcriptions. Equally puzzling are the small number of commercial recordings of the song transcriptions.¹ It is no surprise that the arrangements of Beethoven symphonies and operatic paraphrases have proven more attractive to pianists, given the bravura style of the latter, but the song transcriptions demonstrate Liszt's sheer genius as composer and his technical mastery as pianist. Liszt's role as accompanist and true song lover is seen through the reverence with which he treats the original melodies. The question of the value of the song transcriptions and, more importantly, what can pianists learn from them, still lingers today. I propose that an intimate look at two of the song transcriptions, "Ständchen" and "Widmung," including an examination of their genesis and an analytical comparison between the original songs and Liszt's transcriptions, will produce a greater appreciation of this subgenre of works that has received far too little attention.

Although the word transcription is often used freely and sometimes interchangeably with paraphrase, it is important to note that the literal definition of each is different, and especially relevant in the discussion of Liszt's music. Liszt biographer Alan Walker describes the paraphrase as a "metamorphosis," a work that embellishes freely upon a single theme or melodic idea. Liszt composed a plethora of paraphrases on operas by Wagner, Mozart, Meyerbeer and others, which have gained immense popularity in both live and recorded performance. In contrast, Walker describes transcription as "strict, literal, [and] objective," deviating very little

¹ Alan Walker, *Reflections on Liszt* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 28.

from the original work.² The delicacy and thoughtfulness with which Liszt's song transcriptions were composed offer a detailed look at Liszt's musical skills.

Much discussion has been devoted to the purpose of Liszt's transcriptions. The general consensus by scholars is the transcriptions served two notable purposes. The first was to disseminate more widely the music of lesser known or performed composers. The desire to popularize music of his contemporaries can be clearly seen in Liszt's transcriptions of fifty-six Schubert songs. Despite the obvious contrasts in musical personalities, Liszt's devotion to Schubert began at an early age, as both musicians studied with Antonio Salieri, who cultivated an interest in Schubert to the young Liszt by discussing Schubert's musical abilities. While living in Paris, Liszt encountered the composer and violinist Chrétien Urhan, who was a major champion of Schubert's music, which had not been widely recognized after the composer's death in 1828. Liszt's intense obsession with Urhan fostered his already growing affection for Schubert.³

A tragedy in Liszt's homeland in 1838 spurred the composer to revisit his love of Schubert. That year a tragic flood of the Danube devastated large portions of western Hungary. Liszt traveled from Venice to Vienna to perform charity recitals to support aid and recovery efforts in Hungary. Walker summarizes the effect of this event on Liszt as pivotal in his career as a composer.

Liszt had not been in Vienna since his childhood. And his return to the city of Schubert and Beethoven had a marked effect on him, for some of his earliest memories were enshrined there. He was reunited with his teacher Carl Czerny, the tenor Benedict Randhartinger and Count Thadé Amadé, one of his early benefactors. Liszt's life was always reflected in his work. It was no accident that in

² Ibid., 29.

³ Ibid., 29.

this dramatic year of 1838 he rediscovered Schubert. Almost as soon as he entered Vienna, the Schubert song transcriptions started to pour from his pen.⁴

As a collection, the Schubert song transcriptions include a variety of music from lively, upbeat songs like “Die Forelle” to slow, plodding songs like “Die Doppelganger,” as well as programmatic songs such as Liszt’s own “Die Lorelai.” At one point Liszt was commissioned to transcribe Schubert’s song cycle *Schwangesang*, as well as 12 songs from *Winterreise* but unfortunately, both cycles were printed incomplete when they were published in 1838.⁵ Liszt also transcribed a number of songs by Robert Schumann, including “Frühlingsnacht” and the ever popular “Widmung.” Liszt’s relationship with Schumann is best described as mutually critical and admirable. Schumann’s effort to revive music of the past by composers like Mozart, Beethoven and Weber was not entirely compatible with Liszt’s continued forward thinking. Yet, when Schumann composed his Fantasy in C Major, Op. 17 in 1836, he dedicated the work to Liszt. In return, Liszt dedicated his B Minor Sonata to Schumann, thus marking a notable mutual admiration between two of the world’s greatest composers. Although less popular than the Schubert and Schumann transcriptions, Liszt also transcribed songs by Chopin and Mendelssohn, as well as some of his own songs. The aforementioned composers are readily known today but these works certainly gained more attention following their performances by the famed virtuoso.

The second speculated motivation behind the song transcriptions was the opportunity to further expand piano technique; Liszt possessed what Walker describes as “an unshakable belief in the future of the piano.” The song transcriptions, strict and literal in composition, posed a new set of technical challenges that were not found in the paraphrases, giving Liszt added opportunity

⁴ Ibid., 27.

⁵David Norris, “Liszt’s Winterreise,” *The Musical Times* Volume 26, No. 1711 (September 1985): 521.

to explore every facet of the piano. Liszt's intent was to transpose the melody and accompaniment of a Lied to a single instrument without sacrificing the integrity of the melodic line. The sheer genius of such compositional mastery is highly evident in specific transcriptions such as Schubert's "Ave Maria," "Auf dem Wasser zu Singen" and "Erlkonig." In "Ave Maria," Liszt keeps the accompaniment in the middle register of the piano such as it is in the original by Schubert. The melody is also in the middle register of the keyboard and played with alternating hands, a technique frequently used by Liszt. "Auf dem Wasser zu Singen," one of Liszt's earliest transcriptions, has an active accompaniment that remains intact throughout the piece, offering a near mirror image of its original. Liszt's greatest feat as transcriber was the notoriously difficult "Erlkönig." Aside from the obvious technical challenges, the ability to portray the separate characters in the Lied exemplifies Liszt's compositional expertise, which was enhanced by the advancements of the piano as an instrument. These allowed Liszt to explore new timbres and extended register, both of which were crucial for the "Erlkonig" transcription.

Liszt was both an avid accompanist and a composer of songs, which likely contributed to both his interest in transcribing and the reverence with which he approached it. On several occasions Liszt accompanied performances of Schubert songs for singers such as Adolphe Nourrit, Benedict Randhartinger, and Madame Schröder-Devrient. This perspective as accompanist is what caused Liszt to approach transcription with such caution and to take every effort to preserve the original elements of the song while exploring technical advancements in the piano as an instrument. In his *Reflections on Liszt*, Walker states, "much more than the operatic paraphrases, or even the *Transcendental Studies* these Schubert transcriptions reveal Liszt's total command of the keyboard," thus emphasizing the true significance of these

transcriptions.⁶ A number of scholars, including Walker, believe the transcriptions were meant to increase Liszt's repertory, but his oeuvre is easily the largest collection of piano music (in addition to his tone poems, songs and organ music), so an existing need to increase his collection seems unconvincing.⁷ Instead, what does seem highly relevant to the transcriptions is Liszt's own composition of songs. Like the transcriptions, Liszt's collection of over 80 songs has been much overlooked, despite being strongly rooted in the Lieder tradition. The scholar Edwin Hughes describes Liszt's songs as "German Lieder through and through, as German as any of Schubert's or Schumann's in spite of the fact that their composer was the most cosmopolitan of all great creative musicians."⁸ Although his first songs were composed while in Italy, Liszt's stay in Weimar, beginning in 1848, radically affected his role as song composer. While there Liszt immersed himself in German poetry and had at his disposal a host of accomplished singers like Franz Gotze, Emili Genast and Rosa Agthe, thus fueling his passion for the genre. Liszt's Lieder are so significant that Walker states that any overview is incomplete without discussion of Liszt's songs, and suggests that they are a "missing link between Schumann and Hugo Wolf."⁹ The songs themselves represent a different side of Liszt in their brevity and conciseness. Unlike his tone poems and even certain piano works, the songs are efficient, and comparatively like musical vignettes. Many of the song transcriptions predate Liszt's Lieder, but it is notable that he possessed an avid interest in songs that perhaps first manifested through the transcriptions.

A final observation about Liszt and his transcriptions is his reputation as performer and composer. His colorful lifestyle and dramatic flair for performing gave his musical audience

⁶ Walker, 35.

⁷ Walker, 29.

⁸ Edwin Hughes, "Liszt as Lieder Composer", *The Musical Quarterly*, Volume 3, No. 3 (July 1917): 394.

⁹ Walker, 152.

dramatic displays of showmanship. Liszt transformed the art of performing and made such drastic changes to piano technique that his reputation was strongly tied to this aspect of his musicianship. His works, like the operatic paraphrases and the transcriptions of the Beethoven symphonies, were unlike anything heard by Romantic audiences; thus, their expectations of Liszt as both pianist and composer were of brilliance and virtuosity.¹⁰ The subtlety of the song transcriptions seems to contradict the assumption that all his works are highly virtuosic. Walker describes the difficulties posed by the transcriptions as of a “private, not a public nature,” and attests that Liszt’s intent was not to create pieces that “dazzle.”¹¹ The scholar Philip Friedham offers insight pertaining to the mindset of Liszt, specifically within the context of the Romantic period. He states:

A distinction should be made, however, between the desire of the virtuoso to impress his listeners and the desire of the individual to include every human experience within himself. Liszt's original compositions fulfill the former function, and many of them sustain their virtuosity without sacrificing musical integrity. Some of the transcriptions, however, overstep the limitations of the medium, either through the nature of the specific work (as in the *Symphonie Fantastique*) or through the exaggeration of technical difficulties (as in “Erlkönig”). The element which goes beyond the stage of virtuoso pyrotechnics to something fundamental in Romanticism is a belief in the infinite capability of the human being. Man's greatness is evidenced not only by the fact that he can overcome his apparent limitations, but that he can contain the entire world within himself.

Liszt’s many transcriptions and paraphrases highlight this mindset by providing Liszt the best of both musical worlds, allowing him to take a piece as grand as a Beethoven symphony or as intimate as a Schubert song and perform it himself in its entirety.¹² This empowering ability to transform a single instrument into a simulacrum of a full orchestra or singer and accompanist surely brought Liszt a great deal of satisfaction as both a composer and performer. Therefore, the

¹⁰ Hughes, 391.

¹¹ Walker, 58.

¹² Philip Friedham, “The Piano Transcriptions of Franz Liszt”, *Studies in Romanticism*, Volume 1, No. 2 (Winter, 1962), 87.

song transcriptions not only functioned superficially as lovely concert pieces, but also fulfilled the intimate desire for satisfaction he yearned for as a die-hard Romantic.

Understanding the genesis of the song transcriptions is an important part of appreciating them within Liszt's oeuvre. A secondary or micro-level approach appreciation should include a side-by-side comparison of the transcriptions with the original songs to fully understand and therefore appreciate their complexities and the difficulties that Liszt conquered to preserve the songs as best he could. An examination of "Ständchen" by Schubert and "Widmung" by Schumann yields insight into the delicate process Liszt followed so carefully in transcribing. These two selections exemplify the German Lieder with which Liszt was highly enamored; their subsequent transcriptions are quite effective and make pleasant recital pieces. Therefore, these two works will serve well for an in-depth discussion of the song transcriptions.

The overwhelming number of Lieder that Schubert composed is a testament to his role in the development of the solo song. He wrote hundreds, some of which are in small collections and others that stand alone, as well as three song cycles: *Die Schöne Müllerin*, *Winterreise*, and *Schwanengesang*. *Die Schöne Müllerin*, D. 795 (1823) uses poems by Wilhelm Müller as does *Winterreise*, D. 911 of 1828. *Schwanengesang*, D. 957, was published and titled posthumously by the renowned publisher Haslinger, who likely compiled this collection in an attempt to capitalize on the success of both *Die Schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*. *Schwanengesang* includes poetry by three authors—Ludwig Rellstab, Heinrich Heine and Johann Seidl—which makes the cycle less defined and cohesive than Schubert's other cycles.

"Ständchen," the fourth and most famous song from *Schwanengesang*, depicts a character serenading his lover. The song is strophic and originally in D minor, with transposed editions for medium and high voices. One striking element of the song is its sheer simplicity, as it is based on

only two melodic ideas. It opens with a four-measure piano introduction in which the staccato articulation of the right hand seems to imitate a guitar; the stark nature of this introduction sets the mood for the lyrical serenade to follow. The primary theme is both melodic and rhythmic, using the following combination of rhythms: triplet, dotted-quarter, eighth. Both phrases incorporate the primary theme and begin with the triplet figure, which leads to the highest pitch of the phrase, followed by a gradual descent to its close. Both the first and second phrases begin with D minor chords, but the first cadences in D minor and the second in F major. The secondary theme begins in measure seventeen; the emphasis on major chords and the rising nature of the melody provide a musical and emotional contrast to the primary theme. An eight measure interlude separates the first stanza from the second. The second stanza is not followed by a piano interlude, but rather, an eight-bar section, from mm. 62 – 69, that presents a new melody or tertiary theme that is characterized by dotted rhythms and musical repetition, expressing agitation and passion as the narrator pleads with his or her love to hear their song. The closing material of each stanza returns in m. 70 as the song reaches its conclusion with a final statement of “Come, please me!” In addition to its brevity, another curious element is the polarization of major and minor mode that occurs throughout. For example, the secondary theme is stated twice, first in D minor in mm. 17 – 22 (example 1a) and then in D major in mm. 23 – 28 (example 1b).

Additionally, the piano interlude in mm. 29 – 36 can be divided into two 4-bar phrases, the first of which begins centered on F minor and the second on F major. Lastly, in m. 73 the tonality is D major, but a shift to D minor takes place in m. 74, even while the singer is holding a D over from m. 73.

Example 1a – Schubert, “Ständchen,” mm. 17 – 20

Flü-sternd schlan - ke Wi - pfel rau - schen in des Mon - des Licht,
Si - lent pray'rs of bliss-ful feel - ing, Link us though a - part,

This PDF courtesy of Art Song Central - The singer's resource for free sheet music - www.ArtSongCentral.com

Example 1b – Schubert, “Ständchen,” mm. 23 - 24

des Ver - rä - thers feind - lich Lau - schen,
On the breath of mu - sic steal - ing

The simplicity and pure melodiousness of “Ständchen” is perhaps the source of the song’s appeal and the key to its lasting popularity. It is also what makes Liszt’s transcription of it such a challenge. “Ständchen,” like so many of Schubert’s songs, is so perfectly suited to the voice; thus, translating the vocal line to piano without losing the nature of the song could not have been an easy task. Also, the strophic form would require some variance throughout the transcription to provide musical variety. For this, Liszt employed several techniques that allowed him to complete a transcription as close to its original as possible while still offering a musically satisfying piece. Following Schubert’s voicing, Liszt keeps both the vocal melody and the piano accompaniment in their original range. Liszt thickens the accompanying figure by adding a third pitch to each, making them full triads. At first glance of the score, the transcription appears more difficult than necessary. If played as printed (example 2), the right hand contains both a part of

the accompaniment and the vocal line, posing not only the difficulty of projecting the melody but also of maintaining rhythmic alignment. However, looking beyond the redistribution of the accompaniment, all of the accompanying figures can be played with the left hand, leaving the right hand to play the melody. As a result, the transcription begins exactly as the song did, and remains a perfect replica through the first stanza, which ends in m. 37.

Example 2. Liszt, “Ständchen” transcription, mm. 5–9

The first point at which Liszt deviates from Schubert’s original is in m. 38, when the second stanza begins; for this verse the melody is transposed down an octave, into what would be the tenor vocal range. This re-voicing of the melody, seen in example 3, creates two significant changes to the original. The first is to the musical interpretation, because at this point it seems that Liszt is portraying two singers, one female and one male, a narrative shift from the single character in Schubert’s song; this idea plays a pivotal role in the remainder of Liszt’s transcription. The second change is a technical one, as the pianist is now projecting a melody and accompaniment in the same range of the keyboard, requiring the crossing of one hand over another. Liszt’s decision to alter the voicing stems from the need to provide musical variety in a strophic song. Vocal songs in strophic form rely on the words for narrative purposes, but without text the music loses some depth. In the transcription, it is the idea that two singers exist that

evokes a musical and poetic picture of Rellstab's text. The harmonic and melodic structure of the second stanza remains the same as the first through m. 70, at which point we expect the tertiary and closing themes to appear but they do not. Instead, Liszt elongates the piece by joining both the male and female singers in a duet.

Example 3 –Schubert-Liszt transcription, mm. 38 – 41,

The third stanza of the transcription begins with the melody in its original range in the treble clef, with the second voice an octave higher and entering imitatively. The technical difficulty posed is the need to create a hierarchy of sound by projecting the lower voice over the upper one in the right hand while simultaneously balancing both voices with the accompaniment in the left (example 4). Yet, the physiological makeup of the hand lends itself to this balance fairly well. Liszt includes editorial marks to ensure the interpreter understands this balance by marking the lower voice mezzo-forte and the upper voice pianissimo, as well as noting the upper voice is an “echo”. In m. 79 he adds *sempre a Due*, or “always as two” in order to maintain the duet. This imitative duet continues throughout the entire third stanza, which ends in m. 100.

Example 4 – Liszt, “Ständchen” transcription, mm. 67 - 76

Echo
pp 3

sempre p e stacc.

Fortsetzung nächste Seite

The primary theme maintains the ornaments that a different composer might have ignored or sacrificed in order to accommodate the duet voicing. In contrast to the primary and secondary themes, the tertiary theme, beginning in m. 91, starts with the melody in the right hand, followed by the left hand one measure later (example 5). This is the most Lisztian section of the piece, with its rolled chords spanning a tenth, expanded use of the keyboard’s range and an overall grandiose air. The sudden sparseness in m. 103 recalls the Schubertian nature of “Ständchen,” but is momentarily interrupted by one final indulgent gesture, a chromatic scale that leads to the closing material (example 6). In the final five measures of the piece, Liszt includes two extra measures not in the original song (mm. 113 and 114). These simply expand on the final tonic chord of D major but in a pianistic way that is not necessary in the song.

Example 5 – Liszt, “Ständchen”, mm. 91 – 92

animato il tempo
Laß auch dir die Brust be - we - - gen,
con agitazione

Example 6 – Liszt, “Ständchen”, mm. 103 – 107

In general, Liszt maintains a high level of authenticity in his transcription of “Ständchen.” The major alterations of voicing and the addition of a third stanza were the result of a need for timbral variety and the opportunity to technically advance the music from a pianistic point-of-view. Liszt’s careful attention to detail, such as keeping the vocal line in its original key and range, maintaining ornaments despite the added technical difficulty, and deviating little from the original demonstrate an overwhelming level of reverence Liszt had for Schubert. It is also exemplary of the Schubert-Liszt transcriptions, in that Walker describes the collection as “strict, literal and objective.”¹³ Yet, despite the austerity of the transcription, Liszt

¹³ Walker, p. 29

imbues his work with enough creativity that the outcome is a piece that allows the piano to truly sing in the most literal sense.

Liszt's devotion to Schubert is quite clear through the number of Schubert's Lieder that he transcribed for piano, even though the age and stylistic personalities of these two composers were quite different. Schubert's introverted personality, studious nature and classical roots stood in stark contrast to the Romantic Liszt, whose virtuosic piano technique pushed the boundaries of the genre and who single-handedly transformed the art of performing. Logically it seems that Liszt had much more in common with his contemporary Schumann than with Schubert. Schumann was also a die-hard Romantic who, like Liszt, composed a significant amount of music for piano, orchestra and voice. Also, his music embodies the idea of romanticism more thoroughly through its exploration of German folklore, the use of programmatic writing and his musical collections for both piano and voice. Nevertheless, Liszt transcribed a noticeably fewer number of Schumann's songs, despite his overwhelming success as a Lieder composer. Schumann's song "Widmung," like Schubert's "Ständchen," has enjoyed immense popularity. The song comes from his cycle *Myrthen*, Op. 25, which was written and published in 1840. Following several years of composing primarily for the piano, in that year Schumann was devoted exclusively to composing for the voice; he wrote 168 lieder; thus, the year is known as his Liederjahr. It also marked the year in which Schumann was at last betrothed to his beloved Clara, who was the inspiration behind many of Schumann's works.

Myrthen, like *Schwanengesang*, is a cycle on the works of various poets, including Goethe, Ruckert, Heine, and Byron. "Widmung" is the first Lied in this twenty-six song collection, and uses a text by Rückert. Much like "Ständchen," it is a love song in which its narrator, Schumann, confesses undying love and unsuppressed desire, the very feelings

Schumann felt for Clara. The song is in ternary form and begins in A-flat major with a one-measure piano introduction. The rousing and passionate nature of this section is befitting of the text and recalls Schumann's Florestan character, whose expressiveness is heard in the music. There is no modulation between the A and B sections; though the move to a key a third away is typical of the Romantic period, the transition seems abrupt. In contrast to the outer sections, the B section is more subdued. While the A section is comprised of arpeggiated chords that create a full texture and active accompaniment, the B section is much more homophonic. Here the vocal line is less shapely and settles into a lower register as the singer speaks of rest and joy. In m. 25 the voice repeats the note C-sharp, which acts as the pivot note to return to A-flat major; the voice remains on what is now D-flat (example 7). The suspension of this note allows the harmonic progression to move from C-sharp minor (in E major) directly to an E-flat dominant chord that paves the way for the return of section A in m. 30. This closing section is mostly similar to the first A section, with only slight melodic variances to add interest; the five-measure coda includes a quote of Schubert's "Ave Maria".

Example 7 – Schumann, “Widmung,”mm. 24 - 28

“Widmung” is not a terribly complex or innovative Lied, but the love and pure devotion expressed through text and music is likely the reason for the appeal and staying power of the song, as it has gained significant popularity in both performance and on recordings. “Widmung”

was Liszt's first transcription of a Schumann song and was written in 1848. Clara Schumann also composed a transcription of "Widmung," but it remains relatively unknown given its lack of musical development and overall simplicity. Compared to Liszt's transcription, which exploits the technical capabilities of both the pianist and the instrument, Clara's is a mere replica of the song with little variance. Both transcriptions are remarkably similar in the initial A and B sections (examples 8a and 8b). However, in the return of the A section, Clara retains the same voicing and layout; at the same point, Liszt's transcription is far more virtuosic (examples 9a and 9b).

Example 8a – Clara Schumann, "Widmung," mm. 1 – 3

Innig, lebhaft.

Du meine See - le, du mein Herz,

du meine

Example 8b – Liszt, "Widmung," mm. 3 – 5

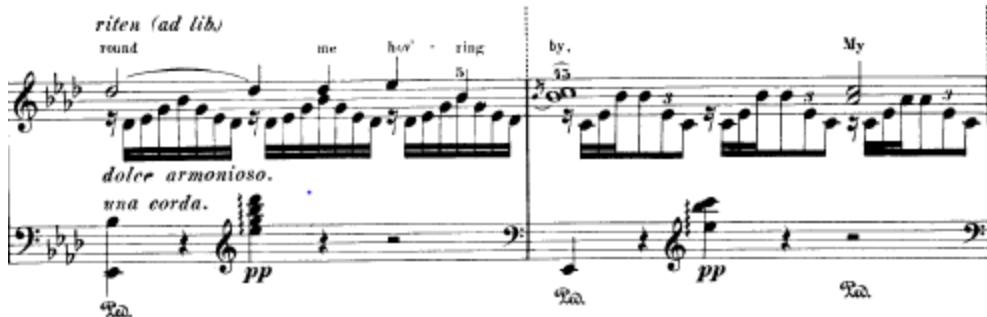
accentato assai il esito.

Thou art my soul, thou art my heart, thou be my

Example 9a – Clara Schumann’s Widmung, mm. 26 – 28



Example 9b – Liszt’s Widmung, 44 – 45



The reverence with which Liszt approached Schubert’s songs is not seen in his transcription of “Widmung;” perhaps it was the near decade that had passed since he began transcribing, or that in the lively nature and full arpeggiation of the accompaniment Liszt saw an opportunity to embellish. Regardless, or maybe as a result, the piece has remained popular with pianists and is one of the few song transcriptions that has been recorded. Liszt’s transcription maintains the ternary form of the original but lengthens the A sections, so the transcription is notably longer than the song. The piece opens with a three-measure introduction that simply repeats the one-measure introduction of the song. The first slight variation in the melody that Liszt introduces is the dotted rhythm in m. 4 (see example 10). This subtle alteration occurs only in this moment, as the remainder of the melody is rhythmically identical to Schumann’s melody. Presumably, Liszt accommodated the melody to rhythmically align with the accompaniment, as the alteration does not occur again.

Example 10a – Schumann, “Widmung,” mm. 2-3



Example 10b – Liszt, “Widmung” mm. 4-5

accentato assai il canto.
Thou art my soul, thou art my heart; thou be my

The first stanza of the transcription is a near exact replica of the song, demonstrating Liszt’s devotion to authenticity. In m. 16 a repeat of the first stanza begins but here the writing is no longer a mirror image of the song; rather, it consists of very pianistic writing, with the use of sixths in the right hand and large, rolled chords in the left hand. As in “Ständchen,” the melody of the second stanza of “Widmung” is in the bass clef as it settles into the tenor range. However, the idea of a duet does not have the same overall effect as in “Ständchen.” Instead, it seems that Liszt is exploring a fuller range of the keyboard and adding to the technical difficulty of the piece. This is evident, as the melody does periodically appear in the right hand, and the accompaniment is clearly in the treble range, suggesting the two parts have simply switched places. The second stanza of the transcription ends with a short coda and a rolled tonic chord,

giving a stronger air of finality to the A section than in the original. The B section is more straightforward, as it does not vary in length and maintains the same ranges for the voice and accompaniment as in the song. The chordal texture of this section does pose some technical challenges to the performer because of the density of the accompaniment, and because the melody must be played with primarily the fourth and fifth fingers. Thus, the balance of the voices can be demanding.

The final A section, beginning in m. 44, is the most embellished, and therefore Lisztian, part of the transcription with chords in the left hand in both the low bass and upper treble clef, facilitated by hand-crossing. Simultaneously, the melody is in the soprano range and broken sixteenth-note chords fill the middle range. The immediate effect is a much fuller texture, a more active accompaniment and a feeling of building toward a climax. This layering of musical and rhythmic ideas culminates in a descending E-flat dominant seventh chord that spans four octaves and signals the return of the primary melody in m. 49. This grandiose statement places the melody in full chords in the left hand while the right outlines arpeggiated harmonies that sweep up and down the upper ranger of the piano (example 11). The fullness and richness of this section is elongated with a repeat of the A section beginning at m. 58. Here, the melody and accompaniment are both stated in full chords, creating an immensely dense texture that uses a large range of the keyboard. Although the texture and nature of this repeated A section is strikingly different from Schumann's song, the actual presentation of the melody is remarkably similar, as Liszt maintains the overall melodic, rhythmic and harmonic structure (example 12). The final coda retains the texture and voicing of the song, with only an added measure of cadential material for variation. Overall, "Widmung," demonstrates a different approach than "Ständchen," as Liszt takes more liberties to transform the song into a virtuosic display. Despite

the deviations from Schumann's original work, Liszt's variations and embellishments always take the melody as his first consideration and the technicalities second.

Example 11 – Liszt, “Widmung,” mm. 49 – 50



Example 12 – Liszt, “Widmung,” mm. 57 – 59



The effectiveness of both “Ständchen” and “Widmung” as transcriptions stems from two major factors. As songs, both works were immensely popular with singers. Additionally, the skill with which Liszt composed each embraces the full capabilities of the piano while retaining the melody and structure of the original songs. Liszt extended this expertise to his own songs, some of which demanded a different kind of creativity in order to be effective as transcriptions. For example, his song “Die Lorelei” required further reworking when transcribed for the piano to encompass the full meaning of the song. Without the text, the music is incapable of depicting its imagery, such as the moment when the boat crashes on the rock. The compositional mastery that Liszt demonstrated in the song transcriptions is a vastly different skill than exercised in his

operatic paraphrases. The technical and interpretive difficulties are far more intimate, much like the songs on which the transcriptions are based. Also, unlike the paraphrases, the effectiveness of the transcriptions is due to the nearly sacred approach Liszt took in maintaining as many details of the original as possible.

Despite the musical appeal of the transcriptions, they remain relatively unknown. Understanding the context in which they were composed helps to explain their absence from the standard concert repertoire. As previously discussed, Liszt's devotion to Schubert and his love of Lieder ignited his interest in transcribing, but it is important to remember why his initial transcriptions were written. His return to Vienna and need for repertoire that appealed to an audience amidst tragedy is what stimulated his earliest works, such as "Auf dem Wasser zu singen," "Ständchen" and "Erlkonig." The result was a collection of appealing music, but not necessarily music that was thoroughly innovative from a theoretical point of view. After all, Liszt was not the only composer to transcribe solo songs, and while his are better-known than those of his contemporaries, historically they did not garner the same attention as his more progressive works. Additionally, fewer pianists were performing his transcriptions; following the deaths of his students, they were nearly forgotten. Instead, pianists chose the virtuosic paraphrases, the B Minor Sonata or the Hungarian Rhapsodies, all of which demand unbridled technique and generally evoke excitement in listeners.

Finally, in the context of Liszt's oeuvre as a whole, the number of song transcriptions is almost diminutive in comparison to his works for solo piano. Perhaps it is the idea of "recycled" music, a concept generally avoided by Liszt, which makes the transcriptions feel less innovative. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Liszt was not known for borrowing musical ideas, nor did he reuse his ideas in his own works. Thus, the transcriptions and paraphrases are his only works

based on previously composed material. Regardless, the song transcriptions offer insight into an aspect of Liszt as a musician, composer and accompanist that cannot be found in his other music. They also provide a glimpse of Liszt as a thoughtful and reverent interpreter, rather than the showman he was so well-known as during his time. In conclusion, the musical appeal of Liszt's song transcriptions warrant greater attention from pianists, who could gain such insight and satisfaction from their performance.

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