



Liszt's Bicentenary at the Beethovenfest Bonn 2011

Liszt and the music of his Hungarian homeland are placed in the context of current political developments

“Oh dear, he’s turned his back on us!” exclaimed King Frederick William IV of Prussia, when the Beethoven monument was unveiled. Alexander von Humboldt drily responded: “Yes, he was always pretty coarse in his lifetime too.”

This conversation took place on the balcony of Palais Fürstenberg when the **Beethoven monument was revealed** on Bonn’s Münsterplatz **in August 1845**. That’s where the important European state representatives were gathered: in addition to Humboldt and Frederick William IV of Prussia, Queen Victoria had also come from England.

Franz Liszt worshipped Ludwig van Beethoven and had planned a monument for him for a long time. To implement this idea he had given charity concerts. Liszt’s commitment earned him 10,000 francs, with which he was able to pay for a fifth of the monument, created by Ernst Hähnel, a sculptor from Dresden. Hähnel also carved four reliefs for the granite pedestal of the over-lifesize Beethoven statue, which represent Beethoven’s religious music, the sonatas, the symphonies and his opera “Fidelio”.

Together with August Wilhelm Schlegel and Louis Spohr Liszt did not just work for the monument in Beethoven’s honour, but also organized a three-day music festival to accompany the statue’s inauguration in August 1845. The **first Beethovenfest** took place on the occasion of what would have been the composer’s 75th birthday. Franz Liszt not only planned everything almost on his own and paid for most of it out of his own pocket, he also performed as a pianist and conductor. He conducted Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony as well as a cantata he had composed specially for the festival; he performed the solo part in Beethoven’s Piano Concerto no. 5. He engaged well-known artists to take part, including Louis Spohr, Heinrich Carl Breidenstein and Marie Félicité Pleyel, the daughter-in-law of piano-maker Ignace Joseph Pleyel, who all performed on Münsterplatz, in the Münster Basilica and in the Beethovenhalle on 10, 12 and 13 August. Liszt had the Beethovenhalle built specially for the festival, but shortly afterwards it had to be demolished again because it was deemed a fire hazard.

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On the concluding weekend the Beethovenfest 2011 will repeat **the second day of the 1845 concert programme** in honour of the bicentenary of the festival founder's birth. Conducted by **Ivor Bolton, Concerto Köln** will interpret Beethoven's "Coriolanus" Overture, his Fifth Symphony, the Seraph's aria from "Christ on the Mount of Olives" and his Piano Concerto no. 5 with soloist **Alexander Melnikov**. In addition the Pleyel-Quartett will interpret Beethoven's String Quartet no. 10, the "Harp", op. 74, while a vocal quartet will perform the quartet canon from "Fidelio" op. 72 (7 October).

Stefan Mickisch will also address the first Beethovenfest 1845 in a lecture concert and perform excerpts from the programme on the piano (18 September).

Liszt and his relationship to music history are at the focus subject of a **Liszt Night** (24 September). At ten concerts in five different venues the Beethovenfest will portray Liszt in many facets: as a symphonic composer, as a member of the avant-garde, as a composer of sacred and folk music, as a composer of songs and as a chamber musician. Liszt felt himself to be Hungarian, even though he only learned the language late in life. He returned to Hungary in 1839. He gave concerts for the victims of a flood in Pest and Bratislava (Slovakia was then part of Hungary), showing himself once again, as in many other cases, to be a benefactor helping the weak and needy in society. In the period that followed he collected melodies from gypsy bands that he wrote down by ear, which he wrongly called **Hungarian folk music**. It was not until later that Bartók and Kodály discovered the Hungarian peasant songs as true Hungarian folk music. Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies developed from his transcription of the collected melodies. He imitated the cimbalom on the piano by repetitions, arpeggi, tremolos and glissandi. Liszt continued to use the gypsy scale in many other works.

During the Liszt Night we shall hear works originally composed for cimbalom. **Ágnes Szakály** will perform pieces by Liszt, Bartók, Kodály, Kurtág and Bach together with the pianist **István Dominkó**. The cellist **Julian Steckel** and the pianist **Paul Rivinius** will interpret cello sonatas by these composers (Schlosskirche).

Further compositions in which Franz Liszt used Hungarian folk melodies will be performed by the pianist **Mihaela Ursuleasa**, the violinist **Géza Hosszu-Legocky** and the double bassist **Roman Patkoló** together with the **Roma und Sinti Philharmoniker**, conducted by **Riccardo M Sahiti**. The programme also includes Kodály's "Dances of Galánta". Before that **Fanfare Ciocărlia** will perform folk arrangements for wind instruments and percussion (Beethovenhalle). The Roma und Sinti Philharmoniker are a project orchestra composed of musicians from various European orchestras from Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania and Germany. It was founded by the conductor Riccardo M Sahiti in 2002. Romani Rose, the head of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, will be patron of this orchestra's concerts.

The organists **Iveta Apkalna** and **Martin Haselböck** will introduce Liszt as the founder of the symphonic-poem genre; also performing at the concert will be **BonnSonata** conducted by **Markus Karas**. Liszt's twelve symphonic poems were inspired by literary sources or a programmatic idea. They each consist of only one movement; within them the sonata form and the four-movement symphonic cycle are

merged to create a new formal idea. The works to be heard are the Symphonic Poem "Prometheus", which Jean Guillou has arranged for the organ, and the Legends no. 1 "St Francis of Assisi's Sermon to the Birds" arranged for organ by Günter Berger and no. 2 "St Francis of Paola Walking on the Waves" arranged for organ by Max Reger (Kreuzkirche).

Before Liszt plucked up the courage to produce compositions for orchestra, something he only began during his time as director of court music in Weimar, he mainly composed **piano music**. He called the piano "his being, his language, his life" and tried to achieve an orchestral sound through this instrument. This intention becomes particularly clear in his transcriptions of orchestral works for one or two pianos. Liszt is considered a revolutionary of piano music. He was the first musician to give a solo piano recital; previously programmes had consisted of performances by several artists. During the Liszt Night **Nikolay Tokarev** will play piano works by Liszt, Pabst, Chopin, Scriabin and Rosenblatt. The **Duo d'Accord** will perform Beethoven's Ninth in Franz Liszt's version for two pianos (Beethovenhalle, Studio).

Liszt composed more than 70 **lieder** with piano accompaniment; he wrote most of them during the seven-year concert tour of Europe which he began in the winter of 1839. The majority of his lieder are based on German and French poems. The latter, as well as French songs by Poulenc and Meyerbeer, will be performed on the Liszt Night by the soprano **Jutta Koch** and the tenor **Andreas Burkhart**. **Eric Schneider** has compiled three evenings of Liszt songs exclusively for the Beethovenfest Bonn 2011. Liszt only composed one original work for violin and piano, namely the Grand Duo Concertant. **Elena Denisova and Alexei Kornienko** will perform this as well as works by other composers for this instrumentation on the Liszt Night (Beethoven-Haus). **Annette Kristina Banse, Hans-Christian Schmidt-Banse and Bodo Primus** will give short historical introductions at six of the ten Liszt Night concerts.

In a further evening of lieder **Matthias Goerne** and Eric Schneider will cast light on **Liszt's connection with Vienna**. The programme includes works by Hugo Wolf and Franz Liszt (25 September). When Liszt was eleven years old, his family moved from Raiding to the Austrian capital, where he took piano lessons with Carl Czerny and composition with Antonio Salieri. It was in Vienna that Liszt composed his first works, before the family moved to Paris just one year later in 1823.

A third evening of lieder at the Beethovenfest Bonn 2011 deals with **Liszt's association with Bayreuth**. Accompanied by Eric Schneider, **Claudia Barainsky** will sing lieder by Liszt, Peter Cornelius and Hans von Bülow, all of whom were followers of the New German/Wagnerian School (23 September). At first Liszt and Wagner had a very close relationship. Liszt was captivated by Wagner and his music. As the director of court music in Weimar he conducted many works by contemporary composers, including Wagner, whose compositions he put on the programme 36 times. In addition he helped Wagner flee to Switzerland when he was wanted for his participation in the May Uprising in Dresden. During the subsequent period Liszt gave his friend both financial and moral support. After 50 rehearsals he put on "Lohengrin" in Weimar in 1850, a work Wagner had dedicated to him. They only had differences regarding religious issues. Wagner's essay "Das Judentum in der Musik"

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[“Judaism in Music”] alienated Liszt, but he avoided a direct confrontation. Through Wagner’s liaison with his daughter Cosima the relationship between the two cooled; it was not until 1872 that it improved again. In 1873 he travelled to Bayreuth for the topping-out ceremony of the Festspielhaus. Liszt was also in Bayreuth for the first two festivals in the summers of 1876 and 1882. In 1886 Liszt, seriously ill by now, once again travelled to Bayreuth for the festival, which his daughter Cosima continued on her own after Wagner’s death. Liszt died there on 31 July.

Further concerts will portray the composer, pianist, conductor, theatre director, teacher and author Franz Liszt in connection with a country or city. **“Liszt and France” “Liszt and Hungary” and “Liszt and Russia”** are the themes of the two concerts by **Steven Isserlis and Dénes Várjon** (4 and 5 October). On the first evening they will interpret two of Liszt’s programmatic-pictorial duos for cello and piano, as well as works by French and Hungarian composers. Liszt’s career as a pianist who was fêted all over Europe began in Paris. French society, whom he impressed with his impressive abilities as well as his appearance, called him “petit Liszt”. His performances were always very expressive and almost eccentric. He himself wrote in May 1839 “Le concert c’est moi” (“I am the concert”). During his concert tour of 1841/1842 Heinrich Heine coined the term **“Lisztomania”**: “How wild was the applause that met him! [...] It was an illustrious sight to see the triumphant performer calmly let the flowers rain down on him before finally, gracefully smiling, putting a red camellia [...] in his button-hole. That’s how, I thought, that’s how I explain this Lisztomania to myself.” **In Paris** Liszt met Heine as well as all the other significant **intellectuals and artists of the day**, such as Delacroix, Balzac, Hugo and Dumas. He met Rossini, Meyerbeer, his future good friend Berlioz, Paganini, who fascinated him, and Chopin, whom he liked more than the Pole liked him. Liszt also met George Sand and **Marie d’Agoult** in Paris. He had a ten-year relationship with the latter that began in 1833. This relationship produced three children, Blandine, Daniel and Cosima.

The second woman who had a significant effect on Liszt’s life was **Princess Carolin zu Sayn-Wittgenstein**, whom he met in Kiev in 1847. She left her husband for Liszt and lived a relatively reclusive life with him in Weimar for twelve years. At her instigation Liszt ended his concert career in order to focus almost wholly on the role of director of court music (Hofkapellmeister) in Weimar from 1848 onwards. Up until her separation from her husband, the princess had lived in the Ukraine, and thus created a link between Liszt and Russia. “Liszt and Russia” is thus the heading for the second evening by Isserlis and Várjon. The programme includes works by Liszt and Russian composers such as Balakirev, Shostakovich and Glazunov, who dedicated his elegy “Une pensée à François Liszt” to Liszt. Each evening will be concluded by a late cello sonata by Beethoven, sonatas op. 102 no. 1 and no. 2 are milestones in chamber music.

Another focus of the Beethovenfest Bonn is Liszt’s connection to his Hungarian homeland. On the one hand, works are featured in which Liszt used the gypsy scale and the influences of Hungarian folk music; on the other, the musicians and ensembles performing are ones who nurture the **cultural heritage of eastern**

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Europe and the Balkans. In addition to their performance at the Liszt Night **Fanfare Ciocărlia** from Romania will give a second concert with folksy arrangements for wind instruments and percussion. The traditional Roma village band from Romania performs Balkan Brass in a very unconventional manner, in the style of the Roma (8 October).

With their special timbre as well as with clarinet and strings, the **Gypsy Devils**, with the cimbalom as their central instrument, resemble the travelling bands of the 19th century that Liszt was familiar with. They combine Hungarian, Slovakian, Russian, Greek, Jewish and Romanian elements with the music of the Sinti and Roma. **Paul Gulda** supports them on the piano (17 September).

Goran Bregović comes to the Beethovenfest Bonn with his **Wedding and Funeral Orchestra** as an envoy for Balkan music. His concert is being organized by the student managers of the Young Beethovenfest (17 September).

The Beethovenfest Bonn is also featuring Liszt at three **musico-literary evenings**: Liszt wrote two major orchestral works, the “Dante Symphony” and the “Faust Symphony”, which he composed in 1854 in the space of just two months. He himself called his symphonic poems preparatory works for these. At his first meeting with Berlioz in 1830 he allowed himself to be swept along by his enthusiasm for Faust. By the 1840s he had produced sketches for a symphony. The “Faust Symphony” is reminiscent of the symphonic poems in its musical architecture and the programmatic movement headings: “Faust”, “Gretchen” and “Mephistopheles”. **Martin Schwab** will read from the book “**Historia von Doktor Johann Fausten**” and from Nikolaus Lenau’s “Faust”. **Martin Walch**, violin, and **Till Alexander Körber**, piano, will perform excerpts from works by Liszt, Beethoven and Schumann which have the “Faust” subject as their theme (18 September).

The actress **Corinna Harfouch** and the pianist **Hideyo Harada** will address Liszt’s long relationship with Marie d’Agoult under the heading “**Wenn ihre Stimm’ im Kuss verhallt**” (“**When her voice dies away in a kiss**”). Harfouch will read from d’Agoult’s memoirs, from the letters between her and Liszt, and from documents by contemporaries; Harada will play excerpts from the “Années de Pèlerinage” and other piano works by Liszt (8 October).

There were two problem areas in the relationship between Liszt and Marie d’Agoult: Liszt’s affairs with other women and the image of the artist. D’Agoult wanted him to be a sedentary composer, but he enjoyed the applause of the touring concert virtuoso. Marie initially accompanied Liszt on his travels, which he captured musically in his “Années de Pèlerinage”. In 1839 they separated temporarily so that Liszt could give concerts as a travelling virtuoso. In the summer of 1841 they met with the children to relax on the **Rhine island of Nonnenwerth**, where Liszt persuaded her to grant him two further years of travel. Before their second summer on the island in 1843 Liszt composed the song “Nonnenwerth” and dedicated it to her. The final separation followed and Marie began writing her novel “**Nélida**”, in which she sought to come to terms with her relationship with Liszt. Actress **Barbara Auer** and pianist **Sebastian Knauer** go in search of Franz Liszt on Nonnenwerth

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under the heading “... und er spielte mit den Damen Blindkuh” (“... and he played blind man’s buff with the ladies”). Auer will read from the memoirs of Liszt’s visit to the Rhine island in 1841. Knauer will play works by Liszt, Chopin and Beethoven (28 September).

When Franz Liszt was born in Raiding on 22 October 1811, the small town was still part of the Hingarian crown lands, which in turn formed part of the Austrian Empire. Although his mastery of the Hungarian language was less than fluent, throughout his life he had a great affinity to the culture and history of Hungary, and was inspired in numerous compositions by the country’s music. Above all, however, Liszt was one of the first genuine Europeans, someone who felt at home everywhere and whose judgement of people did not depend on their nationality. His tolerance and openness have since become the foundation of a widely institutionalized European association of states to which Hungary also belongs. For some time now, and especially since the change of government in April 2010, nationalist and racist tones have been heard from the country. There has been a steep increase in attacks on minorities and non-conformists, on Jews and gypsies, and on homosexuals. Artists and intellectuals opposed to the government line are subject to abuse and are losing their jobs. On the occasion of the bicentenary of the birth of Franz Liszt, the Beethovenfest Bonn is presenting numerous artists from Hungary, as well as gypsy musicians, and feels it to be its duty not to lose sight of the threat to artistic, intellectual and everyday freedom in Hungary even after the end of the Hungarian presidency of the European Council. For this reason, on the day following the concert by the Budapest Festival Orchestra with Iván Fischer we are organizing a **panel discussion** on the theme of “**What next for Hungary? On the current situation of the arts in Hungary**”. It will take place at 11 a.m. on 18 September in the Studio of the Beethovenhalle Bonn, and will involve well-known personalities from public life with an intimate knowledge of Hungarian culture, politics and society: Iván Fischer, Magdalena Marsovszky, an arts theoretician and journalist who divides her time between Munich and Budapest, Prof. Paul Lendvai, a journalist from Vienna, Romani Rose, the Chairman of the Central Council of the Sinti and Roma in Germany, based in Heidelberg, Dr. Michael Kluth, television journalist and screenwriter, and Dr Peter Spary, President of the German-Hungarian Society. The debate will be chaired by the Head of the Romanian Department of Deutsche Welle; Robert C. Schwartz.

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