

LISZT'S SYMBOLISM AND MUSICAL STRUCTURE

by
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"Liszt, in his use of musical symbolism, was going Wagner one better by achieving the true unification of music and ideas without recourse to words."

Alan B. Hersh

Introduction

About a hundred years ago, Liszt made his famous statement, "I can wait." His words reflect an aging composer no longer looking to be understood during his life-time, but gazing instead into the future, confident that some day his music would fulfill its mission. Wrote Liszt: "The predominance of the grossest habits...is still excessive in the music world. Perhaps it will diminish little by little... Perhaps then I shall also find my public"¹ Today, one hundred years later, those who take Liszt's music in earnest will probably ask: Has Liszt found his public, or is he still waiting?

Let us assume that Liszt would come back in 1986 to assess our understanding of his life's work: What would he be looking for, first and foremost? If we value the composer's opinions as expressed in his correspondence, we must remind ourselves that Liszt was not in the least interested in his biography; he stressed this repeatedly in his correspondence. I quote from one letter: "From the moment that she [Lina Ramann, Liszt's biographer] started her work, I told her that I do not attach any importance to my biography... What is the point in resurrecting the details of the past? Had she listened to me, she would have limited herself to the musical and aesthetic analysis of my works."²

Musical and aesthetic analyses of his works—these interested Liszt the most. And understandably so—for without a musical and aesthetic concept of his works, no performer can expect to recreate the music in an appropriate manner; and if the performer does not fully understand the work, how can the public be elevated to an understanding of its musical, poetical, or spiritual message? Consequently, our question must be rephrased thus: How do we fare one hundred years after Liszt's death in our musical and aesthetic analyses of his works? To give an objective answer, I will review a few facts.

The scope of musical analysis is vast, and within the given limitations I can focus on just a few of its aspects and just one work, the Sonata in B minor by Liszt. Because the title of this piece

refers to a musical form rather than a poetical or spiritual message, I will discuss first the purely musical aspects of the work.

I think you will agree with me that there would be no point in calling this piece a sonata if it had nothing to do with the old sonata principle. If Liszt's Sonata is indeed the greatest of his piano works, as wide-spread opinion has it, one would expect a unanimous agreement among musicians regarding the successful ways in which Liszt combined the essence of the old sonata principle with a new, revolutionary recasting of it. An agreement on the structure of Liszt's Sonata is, however, still wanting. Most studies reach dissimilar conclusions on identical issues. Musicians cannot agree even on such a basic thematic aspect of the Sonata as the identity of the so-called first and second subjects.³ For example, in trying to identify the second subject, some see it in the grandioso motif,⁴

grandioso



others, in the cantando espressivo motif.⁵

cantando espressivo



(The above themes are written in the note values of the autograph manuscript.) The larger form of the Sonata is equally controversial; some see it as a single movement work while others see it as having two, three, or even four submovements.⁶

Having found no agreement on the musical structure let me turn to aesthetic considerations. Let us assume that in writing the Sonata Liszt intended to create a work reflecting the new aesthetic concerns of Romanticism: 1) nationalistic traits, 2) mythology of ancient cultures, 3) obsession with the self, 4) hero worship, 5) poetical inspiration, 6) program music, 7) or spiritual content. Approached from this perspective, Liszt's piece has yielded the following varying theories:

1. The Sonata is a Hungarian nationalist epic as proved by the Gypsy scales of the work.
2. The Sonata is derived from the opening Leitmotif revealing Bar-and Bogen forms similar to those found in the music of the Minnesänger and Meistersinger.
3. The Sonata is a self-portrait of the composer.
4. The Sonata is the "Ballade of a

Hero's Life." 5. The Sonata is based on the aesthetics of the Commedia dell' Arte, and the Dramatis Personae are reviewed in their Urform at the beginning of the piece.⁷ 6. The Sonata is a programmatic work based on Goethe's Faust with its three characters Faust, Gretchen, and Mephistopheles.⁸ 7. And finally, the Sonata is a symbolic work based on Milton's Paradise Lost and the Holy Bible, depicting the Fall, the Crucifixion, and the Last Judgment through thematic transformations of the Lucifer, Satan, and Christ motifs.⁹

Ladies and gentlemen, take your pick'. Whether approached musically or aesthetically, Liszt's Sonata has yielded such disagreement among musicians that the only honest approach seems to be that of Heinrich Schenker. Upon confronting the grandioso motif of the Sonata, Schenker wrote: "How are these examples to be explained? Alas, we do not explain them at all. We do not even hear them. And if, occasionally, a sensitive listener turns up, whom such passages strike as odd and who asks for explanations, he will be fed a comfortable answer: All those instances represent unaccountable exceptions; licenses which men of genius take occasionally, etc. 'Exceptions?! Exceptions from what?' I should like to ask. Is it true that the alleged 'norm' of genius is established in manuals and lectures? Or is it true, on the contrary, that our theory does not reach to the level of even the most primitive problem raised by a piece of art?"¹⁰ Thus wrote Schenker.

His words deserve the most serious attention from all of us who believe in the greatness of Liszt as composer. Liszt may be great, but if we continue to disagree on both major and minor issues, we must come to the humble conclusion that we have not even begun to understand his music.

If one century after Liszt's death we have nothing to agree upon, maybe Liszt's critics were right in asserting that his music is a failure whether approached musically or programmatically. But we tend to reply to their accusations with words like these, written by Louis Kentner after an attempt to analyze the Sonata: "Perhaps analysis should not attempt to break the seals of the mystery that is artistic creation anyway, but should say with humility, 'We are in the presence of genius.' The alchemy of genius will, thank God, forever remain a secret."¹¹

But is this an honorable answer to the critics? To say, in effect: "Thank God for our ignorance; it is His will that we remain in darkness'." It seems to me that this is merely a comfortable way to conceal our ignorance while pretending to understand it all—genius, unfathomable genius'. Apparently, Liszt's genius is still the only issue that we seem to agree upon. This, however, is not a good enough reason for celebration.

There is, nevertheless, a good cause for celebration. The aim of this lecture is to demonstrate that, contrary to appearances, there is a significant yet overlooked area of agreement: divine and diabolical symbolism in the Sonata in B minor. After demonstrating the perfect

balance between musical symbolism and musical structure in the Sonata, I shall draw general conclusions on the relationship between the two.

İ. Agreement on Divine and Diabolical Symbolism in Liszt's Sonata in B Minor.

In 1857 Liszt wrote to his mother, "I feel irrefutably that my true reputation as an artist and my true artistic goals were founded first and foremost through my compositions conceived during the last four to five years."¹² These lines point to the years 1852-53 as representing the beginning of a qualitative jump taking place in his works. The importance of this letter is extraordinary: in it we are confronted by a composer who is perfectly aware of his compositions¹ worth and their artistic goals. Indeed, 1852-53 represent the years during which Liszt completed his Sonata in B Minor.

It is well known that Liszt did not identify his musical symbols in the Sonata. For this reason the overwhelming agreement among Liszt scholars regarding divine and diabolical symbolism in the Sonata is a most amazing discovery.

To assess the importance of this agreement, I will quote Peter Raabe: "If it were possible... to reduce [Liszt's Sonata in B Minor] to an intelligible formula, and if this formula would be understood in similar manner by various people, then this work without program would be the most striking proof of the legitimacy of program music."¹³ The challenge of this lecture lies in demonstrating that the Sonata contains indeed such a formula, and that it has been understood in similar manner by various scholars and performers.

A. The Grandioso Motif: Symbol for Divinity»

First, look at the grandioso second subject once more. Now let me quote various reactions to this motif that appears in the Sonata seven times. I shall begin with intuitional or emotional reactions.¹

1. Peter Raabe, more than other Liszt scholars, was an ardent proponent of pure music, and he went out of his way to discredit programmatic explanations of Liszt's music. Yet when confronted with the Sonata, Raabe called it a "psalm that cries towards enlightenment and salvation." Specifically, he speaks of the grandioso theme as "a hymn-'God alone it is who decides'... Faith brings peace...." Later occurrences of this motif are referred to thus: 'the flight to God recurs...Finally...confidence in God becomes a roar of jubilation'. The end of the piece is described as "a...look towards heaven."¹⁴ Would you ever have guessed that such words about the Sonata were written by an enemy of programmatic interpretations?

2. Vladimir Yankélévitch, professor at the Sorbonne, considered the Sonata "a vast lyrico-metaphysical poem for the piano." He wrote on the grandioso: "In the midst of the tragical conflicts that beset the Sonata in B Minor, the musician strikes up...a grandiose hymn:... Indeed, what God does is well done. Let us therefore praise the Lord..."¹⁵

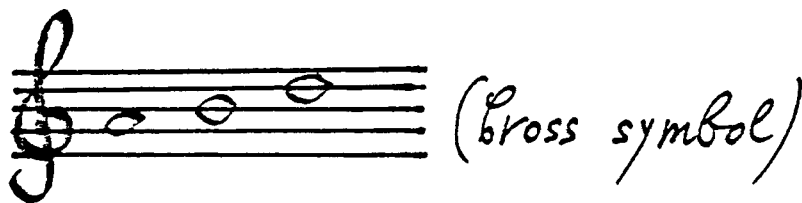
3. James Huneker says about the grandioso: "The chorale, usually the meat of a Liszt composition, now appears and proclaims the religious belief of the composer in dogmatic accents...."¹⁶

4. Emilé Haraszti says that the Sonata reflects "the struggle of a soul who searches for his God and who finally finds him...." The grandioso is, according to Haraszti, "a hymn."¹⁷

5. Humphrey Searle called the grandioso a "chorale-like passage."¹⁸

6. Louis Brechemin writes about the grandioso; "The important element of the chorale... in the Sonata...is used...in the sense of a great religious feeling."¹⁹ Note that in all the foregoing quotes the writers referred either to a hymn or a chorale.

A different kind of comment originated from those who became aware of the connection between the grandioso and Liszt's well-known symbol for the Cross.



Here we can no longer talk of an intuitional or emotional reaction but of a keen sense of observation. Let me read a few quotations:

1. Robert Collete, in commenting on Liszt's enumeration of works containing the Cross symbol, writes: "Oddly enough, Liszt seems to have overlooked the important role of this motif in his B minor Sonata, notably in the D major second subject marked 'Grandioso'."²⁰

2. Zoltán Gárdonyi referred to the grandioso as "the theme of the Cross."²¹

3. Klara Hamburger stated about the Cross Symbol in the grandioso that "...in the Sonata in B Minor, Liszt, in accordance with his own definition, symbolized with it (the Cross symbol) the Cross."²² Though Hamburger did not conclude that the work is programmatic, she states that the grandioso motif belongs to a category of themes that "are concerned naturally with recitation," being "actual or stylized Gregorian chants."²³

4. Sharon Winklhofer stated that the contour of the Sonata's grandioso is similar to important musical themes in the Dante Symphony's Magnificat; the fugue from the Gloria of the Gran Mass; the cross motif in Hunnenschlacht; the March of the Crusaders in the St. Elisabeth Oratorio; Via Crucis; the Mass for Male Choir; and Christus, part 2.

B. The Fugato's Two Motifs; Symbols for the Diabolical

The two motifs of the fugue go hand in hand throughout the whole Sonata, forming an inseparable unity as the first subject at measures 32-33. Instinctive reactions to their diabolical quality have been overwhelming. Here are a few quotes:

1. Béla Bartók referred to the fugue as "the hellishly sparkling fugato," and praised its "diabolical irony."²⁵

2. Louis Kentner writes: "The fugue...must be regarded as the Mephistelian part of Liszt's self-portrait: the spirit of mockery, of negation and savage, distorting caricature. This is done with so much elegance and skill that one suspects the Abbé of being perhaps a little more in sympathy with the Devil than with God."²⁶

3. Klára Hamburger sees in the fugato "Mephisto's diabolical laughter," and talks about the "dark, infernal elements"²⁷ of the piece.

4. David Wilde refers to the fugue as "a devilish fugato," and specifically identifies the repeated note motif as the "Mephisto motif."²⁸

5. Vladimir Yankélévitch called the repeated note motif "a satanic theme," and feels the staccatos to be evocative of the "verve of the demon" and his "Mephistophelian oddities."²⁹

6. James Huneker writes about the two motifs with these words: "The Evil one," or "Again the devil tempts...." He even quotes Christ's words "Vade, retro me Sathanas'." that is, "Get thee behind me, Satan."³⁰

7. Peter Raabe sees in the repeated notes "the adversary" whose "malediction" is lifted through the grandioso "hymn" that brings "Faith."³¹

Louis Brechemin's conclusions concerning the two motifs of the fugue were not based on instinctive reactions but on a study of the diabolical elements in Liszt's piano music: "The principal [diabolic] characteristic of the Sonata in B Minor lies in...repeated notes...[and] the 'leap' [of the descending seventh],"³² that is, the two motifs of the fugue.

Let me stress that none of these quotations concerning the Sonata's grandioso and fugato motifs were blow-by-blow accounts of a story: instead, they were reactions emphasizing the divine or diabolical qualities of the grandioso and the two fugato motifs. Ten scholars associated the grandioso with the divine, and eight scholars associated the two motifs of the fugato with the diabolical. The important point to remember is that among these the grandioso was always associated with the divine, and the two motifs of the fugato were always associated with the diabolical.

C. Alfred Cortot's Interpretation of the Sonata.

In quoting the many musicians who have felt divine and diabolical qualities in the Sonata, I left out two names, those of the great French pianist Alfred Cortot and my own. Though we have reached our conclusions independently and by different methods, we have both arrived at essentially identical concepts concerning the symbolic functions of the Sonata's motifs. Our methods were different in that Cortot relied exclusively on his musical instinct and poetical

imagination, whereas I relied exclusively on the cumulative evidence of divine and diabolical symbolism that I found in Liszt's works with texts and programs and his correspondence.

For those unacquainted with my former work, suffice it to say that my symbolic analysis of the Sonata shows it to have been inspired by the Holy Bible and Milton's Paradise Lost. The three identifiable episodes of the piece are the Temptation and Fall of Adam and Eve, the Crucifixion of Christ, and the Last Judgment. I have identified the Sonata's five musical motifs as bearers of precise symbolic meanings. The opening motif of the piece, the one I call the symbol of Original Sin (m.1-7), generates the intervals and the rhythms of the Sonata's first and second subjects. The two motifs of the first subject symbolize the duality of Lucifer and Satan (mm. 32-33), and the single motif of the second subject symbolizes Christ (m. 105). The fifth motif, the Andante sostenuto, is the symbol of devotion to Christ. With these symbols Liszt evokes Lucifer's Temptation in Paradise that resulted in suffering and death. The curse of death is lifted only through Christ's intervention. The essence of the Sonata is thus contained in the polarity between Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained, to use Milton's terminology.

The only difference between Cortot's and my interpretation is that Cortot did not have available the many materials that enabled me to decode the precise Miltonian and Biblical origin of Liszt's program, and hence Cortot used the Faust legend as the vocabulary of his imagery. But if we get away from the imagery and the names, and look for the essence, we will find that Cortot's Faustian analysis is essentially identical with my Biblical analysis even to the smallest detail.

In the preface to his edition of the Sonata, Cortot writes: "No program pinpoints" "the secret intention of the composer...." "But the themes confront each other with such a dramatic plasticity that one cannot avoid attaching to them a symbolic meaning".³³ Cortot's idea about a dramatic confrontation is later identified as the polarization of the diabolical and the divine. This very polarization is the backbone of my own theory too.

The two theories are represented side by side. In order to make the essential similarities between them more vivid, I will present them as follows: on one hand, I will compress Cortot's many comments about the Sonata's recurring motifs into an uninterrupted succession of quotations; on the other hand, I will slightly re-phrase the ideas contained in my article published in June 1984 in the Journal of the American Liszt Society, without altering the meaning.

Cortot

Szász

Measures 1-7

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the first seven measures of Liszt's Sonata. The notation is on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). A first ending bracket labeled [1] spans the first four measures. The piece begins with a piano (P) dynamic and a 'sotto voce' instruction. A 'Pegato' marking is present in the fifth measure. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

- a. "The symbol of...the classical Fatum" "the theme of fatality"³⁴
- b. "sinister resonance" "evil"³⁶
- c. "the obscure mystery of the hushed sonorities"³⁸
- d. "fatalistic off-beat rhythm"⁴⁰

- a. The symbol of the Original Sin that sealed mankind's fate for generations to come.³⁵
- b. Lucifer's deception as it resonates in the soul of Man.³⁷
- c. Lucifer obscuring the truth of God's words as he surreptitiously tempts Man in the Garden of Eden.³⁹
- d. The off-beat rhythm is identified as Liszt's symbols for death and the diabolical.⁴¹

Allegro energico

Measures 9-13



- a. "the symbol of audacious defiance"⁴²
- b. a cadenza based on this motif is called "a fall"⁴⁴
- c. "the character of pride"⁴⁶

- a. The symbol of Lucifer, the former Bearer of Light who defied God.⁴³
- b. The result of Lucifer and Man's defiance is the fall from Paradise.⁴⁵
- c. Lucifer's character is pride.⁴⁷

Measures 14-17



- a. "the theme of negation" "The theme of revolt"⁴⁸
- b. The state of mind caused by this motif is called "doubt"⁵⁰

- a. The symbol of Satan, the fallen angel; Liszt characterized him as the "spirit of Darkness...of Negation and Death"⁴⁹
- b. In a letter, Liszt wrote that "Satan... can be nothing but Doubt."⁵¹

Measures 105-110



- a. "the motif of faith" "mystical glory and certainty of victory" "affirmation of belief" "the miracle of divine revelation" "prophetic theme" "sublime" "metaphysical" "adoring prostration"⁵²
- b. "the melodic curve...an echo of the liturgical intonation of the Magnificat" "lyrical tendency"⁵⁴
- c. "generative motif in the March of the Crusaders in St. Elisabeth"⁵⁰
- a. The symbol for Christ.⁵³
- b. The Christ motif is a stylized adaptation of the Gregorian hymn for Good Friday, Crux fidelis. Along with the Magnificat, Liszt identified it as the source of his own Symbol of the Cross.⁵⁵
- c. The melodic contour of the Sonata's grandioso recurs only in religious works (Gran Mass, the March of the Crusaders from the Legend of St. Elisabeth, Male Mass, Christus, Via Crucis, Hunnenschlacht, and the Magnificat from the Dante Symphony).⁵⁷

Measures 297-301



"magic formula capable of abolishing at once the troubles ...causing an end to the madness of the Sorcerer's Apprentice"⁵⁰

I have identified Cortot's "magic formula" as the symbol of the Crucifixion of Jesus. In my interpretation, the "Sorcerer" is Satan, and the "Apprentice" is fallen Man. Having paid the ransom for original Sin through his death, Christ abolished the rule of the evil powers over Man.⁵⁹

Measures 331-338



"the sentiments of the mystical soul of Liszt" "the religious character of this episode" "a halo of supernatural sonorities" "seraphic calm"⁶⁰

The symbol of devotion to Christ, (The motif was borrowed by Liszt from a lied by his composition student and patron Maria Pavlovna.)⁶¹

Allegro energico [461] Measures 460-532

"satanic fugue" "satanic causticity" "dangerous insinuations whispered by the Spirit of Evil into the ear of its deplorable victim, in order to awaken its spirit of nonsubmission, of doubt" "the victory of the spirit of negation over the aspirations of salvation" of the "preceding pages"⁶²

"though the spirit is willing, Man falls again, prey to the diabolical as symbolized with the fugato."⁶³

Measures 700-end

[700]

- a. "a symbolic conclusion...the invocation of the almighty celestial power in its absolute fullness"⁶⁴
- b. "this vibrant apotheosis deals with the transports experienced by a soul liberated from all doubts and fully illumined by the dazzling certitude of eternal truths"⁶⁶
- c. "dissolution into the nonexistence" of the eternal rest and at the same time "redemptive transfiguration" "remission of sins"; chords ascend towards "a choir of angels reining in Heaven" "supernatural silence"⁶⁷

- a. Christ's coming at the Last Judgment.⁶⁵

- c. "damnation versus redemption" The unredeemed souls sink into the bottomless pit while the redeemed go to their new home in New Jerusalem."

And now, some concluding remarks about divine and diabolical symbolism in Liszt's music in general and the Sonata in particular. During the last one hundred years, most comments on Liszt's symbolism were of an emotional or intuitive kind. Only a few studies were devoted to their systematic analysis, notably those of Louis Brechemin, Alan B. Hersh, and mine. I will admit in retrospect that at the time I published my article on Liszt's symbolism I rejected the intuitive approach as being unscientific and irrelevant; now I see it in a different light. My present attitude can be expressed thus: if the Sonata's implicit divine and diabolical symbolism could be decoded only by the present author, only one hundred and thirty years after the completion of the piece, and only after three years of hard detective work, then it is really worthless because it only proves the inability of symbolic music to communicate an intelligible message without an explicit program. If, on the contrary, many people became aware of the Sonata's symbolic meaning without having heard of its program, then the Sonata is the greatest success story in the annals of programmatic music. Just think what it means that so many musicians have reacted to the Sonata as if it had something to do with God and the Devil! And this in spite of the fact that no program was declared by Liszt'. It is the objective proof of Liszt's greatness in having achieved what Alan B. Hersh calls "the true unification of music and ideas without recourse to words."⁶⁹

What is the secret of Liszt's success in unifying music and ideas without recourse to words? To find the answer, we must turn to the Baroque Doctrine of the Affects. Centuries ago composers realized the psychological reactions of people to various musical formulas; these formulas were then categorized and used according to certain strict rules.

In devising his musical symbolism Liszt did not take Wagner's path of inventing ever new leitmotifs. In their place, he adopted the potent symbolic formulas of his predecessors and contemporaries, as explained in my article referred to earlier. This alone explains the reason why many musicians were able to qualify unanimously the Sonata's motifs as being divine or diabolical in character. Liszt recognized the tremendous psychological power of the already existing formulas and used them in the Sonata as prototypes of his divine and diabolical symbols—symbols that show up consistently to the end of his life.

II. Musical Structure in Liszt's Sonata in B Minor.

Having reviewed the widespread agreement on the Sonata's symbolism, I will investigate its relation to the musical structure. Why did Liszt use the sonata principle as the vehicle for expressing the conflict between diabolical and divine forces? The answer is as simple as it is ingenious: with its traditional opposition between first and second key areas, the classical sonata principle is ideally suited to express the large-scale conflict between the opposing spiritual powers. In the exposition, B minor stands for the diabolical, and D major stands for the divine; in the recapitulation,

the two return in the traditional sequence of B minor and B Major. The Sonata's tonal relationships in the exposition and recapitulation are literally in accordance with the most elementary and most unexceptional principles of the classical rules. To make the keys clearly perceptible, Liszt used authentic cadences as articulators of the first and second subject. Indeed, the exposition contains only two authentic cadences: the first before and during the B minor first subject at measures 32-33, and the second before the D-Major second subject at measure 105. The tonal arrival of the second subject is further emphasized by the dominant A repeated as a pedal point during twenty-four measures prior to the grandioso with its four-measure pedal point on D.⁷⁰ Similarly, the tonal arrival of the second subject in the recapitulation is emphasized by the dominant F# repeated as a pedal point during thirty-one measures prior to the B-Major second subject with its four-measure pedal point on B (mm. 569-603).

Whether approached symbolically or structurally, the identity of the Sonata's first and second subjects emerges with the same clarity. It is therefore timely to put an end to the controversy regarding their identity. The only correct solution is the one proposed, among others, by Ernest Hutcheson: the first subject is at measure 32, the second at measure 105.⁷¹ This is the only solution that is supported by both musical and symbolic evidence. It is time to look for musical clues such as tonal relationships, authentic cadences, dominant preparations of the second subject, and the repetition of all of the above in the Sonata's recapitulation. It is time to realize that the sonata principle does not depend on masculine first subjects and feminine second subjects but on precisely defined musical considerations such as those mentioned earlier.

It is also time to realize that Liszt's letter to Louis Köhler dated June 8, 1854 does not imply that the cantando espressivo is the "Nebenthema" but that it is the second of a sequence of motifs. "Zweites Motif" is not necessarily synonymous with "Nebenthema".⁷² The first implies a succession, the second a structural point in the sonata principle. As I understand Liszt's letter, the beginning of the Allegro energico marks the beginning of the first motif, and measure 14 with the upbeat marks the beginning of the second motif. This interpretation is in perfect accord with Liszt's derivation of these two motifs from the opening two measures of the Lento assai.⁷³ In the Lento the intervallic and rhythmic essence of the following main motifs of the Sonata is merely prefigured, concealing the clear-cut shape of the two motifs that will make up the first subject in B minor at bar 32.⁷⁴ The procedure of prefiguring the main theme of a composition is by no means unusual in the history of music. Perhaps the most blatant example of such a technique is found in the Var. I (Precedente) that precedes the "Tema" proper of Rachmaninoff's "Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini." Perhaps the correct way to talk about the Sonata's motifs is to say that there are three motifs derived from the opening Lento assai; that these three make up the first and second subjects;⁷⁵ and that an additional theme was borrowed by Liszt from the Grandduchess Maria Pavlovna.⁷⁶

The best proof of Liszt's musical discipline is the derivation of the first and second subjects from the intervallic and rhythmic structure of the Sonata's opening measures. Many musicians have tried to prove this derivation but were unsuccessful because of a seemingly small detail. Most musicians do not realize that the opening interval of the second measure is the ascending seventh G-F and not the descending second G-F. In the whole literature on Liszt I have found only one author who identified the interval correctly; his name is Ernest Hutcheson. Among pianists, I know of only Leon Fleisher and Joseph Bloch who insist on the ascending seventh as the only possible interpretation. The only edition that clarifies Liszt's notation is the old Liszt-Stiftung score edited by Vianna da Motta. Motta added a stem to an inner voice in order to clarify the ascending seventh. His approach is definitely correct: Liszt used the same stemming in bar 454.

[454]

Liszt's stemming

For this reason it is regrettable that the New Liszt Edition eliminated Liszt's stemming in bar 454 and did not reproduce correctly the direction of the stems in the opening measures. Such seemingly small errors obstruct the perception of important motivic derivations.

Of equal importance is the realization that Liszt's compositional process is based on the free treatment of a few inviolable principles. Sharon Winklhofer's monograph on the Sonata's autograph manuscript clearly shows that the final form of the piece was different from the original one. This proves that the details of the Sonata's form and program emerged only gradually, the result of repeated revisions. For example, originally the Andante sostenuto was much shorter; the Last Judgment was not yet present. Liszt's greatest accomplishment, the perfect fusion of symbolism and structure, is the result of both discipline and freedom. Discipline is evident in that Liszt planned the symbolism of the first and second subjects around the traditional tonal design of the classical exposition and recapitulation. Freedom is evident in Liszt's unrestricted manipulations of these subjects for musical or symbolic reasons.

A multi-movement interpretation of the Sonata is not supported by either symbolic or musical considerations. Symbolically, there is one single program running from Original Sin to Last Judgment. Musically, a fragmentation of the Sonata would result in the subversion of the basic principle of exposition and recapitulation. Liszt's autograph provides an important clue that shows Liszt's mind bent towards unification and not fragmentation. The recapitulation of the first subject (mm. 533-553) is not written out at all. Instead, Liszt entered the following remark: "See page 2; the 21 bars that are numbered must be recapitulated." Liszt's remark points to the first subject in the B minor exposition (mm. 32-52) that must be repeated unchanged in the B minor recapitulation (mm. 533-553). Sharon Winklhofer is right when, after consulting the autograph manuscript, she concluded: "the Sonata was conceived as a one-movement sonata-form, and not as an instrumental cycle of several movements strung together...the important tonal moves are not only clearly defined, but surprisingly conservative."⁷⁷

Conclusion

Liszt's music shows both the conservative and the innovative tendencies of the composer. In the Sonata, for example, the symbolism and the basic tonal structure of the exposition were adopted from the models provided by his predecessors and contemporaries. Louis Brechemin is correct when summarizing Liszt's diabolical symbolism in the following words: "What is Diabolism in his music? Liszt, it must be clearly stated, invented no new devices to express the Devil. Liszt, like Mozart, inherited. His 'diabolic essences' are made up from a long line of inheritances; there is nothing new in the picture. It was, as in the case of any original, or inspired composer, a matter of employing the old, and to re-present it as the new. It was ever so in music up to the present century."⁷⁸

The Sonata's innovative tendencies are to be found in the perfect fusion of symbolism and structure. In the Sonata, Liszt was able to embody the essence of his musical and aesthetic ideals. As shown earlier, the symbolism and the structure fit like hand in glove: the symbolic idea finds a perfect counterpart in the essential sonata design.

One of the most important aspects of the Sonata's symbolism is that it affords the greatest musical freedom to the composer in manipulating the motifs with a symbolic meaning. This aspect of the Sonata's symbolism is valid in most other programmatic works of Liszt. Any attempt to see in the Sonata a blow-by-blow account of a story is sheer diletantism. In this regard, it must be clearly stated that my personal interpretation of the Sonata's program published in my 1984 article in the chapter titled "Conclusion" does not imply that such a program was in Liszt's mind before he started composing the piece. As stated earlier, the final version of the program and form resulted only after repeated revisions. Therefore we must always distinguish between the general programmatic and formal outline preceding the act of composition and the specific program and

form into which it becomes crystallized as a result of the compositional process proper.

Liszt's symbolism, with its polarization of the divine and the diabolical, is effective precisely because of its generalized nature. As shown earlier, musicians were able to identify the general divine or diabolical character of the Sonata's motifs even before being able to identify their precise Biblical or Miltonian meanings. It is the pairing of polarized symbolism with the inherent polarization of the sonata principle that made the Sonata the successful piece it is.⁷⁹

Concerning this topic, Edward T. Cone's words on the relationship between program and structure are worthy of quotation: "The effectiveness of a program depends on the degree to which it is felt to be figuratively isomorphic with the form of the composition—the extent to which the pattern of activity suggested by the program corresponds to the pattern of symbolic gestures created by the music. Naturally, the less detailed the program is, the easier it is for the listener to imagine such correspondence."⁸⁰

Even though unaware of the Sonata's true program, Cortot was able to pinpoint the symbolic essence of the work. Reason? The Faust legend is a microcosmic version of the macrocosmic Judaeo-Christian doctrine. As Marc Bloch put it so aptly in The Historian's Craft; "The destiny of humanity, placed between the Fall and the Judgment, appears...as a long adventure, of which each life, each individual pilgrimage, is in turn a reflection. It is in time and, therefore, in history that the great drama of Sin and Redemption, the central axis of all Christian thought, is unfolded."⁸¹ To realize the parallel between the Faust legend and Milton's Biblically inspired Paradise Lost, we need only translate Faust's pact with Mephistopheles into Adam and Eve's pact with Lucifer. Faust exhibits the very trait of the first human couple: thirst for knowledge. And just as the eternal part of Faust's soul is saved in Goethe's version of the story, so in the Apocalypse the loving ones receive eternal life.

Cortot's Faustian interpretation of the Sonata was basically successful because he understood the proper relationship between symbolism and structure. In contrast, Bernard Ott's Faustian interpretation was not discussed because it is based on the false premise of a blow-by-blow approach. My own Miltonian and Biblical interpretation in the 1984 article is such that it does not lend itself to a strictly chronological sequence of events. As an illustration, a chronological interpretation of bars 297-306 would result in the ridiculous idea of two consecutive crucifixions of Christ. Nevertheless, when we consider that the hammered chords occur within the short span of ten measures, and when we realize that these hammered chords represent a unicum in the Sonata, the feeling of a single event predominates. It is as though Liszt, free of liturgical restraints, meditates repeatedly on the contrast between the angry mob demanding crucifixion and the words of the crucified Jesus.⁸²

Though the Sonata's crucifixion music recurs in Via Crucis, the two are different in an essential aspect: the Sonata is free from the liturgical restraints that determine the musical sequence of Via Crucis. In other words, the Sonata is a symbolic work whereas Via Crucis is a strictly programmatic one.

The study of Liszt's symbolism and musical structure can bear fruit only when performers will translate them into living sounds. The time is at hand when more and more people can realize the sincerity of Liszt's idealistic intentions in Art. As he stated, "Music is definitely not a form of amusement for me; instead, it fills a vacuum which would otherwise remain a gaping hole in the soul."⁸³ When these words find a sympathetic resonance in our hearts, Liszt will have found his public.

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Endnotes

1. La Mara, ed., Franz Liszt's Briefe, Vol. III (8 vols. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1893-1905), 191-92, letter no. 113 dated 14 February, 1867.

2. *Ibid.*, VII, 229.

3. John Rocco Rea, "Franz Liszt's 'New Path of Composition'; the Sonata in B Minor as Paradigm," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton university, 1978, pp. 119, 121, 138, 144, 181.

4. The Sonata's second subject has been correctly identified as the grandioso by Robert Collet, Paul Egert, Klara Hamburger, Ernst Günther Heinemann, Ernest Hutcheson, Joseph Kanski, Louis Kentner, Rey M. Longyear, William S. Newman, John Rocco Rea, Tibor Szász, Sharon Winklhofer.

5. The Sonata's second subject has been incorrectly identified as the cantando espressivo by Béla Bartók, Paula Rehberg, Humphrey Searle, Alan Walker.

6. Rea, pp. 116-18.

7. Sharon Winklhofer, Liszt's Sonata in B Minor; A Study of Autograph Sources and Documents (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1980), p. 118.

8. Bernard Ott, "An Interpretation of Liszt's Sonata in B Minor," Journal of the American Liszt Society, X (December, 1981), 30-38, and XI (June, 1982), 40-41.

9. Tibor Szász, "Liszt's Symbols for the Divine and the Diabolical: Their Revelation of a Program in the B Minor Sonata," Journal of the American Liszt Society, XV (June, 1984), 39-95.

10. Heinrich Schenker: Harmony, Oswald Jonas, ed., The university of Chicago Press, 1954, pp. 73-75, also p. 136.

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14. Ibid., pp. 60-62.
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16. James Huneker, Franz Liszt, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923), p. 68.
17. Emilé Haraszti, Franz Liszt, (Paris: Picard, 1967), p. 157.
18. Humphrey Searle, The Music of Liszt, Second revised edition, (New York: Dover, 1966), p. 60.
19. Louis Brechemin, "The 'Mephisto'¹ Elements in the Piano Works of Liszt," Thesis for the Degree of Master of Arts. University of Washington, 1968, pp. 137-38.
20. Robert Collet, "Works for Piano and Orchestra," Franz Liszt: The Man and His Music, ed. Alan Walker (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1970); reprint ed., 1976), p. 323, footnote 1.
21. Information received from Klara Hamburger, student of Gárdonyi, writer on Liszt, in a letter to the present author dated June 21, 1983.
22. Klara Hamburger, Preface, Liszt Ferenc: Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth, (Budapest: Editio Musica, 1974), p. xi.
23. Klara Hamburger, Liszt, (Budapest: Gondolat, 1980), p. 222.
24. Winklhofer, p. 267 endnote no. 48.
25. Szöllosy András, ed., Bartók Béla Összegyűjtött írásai, (Budapest: Zeneműkiado Vállalat, 1966), p. 688. The quotation is translated in Benjamin Suchoff, Béla Bartok Essays, (London: Faber & Faber, 1976), p. 452.
26. Kentner, p. 90.
27. Hamburger, Liszt, p. 191.
28. David Wilde, liner notes for a recording of the Sonata in B Minor, Saga 5460 Stereo, Allied Records Ltd., London.
29. Yankélévitch, pp. 17-18.
30. Huneker, p. 69.
31. Raabe, pp. 60-61.
32. Brechemin, p. 198.
33. Alfred Cortot, ed., Liszt; Sonate en Si Mineur. (Paris: Editions Salabert, date unreadable), Preface, p. i.
34. Cortot, pp. 21 and 7.
35. Szasz, p. 52.
36. Cortot, p. 30.
37. Szasz, p. 52.
38. Cortot, p. 30.
39. Szasz, p. 52.
40. Cortot, p. 21
41. Szasz, pp. 52, 73, 74, 78, 90, 91, 93.
42. Cortot, p. 1
43. Szasz, pp. 48-49.
44. Cortot, p. 25.
45. Szasz, pp. 71 and 73.
46. Cortot, p. 6.
47. Szasz, p. 50

48. Cortot, pp. 20 and 9.
49. Szász, pp. 50-51.
50. Cortot, p. 26.
51. Szász, p. 42.
52. Cortot, pp. 39, 8, 26, 9, 26.
53. Szasz, pp. 42-47, 62-70, 81.
54. Cortot, p. 8.
55. Szasz, p. 44.
56. Cortot, p. 8.
57. Szasz, pp. 47, 65.
58. Cortot, p. 22.
59. Szasz, pp. 39, 46, 82-83.
60. Cortot, p. 24.
61. Szasz, pp. 55, 58, 80, 84.
62. Cortot, Préface p. ii, 31.
63. Szasz, p. 55.
64. Cortot, p. 46.
65. Szasz, pp. 53-54, 79, 94-95.
66. Cortot, p. 43.
67. Ibid., p. 46, 43, 47, 49.
68. Szasz, pp. 54, 79, 95.
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70. See Set 1 of the Appendix.
71. Ernest Hutcheson, The Literature of the Piano, (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1978), pp. 292-93.
72. Winklhofer, p. 45.
73. See Set 2 of the Appendix.
74. See Set 3 of the Appendix.
75. See Set 4 of the Appendix.
76. See Set 5 of the Appendix.
77. Winklhofer, p. 127.
78. Brechemin, pp. 136-37.
79. The relationship between the divine and the diabolical symbols in Liszt's music are shown in Sets 6-9 of the Appendix.
80. Edward T. Cone, The Composer's Voice, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 167.
81. Marc Bloch, The Historian's Craft, trans. Peter Putnam (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), p. 5.
82. See Set 10 of the Appendix.
83. La Mara, Franz Liszt's Briefe, III, 108.

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