

### III *Im Reich der Ideen*

#### *An analysis of Liszt's essay *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie**

La vie intellectuelle de Liszt est entièrement soumise à sa vie sentimentale. Aussi est-il très difficile d'établir si telle initiative ou suggestion vient de lui-même, de l'une de ses Muses, ou bien de ses collaborateurs? Malgré le caractère synthétique de l'homme et de sa musique, le problème Liszt forme un tout organique et indivisible, ce qui ne fait qu'augmenter les difficultés de la question<sup>1</sup>.

---

1 Haraszti, Emile, *Le problème Liszt*, p. 123.



## Introduction

The quotation from Haraszti that accompanies the title of this chapter, in all its strength, illustrates the matters related to the analysis of Liszt's musical and literary production. Firstly, the problem of authorship. Nowadays, it is well known that Liszt wrote the great majority of his theoretical works with the support of either Marie d'Agoult or Carolyne de Sayn-Wittgenstein. Furthermore, he often wrote his articles in French, and afterwards he asked his friends and collaborators to translate them into German. Consequently, a doubt about the accuracy of the translation – even if the majority were approved by Liszt himself – and about the real authorship of these writings arises quite spontaneously. Finally, it is worth pointing out Liszt's linguistic *mélange*: he grew up in a German speaking country, thereafter he moved to France, where he had to learn what would become his new “native language” – still in 1850 Liszt wrote: «Les pages suivantes qui s'adressent particulièrement à l'Allemagne, sont pourtant écrites dans une langue qui n'est pas la sienne. Obligé, pour donner à ma pensée sa plus naturelle et sa plus véritable expression, de me servir de l'idiome avec lequel un usage habituel de vingt-cinq années m'a le plus familiarisé»<sup>2</sup> –, and finally he settled down in Weimar, where he had to “again learn” German. In any case, it seems that he felt unsure in the use of his native language. For that reason, he always asked for the help of his collaborators to proofread his writings; because he felt his prose and his education insufficient to accomplish the task by himself. It is possible to state that Liszt, as a consequence of his *pèlerinage* through Europe, had no native language. Indeed, he even wrote his essay on Berlioz in French, and he asked Richard Pohl<sup>3</sup> to translate it into German:

---

- 2 Liszt, Franz, *De la fondation-Goethe*, p. 7. It is interesting to note that Liszt did not refer to German as “my native language”. Liszt national identity, and its related language problem, are analysed in Cormac, Joanne, *Liszt, Language, and Identity: A multinational Chameleon*.
- 3 Richard Pohl was one of the most relevant figure in the war between the conservatives and the progress party. He met Robert Schumann in 1851 and in 1854 moved to Weimar following an invitation of Liszt. He was close to Franz Brendel, Richard Wagner, Hector Berlioz and Hans von Bülow. He wrote between the 1854 and the 1863 for the *Neuen Zeitschrift für Musik* under the pseudonym “Hoplit”, name which comes from the ancient Greek *Hoplites* (όπλιτης), who were the soliders, who utilized the phalanx formation. He was one of the most determined supporters of the *Neudeutsche Schule*.

Dear Friend,

Here is the *Harold!* a capable piece of symphonic literature – clear, beautiful and written in fine hand. You will have much to brood upon with it and Cornelius is keen for your accurate translation. [...] The article must ring out clearly, nobly and vigorously in the German language. Go to the work on it soon and send me the translation before it is published, for I may yet permit myself a few margin notes<sup>4</sup>.

From this letter, it appears clear that Liszt could have managed the German, but this statement does not clarify the real reasons why he did not write his essay directly in this language. But from the tone of the letter, it emerges that this translation procedure was quite normal, and that this was not the first request of this kind. Anyway, even if Liszt's German articles are actually translations from the original French, he revisited them all before presenting them to the press. Therefore, their paternity should not be questioned. As a consequence, his writings possess a typical style, and they are sometimes not easy reading. According to Haraszti, the essays published in the *Revue et Gazette musicale* during the 1830s were written with the large intrusion of Marie d'Agoult, while the writings of the so called *Weimar Period* were written by Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein<sup>5</sup>. According to Haraszti these writings do not deserve much attention, as they do not represent the literary production of Liszt, because, if it is sure that he was a great pianist, it is likewise sure that he was not an intellectual as Schumann or Wagner were. According to what emerged in the previous chapter of this dissertation, it is possible to state that, even if Liszt cannot be considered an intellectual of the same level as his more educated colleagues, his production, both musical and literary, is sustained by some key ideas, which finds a linear development in his works. Therefore, while he may

---

4 Liszt, Franz, *Liszt letters in the library of Congress*, letter to Richard Pohl dated 7 July 1854, p. 104.

5 Haraszti, Emile, *Franz Liszt, écrivain et penseur. Histoire d'une mystification*, pp. 20–21: «La question de l'authenticité des œuvres littéraires, des écrits du musicien, est un des côtés les plus curieux et les plus importants de l'éénigme lisztienne. Il ne fait plus de doute, aujourd'hui, que les articles parus, de 1836 à 1840 dans la *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, publiée par Schlesinger, sous la signature de l'illustre pianiste, sont l'œuvre de Mme d'Agoult, et que, d'autre part, sa gloire (disons plus simplement sa renommée) littéraire est l'œuvre de la princesse Sayn-Wittgenstein, qui devait inciter Mme Lina Ramann à publier, avec la collaboration de Mme La Mara et de Peter Cornelius, les cinq volumes des Œuvres complètes. [...] Sauf sa correspondance privée et quelques pages de journal, Liszt on le sait maintenant, n'a jamais rien écrit [...]. Il est donc impossible de parler de ses œuvres littéraires, de ses écrits, comme on fait de ceux d'un Berlioz, d'un Schumann, ou d'un Wagner».

not the finest, he is to be considered as an intellectual musician. However, it is Liszt himself who is to be blame for his reputation. He never spent a word trying to clarify his role in the creative process, and he furthermore informs us about these interferences in his articles<sup>6</sup>. According to Dalmonte «il éprouvait souvent le besoin de rédiger un brouillon avant de formuler un texte quelconque» because «il écrivait toujours dans une langue étrangère»<sup>7</sup>. However, on the other hand, it is impossible to ignore the fact that Liszt signed all these articles. That means that he agreed with their content, and consequently that he gave his blessing for their publication. Of course, as Haraszti argued at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when approaching Liszt's writings, one deals with *une autorité en questions*<sup>8</sup>, but anyway a confrontation with these essays is inevitable, and for a very simple reason: it is not very relevant whether Liszt himself wrote the articles. What really matters is that he agreed with their content, and he approved their printing. Therefore, one might say that these were his ideas, and that he was their father, even if the prose, or some of the content did not come directly from his pen. Furthermore, thanks to the stylistic analysis of the writings of the two Liszt's muses, it is possible to identify the passages, paragraphs, chapters, which were written by the two dames<sup>9</sup>. Anyway, Liszt, as reported by Walker,

had to exercise both discretion and diplomacy when attempting to curb the excess of zeal that Princess Carolyne sometimes brought to her task goes without saying. The letter that he wrote to her from Gotha, in March 1854, in which he voiced his concern about the forthcoming article on Beethoven's *Egmont*, is a case in point. Apparently the princess had inserted material that went far beyond the scope of the essay, and Liszt was determined that she take it out. After telling her,

---

6 Liszt, Franz, *Franz Liszt's Briefe, Briefe an die Fürstin Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein*, Vol. 4, p. 96 : «Quand vous aurez entendu le *Harold*, nous nous mettrons à l'œuvre du feuilleton – pour lequel je préparerai les matériaux, aussitôt que j'aurai expédié mon Concerto et les *Études Paganini* à Härtel».

7 Dalmonte, Rossana, *Les révélations d'une traduction «fidèle»*, p. 326.

8 Duchesneau, Dufur, Benoit-Otis (dir.), *Écrits de compositeurs, une autorité en question*, Vrin, 2013. In this book several authors confronted themselves with many essays, writings, and treaties written by many composers in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Two essays deal with Franz Liszt: *Les écrits de Franz Liszt: Quelques réflexions épistémologiques et méthodologiques sur leur paternité et leur typologie*, by Nicolas Dufetel, and *Les révélations d'une traduction «fidele»: Lohengrin de Liszt-Wagner*, by Rossana Dalmonte. Both texts deal more with the lexical and philological matter than with the content and aesthetics problems.

9 For example, it is nowadays sure that the first chapters of Liszt's essay on Chopin, which are an analysis of the political situation in Poland, were very likely written by Carolyne and not by Liszt.

somewhat mockingly, that it was quite unnecessary for her to broach the subject of the “intellectual and moral progress of musicians from the coming of Jesus Christ,” and that he had in any case things of a musical nature that he would prefer to include, he made it plain that he intended to postpone publication of the article by a few days in order to get it right. “Be tolerant of my harshness,” he added tactfully – a phrase that sounds symbolic of their general working relationship at this time<sup>10</sup>.

Hence, what we read today couldn’t be not exactly what Liszt wrote – it is essential, anyway, not to forget that Lina Ramann made a lot of adjustments in her edition of Liszt’s *Gesammelte Schriften* –, but it is for sure his thoughts that one reads. For that reason, the aim of this chapter, as the title suggests, is to provide an analysis of the essay *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie* written by Liszt in 1855 – and as it appeared on the pages of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*<sup>11</sup> in the same year – it is considered an original creation of Liszt. This article had a very long gestation period. In 1851, Liszt already had the idea to write about the *Harold-Symphonie*: «Pour vous décrire la Symphonie de Berlioz, il me faudrait vous faire un feuilleton»<sup>12</sup>. Further correspondence between Liszt and Carolyne suggests that they worked together on the writing. The wide erudition of the princess is surely at the basis of the many quotations one encounters while reading the essay. The work of analysis is however complicated by (at least) two reasons: 1) the critical literature on the essay is still limited even if the writing is very often quoted as an example of Liszt’s defence of programme music. As it will emerge, the defence of programme music is not the main aim of the article, which despite its fame is very rarely analysed in its entirety; 2) despite its relevant content and its chronological relevance, the “stream of consciousness-like” technique used by Liszt creates more confusion than clarity. Of course, it is a newspaper article, and it is therefore worth considering that its main purpose was to convince the reader of the goodness, even the truth, of the author’s ideas.

For that reason, the aim here is to create a step-by-step analysis of the essay, focusing on those aspects which are relevant to this dissertation, namely the idea of progress, and the related problem of the form. Some analysis of the

---

10 Walker, Alan, *Franz Liszt, The Weimar Years, 1848–1861*, p. 378.

11 The article was published in 5 episodes on the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*: the number 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, between 13 July and 24 August 1855. For the present analysis were used both the original edition and the one published by Lina Ramann in 1882 (s. bibliography).

12 Liszt, Franz, *Franz Liszt’s Briefe, Briefe an die Fürstin Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein*, letter dated 11 April 1851, Vol. IV, p. 87.

linguistic and formal construction of the essay will be necessary, in order to identify those passages where Liszt used a philosophical language and those where he used a more poetic language. In this regard, it is noteworthy to quote the suggestion made by Lazzerini Belli, according to which the Berlioz-essay can be regarded as the first answer of an artist to the music related problems arisen from Hegel's *Ästhetik*. The starting point of her interesting investigation is that «Hegel inserì nelle sue Lezioni di Estetica una parte dedicata alla musica che contiene riflessioni acute, singolarmente perspicaci e, in molti casi, quasi preveggenti gli sviluppi futuri di quest'arte. Liszt se ne accorse, valutò la profondità di questo esame filosofico della musica, e riportò alcuni passi delle Lezioni in un suo scritto»<sup>13</sup>. Surely, Hegel made a sharp analysis of the aesthetic of music and of its achievements and future development, but, on the other side, it is worth pointing out that his statements remain strictly connected to a conservative view on music. Hegel's ideas on music can hardly be connected with Liszt's progressive view, and this fact creates an obstacle on the path outlined by Lazzerini Belli. The perspective of the philosopher of Stuttgart on art is directly derived from those of Kant, as it is possible to see from the following quotation:

In der ähnlichen Art ist ebenso die regellose Unruhe an einer *table d'hôte* unter vielen Menschen und die unbefriedigende Anregung durch sie lästig; dieses Hinundherlaufen, Klappern, Schwätzen soll geregelt und, da man es nächst dem Essen und Trinken mit der leeren Zeit zu tun hat, die Leerheit ausgefüllt werden. Auch bei dieser Gelegenheit wie bei so vielen anderen tritt die Musik hilfreich ein und wehrt außerdem andere Gedanken, Zerstreuungen und Einfälle ab<sup>14</sup>.

Aside from the ambiguous expression «auch bei dieser Gelegenheit *wie bei so vielen anderen*», where the words “other occasions” remain unclear, here emerges from this quotation in all its strength a conception of music as a pleasant background, which is sometimes able to push away “other thoughts” from the philosopher's mind. From this point of view the music, far away from being a source of reflections, as well as of new ideas, is seen as a powerful tool which is able to inhibit the normal functions of our most important organ, the intellect. Consequently, since its functions are inhibited, the philosopher can take part in the normal activities requested by social life, without being disturbed by

---

13 Lazzerini Belli, Alessandra, *Hegel e Liszt: un incontro sulla musica*, p. 17.

14 Hegel, G.W.F., *Lezioni di estetica – Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, p. 2182.

his thoughts. This conception of music is strictly related to Kant, who, evoking the same situation, wrote:

[...] Tafelmusik; ein wunderliches Ding, welches nur als ein angenehmes Geräusch die Stimmung der Gemüther zur Fröhlichkeit unterhalten soll und, ohne dass jemand auf die Komposition derselben die mindeste Aufmerksamkeit verwendet, die freie Gesprächigkeit eines Nachbarns mit dem anderen begünstigt<sup>15</sup>.

From these two quotations it clearly emerges that both Kant and Hegel were not experts in the musical field, with the difference that the latter cared to inform us of his lack, and, in the first pages of his chapter on music, he wrote: «In diesem Gebiete aber bin ich wenig bewandert und muß mich deshalb entschuldigen, wenn ich mich nur auf allgemeinere Gesichtspunkte und einzelne Bemerkungen beschränke»<sup>16</sup>. Despite his confession, which alone is enough to doubt the accuracy of his musical analysis, Hegel's theories influenced the reflection on music of the entire 19<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, the writings of the philosopher were such a common lecture among the bourgeois salons, that everyone who was used to take part in these social events was automatically submerged in his thought. From this point of view, it becomes quite clear the reasons why Liszt quoted from Hegel's *Vorlesungen*, namely to extend Hegel's authority on his essay. If Hegel said that it must be true, *ipse dixit*. Anyway, this is not the place for a critique of Hegel's thoughts and reception, because two other matters deserve to be analysed before entering the Berlioz-essay: 1) the first concerns Liszt's reception of the *Ästhetik*, namely, if he read it or if he just had a second-hand knowledge of it; 2) the second point is if the Berlioz-essay is, as Lazzerini Belli suggests, one of the first answers to the lessons of Hegel. About the first point it is possible to state that it is plausible that Liszt came in contact with the thoughts of Hegel through the princess Sayn-Wittgenstein, but the precision with which he quoted from the *Vorlesungen* is a sign that he had at least a copy of the writing under his eyes. Furthermore, the name of Hegel appears only a few times in his correspondence, and most of these times named in the letters addressed to Carolyne. Furthermore, in support of the view according to which Liszt had a first-hand knowledge of Hegel, it emerges that the philosopher's ideas were matter of discord between Liszt and Carolyne, a sign that the two discussed this topic often – since the beginning

---

15 Kant, Immanuel, *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*, p. 167.

16 Hegel, G.W.F., *Lezioni di estetica – Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, p. 2152.

of their relationship –, and that they both had quite a deep acquaintance with his production, as these two excerpts from Liszt's letters prove:

Vous avez la passion du Grand – et reprochez à Hegel et au C. Antonelli de n'avoir pas été assez grands! Je vous écoute – et ne réussis pas à comprendre! [...] *Gott ist das ewige Werden!* Cette formule fut déjà donnée par Hegel, qu'à Woronince, en 1847, vous déclariez "non grand" [...]!<sup>17</sup>

But, on the other hand – in support of the view according to which Liszt had a second-hand knowledge of Hegel – from the analysis of his letters, and from the few quotations he made in his writings, it is possible to state that Liszt had a partial knowledge of the Hegelian writings. It is true that he quoted some passages from the *Vorlesungen*, but it is also true that he seemed to ignore other relevant parts which could have been more useful to his cause. Concluding, it is believed that this matter will remain unsolvable. The point of view of this dissertation is that Liszt quoted from Hegel to assure a more scientific tone for his article. Namely Hegel is the *ipse dixit* argument, against which no one can rebut. Turning to the second point, it is now time to analyse the suggestion of Lazzerini Belli, according to which Liszt's article as the first answer of an artist to the *Vorlesungen*<sup>18</sup>. It is believed that this suggestion, even if it is assuredly fascinating, seems to be barely plausible. Above all, how could Liszt answer a colossal philosophical writing – which was perfectly integrated into an omni-comprehensive system, and based on a centenary philosophical tradition – with a few pages of polemical essay written in a quasi-poetical style? It is therefore inferred that Hegel was not the recipient of Liszt's article, but just a means through which Liszt conveyed a message, a message which was addressed to someone else. And there is a thinker who can be regarded as the secret recipient of Liszt's essay on Berlioz: Eduard Hanslick. His writing *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* appeared the year before (1854), and there the figures of Liszt and Wagner – even if they were not explicitly named in the first version<sup>19</sup> – are the privileged targets of Hanslick's criticism. Furthermore, Liszt met Hanslick several times during the year 1855, precisely when he was still working on his Berlioz's article, as it clearly appears from the two letters he sent

---

<sup>17</sup> Listz, Franz, *Franz Liszt's Briefe, Briefe an die Fürstin Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein*, letters of the 14 January 1877 and of the 21 May 1882, Vol. IV, p. 72 and p. 345.

<sup>18</sup> It is at this point useful to remember that Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* appeared posthumous in 1835, published by Heinrich Gustav Hotho.

<sup>19</sup> The names of List and Wagner explicitly related to the criticism of the *Neudeutsche Schule* appeared from the second edition in 1858.

to Carolyne on 28<sup>20</sup> and 30<sup>21</sup> May, 1855. Nevertheless, the genesis of the article is still obscure. As already noted, Liszt had already written a first draft in July 1854, namely before the appearance of Hanslick's book, but then he had time to revisit his writing before the publication in the *NZfM* in 1855. Even if there is no proof of that, this revision process seems to be very plausible. Mark Evan Bonds seems to be one of the few to note that Liszt's article is «Ostensibly a commentary on Berlioz's *Harold en Italie*, the essay in fact has little to say about that particular work and focuses instead on broader questions about the nature of instrumental music in general. And while Liszt never cites Hanslick or his treatise explicitly [...] his essay stands as one of the earliest extended responses to *Vom Musikalsich-Schönen*»<sup>22</sup>. The Viennese critic was a great supporter of the pianist Liszt, but he was not a supporter of Liszt the composer, or Liszt the conductor. Famous are the words he wrote on *Die Presse* after the *Mozartfest* in 1856, in which Liszt, invited as conductor, is depicted as the worst possible choice, and to which the composer answered with an ironic and bitter letter: «[...] La manière dont vous avez rendu compte dans la *Presse* des deux concerts de Dimanche et Lundi, correspond entièrement à l'opinion que j'avais de vous – et vous êtes montré en cette circonstance, selon votre habitude, critique éminent et parfait gentleman. Permettez-moi de vous faire mes sincères remerciements pour la part que vous avez bien voulu m'accorder et d'espérer que les années prochaines en nous rapprochant davantage me mettront à même de vous mieux témoigner les sincères sentiments d'estime et de considération distingués dont je vous prie d'agréer l'assurance»<sup>23</sup>. And, again, during his old age, Liszt informs

---

20 «En fait de notabilité, en visite à ce festival – j'ai renouvelé connaissance avec Hanslick, [...]», in Liszt, Franz, *Franz Liszt's Briefe, Briefe an die Fürstin Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein*, letter dated 28 May 1855, Vol. IV, p. 216.

21 «Je me suis placé vis-à-vis de M<sup>e</sup> et M<sup>me</sup> Hiller, entre Hanslick et Wasielewski, [...]», in Liszt, Franz, *Franz Liszt's Briefe, Briefe an die Fürstin Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein*, letter dated 28 May 1855, Vol. IV, p. 220.

22 Bonds, Mark Evan, *Absolute Music, The History of an Idea*, p. 210. If it is true that Liszt does not name Hanslick explicitly, he does attack explicitly the formalists, as it is possible to read, for example, at p. 52 of Liszt's article.

23 Liszt, Franz, *Franz Liszt's Briefe, Vom Rom bis an's Ende*, to Eduard Hanslick, 31 January 1856, Vol. II, pp. 404–405. The footnote of Lina Ramann declaims: «Der Brief bezieht sich auf das von Liszt dirigierte mozart-Jubiläumsconcert in Wien und Hanslick's Kritik, in welcher er den Mangel an Courtoisie rügte, womit man Liszt, der zur Leitung dieses Concerts eingeladen worden war, seitens des Publikums und des Comité's behandelte». Hanslick wrote in his article that «Alles wohl erwogen, was sich gegen die Einladung Liszt's ernstlich einwenden lässt, kann man doch eigentlich von ihr nur sagen, daß sie nicht nothwendig war», because «steht Liszt's künstlerische Individualität zu Mozart in gar keine organische Beziehung, noch

us that, according to Hanslick, «je ne dois rester qu'un célèbre pianiste»<sup>24</sup>. Liszt and Hanslick conducted a remote battle, the former writing in the *NZfM*, the latter writing in *Die Presse* first and then in the *Neue freie Presse*. Liszt's article on Berlioz is surely a response to Hanslick's book of 1854, since in it Liszt defends programme music, which was one of the main targets of Hanslick's criticism. Since the beginning, the Austrian critic admitted that his analysis of the essential beauty in music would only be concerned with the so-called pure instrumental music:

Wir haben absichtlich Instrumentalsätze zu Beispielen gewählt. Denn nur was von der Instrumentalmusik behauptet werden kann, gilt von der Tonkunst als solcher. Wenn irgend eine allgemeine Bestimmtheit der Musik untersucht wird, etwas so ihr Wesen und ihre Natur kennzeichnen, ihre Gränzen und Richtung feststellen soll, so kann nur von der Instrumentalmusik die Rede sein. Was die Instrumentalmusik nicht kann, von dem darf nie gesagt werden, die Musik könne es; denn nur sie ist reine, absolute Tonkunst. [...] Sogar Tonstücke mit bestimmten Überschriften oder Programmen müssen wir ablehnen, wo es sich um den „Inhalt“ der Musik handelt. Die Vereinigung mit der Dichtung erweitert die Macht der Musik, aber nicht ihre Gränzen<sup>25</sup>.

However, the real point of confrontation is not programme music, but the problem of the form. Hanslick criticised Liszt (and with him the entire *Neudeutsche Schule*) not because they composed programme music, or operas, or any other kind of music with, or related to, words. Hanslick criticised them because of their use of musical structures and forms, and for the related idea according to which the extra-musical materials can provide proper support for the musical structures, which the composers used to create music, which is otherwise *Formlos*, without form – or, even worse, the form lies outside the music. Those of Liszt and Hanslick are apparently two incompatible aesthetics, but they are actually complementary. According to Hanslick the form is the supreme beauty:

Keineswegs ist das „Specifisch-Musikalische“ als blos akustische Schönheit, oder proportionale Dimension zu verstehen [...]. Der Begriff der „Form“ findet in der Musik

---

weniger in der fachtischen, [...]. See Hanslick, Eduard, *Geschichte des Concertwesens in Wien*, Vol. 2, p. 109.

24 Liszt, Franz, *Franz Liszt's Briefe, Neue Folge zu Band I und II*, to the princess Marie Hohenlohe, March 1881, p. 383.

25 Hanslick, Eduard, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, 1854, p. 20.

eine ganz eigenthümliche Verwirklichung. Die Formen, welche sich aus Tönen bilden, sind nicht leere, sondern erfüllte, nicht bloße Linienbegrenzung eines Vacuums, sondern sich von innen heraus gestaltender Geist<sup>26</sup>.

The form for Hanslick is not something cold, it is not, using the word from Liszt, a *formula*, but it is something that the composer has to fill with its inventive – the form is then more or less fixed, but the composer can fill the scheme with unlimited melodic and harmonic combinations, and through this process he can transform the form itself. From this point of view Liszt and Hanslick are very close. But for the latter the form is simultaneously cause and aim of any beauty, while for the first, the form is a consequence of the beauty, of the inventive of the composer. But Hanslick claimed in his essay that his system is founded on some laws of nature – which anyway remains unspecified. Therefore, there is a shift of perspective in the battlefield. Hanslick defends the tradition, stating that it has the right to exist and to rule, because it is related to these laws of nature; on the other side, Liszt has to prove that even progress and the new are related to these laws, and that they are simple evolutions of them. This is the real terrain upon which the battle is fought. From the *querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*, to the battle between Hanslick and Liszt, to the debate between Schönberg and the formalists, everyone pretended to found his system on some unspecified laws of nature. After all, the theoreticians of the 19<sup>th</sup> century believed that the tonal system itself was directly derived from nature. Hegel himself, even if he did not explicitly use the word “nature”, explains that sounds are related to each other by specific relations, and that these relations follow specific physical laws, where the word physics is to be understood as a synonym of nature.

From this point of view, the reason why Liszt quoted Hegel becomes clearer. Hanslick’s writing reflects the construction of the Hegelian chapter on music: both writings contain a chapter, or a section, about the effect of music, the content of music, feelings, accompanied music, instrumental music, etc.. Consequently, a confrontation with Hanslick must have taken its moves from a confrontation with Hegel. The German philosopher, or better his systematic view of the arts, constitutes the theoretical weapon used to fight the war. After his *Lectures* anyone who pretended to confront himself with the aesthetics had to take into account his thoughts. Therefore, during the analysis both the passages will emerge from Hegel’s *Ästhetik* which support Liszt’s ideas, and the passages which could be analysed as an answer to Hanslick and other opponents. On

---

26 Hanslick, Eduard, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, 1854, p. 34.

the other side, as already stated, every essay of Liszt had a propaganda function, too. In the specific case of the Berlioz-essay, Liszt had more than one purpose: 1) to defend the music of his friend Berlioz; 2) through this defence he aimed to legitimize the creation of a second Berlioz week in 1855 – after the first in 1852 –; 3) to defend programme music and a new conception of form driven by feeling and invention. Aside from that, it is ideally possible to identify a passage of Hanslick *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* as the spark which started the fire, namely as the reason for Liszt's article:

Man pflegt oft anzuführen, daß Beethoven beim Entwurf mancher seiner Kompositionen sich bestimmte Ereignisse oder Seelenzustände gedacht haben soll. Wo Beethoven oder irgend ein anderer Tonsetzer diesen Vorgang beobachtet hat, benützte er ihn bloß als Hilfsmittel, sich durch den Zusammenhang eines objektiven Ereignisses das Festhalten der musikalischen Einheit zu erleichtern. [Wenn Berlioz, Liszt u.a. mehr als dies an der Dichtung, dem Titel oder dem Erlebnis zu haben glaubten, so ist es eine Selbstdäuschung]. Die Einheit der musikalischen Stimmung ist's, was die vier Sätze einer Sonate als organisch verbunden charakterisiert, nicht aber der Zusammenhang mit dem vom Komponisten gedachten Objekte. Wo sich dieser solch poetisches Gängelband versagte und rein musikalisch erfand, da wird man keine andere Einheit der Teile finden, als eine musikalische. Es ist ästhetisch gleichgültig, ob sich Beethoven allenfalls bei seinen sämtlichen Kompositionen bestimmte Vorwürfe gewählt; wir kennen sie nicht, sie sind daher für das Werk nicht existierend. Dieses selbst, ohne allen Kommentar, ist's, was vorliegt, und wie der Jurist aus der Welt hinausfingiert, was nicht in den Akten liegt, so ist für die ästhetische Beurteilung nicht vorhanden, was außerhalb des Kunstwerks lebt. Erscheinen uns die Sätze einer Komposition als einheitlich, so muß diese Zusammenghörigkeit in musikalischen Bestimmungen ihren Grund haben<sup>27</sup>.

If analysed from this point of view, the title Liszt gave to his article is just camouflage, as he devoted just two of the five parts in which the article was published to the analysis of Berlioz's symphony. After all, Liszt's aim was primarily to convince the readers of the goodness of his choices in music, and

---

27 Hanslick, Eduard, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, 1922, pp. 77–78. The passage between square brackets on Berlioz and Liszt did not appear in the first edition of Hanslick's book (See Hanslick, Eduard, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, Rudolph Weigel, Leipzig, 1854, pp. 43–44), but it first appears in the ninth edition of 1896. Then Liszt did not read his name in the essay, but the paragraph itself is an attack against the legitimacy of programme music.

of his work as musical court director. Despite the first Berlioz week being a success, the orchestra of the Weimar theatre was in really poor condition, and Liszt decided to write to Carl Alexander to complain about the conditions under which he had to work. The Grand Duke replied: «Vous êtes, j'espère, tout autant accoutumé à trouver en moi de la bonne volonté guidée par une amitié commun. Nous nous y mettons, n'est-ce pas, et nous ne nous désespérons point, si tout en combattant, tous nos désirs ne se réalisent pas de suite dans cette vie qui n'est autre chose qu'un combat. [...] bon courage et bonne réussite»<sup>28</sup>. Liszt «must have been cruelly disappointed», and he «between June 1853 and January 1854, did not conduct in Weimar at all»<sup>29</sup>. But Liszt was determined, and he wanted to succeed where Goethe and Hummel before him had failed. Supported by Carolyne, he used all his energies to pursue his aims. This is the reason why the Weimar years were so fertile, both in compositions and essays. This is even the reason why his defeat, and his departure from Weimar in 1861, caused him quite a long period of depression and seclusion. Anyway, this essay is still worthy of analysis, since all Liszt's ideas on music of the 1850s are summarised there, and it can therefore shed light on one of his most successful compositions, the *B minor Piano Sonata*, because, as Dalmonte summarised, «Ces écrits remplissent souvent une fonction de propagande, Liszt les rédigeant afin de justifier ses choix après du public; mais c'est aussi dans cette catégorie que l'on trouve la plus grande concentration d'idées sur la composition musicale et ses effets sur le public»<sup>30</sup>.

### Zum Streit über Berlioz' Werke<sup>31</sup>

In the first part, which constitutes the first chapter in Ramann's edition, it is possible to identify the following topics: a) The war in the ideas realm; b) the role

---

28 Liszt, Franz, Carl Alexander, *Briefwechsel zwischen Franz Liszt und Carl Alexander Grossherzog von Sachsen*, letter dated 17 February 1853, p. 42. It is worth pointing out that the letter is written in French.

29 Walker, Alan, *Franz Liszt: The Weimar Years, 1848–1861*, p. 164.

30 Dalmonte, Rossana, *Les révélation d'une traduction «fidèle»*, p. 326.

31 The titles of each paragraph of this analysis of the Berlioz-essay are taken from Lina Ramann's edition of 1882 (s. Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine "Harold-Symphonie"*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Lina Ramann, Vol. IV). The quotations are taken directly from the original edition appeared on the NZJM in 1855.

and perspectives of the critique; c) the birth of the music and its multiple ends; d) the role of the public; e) an introduction to the function of the programme.

The opening section of the first chapter is clearly written with the typical Lisztian style, and it could at the same time be the opening of a novel, or of any other fictive literary work, or even the beginning of a political-philosophical treaty – one shouldn't forget that the 1850s are one of the most intense moments of confrontation between the party of progress and the party of the conservative. The main concept Liszt is expressing in the first lines is that there is a war in the realm of ideas, where the expression “realm of ideas” alludes to the more concrete division of the musical world between progressives and conservatives. In fact, as Liszt testifies, this division was such a common tool in understanding the musical landscape that anyone who did not take a side in this war was seen as a traitor to the fatherland. From the words Liszt used, it is possible to suggest that it was more a war between ideologies, than a philosophical battle in the realm of ideas. Namely, it was something very concrete. Therefore, this introduction serves to decrease the weight of the controversy, pushing it towards a hyperuranic world. Because, once it is established that the confrontation will be between two ideas, and not between two parties, then it is possible to analyse them with impartiality. Hence, these first lines are directed towards the opponents of progress, and to all those people like «Hanslick [...] et quelques autres personnages de cette trempe»<sup>32</sup>, but above all they serve to state Liszt's impartiality, and to affirm the most relevant principle which leads Liszt's analysis, namely to state that he is not interested, and that he has no role in the war between these two parties, and that his unique preoccupation is to identify, to protect, and to spread the products of the men of genius both of the past and of the present. Namely, Liszt affirms from the very beginning of his essay the existence of an evolutionary line on which both the masters of the past, and Liszt's contemporaries find their place. This statement finds its theoretical justification in a cumulative idea of progress. On this same basis, Liszt is able to affirm that the modern composers exploited the achievements of their predecessors in order to bring the music to other and further stages. Before entering the analysis of the essay itself, it is necessary to draw a brief parenthesis on the role of the polemics, since it seems that Liszt was very familiar with the concept and its application. First of all, it is necessary to note that

---

32 Liszt, Franz, *Franz Liszt's Briefe, Briefe an die Fürstin Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein*, letter dated 22 March 1858, Vol. IV, p. 415.

Liszt created, aware or not, a link with the ancient idea of *Polemos*<sup>33</sup>. The link with this concept is strengthened by the relationship Liszt creates between the contemporary war and the ancient one in Athens – moreover this relationship underlines that the war is not just in the realm of ideas, and, above all, that this war will decide the future of the music. Furthermore, Liszt speaks about *Innerer Krieg*, a concept which, in its political meaning, means civil war, while in its philosophical meaning represents the commencement of thinking. On the other side, note that Liszt spent much time reading a lot of books during the 1830, including Plato:

Voici quinze jours que mon esprit et mes doigts travaillent comme deux damnés,  
 – Homère, La Bible, Platon, Locke, Byron, Hugo, Lamartine, Chateaubriand, Beethoven, Bach, Hummel, Mozart, Weber sont tous à l'entour de moi. Je les étudie, les médite, le dévore avec fureur; [...]<sup>34</sup>.

And it is plausible that Liszt read *Protagoras* too. And it is in this dialogue that the idea of *polemos* is presented. But in this same dialogue there are two other themes which were dear to the composer: the myth of Prometheus, and the problem of virtue. The fascination with the Titan was already briefly discussed in the previous chapter. The problem of virtue is related to two other aspects, religion and progress. As a fervent Catholic, Liszt was at ease with the theological virtues, above all after his acquaintance with the princess Sayn-Wittgenstein. On the other hand, the civil virtues are related to a concept of progress according to which humanity is progressing towards the better. Under this light, progress means (and can only mean) moral advancement. As was just pointed out, Plato, in his *Protagoras*, did not just expose the myth of Prometheus and the virtue's problem, but he exposed the idea of *polemos* too, a main idea in ancient Greek philosophy. Related to the *polis* and directed outwards, this concept is the key for advancement, it is what brings progress and prosperity; conversely, if it is directed inwards, it is the most dangerous thing, because this leads to an absence of movement (*stasis*), which, in most cases, leads to the outbreak of violence (civil war). But this is the political analysis of the concept. On the philosophical side, *polemos* is related to the world of ideas, and it constitutes the premise of the most productive thinking-process, especially if it is inward-oriented, i.e.,

---

33 This word can be translated with *war* (*Polemos* was the god of war), but its root *pol* is constitute the basis of many words, such as *polemic*.

34 Liszt, Franz, *Franz Liszt's Briefe, Vom Paris bis Rom*, letter to Pierre Wolff dated 2 May 1832, Vol. I, p. 7.

if it used to conduct our own thoughts. In this last case it produces pairs of opposing concepts which in turn create harmony in the world – since their confrontation produce a balance between them. These few opening words assume a completely different meaning under this light, from which the sociologist Liszt emerges. As had happened in Athens, yet during Liszt's present time, people were only able to use these pairs of opposites in the field of reality. That produces an all against all war, where every person who wanted to think and to discuss, namely everyone who did not want to choose a party, was attacked, and therefore labelled as a traitor. Still, after so many centuries *polemos* only means *stasis*, negation of any dialectical movement. Liszt, pretending to be an impartial judge, affirmed the necessity for a real confrontation, which, as it will emerge in the following chapters, never took place. But these opening words assume yet another meaning, if one relates them to a passage from Liszt's essay on Schumann (1854), where it is possible to read: «In diesem Kampf mit sich selbst [Schumann's fight between classical form and his inner necessity] muß er viel gelitten haben»<sup>35</sup>. The “struggle with himself” is the positive side of *polemos*. Positive, but dangerous. If the composer is stuck in the dualism between Florestan and Eusebius, and he is not able to merge these two aspects of his personality (Meister Raro), the result cannot be anything else but a breakdown. Hence, the aim of Liszt in his Berlioz-essay is to show a possible path to salvation, an *Aufhebung* of the division between progress and reaction. This principle, which becomes an aesthetic rule, is expressed in a few lines:

„Der Künstler kann das Schöne außerhalb der Regeln der Schule verfolgen, ohne befürchten zu müssen, es dadurch zu verfehlten“<sup>36</sup>.

At its basis, this principle does not have a fearful veneration of the works of the ancient masters, neither a worried application of their rules of composition. The principle is based upon the research for beauty, and the composer has to search for it at any cost, even if that means leaving the path traced by the ancient masters. But who decides when and if a composer has left the right path? And according to which rules it is possible to establish it? And what exactly does “leaving the right path” mean? To underline that all these questions can only be answered from an ideological point of view, Liszt introduces in his writings words such as *Partei, Herrschaft, Verbannungsdekrete, Credo, Autoritäten, Musikalische Orthodoxie*,

---

35 Liszt, Franz, *Robert Schumann*, in *Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. Julius Kapp, Vol. IV, p. 174.

36 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 25.

*Sekte, Dogma*<sup>37</sup>, which all refer to an ideologically oriented perspective. These expressions point out that those people who pretend to possess the greatest knowledge, and, therefore, that pretend to be the impartial judges are actually the less recommended figures who can decide upon the quality of new art expressions. The tradition and its guardians alone are not allowed to set the rules which, under their orthodoxy, become dogmas. Liszt's is fighting against this dogma, for the right of the young generation to find their own way, assuming the ancient rules as the starting point, i.e., to compose following one's own inclinations and ideas, it is necessary to know perfectly the works and the rules of the ancient masters. Anyway, Liszt continues, there is a group of people who decide what is right and what is wrong in the field of art production, even if no one assigned them this authority. They are the critics, which Liszt called *die Unproduktive*<sup>38</sup>. Here ends, after very few pages, Liszt's pretension of neutrality in the debate. This epithet is related to the idea of the critique developed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, according to which only composers can create a positive critique. Contrarily, the professional critics, who possess a wide theoretical knowledge, but who have no idea of the problems involved in the compositional process, tried to understand and to set down on paper once and for all the general rules which govern a genre or a style. If one takes this position to its extremes, the result is that the composers have to follow the rules, which were created by these critics, so that they can ascribe their works to this or that style or genre. In this dictatorship of the negative critique the process of the art production is turned upside down. Liszt decided to affirm the opposite. In fact, after these few lines, in which he attacks the music orthodoxy, he introduces a speech about the role of the critique and its real meaning, using sharp words to describe the terrible service these unproductive men have done in the past, and in his present era:

[...] sie, die Unproduktive würde ja darin den beliebten Kanzelton gegen schaffende Künstler aufgeben, vom hohen Pferd herabsteigen, und der fatalen Nothwendigkeit nachgeben müssen, die Dinge einmal aus ihnen selbst heraus zu beurtheilen, statt ein Werk einzig vom herkömmlichen Standpunct richten zu wollen; sie würde sich gezwungen sehen mit der Aufrichtigkeit und dem guten Willen, die einzig zu vollem Verständniß zu bringen vermögen, den poetischen Intentionen zu

---

37 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, pp. 25–26.

38 The use of the word *unproductive* recalls the idea of Schumann on critique, i.e. only the musician could critique the music, because they know how the creative process works. Liszt is creating here a further distinction between him and his party on one side, and the others, the academics, on the other. Art is not a matter of science (see later in this chapter).

folgen, ehe sie sich für berechtigt hält eine Meinung über das Verfahren des Autors auszusprechen, sein Wollen und Können zu vergleichen; sie müßte aufhören gleich der Harpie die Beute zu beschmutzen, die sie in den Klauen hält, sie müßte so manchen Helfershelfern entsagen, die ihren Neid nicht zu Anerkennung hinaufzuschrauben vermögen<sup>39</sup>.

From this perspective, the voices that arose against Berlioz's works were due to a misconception of the role of the critique. In this false view, tradition is seen as the comparison element with which new works have to confront themselves. If they respond to the same aesthetic canon, then they are good works; if they introduced some kind of innovation, they are degenerated. The relationship between innovation and tradition will be debated by Liszt later on. Now he has to focus on his idea of a positive critique, because the defence of Berlioz and of the new generations pass through the foundation of a new conception of critique. This process is actually nothing new. In fact, to reach his aim, Liszt reports two quotations from two poets of two different epochs, namely from Jean de La Bruyère and François-René de Chateaubriand. The first, who in 1688 wrote his *Les Caractères ou Les Mœurs de ce Siècle*, stated:

Wie oft hindert das Wohlgefallen an der Kritik den Genuß des Schönen und Großen!<sup>40</sup>.

The critic as an obstacle to the perception of beauty. This is doubtless a first shaft against Hanslick. The quotation of La Bruyère is significant for another reason, too. He pronounced a speech at the *Académie* in which he defended the *anciens* against the *modernes*, but not because he was a conservative, but because of the excesses and the extravagance of his contemporaries. Therefore, La Bruyère, who was considered by his contemporaries too progressive in his production, assumes in Liszt's discourse the role of the impartial judge, a role which Liszt assigned to himself, since he, exactly as La Bruyère, on one side defended the ancient masters, and conversely was accused by his contemporaries of bringing excessive innovation into the musical field. The second poet from which Liszt quotes is Chateaubriand, who stated:

---

39 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855. p. 26.

40 Bruyère, Jean de La, *Les Caractères ou Les Mœurs de ce Siècle*, Paris, Librairie de Firmin Didot Frères, 1851, p. 28. «Le plaisir de la critique nous ôte celui d'être vivement touchés de très-belles choses».

Es ist Zeit, daß eine Kritik der Vorzüge auf die Kritik der Mängel folge<sup>41</sup>.

La Bruyère, the «kaltblütige, scharfe Charakterbeobachter des siebzehnten», and Chateaubriand, the «enthusiastische Poet des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts»<sup>42</sup>, serve Liszt to recall the double meaning of the word “critique”. The first poet, identifies a more conventional meaning of the word, namely a conception in which the critique assumes the negative meaning of condemnation and blame. This quotation clearly shows a critique of the role of the critique, as something useless, that prevents our full appreciation of an artwork. Critique becomes a sort of hedonistic pleasure, critique for critique’s sake. On the other side, Chateaubriand gives back to the word its original value. Hence, critique means at the same time study, research, and blame and condemnation. Nowadays, according to Liszt, too many people only use the word in its negative meaning. But a change is necessary, a change that not only Chateaubriand firmly asked for, but that the philosopher Victor Cousin in his *Du Vrai, du Beau, du Bien* (1853) even marked as necessary<sup>43</sup>. Here Cousin recalls the Greek precept of the καλός κάγαθός (*Kalos kagathos*), of the beauty and of the good, which automatically involves the concept of truth – and, in some respects the idea of the intervention of a deity. What is good and beautiful is necessarily true, because both these features directly emanated from this same deity. This is the new trinity which Liszt involved in his speech, and that constitutes the background of this new idea of critique, namely a critique based on the idea of beauty:

---

41 Chateaubriand, François-René de, *Oeuvres complètes de M. le vicomte de Chateaubriand*, tome 20I : *Mélanges littéraires*, Ladvocat, Paris, 1826, p. 342: «Il était utile, sans doute, au sortir du siècle de la fausse philosophie, de traiter rigoureusement des livres et des hommes qui nous ont fait tant de mal, de réduire à leur juste valeur tant de réputations usurpées, de faire descendre de leur piédestal tant d’idoles qui reçurent notre encens en attendant nos pleurs. Mais ne serait-il pas à craindre que cette sévérité continue de nos jugements ne nous fit contracter une habitude d’humeur dont il deviendrait malaisé de nous dépouiller ensuite ? Le seul moyen d’empêcher que cette humeur prenne sur nous trop d’empire, serait peut-être d’abandonner la petite et facile critique des *défauts*, pour la grande et difficile critique des *beautés*».

42 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 26.

43 Cousin, Victor, *Du vrai, Du beau, Du bien*. At the beginning of his book it is possible to read a sentence that could have captured Liszt attention too: «Nous ne pouvons accepter leur héritage que sous bénéfice d’inventaire. Notre premier devoir est donc de nous rendre compte de la philosophie du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, de reconnaître son caractère et ses principes, les problèmes qu’elle agitait et les solutions qu’elle en a données, de discerner enfin ce qu’elle nous transmet de vrai et de fécond, et ce qu’elle laisse aussi de stérile et de faux, pour embrasser l’un et rejeter l’autre d’un choix réfléchi», pp. 1–2.

Der Kunstrichter muß eine Klar sehende, aber innige Liebe zum Schönen besitzen: er muß ihm willig begegnen, es suchen, es begehrn. Unschönes erkennen und darlegen ist ein trübseliges Vergnügen, eine undankbare Aufgabe. Dagegen das Schöne herausfühlen, sich von ihm durchdringen lassen, es anschaulich machen und anderen seine Empfindung mitteilen, ist ein hoher Genuß, eine edle Aufgabe. Bewunderung beglückt und ehrt zugleich den, der sie hegt. Sie beglückt ihn durch ein tiefes Gefühl des Schönen; sie ehrt ihn, weil er zur Erkenntnis desselben beiträgt<sup>44</sup>.

In this passage the aesthetics of Liszt are condensed, which are in open opposition to that of Hanslick. The latter, taken as a symbol of Liszt's opponents, is accused of being a mediocre intellect, who pursues mediocre tasks, namely to condemn, from his personal point of view, what is wrong with an artwork. Consequently, the critic participates in the spreading of mediocre in the world. The genuine critic is he who, with great passion and enthusiasm, spreads the beauty and its understanding into the world. This view of the role of the critic in society is perfectly consistent with the Lisztian idea of the role of the artist. If the artist is a prophet who has to lead people towards the moral amelioration, then he, in playing the role of the critic, cannot just bring to light what is wrong, because once people understand what they do not have to do, the wrong, they do not yet know what they have to do, the right. And this is the task of the artists, of the finest intellects and of the noblest hearts: to show what beauty is, what is right, and they have therefore to be to themselves an example of rectitude. Liszt recalls Chateaubriand to state again the necessity of a critique of the merit and virtue in opposition to the critique of the fault. This positive critique is even more important when its subject is a work, which is struggling with all the problems a new form brings with it:

Chateaubriand fühlte schon die Notwendig, die Kritiker zu machen, dass sie ihre Aufgabe edler erfüllen, aller Schwerwilligkeit und systematisch gepflegten

---

44 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 27. «Outre l'imagination et la raison, l'homme de goût doit posséder l'amour éclairé mais ardent de la beauté: il faute qu'il se complaît à la rencontrer, qu'il la cherche, qu'il l'appelle. Comprendre et démontrer qu'une chose n'est point belle, plaisir médiocre, tâche ingrate; mais discerner une belle chose, s'en pénétrer, la mettre en évidence et faire partager à d'autre son sentiment, jouissance exquise tâche généreuse. L'admiration est à la fois pour celui qui l'éprouve un bonheur et un honneur. C'est un bonheur de sentir profondément ce qui est beau; c'est un honneur de savoir le reconnaître. L'admiration est le signe d'une raison élevée servie par un noble cœur». Cousin, Victor, *Du Vrai, du Beau, du Bien*, pp. 152–153.

Kurzsichtigkeit entsagen möchten, wenn sie mit Werken zu tun haben, die mit allen den Schwierigkeiten kämpfen, denen das Auftreten neuer Formen ausgesetzt ist, die aber gerade deswegen das Recht beanspruchen das Neue erkannt zu wissen welches sie bieten, ein Verdienst das man bei allem Herummäkeln und Kritteln nicht unter der Last bombastischer Phrasen begraben, und einstiger gerechter Anerkennung entziehen kann<sup>45</sup>.

And Liszt concludes this passage with a prophetic sentence: «Der Tag wird kommen». He is confident that one day the critique will finally be something useful both for the arts, the artists, and society. This sentence echoes his *Ich kann warten*. Unfortunately, both these fully confident in the future sentences would be contradicted by the lifelong hostilities against which Liszt had to defend his compositions. Consequently, the new critics have a very relevant role, and their task is even more complicated when they have to deal with something new. Liszt shows here an incredible historical awareness, because he states that if one can aesthetically judge an innovative composition – namely one can say if it is nice or not to the ears –, one cannot judge its aesthetical value, because, in order to provide an impartial verdict of it, a period of sedimentation is necessary – namely a period in which the innovations are allowed the time to be fully understood. This is of course a topic of the first relevance in Liszt's discourse, but before entering into this matter, he exploits the term “new” to begin a digression on the evolution of the music.

The theme of the new, which goes side by side with the problem of the form, brings Liszt to ask an epistemological question, namely if music was always as we nowadays know it: «War die Musik immer das, was sie heute ist? Gehorchte sie stets denselben Gesetzen, entzückte sie durch dieselben Reize? Hat sie immer denselben Charakter beibehalten?»<sup>46</sup>. This question automatically involves the concept of “change”; and when this changing takes a precise direction it becomes “improvement” or even “progress”. This underlines that Liszt's point of view is very fascinating, since he is not interested in rewriting the history of music. Instead, he creates an interesting list of people who, in the past and in the present, yelled that music was dead. And this yelling involves a different and opposite concept of progress. The theoreticians of every epoch developed a canon – in this case this means the opposite of what was already explained in the previous chapter, namely it describes here a series of rules that the composers have to follow –, and music has to adhere to this canon if it strives for recognition as

---

45 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 27.

46 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 28.

a beautiful art. Consequently, art lives in every epoch on the belief that it has reached its final stage, namely its highest development, and that no further improvement is possible. But, during this same time, a composer appears who stretches these rules, creating then something new. At this point the theoreticians, who could not understand the necessity of what they identify as a crime against the Art (with a capital A), complain that music relentlessly declines, and that it leaves the old, sure, and beautiful path traced by the ancient masters. Thereafter – and this point represents a very sharp critique against the role of the theoreticians – the future generations of theoreticians will regard, *a posteriori*, to this improvement phase, and they will describe it as a natural process of evolution, which permitted the birth of the music of the present time. Of course, they regarded this last phase as the final stage of the art, and so on. This is a never-ending circle of improvement and formalisation of this improvement, which anachronistically creates a cyclical conception of history. It is interesting to point out the sarcastic tone with which Liszt reproached these theoreticians in this passage: «Und wenn sie [the music of one epoch] nichts destoweniger eine Erweiterung erleiden, einen Fortschritt machen müßte, kamen dann nicht immer die Herren Magister *a posteriori* nachgehinkt, die sie ein für einmal als unverbesserlich, perfect erklären?»<sup>47</sup>. This passage could be read, following the suggestion of Lazzerini Belli, as a critique of Hegel. The philosopher, as already noted, stated that his philosophy represents the highest point ever reached, and no one would ever exceed him. The idea that the 19<sup>th</sup> century represents the highest point of humanity was a common one among the German speaking philosophers. For example, Schopenhauer wrote, summarising the thought of his rival Hegel, that «Über mich kann man wohl in der Breite, aber nicht in der Tiefe hinaus»<sup>48</sup>. The idea of a humanity which has reached its highest development finds its expression in the theory of the end of history, of which Hegel can be considered one of the founders. Liszt, conversely, believed that there is no limit to progress and amelioration. Here his idea of *Fortschritt* emerges (Liszt used the words *Fortschritt*, *Erweiterung*, and *Verbesserung* as synonyms), and he uses it to explain the history of music not as something fixed once and for all, but as a process, whose forces are inexorably proceeding. It is exactly from this idea of progress acting in history thanks to those men of genius that Liszt attacks all of Berlioz's detractors, starting from the words Rossini used to praise the French master as example. It is well known that the swan of Pesaro spoke these words: «Das ist keine Musik mehr! [...] Es ist ein großes Glück,

---

47 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 28.

48 Schopenhauer, Arthur, *Die Kunst zu beleidigen*, C.H. Beck, München, 2016, p. 93.

daß dieser junge Mann keine Musik macht, denn in diesem Falle möchte Sie verteufelt schlecht ausfallen!»<sup>49</sup> Liszt is trying to prove that his reasoning has a solid basis, i.e., contemporary musicians criticise the innovators, because they tend to preserve the old rules, which they cannot overtake. This introduction serves to outline the teleological movement of the musical materials to Liszt, namely to inform the readers that music was not as it is nowadays, and that it will always progress. Consequently, he states that the critics who cry out that music is fading, are a part of this process, but he even underlines that they are not to be taken seriously. To prove that music has evolved, Liszt chose the most complicated way. In fact, he breaks out with an ontological question, «Was ist denn schließlich die Musik?»<sup>50</sup>, which is immediately abandoned in the subsequent lines in favour of a religious, mystical, view on music, which is conceived as a trinity. This trinity is formed by the following elements: rhythm, melody, harmony – not surprisingly they are the same musical elements that Hegel analyses in his *Vorlesungen*. And as a trinity it acts: «die Musik selbst, gleich einer Gottheit mit mannichfachen Attributen, bleibt in ihrer Wesenheit einfach; sie ist eine Dreieinigkeit deren Einzelemente wir soeben genannt haben, die aber als eine einzige, untheilbare besteht»<sup>51</sup>. This definition recalls Liszt's idea of music as something spiritual [*geistlich*], something that cannot be explained through rules and theories. Hence, from this depiction a conception of music emerges as something mystic, something that is closer to the category of beliefs, than that of human rationality. This idea clearly comes from Liszt's religious education. But this passage shows more than that. It emphasises the relationship of music with something magical, as if it were not entirely human. The mystical conception of art, far from being something new, was actually quite common among a portion of the Romantic Generation. And even the formalists were not completely alien to this romantic cliché. Wrote Hanslick:

Form und Charakter des Gehörten verlieren ganz ihre Bedeutung [...], wir können uns nicht loswinden von seinen Klängen, – nicht mehr das Tonstück fühlen wir, sondern die Töne selbst, die Musik als gestaltlos dämonische Gewalt, wie sie mit Zauberaugen glühend an die Nerven unseres ganzen Leibes rückt.<sup>52</sup>

49 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 28.

50 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 28.

51 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 28.

52 Hanslick, Eduard, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, 1854, p. 59.

Even if Hanslick is speaking here of peculiar states of mind, what is relevant are the magical qualities conferred to music. Music possesses an intrinsic power, which is unknowable to men, but whose effects are evident. Neither the psychologists, nor the physiologists, concludes Hanslick, were able to explain the effect of music on the human nervous system. Aside from that, it is noteworthy to underline that a man like Hanslick, who pretended to create a science of music – and this is the reason why he appeals several times to psychology and to physiology –, namely a musicology with precise rules and laws exactly as those of physics and chemistry, described the act of composition as a kind of magical process governed by unknowable rules, which only the intellect of the composers of genius is able to grasp, but, again, not to explain:

Es gibt keine Kunst, welche so bald so viele Formen verbraucht, wie die Musik. Modulationen, Cadenzen, Intervallenfortschreitungen. Harmoniefolgen nützen sich in 50, ja 30 Jahren dergestalt ab, dass der geistvolle Componist sich deren nicht mehr bedienen kann und fortwährend zur Erfindung neuer, rein musikalischer Züge gedrängt wird. [...] Die Phantasie des geistreichen Künstlers wird nun aus den geheim-ursprünglichen Beziehungen der musikalischen Elemente und ihrer unzählbar möglichen Combinationen die feinsten, verborgensten entdecken, sie wird Tonformen bilden, die aus freister Willkür erfunden und doch zugleich durch ein unsichtbar feines Band mit der Nothwendigkeit verknüpft erscheinen. Solche Werke oder Einzelheiten derselben werden wir ohne Bedenken „geistreich“ nennen<sup>53</sup>.

Afterwards, once Liszt has established that music is a trinity composed of rhythm, melody, and harmony, he states that these elements always progress together, exactly as an organism: if during a period of time rhythm progresses more than the other two, then, in the subsequent period melody and harmony will progress faster, in order to reach the same level of progress of the rhythm, and so on. Following these premises, Liszt concludes that, since music acts as an organism, then its elements have to follow some kinds of rules of nature, according to which they always find their balance. With this statement Liszt considers the ontological matter solved, and he can in turn come back on the initial matter, namely the problem of the so called “end of music”, in order to solve it. He starts from a series of examples. Spontini did not appreciate Weber, of whom he never wanted to conduct a work; Cherubini, who laughed and commented

---

53 Hanslick, Eduard, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, 1854, p. 42.

with a “kannitverstan”<sup>54</sup> on Berlioz’s works<sup>55</sup>. But the history of music is full of examples from which clearly emerge this negative attitude directed towards the new generations. For example, Liszt reports, in 1704 Benedetto Marcello warned that «die Musik geht unter!»; and Rameau, some decades later, in 1760 stated that «die Musik ist verloren»<sup>56</sup>. Luckily in our present day, says Liszt, we even have theoreticians who studied the phenomenon, and they are therefore able to explain these shouts and cries, these *Requiem* for the dying music:

Die Musik nährt sich von Gemüthsbewegungen. Diese sind um so lebhafter, je mannigfaltiger sie sind. Sei werden schnell abgenutzt, weil bei der fortgesetzten Gewöhnung an den Genuss dieser Kunst das Bedürfnis des Neuen sich hier schneller als bei jeder anderen fühlbar macht. Daher das Interesse an ihren Umwälzungen, der Enthusiasmus, den sie erregen; daher auch die Klagen jener, welche die gewohnten Formen für die einzig zulässigen halten, daher die so oft erneuerten Weherufe: die Musik geht zu Grunde, die Musik ist verloren!, die eben doch nur bedeuten, *dass die Musik eine andere Form angenommen hat*<sup>57</sup>.

From this last quotation another idea of progress emerges, which was well known to Liszt, and of which he was a supporter. Many historians noted that when a

54 The word comes from the expression “Ik kan niet verstaan” (I don’t understand), and it is taken from the novel written by Johann Peter Hebel in 1808.

55 It is well known that Cherubini did not appreciate the music of Berlioz, and of any other progressive composer. In his *Mémoire* (chapter XXXI) Berlioz tells us an anecdote in which it is clear what the thoughts of the Italian master were: «Eh bien, monsieur Cherubini, vous ne venez pas entendre la nouvelle composition de Berlioz? — Zé n’ai pas besoin d’aller savoir comment il né faut pas faire!».

56 These quotations are very often reported in a huge series of articles and writings (*Musée de familles: lectures du soir*, Bureaux du Musée des Familles, 1841, p. 275; François Henri Joseph Blaze, *Dictionnaire de musique moderne*, *L’Académie de musique*, 1828, p. 20; Joseph Henri Mees, *Abreégé historique sur la musique moderne depuis le quatrième siècle*, p. 20), but always miss the original source. Most likely Liszt took these quotations from the book *Curiosités Historiques de la musique, complément nécessaire de La Musique mise à la portée de tout le monde* (pp. 1–2) written by François-Joseph Fétis where it is possible to find exactly the same quotations.

57 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 30. The quotation is from the book *Curiosités Historiques de la musique, complément nécessaire de La Musique mise à la portée de tout le monde* by François-Joseph Fétis, Paris, Janet et Cotelle libraires, 1830, pp. 3–4: «La musique vit d’émotions. Celles-ci sont d’autant plus vives qu’elles sont plus variées. Elles s’usent promptement, parce que, l’usage de cet art étant habituel, le besoin de nouveauté s’y fait sentir plus souvent que dans tout autre. De là l’intérêt qu’on prend à ces révolutions et l’enthousiasme qu’elles excitent. De là aussi les regrets de ceux qui considèrent les formes auxquelles ils sont accoutumés comme les seules admissibles, et ces exclamations: *la musique se perd! La musique est perdue!* Qui signifient seulement que la musique a changé de forme». Italic is mine.

civilisation dies, a new one arises. But the discoveries and the achievements of the former one are not lost forever, but rather they are taken up, and brought forth, by the newcomers. Sustained by this theory, Liszt stated that the same process is to be found in music: when a style, or a genre, disappears, then a new one – or a modified version of it – comes to fill the gap left by the predecessor. This happens because man cannot progress through simple imitation. Consequently, the achievements of a civilisation, or of a generation, have to be used as a starting point to develop new, and more suitable solutions. Every new generation has to find its own way to solve its own problems every time. This theory of progress is exposed by Liszt several times in different writings, but it finds its clearer formulation in the essay on the Goethe-Foundation:

Nous croyons que l'homme, dans ses efforts collectifs comme dans ses recherches individuelles, ne peut arriver à ce mérite d'une perfection quelconque et à cette gloire enviable que par des voies toujours diverses, qu'une triste nécessité l'oblige de toujours découvrir<sup>58</sup>.

There is certainly some melancholy to this statement, since man has to restart the process every time. The problems humanity encounters need different solutions every time. One can surely look to the past to find inspiration, but the lesson one learns is not enough to reach a new peak. The solutions found by the ancient generations, are not useful any more to the new ones. The path of progress seems to be ruled by Sisyphus. The statement of Féétis is actually based on the same premises which were common among every evolutionist during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and that Nisbet summarised as follows:

What are these premises? They are drawn from the metaphor of growth, from the analogy of change in society to change in the growth process of the individual organism. Six seem to me the most constitutive and far-reaching in their relation to the theories of the major social evolutionists in the century. *Change is natural [...]. Change is directional [...]. Change is immanent [...]. Change is continuous [...]. Change is necessary [...]. Change proceeds from uniform causes*<sup>59</sup>.

Progress is natural and no one can stop it; innovation is a necessity in order to survive. But how can one recognise it? Here comes one of the most interesting parts of the essay. Liszt begins to debate the role of the public and the critics in

---

58 Liszt, Franz, *De la Fondation-Goethe*, p. 33.

59 Nisbet, Robert A., *Social change and History*, pp. 166–182.

the recognition process of the “new” in music. If the new in music shows up through new forms, critics and public must recognise and understand them in order to appreciate them. However, what is the meaning of these new forms? When is a form in music really new? For example, is the form of the *B minor Piano Sonata* really something new, or is it rather new wine in old bottles? To answer the question it is necessary to remember that progress, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was conceived as a cumulative process. Consequently, it is quite impossible to speak about something really “new” in this field. Furthermore, as previously stated, every new generation has an initial knowledge, constituted by the achievements of the previous ones. From these premises it follows that every “new” actually brings with it a more or less relevant part of the past. But if a typical form of a specific period is based upon the assumption that it is the most advanced form, and that no improvement is possible, it becomes a dogma. A dogma labels every “new” as something strange and as a corruption of the costumes, as degenerated. The form becomes a stiffened thought, and the public and the critics become addicted to it. Consequently, they are not able to understand or recognise anything else aside from it. The habit makes critics lazy. Instead of finding the features of the old forms which are still alive into the new ones, they prefer to banish everything they do not immediately understand or appreciate – namely to banish everything that does not perfectly fit the formal schemes they support. Music becomes a dogmatic religion. Public and critics become devoted followers of this new creed. But, as proved by the Middle Ages<sup>60</sup>, innovation always finds its way, even if it has to wait many decades or centuries. The most famous example in the history of music comes from Beethoven. Nowadays the master of Bonn is recognised as one of the most relevant composers of all time, and no one would deny it. But during his lifetime some of his works were labelled, by the *Herren Magister*, as grotesque and bizarre. It is exactly there, Liszt continues, namely where one finds something strange, that one has to search for the activity of the genius. Of course, eccentricity could even be the mask of mediocrity, but according to Liszt there is a method to discern the former from the latter:

*Seltsamkeit* wird immer das sublime beneidenswerthe Unglück jedes musikalischen Genius sein, nicht an und für sich selbst, sondern als unzertrennlich von der wirklichen Erfindung. Genie und Erfindung ist eines; Erfindung und Neuerung geht aber über das Bekannte hinaus, und erscheint dann vielen Augen seltsam. Die Schwierigkeit besteht darin, die Fälle wohl zu unterschieden, wo diese Seltsamkeit nur eine

---

60 See p. 90 and ff.

Zuflucht geistiger Armuth, eine Maske ist, hinter welcher sich ein nichtssagendes Gesicht versteckt, oder wo sie unvermeidliche Folge einer neuen Gefühlsweise und der neuen Form ist, welche diese nothwendig macht. Nur seinen Intelligenzen vermögen ist es gegeben sie dann zu erkennen, nur der Zukunft vorbehalten, die Behauptung dieser zu bestätigen<sup>61</sup>.

Liszt proves in this passage to be a forerunner. *Seltsamkeit* will always be the enviable misfortune of the genius. He identifies the relevance of the relationship between *strangeness* and *invention*. Liszt is here saying that every genuine innovation appears to people as something unusual. The interdependence between genius and strangeness is identified, many years after Liszt, by Harold Bloom. The American critic, in his previously quoted book *The Western Canon*, states that the greatest works of Western literature have only one common feature: unfamiliarity. In his book Bloom analysed twenty-six writers, from Dante to Samuel Beckett, searching for what makes these authors canonical.

With most of these twenty-six writers, I have tried to confront greatness directly: to ask what makes the author and the works canonical. The answer, more often than not, has turned out to be strangeness, a mode of originality that either cannot be assimilated, or that so assimilates us that we cease to see it as strange. Walter Pater defined Romanticism as adding strangeness to beauty, but I think he characterized all canonical writing rather than the Romantics as such. [...] When you read a canonical work for a first time you encounter a stranger, an uncanny *startlement* rather than a fulfillment of expectations<sup>62</sup>.

Hence, if an artist strives for recognition, and aims for a place in the canon, then he has to deal with strangeness. A true artist, who works following his vocation, will always bring innovations within his work. Innovation means that the artist uses a form in a way which goes beyond what is already known. Therefore, people will look to the genius with suspicion, because he is bringing something “unfamiliar”, and this “unfamiliar” inevitably sounds as something strange. The suspicious attitude is not to be regarded as a negative behaviour towards the new music – unless it is an *a priori* attitude against any new – but as a defence mechanism. In fact, Liszt warns us, sometimes strangeness is the sanctuary of mediocrity. Because it is very hard to immediately recognize when the strangeness is the outcome of the work of a genius, and when it is the out-

---

61 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 30.

62 Bloom, Harold, *The Western Canon*, p. 3.

come of a mediocre composer. Liszt identifies two ways to solve the problem: 1) he says that our intelligence is able to recognise when it is an expression of the former or of the latter. And here our intelligence has to be sustained by our instinct. This solution is consequently not very sure – here the word of Liszt resembles those of Cousin<sup>63</sup>; 2) the last word about the strangeness of a new composition can only be declared by history. Only future generations will be able to say if the strangeness actually was the outcome of a genius, or the trick of a mediocre mind.

The element of Liszt's historical awareness emerges in this passage with all its strength, and it has more than one implication, because here is where it is possible to operate an inversion of the point of view on the idea of *Zukunfts-musik*. Liszt used the term to identify the artists of his circle, and, more generally, all the progressive musicians. It is here unnecessary to open a parenthesis on who was considered part of this group, and who was not, or on the differences that this expression assumes in Liszt and in Wagner. For the purpose of this dissertation it is sufficient to analyse this term for his literary meaning, and thereafter to operate an inversion of its meaning. The word *Zukunfts-musik* is usually translated to the expression “music of the future”. If one takes these words in their literal value, it is possible to state that it creates nonsense, a contradiction. It is a contradiction since the compositions of Liszt, or of any other progressive composer, do exist; they are an historical fact and they resounded in Liszt's present time. Under the light of progress, a music of the future represents nonsense too. First of all, because the path of progress is unknowable, exactly because no one can predict with exactitude which direction it will take. Consequently, a music which pretend to be “of the future” is impossible, exactly because no one can predict what music will be. It is at this point that an inversion of the meaning of this term is necessary, and, furthermore, more consistent with the overall theoretical building elaborated by Liszt. Hence, it is possible to turn the concept of *Musik der Zukunft* [music of the future] into *Musik für die Zukunft* [music for the future], basing this inversion upon some of the most recurring expressions used by Liszt, such as «Ich kann Warten», or «Der Tag wird kommen»<sup>64</sup>. This idea is strictly related to the one of a sedimentary process. As already seen for the symbol in *Chapter II*, it is possible to state that

63 See footnote 43.

64 The motto «Der Tag wird kommen» is used by Liszt at the beginning of his essay on Belioz. The words «Ich kann warten» were used by the Hungarian pianist several times during his life. He used them to comment the negative reception of his *Sonata*, as reported, among others, by Paul Bekker in his essay *Franz Liszt Reconsidered*, p. 187; but the main sources of this expression are: Ramann, Lina, *Franz Liszt, Die Jahre 1848 bis 1886*, Vol. II, p. 475; and

the musical language itself is the output of a long sedimentary process. Every innovation, where innovation is a different use of the old forms and materials, leaves the critics, the public, some musicians and composers puzzled in the beginning. That happens because every form, in order to fix its rules and its style, needs an experimentation period. During this time composers discard the material they do not need. It is during this period that a form, which is not yet set once for all, lives its highest freedom. Exactly for this reason, namely for the absence of rules, this first moment is the most problematic. But when a form reaches its final stage, namely when its main features are identified by theoreticians, it becomes widely accepted, and therefore easily recognisable. But, since the form, from the composer's point of view, is always progressing – from this perspective it could even be said that the form does not exist – this last stage coincides with its decline. This process, which was already described by Hanslick<sup>65</sup>, finds a more complex and complete formulation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the contribution of Adorno<sup>66</sup>. That is exactly because every “new” needs a certain period of time to be understood. It has to break down a wall of scepticism to be accepted, and for itself to become part of the norm – in this case “norm” is to be intended as a synonym of standard procedure, of convention, and not as a synonym of formula. The critics and the public, on their sides, need time to familiarise with these new forms, namely their minds need a sedimentation period. This happened to the last works of Beethoven, and the same happened to Liszt. The same faith would be shared by the works of Schönberg, etc. Consequently, the simple sentence «Ich kann warten» has the power to overturn the meaning of *Zukunfts*musik. It does not mean that a music from the future is materialising in the present, but that a music that already exists, namely a music which is the result of a long sedimentation process, is addressed more to the future generations than to the present ones. This kind of music will only be understood in the future, exactly because it finds itself in the middle of the experimentation period, which needs a sedimentation period to separate the strangeness of the mediocre from the invention of the genius.

The strangeness as the hallmark of the genius is strictly related to the problem of the form which is, as already said, the real topic of Liszt's essay. What is new in the symphonic poems, or in the music of Berlioz, and of the *Neudeutsche*

---

Lachmund, Carl, *Living with Liszt*, p. 300; here the quotation is reported in another form, i.e. «Wir können warten».

65 See footnote 53.

66 Adorno devoted some passages of his *Ästhetische Theorie* and of his *Philosophie der neuen Musik* to the concepts of new, decline, necessity, and innovation of the musical language.

*Schule*, is not that they have an extra-musical programme, but their form, and the fact that the musical material is organised in new ways. The musician of genius is an innovator, because he must express his individuality in this or that form, because he feels it as a necessity. He cannot avoid it. To underline this point Liszt recalls a motto attributed to Lorenzo Ricci, «*Sint, ut sunt, aut non sint!*». This quotation serves Liszt to create a bridge to the second chapter of the article. In these last two paragraphs he defends Berlioz, and at the same time he introduces the main subject of the article, namely programme music. As already seen, programme music is just an example made in order to point out that musicians have to follow their creativity, namely that they have to discover new forms. Liszt introduces the discourse on the programme explaining its function, i.e., the programme is used to clarify to the listener the thoughts, the images, the feelings, that the composer had in mind during the composition. The programme then provides to the public the guidelines on the thoughts of the artist. It is a means with which the public can come closer to the state of mind of the composer. Anyway, this is an *a posteriori* justification: the programme exists, and this is its function. But Liszt knows how to carry on a polemic speech, and then he underlines two more points:

Ist sie [the programme] eine Erscheinung ohne jeglichen Vorgang, ohne frühere ähnliche Beispiele? Ist sie ein bei Berlioz allein sich findendes Phänomen, eine ausnahmsweises Vorkommniß und knüpft es sich an keinen vorberetenden Versuch? Welche sind sodann die schlimmen Folgen, die der Kunst aus ihr erwachsen könnten? Welches mißliche Uebel wird sie im Geleit führen? Mit anderene Worten: hat daß Programm eine Berechtigung, da zu sein? Kann es sein Bestehen verantworten?<sup>67</sup>.

One has to keep in mind these two questions, because during the analysis of the second part of his article, how Liszt tried to answer the matter will emerge. In doing that he had to face two further problems: 1) he had to walk backwards through the history of music searching for the programme prodrome, in order to historically justify it, and thereafter 2) he even had to justify it philosophi-

---

67 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 37. In the Ramann's version of 1882 the first lines of this quotation was changed as follow: «[...] ob sie [the programm] eine Erscheinung ohne jeglichen historischen Vorgang, [...].» Even if the change is not substantial, it is here to underline the relevance of the *historisch*, since the historical awareness plays a very relevant role both in Liszt's theorois on musical evolution and in the thesis on the progress of the presnet work.

cally, namely he had to answer the ontological question about the right to the existence of programme music itself.

## Zur Programmfrage der Instrumentalmusik

Der Meister kann die Form zerbrechen  
Mit weiser Hand, zur rechten Zeit,  
Doch wehe, wenn in Flammenbächen  
Das glühnde Erz sich selbst befreyt!<sup>68</sup>

Since this essay is a journal article, the second chapter of this writing opens with a recapitulation in which Liszt recalls the meaning of the programme: any kind of preface, written in an understandable language, which the composer attaches to his music in order to guide the interpretation of the listeners towards the ideas which inspired the work<sup>69</sup>. The programme is a tool in the hands of musicians to prevent mystifications, and to bring the listener as close as possible to the “real” meaning of the work. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century some critics were used to describing some pure instrumental works by assigning them fictive characterisers and stories, namely, they used what was described in *Chapter II* as the metaphorical perception of music as a methodological tool. If some suggestions which emerged from this operation could be useful for the performer to reach a better interpretation of the work, conversely, they have the immediate effect of giving rise to ridiculous misinterpretations, as it will emerge later on.

As already stated, every text, especially if it is a poetic one, possesses different interpretations. Explaining a form of art through another form of art is to look into a mirror through a mirror. It creates an endless network of references from which it would be impossible to escape. But the problem of the interpretation is a quite modern one, and it would be a mistake to apply this reasoning to Liszt’s point of view. Although a poetic text is by its own nature open to many

---

68 Schiller, J.C.F., *Das Lied von der Glocke*, in *Musen-Almanach für das Jahr 1800*, J.G. Cotta’schen Buchhandlung, Tübingen, 1799, p. 260.

69 The programme is described as «irgend ein der rein-instrumentalen Musik in verständlicher Sprache beigefügtes Vorwort, mit welchem der Komponist bezweckt, die Zuhörer gegenüber seinem Werke vor der Willkür poetischer Auslegung zu bewahren und die Aufmerksamkeit im Voraus auf die poetische Idee des Ganzen, auf einen besonderen Punkt desselben hinzulenken».

different interpretations, it is somehow undeniable that the general atmosphere which poetry is able to evoke is more or less the same for every reader. That is exactly the core of Liszt's reasoning. The programme is therefore not used to assign a univocal interpretation of a work. Liszt is not working against the intrinsic open character of the artwork, namely he is not working against the concept of *Mehrdeutigkeit* – which is, and he was perfectly aware of this, a gold mine for composers. Therefore, he emphasises several times that the programme must evoke an atmosphere, a general feeling that must be as close as possible to the one experienced by the composer during the act of creation. Before answering the ontological question, Liszt has to justify the programme on the historical evolutionary line. This is his opening statement:

Das Programm [...] ist so wenig von Berlioz erfunden, daß wir ihm schon vor der Haydn'schen Periode begegnen<sup>70</sup>.

To support this thesis Liszt exploits the authority of one of the most relevant composers of the previous century, Johann Sebastian Bach – who during that time enjoyed his first period of posthumous glory – and his *Capriccio sopra la lontananza del fratello dilettissimo* (BWV. 992) as an example of early programme music. This work was composed before 1705 and it represents a unicum among Bach's production, because it is the only composition with programmatic subtitles<sup>71</sup>:

1. Ist eine Schmeichelung der Freunde, um denselben von seiner Reise abzuhalten.  
Arioso, Adagio
2. Ist eine Vorstellung unterschiedlicher Casuum, die ihm in der Fremde könnten vorfallen
3. Ist ein allgemeines Lamento der Freunde. Adagissimo
4. All hier kommen die Freunde, weil sie doch sehen, dass es anders nicht sein kann, und nehmen Abschied
5. Aria di Postiglione. Adagio poco
6. Fuga all'imitazione della cornetta di postiglione

---

70 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, pp. 37–38.

71 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 38, footnote. Most likely Liszt reported the titles without having the score under his eyes, because they does not coincide with the original ones assigned by Bach.

Liszt is perfectly aware that this example is not enough to historically justify the programme, precisely because this is an exception among Bach's opus, and it is an early work, although a masterpiece. Therefore, Liszt produces a list of other, older composers, the ancient masters, whose works involve some kind of description or evocative title. He chronologically lists works of Clément Janequin, and Philippe Verdelot for the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>72</sup>; of Johann Jakob Froberger, and Johann Kuhnau for the 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>73</sup>; of François Couperin for the 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>74</sup>; and, in the last paragraph of this long footnote, he conclude:

In den Jahren, welche zwischen Händel's und Haydn's Blüthezeit liegen, finden wir öfters Orgelcompositionen und andere Instrumentalstücke mit einem, ihren Charakter und Zweck andeutenden Titel Versehen. Es sind Stürme, Meerfahrten etc. in ihnen beschrieben<sup>75</sup>.

From the recapitulation at the beginning of the second chapter, and from this footnote, Liszt's idea of the programme clearly emerges. Everything could be a programme; a painting, a sculpture, a novel, a poem, or even a simple evocative title. What is strange in this long footnote is that Liszt used most of the space to report the programme of Bach's and Kuhnau's work, and he missed informing the reader of other, and probably more pertinent works. Surprisingly a lot of composers are missing from this list, such as Vivaldi, Tartini, Rameau, Frescobaldi. But we have to keep in mind that he is writing an article for the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, and he has a precise target audience. Probably the readers of the *NZfM* were more familiar with names such as that of Bach and Kuhnau, than with those previously listed. Above all, Liszt was trying to root

---

72 Liszt refers to the *Le dixième livre de chanson de plusieurs célèbres musiciens* printed in Anvers, 1545.

73 Liszt reports the word which Johann Mattheson used to describe the music of Froberger, stating that he «hat auf dem bloßen Claviere ganze Geschichten, mit Abmalung der dabei gegenwärtig gewesen und Theil daran nehmenden Personen, sammt ihren Gemüthserscheinungen, gar wohl vorzustellen gewußt». Johann Kuhnau composed a biblical history in six sonatas with a programme:

    Sonata I Der Streit zwischen David und Goliath (C major)

    Sonata II Der von David vermittelst der Music curirte Saul (G Dorian mode)

    Sonata III Jacobs Heyrath (G major)

    Sonata IV Der todtkrancke und wieder gesunde Hiskias (C Dorian mode)

    Sonata V Der Heyland Israelis, Gideon (F major)

    Sonata VI Jacobs Tod und Begräbniß (E♭ major)

74 Liszt claims that the *Pièces de clavecin* (1713–1730) are almost all programmatic because of their evocative title.

75 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 38.

the birth of programme music to the German musical tradition. Namely, he was trying to state that it was something natural, the most spontaneous outcome of the evolution of German music, and, furthermore to state that it was something which the German composers had already used. Liszt's reasoning is based, here as well as in many other points of his article, on a fallacy, since he appeals to an *argumentum ab auctoritate* (appeal to authority). If Bach (the authority) used the programme, and if we appreciate his music, then modern composers have the same right to use the programme, and the same right to search for public recognition. But here it is necessary to make a distinction between the "ancient" use of the programme and the modern one. Even if Liszt wrote, trying in this way to anticipate a possible objection, that these old «Programme sind knapp gehalten»<sup>76</sup>, there is a fundamental difference between them and Liszt's conception – and Liszt seems to be aware of this too, since he states that one does not have to compare these old programmes with the new ones, but just that one has to keep them in mind as forerunners, as the place where the new ones come from. If one looks at the titles of the "programmatic" compositions of Couperin, Rameau, Janequin, but even those of Vivaldi, or Tartini, it clearly emerges that they are a description of something. That is related to the concept of *mimesis*, of mimetic art. Of course, this idea is a very old one, and it comes from Aristotle, according to which art consists basically in the imitation of nature. This statement influenced the aesthetic debate at least till the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century music was programmatic because composers tried to insert into their works some elements directly derived from nature. They are not pure imitation, but nature is mediated, and she enters the music through the mind of the composer. This is even an expedient to expand musical possibilities. Compositional rules were very strict at that time. Consequently, the expedient of the imitation of nature was used to introduce sounds and harmonies which were prohibited by these rules, but which were permitted in these special cases. It is also worth remembering that music, always fighting against an inferiority complex before the other arts and always considered, still during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, more as a *tèchne* (practical knowledge) than as an art, tried to elevate itself by binding itself to, or imitating other artistic products. Concluding, the historical justification brought by Liszt is very weak. Furthermore, the operation he attempted to perform could even be described as reactionary. Liszt, in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, namely in the middle of the emancipation of music from any extra-musical reference, tried to relate music to extra-musical works, denying

---

76 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Harold-Symphonie*, 1882, p. 23.

in this way the self-subsistence for which music had been fighting for, for many centuries. Of course, Liszt's use of the programme does not go in this direction, and it is exactly for this reason that the examples he furnished are not completely appropriate. The last statement of the footnote and, more generally, the idea of programme music so far expressed by Liszt could be summarised with a sentence of Rainer Kleinertz, «all music is programmatic (in a broader sense)»<sup>77</sup>. And it is here, with this definition of programme, that it is possible to find a first common point with the autonomists. According to Hanslick's view, music is not able to evoke precise feelings or images. Music «vermag die Bewegung eines physischen Vorganges nach den Momenten», but this «Bewegung ist aber nur eine Eigenschaft, ein Moment des Gefühls, nicht dieses selbst»<sup>78</sup>. This statement finds its foundation in a well-known concept, namely the difference between “feeling” (*Gefühl*) and “inner climate”, a state of mind. The latter concept is described by the German word *Stimmung*, and it is to this word that Liszt's description of the programme is referring to when he wrote that the programme has to clarify to the listener the *Stimmung* of the composer, and not his *Gefühl*. Hence, on one side it is possible to state, quoting Mauro Mastropasqua (2011), that «il formalismo, che è un termine paradossale, segna in sé il suo punto di inversione, poiché in nessun modo l'immanenza della musica può fare a meno di riferirsi al soggetto che percepisce e immagina»<sup>79</sup>, and, on the other, that Liszt is working for the formalism, since his definition of the programme refers to the percipient subject, and not to the music itself, namely the programme is not able to explain the form. Liszt, in giving a description of the inner climate in which the artwork was conceived, limits the otherwise borderless imagination of the listener, who is then freer to focus on the musical material and structure. Somehow the programme, under this view, works for the formalists. Furthermore, Hanslick said that it is anyway useless to know if the artwork was inspired by any extra-musical element, because the composer deals with musical material, and the musical material has nothing to do with the phenomenical world. Aside from the fact that Hanslick is ignoring the symbolic power of music, and its symbolism – which is not only able to describe the phenomenical world, but even to convey very precise messages – he missed that an explanation of the *Stimmung* is even able to clarify the pure aesthetical choices of the composer. The composer, through the programme

---

77 Kleinertz, Rainer, this sentence was spoken out during the conference *19<sup>th</sup> Century Programme Music*, Lucca, 26<sup>th</sup> November 2016.

78 Hanslick, Eduard, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, 1854, p. 16.

79 Mastropasqua, Mauro, *Logica musicale*, p. 113.

can justify the use of this or that musical material and of this or that form. Consequently, the pure musical structures become clearer when the composer uses a programme to evoke the imaginary, the state of mind which guides his compositions. Of course, there is a substantial difference between Hanslick's and Liszt's idea on music, but it will be clarified later on, following the development of the essay.

From here on Liszt presented his personal idea of the history of music to the reader. On the one hand, there are the Oratorio and the Cantata, in which the orchestra, even during the instrumental moments, namely the ones without choir and soloists, has a role of *Landschaftlichen Hintergrund*, scenic background, and it has to create the framework in which the acting begins. With this statement Liszt is in open opposition both with Hegel and Hanslick. The latter in his *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* state that he is not interested in any kind of music which contains a text, because it influences our perception of the "meaning" of music<sup>80</sup>. What Hanslick is looking for is the beautiful in music, and it must be sought in pure instrumental music – anyway this research should involve vocal music too, because it is there that the pure instrumental music finds its origins. Hanslick is still related to a conception in which the literal meaning of the words prevail on the music, and it brings him to affirm something ambiguous, namely that the «die Vereinigung mit der Dichtkunst erweitert die Macht der Musik, aber nicht ihre Grenzen»<sup>81</sup>. The critic tries to explain this sentence in the footnote, where he reports the answer Ferdinand Hiller gave to Gervinius<sup>82</sup> to state that, since «es ist in den meisten Fällen dem Hörer gar nicht möglich, Worte und Melodie gleichzeitig zu erfassen»<sup>83</sup>, then the listener has to choose to which element is more relevant. Of course, the text of an oratorio is not as relevant as a text of an opera or of a poem – since the meaning of the text is already well known – and the attention of the listener will be directed to the music; but, what happens if the text is a poem? To answer this question, it is necessary to recall what Hegel wrote about this relationship, because it is on this ground that Hanslick found his thesis, and it is to this objection that Liszt has to answer:

---

80 See footnote 25.

81 Hanslick, Eduard, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, 1922, p. 34.

82 Hanslick, Eduard, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, 1922, footnote pp. 34–36. The quotation is taken from the book *Aus dem Tonleben unserer Zeit* published in 1871. The footnote does not exist in the first edition of 1854, and it is here reported only because it rise a strong objection to the Liszt's argument.

83 Hanslick, Eduard, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, 1922, p. 35.

Soll jedoch die musikalische Seite eines solchen Kunstwerkes das Wesentliche und Hervorstechende desselben bleiben, so darf die Poesie als Gedicht, Drama usf. nicht für sich mit dem Anspruch auf eigentümliche Gültigkeit heraustreten. Überhaupt ist innerhalb dieser Verbindung von Musik und Poesie das Überge wicht der einen Kunst nachteilig für die andere. Wenn daher der Text als poetisches Kunstwerk für sich von durchaus selbständiger Wert ist, so darf derselbe von der Musik nur eine geringe Unterstützung erwarten; wie z.B. die Musik in den dramatischen Chören der Alten eine bloß untergeordnete Begleitung war. Erhält aber umgekehrt die Musik die Stellung einer für sich unabhängigeren Eigentümlichkeit, so kann wiederum der Text seiner poetischen Ausführung nach nur oberflächlicher sein und muß für sich bei allgemeinen Empfindungen und allgemein gehaltenen Vorstellungen stehenbleiben. [...] Lieder, Opernarien, Texte von Oratorien usf. können daher, was die *nähere* poetische Ausführung angeht, mager und von einer gewissen Mittelmäßigkeit sein; der Dichter muß sich, wenn der Musiker *freien* Spielraum behalten soll, nicht als Dichter bewundern lassen wollen<sup>84</sup>.

But Hanslick, moving this objection to programme music, creates a false generalisation, because in programme music, text and music do not occupy the same place in time, namely the listener has to read the programme before the music begins. Liszt's and Hanslick's aims are the same, since no one of them wants to justify the text related music. Cantatas, oratorios, and all text related music, are not the subject of their investigations. Not one of them speaks about Opera, because it stands at the antipodes and has nothing to do with absolute music – furthermore Liszt is not searching for the perfect fusion between words and music, he is not trying to solve [*aufheben*] this dichotomy. Quite the opposite, he is here defending the right of pure instrumental music to connect itself with a programme, which is in turn able to recreate the psychological condition under which a composition was conceived. Liszt states without doubts the superiority of music on words. But he needed to create a connection with opera to provide a historical foundation to the programme. Even if its music has the same role as in the oratorios and cantatas, it contains the germ from which programme music was born: the *ouverture*, conceived as a *pure instrumental moment* detached from the opera – this is even further proof that Liszt is actually a supporter of pure instrumental music. The path that he outlined to describe the birth of programme music follows the same path which instrumental music faced to conquer its independence from text.

---

84 Hegel, G.W.F., *Lezioni di estetica – Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, p. 2168.

So, at the beginning the ouverture was just a short piece of music needed as introduction for the actors. Gradually it became even longer, and it began to have a specific weight, and a more defined *form*. So one finds ouverture without the connected opera, and the term starts to identify all the «instrumentalen Werke, die nicht wie die Symphonie in vier verschiedene Sätze zerfallen, sondern ein homogenes, organisches, unzertrennliches Ganze in einem Satze geben»<sup>85</sup>. The subsequent passage is one of the most relevant of this chapter, because Liszt tries to link the birth of programme music directly with the ouverture, providing some historical examples. Here again the necessity of linking the programme with the natural evolution of music emerges. Therefore, Liszt creates a connection with the tradition, with already well-known musical genres, and, above all, with a series of respectable authors (*argumentum ab auctoritate*), who here became untouchable authorities:

[...] der größere Spielraum, welcher hier der Phantasie des Componisten gelassen war, als auch die günstige Gelegenheit, solche Stücke an ein bestimmtes Sujet zu knüpfen, welches im Titel anzudeuten man fortfuhr, trug zum raschen Erblühen dieser Gattung Kunstwerke bei. Sie brachte, wie wir sagen möchten, das Privilegium des Programms mit auf die Welt<sup>86</sup>.

The ouverture was born as an introduction to the opera. Alongside the development of the latter, the ouverture became even longer, but at the same time even more relevant. Subsequently, it started to appear in concert programmes as an independent composition. It was in that moment that the composers realized the potential of this genre. In the beginning, this form was very short, since its role was just to introduce the tonality of the action. It is exactly for its simplicity that the ouverture gave composers a good chance to expand upon. Adorno said that «Der Komponist hat den der Erfindung zugewiesenen Raum gerade unschematisch zu erfüllen, um dem Schema Genüge zu tun»<sup>87</sup>. Then, when a form becomes larger, it leaves some empty spaces between its parts. And these spaces are the place where the composer finds his freedom to invent new possibilities. Thereafter, the ouverture became so relevant, that it achieved self-sufficiency, and the musicians started to compose ouvertures without opera, but they followed the convention to assign to their composition a title, as if they really were the beginning of an opera anyway.

---

85 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 38.

86 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 38.

87 Adorno, Theodor W., *Beethoven*, p. 98.

At this point Liszt plays his Mendelssohn card, «der moderne Klassiker». Liszt's reasoning is very simple: if it is possible to relate programme music to him, then no one would discuss the legitimacy of this “new” genre. Mendelssohn, who saved the name of Bach from oblivion, was surely more faithful to the ideal of classicism than to the excesses of Romanticism, even if the musicians of the Lisztian circle often quoted him among the initiator of the *Zukunfts*musik. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that his corpus contains a good number of compositions which have clear programmatic intention – if the term programme music referred to Mendelssohn nowadays seems inappropriate, one should not to forget that one has to relate it to Liszt's polemical intentions – such as many of his orchestral compositions which were inspired by many different extra-musical sources: *Die Hebriden*, *Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt*, *Das Märchen von der schöne Melusine*, the *Scottish* and the *Italian* symphony, etc. But Liszt, in his attempt to root programme music to tradition, is here using Mendelssohn just as a link in a longer chain, namely to connect the programme tradition to the highest authority in the history of music, Beethoven. In the beginning of the second chapter, the polemical style of the writings is even clearer, since here Liszt uses again the *ipse dixit* strategy; if the Master (Beethoven) did that, it cannot be wrong. And he lists the programmatic works of Beethoven: the *Eroica* and *Pastorale* symphonies, the piano sonatas op. 27 No. 2 *Mondschein*sonate, and op. 81a No. 26 *Les Adieux*, the string quartets No. 15, op. 132, and No. 16 op. 133, and even the *Faust Symphonie*, which he was unable to finish, because «Der Tod überraschte ihn»<sup>88</sup>. Furthermore, «[...] seit etwa fünfzehn Jahre immer häufiger vorkommenden Versuche, seine Symphonien, Quartette und Sonaten in uns herforgerufenen Bildern in pittoresken, poetischen oder philosophischen Commentaren festzuhalten, zeigen, wie lebhaft das Bedürfnis sich ausspricht, den leitenden Gedanken großer Instrumentalwerke genau bezeichnet zu sehen»<sup>89</sup>. But the result of Liszt's determined effort of relating programme music to the old German tradition has the opposite effect. If the programme is an extra-musical element which is able to clarify to the listener the psychological and emotional state of the composer during the act of composition, and it could be applied *a posteriori* or *a priori*, but it forms nevertheless a unity with the music, and it is the expression of the will of the composer, then imposing *a posteriori* a programme on a work of another composer, is an interpretative act that goes against the role of the programme itself: «[...] das Programm oder Titel nur dann gerechtfertigt erscheinen, wenn sie eine poetische Notwendigkeit,

88 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 39.

89 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 39.

eine unablässbarer Theil des Ganzen und zu seinem Verständniß unentbehrlich sind, [...]»<sup>90</sup>. Furthermore, it exposes his view to critiques and misconceptions. And Hanslick is there to point out every inconsistency. He wrote:

Überschriften und Notizen, auch authentische, von Beethoven selbst herrührende, würden das Eindringen in Sinn und Bedeutung des Kunstwerks nicht wesentlich fördern, es ist vielmehr zu fürchten, daß sie ebensowohl Mißverständnisse und Verkehrtheiten hervorrufen würden, wie die, welche Beethoven, veröffentlich hat. Die schöne Sonate in Es-dur (op. 81[a]) trägt bekanntlich die Überschriften „Les adieux, l'absance, le retour“ und wird daher als zuverlässiges Beispiel von Programm-musik mit Sicherheit interpretiert. «Das es Momente aus dem Leben eines liebenden Paares sind», sagt Marx, der es dahingestellt sein läßt, ob die Liebenden verheiratet sind, oder nicht, «setzt man schon voraus, aber die Komposition bringt auch den Beweis». «Die liebenden öffnen ihre Arme, wie Zugvögel ihre Flügel», sagt Lenz vom Schluß der Sonate. Nun hat Beethoven auf das Original der ersten Abteilung geschrieben: «Das Lebewohl bei der Abreise Sr. Kais. Hoheit des Erzherzogs Rudolf, d. 4. Mai 1809» und auf den Titel der zweiten: «Die Ankunft Sr. Kais. Hoheit des Erzherzogs Rudolf, d. 30. Januar 1810». Wie würde er protestiert haben, daß er dem Erzherzoge gegenüber diese «in schmeichelndem Kosen beseligter Lust» flügelschlagende Sie vorstellen sollte! – «Darum können wir zufrieden sein», schließt Jahn, «daß Beethoven (in der Regel) solche Worte nicht ausgesprochen hat, welche nur zu viele zu dem Irrtum verleitet haben würden, wer die Überschrift verstehe, der verstehe auch das Kunstwerk. Seine Musik sagt alles, was er sagen wollte»<sup>91</sup>.

Liszt was perfectly aware that some programme supporters tended to impose their own interpretation on other's compositions, which were not intended to be programmatic, or to interpret works with evocative titles, as in the case of Beethoven's *Les adieux*, in too peculiar a way. It is worth remembering that for Liszt the programme is not a description of the music, but it has an evocative power. Perfectly aware of the possible mystifications of his thought he added, at the end of the second chapter, a passage which is both a clarification of the meaning of the programme, and an answer to the (future) objection of Hanslick:

---

90 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 40.

91 Hanslick, Eduard, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, 1922, footnote pp. 78–80. The footnote does not appear in the first edition, because neither Marx's (1859), nor Jahn's (1866) books had appeared at that time. Anyway, this remains one of the best example of mystification that can occur when one tries to impose his own will on someone else's artwork.

Das Programm will nur die Möglichkeit anerkannt wissen einer genauen Bestimmung des Seelenmoments, der den Componisten zum Schaffen seines Werkes trieb, des Gedankens, der er zur körperlichen Erscheinung brachte. Wenn es nun kindisch müßig, ja oft verfehlt ist, nachträgliche Programme zu zeichnen, das Gefühl einer Instrumentaldichtung erklären zu wollen, und so den Zauber zerstören, Gefühle entweihen, feinste Gespinnste der Seele durch das Wort zerreißen, die gerade nur diese Form annahmen konnten, weil sie sich nicht in Worte, Bilder und Ideen fassen ließen, so ist doch auch wieder der Meister Meister über sein Werk und kann es unter dem Einfluß bestimmte Eindrücke schaffen, welche er im Zuhörer zu vollem ganzen Bewußtsein bringen möchte<sup>92</sup>.

Even if Liszt's answer to the Hanslick's objection is anachronistic, it anyway provides the best explanation of his intention. The composer decided if his composition had to be explained through a programme, or if it was a pure instrumental work. Liszt reiterates the concept several times from many different perspectives. *Repetita iuvant*, this latin locution represents one of the simplest communicative strategies, but anyway it cannot erase the weakness of the historical justification of the programme provided by Liszt. On the one side it is based upon the appeal to the authority fallacy, and, on the other side, it seems that the only means with which it is possible to justify a new musical idea is to rewrite the history of music, imposing upon it a concept that did not exist in the past centuries. And that is precisely what Liszt suggests in the subsequent paragraph:

Ein aufmerksamer Blick auf die Entwicklung der rein-instrumentalen Kunst, besonders seit Haydn, würde uns alsbald, nach einigen staubigen Untersuchungen, wie einen mehr und mehr betretenen Pfad eine ununterbrochene Reihe von Programmversuchen wahrnehmen lassen, welche das immer wachsenden Verlangen der Künstler bezeugen, die Lösung des Räthsels zu geben, welches aus den Wellen der Instrumentation ihnen entgegentaucht<sup>93</sup>.

According to this view the history of music from Haydn to the present day shows an unbroken line of composer's attempts to unite music and programme. As already noted, the relationship between music and other arts, especially literature, was always problematic. But this view of Liszt erases all the attempts made by hundreds of composers through countless compositions to give to music its own place among the arts, and to free it from any external interference. Fur-

---

92 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 52.

93 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 39.

thermore, the majority of examples Liszt reports, are ascribable to the category of descriptive music, than to that of programme music. But in a dialectical war any means is legitimate, and here Liszt is deliberately manipulating the history of music, because his aim is to convince the reader that what he is doing is right, and based on solid and old traditions – even if his insistence on the past seems to contradict the relevance he gave to the role of progress and of the new in music. If programme music was discovered by the ancient master, he is doing nothing innovative. But this passage plays a very relevant role in Liszt's narration. His aim is not to state that programme music is something new which belongs to the *Neudeutsche Schule*. His aim is to point out a process, namely a historical process which involves the transformation of the form, or the birth of new one, as in the case of the *ouvertures*. His reasoning is quite simple: the programme is something that has existed for a very long time and it was used in relation to many different musical forms; so, the programme is the constant in this process. What is changing is the form. Liszt's aim here is then to prove that these transformations (progress, innovations) naturally belong to music, and they are essential to its own life. Under this light, the main topic of the Berlioz-essay is not programme music itself, because Liszt wants to justify here his new conception of the form, and this illustrating that even the old masters brought innovations in this field, and this not due to the human caprice, but to the laws of nature:

Jedes Element erlangt durch Berührung mit einem anderen neuen Eigenschaften, indem es ursprüngliche einbüßt; andere Wirkungen in veränderter Umgebung ausübend, nimmt es einen neuen Namen an. Ein Wechsel in den bezüglichen Verhältnissen ihrer Mischung reicht hin, um das durch ihr Zusammentreten erzeugte Phänomen zu einem neuen zu machen. Das amalgamiren von Formen, die ihrem Ursprung nach verschiedener Art sind, wird in der Kunst wie in der Natur entweder Erscheinungen von ganz neuer Schönheit oder Ungeheuerlichkeiten erzeugen, [...]<sup>94</sup>

Die [Gattungen] von Menschen, wie er selbst scheinbar von der Natur, ausgehende Kunst, die, wie er selbst das Meisterstück der Natur ist, als sein Meisterstück von ihm mit Gedanken und Gefühl begabt wird – die Kunst kann der nothwendigen Veränderung nicht entgehen, die allem eigen ist was die Zeit gebiert. Ihr mit dem der Menschheit zugleich bestehendes Lebensprincip bleibt, wie das Lebensprincip der Natur, nur eine Zeit lange denselben Formen innenwohnend und geht von einer in die andere in ewigem Wandel über und treibt die Men-

---

94 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 43.

schen an sich neue zu schaffen in dem Maaße, als er die Verblühten und Veralten verläßt<sup>95</sup>.

These two excerpts from a longer passage, are very interesting, because they point out the relevance of historical time in human affairs. Everything that lives under the influence of time changes. And this is certainly true for nature. For human beings and their productions this law of nature is still valid, but one has to add to it the changes of society. Then, every new genre, or style, or art in general, undergoes these two forces, the changes of natural time and the changes (requirements) of the epoch. So, the artwork is both in the natural time, and in the historical times – and, as already pointed out in the chapter on the idea of progress, both these times have a direction and a movement, which involves the idea of transformation.

Indeed, after these examples of programme music taken from Beethoven and Mendelssohn, Liszt states that Berlioz belongs to this same tradition, and that what he is doing is actually nothing new. This statement leads to the key point of the essay, because it is used by Liszt to point out the main concept of his essay, using a circular construction<sup>96</sup>: the programme arose from a poetic necessity, as a part of the musical work, and it serves to explain it, because the musical artwork is the highest expression of feelings, and the composer has the moral duty to guide the listener in the right direction. Liszt is perfectly aware that one of the strongest objections of the programme music opponent lies on this argument: the programme music composer attaches an extra-musical content to his works, because he is convinced that the music is not self-subsistent, that the music acquires its value only when it carries a thought:

Verhüte der Himmel daß Jemand im Dociren über Nützlichkeit, Zulässigkeit und Vortheil des Programms den alten Glauben abschwöre und vorgebe, daß die himmlische Kunst nicht um ihrer selbst willen bestünde, nicht sich selbst genüge, daß sie den göttlichen Funken nicht aus sich selbst entzünde und nur als Vertreterin eines Gedankens, als Erhöhung des Wortes Werth habe. Die Wahl zwischen einem solchen Vergehen an der Kunst und der gänzlichen Ablehnung

---

95 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haraldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 44.

96 Starting from the statement that programme music is a fact today, Liszt re-read the history of music until he finds the foundation of this practice, and from there, since the programme is an inner necessity for the composers, he infers that it is something natural, which is sprung from the compositional practice itself. In fact, after the analysis of the past, he comes back to the present day to state the validity of programme music, and consequently to affirm its place among the classical genres.

des Programms würde nicht schwanken dürfen, und es wäre vorzuziehen, eine ihrer reichhaltigsten Quellen versiegen zu lassen, als mit dem Läugnen ihres Bestehens durch eigne Kraft, ihren Lebensnerv zerschneiden zu wollen. Das Gefühl incarnirt sich in der Musik, ohne, wie in seinen übrigen Erscheinungsmomenten, in den meisten Künsten und vornehmlich denen des Worts, seine Strahlen an dem Gedanken brechen, ohne die Nothwendigkeit sich mit ihm verbinden zu müssen<sup>97</sup>.

Liszt here does not want to be misunderstand and he writes that it would be better to completely abandon the programme, if it would lead listeners to think that the music has no independent existence. To sustain his statement Liszt adds a series of excerpts from Hegel's *Vorlesungen*, all with the same aim, i.e., to prove that the music is «die Seelensprache, welche die innere Lust und den Schmerz des Gemüts in Töne ergießt und in diesem Erguß sich über die Naturgewalt der Empfindung mildernd erhebt, indem sie das präsente Ergriffensein des Inneren zu einem Vernehmen seiner, zu einem freien Verweilen die sich selbst macht und dem Herzen eben dadurch die Befreiung von dem Druck der Freuden und Leiden gibt [...]»<sup>98</sup>.

The idea that music is the privileged means of feelings' expression arose with the Romantic Generation. Music, exactly because it does not have any phenomenalical object to which it referred to, opens our minds to the comprehension of the infinite, and during its unfolding the listener is able to grasp for a moment the ineffable breath of the universe:

Die Musik dagegen giebt gleichzeitig Stärke und Ausdruck des Gefühls; sie ist verkörperte faßbare Wesenheit des Gefühles; [...] Das Gefühl selbst lebt und leuchtet in der Musik ohne bildliche Hülle, ohne Vermittelung der That, des Gedankens; es hört hier auf Ursache, Quelle, Triebfeder, bewegendes und erregendes Prinzip zu sein, um sich faltenlos und ohne vertretende Symbole in seiner unbeschreiblichen Ganzheit zu offenbaren [...]»<sup>99</sup>.

Aside from this poetic view on the topic of the infinite, which sometimes turns into the «male romantico dell'inettitudine a vivere, la sostituzione dell'arte alla

---

97 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855 p. 40.

98 Hegel, G.W.F., *Lezioni di estetica – Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, p. 2234. For the other quotations see Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 40, footnote.

99 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 41.

vita»<sup>100</sup>, this statement has many philosophical implications, above all when analysed from the Hegelian perspective, that it would take too much place in this work. Liszt is writing an article, whose aim is to persuade the readers of the quality of his idea. In doing so, he tried to give it a systematic structure. It is for this reason that he has to recall the ideas of many philosophers and writers to sustain his thesis. The result is a row of quotations, more or less explained, more or less relevant, but which doubtless create a sense of a systematic presentation – and it does not matter if Liszt uses the words “*Geist*” and “*Gefühl*” as quasi-synonymous.

Once Liszt stated that programme music is perfectly consistent with the historical evolution of German music, he has an essential task to fulfil in the battle against formalism, namely to demonstrate that feelings are both the source and the aim of music, and that they are therefore the only force able to create new forms:

Zwischen Tondichter und bloßem Musiker ist dies der Unterschied: der erste reproducirt seine Eindrücke und Seelenereignisse, um sie mitzutheilen; der zweite handhabt, gruppirt, verkettet Töne nach gewissen hergebrachten Regeln, und gelangt darin höchstens, mit spielender Ueberwindung von Schwierigkeiten, zu neuen und kühnen, ungewöhnlichen und verwickelten Combinationen. [...] Nur dem *Tondichter* ist es gegeben, die Grenzen der Kunst zu erweitern, indem er die Fesseln zerbricht, die den freien Aufschwung seines Gedankens hemmen. [...] während die Formalisten nichts besser zu thun vermögen, als das von Jenen Errungene zu nutzen, zu verbreiten, einzutheilen und gelegentlich zu verarbeiten<sup>101</sup>.

It is interesting that this attack against the formalists take its steps from a quotation from Hegel:

Der Komponist seinerseits kann nun zwar selber in sein Werk eine bestimmte Bedeutung, einen Inhalt von Vorstellungen und Empfindungen und deren gegliederten geschlossenen Verlauf hineinlegen, [...]. Das Tiefere ist daher darein zu setzen, daß der Komponist beiden Seiten, dem Ausdruck eines freilich unbestimmter Inhalts und der musikalischen Struktur, auch in der Instrumentalmusik die gleiche Aufmerksamkeit widmet, [...]<sup>102</sup>.

---

100 Mila, Massimo, *Breve storia della musica*, Einaudi, Torino, 1963, p. 232.

101 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, pp. 51–52.

102 Hegel, G.W.F., *Lezioni di estetica – Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, p. 2290.

In this passage Hegel states for sure that the composer should care about both the musical structure and the spiritual content of his composition. But Hegel's idea is based upon the ancient Aristotelian idea of «das rechte Maß»<sup>103</sup>, and then it is closer to a formalistic conception of the music, than to the Romantic one. It is worth remembering that Hegel's ideal composers are «Palestrina, Durante Lotti, Pergolesi, Gluck, Haydn, Mozart»<sup>104</sup>. Furthermore Hegel, divided the music listeners into two categories: the amateurs and the experts. And it is only the latter who can enjoy music in its completeness:

[...] der Kenner dagegen, dem die inneren musikalischen Verhältnisse der Töne und der Instrumente zugänglich sind, liebt die Instrumentalmusik in ihrem kunstgemäßen Gebrauch der Harmonien und melodischen Verschlingungen und wechselnden Formen; er wird durch diese Musik selbst ganz ausgefüllt und hat das nähere Interesse, das Gehörte mit den Regeln und Gesetzen, die ihm geläufig sind, zu vergleichen, um vollständig das Geleistete zu beurteilen und zu genießen, [...]<sup>105</sup>.

On the other hand, the musical experience of the amateur is described by Hegel as *symbolic*, because «er steht mit dem Versuch, die Bedeutung zu erhaschen, vor schnell vorüberraschenden rätselhaften Aufgaben, die sich einer Entzifferung nicht jedesmal fügen und überhaupt der verschiedenartigsten Deutung fähig sind»<sup>106</sup>. So, in this passage Hegel supports the formalistic point of view, stating that, to fully enjoy a pure instrumental composition, one has to grasp and understand the structure and its causal nexuses. If the listener does not understand the formal structure of a musical artwork, then he will be looking for images, which are maybe valid substitutes of the formal structures (while listening), but which are not able to explain them. On the contrary, from this kind of listening a myriad of different interpretations, the *Mehrdeutig*, emerges. This is perfectly consistent with the Hegelian idea of *symbol*, as it already emerged during the chapter on the idea of progress – the symbol, exactly because it will never be defined once and for all (it will always be open to new interpretations), cannot be part of a system, which tries to systematise the entirety of human knowledge, the Hegelian one. Liszt seems to ignore these matters, and anyway he used the *Vorlesungen* to sustain his thesis. After all a quotation without its context can

---

103 Hegel, G.W.F., *Lezioni di estetica – Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, p. 2276.

104 Hegel, G.W.F., *Lezioni di estetica – Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, p. 2256.

105 Hegel, G.W.F., *Lezioni di estetica – Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, p. 2288.

106 Hegel, G.W.F., *Lezioni di estetica – Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, p. 2290.

be used for every scope, and here Liszt's aim is to point out that the feelings of the composers are a necessary feature of any artwork.

It will emerge that, in elaborating what it can be called a modern *Affektenlehre*, Liszt will reach its inversion, becoming more formalist than Hanslick. In order to absolve this task, Liszt has to recall the most relevant authority in the field of aesthetics: Hegel. And here Liszt starts to play with words, a clear sign that the philosopher in his game plays the role of the authority, and he is not exploited to theoretically sustain the ideas. Liszt reports some excerpts, but he avoids quoting them in their entirety. Therefore, it is possible to state that he either did not possess a good knowledge of Hegel's writing, or that he manipulated the text in order to reach his objective. This second option is of course the most plausible. For example, Liszt quotes a passage from the *Vorlesungen*, which seems to validate his thesis: «Musik ist Geist, Seele, die unmittelbar für sich selbst erklingt und sich in ihrem Sichvernehmen befriedigt fühlt»<sup>107</sup>. The quotation, if reported in its entirety, works actually against the idea of a music driven by feelings. Quite the opposite, Hegel is celebrating the “golden middle way”, principle which recalls the ancient Greeks' precept on art, according to which *symmetry*, *proportion*, and *harmony* are the three elements of beauty. Indeed Hegel wrote:

Als schöne Kunst [Musik] nun aber erhält sie Seiten des Geistes her sogleich die Aufforderung, wie die Affekte selbst so auch deren Ausdruck zu zügeln, um nicht zum bacchantischen Toben und wirbelnden Tumult der Leidenschaften fortgerissen zu werden oder im Zweispalt der Verzweiflung stehenzubleiben, sondern im Jubel der Lust wie im höchsten Schmerz noch frei und in ihrem Ergusse selig zu sein. Von dieser Art ist die wahrhaft idealische Musik, der melodische Ausdruck in Palestrina, Durante Lotti, Pergolesi, Gluck, Haydn, Mozart. Die Ruhe der Seele bleibt in den Kompositionen dieser Meister unverloren; der Schmerzen drückt sich zwar gleichfalls aus, doch er wird immer gelöst, das klare Ebenmaß verläuft sich zu keinem Extrem, alles bleibt in gebändigter Form fest zusammen, so daß der Jubel nie in wüstes Toben ausartet und selbst die Klage die seligste Beruhigung gibt<sup>108</sup>.

From this passage Hegel's view on music emerges in all its strength. It is of course the language of feelings, and it is of course “spirit which resounds directly on its own account”, but it is not emotional. The composer has to control

---

107 Hegel, G.W.F., *Lezioni di estetica – Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, p. 2254.

108 Hegel, G.W.F., *Lezioni di estetica – Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, p. 2254–2256.

and balance its elements in order to obtain a language which is able to express feelings, but that, at the same time, has to limit their extremes in a “restrained form”. Hegel’s view on feelings is still imbued with Cartesian thought. After all, Hegel did not utter a word on Beethoven’s works, and this is not because of his musical ignorance, but because the master of Bonn did not represent, from a Hegelian perspective, a composer of fine music. He already created degenerated art. It is undeniable that Liszt was aware of the existence of this passage, and that he omitted part of it just to exploit Hegel’s authority, since he was trying to demonstrate that feelings and music are strictly related, and that, since the composer has the inner necessity to express them, this relationship is the reason for the changing of the form. Liszt’s aim is to philosophically demonstrate that feelings are the driving force of change, namely that they are progress itself. And it is exactly the reason why he cannot quote Hegel’s passage in its entirety. First of all, the philosopher cites some composers as models. None of them were alive when he wrote the passage. Secondly, Hegel says that the emotions must be balanced to avoid the excesses, and therefore they have to be enclosed in a restrained form. This statement not only goes against what Liszt wrote in his famous letter to Luis Köhler – in which he describes his programmatic intentions, namely «bitte ich nur um die Erlaubnis, die Formen durch den Inhalt bestimmen zu dürfen [...] und dass führt uns immer auf das *Empfinden* und *Erfinden* zurück, wenn wir nicht im Gleise des Handwerks herumkrabbeln und zappeln wollen»<sup>109</sup> –, but it even goes against the entire romantic idea of art. From the confrontation between Liszt and Hegel, it clearly appears that they are on two opposite sides of the barricade. Hegel defends the “tradition” of a balanced music, which has to amuse the listeners with its melody and rhythm, and whose harmony has to follow a precise path. Liszt is searching for new means of expression, and this research led him to new harmonic, melodic, and formal constructions.

Hegel’s passage quoted by Liszt in the footnote is explained by the composer in the subsequent lines, from which emerge Liszt’s inability to keep the speech on the philosophical field. Firstly, he explains Hegel’s view with other words, which are more poetical than technical; it is clear that Liszt is trying to convince the readers using a dialectical artifice: he quotes from a philosopher to give validity to his speech, and suddenly he turns back to a poetical language in order to move (in its etymological meaning of *con-movēre*, move together) the readers. That is the reason why he turns from Hegel to Jean Paul

---

<sup>109</sup> Franz Liszt, *Franz Liszt’s Briefe, Von Paris bis Rom*, Letter to Luis Köhler dated 9 July 1856, Vol. I, p. 225.

and E.T.A. Hoffman within a paragraph<sup>110</sup>. Here Liszt's romantic view of music emerges: at the beginning he still follows Hegel, affirming that music, contrary to other arts, affects our feelings and it is able to make every inner impulse audible, but it cannot give us precise descriptions of them, because, in order to do that it needs images or comparisons. And everything without the help of reason. However, the relationship between music and feeling is perceived by Hegel with a certain embarrassment, exactly because intellect is not involved in this process. Liszt said that liberation from the *Dämon Thought*<sup>111</sup> is the reason why music can access the *überirdische Welt*. The *Gefühl* ceases to be the «Quelle, Triebfeder, bewegendes und erregendes Prinzip», and, as the *Gott der Christen*, it can show itself in its totality. Here Liszt read the Hegelian *Geist* as *Gefühl*, and this changing of perspective creates an aesthetic view that is in open contrast with that of Hanslick. Liszt starts from Hegel's proposition according to which "music is spirit sounding for itself"; but what resounds in music, is not the pure spirit, but the feelings of the composer. Consequently, during a performance, it is the pure feeling that resounds, since music is unable to recreate precise emotions without referring to images or words. «Ist nicht die Musik die geheimnisvolle Sprache eines fernen Geisterreiches, deren wunderbare Accente in unserem Inneren wiederklingen und ein höheres, intensiveres Leben erwecken?». The words by E.T.A. Hoffmann, and those of Jean Paul, and likewise those of Liszt recall the idea of magic. That is probably the only thing that Hegel, Liszt and Hanslick have in common. Namely they are all unable to explain pure instrumental music without referring to a sort of magical world from which music arises, and from which the composer takes his material. The composer is seen as a sort of magician, and the art of composing follows mysterious rules. As already seen before in this chapter, even the Viennese critic could not avoid describing the work of the composer without a reference to a sort of magical world<sup>112</sup>. If the aim of Hanslick was to lay the foundation of a musicology intended as a *science of music*, the two statements cited above are alone enough to invalidate his efforts. How is it possible to analyse a work if the material that the composers use has a mysterious source? And how can we analyse their compositions if we are not able to grasp the process the composers used to select the material? Finally, how can we explain the entire creative

---

110 Jean Paul and E.T.A. Hoffmann are quoted at pages 41–42. Liszt quoted Jean Paul from his *Hesperus, oder 45 Hundpostage* (from *O Tonkunst to Wunden bringen*) and then from his *Blüthen*, a collection of writings (from *O Musik! to ihrer Wüste*); Hoffman quotation comes from chapter 9 of his *Serapions-Brüder*, with the evocative title of *Der Dichter und der Komponist*.

111 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Harold-Symphonie*, 1882, p. 30. In english in the original.

112 See footnotes 52 and 53.

process? Hanslick's crusade against the *aesthetic of feelings* transforms his *Vom Musikalisch-schönen* into a treatise on cognitive psychology. The listener point of view is predominantly compared to that of the composer. The same perspective guides Hegel's investigation, since the philosopher, as he informs us, was nothing more than an amateur. He wrote, for example, that «In dieser Art der Ausübung genießen wir die höchste Spitze musicalischer Lebendigkeit, das wundervolle Geheimnis, daß ein äußeres Werkzeug zum vollkommen beseelten Organ wird, und haben zugleich das innerliche Konzipieren wie die Ausführung der genialen Phantasie in augenblicklichster Durchdringung und verschwindendstem Leben blitzähnlich vor uns»<sup>113</sup>. Concluding, the philosopher, the critic, and the composer, use the same key concepts to describe pure instrumental music. Even if they differ in content, they all think that there is something magic, something that comes from a *primitive power*, something that is the *spirit sounding for itself*, or something that can open our minds for a while to the comprehension of the infinite, to the reign of the spirit. Music is just half-human, and this romantic view of art is what the three have in common.

The long paragraph on pure instrumental music serves Liszt to respond to the attacks of the formalists, and to those who criticise programme music. But now he has to justify it using the same instruments as his detractors. He has to demonstrate that programme music follows the rules of nature, and that nature and art evolves in the same way. The main aim of the passage is to demonstrate that the union of music and words neither impoverishes the music nor the words:

Wer möchte es wagen, unserer erhabenen Kunst die höchste Kraft des Sichselbstgenügens abzusprechen? Heißt aber einer neuen Form sich bemächtigen, den angeborenen und geschichtlich anerzognen auf immer entsagen? Schwört man der Muttersprache ab, wenn man einen neuen Zweig der Beredtsamkeit erring? Weil es Werke gibt, welche eine gleichzeitige Tätigkeit des Fühlens und Denkens beanspruchen, wird deßwegen der reine Instrumentalmusik für Solche seinen Zauber einbüßen, die gern mit ihrem ganzen Empfindungsvermögen in ihr aufgehen, ohne durch einen bestimmten Gegenstand in der Freiheit des Gefühles gehindert zu sein? Hieße es nicht Mißtrauen in seine Lebensfähigkeit setzen, befürchtete man sein gänzliches Verwelken, weil ihm zur Seite eine neue Gattung entsteht, die von Drama, Oratorium Cantate verschieden, dennoch mit ihnen die poetische Grundlage gemein hat?<sup>114</sup>

---

113 Hegel, G.W.F., *Lezioni di estetica – Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, p. 2298.

114 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 42.

These are the premises of this new paragraph. The self-subsistence of pure instrumental music is undeniable, but to create a new *form* does not mean to renounce pure instrumental music, nor to deny the heritage of the ancient masters, nor to deny other forms. Furthermore, Liszt is dealing here with a fundamental aesthetic problem, namely how can the music convey a precise content? As already seen in the previous chapter, Liszt was interested in many social and humanitarian philosophies. His objective is then to find out a way to convey these ideas to the listeners, namely, he has to find a way through which the musician, the prophet, can guide the people towards the good. How can the artist, with his art, actively change society? From the Lisztian point of view, both the aesthetic of feelings and the formalism deny this possibility to the music. For the former, music is not able to convey neither particular nor general feelings. And if it is not able to convey feelings, how can it be able to convey ideas, or philosophical concepts? According to the formalist point of view, the content of music is the music itself, and it is to be understood through its formal structures, harmony, melody, and rhythm<sup>115</sup>. Liszt, on the other side, founds his aesthetic view on the principle according to which beauty in art means moral beauty<sup>116</sup>, and therefore he proposes to the readers a solution to this matter. The solution cannot imply the use of vocal forms, such as the cantata, the oratorio, or the opera. His declared aim is to unify the power of the pure instrumental music – which is able to arise feelings –, to the power of the words – which is able to evoke precise images and to convey precise ideas. It is of course an ambitious task, and therefore Liszt, giving proof of his mountebank character<sup>117</sup>, has to jump from philosophy to poetry and vice versa. Liszt recalls the Hegelian view according to which the union of words and music can only obfuscate one or the other of the two arts, in order to deny it. More than that,

---

115 Symbolism could be an alternative; but the message would then only be understandable to the adepts, who, most likely, already knew the message, or at least, possess the key to decode it.

116 This view is based on the theories of a philosopher which Liszt knew quite well, Friedrich Schiller. In his *Ästhetische Vorlesungen* he states that «Die menschliche Gestalt ist einer doppelten Schönheit fähig. Die eine ist ein bloßes Geschenk der Natur und erweckt Liebe, die andere beruht auf sittlichen Eigenschaften und erwirkt zugleich Achtung». Furthermore his aesthetics is based on a conception of technique as a mean of art expression and not as aim of art: «Technik ist die Verbindung des Mannigfaltigen nach Zwecken, und zur Schönheit notwendig, wiewohl sich diese nicht auf die Beurtheilung der Technik gründet, wie Sulzer annimmt». Sulzer, around 1775, already elaborated a theory in his *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste* in which the feeling of beauty is connected with the moral feeling.

117 Marie d'Agoult in a letter to Georg Herwegh dated May 28, 1844 defined Liszt as a «Half mountebank, half juggler, who makes ideas and sentiments disappear up his sleeve». Haraszti, Emile, *Franz Liszt, écrivain et Penseur. Histoire d'Une Mystification*, p. 19.

he states that what Hegel describes happens only if the two arts are *combined* instead of *unified*. Liszt is of course playing with the words, but, in order to convince the reader of the value of his perspective, he affirms that the natural output of the first case (combination) would be something unharmonious and offensive to the good taste, which cannot strive for its self-subsistence, while his solution (unification) can achieve the self-subsistence, because it follows the rules of nature.

Ist nicht die Kunst im allgemeinen und eine jede insbesondere eben so reich an verschiedenen gearteten und unähnlichen Erscheinungen als die Natur im Wechsel ihrer Hauptreiche und deren mannichfachen Abtheilungen? Die Kunst stellt wie die Natur stufenweise Gliederungen her, welche die entferntesten Reiche und unterschiedensten Abstufungen durch vermittelnde Gattungen aneinander kettet, die nothwendig und natürlich, also auch lebensberechtigt sind<sup>118</sup>.

Here Liszt, with a literary *coup de génie* recalls the main argument in a defence speech: the relationship with nature. Programme music is justifiable because it is a product of art, and since art follows the same rule of nature, programme music finds its validity on the natural evolution process.

Wie es in der Natur keine Leere giebt, in der menschlichen Seele nicht blos Contraste sich zeigen, so klaffen keine steile Abgründe zwischen den Gipfeln der Kunst, un es fehlen nirgends Ringe in der wunderbaren Verkettung ihres großen Ganzen. In der Natur, in der Menschenseele und in der Kunst sind die Entfernung, die Gegensätze und Höhepunkte durch eine ununterbrochene Reihenfolge verschiedener Arten des Seins miteinander verbunden, in welchen durch Modificationen Verschiedenheiten herbeigeführt, zugleich aber Aehnlichkeiten aufrecht erhalten werden<sup>119</sup>.

Art, like nature, proceeds without leaps. The principle was already stated by Leibniz, back in 1704, when he wrote that «*Natura non facit saltus*», and it was used again by Darwin and the positivists to «Banish the thought of discontinuities and fortuitous jumps which might make a true science impossible. Nature never makes leaps. Always she proceeds in continuous, gradual, and cumulative

---

118 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 42.

119 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 42.

fashion»<sup>120</sup>. The comparison with nature serves Liszt to state that «Die Sterne des Himmels kommen und gehen»<sup>121</sup>, namely to state that nothing is eternal, not even the musical forms. As already expressed, Hanslick was of the same idea when he stated that musical material remains usable for a limited period of time. It becomes old, and composers have to find other solutions. From very similar premises, Liszt and Hanslick arrive at two very different conclusions. For the Hungarian composer the «ganze Künste sterben aus und ihr ehemaliges Leben ist nur noch an den Skeletten zu erkennen», but «durch Kreuzung und Verschmelzung entstehen neue, bis dahin unbekannte, die durch ihre Ausdehnung und Mischung vielleicht dereinst wieder ihrem Ende entgegengeführt werden, so wie im Thier- und Pflanzenreich ganze Gattungen durch andere ersetzt worden sind»<sup>122</sup>. Here the influences that the evolutionary theory had on Liszt emerges. Art is created by men, but it does not follow men's rules. Instead, it behaves like a second nature, and it follows the rules of nature itself, namely birth and death, evolution, and selection. Therefore, for both Liszt and Hanslick, art can preserve «nur eine Zeit lang denselben Formen»<sup>123</sup>, because it undergoes an incessant process of change and innovation. It is exactly here that the difference between the two aesthetics emerges. Liszt wrote that the last aim of progress lies outside of the human comprehension and knowledge. Consequently, even the most erudite scientist can «wohl den Spuren ihrer Vergangenheit nachgehen, nicht aber voraussehen, welcher Endbestimmung künftige Umwälzungen sie entgegenführen mögen»<sup>124</sup>. Hence, at the basis of Liszt's aesthetics lies the idea according to which progress is a natural process. It was, and it always will be, even if we are not aware of its unfolding. For that reason, it was for him extremely logical to infer that music is always progressing, and that the entirety of humanity will always be inside this process. The prophet can, guided by the providence which descends on Earth like a divine blow, compose new works, which distanced themselves from the habit. But these compositions still possess some signs of tradition, because it is anyway the ground from which the new grew, namely the process of evolution is cumulative. The old forms do not die, but they are absorbed into the new ones. Contrarily, Hanslick's view is closer to that of Hegel. The philosopher stated, as already seen, that his system represents the highest peak of western philosophy,

---

120 Nisbet, Robert A., *Social change and History*, p. 116.

121 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 43.

122 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, pp. 43–44.

123 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 44.

124 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 43.

even if he did not deny the possibility of future improvement. Hanslick did the same. He did not deny the possibility of future improvement in the field of music, but, since the 19<sup>th</sup> century is the highest peak of musical production, this amelioration remains a remote possibility:

Aus diesem Proceß ergibt sich, daß auch unser Tonsystem im Zeitverlauf neue Bereicherungen und Veränderungen erfahren wird. Doch sind innerhalb der gegenwärtigen Gesetze noch zu vielfache und große Evolutionen möglich, als daß eine Änderung im Wesen des Systems anders wie sehr fernliegend erscheinen dürfte. [...] Der musikalische Theoretiker kann daher gegenwärtig den Ausblick auf diese Zukunft noch kaum anders frei lassen, als durch die einfache Anerkennung ihrer Möglichkeit<sup>125</sup>.

Namely, the musical system of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is not perfect, and it will be improved in the future; it is possible to state, with an anachronistic quotation, that «there were still many good tunes to be written in C major»<sup>126</sup>. Then, if both Liszt and Hanslick agreed, that the musical systems undergo a transformation process, why are their positions so different? The point is that the music composed by Liszt and the so called *Neudeutsche Schule*, does not represent the kind of break suggested by Hanslick. For the Viennese critic, the idea of progress seems to mean something closer to what (partially) the twelve-tone system, or the avant-garde in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century did, namely the creation of a new system which can completely replace the old one. What Liszt and his disciples brought about were just *Bereicherungen und Veränderungen*, i.e., something permitted by the aesthetics elaborated by Hanslick. Liszt did not invent a new system, but he used the same old material in different and, perhaps, original ways, the results of which were not appreciated by Hanslick.

The last passage of this chapter which deserves a little attention, and which represents again an answer to Hanslick, concerns the relationship between art and science. Liszt quoted Newton and the rules of the physical world to state that art and science follow the same rules, the laws of nature. According to them art is kept between its two extremes, sterile forms and progress, thanks to the «Finger Gottes, [...] dies geheimnißvoll Bewegende, dies verborgen Waltende, welches zwischen den verschiedensten Elementen die Harmonie erhält und unser Fortschreiten in Zeit und Unendlichkeit entscheidet, durch das Genie»<sup>127</sup>. Sci-

---

125 Hanslick, Eduard, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, 1854, pp. 87–88.

126 Schönberg to his advanced composition class at UCLA, ca.1940.

127 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 44.

ence has to investigate the laws of nature. It should follow that, if art responds to the laws of nature, and if science has to investigate them, then science can even explain art. Of course, according to Liszt, it cannot be that easy, because if it is true that music follows the same laws of nature that science tries to explain, it is even true that music is a human product, and this simple feature adds too many variables to the equations which make science powerless in the face of music. But, if a science of music is not possible, who can explain music? What does it mean to be an expert in the musical field? Liszt has to come back to Hegel in order to produce a solid argument to answer this issue.

Der *Laie* liebt in der Musik vornehmlich den verständlichen Ausdruck von Empfindungen und Vorstellungen, das Stoffartige, den Inhalt, und wendet sich daher vorzugsweise der begleitenden Musik zu; der *Kenner* dagegen, dem die inneren musikalischen Verhältnisse der Töne und Instrumente zugänglich sind, liebt die Instrumentalmusik in ihrem kunstgemäßen Gebrauch der Harmonien und melodischen Verschlingungen und wechselnden Formen; er wird durch die Musik selbst ganz ausgefüllt und hat das nähere Interesse, das Gehörte mit Regeln und Gesetzen, die ihm geläufig sind, zu vergleichen, um vollständig das Geleistete zu beurteilen und zu genießen, obschon hier die neu erfindende Genialität des Künstlers auch den Kenner, der gerade diese oder jene Fortschreitungen, Übergänge usf. nicht gewohnt ist, häufig kann in Verlegenheit setzen<sup>128</sup>.

It is fascinating that Hegel places himself among the amateurs at the beginning of his speech («In diesem Gebiete aber bin ich wenig bewandert»<sup>129</sup>), and subsequently states that the amateurs are not able to (fully) understand music. Liszt cannot speak against the authority of Hegel, since he does not possess the knowledge to survive the confrontation. Furthermore, he cannot attack his *argumentum ab auctoritate*. Moreover, Liszt defends the philosopher from the attacks of those people, who, exactly for this reason, pretend to diminish the value of his thought, affirming that «wir finden seine Urtheile doch meistens zutreffend»<sup>130</sup>. Furthermore, he takes the opportunity to use the lack of musical education of the philosopher, who in spite of his ignorance made very pertinent

---

128 Hegel, G.W.F., *Lezioni di estetica – Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, p. 2288. The passage is quoted in its entirety by Liszt himself at p. 45.

129 See footnote 16.

130 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 51, footnote. «Obschon man gegen Hegel einwendet, er habe von Musik gesprochen, ohne eine umfassende Kenntniß dieser Kunst zu besetzen, finden wir seine Urtheile doch meistens treffend und wie von jenem graden gefunden Verstand dictirt, der mit der allgemeinen Ueberzeugung zusammenstimmt».

observations, to go against the academics, the *Herren Magister*, and against all those people who pretend to possess the highest musical knowledge, namely the formalists. Hegel wrote that «Einerseits nämlich gehörte zu einer weitläufigen und begründenden Abhandlung des Gegenstandes eine genauere Kenntnis der Regeln der Komposition und eine ganz andere Kennerchaft der vollendetesten musikalischen Kunstwerke, als ich sie besitze und mir zu verschaffen gewußt habe, da man von den eigentlichen Kennern und ausübenden Musikern – von den letzteren, die häufig die geistlosesten sind, am allerwenigsten – hierüber selten etwas Bestimmtes und Ausführliches hört»<sup>131</sup>. Liszt, still playing the role of the impartial judge, states that his activity, both as composer and as theatre director, is devoted to filling this gap.

Conversely, the formalists share Hegel's distinction between the expert and the amateur to support their reasons, stating that genuine musical enjoyment lies in the comprehension of all the musical structures and relationships. More, Hanslick wished to build a science of music. Of course, he is aware that it will not be a science like chemistry, but it can aspire to the same status of philosophy or sociology, whose aim is to create a system in which every element is connected with the others.

So hätte die „philosophische Begründung der Musik“ vorerst zu erforschen, welche nothwendigen geistigen Bestimmtheiten mit jedem musikalischen Element verbunden sind, und wie sie miteinander zusammenhängen. Die doppelte Forderung eines streng wissenschaftlichen Geripps und einer höchst reichhaltigen Causistik machen die Aufgabe zu einer sehr schwierigen, aber kaum unüberwindlichen, es wäre denn, daß man das Ideal einer „exakten“ Musikwissenschaft, nach dem Muster der Chemie oder Physiologie, erstrebte!<sup>132</sup>.

But programme music is not *Begleitungsmusik*, and it is not a negation of the beauty of musical structure. Furthermore, Hegel himself underlines that even the experts can be surprised by, and therefore not understand, some of the innovations brought about in music by the creativity of the composer. And Liszt uses this argument to attack Hanslick. The musician, the genius, is always a step ahead of the theoreticians. Anyway, Liszt has to criticise Hegel for his analysis according to which only the musical expert can enjoy the beautiful in music, since he possesses the ability to catch its most secret formal structures and connections. If it were really like this, says Liszt, then beautiful would be

---

131 Hegel, G.W.F., *Lezioni di estetica – Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, p. 2234.

132 Hanslick, Eduard, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, 1854, pp. 40.

pure calculation, excluding in this way the possibility for any art to convey a message or ideas, or feelings. When we hear a poem, we are not just fascinated by the sounds of the words, by the perfection and the symmetry of phrases and syntax, but we are also moved by the meaning that these words possess, by the message that the author has delivered in the hands of the muses. This passage serves Liszt to shift the accent from the listener to the composer. If Hegel and the formalists say that there are two kinds of listeners, those who can, and those who cannot understand music, Liszt says that there are two kind of composers, the *Tondichter* and the *bloße Musiker*<sup>133</sup>, and there is a vast difference between the two. This dichotomy even creates two kinds of listeners. Consequently, the mere musician is he who «handhabt, gruppiert und verkettet Töne nach gewissen hergebrachten Regeln»<sup>134</sup>, while the tone poet is he, who does not express this or that emotion, but he, who plays with the forms and, starting from its traditional manifestations, manipulates it, and he who can easily find new ways to solve and overcome the problems. Liszt, in one of the most intense passages, even if he attacks the formalists – basically stating that they are not able to produce art, but just to reproduce forms that already exists (formulas), namely that they are compilers and not composers –, turns the situation and transforms his aesthetics of the feelings into formalism, stating that «Nur dem *Tondichter* ist es gegeben, die Grenzen der Kunst zu erweitern, indem er die Fesseln zerbricht, die den freien Aufschwung seines Gedankens hemmen»<sup>135</sup>, because it is exactly through his thoughts and feelings (invention), that the composer can create new forms or expand upon old ones.

With this passage Liszt not only assigns a primary role to the form – or at least at the same level of the emotions, since the two elements are interdependent –, but he places himself on the same path as Hegel. While the formalists care about the form for its sake, and they declare their passion for the calculation, Liszt, on the other hand, declares that the tone poet works with the form. That means not just that he applies the traditional forms, but that he even has to analyse them, to understand them, namely the composer has to interact with them, because they are the means through which he has to express himself. A fixed form, which someone else has discovered, is good enough to express the discoverer's ideas, or to express a meaning which this form has acquired through the centuries. But in this last case, even if the artist can sometimes use formulas, what is missing is the idea – the idea as Hegel described it, as

---

133 S. footnote 101.

134 S. footnote 101.

135 S. footnote 101.

the only premise for beautiful art<sup>136</sup> –, and since «die Kunstschönheit ist die *aus dem Geiste geborene und wiedergeborene Schönheit*»<sup>137</sup>, an artwork without ideas cannot be beautiful, exactly because it is the sensible appearance of the spirit (*Geist*):

Die Kunst nun und ihre Werke, als aus dem Geiste entsprungen und erzeugt, sind selber geistiger Art, wenn auch ihre Darstellung den Schein der Sinnlichkeit in sich aufnimmt und das Sinnliche mit Geist durchdringt. [...] Und wenn auch die Kunstwerke nicht Gedanken und Begriff, sondern eine Entwicklung des Begriffs aus sich selber, eine Entfremdung zum Sinnlichen hin sind, so liegt die Macht des denkenden Geistes darin, *nicht etwa nur sich selbst* in seiner eigentümlichen Form als Denken zu fassen, sondern ebenso sehr sich in seiner *Entäußerung* zur Empfindung und Sinnlichkeit wiederzuerkennen, sich in seinem Anderen zu begreifen, indem er das Entfremdete zu Gedanken verwandelt und so zu sich zurückführt<sup>138</sup>.

It is somehow surprising that Liszt did not quote this passage, because here, as in many other passages of the introduction of the *Vorlesungen*, Hegel presents his main point, namely that art, beautiful art, is nothing more than the perceivable manifestation of the spirit. And since art comes directly from the spirit, it cannot be empty, and exactly for the same reason it cannot find its fulfilment in the pure form. Hegel says in this respect something that Liszt shouldn't have ignored:

Hieraus ergibt sich sogleich nach der Seite des *Inhalts*, daß die schöne Kunst nicht könne in wilder Fessellosigkeit der Phantasie umherschweifen, denn diese geistigen Interessen setzen ihr für ihren Inhalt bestimmte Haltpunkte fest, mögen die Formen und Gestaltungen auch noch so mannigfaltig und unerschöpflich sein. Das gleiche gilt für die Formen selbst. Auch sie sind nicht dem bloßen Zufall anheimgegeben. Nicht jede Gestaltung ist fähig, der Ausdruck und die Darstellung

---

136 «Denn die Schönheit, [...] ist nicht solche Abstraktion des Verstandes, sondern der in sich selbst konkrete absolute Begriff und, bestimmter gefaßt, die absolute Idee in ihrer sich selbst gemäßen Erscheinung. Wenn wir, was die *absolute Idee* in ihrer wahrhaftigen Wirklichkeit sei, kurz bezeichnen wollen, so müssen wir sagen sie sei *Geist*, und zwar nicht etwa der Geist in seiner endlichen Befangenheit und Beschränktheit, sondern der allgemeine unendliche und *absolute Geist*, der aus sich selber bestimmt, was wahrhaft das Wahre ist». Hegel, G.W.F., *Lezioni di estetica – Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, p. 362.

137 Hegel, G.W.F., *Lezioni di estetica – Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, p. 150.

138 Hegel, G.W.F., *Lezioni di estetica – Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, p. 176.

jener Interessen zu sein, sie in sich aufzunehmen und wiederzugeben, sondern durch einen bestimmten Inhalt ist auch die ihm angemessene Form bestimmt<sup>139</sup>.

Even if in this passage Hegel's idea of the "rechte Maß" still emerges, where all the elements have to be balanced, Liszt could have found the best argument in defence of his new conception of the form-content relationship, exactly where Hegel writes that not all the forms are able to host all the expressions, and exactly for this reason every content has to be expressed in an adequate form. So, in Hegel's intentions it is clear that this relationship between form and content is dialectical. Nonetheless it could have represented a good defence point for Liszt.

## Zur geschichtlichen Stellung und Aufgabe der *Programm-Symphonie*

The opening of the third chapter (of Ramann's 1882 edition) is further evidence that the effective topic of the essay is not programme music, but rather the problem of *form*. Nevertheless, Liszt has to conclude his speech on programme music, in order to historically justify it. Once he has established that this genre has a long tradition, he can infer that the *Programm-Symphonie*, as a new musical genre, has to reach the same celebrity of its predecessors. What follows is then an analysis of the role of the musical genres, from which emerges Liszt's extraordinary historical awareness. He affirms that the old forms, such as the *Oratorio* and the *Cantata*, were brought to their highest level by the ancient masters. For this reason, it is difficult for modern composers to successfully use these forms. And it is not because the composers of the past were superior to their living colleagues, but because the social and historical situation has changed, and the old forms are no longer able to answer the demands of the present time. Two passages are relevant in this sense. In the first, Liszt affirms that he wants to give to programme music the same role, even if in a modern sense, which cantatas and oratorios had in the past. Namely, he recognises that musical genres have a role, evidently, in society. And this is a first reason why they are no longer usable for composers today, because they have lost their social function, or, if this definition sounds too Adornian, listeners do not find them interesting any more, because «haben diese Gattungen aufgehört ein

---

139 Hegel, G.W.F., *Lezioni di estetica – Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, p. 178.

ähnliches Interesse einzuflößen»<sup>140</sup>. Here Liszt states that the old forms are not able to arouse the interest of the listener any more, and this because the correspondence between a specific form of art and society has fallen apart. From this Liszt's dialectical conception of the musical material emerges. Forms and genres become old, and the composer has to answer the questions asked by the relationship between musical material and society. The movement towards the future dictated by progress, forces the composer to an incessant re-thinking of his own works. Because, and here lies the evidence of the Lisztian sociology of music, every *Kunstform* has to respond to, and to reach the «Ideal ihrer Zeit»<sup>141</sup>. The necessity of the programme arises exactly from this concept, to respond to a sociocultural demand. The ancient epic gave to readers a depiction of society, and the heroes were examples of integrity, and every citizen aimed to be like them. The antique *epos* was a static depiction of the state's life, with its rules and rituals. In this frame the heroes were examples to follow. In the modern *epos*, which, according to Liszt, has to be called *Philosophische Epopöen*, the poet is more interested in the depiction of the hero's *feelings* and inner life, than in the depiction of his public virtues. Above all, these heroes are no longer examples of integrity, but rather they represent the fragility of the human being. Modern heroes have something obsessive, sick, and sometimes even demonic. Their feelings are unknown to the majority of readers. Anyway, they know perfectly that the line between the balance of mind and insanity is very thin. But that didn't happen because the literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century became sick, but because these feelings are «das lebendigste Abbild des Zeitgeistes, der Nation»; namely, the modern *epos* represents «das Ideal von Seelenstimmungen [...], welche zu ihrer Zeit die Gebildeten aller europäischen Länder durchdrang»<sup>142</sup>. Again, Liszt shows his Hegelian thought, stating that literature is the artistic embodiment of the spirit of the time. Consequently, in an artistic work one expects to find all the main features of an epoch, and the main characteristic of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is the relevance of the inner life of men, his inclinations, and his most secret desires. And as literature has to express these feelings, exactly

---

140 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 52.

141 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Harold-Symphonie*, 1882, p. 51. This expression is not to be found in the original article of 1855, where it reads: [...] die Programm-Symphonie dazu bestimmt ist, festen Boden in der jetzigen Kunstperiode zu gewinnen, gleiche Wichtigkeit wir Oratorium und Cantate zu erreichen, und nach mancher Seite die Bedeutung dieser beiden in modernem Sinne zu erfüllen» (Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 52). The idea of progress emerged here as a natural and inevitable force, it is able to explain, partially at least, the revisiting process to which Liszt forced the majority of his works.

142 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, pp. 53–54.

because it is its artistic mission, then music has to do the same. How? Liszt gives an answer that goes, for the second time, against the Wagnerian aesthetics. He states that, on one side the drama alone is not enough to bring to listeners the ideas of the composer, to give them an idea of the movement of the inner life of the characters on the stage. Drama is more action oriented, namely it is more suitable to express the outer world, the public virtues. On the other side, Liszt says, the symphony is not enough either, because «Das Ringen ihres unabhängigen Styls mit dem aufgezwungenen eines Sujets würde unangenehm berühren, weil es der augenscheinlichen, faßbaren Ursache entehrte»<sup>143</sup>. Hence, the composer could not lead the listeners «[...] in die Regionen eines der ganzen Menschheit gemeinsamen Ideals zuführen, [...]», because «[...] ohne genau Angabe der besonderen Wege, [...]»<sup>144</sup> they would be confused, and they can therefore only start to wander following their own imagination. The only way in which the music can answer this demand for the expression of the most inner life of the subject, lies in the same solution identified by Wagner, namely in unifying drama and music<sup>145</sup>. But, according to Liszt, the union of these two elements does not lead to opera, and he states that the composer can reach the same results of the literature just by adding a programme to his music. According to him the programme can give to the listeners the direction of the composer's ideas and, through them they can comprehend the subject. Now, it is worth noting that in this speech Liszt forgets to mention the *form*. It is clear that what is relevant here, is not the formal structure that the music will take, but the idea expressed *through* music. In this passage Liszt even quotes an excerpt from Fétis<sup>146</sup>. In this passage the musicologist states that the most cultivated people always outline a programme when listening to a symphony, a quartet, or any other kind of instrumental composition. Through this expedient they assign to the music the faculty of evoking feelings. The listeners, while hearing the music imagine actions, but these actions are different from listener to listener. Consequently, continues Liszt, if the listeners already used a programme in their

---

143 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 54.

144 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 54.

145 Of course, Wagner primary aesthetic aim was not that to express the feelings and the inner life of his characters.

146 It is not clear where the quotation comes from, but it is sure that Liszt and Fétis had a very long and friendly relationship, and the composer, already in the '30s, discussed with the philosopher about music aesthetic questions: «Les temps forts de cette entente musicale sont marqués par les échange sur l'*Histoire de la musique* de Fétis, ouvrage qui commence à partir en 1869, et reste inachevé, avec ses cinq volumes. Le 22 octobre 1849 Liszt souhaite connaître le contenu de l'*Histoire de la musique* et fait allusion aux cours suivis à Paris avec Fétis». Reynaud, Cécile, *Fétis et Liszt* p. 84.

minds, and the theoreticians have already recognised and described the process – namely the metaphorical perception of the music –, then there are no reasons why the composers cannot make evident his programme. Anyway, this underlines a substantial difference between Liszt and Fétis. The first refers to the programme as a consequence of human perception of music. The listeners, according to this view, have a metaphoric perception of music. As already seen in *Chapter II*, this is a cognitive process, according to which we assign some features to music. That is the reason why Fétis wrote that the public can imagine an action, and that this action is different from listener to listener. Liszt, quoting this passage seems to go against his own statement of programme, namely an understandable description of the psychological moment in which the composition has been conceived. A programme as described by Fétis would lead to descriptive music, and this is not Liszt's aim, since the latter aimed to exploit the psychological, and not the descriptive power of an extra-musical element. Furthermore, as it has already emerged, Fétis was quite a conservative composer and critic, while Liszt used the expedient of the programme to conceal his process of re-construction of the form – namely, first had he to reduce the form to its constituent parts, and to use them not as pre-constructed forms (formulas) any more, but as particles, which can be assembled and disassembled in many different ways. In turn, this fight against the formulas is the highest tribute a modern composer can pay to the old patriarchs: their forms are exhausted, and from them nothing else can rise but copies of little value. Change is a social necessity, which is in turn, for the social composer, an inner necessity. This is what Berlioz did, and what his detractors will never forgive him for is «daß die Form bei ihm nur eine dem Gedanken nachstehende Wichtigkeit hat, daß er nicht wie sie die Form um der Form willen hegt; sie werden es ihm nie verzeihen, daß er Denker und Dichter ist»<sup>147</sup>. The role of the *Tondichter*, and the supremacy of the role of the ideas upon the form is a topic that has already been analysed, and Liszt added nothing new here. It is just a repetition (*repetita iuvant*), or better, a coda. Even this article is built with a cyclical form, and, after a long development, the topic of Berlioz comes back on to the stage.

However, before that, there is a further aspect to take into consideration, namely the relationship between music and text, the «[...] Verbindung der Musik mit literarischen oder *quasi* literarischen Werken [...]»<sup>148</sup>. As Liszt himself points out, this is a very old relationship. But at the beginning, and still today, the music is just combined with literature. This combination gives rise

---

147 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 78.

148 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 77.

to songs, which Liszt defines *gesungene Wort*. The present times have to seek an amalgamation of the two arts. Liszt is not just playing with words – as he did before speaking on the same topic –, but he describes a real dialectical process, in which the two moments, music and text, melt (Verschmelzen) into one superior existence. This idea is of primary relevance, since it lies at the basis of the crisis of form of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup>, and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to Liszt the composer has to express his ideas, and in doing so he has to find new ways, and this process implies the creation of new forms. A literary text used as programme is necessary in order to explain the sequence of the different mental states which the composer went through during his work. Therefore, on the one side words are to be taken for their literal value – before listening; on the other side, the atmosphere that they evoke is able to explain the formal nexuses between the different parts of a composition. Namely, the expansion of the possibility within the tonal system breaks down the “dictatorship of the tonic”<sup>149</sup>, and it opens the way to the construction of infinite new formal connections. It is no exaggeration to state that Liszt followed this idea to its extreme consequences. The motto *sint ut sunt, aut non sint* becomes an aesthetic view, as it will be pointed out in the chapter on his late works. Liszt followed his feelings to compose music and, since they are even more introspective, music seems to lose every formal nexus. This point is related to the aforementioned topic of the spirit of the time.

It is now necessary to take a little digression, a little recapitulation of the idea of *Zeitgeist* applied to Liszt as man and artist, since it will be useful to better understand the following chapters. It is possible to affirm that Liszt was the embodiment of this concept, and a closer look at the transformation which occurred in his personal life can bring a tripartition of Romanticism, since his personal life cannot be divided from his social life:

1. For the first interpretation it is necessary to translate the German word into French, thus obtaining the word *esprit du temps*. From this point of view, the aspect is related to the figure of the *Wanderer*, of the traveller. This imaginary is especially related to the first part of Liszt's life, the so-called *Virtuoso-Years*. This is even the phase of what it is possible to describe as the “happy Romanticism”, namely when it was still related to the safer traditional forms, upon which the

---

<sup>149</sup> With the term “dictatorship of the tonic” are meant all the rules of tonal harmony, and subsequently, even the forms identified by the theoreticians during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, sonata form included, since one of its more relevant rules is the relationship of its themes to the tonic-dominant construction.

musician could still build everything. The levity of life seemed to ensure an easy and straightforward future;

2. *Zeitgeist* is even intended to be an intellectual fashion. When Liszt arrived in France, he began to attend the bourgeois salons, and he came in contact with world literature, and to be influenced by these readings. This is the beginning of Liszt's life as an intellectual<sup>150</sup>. The *Weimar Period* is evidence of the "maturity of the Romanticism". Musicians are not just musicians, but they are also intellectuals. They wrote articles, books, and essays, and they spoke about aesthetics and philosophy; they pretended a more relevant role in social organisation. Music asks for its self-subsistence, and the old forms cannot contain the composers' creativity and all their requests;
3. Liszt embodies the spirit of the time even in a chronological sense. Using a metaphor taken from Dante's *Divina Commedia*, Liszt was a sort of Charon, and he ferried the music from the side represented by one of the highest points of classicism to the beginning of the "tonal crisis". These are even the *Final Years* of the Romanticism, and of the bourgeois society. The dreams of a bright future start to fall apart, and war (Franco-Prussian) and disillusion are the most common feeling across Europe. Liszt and his historical awareness, gave rise to works that are not only introspective, but they are even a representation of the anxiety of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Under this light, they represent the *Ideal ihrer Zeit*, from the cheerfulness of the first years to the *Ur-schrei* of his old age. The latter is the scream that embodies a cry of despair, which is not subjective any more: «Die seismographische Aufzeichnung traumatischer Schocks wird aber zugleich das technische Formgesetz der Musik. Es verbietet Kontinuität und Entwicklung»<sup>151</sup>. This topic will be explored more deeply in the last chapter of this dissertation.

---

150 Though the first part of this period sees Liszt behaving more as a character of a 19<sup>th</sup> century novel. This is proven by the correspondence first between him and Caroline de Saint-Cricq, and then with Marie d'Agoult and less with Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein. This correspondence is full of quotations taken from the fictive world, and it is possible to state that the way in which these letters are written seems excessively "romantic". Furthermore, this period of his life gave rise to what it could possibly be called the "comedy of Liszt's life", the period in which Liszt created his mountebank reputation.

151 Adorno, Theodor W., *Philosophie der Neuen Musik*, p. 44.

## Musikalisch-ästhetische Analyse der „Harold-Symphonie“

In spite of its relevant title, in this chapter Liszt decreases the weight of his polemics, and states that everyone is free to hear in the pure instrumental music what he wants to hear: «Jene Symphonie ist den gebildeten höchster Ausdruck der verschiedenen Phasen eines leidenschaftlich freudigen Gefühls, diese der einer elegischen Trauer, die andere einer heroischen Begeisterung, wieder eine der klagen über ein Unersetzliches»<sup>152</sup>. These people have to experience a natural distaste for every work in which the direction of feelings is well defined by a programme. Liszt does not deny the right of composers to write pure instrumental music, and neither does he deny to listeners the right to hear the «abstrakten Ausdruck allgemeine menschlicher Gefühle»<sup>153</sup>. But he asks for himself, and for other composers who want to follow his teaching, the right to find new ways, the right of the existence of other kinds of musical genres: «soll aber deswegen anderen Gattungen ihr Daseinsrecht geschmälerd werden? Sollen diejenigen unter das Joch einförmiger Arbeiten gebeugt werden, die von ihrem Genius und dem Geiste der Zeit zur Erfinden neuer Gießformen sich getrieben fühlen?»<sup>154</sup>. Through the analysis of the Berlioz's work Liszt aims to show that these new forms have the right to exist. The French composer, according to Liszt, brought some innovations within his music, and they, as it will emerge, consisted not in the programme, but in the form. As already pointed out, Liszt's aesthetics, which at the beginning were described as a new *Affektenlehre* – namely an aesthetic where the most relevant place is occupied by the content, where the musical material is used with the unique purpose of expressing this content (feelings) –, turns into a more balanced aesthetic, namely in a theory where the extra-musical elements serve to conceal the transformation of the form, and then in a theory where the form in which the content is expressed plays at least the same role as the content. As already pointed out, the form cannot (concretely) exist without a content, which can model it; but the content cannot exist without a form, which can host it, and which is able to express it. The dialectical relationship between the two elements is self-evident

In the introduction of this fourth chapter, Liszt exposes the innovations Berlioz brought about. The French composer was able « [...] Personen (wie im Harold) oder Leidenschaften (wie in der Fantastique) durch eine wiederkehrende

---

152 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 80.

153 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 80.

154 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, pp. 80–81.

Melodie zu Charakterisieren»<sup>155</sup>. Berlioz reached this aim creating a new idea of theme, which he called the *Idée fixe*. It is able, going through modulations and rhythmical variations, to express all the different atmospheres, feelings, and nuances through which the symphony is developing. Hence, a musical theme is able to symbolise a person, and the orchestral frame changes as if it was theatrical scenery: «Durch diese, von ihm zuerst angewandte Symbolisierung ermöglicht Berlioz nicht nur Anwesenheit oder Abwesenheit seines Helden in verschiedenen Scenen anzuseigen; mit Hülfe der Modulation, Biegung des Rhythmus und harmonischen Ausdrucks macht er alle Wendungen seiner Gefühlsbewegung verständlich»<sup>156</sup>. But this is not, according to Liszt, the main innovation Berlioz brought about. His main contribution to the music lies in the primacy of the idea upon the form. Liszt, at this point uses his best argument against the formalist. Unfortunately, neither him, nor the translator of the Berlioz-essay or any of his collaborators, were able to develop a defence starting from this statement<sup>157</sup>.

In der sogenannten classischen Musik ist die Wiederkehr und thematische Entwicklung der Themen durch Regeln bestimmt, die man als unumstößlich betrachtet, da doch nur die eigne Phantasie Jenen die Anlage ihrer Stücke vorschrieb, die zuerst in die gewisse Reihenfolge anordneten, welche man jetzt als Gestz aufstellen will. In der Programm-Musik ist Wiederkehr, Wechsel, Veränderungen und Modulation der Motive durch ihre Beziehung zu einem poetischen Gedanken bedingt»<sup>158</sup>.

With this argument Liszt and his fellows could have annihilated the thesis of their opponents. And the argument is a very simple one. The rules, which were used by the classic composers are not eternal. They grow up with them. Actually, the rules did not exist at that time. They are just identified *a posteriori*,

155 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 81.

156 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, p. 81.

157 About the inability of the *Neudeutsche Schule* to create a defence of programme music based on solid theoretical bases, see Deaville, James, *The Controversy Surrounding Liszt's Conception of Programme Music*, pp. 106–107: «Liszt – by virtue of his developing thoughts about programme music – was the best-prepared to respond to Hanslick, and may have needed just to go public with his own aesthetic theory». But Liszt always felt himself unable to create a systematic thought, because of his lacking education, Then, even if the «response to the book were many and varied. [...] the New Germans simply were not able to produce the decisive refutation, nor did they publish their own aesthetic theory that could compete with Hanslick in terms of perceived quality, popularity and dissemination».

158 Liszt, Franz, *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie*, 1855, pp. 81.

## Conclusion

and therefore they started to exist when the theoreticians put them on paper. It is a utopia to think that it is possible to develop a series of rules, which are able to explain at the same time all the works of Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven without creating any contradictions. The composer works on the path of tradition, following the costumes of a style or a genre. But the tradition always leaves some empty spaces which gives to the composer some freedom for his creativity. The process that Liszt is describing here is the expansion of the field of possibilities, that is the process at the basis of every progress. Liszt's new formal rules are then the repetition, the change, the transformation and the modulation of a motive, following a poetic idea. The rest of the chapter is an analysis, and not a very enlightening one – since Liszt's aim is an educational one –, of Berlioz's *Harold*. There are many references to other works of the French master, but Liszt's article is an ode to the genius of the French composer till the end, written in the typical Lisztian bombastic style. The musical analysis itself, even if it is from an historical point of view interesting, is a description through metaphors of the content and of its relationship with the programme.

## Conclusion

During the analysis of the essay *Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie* many different topics emerge, from the role of the critique and of the public, from Liszt's idea of progress to his conception of the role of the artist. Anyway, the main aim of the analysis was to point out that Liszt used this article not only to defend Berlioz, but also to expose two major topics: 1) using the French composer as starting point, Liszt defended on the one side his work as theatre director, and, on the other side, his work as composer; 2) both of these two defensive speeches need to be theoretically justified, and, through this justification, Liszt outlined the most relevant characters of his aesthetics. In the beginning it seems to be a defence of the feelings against the cold formalism, but afterwards the form is defined by Liszt not as an obstacle in the path of the innovators, but as the real tool in the hands of composers to bring to the listener their ideas. Consequently, the essay does not focus on programme music, but, on the contrary, it declares the form as the real centre of Liszt's theory – of course if one looks at the form not as a set of fixed rules, but as a collection of tools in the hands of the composers, which they can use, and rework in accordance with their own needs. Under this light, and quite surprisingly, Liszt's aesthetic follows the Hegelian path, since the artwork that emerges from the composer's mind is the phenomenal appearance of thought. The thought needs a form to become

phenomenon. Consequently, it is possible to state that it is a super-formalism. It is not a formalism because the form is the most relevant part of a composition, but because the spirit, in order to reach the phenomenical world, models the form, which is consequently to be understood as the container for the spirit itself. Nevertheless, the article failed to convey precisely this message. Its style and structure were certainly good for Liszt's propaganda purpose – and this was assuredly one of his primary aims –, but they are not good enough for the emergence of a clear idea on music and of the role of musicians. Anyway, the essay is a very precious source of information about Lisztian aesthetic thought, and it can shed new light on his compositions, as it will emerge in the following chapters, in which his compositions are analysed following the traces of the ideas that emerged here.