

LISZT PIANO SONATA MONOGRAPHS

Franz Liszt's Precursor Sonata of 1849:
a trial run in the Master's inner circle

LISZT BICENTENNIAL

Gerard Carter · Martin Adler

→ SONATA

1849

1853

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Franz Liszt's Precursor Sonata of 1849:
a trial run in the Master's inner circle

An Robert Schumann

Sonate

für das Piano forte. —

von

F. Liszt —

FRANZ LISZT'S PRECURSOR SONATA OF 1849:
A TRIAL RUN IN THE MASTER'S INNER CIRCLE

Gerard Carter and Martin Adler

WENSLEYDALE PRESS

Liszt Piano Sonata Monographs

www.lisztsonata.com

Wensleydale Press
ABN 30 628 090 446
165/137 Victoria Street
Ashfield (Sydney) NSW 2131 Australia
Tel +61 2 9799 4226
Mob 0488 99 4226
gerard.carter@bigpond.com
www.wensleydalepress.com.au

Layout and cover design
ADLERMEDIA.DE
www.adlermedia.de

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The authors wish to thank Prof. Dr. Michael Saffle (Virginia Tech, USA) and Prof. Dr. Tibor Szász (Hochschule für Musik, Freiburg, Germany) for their kindness and many valuable discussions and suggestions. Furthermore, they wish to thank Prof. Dr. Szász for suggesting a number of important corrections and his kind contribution of comments and materials which are included as an appendix to this monograph. They also wish to thank Dr. Reinhold Brunner (Stadtarchiv Eisenach, Germany) for the images of Friedrich Kühmstedt and his sepulchre, and they wish to thank Olaf Mokansky and the Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek (Weimar, Germany) for permission to print the Kühmstedt Fugue.

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Druck und Verlag: epubli GmbH, Berlin, www.epubli.de

ISBN 978-3-8442-0842-9

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in
der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische
Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

Printed in Germany

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his *Quasi-Faust* movement, was published in 1848, at the latest.¹³ Liszt presumably acquired a printed copy shortly after publication.

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Advertisement for the first edition of Alkan's Sonata
in the *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris* of 3 September 1848.

Liszt completed his Sonata and it was published in 1854 by Breitkopf & Härtel. After printed copies became available, Liszt gave copies to a number of prominent pianists and composers with whom he was friendly (Chopin had died in 1849). Hans von Bülow received a copy in the mail from Liszt. Liszt handed a copy to Dionys Pruckner. Clara Schumann received the copy that Liszt mailed to Robert and Clara Schumann. Louis Köhler received a copy from Liszt. Liszt's correspondence suggests that he mailed a printed copy of his Sonata to Karl Klindworth.¹⁴

¹³ The present authors have confirmed that the Alkan Sonata was in fact published in 1848 (and not many years later, as has occasionally been suggested). The *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris* of 1848 contained several advertisements for the first edition (Brandus) of the Sonata:

<http://www.archive.org/stream/revueetgazettemu1848pari#page/276/mode/2up>

¹⁴ Hans von Bülow received a copy in April 1854. See Winklhofer p. 46.

Liszt's sketch on page 75 (page 87) of the Weimar sketchbook GSA 60/N 2.
The crossed-out notes in bars 1, 2 and 4 imply that the interpolated, uncrossed pitch "G" in bar 3, lower staff, must similarly be interpreted as a crossed-out note.

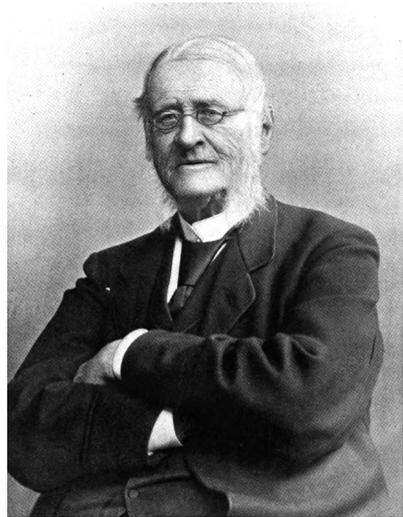
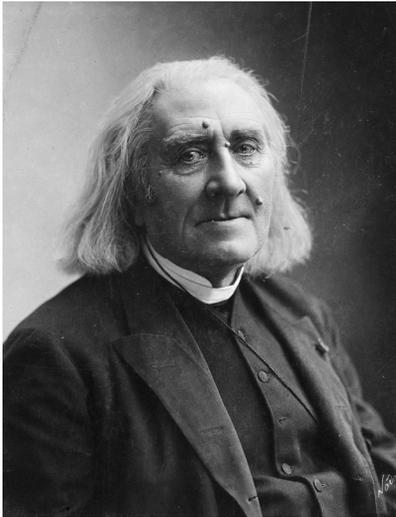
Winklhofer states that the motif A in the sketch is "fundamentally tonal in conception" but that "[i]ts decorated G-minor triad does, however, suggest the ominous quality of the later version."

The sketch begins with a rising movement from G to E \flat , and then falls back onto the pitch D. The final version does essentially the same, by expanding the ascending intervallic span G–E \flat , first to G–F \sharp which falls back to pitch E \flat (bar 2); and then to G–F \sharp which falls back once again to pitch E \flat (bar 5). In both cases the opening bars feature characteristic, large upward movements (a minor sixth span in bars 1–5 of the sketch; three leaps in bars 1–9 in the final version of the Sonata: minor seventh, major seventh and octave).²⁶

There is no evidence contained in the bound sketchbook as to when Liszt penned his sketch of motifs A and B but the external evidence of Kühmstedt's Fugue suggests that Liszt may have penned it as early as January 1849.

²⁶ This fact was brought to the authors' attention by Tibor Szász.

following: “Here I am, dear *friend*[.] *Friend*, I am awaiting you here [Liszt uses the intimate ‘Du’ throughout] and I want to welcome you here most kindly and most amicably on classical ground. You know I am a bad correspondent as well as a good travelling companion! So let us leave all written tomfoolery and just allow me to give you cordially my compliments for the doctoral hat and to await you very soon as a colleague in Weymar. Sincerely devoted to you, F. Liszt”. Gille is the best possible candidate for being the music critic “G.” and there is no need to suggest that the words “to us” are “creative” writing as he was obviously a member of Liszt’s “inner circle” in 1849/50 and before that.



Franz Liszt (1811–1886) and his lifelong friend Carl Gille (1813–1899), sources: Wikipedia (Liszt), Adolf Stern, Franz Liszts Briefe an Carl Gille, Leipzig (1903) (Gille).

A further hint towards Gille is the fact that only two articles in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* from the time of the 1884 Musikfest are signed “G.”, and no other article signed in this way can be found in

As part of Liszt's "inner circle"⁴⁸ Kühmstedt had a significant role to play in 1849/50 in relation to the precursor Sonata, as we can see from the following excerpt from the article by "G." in 1884: "This curious tone piece [the Sonata] originates from the beginning of the fifties. As the Master played the creation in question to us within the inner circle, Prof. Friedrich Kühmstedt [...] was present and was so much moved and captivated by the two main themes (cf. bars 8–15 of the work mentioned) that he executed them in a magnificent Fugue for piano in B minor (Erfurt, Körner)⁴⁹ in great strokes. By the way, this work is of unusual interest contrapuntally and does not deserve to fall into oblivion completely. When Liszt was presented with this masterly fugue, a very complicated work, he played it *prima vista* as if it were just – child's play."⁵⁰

Hofmeister's directory of published works for May-June 1850 gives the year of publication of Kühmstedt's Fugue as 1850.⁵¹

After hearing Liszt perform his precursor Sonata in about June 1849 Kühmstedt started composing his Fugue based on motifs B and C. It is

⁴⁸ Kühmstedt was indeed close to Liszt at this time, as the following excerpt from Richard Wagner's memoirs (about his escape from Dresden in 1849) shows (Wagner1, p. 502): "Liszt continued his journey from Eisenach, leaving me to be entertained and looked after by Stöhr and the musical director Kühmstedt, a diligent and skilful master of counterpoint with whom I paid my first visit to the Wartburg, which had not then been restored. I was filled with strange musings as to my fate when I visited this castle."

⁴⁹ KühmstedtFugue. Kühmstedt's Fugue was published by G. Wilh. Körner of Erfurt and Leipzig. The German town of Erfurt is near Weimar.

⁵⁰ App1NZfM2.

⁵¹ see Hofmeister, App1NMZ1, App1NMZ2.

1849 (as the present authors contend) and it was published in 1854. This period of five years fits in nicely with the other entries in column E of the above table.

During these years Liszt was heavily involved in the compositional work described in the table. He also had the stress of acrimonious dealings with the Wittgensteins regarding Carolyne's divorce and property settlement, the stress of Carolyne's protracted annulment proceedings, the poor health of his mother who was staying with him at the Altenburg, the pressures on him to marry Carolyne (to placate Carolyne, his mother and the church hierarchy), his attendance at numerous musical and society events, the many active obligations of his position as Hofkapellmeister, and his constant travelling.

It is clear from all the above circumstances that, contrary to the conventional wisdom, Liszt could not possibly have composed his Sonata in the space of two years. It is stated that Liszt penned the Lehman autograph in about three months, from December 1852 to February 1853 but, in this respect, this may not be far off the mark. It is clear, however, that what Liszt was doing was penning a composition that he had, in substance, completed years earlier.

We can also deduce this from an examination of the Lehman autograph itself. That autograph was written in a straightforward manner suggesting various previous drafts (which have not come down to us) and a clearly thought-out structure. It is true that there are a large number of corrections and reworkings in it but, having regard to the length, complexity and importance of the Sonata, this would not seem to detract from the proposition that by the time Liszt commenced to pen the autograph he had already developed a structure which had been clearly thought out in his head and which he had

Comparison 4

8va
ff
sva

C4a, Sonata, bars 55-57.

ff
decresc.

C4b, Fugue, page 17, system 3.

Here we have a similarity which is less likely to be a co-incidence than in Comparison 3 because in both cases there is a stretto, two beats apart, of motif B. In the Fugue the stretto is repeated several times whereas in the Sonata it occurs only once per phrase. Here again, it seems likely that Liszt's stretto impressed and influenced Kühmstedt and, accordingly, that it was also in Liszt's precursor Sonata.

App1Bülow4

in: BülowBS1, pp. 171 ff.

Letter from Hans von Bülow to his mother, Weimar, 2 June 1849 [Saturday].

[...] Liszt antwortete mir sehr freundlich an letztem Montag [28. Mai], daß er Alles thun würde, um mir hier den Aufenthalt interessant zu machen. Ich reiste alsobald Montag Mittag nach Halle und blieb daselbst bis Dienstag.

Nach einigen vergeblichen Gängen traf ich Liszt um 1 Uhr (Mittwochs [30. Mai]) – er mußte zur großherzogl. Tafel, doch unterhielten wir uns eine Stunde über Verschiedenartiges: (Raff, Wagner, den Liszt in Paris hofft.) Den Nachmittag beschied er mich um ½5 Uhr auf die Altenburg, den Wohnort der Fürstin Wittgenstein, wo Liszt auch den ganzen Tag zu sein pflegt. Ich traf dort einen Schüler von ihm (16 Jahre), den jungen Winterberger, recht talentvollen Menschen; [...] [Liszt] spielte einiges mit mir

[...] Liszt replied last Monday [28 May], in a very friendly manner, that he would do everything to make my stay here interesting. On Monday at noon I travelled right away to Halle and stayed there until Tuesday.

After some fruitless walks I met Liszt at one o'clock (Wednesday [30 May]) – he had to go to the grand ducal table, but we talked for an hour about different things: (about Raff, and about Wagner who Liszt hopes will be in Paris.) In the afternoon he asked me to come at half past four to the Altenburg, the residence of the Princess Wittgenstein, where Liszt also stays the whole day. There I met a pupil of his (16 years old), the young Winterberger, quite a talented person; [...] [Liszt] played something with me

App1Urania2

G. Siebeck in: Urania, 1851, 3, pp. 38 ff.

http://books.google.de/books?id=q_ExNn97lwYC&pg=PA38

Fr. Kühmstedt. Große vierstimmige Concert-Fuge über ein von Hrn. Dr. Liszt gegebenes Thema etc. Op. 24. Preis 25 Sgr. Erfurt u. Leipzig: Verlag u. Eigenthum von G. W. Körner.

Die sehr gewandte und feine Contrapunktik der *Kühmstedt'schen* Muse hat Ref. von Fachgenossen öfters weit mehr als „das Resultat einseitiger Verstandesthätigkeit, als eine von wahrer Posie oder auch nur von klarerem und lebendigerem Gefühlsausdrucke durchdrungene Kunst“ bezeichnen hören. Vorliegende Concertfuge dürfte noch mehr, als alle früheren Werke *Kühmstedt's*, geeignet seyn, diese Herren eines Besseren zu belehren. In der That vereinigt sich hier fast Alles, um den Beruf seines Verfassers als musikal. Techniker, wie im edleren Sinne des Wortes „als Tondichter“ auf das Klarste herauszustel-

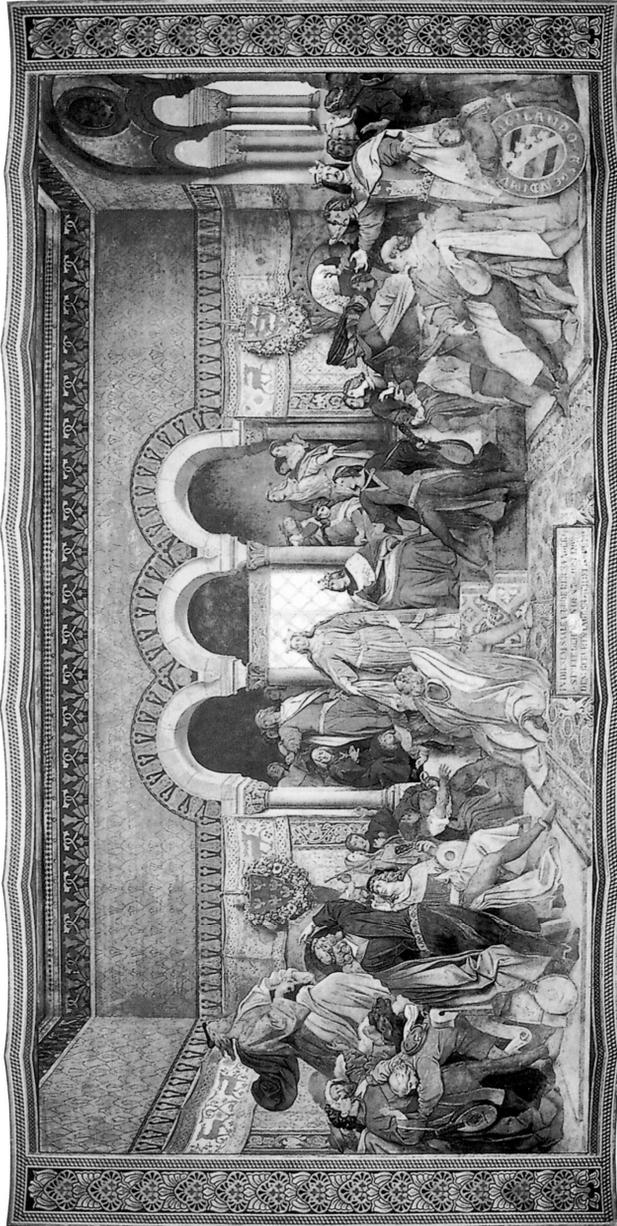
Fr. Kühmstedt. Grand four-part Concert Fugue on a theme given by Herr Dr. Liszt etc. Op. 24. Price 25 Sgr. Erfurt and Leipzig: published and owned by G. W. Körner.

The very skilful and fine contrapuntal work of *Kühmstedt's* muse was often called by colleagues of the writer rather “the result of a one-sided intellectual occupation rather than an art infused with real Poetry or just with clearer and more vivid emotional expression”.

The present Concert Fugue might, even more than all former works of *Kühmstedt*, serve to disabuse these gentlemen.

Indeed there is gathered here almost everything which most clearly characterises the profession of its creator as a musical technician, and, in the more noble sense of the word, as a “tone

APPENDIX 2: SCHWIND'S FRESCO AT THE WARTBURG



Moritz von Schwind (1804–1871), *Der Sängerkrieg*,
Fresco, Wartburg, Eisenach (1855), source: Wikipedia.

Probable sources of Lisztian symbolism.

Set 19.

1. a [264] *pp* [Samiel from] Weber: Freischütz
[Wolf's Glen scene]

b [1] *p sotto voce.* [Lucifer's temptation from] Liszt: Sonata
[Garden of Eden]

2. a [1] *pp legato* Weber: Freischütz
Opening of the Wolf's Glen scene.
[Kaspar yearns for the magic bullet]

b [2] *(p sotto voce) legato* Liszt: Sonata
[Man yearns for the forbidden fruit]

3. a [1] Bach (J.S.): Through Adam's Fall
[Orgelbüchlein BWV 637]

b [9] *f* Liszt: Sonata
[Man and Lucifer's Fall]

4. a [204] *f* Alkan: Grande Sonate
"Quasi Faust". The motif is labeled "Sataniquement"

b [509] *f* [Fugato] [Lucifer motif] Liszt: Grande Sonate

5. a [3] *f* Alkan: Grande Sonate
"Quasi Faust". The motif is labeled
"Sataniquement" [3] and "Diabolique" [190]

b [14] *sf* Liszt: Grande Sonate
[Satan motif]

6. a [54] *f marcato* Weber: Freischütz
[Kaspar pleads with Samiel]

b [16] Liszt: Sonata
[Satan motif]

7. a Crux fi - de - lis in - ter om - nes Crux fidelis
Good Friday hymn

b [105] *ff grandioso* Liszt: Sonata
[Christ motif]

8. a [1] *cantabile con divozione* Maria Pavlovna Romanova [-Liszt]: Lied
Identified as such by Liszt in Consolation No. 4.
[GSA 60/122 (Ms. 1,22)]

b [335] *dolce* Liszt: Sonata [Maria Pavlovna Romanova's Lied:
in the Sonata, the motif of devotion to Christ]

Set 19 of Tibor Szász, JALS 1984:

Probable morphological and symbolic sources of the Liszt Sonata motifs.

INTRODUCTION.

Adagio.

F. Kühmstedt, Op. 26.

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Franz Liszt completed his **Piano Sonata in B minor** at Weimar in 1853. It met with a mixed reception from the musical establishment of the day but is now a part of the repertoire of every leading pianist and may even be the most frequently recorded and performed piano work ever written. It is the outstanding example of the compositional process of thematic transformation. The grandeur and lyrical power of its themes, based on three motifs so clearly stated at the outset, place it at the pinnacle of the piano literature.



Gerard Carter is the author of several books on the Liszt Sonata and has produced CDs of historic recordings as well as of his own performance. Gerard studied the Sonata with Eunice Gardiner when he was a pupil at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. Miss Gardiner had taken lessons from Claudio Arrau, which makes Gerard a great-great-grand pupil of Franz Liszt. Gerard holds the associate diploma in music (piano performing) and is a graduate in economics and law from the University of Sydney.

Martin Adler has a doctorate of natural sciences from the University of Marburg and runs an internet consultancy in Bonn where he lives with his wife and their three children. Martin has had an ever-growing fascination for the Liszt Sonata since he first heard it as a youth. He has studied it with his teacher Nelly Moser, who was a student at the St Petersburg Conservatory in the classes of the legendary pedagogues Emmanuel Fischmann and Vladimir Nielsen.



Liszt Piano Sonata Monographs. Each monograph upholds the best traditions of modern musicological scholarship while presenting the contents in an attractive way for the general reader. The launch of the series coincides with the bicentennial of the birth of Franz Liszt (1811–1886).

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ISBN 978-3-8442-0842-9