

Editorial

IT IS 2011, AND THE MUSICAL AND MUSICOLOGICAL world has not spared its pains: as usual, the year has been taken as an occasion for birthday-year celebrations. 2010 was the year of Chopin and Schumann. 2011 is that of Liszt and Mahler. Celebrating composers in this way – according to a date on the calendar – has its advantages but also its disadvantages. The various markets – for recordings, concerts, music publishing, and even what we might call the musicology market – are undeniably boosted by these celebrations. This is an ideal occasion to thrust a composer and his output front and center.

But do the giants of music – son whose shoulders we dwarves sit – really need this? Is it not we, rather, who depend on it for our existence during these jubilees, which open a seemingly ideal window of opportunity? Yes and no. The public and the media did not wait until 2011 to get excited about Mahler. Indeed, the fashion form that composer has been growing for several years now. His ongoing success seems assured.

Liszt is a different case. There is not the same kind of fad for his music, nor the same consensus about it. Concert programmers and record companies generally fear to leave the beaten path. They turn his immense, varied output into a series of categories impossible to encompass; one cannot see the forest for the trees. Baudelaire, in Liszt's lifetime, warned about the difficulties of dealing with this «bard of eternal Eroticism and eternal Anguish, this philosopher, poet, and artist». He continued: «Unity of aim, variety of means, omnipotent and indivisible amalgam of genius – what analyst would have the despicable courage to divide you up, to separate you into parts?»¹.

We should not divide Liszt up into little boxes or reduce him to one or two fixed aspects, given that he embodies an astonishing and ungraspable diversity. Pianist, composer, conductor, teacher, writer, diplomat, philanthropist, humanist, Saint-Simonian, freemason, Catholic: he was all of this at one and the same time, and much besides. This is no doubt why he is so misunderstood – and why he is also, we might say, mis-loved. Yet this also is what makes his message so rich, and what makes studying him so exciting, rich, and limitless.

From a musicological point of view, the Liszt Year, like any celebration of a special year, should be the occasion to raise methodological and epistemological questions that aim to sum up our current knowledge, revise it, and build the basis for future research. From a more general point of view, it offers the opportunity to draw attention to the true dimensions of this creative artist and to lesser-known sides of his output, which contain masterpieces that the nervous marketplace denies a deserved place in our cultural heritage and our present-day cultural life. After all, the concept of «cultural heritage» should not be limited to whatever happens to be fashionable only today.

Celebrations risk turning culture into a «news item» that exists only for a short moment. Cultural heritage should not be treated as a chain of moments or snapshots, any more than a series of slides or snapshots would amount to a film. After 2011 has passed, Mahler and Liszt will certainly not be forgotten. But their moment will be over as short-term «capitalized» objects – objects of the musical and publishing market tied to the calendar. One can only regret the lack of courage and curiosity of certain individuals – musicians, directors of concert series, music publishers – who confine themselves to a reduced «canon» of works that is dictated more by the need for commercial success than by curiosity or, even better, a desire to educate the public.

Of course, there are exceptional individuals in this regard. Some are more daring than others: one should welcome their initiatives and rejoice in the courageous cultural policies that accompany them, policies not guided solely by the profit motive. In France, the Céline Affair – the inclusion of the fiftieth anniversary of that poet's death-year alongside other French «National Celebrations» – put into question the principles according to which the Republic honors its heritage. People even raised a point of terminology: should one «celebrate» or «commemorate»? But even if, in the future, we do end up speaking of national

¹. «[...] chante de la Volupté et de l'Angoisse éternelles, philosophe, poète et artiste», «unité du but, variété des moyens, amalgame tout-puissant et indivisible du génie, quel analyste aura le détestable courage de vous diviser et de vous séparer?»: BAUDELAIRE, Charles. *Le Thyse*, in: ID. *Le Spleen de Paris. Petits Poèmes en prose*, edited by Robert Kopp, Paris, Gallimard, 2006 (Collection Poésie, 415), p. 188-189.

«commemorations» rather than «celebrations» – as Jean-Noël Jeanneney proposes, in order to avoid putting us in an «uncomfortable position» and to avoid the old debate about aesthetic and moral values – only the rhetoric will be new. The programming will stay the same. We would do well to consider these occasions as means to an end, not as ends in themselves. A cultural Year should not end on December 31. This long-range vision was shared by Liszt, who, in Weimar, was assigned the task of directing a cultural policy that aimed at ensuring the city's survival in the artistic and political worlds. «The arts and letters cannot flourish without the generosity of the aristocracy and the wealthy», he wrote to his «patro», the Grand Duke of Weimar. No doubt he would have agreed with Victor Hugo's ideas on the political necessity of culture that the poet presented in these words before the French National Assembly: «You claim to reducing costs. What you are reducing is glory. I reject this, for the sake of France's dignity; I reject it for the honor of the Republic»².

For Liszt, culture and the arts can ensure an existence – and a political *Nachleben* – to a state whose industry, military power or economy are weak or even nonexistent. In Weimar, the sovereign gave Liszt his support, and together they built an ambitious cultural policy by going beyond the sole domain of culture, therefore no longer requiring culture to pay its own way. The Liszt Year gives us the rare opportunity to show how to link a heritage discourse to present-day society, and how to do so in the context of a philosophy of history that was formulated by, among others, Hegel (in the following words): «What we are historically – the property that belongs to us, the people of today's world – did not arise spontaneously out of present-day conditions. Rather, this property is the heritage and result of labor, namely the labor of all previous generations of the human race»³.

The articles in this issue of *Ad Parnassum* all treat topics that put into perspective certain unavoidable problems in the musicological domain known as «performance practice». It is worth recalling, especially this year, that virtuosity, transcription, and performer-composers are not only to be found in the world of nineteenth-century pianism. Thus, Graham Pont re-evaluates Handel's role in the history of keyboard virtuosity and proposes that Handel initiated – through his opera transcriptions – a new era in this domain. Fabrizio Ammetto examines the instrumental output of another Baroque composer: Vivaldi, whose works have been much studied with regard to performance-practice issues. Beverly Jerold, for her own part, emphasizes the importance of instrument-building in the evolution of keyboard music in the eighteenth century. Advances of this sort ended up contributing a great deal to the birth, in the nineteenth century, of a new way of writing for the piano by, among others, Liszt and his successors. Renato Ricco, raising the thorny issue of how instrumental music in nineteenth-century Italy was smothered by opera, sketches the portrait of a violinist-composer (Ghebart). Massimiliano Sala devotes his article to a much better-known figure from the world of the violin, Viotti; he presents four previously unpublished letters that reveal particular aspects of the composer. Finally, Francesco Esposito contributes an article on the initiatives of the Irmandade de Santa Cecilia (Lisbon), an organization of which Liszt was named a member in 1845. Esposito's study shines a light on the thinking and social actions initiated by musicians, thereby showing that these were not limited to the musical capitals of northern Europe (especially Paris, with the Saint-Simoniens and other utopian movements). Esposito also draws a parallel to organizations aiming at protecting the rights of musicians, notably the Association des Artistes Musiciens (in Paris).

Nicolas Dufetel
Weimar-Jena/Angers

translated by Ralph P. Locke

². «Vous avez cru faire une économie d'argent, c'est une économie de gloire que vous faites. Je la repousse pour la dignité de la France, je la repousse pour l'honneur de la République»: *Compte rendu des séances de l'Assemblée nationale*, vol. v (21 octobre–30 novembre 1848), Paris, Assemblée nationale, 1850, p. 443.

³. «Was wir geschichtlich sind, der Besitz, der uns, der jetzigen Welt, angehört, ist nicht unmittelbar entstanden und nur aus dem Boden der Gegenwart gewachsen, sonder dieser Besitz ist die Erbschaft und das Resultat der Arbeit, und zwar der Arbeit aller vorhergegangenen Generationen des Menschengeschlechts»: HEGEL, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie. Teil 1, Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie: Orientalische Philosophie*, edited by Pierre Gamiron and Walter Jaeschke, Hamburg, Meiner, 1994 (Vorlesungen, 6), p. 6.