



audite

FRANZ LISZT

DANTE Symphony

TASSO Lamento e Trionfo

KÜNSTLERFESTZUG

Kirill Karabits

Staatskapelle Weimar

FRANZ LISZT

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**Damen des Opernchores des
Deutschen Nationaltheaters Weimar***

Marianna Voza, choir director

Knabenchor der Jenaer Philharmonie*

Berit Walther, choir director

It was in Weimar that Liszt was finally able to find the time and the means to complete a number of compositional projects that he had been dreaming about for years but which he had been prevented from working on by his European recital tours and his triumphs as a virtuoso. Thanks to Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna, he was appointed Kapellmeister in Extraordinary by Grand Duke Carl Friedrich in 1842. Four years later he wrote, full of hope, to their son, the heir apparent Carl Alexander, to say that in his eyes Weimar was “a fixed star whose beneficent rays shine down on the long journey of my life”. At that date he regarded the small town in Thuringia, with its great past, as “the homeland of the Ideal” and as a place where he hoped to settle. As early as 1782 Goethe had already described the town as “like Bethlehem in Judah, small and great”.

On moving to Weimar in 1848, Liszt set to work with a will, remaining in the town until 1861 and later describing these years as a time of “Sammlung und Arbeit” (composure and work). Here he not only began to compose his orchestral works but also revised his principal piano cycles in order to give them their final form. These compositions include the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, the *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* and the first *Année de pèlerinage*. These last-named pieces comprise poems for the piano and reflect Liszt’s aesthetic ideas on programme music and on the link between music and poetry, ideas that had sprung from the soil of his years in Paris between 1824 and 1844, when, living at the heart of Romanticism, he had been in contact with Berlioz, Hugo, Lamartine and others. In an important piece on Berlioz’s *Harold en Italie*, Liszt wrote that it was necessary to “create new forms for new ideas, new bottles for new wine”. Programme music, he argued, must assume a new form and not be expressed solely within the familiar framework of the symphony. It was this belief that led him to invent the symphonic poem. Faust and Dante, however, provided him with the material for works of far greater dimensions.

In Weimar Liszt also had to write occasional pieces, notably for the inauguration of the various monuments with which Carl Alexander wanted to furnish the town in memory of its glorious past. The statues of Herder, Goethe and Schiller, Wieland and Carl August were all unveiled to the strains of music by Liszt. But when we come to examine the heart of these occasional works, we shall find that the whole of Liszt’s symphonic output is held together by a system of self-quotations and self-references.

The works that are included in the present release illustrate the three different aspects of Liszt as a symphonist in Weimar: an occasional piece, a symphonic poem of modest dimensions and a vast programme symphony. This is the first time that these works have been recorded by the Weimar Staatskapelle, which in the process is paying tribute to its own distinguished past, to its prestigious Kapellmeister, to the prince who kept Liszt company during his years in the town and, more generally, to the town of Weimar itself.

Künstlerfestzug zur Schillerfeier (1859)

The *Künstlerfestzug zur Schillerfeier* (Artists’ Gala Procession for the Schiller Celebrations) is one of several works associated with Friedrich Schiller that include *La chapelle de Guillaume Tell* for piano, the cantata *An die Künstler*, the *Festlied zu Schillers Jubelfeier* (10. November 1859) and the symphonic poem *Die Ideale*. Liszt began working on it in 1857 on the occasion of the celebrations accompanying the unveiling of the double statue of Goethe and Schiller by Ernst Rietschel, but,

as its title indicates, it was ultimately played at the celebrations marking the centenary of Schiller's birth two years later, when Liszt used it as the prelude to his incidental music for Friedrich Halm's melodrama *Vor hundert Jahren*, which was performed for the first time on 9 November 1859. Solemn and heroic in character, the *Künstlerfestzug* shares a number of musical elements with Liszt's other Schillerian works, notably *An die Künstler* and *Die Ideale*. Note in particular the lyrical theme marked "dolce espressivo" that is first stated by the horn accompanied by strings and harp before being taken up in turn by the rest of the orchestra. In other words, this dulcet tune may be thought of as Liszt's "Schiller melody".

Tasso. Lamento e Trionfo

Like other symphonic poems in the tradition of Beethoven's overtures, *Tasso* was initially conceived as an overture. Carl Alexander wrote to his former tutor Frédéric Soret on 1 July 1849 to report that he was "preparing to mark the centenary on 28 August in a worthy manner; [...] they'll be performing *Tasso*, I've asked my friend Liszt to write an overture for it. May the genius of the man whose memory we are celebrating watch over our country for ever." It is clear from one of his Weimar notebooks (N5) that Liszt had started work on the thematic material in 1847. *Tasso* was performed for the first time as the overture to Goethe's drama on 28 August 1849, the centenary of the playwright's birth. Over the following years Liszt continued to rework the score in order to give it its definitive form. It was published by Breitkopf & Härtel in 1856 under the title *Tasso. Lamento e Trionfo* as the second of Liszt's symphonic poems.

In the programme that he published with the score, Liszt recalled the Goethean context of the work's genesis, while admitting that he was inspired more by "Byron's respectful compassion" as expressed in the poet's dramatic monologue, *The Lament of Tasso*, than by the German dramatist's stage play. Like many of Liszt's other symphonic poems, *Tasso* can trace back its origins to the works of literature that he read in the 1830s and to the musical ideas that those works inspired in him, and it was through Byron, not Goethe, that Liszt first became familiar with the Italian poet. Tasso, whom he described as "the most unfortunate of poets", was an example of the cursed artist so dear to the Romantic heart. According to Liszt, Tasso was the very embodiment of "genius ill-treated during life, and shining after death with a light which should overwhelm its persecutors". Tasso, the composer went on, "loved and suffered at Ferrara" but was "revenged at Rome", where he was acknowledged as the prince of poets. A legendary figure, "his glory still lives in the popular songs of Venice". These aspects of Tasso's life were central to the symphonic poem's structure, which describes the poet's sufferings and posthumous triumph. Liszt began by conjuring up "the spirit of the hero as it now appears to us, haunting the lagunes of Venice; next, we must see his proud and sad figure, as it glides among the fêtes of Ferrara – the birthplace of his masterpieces; finally, we must follow him to Rome, the Eternal City, which, in holding forth to him his crown, glorified him as a martyr and poet. [...] Lamento e Trionfo: these are the two great contrasts in the destiny of poets, of whom it has been truly said that if fate curses them during life, blessing never fails them after death."

According to Liszt, the poet's grief is expressed by the melody that he heard gondoliers singing in Venice to the opening lines of Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*: "Canto l'arme pietose e'l Capitano, / Che'l gran sepolcro liberò di Cristo" (Th' illustrious Chief who warr'd for Heav'n, I sing, / And drove from Jesus' tomb th'

insulting King). Liszt had already used this melody in the first version of his *Venezia e Napoli*, which he wrote during his visit to Venice in 1838. The poet is embodied in this melancholy tune, a melody we hear throughout the work. It is “plaintive, slow, and mournfully monotonous” and “breathes so gnawing a melancholy, so irremediable a sadness, that a mere reproduction of it seems sufficient to reveal the secret of Tasso’s sad emotions” in the face of the “brilliant illusions of the world”. As the work unfolds, so this melody is transformed according to a procedure of which Liszt was extremely fond, assuming different guises that include profound affliction, melancholy, meditation, amorous and warlike outbursts, triumph and even the elegance of the Ferrara court encapsulated in a “Quasi Menuetto” unique in the composer’s output and intended to conjure up an image of the festivities of a bygone age.

The Italian poet, whose memory had been hymned not only by Venice’s gondoliers but also by Lord Byron, inspired Liszt to write a piece intended to celebrate Goethe. As a result, *Tasso* is an example of intertextuality that goes beyond the great German poet and beyond the commemoration of his centenary in Weimar: it is the fine-sounding verse of a hero of world literature, which is the literature of the whole of universal humanity.

A Symphony to Dante’s ‘Divina Commedia’

Liszt was fascinated by Dante throughout his life and sought inspiration from him at an early age. On 24 June 1849 he presented Carl Alexander with his own copy of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* to mark the grand duke’s birthday: “These last few years, he [Dante] has become for my mind and spirit what the column of clouds was for the children of Israel when it guided them through the desert.” In Byron’s complete works, which Liszt read in French in the 1830s, *The Lament of Tasso* was followed by *The Prophecy of Dante*. In both texts Liszt underlined a number of passages. In 1837, when he was travelling in Italy, he noted down the initial sketches for what – twenty years later – was to become *Après une lecture du Dante, fantasia quasi sonata* for piano in the second volume of his *Années de pèlerinage*. If he felt the necessary “strength and life”, he noted at the time, he would even write a large-scale symphonic piece on the subject. In 1845 he thought of working with the poet Joseph Autran on a staged version of the *Divine Comedy*. Orchestra, chorus, soloists and narrator would be brought together in a kind of total artwork combining music, poetry and painting, with large canvases being projected by means of a diorama. Liszt wanted to entrust the role of Dante to a narrator, while Virgil would be sung by a contralto, allowing the *Divine Comedy* to be “presented to the public gaze in such a way that for 3 francs 10 sous everyone can retrace the journey of Dante and Virgil for his or her own benefit”. In short, Liszt wanted to create a musical and visual spectacle that would help to popularize this other monument of world literature.

It was in Weimar, and thanks to Weimar, that Liszt was finally able to complete his Dante project. He wrote the symphony in a matter of only a few months in 1855 and 1856 and conducted the first performance of it in Dresden on 7 November 1857. In the event it proved a fiasco as the musicians were insufficiently prepared for the score’s formidable difficulties and novel features. But Liszt had not forgotten his earlier project and hoped that large paintings by Bonaventura Genelli could be projected on a screen during the performance.

Wagner repeatedly praised the symphony, which Liszt dedicated to him in a manuscript note in the score: “As Virgil guided Dante, so have you guided me through the mysterious regions of those worlds of sound that are steeped in life. – From my innermost heart I call out to you: ‘Tu se’ lo mio maestro, e il mio autore!’ And I dedicate this work to you in steadfastly loyal love.” Much later Wagner opined that Liszt’s music revealed and explained the hidden, complex meaning of the *Divine Comedy*: “Here is the soul of Dante’s poem in its purest and most transfigured form.” And yet, he went on, the work would never be appreciated for its true worth: it had “remained as good as unknown to our age and to its public” despite its being “one of the most amazing feats of music”. It was a matter for regret, Wagner concluded, that “Liszt’s conceptions” were “too potent for a public that lets *Faust* be conjured up for it at the Opera by the sickly Gounod and in the concert hall by the turgid Schumann”.

The opening movement, *Inferno*, depicts the sufferings of Hell. Beneath the opening notes Liszt quotes four lines from Canto III of Dante’s *Inferno*, lines that are merely intended to guide the interpreter and throw light on the composer’s inspiration. The symphony begins, therefore, with a picture of the gates of Hell surmounted by a sombre exhortation:

*Per me si va nella città dolente,
Per me si va nell’eterno dolore,
Per me si va tra la perduta gente [...]
Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch’intrate!*¹

To illustrate this menacing message, horns and trumpets hammer out and repeat a hieratic and moralizing motif accented according to the syllabic values of the final line, “Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch’intrate”. It returns in cyclical fashion, becoming the leitmotif of fate, a reminder of the inexorability of the destiny that is imposed on those who have been condemned to spend the whole of eternity suffering in Hell. Growling and roaring, the orchestra seems to sink lower and lower into the circles of Hell. At the heart of this section is an episode describing Paolo and Francesca who symbolize forbidden love and damnation. It offers a moment of repose. In order to evoke the adulterous lovers’ anguish and their memories of past happiness, Liszt has added Francesca’s words to the score: “Nessun maggior dolore, che ricordarsi del tempo felice nella miseria” (The bitterest of woes / Is to remember in our wretchedness / Old happy times). They announce a calm and melancholic episode marked “Andante amoroso, tempo rubato”, the impassioned and complex rhythms of which none the less remind us that we are still in Hell. Suddenly, like some infernal blast, a harp glissando cuts through the silence and the satanic frenzy gradually resumes its course before building to a final crescendo for which Liszt demands a wind machine to imitate an unnatural blast of foul air and plunge the spectator into the blackest of horrors. To complete this infernal journey, the brass intones the phrase associated with the words “Lasciate ogni speranza” one last time.

¹ “Through me the road to the city of desolation, / Through me the road to sorrows diuturnal, / Through me the road among the lost creation [...] / Lay down all hope, you that go in by me.

Purgatory is the place where lost souls linger between two worlds, the world of darkness and the world of light. Liszt's music is neither sad nor cheerful: the rocking motion of the strings, regular and obsessive, tends rather to conjure up an image of the mists that hold these souls in captivity as they await salvation. A solemn chorale theme breaks through these dull grey mists before the music gives way to a great fugue on a plaintive subject that Wagner particularly admired. Towards the end of the movement a series of non-functional harmonies develops like a ladder – could it be Jacob's? Through the interplay of kaleidoscopic colours Liszt succeeds in this way in providing a transitional link to the luminous vision of Paradise that bursts upon us like an epiphany with the entry of a chorus of angels singing lines from the *Magnificat*.

It has been said that Liszt, following Wagner's advice, did not set Dante's Paradise to music, but this is untrue, for he did indeed set it in his own way in an extremely subtle "programme" that reveals his profound knowledge of the *Divine Comedy* and of Catholic theology. Liszt wanted to guide the listener just as Virgil guided Dante from Hell to Paradise passing through Purgatory on the way. Although his symphony is traditionally presented as a diptych (1. *Inferno* – 2. *Purgatorio und Magnificat*), it is in fact a triptych, the third movement of which (the *Magnificat*) is directly linked to its predecessor. The autograph score in Berlin includes evidence essential to our understanding of the work: Liszt had initially titled the different parts "Inferno" and "Purgatorio und Vision". Following Purgatory, Dante, regenerated and purified by the waters of Lethe, can contemplate Paradise from the top of a hill. (As a heathen, Virgil is unable to join him there.) The final canto of the *Divine Comedy* is a vision of the Virgin Mary on her throne of glory surrounded by the heavenly host. Musically, this is expressed by the first two lines of the *Magnificat*, the words of which are not taken from Dante but are an expression of the Virgin Mary. Liszt suggests and subtly constructs his vision of Paradise, adding the words "Halleluja" and "Hosanna" to the verses from the *Magnificat*. Both of these words are sung by Dante's angels in Paradise. There is no doubt, therefore, that the "vision" that follows on from Purgatory is that of Paradise as described by Dante in his *Divine Comedy*.

Even so, we are not permitted to enter this heavenly empyrean and to journey through it as we did in the case of Hell and Purgatory. Just as Virgil did with Dante, so Liszt leads the spectator to the top of the hill in Purgatory from where we can contemplate Paradise. This is the reading suggested by the music, which consists of a subtle rustle of strings, winds and two harps, a transparent microtexture forming a luminous carpet of sound that symbolizes the luminescent sound of the angels' wings. The soft-toned voices of the women or children whom Liszt wanted to be placed on a platform behind a veil in order to create a mysterious effect that would make the sound seem as if it were coming from "on high" are heard against this accompaniment, in which there is no fundamental bass. In the final bars of the gentle close – another more powerful ending exists – an unprecedented range of harmonic colours unfolds. Liszt, who was proud of this harmonic *trouvaile*, reveals himself here as a luminarist. The heavenly voices intone their delicate final "Hosannas" and "Hallelujas", which rise ever higher in pitch. They sing of a feeling of ecstasy and of a vision that the composer has succeeded in expressing in his music. A window opens on the infinite: it is indeed a vision of Paradise according to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, a revelation and a theophany.

Nicolas Dufetel

Translation (French to German): Ariane Ludwig

Translation (German to English): Stewart Spencer



STAATSKAPELLE WEIMAR

Founded in 1491, the Staatskapelle Weimar is one of the oldest orchestras in Germany and among the most illustrious in the world. Its history is closely associated with some of the world's best-known musicians, including Johann Sebastian Bach, Johann Nepomuk Hummel, Franz Liszt, and Richard Strauss. Established as the premier musical institution of classical Weimar and part of the Hoftheater Weimar, the orchestra continued to attract attention through the achievements of Liszt and Strauss during the 19th century. These two celebrated figures not only improved its quality and reputation, but also led the Hofkapelle in world premieres of numerous contemporary orchestral works and operas. These positive developments were brought to an abrupt end when the National Socialists seized power. After the calamitous events of World War II, conductor Hermann Abendroth re-established the Staatskapelle Weimar, restoring it to its former grandeur and quality.

Since the 1980s, conductors Peter Gülke, Oleg Caetani, and Hans-Peter Frank as well as the current honorary conductor George Alexander Albrecht, who led the orchestra from 1996 to 2002, have left a lasting mark. Kirill Karabits had taken the reins of Thuringia's only A-level orchestra for the seasons 2016/17 through 2018/19.

The ensemble has made guest appearances in Japan, Israel, Spain, Italy, Great Britain, Austria, Switzerland, and the US as well as in the major concert halls throughout Germany and at renowned festivals. Numerous recordings document the orchestra's diverse repertoire.



KIRILL KARABITS

In his 11th year as Chief Conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Karabits' relationship with the BSO has been celebrated worldwide and together they have made many critically acclaimed recordings and appeared regularly at the BBC Proms.

Karabits has worked with many of the leading ensembles of Europe, Asia and North America, including the Cleveland, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Chicago Symphony Orchestras, Münchner Philharmoniker, Orchestre National de France, Philharmonia Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Filarmonica del Teatro La Fenice and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Kirill Karabits enjoys a special relationship with the Russian National Orchestra with whom he repeatedly appeared at the Edinburgh Festival and embarked on an extensive North American tour, including his New York debut at the Lincoln Center. Recent highlights also include debuts with the Toronto, Cincinnati, Seattle and Melbourne Symphony Orchestras as well as the Wiener Symphoniker, and a return to the Deutsche Oper. The 2019/20 season will highlight a number of North American visits, including Karabits' debut with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra and subscription debut with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, as well as returns to the Minnesota Orchestra, the Bamberger Symphoniker, and the Sydney Symphony and Seoul Philharmonic Orchestras. Karabits will also embark on a European and South American tour with the Russian National Orchestra and return to the Barbican with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

A prolific opera conductor, Kirill Karabits has worked with the Deutsche Oper and Oper Stuttgart. He has also conducted at Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Staatsoper Hamburg, English National Opera, Bolshoi Theatre and at the Wagner Geneva Festival. As General Music Director and Principal Conductor at the Deutsches Nationaltheater Weimar in the seasons 2016/17 to 2018/19, he also conducted many operas with the Staatskapelle Weimar. The 2019/20 season will see Karabits conduct a production with the Opéra Orchestre National Montpellier as well as the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

Working with the next generation of bright musicians is of great importance to Karabits. As Artistic Director of I, CULTURE Orchestra – an orchestra of talented, young musicians from Poland and other East European countries – he conducted them on their European tour in August 2015 and a summer festivals tour in 2018. In 2012 and 2014 he conducted the televised finals of the BBC Young Musician of the Year Award and has recently debuted with the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain on a UK tour. In recognition of his achievements in the UK, Kirill Karabits was named Conductor of the Year at the 2013 Royal Philharmonic Society Music Awards.

DAMEN DES OPERNCHORES DES DEUTSCHEN NATIONALTHEATERS WEIMAR

The Opera Chorus of the Deutsches Nationaltheater Weimar is a permanent part of the company's music theatre arm and the venerable house's second-largest ensemble after the Staatskapelle Weimar. It is currently made up of forty-four male and female singers from nine different countries. Their varied duties also include concerts and productions of spoken plays. Some of its members additionally sing small and medium-sized solo parts.

The ladies and gentlemen of the Opera Chorus perform a wide-ranging repertory extending from Classicism and German and Italian Romanticism to works by twentieth- and twenty-first-century composers.

From 1968 to 1997 the Opera Chorus of the Deutsches Nationaltheater Weimar was run by Eduard Lehmstedt. Since 1997 his successors as chorus master have been Andreas Korn, Markus Oppeneiger (from 2005) and Jens Petereit (from 2018).



KNABENCHOR DER JENAER PHILHARMONIE

The Boys' Choir of the Jena Philharmonic is one of the jewels of Thuringia's cultural landscape. Boys' choirs can look back on a long tradition, the roots of which may be traced to the Middle Ages. The Boys' Choir of the Jena Philharmonic was founded in 1976, making it a relatively recent institution. It combines tradition with the here and now and ensures that tried and tested traditions are preserved and can be carried forward into the future.

The ninety or so members of the choir are taken from all age groups and are divided into families. All of those choristers who make the transition from the preliminary choir to the next-generation choir are accepted into one of seven such choral families. In keeping with the choir's underlying concept, the older boys take charge of the younger ones, resulting in friendships that may extend beyond the world of music. Concert tours, joint hiking expeditions and football tournaments are particular highlights for the entire choral community. The Boys' Choir of the Jena Philharmonic has been run by Berit Walther since 2000.

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