CONCERTS FROM THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS 2020-2021

Friends of Music

(RE)HEARING BEETHOVEN FESTIVAL

Part Three:

Ran Dank & Soyeon Kate Lee
pianos

December 12, 2020 ~ 8:00 pm
The Library of Congress
Virtual Events

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Hear Dr. Julia Ronge of the Beethoven-Haus Bonn speak with Carol Lynn Ward Bamford, Instrument Curator for the Library's Music Division, about the instruments Beethoven owned and used that are held at the Beethoven-Haus in Bonn. This event is being presented in collaboration with the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, Washington, DC.

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Page 4) **Ran Dank &**
Soyeon Kate Lee, pianos

(RE)HEARING BEETHOVEN FESTIVAL

Welcome to the **(Re)Hearing Beethoven Festival**, a series of unique concerts presented virtually by Concerts from the Library of Congress. With this series we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the birth of Ludwig van Beethoven, a composer whose life and work have had an immeasurable influence in the world of music. Over the course of our festival you will encounter all nine of Beethoven's symphonies in transcriptions for a variety of forces, from solo piano to wind nonet. Works by Beethoven for which the Library of Congress possesses primary sources are also featured, in addition to other chamber and piano pieces. Beyond the concerts, you will find conversations with the artists, lectures, curator talks and many electronic resources you can access from home.

Our aim in presenting the symphonies in transcription is to offer insights into how we might re-hear familiar works by Beethoven, in light of what the new medium of transmission might illuminate. While issues of interpretation and presentation are still utmost in the minds of our guest artists performing the works, the very fact that the music is heard in a manner different from its initial conception requires us to face it with new ears, considering what is lost and what is gained with each encounter. The arrangements presented possess varying degrees of fidelity to the letter of the score, and we will find that deviations tended to be accommodations that made the arrangement more effective in its new medium. I think of this as faithfulness to the spirit of the work, which is a quality that is essential if the transcription is to be a performable (and listenable) version of a piece. While we won't have room to delve deeply into the complex considerations concerning the ontological status of a work vis-à-vis its derivative cousins, there is comfort for those who may take issue with the decisions of this or that arranger: the original is still there, unmaligned, to experience on its own merits at any time.

There were many motivations prompting the production of transcriptions and reductions, particularly at the end of the 18th and throughout the 19th century: pecuniary considerations, increased dissemination of a piece to people without access to an orchestra, artistic advocacy of a work, or a mixture of these. It was common for reductions to be made for amateurs to gain access to a piece at the keyboard, but by design these were often simplified and not intended for public performance. This changed when composers would craft their own transcriptions, or when a musician of stature like Franz Liszt would create performance transcriptions as an homage to the original composer. The artistry required to make an effective version of a work for another medium is significant, whether the goal is to make it accessible to the amateur or to emulate the world of the orchestra on a single piano, whatever the technical requirements may be.

Because of the myriad topics involved with each of these works, about which so much has been written over the years, the ensuing notes are intended to provide some salient background information about each piece, but not a substantive analysis of the work; there is simply not the scope here to accomplish that in the manner

we would like. Rather—in general—elements that are particularly germane to the transcriptions and their performance will be highlighted. Given the constraints of space and time, there will also not be room for a broad overview of certain topics that one may consider essential to the performance of Beethoven's symphonies. This includes the subject of the controversial metronome markings that Beethoven authorized to be published in the December 1817 issue of the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* for the first eight symphonies, followed by those for the ninth in 1826 and other works as well; they will be only briefly addressed here.

There were advocates in Beethoven's lifetime, including early biographer Anton Schindler (a notoriously unreliable commentator who is said to have forged material to support his claims—one in particular will be looked at in the discussion of the eighth symphony), who felt that the tempi as indicated by the metronome markings were unrealistic. There was a "Beethoven Metronome Congress" held in Vienna in 1977, where an attempt was made to discuss Beethoven's metronome markings and come to terms with them. The notion that Beethoven's metronome was broken and he just didn't notice it "…can easily be rejected, however: faulty metronomes tick either too quickly—thus producing values that are too low—or with an irregular beat. The latter did indeed occur from time to time; when Beethoven was late sending in his metronome figures to Schott, he defended himself by saying that his metronome was 'sick' and had been sent to a watchmaker to restore its regular pulse."[1] For those of us who have assigned metronome markings in the absence of performers, it is conceivable that the internal sense when imagining music in one's head may have differed from what was advisable in practice, and sometimes those figures need to be adjusted after hearing a tempo in rehearsal. While Jan Caeyers sees the anti-metronome marking faction as having some irregular beats in their thinking, he admits that "[there] is one error of judgment to which Beethoven may have fallen prey. Composers and conductors experienced with the metronome know only too well that tempi 'in the mind' are always slightly faster than tempi in performance—a common psychological pitfall with a potential margin for error of several percentage points."[2] As a last note on this, there are compelling reasons to use the markings that Beethoven eventually supplied, and recorded examples can increasingly be found. However, as with a pianist who adapts elements of execution like articulation and use of pedal to the needs of the hall and the piano being played in order to find the right solution for the circumstances, the musician's arrival at a workable tempo is one of those considerations that perhaps, to a degree, should be malleable. Beethoven's markings are provided for reference in our program listings.

Thank you for joining us on this extraordinary journey. We invite you to rehear these familiar works anew, to listen afresh to Beethoven's music in general, to think about hearing (re: hearing) the works in different contexts, and to play along with us as we examine what such experiences can add to our appreciation of this extraordinary music.

1 Caeyers, Jan, *Beethoven: A Life*, transl. Brent Annable (United States: University of California Press, 2020), 439.

2 Ibid., 440.

The Library of Congress
Virtual Events
Saturday, December 12— 8:00 pm

Friends of Music

RAN DANK
&
SOYEON KATE LEE

Pianos

Program

Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

Les Préludes (after A. de Lamartine), S. 637 (1848-1855)
Symphonic Poem no. 3
Version for two pianos (c. 1855)

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827) / FRANZ LISZT

Transcription for two pianos (1851)

Symphony no. 9 in D minor, op. 125 (1822-4)

Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso (♩ = 88)

Molto vivace (𝅗𝅥. = 116)—*Presto* (𝅝 = 116)—*Molto vivace* (𝅗𝅥. = 116)—*Coda—Presto*

Adagio molto e cantabile (♩ = 60)—*Andante moderato* (♩ = 60)—*Tempo I—Adagio—Lo stesso tempo*

Presto (𝅗𝅥. = 96)—*Allegro ma non troppo* (♩ = 88)—*Tempo I—Poco Adagio—Vivace—Tempo I—Adagio cantabile—Tempo I, Allegro—Allegro assai* (𝅗𝅥 = 80)—*Tempo I, Allegro—Allegro assai* (𝅗𝅥 = 80)—*Poco Adagio—Tempo I—Presto—Recitativo—Allegro assai—Alla Marcia: Allegro assai vivace* (♩ = 84)—*Andante maestoso* (𝅗𝅥 = 72)—*Adagio ma non troppo, ma divoto* (𝅗𝅥 = 60)—*Allegro energico, sempre ben marcto* (𝅗𝅥. = 84)—*Allegro ma non tanto* (𝅗𝅥 = 120)—*Poco Adagio—Tempo I—Poco Adagio—Poco Allegro, stringendo il tempo, sempre più Allegro—Prestissimo* (𝅗𝅥 = 132)—*Maestoso* (♩ = 60)—*Prestissimo*

About the Program

FRANZ LISZT, *Les Préludes*

"What else is our life but a series of preludes to that unknown Hymn, the first and solemn note of which is intoned by Death?"[3]

When Liszt embarked on his remarkable series of symphonic poems, he offered a new conception of what instrumental music could be. Born from the world of the concert overture with its extramusical references and typically cast in a single movement (the final *Von der Wiege bis zum Grabe* being the exception), these works became significant players in the debate about absolute music versus program music. The distinction was and is in many ways a forced one; in general Liszt's music does not follow a specific "program" but rather offers something inspired by the topic at hand (often a work of literature or a figure like Hamlet, Mazeppa or Tasso) that can still be described in known formal terms. Material for Liszt's symphonic poems, as we shall see in the case of *Les*

3 Alphonse de Lamartine, *Méditations Poétiques*, extracted from Liszt, Franz, *Les Préludes and Other Symphonic Poems in Full Score* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1994), 3.

Préludes, often had an early genesis that developed over many years into its final form. The first numbered symphonic poem was *Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne,* after Hugo, which coincidentally bore the same title and inspiration as what some consider the "earliest" symphonic poem by César Franck.[4]

As we often find with Liszt, the genesis of *Les Préludes* was remarkably complex and involves a multitude of versions and preliminary works. That is partly why it is difficult to speak with certainty about influences between versions of the pieces, as we will see; for this program we will be focusing on the two-piano version of the symphonic poem that was published concurrently with the orchestral score in 1856. In addition to the orchestral and two-piano versions, there is also a four-hands duet version and even a solo piano version, the preparation of which Liszt supervised, as a "Partition de piano par K. Klauser, avec additions de F. Liszt." Liszt's edits to Karl Klauser's work were significant enough for Leslie Howard to record it as part of his complete recordings of Liszt's piano works.[5]

An interesting aspect of the piece is the declaration of "after Lamartine," because that inspirational source only came toward the end of the process, after Liszt had already associated the material with another literary source. This re-association of inspirations happened sometimes with Liszt, as with the second symphonic poem *Tasso* and its relationship to both Goethe and Byron. In the case of *Les Préludes,* the piece actually started life as a work for men's voices and piano. Around 1844-5 Liszt composed "Les aquilons" for male voices and piano duet, the second in a series of pieces that formed *Les quatre élémens,* based on the poetry of Joseph Autran. The other movements ("La terre," "Les flots," and "Les astres") were drafted for piano and voices with the intention of orchestrating the set. Liszt enlisted August Conradi to orchestrate the quartet of pieces, while Liszt made corrections and oversaw the process. The final manuscript from Conradi dates from 1848, and here is where we start to see the shift that led to the work we know. It appears that Liszt planned to open the four-part choral cycle with an instrumental overture that drew on the themes developed in *Les quatre élémens*. This ended up becoming the symphonic poem *Les Préludes*, and the choral works were abandoned.[6] The standalone work was revised in 1850-52, and its association had changed to Lamartine by mid-1853. The orchestral version of the symphonic poem was first performed in Weimar in 1854 under Liszt's direction.

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4 Franck's work was composed at about the same time, and finished earlier, but was unpublished in his lifetime.

5 To my knowledge this is the largest solo recording project undertaken, comprising 99 CDs in the original set plus the occasional supplement as more music is discovered. Incidentally, Howard mentions in his always-enjoyable program booklets that "the similarity of the second theme to the trio from Schubert's 'Great' C-major Symphony may be regarded as entirely accidental, since the Schubert was unpublished and unknown at the time of Liszt's first conception of his melody." Howard, Leslie, CD Booklet for Leslie Howard, *The complete music for solo piano, Vol. 38 – Les Préludes* (Hyperion, CDA87015, 1996), online version.

6 Maria Eckhardt, transl. András Mártonffy, CD Booklet for Ferenc Liszt, *Choral Works for Male Voices,* Honvéd Ensemble Male Chorus, András Tóth and Gergely Bogányi (Hungaraton Classic, HCD 31923, 2000).

Dedicated to his companion Princess Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein, *Les Préludes* has long been an audience favorite among Liszt's orchestral works. This is great in that the piece shows off Liszt's ability to transform material to suit different musical needs, but it can also be a crutch among orchestral programmers who are still wary of more "modern" works like *Prometheus*. There are fascinating things about each of these works, and they are worth exploring. Liszt, although he had abandoned his career as an itinerant virtuoso in favor of focusing on composition while in Weimar, was not naïve about his prospects with the critics and the public. He knew that his innovations would not immediately be embraced, and here is where the notion of the transcription of his own works becomes particularly fascinating.

Hyun Joo Kim, in her book *Liszt's Representation of Instrumental Sounds on the Piano*, points out that while roughly two-thirds of the "golden age" arrangements for two pianos came from the 1880s to 1910s, Liszt's symphonic poem transcriptions for two pianos date from the late 1850s, and his Beethoven 9 transcription from 1853.[7] As Kim puts it, "[it] would not be overstating the case to say that Liszt ushered in a new method in the field of orchestral arrangements for two pianos in the mid-century by consistently advocating a more conscientious approach to the original. Liszt's two-piano arrangements, in a word, were in the vanguard of technical and aesthetic development of the medium during the second half of the century."[8] Interestingly, Liszt seems to have had a preference for the resources of four hands at two pianos over four-hands at one. Kim explains that "Liszt made a distinction between four-hand and two-piano arrangements, regarding the former as "more practicable for sales" yet incapable of capturing his "tones," while the latter, although it appears acceptable ("sounds reasonable"), remains the province of advanced pianists."[9]

This is to say, the artistic possibilities of two pianos were more attractive to Liszt than what could be accomplished in a four-hands arrangement. For Liszt the ideal was often a version for solo piano, in which the pianist could control every aspect of the performance. When additional resources are needed, two pianos provide the compass of two keyboards, but perhaps more importantly, the independence of thought and movement with respect to the sound and execution of the music on each instrument.

Knowing as he did that his orchestral music was going to have difficulty gaining a foothold, Liszt put into motion a clever strategy using the two-piano medium to promote his orchestral music. In almost all cases of the symphonic poems the two-piano versions were published concurrently with the full score, but as mentioned above, these versions were less conducive to "sales." Instead of seeking the traditional market for arrangements, excellent pianist-advocates like Camille Saint-Saëns and Francis Planté would play the symphonic poems and symphonies for a select group of guests in a private performance. This served as a primer for the audience, a way to familiarize them with the music

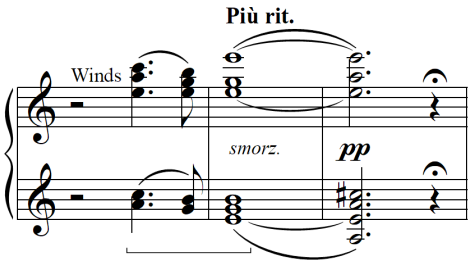
7 Kim, Hyun Joo, *Liszt's Representation of Instrumental Sounds on the Piano: Colors in Black and White* (United States: University of Rochester Press, 2019), 80.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid., 81.

before hearing the orchestral work.[10] The notion is an intriguing one, and given how difficult it is for composers today to get second performances of a work (and therefore a chance for them to be considered more fully)—let alone first performances—it would be interesting to see this more in practice today.

Liszt treated his own symphonic poems with the transcriber's respect that he generally reserved for works by Beethoven, Berlioz, Weber and Wagner (in the case of the *Tannhäuser* overture). This meant that, while he would adapt things as needed to the needs of the new medium, a guiding light was the orchestral score itself. Kim notes a prime example of this at the very opening of *Les Préludes*, where Piano 2 starts by itself, and instead of completing the full gesture, passes midway through the phrase to Piano 1. This occurs at precisely the moment where there is a corresponding timbral shift in the orchestration. It is a subtle effect that may cause more trouble than desired for the performers, but nevertheless shows a desire to emulate what he had done with the orchestra.[11] Throughout the transcription we find that Liszt distributed the parts in such a way as to create a sense of distinction between instrumental groups being represented. While the timbres of the two pianos are generally matched, there is something about seeing the interplay between them that adds to one's awareness of the orchestrational choices Liszt made. With the split-screen shots featured in Soyeon Kate Lee and Ran Dank's performance, these aspects come vividly to life.

As with all notes for the (Re)Hearing Beethoven Festival, our goal is to provide a little context and then to focus on some facets of the transcription that may be of interest, rather than give a detailed accounting of the music (much as I wish we had the scope to do so). With that in mind, we first note that Liszt opens his transcription with the alternation of phrases, each pianist responding to the other. In measure 10, Liszt introduces a *smorzando* rolled chord played only by Piano 2:

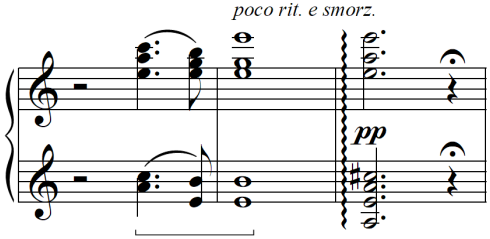
Example1
a)



Franz Liszt, *Les Préludes,* orchestral version: mm. 8-10, winds

10 Ibid., 82-3.
11 Ibid., 85.

b)



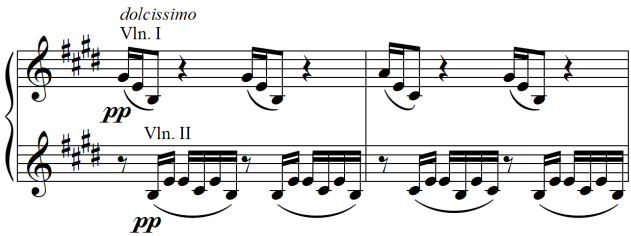
Franz Liszt, *Les Préludes*, two-piano version: mm. 8-10, Piano 2

The roll is of course the most pianistic of gestures, and works well here. Notice, however, the differences between the bracketed chords and the tempo modification markings, which were preceded by *Poco ritenuto* in the orchestral version and *Poco rallent.* in the two-piano version. Both accomplish similar things, but are sufficiently different to make me suspect that another, earlier version was involved in the preparation of one or the other (likely the two-piano version, which omits a few measures found in the orchestral version), or that some elements may have been developed concurrently (Liszt often worked on multiple pieces simultaneously). There is further evidence of these version differences later in the piece—some sort of disconnect that suggests that the final orchestral score was not the only one used in preparation of the two-piano version.

Early in the orchestral version the harp begins to play a significant role, and in that first exposed section Liszt actually excludes the harp part from the two-piano version. It would have been possible to include, so a few possible reasons for its exclusion jump to mind: the preparation of the 2-piano version may have been made from a different source, or Liszt was making a decision to declutter the music. In the orchestra the harp part subtly activates the sound, but in the piano version its inclusion may have anticipated too much of the accompanimental variation to come at too early a point in an expository context.

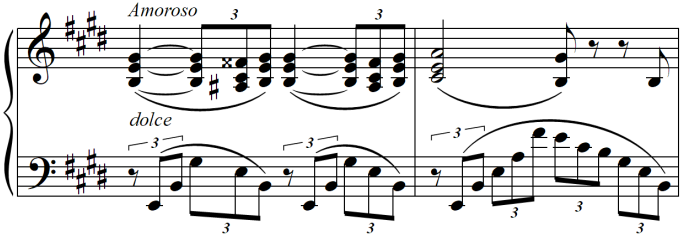
As we will see with several examples, Liszt opted to change the type of accompanimental figuration, perhaps again because he wanted to save the more involved accompaniments for later in the piece. As we see in Example 2, the violins have figuration that is missing from the two-piano version:

Example 2
a)



Franz Liszt, *Les Préludes*, orchestral version: mm. 70-71, violins

b)

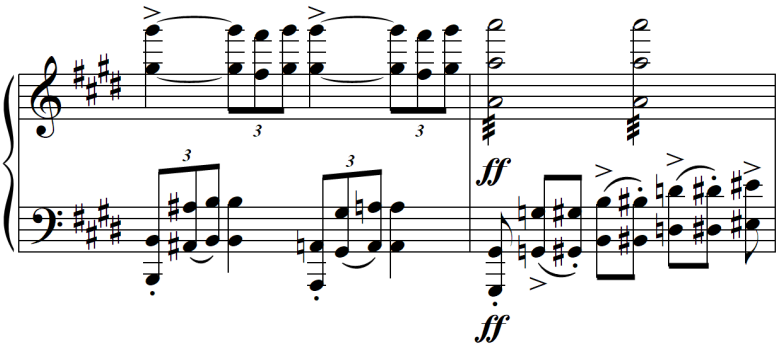


Franz Liszt, *Les Préludes*, two-piano version: mm. 70-71,[12] Piano 1

Incidentally, the two-piano version is missing a transitional measure here as well. The rolling arpeggios in the bass are certainly easy for the pianist to execute, and are melodically tied to thematic components, which may have been a factor in their preference for this case.

Sometimes Liszt will offer a double-whammy re-orchestration of an idea. Consider an intensifying moment in the orchestral version, with *tremolando* strings above an offbeat pulsing bass:

Example3a

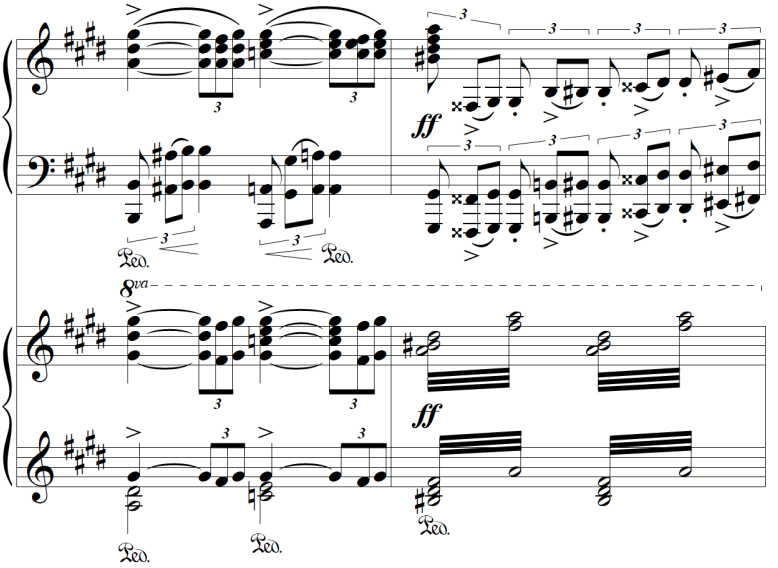


Franz Liszt, *Les Préludes*, orchestral version: mm. 88-89, strings

Since repeated-note string tremolos are impractical on the piano, Liszt instead amasses sound with chordal tremolos in Piano 2, while Piano 1 continues the triplet pattern established in measure 88. The move is in line with what occurred in the orchestral version, but by not scaling back to duple rhythms the energy of the passage is intensified:

12 Because of discrepancies in measure numbers between versions, for the sake of avoiding confusion I am using the orchestral measure-numbering on all listed measure numbers for both versions of *Les Préludes*.

Example 3b

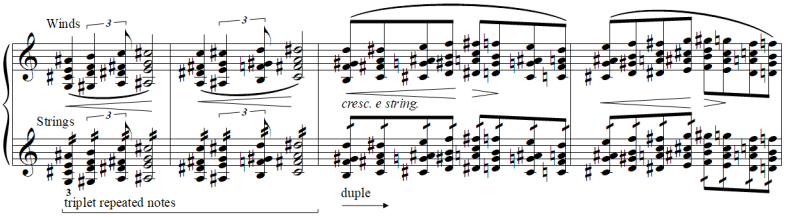


Franz Liszt, *Les Préludes*, two-piano version: mm. 88-89

In a work with such a complex composition history and the early involvement of the keyboard, it may be that the origins of some figuration predate the orchestral version—a different scenario, perhaps, than active deviation from the other version.

Speaking of figuration, Liszt was always conscientious about providing variety in his textures. A good example of this can be found in a passage that features winds articulating the main line in parallel chromatic motion, while the strings play tremolo atop for a special effect:

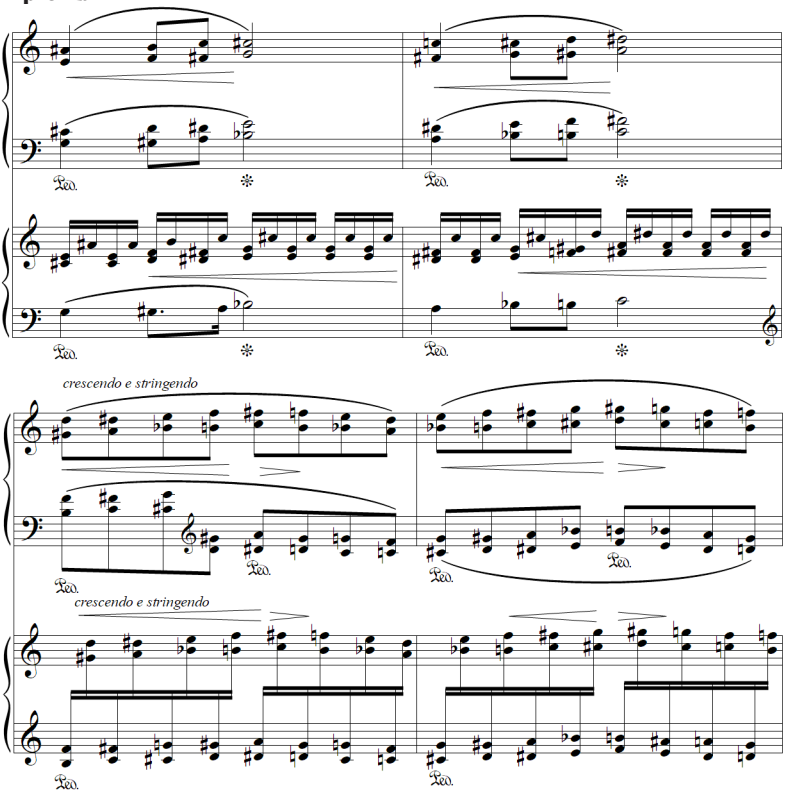
Example 4a



Franz Liszt, *Les Préludes*, orchestral version: mm. 123-126, condensed winds and strings

Notice that the tremolos of the first two measures of Example 4a, bracketed above, are measured triplet repeated notes, and they change to measured duple repeated notes in measure 125. Liszt emulates this in a way that doesn't literally do the same thing, but rather differentiates between the figurations. In Example 4b, Piano 1 has the role of the winds, and Piano 2 the strings:

Example 4b

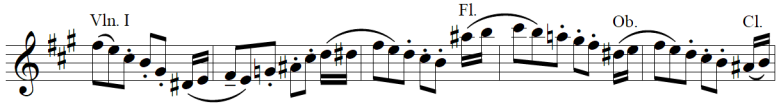


Franz Liszt, *Les Préludes*, two-piano version: mm. 123-126

The first two measures of Piano 2's right hand part include a measured triadic tremolo, and then Liszt opts for a remarkable timbral shift by alternating the hands as they comment on Piano 1's lines. The result is exhilarating.

At other points Liszt shows his knowledge of the piano's voicing possibilities as an orchestrational tool. There is a passage later in the piece where the violin passes a line to solo winds:

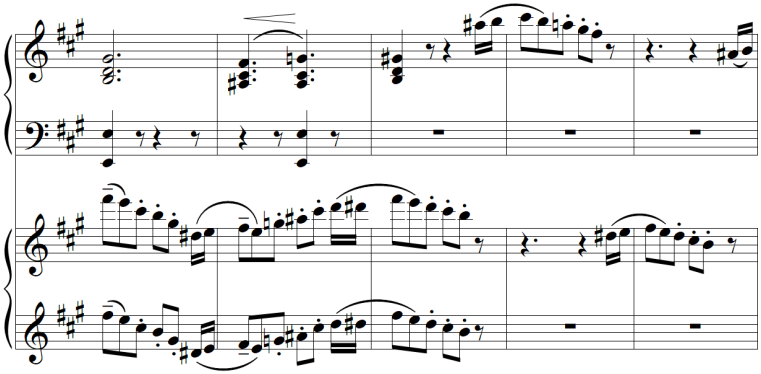
Example 5a



Franz Liszt, *Les Préludes*, orchestral version: mm. 249-53, condensed violins and winds

In the two-piano version Liszt actually doubles the violin line at an upper octave, and then alternates the wind solos between the piano parts:

Example 5b



Franz Liszt, *Les Préludes*, two-piano version: mm. 249-53

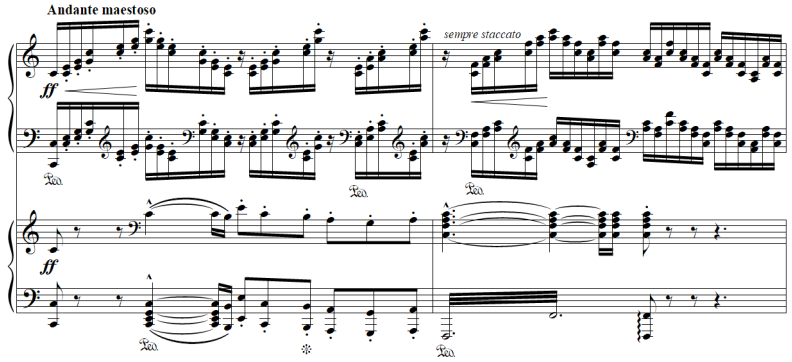
Liszt was also willing to remove accompanimental figures if they might overly complicate the texture, even though they may be more welcome in an orchestral context. Ossia or "alternative" passages were also a go-to practice for Liszt, who used them as a way to entertain variant visions for what the music could sound like. Often these different versions each have considerable merit, so it is a question of preference as to which should be chosen.

As the symphonic poem approaches its climax, further differences between the orchestral and two-piano versions emerge. These include differences in accompaniment, melody and proportion (two measures are dropped and the melodic profile is different at a section in the two-piano version leading to the *Allegro marziale animato*). Each is effective in its own way, but this is another indicator that Liszt may have been working with one version that was not "final."

We will close with one last example of something that Liszt sometimes does in his transcriptions that I admire, which is vary the setting of a recurrence of a passage that has the same music (or nearly the same music) in the original. This happens with the grand *Andante maestoso* theme, which, although there are important differences in the orchestral parts, is essentially the same in figuration and rhythm at each occurrence. Instead of writing the same thing twice, Liszt gives us the following treatment of the "same" music:

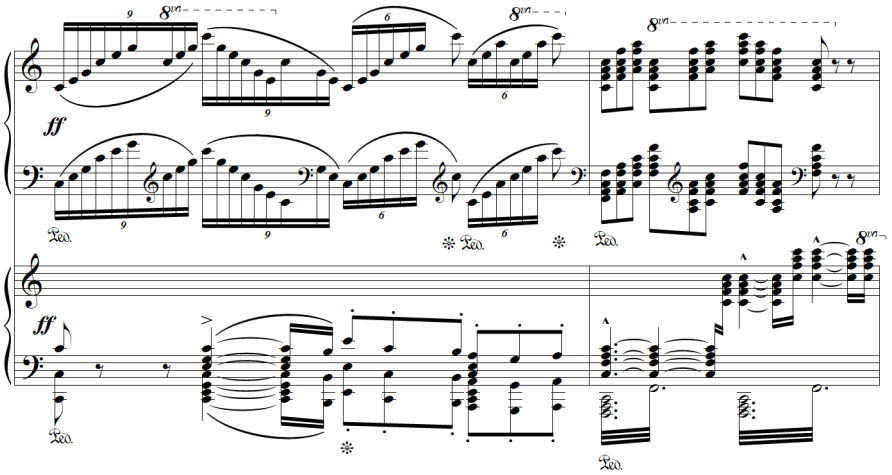
Example 6

a)



Franz Liszt, *Les Préludes*, two-piano version: mm. 35-36

b)



Franz Liszt, *Les Préludes*, two-piano version: mm. 405-406

Liszt uses variation as a form of development, allowing for a climactic buildup of sound that is differentiated from the earlier instantiation, as big as that was. In effect it is a brilliant means of emulating on the pianos the powerful sound of which an orchestra is capable.

Ludwig van Beethoven / Liszt, Symphony no. 9 in D Minor

"Freude, schöner Götterfunken" ("Joy, beautiful spark of divinity")
"Seid umschlungen, Millionen" ("Be embraced, you millions")[13]

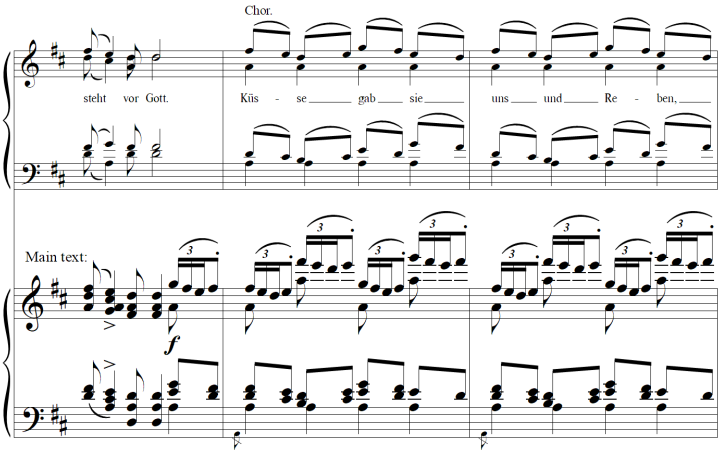
Beethoven's final symphony came over a decade after the composition of the eighth, and was his swan song to orchestral music. Books have been written about this epochal work in the literature, and countless gallons of ink have been spilled in both exploring the music and laying claim to the mantle of Beethoven's legacy. One need look no further than the competing claims of Wagner and Brahms to see what was at stake. But for our purposes here, we will be listening to this music with fresh ears, seeking fresh insights from a work that has never ceased being relevant. Our vehicle for this new exploration is the two-piano version of Beethoven's ninth symphony as transcribed by Franz Liszt, whose Beethoven transcriptions are without parallel in the cornucopia of arrangements that have been made over the years of his music.

One aspect of transcription that is evident in Liszt's work is his desire for musical clarity, even when rendering the most difficult passages. This is partly why he balked at the prospect of tackling the Finale to Beethoven's ninth symphony in a transcription for a single piano, after having accomplished the feat with the other eight symphonies. As Liszt protested, "But to screw both parts, the instrumental and vocal, into two hands cannot be done either à peu pres or à beaucoup près!"[14] His solution to the difficulty of incorporating the choral component with the instrumental on a single keyboard was a complicated one, and at times involved the use of up to six staves at one time, with the main text doing what it could to present a performance version, and the other staves showing what was important to voice, or giving a context that was needed for the understanding of the primary text. For instance, consider the entrance of the chorus at measure 77 of the Allegro assai "Ode to Joy" setting (at "Küsse gab sie…"):

13 Friedrich Schiller, extracted from "An die Freude," as quoted in Lockwood, Lewis, *Beethoven: The Music and the Life*, paperback edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2003), 412. Lewis Lockwood points to the confluence of these "Ode to Joy" stanzas at a climactic point in the Finale.

14 Liszt, writing to Breitkopf & Härtel about the desired solo piano version. As quoted in Kim, 50.

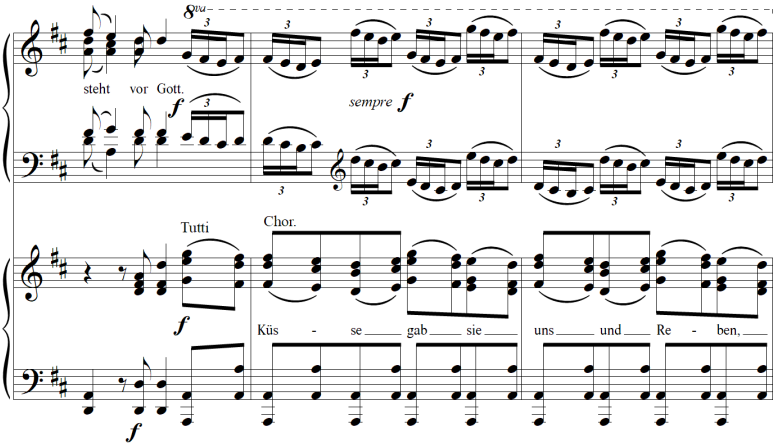
Example 7a



Beethoven/Liszt, Symphony no. 9 in D minor, op. 125, version for solo piano, IV, *Allegro assai*: mm. 76-78

The top two staves are not to be played. Liszt covers the content of those chorus parts in essence but not exactly in the left hand, while the right is free to play adapted trill figuration. Performers I know who have tackled this solo piano version have occasionally integrated some of the music from the extra staves (distinct from *ossia* or "alternative" options that pepper Liszt's scores), or bypass some of the difficulty by performing with vocal soloists in a remarkable chamber version of the piece. Liszt had fewer concerns about the two-piano version of the ninth symphony, because he had been able to divide the instrumental and vocal parts between the pianos, covering everything that was necessary. Consider the same passage in the earlier 2-piano version:

Example 7b



Beethoven/Liszt, Symphony no. 9 in D minor, op. 125, version for two pianos, IV, *Allegro assai*: mm. 76-78

The solution for two pianos, as can be seen, offers cleaner roles for each pianist and a greater presence for the melody and bass. Even so, what Liszt was still able to accomplish with the solo piano setting was remarkable.

Beethoven had originally planned to compose a "symphonic triptych" at the time he wrote the seventh and eighth symphonies, and indeed his early sketches for the D minor symphony date from this time.[15] Lewis Lockwood even notes the existence of a much earlier sketch for a "D-minor symphony" from the 1804 "Eroica" sketchbook.[16] There is justifiable speculation that Beethoven had been planning a companion symphony to the choral when he did commence work on the idea more earnestly, including a verbal description from 1818 and some sketches from 1822.[17] While it is unclear if Beethoven ever seriously entertained not keeping the choral finale once he had set his mind to it, he did sketch material labeled "Finale instromentale," and ultimately used the main theme for this in his op. 132 string quartet.[18]

The symphony was mostly composed during the space of only 9 months, between May 1823 and February 1824, though sketches for the scherzo date back to 1815/16. When Beethoven revisited the idea of a new symphony when discussing a possible commission from the London Philharmonic Society in 1817, he sketched some structural elements that would ultimately become part of the final work, including the idea of using text.[19] The symphony was premiered in Vienna on May 7, 1824 at the Kärntnerthortheater.[20] This was not without controversy, as the English had expected initial rights to the work. Beethoven had intended to dedicate the symphony to Alexander I of Russia, but the leader died before it could be accomplished, so the honor went to Frederick William III of Prussia. Beethoven was less than impressed with his compensation—a ring that wasn't worth all that much.[21] The issue of dedication was a complicated one in the case of the Symphony no. 9; as Grove put it, "There exists, however, another dedication of the Symphony, to a body who had more right to that honour than was possessed by King or Kaiser—namely the Philharmonic Society of London."[22] This organization actually paid Beethoven for the manuscript and the exclusive rights to perform the work for eighteen months. That this was not honored is evident by the premiere occurring in Vienna, and the first London performance not actually taking place until 1825.

In any event, the premiere, unusually for Beethoven, ended up being a triumph despite the usual lack of rehearsal time. Two of the soloists, Henriette Sontag and Caroline Unger, had a difficult time with the parts and called Beethoven the "tyrant

15 Caeyers, Jan, *Beethoven: A Life*, transl. Brent Annable (United States: University of California Press, 2020), 351.

16 Lockwood, Lewis, *Beethoven's Symphonies: An Artistic Vision* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2015), 194.

17 Lockwood *Beethoven Symphonies*, 195-7.

18 Ibid., 198.

19 Caeyers, 488.

20 Caeyers, 482 & 485.

21 Caeyers, 494.

22 Grove, George, *Beethoven and His Nine Symphonies*, reprint of third edition from 1898 by Novello, Ewer and Company (United States, Dover Publications, 2012), 332.

of all singing organs."[23] The performance involved three conductors: Michael Umlauf was the principal conductor, Ignaz Schuppanzigh (the famed eponymous quartet violinist) led the instrumental forces, and Beethoven was relegated to giving tempos and generally being ignored to the side.[24] The premiere was among the most successful of Beethoven's career; after the performance the audience went wild but Beethoven did not notice since his back was to them, and had to be shown by one of the singers. As Jan Caeyers puts it, "[performers] and public alike were transported by the exhilarating final crescendo leading into the glorious apotheosis, after which the audience erupted into wild and rapturous applause, waving hats and white handkerchiefs—a gesture that must have brought immense joy to the unhearing Beethoven."[25]

There is an account that Beethoven had considered setting Schiller's "Ode to Joy" in the early 1790s, and he may have considered it at other points as well, but it was not until 1822 that he adapted the poem for his use in the symphony.[26] Beethoven made judicious cuts to the poem, excising the overt references to drinking and politics.[27] In his sketchbooks Beethoven annotated the appearance of the first three movements' material in his own running commentary. As Caeyers relays, "Beethoven's comment on the first fragment reads, 'No, this won't do—I require something more pleasing.' The Scherzo citation also meets with disapproval: 'Nor this—it is no better, merely livelier.' Even the reprise of the idyllic Adagio cannot satisfy him: 'No, again, it is too tender and sweet. I need something brighter, more cheerful… I shall proceed to sing something of my own… I ask that you join in with me.'" Once he gets to the "Ode to Joy" theme he announces "Ha, this is it! The joy I seek—I have found it."[28] It is always somewhat comforting to find that this type of planning was taking place to produce a work you admire; it both humanizes the composer and forces the realization that they must have possessed a profound ability to self-critique and edit in order to arrive at their end result.

Looking at the music, we will focus on Liszt's adaptation of Beethoven's score, instead of a customary analysis of the symphony. The piece opens somewhere deep in the cosmos, with the elements churning together and accreting to form the principal theme, which Lockwood describes as "a theme that seems to be carved in granite."[29] Liszt presents this opening material with a nebulous sound cloud in the second piano, out of which the first specks of material emerge from the other piano:

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23 As quoted in Caeyers, 486. Another difficulty Beethoven faced in his preparations for the premiere had to do with preparing the parts—the bane of any composer. Beethoven had trouble with copyists, especially since his favorite one, Wenzel Schlemmer, had passed away. A year after the premiere of the ninth symphony he "…wondered whether there might not be a way to 'use a stereotype technique to reproduce one's work automatically, so as to be free from these accursed copyists.'" As quoted in Caeyers, 483.

24 Ibid., 486.

25 Ibid., 487.

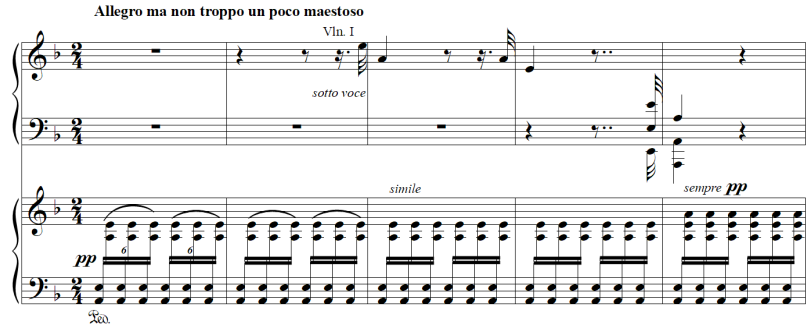
26 Ibid., 490.

27 Ibid., 491.

28 Caeyers, 493, including quotes adapted from Gustav Nottebohm's work.

29 Lockwood *Beethoven Symphonies*, 208.

Example 8

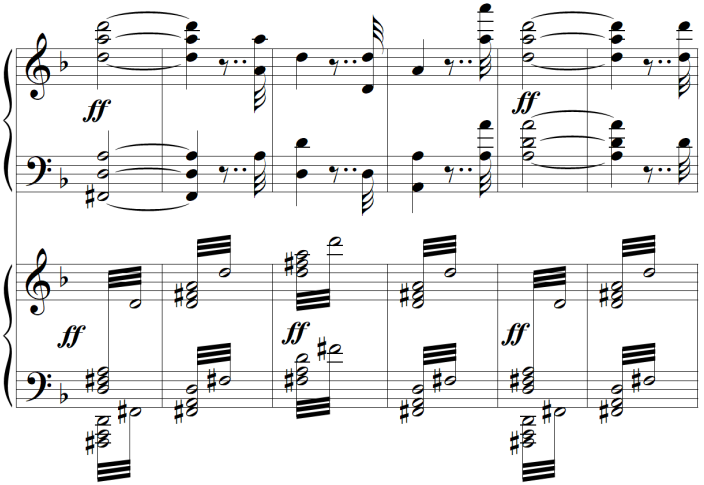


Beethoven/Liszt, Symphony no. 9 in D minor, op. 125, two-piano version, I: opening

In general Liszt makes practical use of the instruments at hand, dividing up the winds and strings between the two pianos for a call-and-response effect. He labels them as such in the score, and the effect is both sonically and visually effective. The differentiation between piano sounds may not be as great as that between the winds and the strings, but keeping the lines intact allows each player to present the material as an individual, and not just a composite super-piano.

Over the course of the first movement the texture given in Example 8 is developed, with a remarkable arrival happening at the recapitulatory moment:

Example 9



Beethoven/Liszt, Symphony no. 9 in D minor, op. 125, two-piano version, I: mm. 301-6

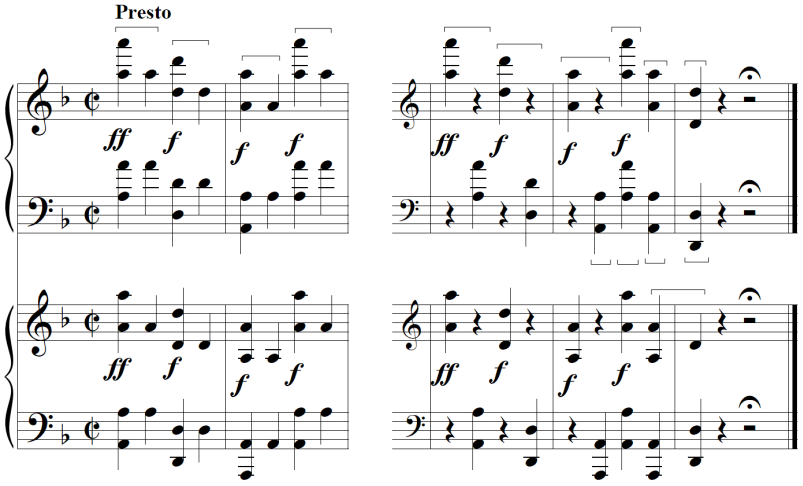
This spot has been described as an earth-shattering moment, rending the heavens apart with its force. In David Levy's book *Beethoven: The Ninth Symphony*, he writes: "The recapitulation of this first movement is as unexpected as it is astonishing. Recapitulations normally represent an area of affirmation and stability after the

turbulence of tonal meandering… Never before had a composer destabilized this critical formal juncture as does Beethoven with his first-inversion D major triad. And never before had a major chord sounded so apocalyptic! A sense of arrival is unequivocal, but the effect is, at the same time, profoundly disturbing."[30] By the close of the movement, the forces have united in a unison statement in barren octaves.

The scherzo would be the largest Beethoven would ever write, and harkens back to the world of the seventh symphony with its relentless rhythmic drive. The music of the scherzo erupts at once into a single fireball of an idea, grounded by the surprising use of timpani in the initial statement. That such an eruption can be followed by a five-voice fugue based on the introduced motive shows that these tectonic forces are nevertheless grounded by Beethoven's mastery of technique. This movement is a real tour-de-force for the pianists. Liszt is generally pretty diplomatic about spreading the challenges between the players, but there are occasions when he does so in order to provide the potential for musical variety. For instance, during a short repeated section in the trio, instead of simply repeating the measures, Liszt gives the same passage to the other pianist to play where the repeat would have been. This ends up resonating with the call and response tactics he employs throughout the transcription between the two pianos.

Occasionally there is no avoiding tricky moments, but Liszt nevertheless does what he can to help make coordination easier. Example 10 shows the opening measures of the last *Presto* of the movement next to the final measures. Both involve similar hand positions (indicated by brackets; those labeled in Piano 1 apply to those in Piano 2 except where marked differently), but Liszt makes the final setting a bit more incisive and easier to pull off until the last three notes:

Example 10



Beethoven/Liszt, Symphony no. 9 in D minor, op. 125, two-piano version, II: final *Presto*
13 mm. from end, and 3 mm. from end

30 Levy, David Benjamin, *Beethoven: The Ninth Symphony* (United States: Schirmer Books), 1995, 61.

But what must we lose if we never risk anything? For the transcriber and composer these decisions are made with a tacit understanding that the bold may flub, and that is okay. It should be noted that the sudden return of this interruptive gesture at the end of the scherzo foreshadows the kind of rejection that the musical spheres of the first three movements will experience in the finale, before the introduction of the "An die Freude" theme.

The *Adagio molto cantabile* is another movement of profound beauty, sharing some elements in common with the majestic *Adagio sostenuto* of the "Hammerklavier" sonata, heard earlier in our (Re)Hearing Beethoven Festival. For Berlioz, Beethoven's fast music is great and all, but his slow movements he describes as "extra-human meditations."[31] Liszt continues the expected alternation of winds and strings between the pianos where appropriate, and we sense some other similarities to the *Adagio* of the "Hammerklavier," especially in the interaction between an increasingly florid melody and its accompaniment. Another point that comes to mind when considering this movement has to do with hearing piano music in the same register. In this, two pianos have an advantage over one. It seems obvious, but you may not realize how much one misses, when playing complicated four-hand or solo piano music, the ability to articulate and hear several distinct lines within the same register with clarity.

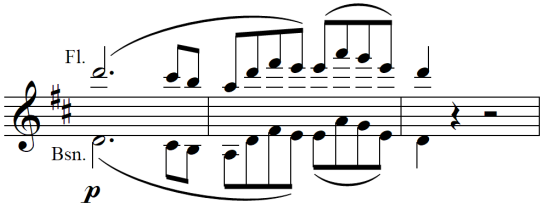
The sublime is interrupted by the profane, in a gesture that Wagner referred to as the *Schreckensfanfare* ("fanfare of terror").[32] This jolting material is presented in the winds, brass and timpani before leading to the multipart introduction of the finale. Cello and bass recitatives are interspersed within a catalog of reminiscences, referenced above, with the instrumental recitatives serving as declamatory arbiters of what music will be allowed to propagate in the finale. In Liszt's version, after one piano does recitative work, Liszt the egalitarian gives the main theme at the *Allegro assai* to the other piano.

Occasionally Liszt will leave out appearances of instruments at certain octaves, presumably in an effort to control the dramatic impact of differentiating statements of material or reserving a register for a particular moment. After another *Schreckensfanfare* we arrive at the famous entrance of "O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!" As a bonus in the video of Soyeon Kate Lee and Ran Dank, the German text will be shown on the screen while the pianists play the vocal lines.

It took some time for Beethoven to work out his deceptively simple "Ode to Joy" theme,[33] despite having glanced and winked at it with one of the themes in the Choral Fantasy way back in 1808. Beethoven's varying presentations of the material provide excellent opportunities for Liszt to differentiate the writing in the two-piano version as well. It may again be out of a desire to reserve particular registers, but occasionally Liszt will simplify what was an interesting texture in the orchestral version, yielding a clearer presentation of the material. As an example, consider that Liszt set the flute and bassoon line of Example 11a smack in the register between the two that Beethoven wrote:

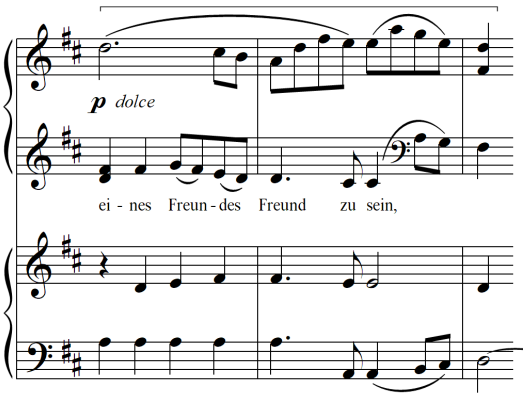
31 Lockwood *Beethoven Symphonies*, 214.
32 Levy, 93.
33 Lockwood *Beethoven Symphonies*, 215.

Example 11
a)



Beethoven, Symphony no. 9 in D minor, op. 125, orchestral version, IV:
Allegro assai mm. 35-37, flute and bassoon

b)

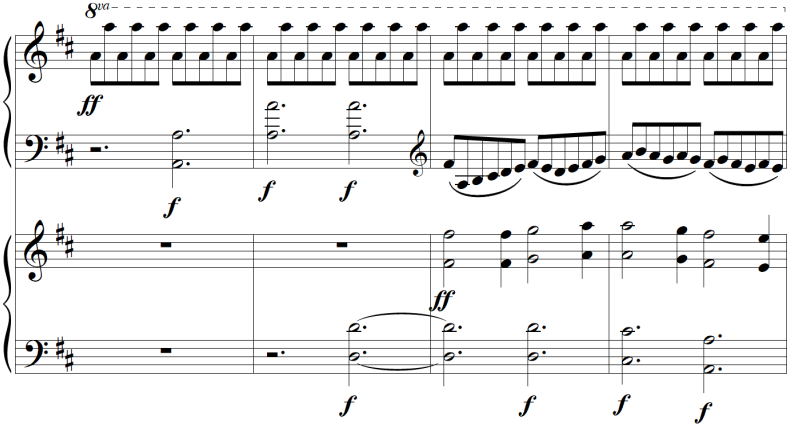


Beethoven/Liszt, Symphony no. 9 in D minor, op. 125, two-piano version, IV:
Allegro assai mm. 35-37

Liszt was well known for recreating an orchestra at the piano, but in addition to simulating big sounds, this included using the piano's ability to create beautiful, quiet textures. We find one of those spots in the misterioso tremolo passage alongside delicate triplet chords just prior to the brilliant *Allegro energico* section.

Sometimes less is more when it comes to presenting the essence of the music. Later in the Allegro energico Liszt drops the upper first violin line to avoid a series of runs in tenths, and further distills the texture to the necessary elements without decreasing excitement. The octave tremolo in the treble sets the stage for the passage:

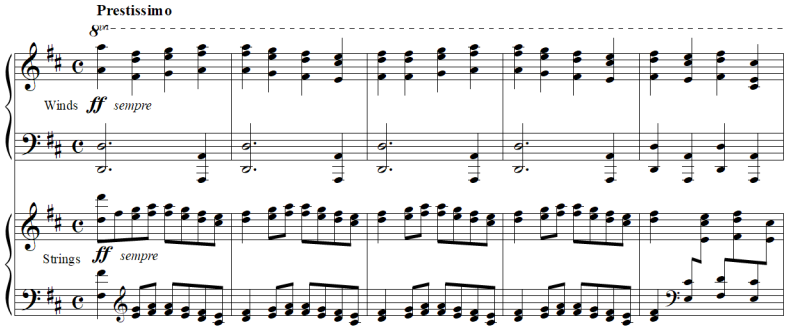
Example 12

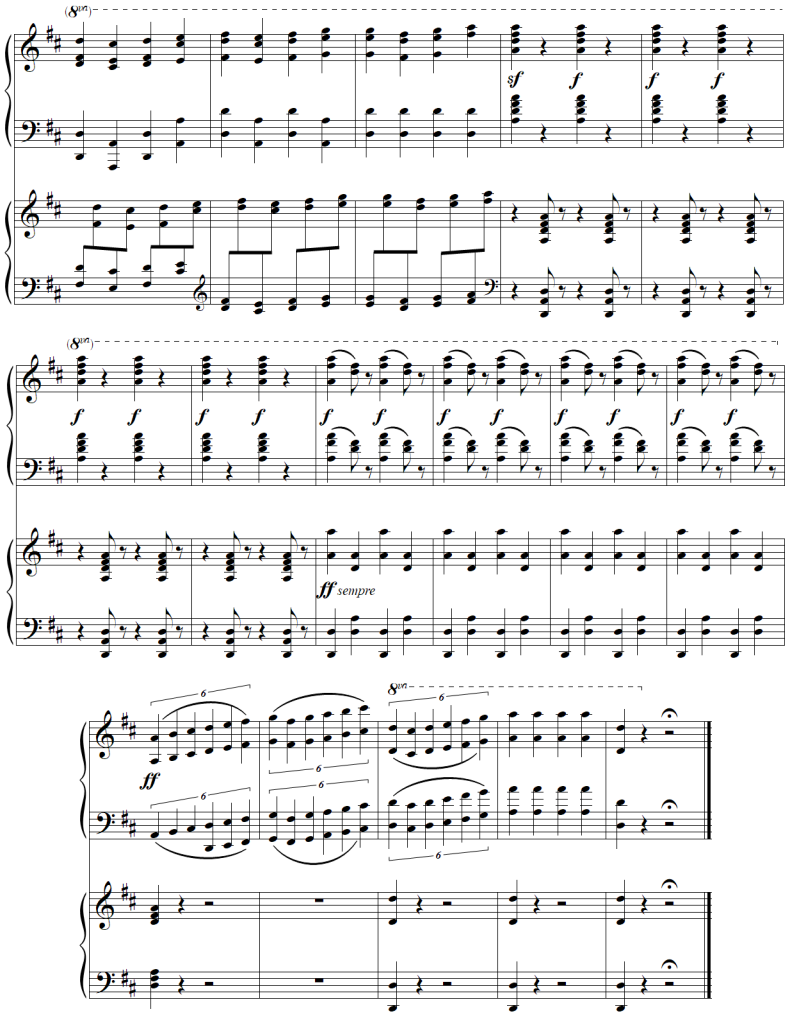


Beethoven/Liszt, Symphony no. 9 in D minor, op. 125, two-piano version, IV: *Allegro energico* mm. 64-67

The ecstatic ending *Prestissimo* is a veritable catalog of smart decisions on Liszt's part, with each part independently playable at tempo and together providing a raucous romp through exciting figurations. Piano 1 is entrusted with the double octaves in the last measures (in keeping with the wind/strings division of the work as a whole), while Piano 2 is there as a failsafe to ensure the final D's are resoundingly struck. I marvel at Liszt's ability to create such an effective performance piece without the benefit of the vocal parts, and I suspect that he enjoyed the challenge; it certainly seems that way given his energetic adaptation of the music. We will let Beethoven have the last word, via Liszt, with the closing *Prestissimo* of the ninth symphony:

Example 13





Beethoven/Liszt, Symphony no. 9 in D minor, op. 125, two-piano version, IV: *Prestissimo* to end

David Plylar
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About the Artists

Technically dazzling and intellectually probing artistry exemplify **Ran Dank**'s pianism and musicality—captivating audiences and critics alike. Notable performances during Ran Dank's 2019-2020 season included appearances at the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., the Hawaii Concert Society, Purdue Convocations, Gina Bachauer Concert Series, two consecutive recitals at the Pro Musica series in San Miguel de Allende in Mexico, and a collaboration with Jayce Ogren and the Westchester Philharmonic.

Other recent performances have included recitals at the San Francisco Performances Series, Gilmore, Ravinia, Carnegie Hall's Zankel and Weill Halls, Steinway Hall, Gardner Museum, Kennedy Center, Town Hall, Yale School of Music, Phillips Collection, Morgan Library, Pro Musica in San Miguel de Allende (Mexico) and Portland Ovations, and have garnered critical acclaim from *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. Dank has performed as a soloist with the orchestras of Cleveland, Sydney, St. Luke's, Portland, Eugene, Toledo, Hawaii, Kansas City, Vermont, Charleston, Jerusalem, Valencia, Phoenix, and Hilton Head, among others, working under the batons of Michael Stern, Jahja Ling, Michael Christie, Kirill Karabits, Jun Märkl, Pinchas Zukerman, Jorge Mester, Jaime Laredo, and Ken-David Masur. His chamber music festival appearances have included Santa Fe, Seattle, Chanel in Tokyo, Great Lakes, Bridgehampton, Cooperstown, Mänttä, Bowdoin, Maverick, Skaneateles, and Montreal, and he has collaborated with luminaries in the field such as Paul Watkins, Augustin Hadelich, Eugene Drucker, Jaime Laredo, Sharon Robinson, James Ehnes, and the Orion, Shanghai, Takács, and Dover String Quartets. Dank's recent performance of the monumental set of variations by Frederic Rzewski, *The People United Will Never Be Defeated!*, at the University of Chicago was selected as one of the top ten performances of 2017 by the *Chicago Classical Review*.

Dank is an ardent advocate of contemporary music, and in recent seasons has performed Kevin Puts' piano concerto *Night*, the Tobias Picker concerto *Keys to the City*, and William Bolcom's Pulitzer-winning set of *Twelve New Etudes*, and has given, alongside pianist and wife Soyeon Kate Lee, the world premieres of Rzewski's *Four Hands* and Alexander Goehr's *Seven Impromptus*. This season Dank and Lee are featuring the world premiere of *Tango* for four hands by multiple GRAMMY-nominated pianist and composer Marc-André Hamelin.

First prize winner of the 2010 Naumburg International Piano Competition and the 2004 Concert Artist Guild International Competition, Korean-American pianist **Soyeon Kate Lee** has been lauded by *The New York Times* as a pianist with "a huge, richly varied sound, a lively imagination and a firm sense of style" and by the *Washington Post* for her "stunning command of the keyboard."

Highlights of the 2019-2020 season included appearances at the National Gallery where she gave the world premiere of Marc-Hamelin's *Tango* with Ran Dank, as well as the Gina Bachauer Concert Series, Purdue Convocations, Rockefeller University, Hawaii Concert Society, Corning Civic Music, Cleveland Art Museum, and Rob Kapilow's "What Makes It Great" at New York's Merkin Hall. She also returned to the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Carlos Miguel Prieto and collaborated in concert with the Escher and Daedalus String Quartets.

Lee has been rapturously received as guest soloist with the Cleveland Orchestra and the London Symphony Orchestra, as well as the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, San Diego Symphony, symphony orchestras of Columbus, Bangor, Boca Raton, Eugene, Wyoming, Bozeman, Hawaii, Wheeling, Cheyenne, Napa Valley, Scottsdale, Abilene, Naples, Santa Fe and Shreveport in the United States; and the Daejeon Philharmonic Orchestra (South Korea), Ulsan Symphony Orchestra (South Korea), Orquesta de Valencia (Spain) and the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional (Dominican Republic), including performances under the batons of Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, Jahja Ling, Jorge Mester and Otto-Werner Mueller.

Past recital appearances include New York City programs at Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall and Weill Recital Hall, Merkin Concert Hall, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts' Alice Tully Hall, Washington's Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Cleveland's Severance Hall, the Ravinia Festival's "Rising Stars" series, Auditorio de Musica de Nacional in Madrid, tour of the Hawaiian Islands, Krannert Center, Herbst Theatre, and Finland's Mänttä Music Festival.

A Naxos recording artist, her discography spans two volumes of Scarlatti sonatas, Liszt opera transcriptions, two volumes of Scriabin works, and an upcoming release of Clementi sonatas. Lee's recording of Re!nvented under the E1/Entertainment One (formerly Koch Classics) label garnered her a feature review in *Gramophone* and the Classical Recording Foundation's Young Artist of the Year Award.

Lee is the co-founder and artistic director of Music by the Glass, a concert series dedicated to bringing together young professionals in New York City. A Yamaha Artist, Lee is an Associate Professor of Music in Piano at the Cincinnati-College Conservatory of Music and serves on the piano faculty of the Bowdoin International Music Festival. She lives in Cincinnati with her husband, pianist Ran Dank, and their children, Noah and Ella.

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"The President's Own" United States Marine Band
Music by Beethoven: Symphonies 3 and 7
Virtual Event
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***Saturday, December 5, 2020 at 8:00 pm [Concert]**
Borromeo String Quartet
Music by Beethoven: Symphony no. 8, op. 130 & 133
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***Thursday, December 10, 2020 at 8:00 pm [Concert]**
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Additional video content available starting at 10am on 12/10/20
BONUS: This concert will be available as an augmented reality experience for a limited period of time!

***Friday, December 11, 2020 at 8:00 pm [Concert]**
Verona String Quartet and Adam Golka
Music by Beethoven: Hammerklavier Sonata in Two Versions
Virtual Event (https://loc.gov/concerts/beethovens-hammerklavier.html)
Additional video content available starting at 10am on 12/11/20

***Saturday, December 12, 2020 at 8:00 pm [Concert]**
Ran Dank & Soyeon Kate Lee
Music by Liszt and Beethoven: Symphony no. 9
Virtual Event (https://loc.gov/concerts/dank-lee.html)
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Christopher Taylor
Music by Beethoven: Symphonies 1, 2 and 5
Virtual Event (https://loc.gov/concerts/christopher-taylor.html)
Additional video content available starting at 10am on 12/17/20

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Stradivari Anniversary Concert
Details to be announced
Virtual Event (https://loc.gov/concerts/antonio-stradivari.html)
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