

Sunday, March 1, 2020, 3pm
Hertz Hall

Louis Lortie, *piano*

PROGRAM

Franz Liszt (1811–1886)

Années de pèlerinage

Première année: Suisse, S. 160

La chapelle de Guillaume Tell
Au lac de Wallenstadt
Pastorale
Au bord d'une source
Orage
Vallée d'Obermann
Eglogue
Le mal du pays
Les cloches de Genève: Nocturne

INTERMISSION

Deuxième année: Italie, S. 161

Sposalizio
Il penseroso
Canzonetta del Salvator Rosa
Sonetto 47 del Petrarca
Sonetto 104 del Petrarca
Sonetto 123 del Petrarca
Après une lecture de Dante: Fantasia Quasi Sonata

INTERMISSION

Troisième année, S. 163

Angélus! Prière aux anges gardiens
Aux cyprès de la Villa d'Este I: Threnodie
Aux cyprès de la Villa d'Este II: Threnodie
Les jeux d'aux à la Villa d'Este
Sunt lacrymae rerum/En mode hongrois
Marche funèbre
Sursum corda

This afternoon's concert will last approximately three hours, including two intermissions.

Recordings available on the Chandos and Decca London labels.

Louis Lortie appears by arrangement with Seldy Cramer Artists, Inc.

*Support for this performance provided by the E. Nakamichi Foundation.
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Années de pèlerinage
(*Years of Pilgrimage*)

Franz Liszt

A great man's reputation precedes him, and Franz Liszt followed where his led. One of Europe's most famous and sought-after personalities in the 19th century, he traveled the length and breadth of the Continent, astounding audiences with his piano wizardry. His biographer Sacheverell Sitwell wrote, "There was hardly a country in Europe to which his journeys did not extend. We find him in Seville, in Lisbon, in Copenhagen, all over Poland and Russia, in Hungary, and at Constantinople. The scope of his voyages was without precedent in the history of music." Liszt collected musical images as he traveled, much as did Aaron Copland in the 1930s when he wrote, "Other tourists will pull out their snapshots to show you what a country looks like, but a composer wants to show you what a country *sounds* like." Liszt's most famous "tonal snapshots" are the three volumes of *Années de pèlerinage* (*Years of Pilgrimage*).

Première Année: Suisse (First Year: Switzerland),
S. 160 (1835–36, revised 1848–53)

The first volume of *Années de pèlerinage* contains musical souvenirs of Liszt's travels in Switzerland and Italy in the 1830s. Most of the nine pieces were originally composed in 1835–36 and first published in 1842 as a collection titled *Album d'un Voyageur*. Liszt thoroughly reworked them between 1848 and 1853, and published them in their final form in 1855.

"La chapelle de Guillaume Tell" evokes the legend of the Swiss hero who led the 14th-century struggle to create a free, unified nation, which served as the source of Schiller's play of 1804 that in turn inspired Rossini's 1829 French opera (as well as the spectacular open-air drama that has played in Interlaken since 1912). Liszt headed his score with the traditional motto of Switzerland—"Einer für Alle. Alle für Einen" ("One for All. All for One")—and suggested the country's national spirit with a noble anthem at the start and a central portion based on an authentic alphorn melody, which is echoed above a tremulous and increasingly stormy background. The anthem returns in triumph in

sun-bright C major before the piece closes with a coda that juxtaposes that theme with the final echoes of an alphorn motive.

The halcyon mood of "Au lac de Wallenstadt," named for a small, idyllic Alpine lake an hour southeast of Zurich, is captured in the quotation from Byron's *Childe Harold* with which Liszt headed the score: "... thy contrasted lake/ With the wild world I dwelt in, is a thing/ Which warns me, with its stillness, to forsake/ Earth's troubled waters for a purer spring." Liszt's mistress and traveling companion, Countess Marie d'Agoult, recalled of their visit, "The shores of Lake Wallenstadt detained us for a long time. Franz wrote for me there a melancholy piece, imitative of the sigh of the waves and the cadence of oars, which I have never been able to hear without weeping."

The "Pastorale" is a charming country vignette in alternating stanzas, the first a quick, circling dance-like motive, the second more active, both built above repeated accompaniment figures that suggest the drone of a bagpipe.

The breathless anticipation that comes with the first blooms of springtime is heard in "Au bord d'une source" ("Beside a Spring"), headed by a line from Schiller's poem "Der Frühlings" ("The Flowering"): "In the whispering coolness begins the play of young nature."

"Orage" ("Storm") uses a spectacular show of virtuoso pianism to evoke the gusts and rain of a mountain tempest that Byron equated with human emotion in the lines from his *Childe Harold* that preface the score: "But where of ye, O tempests! is the goal?/ Are ye like those within the human breast?/ Or do ye find at length, like eagles, some high nest?"

The most substantial movement in the "Swiss" collection is the "Vallée d'Obermann" ("Obermann's Valley"), inspired by the epistolary novel *Obermann* (1804) set in Switzerland by the French writer Étienne Pivert de Senancour (1770–1846), who lived in Fribourg during the years following the French Revolution. Both the author and his title character were melancholy, cynical and solitary, qualities that Liszt sought to capture in this tone poem for piano, which he prefaced with two quotations from the novel: "What do I wish? What am I? What

shall I ask of nature? I feel; I exist only to waste myself in unconquerable longings.... Inexpressible sensibility, the charm and the torment of our futile years; vast consciousness of a nature that is everywhere incomprehensible and overwhelming; universal passion, indifference, the higher wisdom, abandonment to pleasure—I have felt and experienced them all.”

“Vallée d’Obermann” uses as its generative process the continuing transformation of a somber descending theme given at the outset, a procedure that was later to become the essential working method for Liszt’s orchestral tone poems. In an essay on Liszt’s early piano works, University of Kentucky faculty member and Liszt authority Ben Arnold gave the following description of this piece’s deeply impassioned expressive path: “The transformations of the first section are of the contemplative type, but at the *Recitativo* the restless and energized quest begins with its turbulent tremolos and impressive octaves. A contrasting transformation begins and conveys the peaceful assurance that something meaningful has been found. The original melody is inverted to create a sublime and glorious moment leading directly into a blissful state.... This joy is cut tragically short by a dramatic pause and an abrupt descending restatement of the opening theme. This epiphany proves to be an illusion, since the final descending statement creates a heartbreaking close to this incredible pursuit. Obermann almost finds life’s answer and the happiness he seeks, only to realize that it is a mirage.”

The “Eglogue” (“Eclogue,” i.e., a short pastoral poem) is modeled on the “Ranz de chèvre,” a type of traditional Swiss “goat herder’s song,” for which another verse from Byron’s *Childe Harold* provides an apposite introduction: “The morn is up again, the dewy morn,/With breath all incense, and with cheek all bloom,/Laughing the clouds away with playful scorn,/And living as if earth contained no tomb!”

“Le mal du pays” (“Homesickness”) embodies both the sentiment of the title and a line from the quotation from Senancour’s *Obermann* Liszt appended to the score: “The Romantic satisfies only profound souls of real sensitivity.”

“Les cloches de Genève: Nocturne” drapes a tender melody upon a subtle, arpeggiated accompaniment suggesting distant tolling bells. Liszt dedicated the original 1835 version of the piece to his daughter Blandine, who was born that year in Geneva.

Deuxième Année: Italia (Second Year: Italy), S. 161 (1837–49)

After a series of dazzling concerts in Paris in the spring of 1837, Liszt and his long-time mistress, Countess Marie d’Agoult, spent the summer with George Sand at her villa in Nohant before visiting their daughter Blandine in Switzerland, where the one-year-old was being raised by Liszt’s mother while he dashed around the Continent, and then descending upon Milan in September. As the birth of their second child approached, they retreated to Lake Como, where Cosima (later the wife of Hans von Bülow before she was stolen away by Richard Wagner) was born on Christmas Eve. They remained in Italy for the next year-and-a-half, making extended visits for performances in Venice, Genoa, Milan, Florence, and Bologna before settling early in 1839 in Rome, where their third child, Daniel, was born on May 9th. Liszt’s guide to the artistic riches of the Eternal City was the famed painter Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, then director of the French Academy at the Villa Medici; Liszt was particularly impressed with the works of Raphael and Michelangelo and the music of the Sistine Chapel. He took home as a souvenir of his Roman holiday the now-famous drawing that Ingres did of him and inscribed to Mme d’Agoult. Liszt’s Italian travels were the inspiration for the series of seven luminous piano pieces that he composed between 1837 and 1849, and gathered together for publication as Book II of his *Années de pèlerinage* in 1858.

Book 1 of the *Années* was largely rooted in the land, people, and history of Switzerland, but Book 2 took as its catalysts Italy’s art and literature. “Sposalizio” was inspired by Raphael’s *The Marriage of the Virgin* and *Il Penseroso (The Thinker)* by the marble statue Michelangelo carved for the tomb of Lorenzo de Medici in Florence. (Liszt demanded that the first edition

of the score include drawings of both works by the German illustrator Robert Kretschmer.) Raphael's painting was done for the Church of San Francesco in Città di Castello, 30 miles north of Perugia, in 1504; it is now held by the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan. The painting depicts the marriage ceremony of Mary and Joseph surrounded by a dozen other sumptuously dressed figures standing before a large, symmetrically tiled plaza (a virtuoso exercise in perspective) capped by a domed circular pavilion. Liszt's "Sposalizio" is a lovely, lyrical bridal song of almost Impressionistic hue (created more than two decades before Debussy was born, however) with suggestions of wedding bells in its peaceful preamble and benediction. "Il pensiero," with its solemnly tolling rhythms, lightless sonorities, and frozen, tiny-interval melodic motion, is the most somber of funeral marches. Liszt associated this deeply introspective music with the inscription on Lorenzo's tomb: "I am thankful to sleep, and more thankful to be made of stone. So long as injustice and shame remain on earth, I count it a blessing not to see or feel; so do not wake me—speak softly!"

Despite its title, the "Canzonetta del Salvatore Rosa" was not based on a song by the eponymous mid-17th-century painter, but is actually from one of more than 300 secular cantatas composed by Giovanni Bononcini (1670–1747), among the most famous, successful, and peripatetic musicians of his time, composer, cellist, teacher, and consultant in music centers and courts throughout Italy, Germany, Austria, England, France, and Portugal. British pianist Christine Stevenson, whose recording of Book 2 of the *Années* received critical acclaim, wrote of Liszt's apparent mis-attribution, "I think that Liszt was very aware of outdoor song in Italy, and perhaps the 'Canzonetta' is a sound bite from the Italian soundscape." Bononcini's *canzonetta* is a carefree marching tune—"Vado ben spesso cangiando loco": "Often I change my state of being/ But I shall never change my feelings./The fire within me will remain the same,/And so will I myself" (the text is inscribed above the melody in the score)—of which Liszt made a straightforward if somewhat elaborated arrangement.

The "Three Sonnets of Petrarch" that occupy the heart of the second set of the *Années de pèlerinage* began as settings for high tenor voice of verses by that esteemed 14th-century poet that Liszt composed in Italy in 1838–39. He transcribed those songs for piano solo in 1845, and published them the following year. Ten years later, he created extended fantasias on the songs' materials for inclusion in the *Années*. His last version of the songs was a revision for low voice done in 1864.

The "Sonnet No. 47" ("Benedetto sia 'l giorno") is, in the words of the noted English pianist and Liszt authority Louis Kentner, "a song of thanksgiving for the pleasures and sufferings of first love." It captures well the mood of Petrarch's poem: "Blessed be the day, the month, the year, the season, the hour, the place ... where I was found and enslaved by two fair eyes."

According to Kentner, the "Sonnet No. 104" ("Pace non trovo, e non ho da far guerra"—"I find no peace, and know not how to make war") speaks of "restlessness, tears, self-hate, vain search for inner peace—all caused by the loved one. ... It is understandable that pianists revel in its eloquence."

The dreamy mood of the "Sonnet No. 123" ("T vidi in terra angelici costumi") evokes perfectly Petrarch's gracious words and images: "I saw on earth figures of angelic grace ... no leaf stirred on the bough, and all was celestial harmony."

Liszt and Marie were avid readers of Dante Alighieri, the patriarch of Italian literature, and while in Rome in 1839, Liszt was moved by the "Inferno" in the poet's *Divine Comedy* to compose his "Après une Lecture du Dante" ("After a Reading of Dante"). The work was thoroughly revised 10 years later, and included in Book 2 of the *Années de pèlerinage*. (*The Divine Comedy* inspired a full symphony from Liszt in 1855–56.) "Après une lecture du Dante" is largely constructed from two contrasting subjects, perhaps depicting heaven and hell. The first consists of transformations of two motives: an ominous augmented fourth (a harmonically unsettling leap known since the Middle Ages as the "devil's interval") and anxious chroma-

ic octaves evoking the descent into the abyss; the contrasting second subject is serene, idyllic, and, well, heavenly. Only a few moments of calm recalling the second subject slow the furious pace of this unforgivingly virtuosic evocation of Dante's weird and horrible visions as it drives toward a dramatic and ferocious close.

Troisième Année (Third Year), S. 163 (1867–77)

In the early 1860s, after four decades of one of the most flamboyantly sensational careers ever granted to a musician, Liszt sought a more contemplative life. Though he was still acclaimed as a peerless pianist, excellent conductor, and influential figure in European musical life, he experienced some serious reverses in the years surrounding his fiftieth birthday, in 1861: he resigned his post as music director at Weimar because of opposition to his artistic policies as well as the growing local animosity toward his long-time, and still unwed, relationship with Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein; his recent orchestral compositions were receiving scant attention; Brahms, Joachim, and other leading musicians published a manifesto attacking the alleged excesses of his music as well as that of Wagner and other "New German" composers; his son Daniel died in 1859, his daughter Blandine in 1862. In 1860, Liszt made out his last will and testament, and the next year he went with the Princess to Rome, where they hoped she would be granted a divorce by Pope Pius IX so that they could marry on the composer's fiftieth birthday, October 22nd. Their petition was denied and they never spoke of marriage again, even after her husband died in 1864. Liszt spent much of 1863 cloistered in the monastery of the Madonna del Rosario at Monte Mario, receiving the religious instruction that led to him being granted "minor orders," which allowed him to perform a few small priestly duties but not to officiate at Mass or to hear confession. The change in Liszt's attitude toward his life was paralleled by a reconsideration of his musical style, and several of his late piano works are marked by a sobriety, austerity, introspection, and harmonic daring that leave far behind the virtuoso pyrotechnics of his touring years and look ahead to the atonal modernisms of the

early 20th century. The third volume of the *Années de pèlerinage*, published in 1883, was composed during those years of loss, contemplation, and religious awakening.

The selections in Book 3 of the *Années* were mostly written when Liszt stayed for extended periods at the sumptuous Villa d'Este in Tivoli, 20 miles northeast of Rome. The history of that storied place began in 1550, when Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, grandson of Pope Alexander VI and son of the Pope's daughter, Lucrezia Borgia, lost a power struggle to occupy the throne of St. Peter's to Julius III. Julius appointed Ippolito Governor of Tivoli, effectively sending him into internal exile, since such positions required that the magistrate never leave his jurisdiction. Ippolito spent the remaining 22 years of his life ameliorating his velvet captivity by renovating the old Benedictine convent at Tivoli into an opulent *palazzo* and then surrounding it with some of the most spectacular gardens in Italy, widely famed for their groves of cypress trees and their fountains and water features. The Villa d'Este played host and home to church figures, artists, and other important guests over the centuries, and by the 1850s, it had come to have as its chief occupant Archbishop Gustav Adolph Hohenlohe, a scion of a noble German family who had been ordained as a priest in 1849 and was then insinuating himself into the hierarchy of the Vatican. (He was made a cardinal in 1866.)

In 1859, Franz Liszt and Hohenlohe met. During the following years, when Liszt suffered serious personal and professional reverses, he turned strongly to religion for solace, and he and Hohenlohe became fast friends. Hohenlohe presided at the ceremony in 1865 at which Liszt was granted minor orders in the church, and he invited the composer to stay at the Villa d'Este whenever he was in Rome. Liszt frequently and gratefully partook of the beauty and tranquility of Tivoli over the next two decades, and during a visit in 1877 he composed two pieces inspired by the cypresses at the Villa d'Este and another one—"Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este"—by its fountains, which he included along with four others of somber religiosity in the Third Book of the *Années*.

The cypress tree grows tall, slender, and elegant, as though reaching for the heavens, and it has symbolized directing the thoughts to some higher ideal since ancient times. The cypress has been especially associated with death as a vector directing the soul to its unknowable next life, and has been favored in Muslim and European cemeteries for centuries. The Villa d'Este was especially noted for its cypress trees, and Liszt reflected his impressions of them in the two pieces he titled "Aux cyprès de la Villa d'Este" (1877); he indicated that both were *thrénodies*, songs of mourning, a term derived from the Greek *threnos* ("wailing") and *oide* ("ode" or "song"). Both are largely austere and contemplative, though the first has a vehement outburst as its central episode while the second has a beatific episode that is echoed, as though in memory, at the movement's close.

The third piece in the final book of *Années* that is associated with the Villa d'Este is "Les jeux d'eau" (1877), a path-breaking experiment in the musical depiction of water and light that proved to be an important source for the keyboard and harmonic techniques of the Impressionists. Liszt, however, also intended that its opalescent strains have a religious symbolism, which he indicated by appending to the score a quotation from Chapter 4 of the Gospel of St. John: "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Preceding the Villa d'Este pieces in Book 3 is "Angelus! Prière aux anges gardiens" ("Angelus! Prayer to Guardian Angels," 1877), in which Liszt recalled his memories of the evening bells rung in Roman monasteries during the recitation of the Annunciation text, "Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariae" ("The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary").

"Sunt lacrymae rerum. En mode hongrois" (1872) takes its title and expressive character

from a line in Virgil's *Aeneid*: "The world is a world of tears and the burdens of mortality touch the heart." "In the Hungarian manner" refers to the movement's gapped-scale melodic leadings, a trait of the music of Liszt's native land. The piece was dedicated to the brilliant pianist and conductor Hans von Bülow, Liszt's one-time son-in-law.

"Marche funèbre" (1867) was a tribute to Maximilian I, a younger brother of Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph I, who had accepted an offer from Napoleon III in 1864 to promote the French interest, supported by Austria, in establishing a friendly monarchy in the New World. Maximilian awarded Liszt the Grand Cross of the Order of Guadalupe in June 1866. When he was overthrown and executed by republican forces the following year, Liszt wrote this piece in his memory. He headed the score with a quote from the Roman poet Propertius: "In magnis et voluisse sat est" ("In great affairs it is enough even to have been willing").

"Sursum corda" ("Lift Up Your Hearts," 1877), a phrase taken from the preface to the Roman Catholic Mass, evokes tolling bells as the background for repetitions of a short, leaping melodic phrase that together build to a cathartic close for the *Années de pèlerinage*.

In his preface to the 1883 publication of Book 3 of *Années de pèlerinage*, Liszt wrote, "As instrumental music progresses, it will cease to be a mere combination of sounds and will become a poetic language more apt than poetry itself, perhaps, at expressing that within our souls which transcends the common horizon, all that eludes analysis, all that moves in hidden depths of imperishable desire and infinite intuition. [This volume] is written for the few rather than for the many—not ambitious of success, but of the approval of those who conceive art as having other uses than the beguiling of idle hours, and asks more from it than the futile distraction of a passing entertainment."

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For over three decades, French-Canadian pianist **Louis Lortie** has performed worldwide, building a reputation as one of the world's great pianists. He extends his interpretative voice across a broad spectrum of repertoire rather than choosing to specialize in one particular style, and his performances and award-winning recordings attest to his remarkable musical range.

Lortie is in demand internationally. This season he returns to Australia and New Zealand, performing with the NZSO on tour, and with the Sydney and Adelaide Symphony Orchestras. He also returns to OSESP Sao Paulo, performing with the orchestra and in recital, and will embark on a recital tour of Russia following a recent triumphant Chopin Études performance in Moscow. He returns to the Philadelphia Orchestra and Nézet-Séguin, and tours with the Toronto Symphony and Sir Andrew Davis.

His concerts also include returns to the San Francisco Symphony, the Dallas Symphony, the NDR Hamburg, the BBC Symphony, and the orchestras of Atlanta, Milwaukee, and Vancouver. To celebrate Beethoven's 250th birthday year, he performs complete Beethoven sonata cycles and all of the Beethoven concertos in North America and in Europe.

Lortie has made over 45 recordings for the Chandos label, covering repertoire from Mozart to Stravinsky, including a set of the complete Beethoven sonatas; the complete Liszt *Années de pèlerinage*, which was named one of the 10 best recordings of 2012 by the *New Yorker* magazine; and all of Chopin's solo works. His recording of the Lutoslawski Piano Concerto with Edward Gardner and the BBC Symphony received high praise, as did a recent Chopin recording that was named one of the best recordings of the year by the *New York Times*. Recently released albums are *Chopin Waltzes* ("This is Chopin playing of sublime genius"—*Fanfare Magazine*); *Saint-Saens' Africa, Wedding Cake, and Carnival of the Animals* with Neeme Jarvi and the Bergen Philharmonic; and with Helene Mercier, Rachmaninoff's complete works for two pianos and the Vaughn-Williams Concerto for Two Pianos. For the Onyx label, he has recorded two acclaimed albums with violinist Augustin Dumay.

Louis Lortie is Master in Residence at the Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel of Brussels. His long-awaited LacMus International Festival (www.lacmusfestival.com) on Lake Como, Italy, made its debut in 2017. He studied in Montreal with Yvonne Hubert (a pupil of the legendary Alfred Cortot), in Vienna with Beethoven specialist Dieter Weber, and subsequently with Schnabel disciple Leon Fleischer. In 1984, Lortie won First Prize in the Busoni Competition and was also prizewinner at the Leeds Competition. Lortie has lived mostly in Europe in the last decades with homes in Switzerland, Canada, and Italy.