

Franz Liszt and the Birth of Modern Musical Institutions

The reception of Franz Liszt in Danish musical life, 1839–1928

PETER E. NISSEN

Franz Liszt is not a prominent figure in standard accounts of the history of Danish musical life.¹ The most probable reasons for this are that only a few Danish composers have been directly inspired by him in their compositions, and that his works have been granted only moderate exposure by Danish concert institutions. In traditional historiography, composers are singled out for attention in proportion to their status, and the question of why certain composers have become more important than others has rarely been answered convincingly. In research on Danish musical life in the nineteenth century, it has been pointed out that the music of Richard Wagner was very popular in Copenhagen concert life, from the end of the century into the first decades of the next.² It is therefore interesting to investigate why Liszt's music, which in many ways is related to that of Wagner compositionally and aesthetically, did not enjoy the same status. This article is a study of the extent to which Liszt's music achieved or failed to achieve such a breakthrough, and suggests some reasons for these patterns.

In order to answer this question, I have conducted research on the reception of Franz Liszt in Danish musical life from 1839, through the following 90 years, to 1928.³ The year 1839 marks the first public performance in Denmark of a work by Liszt (the transcription of Schubert's *Erlkönig*). 1928 was the year when the composer Rued Langgaard succeeded in giving the first Danish performance of Liszt's symphonic poem *Von der Wiege bis zum Grabe*, in Langgaard's own short-lived *Klassisk Musikforening* (Classical Musical Society), as part of an attempt to revive Liszt's symphonic music within the Danish musical agenda, after years of decline.

My methodical point of departure is the reception categories formulated by Hans Robert Jauß. Jauß describes the aesthetic of reception (*Rezeption*) and effect (*Wirkung*) as 'a process of aesthetic communication' between three instances: author, work and recipient (where 'recipient' includes readers, listeners and viewers, critics,

1 The most influential histories of Danish music are Nils Schiørring, *Musikkens historie i Danmark*, 3 vols. (Copenhagen, 1978) and Kai Aage Bruun, *Dansk musiks historie*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen, 1969).

2 Claus Røllum-Larsen, *Impulser i Københavns koncertrepertoire 1900–1935* (Copenhagen, 2002), i, 86–104.

3 This choice of investigation can also be seen in the light of Michael Saffle's point, that analyses of Liszt's reception can throw new light on Liszt's bad reputation within traditional musicology, see Michael Saffle, 'Liszt's Reputation: the Role of Rezeptionsästhetik', in Angelo Pompilio et al. (eds.), *Atti del XIV Congresso della Società Internazionale de Musicologia Bologna*, 27.8.–1.9. 1987, iii: *Free Papers* (Torino, 1990), 805–10 and Michael Saffle, *Liszt in Germany 1840–1845* (Franz Liszt Studies Series, 2; Stuyvesant, NY, 1994), xi and 203–17.

and audiences).⁴ The analytical focus is a historical comprehension of composer and work, which is created in the union of composer, work, and recipients.⁵

Although Jauß' interest is primarily in the reception of works, the main issue here is the reception in the light of institutional and cultural perspectives. My concentration is on the reception of Liszt among various social and cultural groups in Danish musical culture.

In my approach, the reception of Liszt's works will be related to their genre. This is relevant according to Liszt's own performance of his piano works from his years of travelling.⁶ According to the interpretation of Liszt's symphonic poems in the Danish concert institutions of this time, it is also relevant to interpret Liszt's instrumental music from the perspective of genre, not least in comparison with Wagner's operas.

There is every advantage in dividing the period of reception into three periods of 30 years (i.e., a generation) according to the changes in attitudes towards Liszt's music. The first period (1839–70) can be characterized by the term *introduction* because this was the period when Danish musical culture was introduced to Liszt and his music. The second period (1870–1900) marks Liszt's *breakthrough*, when his work acquired greater acceptance and acknowledgement. The last 28 years (1900–28) may be seen as a *decline* for Liszt's influence in Denmark with a decreasing number of his works being performed (see Table 1).

The reception history of Franz Liszt in Denmark is as yet an unexplored field. One short article about Liszt's influence on Danish musical culture has appeared.⁷ In the last decade, two articles have also focused on Liszt's relationship to Scandinavia.⁸

The following discussion of the reception of Franz Liszt in Denmark is the story of a segment of the repertoire that neither originally belonged to, nor ever became, an accepted part of Danish musical culture. But it also concerns the developing role of modernity in Danish musical culture, an intriguing issue that will be touched

4 '... einen Prozeß ästhetischer Kommunikation ... an dem die drei Instanzen von Autor, Werk und Rezipient (Leser, Zuhörer und Betrachter, Kritiker und Publikum) gleichermaßen beteiligt sind', Hans Robert Jauß, 'Rezeption, Rezeptionsästhetik', in Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer (eds.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, viii (Basel, 1992), 996. I have used the English translation of Jauß' terms *Rezeption* and *Wirkung* according to Robert C. Holub, *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction* (London, 1984), 53–82.

5 Jauß, 'Rezeption, Rezeptionsästhetik', 996–1004. See also Hans Robert Jauß, 'Rückschau auf die Rezeptionstheorie. Ad usum Musicae Scientiae', in Hermann Danuser and Friedhelm Krummacher (eds.), *Rezeptionsästhetik und Rezeptionsgeschichte in der Musikwissenschaft* (Laaber, 1991), 13–36; and Mark Everist, 'Reception Theories, Canonic Discourses, and Musical Value', in Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (eds.), *Rethinking Music* (Oxford, 1999), 379–86.

6 This has been called to attention by Jim Samson, 'The Practice of Early-Nineteenth-Century Pianism', in Michael Talbot (ed.), *The Musical Work: Reality or Invention?* (Liverpool Music Symposium, 1; Liverpool, 2000), 110–27.

7 Bengt Johnsson, 'Liszt og Danmark', *Dansk Musiktidskrift*, 37 (1962), 79–82 and 38 (1963), 81–86. This article was translated into English, 'Liszt and Denmark', *Liszt Society Journal*, 21 (1996), 2–10.

8 Lennart Rabes, 'Liszt's Scandinavian Reputation', in Michael Saffle (ed.), *Liszt and his World* (Analecta Lisztiana, 1; Stuyvesant, NY, 1998), 217–46 and Mária Eckhardt, 'Liszt und die Musik der Skandinavischen Länder', in G.J. Winkler (ed.), *Liszt und die Nationalitäten* (Wissenschaftliche Arbeiten aus dem Burgenland, 93; Eisenstadt, 1996), 151–62.

upon at the end of this investigation.⁹ This will also be put into a broader perspective, through comparison with recent analyses of Liszt's European reception.¹⁰ Much of the Danish reception of Liszt's works is similar to the reception patterns in other European cultures, but the Danish reception can also throw new light on the general interpretation of Liszt, both historical and present.

FIRST PERIOD 1839–1870: THE INTRODUCTION OF LISZT IN DANISH MUSICAL CULTURE

Liszt's arrival in Denmark

In 1839, the Danish capital was about the only place in the country where professional musicians could find venues to perform in. Copenhagen's sole local piano virtuoso, the young German-born pianist Rudolf Wilmers (1821–1878), performed Liszt's transcription of Schubert's *Erlkönig* as part of a concert programme at Det Kongelige Teater (The Royal Theatre) in May 1839. Like many of the virtuosos, Wilmers' performance did not interest the critics, and they probably did not register this new work by Liszt.

In Denmark, Liszt was regarded from the beginning as just another one of the many contemporary virtuosos continuously visiting the city.¹¹ Liszt's visit to Copenhagen in 1841 was part of a concert tour of northern Europe, and he had just participated in the third Northern German Music Festival in Hamburg.¹² Already on 15 July, the day after his arrival, Liszt played at a recital at Christiansborg Palace for the king, Christian VIII. It was wise of Liszt to begin his stay there, because the king's good will would open the city's only venue for public music Det Kongelige Teater for him, something Liszt had already learnt to value, through his experience as a travelling virtuoso: 'One says that this is a very musical town with a court which is sympathetic and benevolent towards us poor musicians.'¹³

9 On the relationship between Liszt and modernity, see Michael Saffle, 'Liszt and the Birth of the New Europe: Reflections on Modernity, Wagner, the Oratorio, and "Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth"', in Michael Saffle and Rossana Dalmonte (eds.), *Liszt and the Birth of Modern Europe – Proceedings of the International Conference held at the Villa Serbelloni, Bellagio (Como) 14–18 December 1998* (Analecta Lisztiana, 3; Hillsdale, NY, 2003), 3–24.

10 In recent years, historical analyses of Liszt reception have been conducted primarily within American musicology, inspired by new approaches from historical cultural studies, for instance by Richard Leppert and Stephen Zank, 'The Concert and the Virtuoso', in James Parakilas (ed.), *Piano Roles – Three Hundred Years of Life with the Piano* (New Haven, 1999), 237–81; by Lawrence Kramer, 'Franz Liszt and the Virtuoso Public Sphere', in *Musical Meaning – Toward a Critical History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2002), 68–99; and by Dana Gooley, *The Virtuoso Liszt* (Cambridge, 2004).

11 Heinrich W. Schwab, 'Kopenhagen als Reiseziel ausländischer Virtuosen', in Christian Meyer (ed.), *Le musicien et ses voyages (Musical Life in Europe 1600–1900. Circulation, Institutions, Representation)* (Berlin, 2003), 144–55.

12 Saffle, *Liszt in Germany*, 110.

13 'C'est une ville très musicale dit-on, et la Cour est tout à fait gracieuses et bienveillante pour nous autres croque notes'. Letter to M. Schlesinger dated 'Copenhague aussitôt débarqué 14 Juillet', quoted in Jacqueline Bellas, 'La Tumultueuse Amitié de F. Liszt et de M. Schlesinger', *Littératures* (Annales de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences humaines de Toulouse, NS 1), 12 (1965), 16–17. The English translation is quoted from Rabes, 'Liszt's Scandinavian Reputation', 217.

<p>1839-1870</p> <p>MAY 1839: <i>Erlkönig</i> performed at a public concert by Rudolf Wilmers</p> <p>JULY 1841: Franz Liszt's visit</p> <p>APRIL 1842: Clara Schumann's visit</p> <p>MAY 1847: Sigismund Thalberg's visit</p> <p>OCTOBER 1857: <i>Les Préludes</i> performed at a private concert</p> <p>JANUARY 1859: <i>Orpheus</i> played in Musikforeningen</p> <p>1870-1900</p> <p>OCTOBER 1871: The first public concert in Denmark by a pupil of Liszt (R. Joseffy)</p> <p>APRIL 1873: The first public performance of a sacred work (<i>Psalm 13</i>)</p> <p>SEPTEMBER 1873: First performance of a Liszt symphonic poem (<i>Les Préludes</i>) since 1859</p> <p>JULY 1886: The death of Franz Liszt, followed by performances of his works, discussed in the press</p> <p>FEBRUARY 1893: Next performance of a Liszt symphonic poem (<i>Les Préludes</i>) in Musikforeningen</p> <p>1900-1928</p> <p>1911: The centenary of Liszt's birth with many concerts</p> <p>JANUARY 1921: The first public performance of <i>Die Ideale</i> in Denmark</p> <p>APRIL 1928: The first public performance of Liszt's last symphonic poem <i>Von der Wiege bis zum Grabe</i> by Rued Langgaard in his own Klassisk Musikforening</p>

Table 1. Important events relating to Liszt reception in Denmark, 1839–1928.

According to Liszt's own letters, and in descriptions by others, his visit to Copenhagen was socially characterized by gatherings in the upper bourgeois circles, where he met leading Danish personalities and artists, such as the composer J.P.E. Hartmann and the poet Hans Christian Andersen. Liszt met Andersen again several times on the artists' respective journeys around Europe.¹⁴ In addition, he met the prominent liberal politician Orla Lehmann, who played an important role in introducing democracy to Denmark in 1849.¹⁵ In this respect, Liszt's behaviour corresponded to other descriptions of his social life in the places he visited on his concert tours.¹⁶

Liszt gave three public concerts in Copenhagen, performing a typical standard programme which consisted mainly of transcriptions and arrangements of popular songs and opera arias (see Table 2).¹⁷ As was common at such events, the theatre

14 Cf. Anna H. Celenza, *Hans Christian Andersen and Music* (Aldershot, 2005) and Inger Sørensen, *H.C. Andersen og komponisterne* (Copenhagen, 2005), 140–57.

15 According to a paragraph in *Aalborg Stiftstidende og Adresseavis*, 29 July 1841 (also quoted in *Fyens Avis og Avertissements-Tidende*, 2 Aug. 1841). See also Claus Bjørn, *Fra reaktion til grundlov – 1800–1850* (Gyldendals og Politikens Danmarkshistorie, 10; 2nd edn., Copenhagen, 2003), 327–32.

16 For example, his visit to Prague, see Alexander Buchner, *Franz Liszt in Böhmen* (Prague, 1962), 66–100. See also Janos Kárpáti, 'Liszt the Traveller', *New Hungarian Quarterly*, 27/103 (1986), 108–18.

17 The detailed programmes were presented in *Fedrelandet* the day before each recital. They are reprinted in my dissertation, Peter E. Nissen, *Klaverkonge i Abbatedragt? – Franz Liszts receptions-*

<p>Saturday, 17 July</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ouverture Guillaume Tell (Rossini) 2. Beethoven's Geistliche Lieder 3. Ständchen (Schubert) 4. Réminiscences de Robert le diable (Meyerbeer) 5. Aufforderung zum Tanze (Weber) 6. Grand Galop Chromatique <p>Wednesday, 21 July</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Konzertstück (Weber) 2. Fantasie sur des motifs favoris de l'opéra La sonnambula (Bellini) 3. Marche hongroise 4. Soirées musicales: La danza (Rossini) 5. I puritani (Bellini) 6. Hexaméron (Bellini) <p>Saturday, 24 July</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scherzo 2. Symfoni pastorale (Orage and Finale) (Beethoven) 3. Fantasie sur des motifs favoris de l'opéra La sonnambula (Bellini) 4. Duo (sonata) with Violin (Francois Prume played the violin) 5. Réminiscences de Robert le diable (Meyerbeer) 6. Improvisation on musical themes suggested by the audience Grand Galop Chromatique (encore) Erlkönig (Schubert) (encore)

Table 2. The programme of Liszt's three recitals in Copenhagen, 1841.

was only half-full at the first recital, but by the final two it was totally filled, and the response of the audience was similar to that of those in many other European cities. Both the metropolitan and the provincial newspapers continued writing about this extraordinary phenomenon for several days. Most of the critics focused on the stagings, the man himself and his uncommon skills and performance, and all of them emphasized the new approach to playing and organizing concerts.¹⁸ As in many other cities, the recitals developed into sensational events with fainting ladies, post-concert processions, and an adjacent merchandise industry, etc.¹⁹

og virkningshistorie i dansk musikliv 1839–1928 (Piano King in Abbot Dress? – Franz Liszt's history of reception in Denmark 1839–1928) (University of Copenhagen, 2005), 27–28.

18 For example in *Dagen*, 19, 22, and 26 July 1841, *Fyens Avis og Avertissements-Tidende*, 20 July 1841, and *Aarhus Stifts-Tidende*, 28 July 1841.

19 For more details from the event, see Nissen, *Klaverkonge i Abbatedragt?*, 29–32. On the reception in the other cities, see Robert Stockhammer's list and presentation of all the tours of Liszt in *Franz Liszt – Im Triumphzug durch Europa* (Vienna, 1986). Amongst other studies of specific regions, it is worth mentioning Saffle, *Liszt in Germany*, and David I. Allsobrook, *My Travelling Circus Life* (London, 1991) on Liszt's travelling on the British Isles.

Danish musical culture at the time

As in many other European cities, a group of citizens in Copenhagen formed a concert society, here called Musikforeningen (The Music Society). The society was founded in 1836 to promote Danish music, through activities such as organizing concerts and composition prizes, and sending advertisements about new Danish music to leading foreign music journals. Musikforeningen put on its first concerts in 1843, and under the direction of the composer Niels W. Gade (1817–90) from 1850, it became fully established with a regular series of symphonic concerts. Gade had been the director of the Gewandhaus concert society in Leipzig for four years (following Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy), and his leadership of Musikforeningen can be regarded as a continuation of his experiences from Saxony.

The organizers behind Musikforeningen were, like their fellows in Leipzig, driven by social and aesthetic ideas of philharmonic concerts regarded as spiritual communities centred around ‘The Great Symphony’, as composed by Beethoven and the composers of Leipzig. By virtue of the symphony’s universal character, it was regarded as an international phenomenon. The treatment of the Danish composer Gade and his symphonies in Leipzig was an example of this. The idea of the symphony’s universal character became an important part of German bourgeois *Bildungskultur*, and the German-Romantic idea of the absolute and original work of music enhanced this process.²⁰

This *Bildungskultur* rested partly on the idea that it was the duty of the enlightened (‘die Kenner’) to guide uneducated but music-loving audiences (‘die Liebhaber’). On the basis of their professional knowledge and their ability to reflect upon and evaluate music, these experts believed in the concept of good taste. The rising phenomenon of the music critic in newspapers and renowned music journals became an important part of this musical enlightenment.²¹ The new culture of musical experts can be regarded as a sign of the consolidation of bourgeois identity in a revolutionary era when both the aristocracy and royalty were losing power.²²

Concerts by virtuosi were one of the areas where a split in reception among audiences in Denmark can be observed. These charismatic musicians were banned from Musikforeningen, where they were judged to be superficial entertainers and

20 Wolfgang J. Mommsen, ‘Kultur als Instrument der Legitimation bürgerlicher Hegemonie im Nationalstaat’, in Hermann Danuser and Herfried Münkler (eds.), *Deutsche Meister – böse Geister? Nationale Selbstfindung in der Musik* (Schliengen, 2001), 61–74, and Siegfried Oechsle, ‘Nationalidee und große Symphonie. Mit einem Exkurs zum “Ton”’, in *ibid.*, 166–84. See also Celia Applegate, ‘How German Is It? Nationalism and the Idea of Serious Music in the Early Nineteenth Century’, *19th Century Music*, 21/3 (1998), 274–96. On Niels W. Gade in Leipzig, see Yvonne Wasserloos, *Kulturzeiten. Niels W. Gade und C.F.E. Horneman in Leipzig und Kopenhagen* (Studien und Materialien zur Musikwissenschaft, 36; Hildesheim, 2004), 149–91 and Inger Sørensen, *Niels W. Gade – Et dansk verdensnavn* (Copenhagen, 2002), 69–161.

21 Erich Reimer, ‘Kenner – Liebhaber – Dilettant’, in Albrecht Riethmüller (ed.), *Handwörterbuch der musikalischen Terminologie* (Stuttgart, 1974), 1–17, and Walter Salmen, *Das Konzert. Eine Kulturgeschichte* (Munich, 1988).

22 Gooley, *The Virtuoso Liszt*, 203–6.

referred either to Det Kongelige Teater, or – from the mid-1840s – to commercial institutions. In these latter private venues, scepticism towards the virtuosi depended almost entirely on whether they were able to sell tickets or not. The driving force behind the establishment of these institutions was the francophile merchant Georg Carstensen (1812–1857). He spent several years of his youth in France, and strove to introduce French fashions in the Danish capital in the 1840s.²³ His summer amusement park, Tivoli (established 1843), and the winter theatre Casino (established 1847), contributed to the establishment of a new culture of entertainment in Copenhagen. Parallel to this, Carstensen also popularized magazines such as *Portefeuillen* and *Figaro*, which published stories about fashion, music, and gossip in upper-class circles from all over the world. In relation to Liszt, *Portefeuillen* orientated the readers about Liszt's tours and published sensational stories about the musician and his travels in translations from French music journals such as *Gazette musicale*.²⁴ *Figaro* was the first magazine to announce Liszt's Copenhagen visit in July 1841.²⁵

Carstensen was not the only one who looked to France for inspiration during those years. As in many other European countries, a flourishing Danish political movement within bourgeois social circles had begun to agitate for the diminution of royal power by a democratically based constitution, inspired by the French revolution of 1830.²⁶ The daily national newspaper *Fædrelandet* (launched in 1839) was the most important organ of the democratic movement. In this era of political censorship, the press had to be subtle in its methods of agitating within the limits for political expression. Thus, *Fædrelandet* quoted Hector Berlioz' enthusiastic appraisal of Liszt from *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* in the days before his arrival, and the newspaper expressed great expectations of Liszt's upcoming visit.²⁷

Two directions in Liszt reception and their increasing divergences

Many of the opinions that later characterized views on Liszt and his music began with his visit to Copenhagen in July 1841. They developed in two directions.

One group of critics was positive, connecting Liszt to new musical currents from France. *Figaro* judged Liszt's performance in the same vein as prominent French critics, among these F.-J. Fétis from his treatise *Traité élémentaire de musique* (1832). *Figaro* heralded Liszt's works (*L'Années de pèlerinage*) and playing style as a new school of piano performance.²⁸

The reviewer from *Fædrelandet* associated Liszt with the French revolution and famous French artists such as Lamennais and George Sand. In an unusually lengthy

23 According to the first issue of *Figaro*, 4 July 1841. See also Steffen Auring et al., *Dansk litteraturhistorie*, vol. 5: *Borgerlig embedskultur 1807–48* (3rd edn., Copenhagen, 2000), 490.

24 For example a piece on Liszt's surprising visit in a small town ('Blandinger', *Portefeuillen*, 1841, 167).

25 *Figaro Supplementblade*, 11 June 1841.

26 Bjørn, *Fra reaktion til grundlov*, 201–6.

27 *Fædrelandet*, 15 July 1841 (from *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, no. 48).

28 *Berlingske Tidende*, 27 July 1841; 'Liszt og den nyere Tids Claveer-Compositioner', *Figaro*, 1841, 186.

review, Liszt the man was interpreted as a ‘child borne of the revolution’ (‘Revolutionsens ætbaarne Barn’) and his music was characterized as a means of expressing the spirit of the revolution in sound. The reviewer appealed to the bourgeois segment of the public to join Liszt in his fight for freedom and a glorious future.²⁹ Although it is doubtful that the major part of the audience shared this interpretation of Liszt, *Fedrelandet* was supported by the satirical magazine *Corsaren*.³⁰ Elsewhere, Hans Christian Andersen wrote: ‘The Orpheus of our age has let his tones swell through the world metropolis of machinery, and we have found and acknowledged, as a Copenhagen once said, that “his fingers are truly railroads and steam engines”’.³¹

The reviewer from *Kjøbenhavnsposten* was the only one to focus on the music. At first, the newspaper let Liszt’s first recital pass without comment, but was later forced to do otherwise because of the sensation that the concert caused, together with the fact that it confirmed Liszt’s artistic qualities.³² The commentator was at pains to distance himself from other critics’ enthusiasm for Liszt, stating that a local reserved taste was acceptable on the basis of past experiences in Copenhagen, even though this reservation would differ from the enthusiasm with which Liszt was received in the rest of the world. The *Kjøbenhavnsposten* critic was reluctantly positive towards this new way of performing. The final judgement rested on the question of allegiance to piano schools, and this reviewer had confidence in the new French way of playing introduced in the 1830s.³³ The elitist standards presupposed by this review and the critic’s reservations towards foreign judgements was targeted at the franco-philie *Figaro* and *Fedrelandet*.

Liszt’s performance made a great and lasting impression on audiences. Tivoli’s popular orchestra played an arrangement of Liszt’s *Hungarian Sturm-March* in 1844, orchestrated by the director Hans Christian Lumbye. Lumbye’s orchestra was successful in adapting the entertainment concept popularized by the Strauss family in Vienna, and many of Lumbye’s arrangements were named after popular artists of his day.³⁴ The arrangement of Liszt’s *Sturm-March* for the Tivoli orchestra indicates the positive and continuing impression that Liszt had made on Copenhagen’s musical life.

29 *Fedrelandet*, 19 July 1841.

30 *Corsaren*, 30 July 1841, 3 (reprint, Copenhagen, 1977, 324).

31 Hans Christian Andersen, *En Digtters Bazar* (Copenhagen, 1842), 13. The quotation is translated into English by Celenza, *Hans Christian Andersen and Music*, 108.

32 *Kjøbenhavnsposten*, 19 July 1841. This is confirmed by the fact that a short notice was followed by longer in-depth reviews, where a number placed at the bottom indicates a co-writer. The paper also carried a longer review of Willmers’ concert on 31 October. This might indicate a change in attitude at the paper towards virtuosi following Liszt’s visit.

33 Later, agreement was reached that something new had happened in the history of piano playing in Paris around 1830. See Linde Grossmann, ‘Klavierspiel’, *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Sachteil 5 (1996), 425–31.

34 Schiørring, *Musikkens historie i Danmark*, ii, 334–40.

Comparisons with Clara Schumann and Sigismund Thalberg

Clara Schumann's visit to Copenhagen in April 1842 helped convince the reluctant reviewer from *Kjøbenhavnsposten*, who judged her way of playing as both appealing and impressive. She was noted particularly for her modest style, and the group behind Musikforeningen invited her to make a private recital in the exclusive Hotel d'Angleterre. Schumann had one of Liszt's works on her programme (*Réminiscences of Lucia di Lammermoor*), but the work itself made little contribution to the overall valuation of her performance. On the contrary, compared with Liszt, her personal and musical style was praised as the right alternative for the future virtuoso.³⁵ A dichotomy between Clara Schumann and Liszt was thus created, and not only in *Kjøbenhavnsposten*.

This time even the otherwise pro-French *Figaro* introduced into Denmark the popular international presentation of Liszt as demonic and diabolic, and his performance style was regarded as superficial compared with Schumann's more profound interpretations. The view of Liszt as superficial would cling to him in later years, when Liszt's most famous rival Sigismund Thalberg passed through the Danish capital in May 1847. Though Thalberg did not play any works by Liszt, the composer was once again demonized as a musical parallel to Victor Hugo, indicating Liszt's connection to topical French artists. Like Schumann, Thalberg was presented as the acceptable alternative. In conclusion, both Schumann and Thalberg helped critics to place Liszt. There was a tendency to judge him as superficial alongside other popular virtuosos, and if Liszt was to be taken seriously, then he was regarded as symbolising something nasty with his demonic and diabolic way of playing and his music's ability to create chaos in the concert hall.

The introduction of Liszt's symphonic poems

Only a few pianists in Liszt's own generation dared to play his virtuous works, most often with bad results. In the years after Thalberg's visit, there was an almost total silence about Liszt in Denmark. Liszt himself had taken up residence in Weimar from 1848, where he was busy making the town a new centre for his musical ideas. As a part of his reformation, Liszt had invented a new symphonic form, 'symfonische Dichtung', in which poetry and music were closely integrated. Liszt's first six symphonic poems were published in 1856. The new editor of *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Franz Brendel (1811–68), agitated aggressively for Liszt's new music, creating heated debate throughout Europe. Richard Wagner was connected to Liszt as a part of a 'neu-deutsch' music of the future.

The first performance of a symphonic poem by Liszt in Copenhagen was the rendition of *Les Préludes* at a private concert in October 1857. Richard Wagner's overture to *Tannhäuser* was also included on the programme. *Les Préludes* had been in-

³⁵ *Kjøbenhavnsposten*, 5 Apr. 1842.

roduced to audiences at the Leipzig Gewandhaus and in Vienna, in February and March the same year.³⁶

The judgement of the Danish press was harsh. While *Tannhäuser* gained enough acceptance to represent an opening for further acquaintance in the future, *Les Préludes* was condemned as a musical monster. Even the editor of the newly founded music journal *Tidsskrift for Musik*, whose mission was to promote ‘The Music of the Future’, accepted defeat, concluding that the symphonic poems had not succeeded elsewhere either. The audience was small, and the editor Emmanuel Réé speculated critically on the possibility that many of the city’s music lovers had stayed away from this concert, because they only liked the music and the performances of Musikforeningen.³⁷

Against this critical background, Niels W. Gade showed courage in choosing to programme another of Liszt’s symphonic poems, *Orpheus*, at Musikforeningen in January 1859. It did nothing to change attitudes, however, and *Orpheus* was accused of lacking ‘naturalness’ (Naturlighed) and inventive power. This was not a new verdict, but echoed judgements in the German music press. Shortly after the Copenhagen performance of *Orpheus*, *Tidsskrift for Musik* published a biographical article about Liszt from Eduard Bernsdorf’s recently published *Lexicon der Tonkunst* (1857). In this article, Liszt was praised as a pianist but not as a composer. His symphonic poems were criticized, and the author wrote polemically against *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* and other agitators who backed the New German School. Thus, the current European battle about music of the future arrived in Denmark in the 1850s, and even though Liszt’s symphonic music had hardly been played in Copenhagen, the verdict was – as in Leipzig – clearly negative.³⁸ Fourteen years were to pass before a large-scale work of Liszt was performed in the city again.

SECOND PERIOD 1870–1900: LISZT’S BREAKTHROUGH IN DANISH MUSICAL CULTURE

Danish musical culture at the time

Danish interest in Richard Wagner during the 1860s undoubtedly helped the promotion of Liszt. The performance of *Lohengrin* at Det Kongelige Teater in 1870 was the first in a line of Wagnerian opera productions that were to become highly popular in Denmark during the final decades of the nineteenth century. During this period, the old city ramparts in Copenhagen were abolished and the capital grew rapidly. Enhanced welfare in the city created new music societies, popular magazines, music journals, and a proliferation of entertainment venues for the new middle class. In addition, a younger generation of more open-minded musicians and critics changed attitudes

36 Keith T. Johns, *The Symphonic Poems of Franz Liszt* (Franz Liszt Studies Series, 3; Stuyvesant, NY, 1997), 99–114.

37 *Tidsskrift for Musik*, 1857/12, 1.

38 Johns, *The Symphonic Poems of Franz Liszt*, 99–104 (about Leipzig). See also the discussion in this article below.

towards Liszt. The success of Liszt's piano music was re-established. A new generation of foreign pianists, who had been directly educated by Liszt, began to visit Copenhagen, and their reception indicates a new attitude towards Liszt's music, more akin to the reception of Liszt's own performances in 1841. The opinion that Liszt's piano music as a work in itself was nothing special still surfaced repeatedly, but in performance something happened that swept audiences off their feet and impressed the critics. This effected a shift of attention from the musical work and the composer to the performer. One compensation for this was the prevalence of descriptions of Liszt in popular magazines, where he was pictured as an eccentric genius with divine gifts. On his death in 1886, the music journal *Musikbladet* also devoted considerable space to analyses of Liszt's works and their influence within European music.³⁹ This climate made it difficult for the powerful management of Musikforeningen to ignore Liszt.

Liszt's breakthrough

Ultimately, the breakthrough for Liszt's orchestral works came through the Church. On Easter Day, 1873, *Psalms 13* for tenor, choir and orchestra was performed in Copenhagen's central church (Vor Frue Kirke) by Det Kongelige Teater's opera chorus. The choice of a non-symphonic work was wise, in the light of reactions towards the symphonic poems in the 1850s. At the same time, *Psalms 13* was a work of moderate stylistic experiment in comparison with the symphonic poems. The psalm was performed once more in the same church the following year, and in the newly established concert society Koncertforeningen (established 1874) in November 1876. The performances were successful, and were met with enthusiastic applause. Although reviewers noted with some criticism the deviation of style from traditional church music, *Psalms 13* received a positive judgement. The concert was followed by the performance of extracts from Liszt's oratorio *The Legend of St. Elisabeth* and *Les Préludes* by the symphonic orchestra of Tivoli the same year (1873). *The Legend of St. Elisabeth* was also programmed on Easter Day in 1876 and a part of it in an Easter performance in 1877 (*Crusader March*). Extracts from Liszt's second oratorio, *Christus*, were performed in 1876 and in following years.

The only critic to uphold the previous entirely negative attitude towards Liszt's music was the reviewer from the conservative newspaper *Dagbladet*. Many of the same formulations from the 1850s were retained in his characterization of Liszt's music as either popular and superficial (in the case of the piano music) or obscure and in bad taste (the symphonic music).⁴⁰

In 1886, the musician Frits Bendix wrote a statement in the newspaper *Politiken* which in many ways represents the understanding of Liszt's music among conserva-

³⁹ For example A. Göllerich's catalogue of Liszt's works was published in *Musikbladet*, 4/5 (1887), 24, and Liszt's importance for the development of modern piano music was discussed in L.S. [Ludvig Schytte], 'Lidt om Klaverspil og Klaverkomponister', *Musikbladet*, 3/2 (1886), 6, and K.C.A., 'Lidt om Liszt's Kompositioner', *Musikbladet*, 3/17 (1886), 87–88.

⁴⁰ See for example the review in *Dagbladet*, 24 Oct. 1886.

tives in Musikforeningen. Bendix' statement is a reply to the reviewer Alfred Møller who had challenged the negative reception of Liszt's works in Copenhagen. Bendix took up the case for the defence of the conservatives, criticizing Liszt's symphonic works (alongside those of Berlioz) for their lack of substance, which he sought to clarify through comparison with Beethoven's symphonies. Bendix firmly believed that the orchestral music of Beethoven and his German successors was the best art ever made, and was thus insurpassable. Instead, Bendix regarded opera as the right place to seek renewal in music, exemplified by Wagner's dramas.⁴¹

This judgement of Liszt's music among the new generation within Musikforeningen marks an institutional distinction. The 'new German' modernization was acceptable within the institution of opera, but not within the philharmonic concert society. At the same time, Liszt was respected as a great composer for the piano, and reservations about Liszt's popular piano music, such as the Hungarian rhapsodies, were subsiding. But this depended on the containment of that kind of music within the virtuoso recital. The situation in this period is summarized in the popular magazine *Illustreret Tidende*. Following a philharmonic concert in March 1884, the reviewer from *Illustreret Tidende* characterized 'the Berlioz-Liszt-Wagner trio' negatively, as canonized saints of 'the musical left'. This musical movement was criticized for its narrow focus on being modern, at the expense of demands on quality and clarity.⁴²

The question of programme music

The international debate around the conflict between programme music and absolute music was summarized for Danish readers in a review of the first performance of Liszt's *Faust Symphony* in 1873. At this time and during the following decade, attitudes towards programme music were reserved and sceptical, although not as strongly negative as in the 1850s. By the time the last institutional stronghold Musikforeningen opened its doors for Liszt's music again in the 1890s, other symphonic poems by Liszt, such as *Die Ideale* and *Tasso*, had been performed in Copenhagen. But it was still *Les Préludes* that was most often played. Nothing seems to indicate a significant interest in the symphonic poems in their diversity, but *Les Préludes* had become a regular popular orchestral work in the repertoires of Copenhagen orchestras. Though the many performances of the work can be seen as a sign of acceptance, its critical reception was increasingly dominated by negative attitudes. Views expressed by the prominent Viennese critic Eduard Hanslick were regularly quoted. Most of the Danish criticism leaned on the conservative German press and on the

41 Frits Bendix, 'Om Konservatismen i vort Musikliv' (About Conservatism in our Musical Life), *Politiken*, 22 May 1886.

42 *Illustreret Tidende*, 9 Mar. 1884, 290. This point of view is similar to the discussion in Germany, where the three composers were also connected with French realism, cf. Martin Geck, *Zwischen Romantik und Restauration – Musik im Realismus-Diskurs 1848–1871* (Stuttgart, 2001), esp. 140–42 on the role of Liszt.

repetition of the well-rehearsed complaint against Liszt's perceived superficiality. The symphonic and choral works of Johannes Brahms were also performed in Copenhagen from the 1880s (Brahms had visited Copenhagen in 1868), and whenever critics compared the two (e.g. *Christus* with *Ein deutsches Requiem*), Brahms gained the upper hand.

THIRD PERIOD 1900–1928: LISZT'S DECLINE IN DANISH MUSICAL CULTURE

Danish musical culture at the time

The time after the turn of the century was characterized by a declining interest in Liszt's music – both within professional circles and popular musical culture. The increasing number of recitals by foreign virtuosi gave less space for attention to the single performance, in spite of the fact that unknown music by Liszt was sometimes performed. Typically, the works of Liszt and other composers of virtuoso music were reduced in the press to the role of showpieces, chosen to demonstrate the skills of the performer.

With the death of Musikforeningen's founding generation, the traditional concert society began to decline, and new concert societies became strong rivals. The new generation of composers and musicians behind these newer institutions were more interested in younger composers such as Claude Debussy (1864–1949) and Jean Sibelius (1865–1957), and the local composer Carl Nielsen (1865–1931, conductor of Musikforeningen 1915–27) was favoured as the new national composer after Niels W. Gade.

Another threat towards traditional music societies such as Musikforeningen was the establishment of the national radio, Statsradiofonien, in 1925, where classical concerts had an important role in transmissions right from the start.

Performance and reception

The period was characterized by audiences' weakening interest in Liszt's music, as opposition against his music increased. Although Liszt's music was still played at popular recitals, the musical style of his compositions was now regarded as out-moded. In the critical literature of the period Liszt was emphasized as a piano player and not for his symphonic production. As for the new composers, Liszt could no longer compete, and his spiritual fellow Wagner was a staunch rival by comparison. Wagner's opera cycle *The Ring of the Nibelung* was introduced successfully to the Danish audience at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The positive potential for Liszt's sacred music diminished during these years. When *Tu es Petrus* from the oratorio *Christus* was performed in Musikforeningen on the occasion of Liszt's 100th anniversary in 1911, the music was criticized as presenting a style considered improper for church music. This negative critique was supported by a general criticism of Liszt and his world. Liszt's symphonic poems came under fire twice during this period; first, at a performance of *Die Ideale* in Musikforeningen in

January 1921, and then at the first Danish performance of *Von der Wiege bis zum Grabe* in Rued Langgaard's Klassisk Musikforening in April 1928. *Die Ideale* was regarded as anachronistic, and its style was characterized as a mere transferral of Liszt's piano virtuosity onto the orchestral apparatus.⁴³ *Von der Wiege bis zum Grabe* was regarded as simply weak and trivial.⁴⁴

This situation was a source of regret for Denmark's first professional scholar in musicology, Angul Hammerich, a venerated reviewer. Hammerich did not understand why opposition against Liszt was so strong, and he found the harsh judgements of Liszt's works excessively one-sided and political, based on superficial conclusions. He observed a consistent 'anti-Lisztianism' in the capital, without being able to account for it.⁴⁵

CONCLUDING PERSPECTIVES

The history of Liszt's reception in Denmark 1839–1928 can be seen as a cultural clash between French and conservative German musical influences within a society that was at the periphery of Europe. Danish musical culture tried to orientate itself towards outside influences, whilst still maintaining its independence. This was already evident during Liszt's visit in 1841, where he was seen as a part of the French revolutionary movement not only by liberal democrats, but also within the new amusement business (Georg Carstensen, for example) and among conservative professionals and German/Leipzig-orientated factions within the bourgeois audiences connected with Musikforeningen.

This extraordinary reaction towards Liszt's compositions and performances is similar to Liszt's visits to other European cities. In his analysis of Liszt's reception in Berlin the same year, Dana Gooley emphasises that lack of freedom of speech and a weak public profile among aristocratic and bourgeois circles provided a breeding ground for excessively feverish atmospheres at large-scale public events.⁴⁶ It is natural to regard the reception of Liszt's Copenhagen visit in the same light, because of its timing (in the run-up to the democratization of the Danish monarchy in 1849), and other parallels such as *Fedrelandet's* characterization of Liszt as a revolutionary leader.

Liszt's music itself created cultural and political turbulence. To both critics and admirers, Liszt represented modern elements in musical culture, not only in his works, but also his performance style. Liszt's ability to create a new concert culture and thus contribute to the development of a Danish democratic musical culture is also evident in later periods. Liszt was a popular figure among amateur music lovers throughout the period discussed in this article, and this popularity was maintained by sensational stories in popular magazines that circulated in the new up-and-coming

43 Review by Gustav Hetsch in *Nationaltidende* and *Dagbladet*, 26 Jan. 1921.

44 Reviews by O., *Kristeligt Dagblad*, 12 Apr. 1928 and Vicar., *Politiken*, 12 Apr. 1928.

45 Review by A.H. [Angul Hammerich], *Nationaltidende* (morning edn.), 15 Dec. 1911.

46 Gooley, *The Virtuoso Liszt*, 203–6.

middle classes.⁴⁷ Liszt's pupils managed to create much the same atmosphere at their recitals in the second half of the nineteenth century as Liszt himself had done in July 1841. These recitals helped a new type of audience to find its own culture of response to the expressions of Liszt's music and performance style, at the same time as helping them to find their musical identity in the concert hall.

Liszt's church music contributed to the latter development. The grand Easter concerts of the 1870s and 1880s gathered a broad audience from the royal court down to the lower middle classes, and some of the sacred concerts at which Liszt's music was played were even called 'popular church concerts' (folkkelige Kirkekoncerter).⁴⁸ This may be construed in Liszt's visions of a new kind of church music, which aimed to gather a broad segment of the population in a general movement towards cultural democratization.⁴⁹

In the 1870s, modern movements within Danish culture offered a breakthrough for Liszt's music, as also for other artistic and cultural manifestations from France. The interest in Wagner's operas and the successful performance of Liszt's sacred works gave new possibilities for some of the symphonic poems to be performed. But it was still difficult, because Liszt (unlike Wagner) chose the 'great symphony' as the genre within which to modernize musical culture. His symphonic experiments were not welcomed in symphonic institutions, and over time Liszt and his agitators – though establishing a base in Weimar in the centre of German culture – lost this cultural war.

The musical genres of opera and church institutions were easier to change and modernize. In these genres, there was not such a strong connection between a specific genre understanding and *bourgeois* education as there was in the philharmonic symphonic institution. Fritz Bendix's letter is an example of this. This was also the reason why the church provided a venue for Liszt's breakthrough, and why a minor work like *Psalm 13* received such an importance. It also explains why Gade chose an extract of the oratorium *Christus* when he chose to reintroduce Liszt's orchestral work at Musikforeningen, twenty-four years after the performance of *Ophéus*. When the churches closed their doors to Liszt's music after the turn of the century, there had been a change in understanding of church music by leading church figures towards a view similar to that which prevailed in the philharmonic music scene.

47 About the idolization of Liszt, see Kramer, 'Franz Liszt and the Virtuoso Public Sphere', 81–92 and Gooley, *The Virtuoso Liszt*, chapters 1–3 and 5.

48 The concerts in Vor Frue Kirke, 28 and 31 Mar. 1877, where a part of *St Elisabeth* was performed, were advertised as such.

49 Under the influence of the Saint-Simonians in Paris during the revolutionary 1830s, Liszt wrote a manifesto of the future Church music, *De l'avenir de la musique d'église* (1834), one of his series of articles about the future musician and his revolutionary role in society: *De la situation des artistes, et de leur condition dans la société* in *Revue et Gazette Musicale*. The article about church music was printed in the journal 30 Aug. 1835. It is reprinted with a German translation in the new critical edition, Rainer Kleinertz (ed.), *Franz Liszt – Sämtliche Schriften*, 1: *Frühe Schriften* (Wiesbaden, 2000), 56–59. An English translation of the article and a discussion on its coming into existence has been published by Paul Merrick, *Revolution and Religion in the Music of Liszt* (Cambridge, 1987), 7–25.

At the turn of the century, younger generations of composers and listeners were more interested in newer music. In the following decades, the movement against romantic music and the virtuoso culture established in the musical centres of Europe died out. This led to an increase in the number of performances of Liszt's works in concert halls. The doors of the (protestant) churches remained closed to Liszt, however, because as part of the anti-romantic movement church musicians had condemned Liszt's sacred music as profane and vulgar. Resistance towards Liszt's sacred music from the well-educated at the beginning of the twentieth century, and their wish to return church music to the style and practice of earlier times, can be seen as an attempt from the elite to regain control. This time, ideas about musical genre in the philharmonic concert hall and the church seemed to be allies.

Liszt in Leipzig

All this can be put into perspective by comparing Liszt's reception in Denmark with that of his reception in Leipzig. As in Musikforeningen, Liszt was received with great scepticism at his Leipzig concerts in 1840. His performances (in particular, his transcription of Beethoven's Sixth Symphony) were seen as displaying a lack of *Bildung*, and both Niels W. Gade's successor as director of the Gewandhaus, Julius Rietz (1812–77), and his successor in 1860, Carl Reinecke (1824–1910), were reluctant to programme Liszt's symphonic works. These works were only heard in the city on rare occasions until Reinecke's retirement in 1895. This was in consensus with the Gewandhaus committee and the Leipzig conservatory, which was later to become notorious for its conservatism. Leipzig was famous at this time for its many important newspapers and music journals, such as *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* and *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*.⁵⁰ The first performances of Liszt's symphonic poems in the years 1857–60 were received with great reservation and indifference in the Leipzig press. Attitudes towards Liszt's music displayed an opposition to the so-called 'Zukunftsmusik', as well as nationalistic attitudes and a general dichotomy between German and French culture.⁵¹ Dana Gooley sees Liszt's visit to Leipzig as demonstrating a clash of cultures between French aristocratic and German conservative bourgeois cultures.⁵² By contrast, Liszt's performance style originated in a Paris that was marked by revolutionary norms with great social events for the public, in a city

50 Steffen Lieberwirth, 'Bruckner und Liszt im "Schutz- und Trutzbündnis" Leipziger Konzertvereine', in Renate Grasberger et al. (eds.), *Bruckner Symposion Linz 1986 – Bruckner, Liszt, Mahler und die Moderne. Bericht* (Linz, 1989), 79–86. See also Sieghart Döhring, 'Dresden and Leipzig: Two Bourgeois Centres', in Alexander Ringer (ed.), *Man and Music*, iv: *The Early Romantic Era* (London, 1990), 155–56; Yvonne Wasserloos, *Das Leipziger Konservatorium der Musik im 19. Jahrhundert* (Hildesheim, 2004), 54–62. On the discussion of Liszt in German journals, see Saffle, *Liszt in Germany*, 203–17.

51 Johns, *The Symphonic Poems of Franz Liszt*, 101–4.

52 Gooley, *The Virtuoso Liszt*, 157–64. See also Arno Forchert, "'Klassisch" und "romantisch" in der Musik-Litteratur des frühen 19. Jahrhunderts', *Die Musikforschung*, 31 (1978), 405–25.

concerned with greatness and with great men's ability to exceed ordinary expectations.⁵³ The situation in Copenhagen can be regarded as parallel to Leipzig, in as far as Danish musical society lent heavily on the Leipzig institutional model. This dichotomy was personified by Clara Schumann's visit in 1842. The aforementioned invitation extended to her, to perform not in the grand public theatre but in the exclusive environs of Copenhagen's grandest hotel (opposite Det Kongelige Teater) can be regarded as her symbolic transportation from Liszt's world among the many to the world of good taste enjoyed by the privileged few.

SUMMARY

Research on the reception of Franz Liszt in Danish musical life between 1839 and 1928 shows how Liszt's music was received in various ways due to factors such as the kind of audience, the genre, and the venue of the concerts. Turbulence and controversy arose from Liszt's visit in Copenhagen in 1841, and continued during the introduction of his works over the following years. Liszt was associated with French modern art, and was treated with suspicion among conservative *Kenner* in the local music society Musikforeningen, which leaned heavily on ideals derived from the Gewandhaus music society in Leipzig. On the other hand, Liszt was received with enthusiasm among the rising middle-class audience (*Liebhaber*), and used in propaganda by liberal democrats in the years leading up to the introduction of the democratic constitution of the Danish monarchy. In the 1870s, the operas of Richard Wagner helped pave the way for a breakthrough for Liszt's music in Denmark, but in contrast to Wagner's operas it was difficult for Liszt's works to maintain this foothold. An essential reason for this was the fact that while Wagner worked within the genre of opera, Liszt tried to modernize the symphonic genre – through his symphonic poems – within a hostile philharmonic culture. In addition, his church music was well received in the late nineteenth century. In the early twentieth century, neither his piano works, his symphonic poems, nor his church music remained a part of the established repertoire.

53 Paul Metzner, *Crescendo of the Virtuoso* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1998), 1–13.