



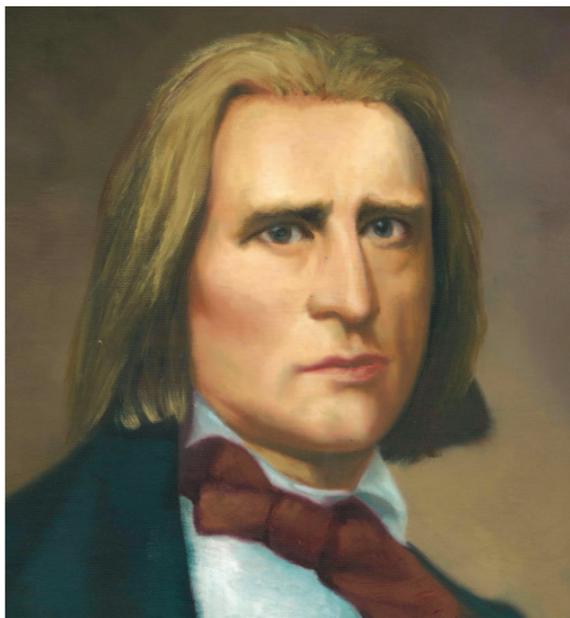
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DDD

FRANZ LISZT

Album d'un voyageur: Impressions et Poésies Apparitions

Ashley Wass, Piano



COMPLETE
PIANO
MUSIC



VOLUME
32

Franz Liszt (1811–1886)

Album d'un voyageur I • Apparitions

Having visited in recent times many new countries, many diverse sites, many places hallowed by history and poetry, having felt that the various aspects of nature and of related scenes did not pass before my eyes as vain images, but that they aroused in my soul deep emotions; that there was established between them and me a vague but immediate relationship, an indefinite but real rapport, an inexplicable but definite communication, I have tried to express in music some of my strongest feelings, my most vivid perceptions.

– F. Liszt: Album d'un voyageur: Avant-Propos

Born at Raiding, in Hungary, in 1811, the son of Adam Liszt, a steward in the service of Haydn's former patrons, the Esterházy Princes, Franz Liszt had early encouragement from members of the Hungarian nobility, allowing him in 1822 to go to Vienna, for lessons with Czerny and a famous meeting with Beethoven. From there he moved to Paris, where Cherubini refused him admission to the Conservatoire, as a foreigner. Nevertheless he was able to impress audiences by his performance, now supported by the Erard family, piano manufacturers whose wares he was able to advertise in the concert tours on which he embarked. In 1827 Adam Liszt died, and Franz Liszt was now joined again by his mother in Paris, while using his time to teach, to read and benefit from the intellectual society with which he came into contact. His interest in virtuoso performance was renewed when he heard the great violinist Paganini, whose technical accomplishments he now set out to emulate.

The years that followed brought a series of compositions, including transcriptions of songs and operatic fantasies, part of the stock-in-trade of a virtuoso. Liszt's relationship with a married woman, the Comtesse Marie d'Agout, led to his departure from Paris for years of travel abroad, first to Switzerland, then back to Paris, before leaving for Italy, Vienna and Hungary. By 1844 his relationship with his mistress, the mother of his three children, was at an end, but his concert activities continued until 1847, the year in which his association began with Carolyne zu Sayn-Wittgenstein, a Polish heiress, the estranged wife of a Russian prince. The following year he settled with her in Weimar, the city of Goethe, turning his

attention now to the development of a newer form of orchestral music, the symphonic poem, and, as always, to the revision and publication of earlier compositions.

It was in 1861, at the age of fifty, that Liszt moved to Rome, following Princess Carolyne, who had settled there a year earlier. Divorce and annulment seemed to have opened the way to their marriage, but they now continued to live in separate apartments in the city. Liszt eventually took minor orders and developed a pattern of life that divided his time between Weimar, where he imparted advice to a younger generation, Rome, where he was able to pursue his religious interests, and Pest, where he returned now as a national hero. He died in 1886 in Bayreuth, where his daughter Cosima, widow of Richard Wagner, lived, more concerned with the continued propagation of her husband's music.

The scandal of Liszt's relationship with Marie d'Agout led to his elopement with her to Switzerland in early June, 1835. His liaison with her had started two years before. Descendant of a mother from a German-Jewish banking family and a father, an exiled French nobleman, Marie had, in other respects, an unstable family background, with a half-sister who had shown increasing signs of mental disturbance, leading eventually to suicide. Her family had failed to find her a husband during three seasons after her coming out, but eventually she agreed to marry Comte Charles d'Agout, some fifteen years her senior and a distinguished former army officer. The wedding in 1827 was attended by the King and other members of the royal family. Always a difficult woman, she bore her husband two daughters and by the 1830s had established herself in

Paris as a fashionable hostess, entertaining notable figures in literary and artistic society at her salon. It was here that she met the 21-year-old Liszt, five years her junior, and as the months followed their relationship became closer, with secret meetings at Liszt's mother's and at the Countess's country retreat at Croissy. Marie d'Agoult, now pregnant, left Paris in late May and in early June reached Switzerland, where she was joined a few days later by Liszt. It was a tour that they undertook in the following weeks that proved the immediate source of Liszt's *Album d'un voyageur* and the later *Années de pèlerinage, première année, Suisse*. In July the couple settled in Geneva, where Liszt gave some lessons at the new conservatoire. Their first child, a daughter, Blandine, was born in December.

The *Album d'un voyageur* was eventually published in three parts, the third and first to appear directly based on Swiss alpine melodies. The first part, *Impressions et poésies*, starts in France with *Lyon*, dedicated to Liszt's spiritual mentor the Abbé Lamennais, who had done his best to dissuade Marie d'Agoult from any rash action. Lamennais had become increasingly concerned about the plight of workers and had been involved in the defence of striking silk-weavers in Lyon. The slogan of the workers is given at the head of Liszt's piece, *Vivre en travaillant ou mourir en combattant*, and is reflected in the opening phrases of a work that probably reflects discussions Liszt had had with Lamennais during the autumn of 1834 that they had spent together in Brittany. The piece was not included in the later *Année de pèlerinage*.

The evocative tranquillity of *Le Lac de Wallenstadt*, has a superscription from Byron's *Childe Harold*: ... *Thy contrasted lake, / With the wild world I dwell in, is a thing, / Which warns me, with its stillness, to forsake / Earth's troubled waters for a purer spring*. It is coupled, in contrast, with the livelier *Au bord d'une source*, headed by a quotation from Schiller's *Der Flüchtling* (The Fugitive): *In säuselnder Kühle / Beginnen die Spiele / Der jungen Natur* (In whispering coolness begins the sport of young nature).

Les Cloches de Genève is dedicated to Liszt's young daughter, Blandine, at its head the words: ... *Minuit dormait, le lac était tranquille, les cieux étoilés ... nous voguissions loin du bord*, and, from Byron's *Childe Harold*: *I live not in myself but I become / Portion of that around me*. In this original version of the piece the sound of bells, distant and nearer at hand, is heard, and generally indicated in the score, with tranquillity finally restored after an *Allegro appassionato* section.

The French writer Etienne Pivert de Senancour, commemorated in stanzas by Matthew Arnold, had captured the spirit of romanticism in his letters from Obermann, a supposed solitary, living in a valley of the Jura. Liszt pauses to quote a page from Obermann, preceding his *Vallée d'Obermann* with further references that seem to reflect his own feelings: *Je sens, j'existe pour me consumer en désirs indomptables, pour m'abreuver de la séduction d'un monde fantastique, pour rester atterré de sa voluptueuse erreur* (I feel, I exist only to consume myself in untameable desires, to quench my thirst in the seduction of a fantastic world, to be overwhelmed by its sensuous illusion). The opening words of the quotation from Obermann are reflected in the opening motif of the piece: *Que veux-je? que suis-je? que demander à la nature?* (What do I want? What am I? What do I ask of nature?), from which the rest follows, mounting in alpine splendour, as the dilemma is resolved. The piece is dedicated to Senancour.

La Chapelle de Guillaume Tell is dedicated to the abolitionist Victor Schoelcher. At its head are the words: *Einer für alle / Alle für einen* (One for all / All for one), the motto of Switzerland, saved, according to legend, from Habsburg domination by the patriot William Tell. The spirit of Tell is evoked in music that includes representations of the Swiss alps.

The work ends with *Psaume (de l'église à Genève)*, preceded by the words of Psalm 42, in the French translation of the Geneva Psalter: *Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God*.

Liszt presents the psalm in simple chords, leading to arpeggiation in a meditative end to a remarkable album.

Liszt's *Apparitions* were the result of his stay during the late summer of 1834 at La Chênaie in Brittany with the Abbé Lamennais, whose controversial views on what he saw as a necessary division between church and state had led to conflict with the ecclesiastical authorities and condemnation from Rome. The first of the three pieces,

marked *Senza lentezza quasi allegretto*, is dedicated to the Paris society hostess, the Duchesse de Rauzan, and the second, *Vivamente*, to the Vicomtesse Frédéric de Larochefoucauld. The third of the set, a *Fantaisie sur une valse de François Schubert*, ends a group of pieces, each innovative in its own way, that foreshadow something of Liszt's later achievement.

Keith Anderson



Ashley Wass

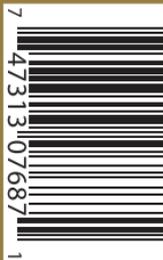
Described by *Gramophone* magazine as possessing 'the enviable gift to turn almost anything he plays into pure gold', Ashley Wass is the only British pianist to have won First Prize at the London International Piano Competition and is also a former BBC New Generation Artist. He is Naxos's first ever exclusively contracted solo artist, and his recent surveys of piano music by Bridge (8.557842, 8.557921) and Bax (8.557439, 8.557592) have been heralded as 'unmissable' and 'the yardstick against which all future recordings will be judged'. He has given performances at most of the major venues in Britain, including the Royal Albert Hall as part of the BBC Proms, and also appeared in a gala concert at Buckingham Palace to mark the Queen's Golden Jubilee. Concerto performances have included collaborations with Sir Simon Rattle and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, the London Mozart Players, Philharmonia, Bournemouth Symphony and all the BBC orchestras. Ashley Wass is also much in demand as a chamber musician and has toured the United States and Europe with violinist Sarah Chang appearing at venues such as Philadelphia's Kimmel Center and Carnegie Hall in New York. He is Artistic Director of the Lincolnshire International Chamber Music Festival.

Photo: Sussie Ahlberg



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 Franz
LISZT
(1811–1886)

Complete Piano Music • 32
**Album d'un voyageur:
Impressions et Poésies, S156/R8**

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | I. Lyon | 7:25 |
| 2 | IIa. Le Lac de Wallenstadt | 3:59 |
| 3 | IIb. Au bord d'une source | 4:24 |
| 4 | III. Les Cloches de G(enève) | 12:29 |
| 5 | IV. Vallée d'Obermann | 14:57 |
| 6 | V. La Chapelle de Guillaume Tell | 7:10 |
| 7 | VI. Psaume (de l'église à Genève) | 4:54 |

Apparitions, S155/R11

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 8 | I. Senza lentezza quasi allegretto | 8:58 |
| 9 | II. Vivamente | 4:18 |
| 10 | III. Fantaisie sur une valse de F. Schubert:
Molto agitato ed appassionato | 9:46 |


Ashley Wass, Piano

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