

CRITICAL NOTES

Even if all the vast catalogue of his piano music were excluded, Liszt's output in all other fields would still rank him amongst the most prolific of nineteenth-century composers. Because Liszt very seldom used standard formal structures and titles, and because he participated in very few performances, his quite considerable achievements in the realm of chamber music have either remained overlooked or discounted without examination. With the exception of some of the works for violin and piano, Liszt's chamber music consists either of alternative versions or transcriptions of works which exist for other forces. But this does not mean that the medium is mishandled in any way; Liszt's skill and originality as an orchestrator shows many a passage of the most delicate writing for just a few instruments, and Liszt's skills as a transcriber between a great variety of media are justly acclaimed. Of course, the relative obscurity of the chamber music is also due to Liszt's reticence in his later years to do much to propagate his own works, and to the sheer difficulty of locating some of the unpublished pieces mentioned in passing by his students and colleagues. At the time of writing, there are more than thirty chamber works of Liszt to hand, of which only one or two are at all widely known.

Many cellists are unaware that Liszt's contribution to their literature is a significant one. Although the works could all be loosely described as character pieces, such a description would belie the variety of style and intensity of much of the music, which ranges from the lyrical and elegiac to the starkly dramatic. This volume is offered in the hope that many a recital of large-scale cello and piano works might benefit from the inclusion of a shorter work or two by the Hungarian master.

Sadly, there is no inherited performing tradition of this music, but an understanding of the style of playing required in Liszt's solo piano music, especially for the works of his final years, is a useful guide. The paucity of notes in the piano part often requires compensatory declamation, and the cello writing presupposes a complete gamut of colours from the most intimate to the stentorian. As in much of the piano music, operatic gesture, and especially recitative, are essential attributes, and the vocal qualities of the cello are fully exploited. It will be noted that there are many silences in this music which entail a thoughtful response to acoustics in order to sustain the musical structure, and the pianist's use of the sustaining pedal may sometimes be extended beyond Liszt's indications to supply the necessary generosity of support. These and other observations in these notes are prompted by the experience of preparing all these works for performance with Steven Isserlis.

This edition, the first to attempt to include all of Liszt's cello works in one volume, has been prepared from manuscript sources in Liszt's hand, or in the hand of original copyists – often with Liszt's handwritten annotations, with critical comparison with first editions, and from first editions where no manuscript source has been traced. In addition, Liszt's versions of the pieces for other forces have been consulted in manuscripts or in first editions. We have refrained from supplying bowing or fingering that does not stem from the sources, and it will be seen that Liszt's original slurs in the cello part reflect phrase-structure more often than bowing patterns.

The *Élégie* – usually called *Première Élégie* in order to distinguish it from the second Elegy – was composed in memory of Marie Moukhanoff-Kalergis, a patroness of both Liszt and Wagner. According to the original manuscript and several of Liszt's letters in mid-1874, the original title for the piece was *Schlummerlied im Grabe* [Lullaby in the grave], but by the publication date 1875, the title had been altered to *Élégie*. From the correspondence, it seems that the piano solo