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Franz Liszt, Vol. 2: The Weimar Years, 1848-1861



Synopsis

The second volume in Alan Walker's magisterial biography of Franz Liszt. "You can't help but keep turning the pages, wondering how it will all turn out: and Walker's accumulated readings of Liszt's music have to be taken seriously indeed." •D. Kern Holoman, New York Review of Books "A conscientious scholar passionate about his subject. Mr. Walker makes the man and his age come to life. These three volumes will be the definitive work to which all subsequent Liszt biographies will aspire." •Harold C. Schonberg, Wall Street Journal "What distinguishes Walker from Liszt's dozens of earlier biographers is that he is equally strong on the music and the life. A formidable musicologist with a lively polemical style, he discusses the composer's works with greater understanding and clarity than any previous biographer. And whereas many have recycled the same erroneous, often damaging information, Walker has relied on his own prodigious, globe-trotting research, a project spanning twenty-five years. The result is a textured portrait of Liszt and his times without rival." •Elliot Ravetz, Time "The prose is so lively that the reader is often swept along by the narrative. . . . This three-part work . . . is now the definitive work on Liszt in English and belongs in all music collections." •Library Journal

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Customer Reviews

"It is a peculiarity of Liszt's music that it faithfully and fatally mirrors the character of its interpreter. When his works give the impression of being hollow, superficial and pretentious, the fault usually lies with performer, occasionally with the (prejudiced) listener, and only rarely with Liszt himself." -

Alfred Brendel. Liszt Misunderstood (1961) Reading the second volume of Alan Walker's biography of Liszt, 'Franz Liszt: The Weimar Years, 1848-1861', it is clear that the struggles he undertook willingly during his life persist to this day. Liszt is a fascinating character and extraordinary central figure in the development of classical music. It is not only that much of his music remains underrated, but also his influence and encouragement to composers across the long span of his life is easily overlooked. On a simple level Liszt's ability to see the genius in Berlioz and Wagner, to champion their music when not many others were is to his credit. But looking a little deeper, as Walker's exceptionally detailed account of the Weimar period permits, one must admit that Liszt's radical (at the time) understanding of the art of the conductor, together with his unwavering certainty that music had to develop in new directions, mark him out as something more than many of his contemporaries. Liszt was also, in the field of music, an exceptionally generous personality. Having spent a few hundred pages cataloging how the critic Eduard Hanslick savaged Liszt's endeavours both as a composer and a conductor, Walker describes how the two met at a dinner party and sat down to play some four-handed Schubert. Certainly Hanslick deserves some credit too for having the grace to lay down the cudgel for one evening, but then again he was slinging the arrows.

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