EVOCATIONS OF WATER AT THE PIANO:

FROM SCHUBERT TO LISZT AND RAVEL

by

ALEXANDRA M. LEWIS

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Music in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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Abstract

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by

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Advisor: Professor L. Michael Griffel

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a number of factors converged to create a unique repertoire for the piano that sought to evoke water. Integral to this was the evolution of the piano and its emergence as a principal force in shaping the period's aesthetic. By tracing the lineage from Schubert through Liszt and Ravel, one may observe how water imagery developed a musical language of its own.

Informing these works are two of the nineteenth century's chief preoccupations: Nature and realism. Composers' responses to these led to the creation of a unique repertoire that effectively expresses water with its fascinating qualities and multifaceted character. In addition, this music manifests some of the larger developments of the century (the use of increasingly coloristic harmony, more nontraditional tonal relationships, innovative textures, exotic scales). This body of music can therefore be seen to reflect an evolution from the Classical ideal, with drama generated primarily by abstract formal relationships, to the Romantic and, later, the Impressionist idioms, in

which extramusical elements inspired musical narrative and a freer, more fluid sound-world became the norm.

Crucial to the creation of water music was the rapidly evolving pianoforte, which possessed a more responsive action, greater dynamic range, and a lusher, more liquid sonority than its predecessors. The emergence of this new instrument coincided with the first flood of virtuoso pianist-composers. The imaginations of many of these composers — with their increasing predilection for virtuosity — were ignited by the piano's ever-broadening palette. In turn, their demands spurred piano manufacturers to greater technological advances.

This study traces the origins of water music for the piano from Schubert's inventive song accompaniments, through Liszt's song transcriptions, songs, and piano solo works, to the piano works of Ravel. These composers span the entire Romantic period through Impressionism. Each had a profound effect on his successor, and nowhere is this more apparent than in their piano works that contain water imagery, a body of music that includes the seminal "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este" and *Jeux d'eau*, which in many ways stand at the crux of the period's aesthetic.

In memory of my mother.

PREFACE

This project was inspired many years ago when, in the early 1980s, I innocently purchased a new recording entitled *"Water Music" of the Impressionists*.[1] I had always been attracted to this repertoire, and, needless to say, I spent countless hours listening. This recording prompted me to tackle some of these challenging works and ponder what made them so compelling and what made their expression of water so effective. Inevitably, during the course of my studies, the idea of exploring and attempting to explain how composers could magically draw water out of a black wooden box evolved into the present investigation.

This study examines a unique repertoire for the piano — created during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries — which sought to evoke impressions and expressions of water. It concerns itself with historical precedents and contributing factors that gave birth to this music. In addition, it reveals how water imagery developed a musical language of its own.

Water music — that is, music that in some way suggests water — is a vast repertoire. The orchestral music of this ilk alone amounts to a very large body of works.[2] What especially fascinates me, however, is how closely the growth of water music mirrors the evolution of the piano, sometimes appearing to inspire it, and how the

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[1] Carol Rosenberger, *"Water Music" of the Impressionists* (Hollywood, Calif.: Delos, 1983).

[2] For a general discussion on the role of water in orchestral music, see Gerda Burkhard, "'Rollend in schaumenden Wellen': Musikalische Wasserspiele," *Universitas* 8 (1993): 745-54.

instrument, in turn, seems to exert a profound influence on nineteenth-century musical thought.

The present study, therefore, addresses works written exclusively for the piano: a body of music that in many ways stands at the crux of the period's aesthetic. It includes an examination of Schubert's Lied accompaniments and of how these gave rise to solo piano works. The pieces chosen for consideration all share one essential trait: namely, that their composer overtly attempted to portray or suggest water and that this intention was made explicit by the title, text, preface, or introductory remarks accompanying the music. In the case of the song accompaniments, water plays a prominent role in the text if not always in the title itself. I have focused on a selection of works composed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, beginning with Schubert's song accompaniments, giving rise to several transcriptions, songs, and solo piano works of Liszt, and culminating in the piano music of Ravel, in which water imagery reaches its pinnacle and epitomizes the aesthetic concerns of the Impressionist period.

Though I had initially intended to include Debussy in this project, I ultimately chose to concentrate on Ravel and leave Debussy for future study. The approaches to expressing water of these two composers, who are all too often paired, are very different and, in many ways, underscore their distinct styles: Ravel, of a virtuosic, highly representational bent, was clearly a direct descendant of Liszt, while the iconoclastic Debussy, more closely aligned with the Symbolist aesthetic, took a more abstract approach. A thorough examination of Debussy's piano works that express water, including the song accompaniments, requires a full-length study of its own.

Finally, I have confined my discussion of harmony, particularly with regard to Ravel's music, to chord quality, and have not attempted to explain the intricacies of Ravel's tonal prolongation. I have tried only to identify chord types that, for their coloristic qualities, recur throughout this repertoire and become a characteristic part of the vocabulary.

While preparing this study, I was extremely fortunate to have the help and support of many to whom I owe my eternal gratitude. I wish to thank Henry Z. Steinway and the Steinway & Sons archives, Gabor and Sujatri Reisinger at Klavierhaus, Stewart Pollens, curator of musical instruments at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Elliott Kaback, Honora Raphael, Rena Charnin Mueller, Arbie Orenstein, Nancy Hager, Sheryl and Martin Cannelakis, and Michael Rogers. Special thanks to Philip Rupprecht who was so generous with his time, extremely helpful, and always supportive. For his encouragement, guidance, and input, I wish to acknowledge Allan Atlas. I am most grateful to Peter Basquin and Bruce MacIntyre, as my readers, for their expert and insightful contributions, to Susan Kagan and Richard Burke for their willingness to serve on my dissertation defense committee, and to Sylvia Kahan as Committee Chair. Words cannot express my gratitude to my advisor, L. Michael Griffel, for all he contributed to this project: his time, generosity, kind prodding, careful attention to detail, healthy skepticism, and constant inspiration. But perhaps most of all, I am grateful to have had the opportunity to share with him a mutual love and admiration for these composers and this special repertoire. Finally, I wish to acknowledge my husband, Bim Strasberg, whose encouragement, devotion, and assistance helped make this endeavor possible.

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INTRODUCTION

This study will explore a piano repertoire in which water, in its varied manifestations, is evoked, and examine the ideas and forces that gave rise to this music. Chief among the latter was the evolution of the piano — with its growing physical and sonic capabilities — through the nineteenth century, and the instrument's emergence as a primary vehicle for the expression of the period's ethos. Specifically, the study will trace the lineage of water music through its major progenitors: from its genesis in Schubert's song accompaniments, through Liszt's early transcriptions of Schubert songs as well as his own song accompaniments and solo works, to Ravel's exemplary works inspired by water. In so doing, one observes the formation of a vocabulary for expressing water that employs certain types of descriptive figuration, characteristic harmonies and scales, and a flexible treatment of rhythm and meter, in conjunction with the piano's sonorous capabilities.

Central to this discussion and, indeed, this repertoire is Franz Liszt, whose contributions were among the earliest and in many ways the most significant. The chapters covering his songs and song arrangements are preceded by an examination of Schubert's inventive song accompaniments, which served as the inspiration for the youthful Liszt's own compositional language for watery subjects. The subsequent comparison of Liszt's treatments of Schubert and Rossini further elucidates this debt. The final chapter concerns itself with Liszt's successor, Ravel, whose nonpareil water-inspired works expand upon the innovations of the elder composer's visionary creation,

"Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este." Thus, Liszt stands as a bridge, both musically and geographically, from Schubert and central Europe — where he spent his formative years — to Ravel, the Impressionists, and Paris.

Most obvious among the devices for suggesting water is figuration, which emerges in Schubert's picturesque accompaniments to great effect. The development of pianistic virtuosity and the imaginative figurative effects — rhythmic, metric, sonic — to which this gave rise led to increasingly more vivid imagery. Additionally, as the harmonic language evolved throughout the course of the century, becoming both more free and colorful, new tools were available to the composer for this purpose. Harmonies such as the half-diminished seventh, dominant ninth, and major triad with added sixth, along with the pentatonic scale, would emerge for their coloristic attributes as important components in the evocation of water. All of these, of course, appear throughout the repertoire, and none is intrinsically capable of depicting water on its own. Context is paramount to the efficacy of these devices, therefore, and it is in concert with one another that these gain their potency.

One may ask: why has water been such an important source of inspiration in music, or, for that matter, literature, art, and dance? As we shall see in the first chapter, from mighty oceans to raindrops, there is something about water that has always moved the human spirit. As Herman Melville (1819-91) declares in the opening pages of *Moby Dick* (1851), "There is magic in it." Water has been endowed with many meanings throughout history. It can represent a powerful and dangerous force, an effervescent playfulness, a sensual attraction, a cleansing essence, a medicinal cure, a mysterious

world beyond human dominion, or a metaphysical parable of life itself.[1] And, as scientists remind us, without water there would be no life.

During the nineteenth century diverse yet related factors combined to make feasible the expression of water through piano music.[2] The rapidly evolving pianoforte proved to be an effective vehicle for this. To meet the increasing demands placed upon the instrument by works such as Beethoven's *"Hammerklavier" Sonata,* Op. 106 (1817-18), technological improvements became necessary. With the advent of the cast-iron frame in the 1830s, the piano began its metamorphosis into the modern concert grand.[3] By mid century, the "monster" instrument that emerged was a revelation. It possessed a greater dynamic range, power of projection, sustaining capability, keyboard responsiveness, and richness of sonority than its predecessors. This new and exciting potential of the piano coincided with the first flood of virtuoso pianist-composers that included Mendelssohn, Chopin, the Schumanns, Liszt, and Thalberg. Together with an increasing predilection for virtuosity, the piano's ever-broadening palette ignited the imagination of composers. As will be seen, by examining water music as it developed from the accompaniments of Schubert's Lieder through the solo piano works of Liszt and Ravel, we can trace this impact.

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[1] In Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* (New York: New Directions, 1951) the river's eternal flow and the seeming innocuousness of the boatman's existence reveal to the young Buddha the true "meaning," or lack thereof, of human existence.

[2] Though examples of natural imagery can be found in the literature dating back to the Renaissance, this writer finds that not until the nineteenth century was the expression of water so effective and pervasive.

[3] For a comprehensive history of the instrument, see Edwin M. Ripin et al., *The New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments: Piano* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988); Cyril Ehrlich, *The Piano: A History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976); and William L. Sumner, *The Pianoforte* (London: MacDonald and Co., 1966).

Other crucial factors that had a profound effect upon the creation of this repertoire found their beginnings in Beethoven's *"Pastoral" Symphony* (1808), an early Romantic example of picturesque orchestral music. In the second movement, "Scene by the Brook," water springs forth orchestrally as Beethoven evokes the gentle flow of the stream. Embodied in this work are two of the nineteenth century's chief preoccupations: Nature and realism. These concerns found earlier and more explicit expression in art and literature. William Wordsworth (1770-1850) paid homage to Nature in poems such as *Ode: Intimations of Immortality* (1807) and *Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, In a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont* (1805), the latter of which exemplifies the strong links among the arts of the period. Similarly, the landscapes of William Turner (1775-1851) were often inspired by literary themes, bearing such titles as *Snowstorm: Hannibal Crossing the Alps* (1812) and *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: Italy* (1812).

The musical outgrowth of these concerns was program music — music that expressed one or more extramusical ideas. In Felix Mendelssohn's (1809-47) *Hebrides Overture* (or *Fingal's Cave*, 1830), for instance, the composer paints a musical seascape of a Scottish isle. The element of realism became even more explicit in the work of Hector Berlioz (1803-69), notably so in his *Symphonie fantastique* (1830). His successors — such as Modest Mussorgsky (1839-81) and Richard Strauss (1864-1949) as well as Liszt — sought to portray specific images in increasingly vivid terms.[4]

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[4] For a thorough discussion of the role of nature in literature, painting, and music, see Charles Rosen, "Mountains and Song Cycles," *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 116-236.

Composers' responses to Nature and the quest for realism, combined with their special feelings for water, led to the creation of a spectacular repertoire that effectively expresses water in liquid state with its fascinating qualities and multifaceted character. In addition, this music manifests some of the larger developments of the century (i.e., the use of increasingly coloristic harmony, more nontraditional tonal relationships, innovative textures, exotic scales). Thus, this body of music can be seen to reflect the evolution from the Classical ideal, with drama generated primarily by abstract formal relationships, to the Romantic and, later, the Impressionist idioms, in which extramusical elements inspired musical narrative and a freer, more fluid sound-world had become the norm.

PART I: LA SOURCE

CHAPTER I

ORIGINS

Before examining specific examples of water-inspired music for the piano, one must consider *La Source* — the philosophical, aesthetic, and technological contexts — for such pieces. Several crucial questions need to be discussed here. What does water itself signify and why did it fascinate Romantic poets, artists, and composers? Why is water such an effective manifestation of Romanticism and its enduring interest in Nature? And finally, how did improvements in piano construction pave the way for the creation of the special repertoire that will be discussed in the chapters that follow?

THE MYSTERIES AND MEANINGS OF WATER

Water has always held an irresistible attraction for humankind. There can be little doubt that our fascination and complex relationship with water are linked inextricably to the crucial role water plays in our lives. Ancient societies universally recognized water's significance and enshrined it as one of the essential elements of which the cosmos is composed.[1] As such, water represented a vital source of life, an intrinsic part of life's web. This alone, however, cannot adequately account for the compelling lure of water.

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[1] Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* (New York: Arkana, 1959), 64.

Water is in many ways an enigma. In its fluidity, it is a formless substance that is capable of taking on many shapes and, thus, defies description. It can assume various states: from the raging deluge of a waterfall to the pensive stillness of a reflecting pond; from the meanderings of a stream to the staccato patter of raindrops. Its depths can be both transparent and revealing or murky and opaque — in the latter case, a free range for the imagination, harboring fantastical creatures (the Loch Ness monster, for instance) that defy our notions of reality. It stands as the counterpoise to land; water is the metaphysical realm of mystery, sensuality, imagination, and unencumbered movement, whereas earth is the realm of substantive concreteness and physical gravity. Our relationship with water, which starts before we leave the womb, is a complex one: an ambivalent bond of fear and desire, of turmoil and tranquility.

THE VITAL ELEMENT

At least part of water's allure stems from the fact that it is so essential to life itself. Covering three-quarters of the earth's surface, water is the domain of a rich multitude of aquatic life. It is the major constituent of living matter and represents seventy percent of human body weight. Without regular replenishment of water, all life — plant, animal, microbial — would wither and die.

What lends water much of its mystique and symbolic resonance, however, is its formlessness. At ordinary temperatures, it is the only substance that occurs in all three states of matter: solid, liquid, and gas. It can appear, for instance, as ice, snow, rain, dew,

fog, steam, clouds, swamps, lakes, rivers, and oceans. Having no permanent shape or form of its own, water is, thus, an extremely elusive element. In its purest state, it is odorless, tasteless, colorless, and completely transparent. These qualities, however, stand in direct conflict with some of the vivid images and sensations we commonly associate with water: the color "sea green," the "blue Pacific," the smell of salt water. Water can move or remain at rest and in the latter condition has the unusual ability to reflect images. In addition to its many guises, water possesses the capacity to make light objects buoyant.

By its very nature, water presents us with many dualities. While it is from water that life springs, water also has the potential to destroy life. Too much or too little of this precious substance can precipitate natural disasters; the history and literature of the world are replete with devastation from floods and droughts. And though water is naturally transparent, its surface at times appears totally opaque — a mirror to the sky or the viewer. In mythology[2] and other literature water imagery has been used to suggest both male and female tendencies,[3] while in its various states it can evoke diverse moods: from the effervescent playfulness of a fountain to the dark mystery of a murky pool; from the serenity of a placid lake to the menacing violence of a stormy sea. It is hardly surprising that, though humans have successfully harnessed water's powers for constructive purposes, ultimately its movements are unpredictable and beyond their control.

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[2] See "Water" and related topics in *Man, Myth, and Magic: Encyclopedia of Mythology*, 20 vols., ed. Richard Cavendish (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1995).

[3] See "Feminine and Masculine Water" below.

THE CRADLE OF LIFE

Water is not merely essential to life but is its very essence. While living things cannot survive without it, life itself springs from water. Part of our deep affinity for the liquid stems from our own origins and subconscious recollections of our birth. Enveloped in water and thus shielded from the world, the embryo inhabits its own sanctum; the womb then represents to us a sense of security and contentment. Liquids furthermore are endowed with life-giving properties simply because they flow. The sap is the lifeblood of a tree, carrying vital nutrition to the branches just as blood supplies the body of an animal. And, in a larger sense, a stream would seem to do the same for a forest. Even in a desert environment water constitutes an oasis for life. This vital link between water and life is reflected in cultural and linguistic constructs such as *aqua vitae*, *eau de vie*, and *Lebenswasser*, for example.

Without doubt, water is the cradle of life and civilization. Mesopotamia, believed to be the earliest civilization,[4] is known to have sprung up in what is now southern Iraq around the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers;[5] these are believed to be the very rivers described in Genesis 2:10 as flowing out of the Garden of Eden. Along with its generative symbolism, however, water has traditionally been endowed with life-giving qualities beyond its mere biological significance. The Bible serves as a source of

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[4] Campbell, 143. See Ivan Illich, *H2O and the Waters of Forgetfulness* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1985), for an interesting and highly informative account of water and its historical, linguistic, and mythological meanings

[5] The Greek name Mesopotamia literally means "between rivers."

numerous references — both literal and metaphorical — the most famous of which is found in the Gospel of John, who proclaims: "Everyone who drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14).[6] Echoing this sentiment, references to the "water of life" are plentiful in Revelations, the final book of the Bible.

The "water of life" is also the subject of many myths and legends. In Greek mythology, the sea nymph Thetis plunges her son Achilles into the river Styx, the divine waters of which should render him invulnerable and thus bestow immortality upon him.[7] Of course, it is the warrior's famous heel from which his mother suspends him that proves to be his vulnerability and, ultimately, his undoing. The human quest for immortality, nevertheless, drove explorers and conquerors from Alexander the Great to Ponce de Leon to the ends of the earth in search of a real "fountain of youth."[8]

The unique substantive ability to cleanse has further inspired the notion in many cultures that water has the power to purify the soul. Hence, the famous proverb "cleanliness is next to godliness" represents a rather banal iteration of a more profound conviction. In many societies and religions, the ritual of washing or of sprinkling water over a subject is symbolic of spiritual purification. The Hindus, for instance, believe the ritual of bathing in a sacred river capable of cleansing both body and spirit, and in many religions washing away sin is a prerequisite for prayer or approaching the divine. Similarly, in Islam, washing before daily prayers, which occur five times each day, is

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[6] As we shall see in Chapter V, this passage was musically immortalized in Liszt's "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este."

[7] Edith Hamilton, *Mythology* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1940), 193-94.

[8] See "Water" in *Man, Myth, and Magic*.

essential. A Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox priest will sprinkle "holy water" over the congregation during mass to ward off evil spirits.[9] It is hardly surprising, then, that history's greatest purge of sin and corruption, the biblical Flood, relied upon the cleansing (not to mention the destructive) powers of the liquid: water is the divine implement for, alternatively, the creation, redemption, or destruction of life.

In the Christian faith, the ideas of the "water of life" and purification are intertwined in the baptismal rite, which represents both initiation and rebirth. The ritual, symbolic of the birth process itself, celebrates the subject's entrance into the world — now as a spiritual being — and subsequent devotion to the faith. The baby, novice, or convert, initially immersed in water as though returned to his or her origin in the womb, emerges blessed with the Holy Spirit and, thus, reborn.[10] In a similar manner, the ritual is reenacted at death with water sprinkled upon the coffin both to ensure the soul's purification and its subsequent resurrection to eternal life.

FEMININE AND MASCULINE WATER

Over time, various associations with water have evolved that may be termed feminine and masculine — from the birthing process and seductive qualities attached to women to the blend of destructive and gentle traits in male figures of mythology. In the nineteenth century, with its heightened interest in past literature and folklore, these

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[9] For rituals and the uses of water, see "Ablutions" in Jean Rudhardt, "Water," *The Encyclopedia of Religion,* 15 vols., ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987), Vol. 15, 351.

[10] Cf. the Gospel accounts of: Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33.

associations naturally enhanced the potential attraction of water imagery and subjects among poets, artists and composers.

The association of water with the female gender is pervasive: goddess-shrines, for instance, were nearly always associated with the sea or other bodies of water such as wells, springs, or lakes. The birth process points out one of the visceral connections between water and woman. By virtue of this relationship, water has often assumed a maternal quality. The soothing, rocking motion of the sea or the wistful murmurings of a brook are not unlike those of a parent (and, more conventionally in human experience, the mother) gently lulling a baby to sleep. In fact, the sea has been universally regarded as "the Great Mother,"[11] for it is from the sea that the first forms of life emerged. Language often reflects this connection between mother and water: the Latin word for sea, "*mare*," is associated with the name Maria, the Virgin Mary being the supreme mother figure in the Roman Catholic tradition; coincidentally, the French words for sea, "*mer*," and mother, "*mère*" (both feminine nouns), vary slightly in spelling but sound exactly alike. Charles Baudelaire (1821-67) was perhaps exploiting this similarity in his apparent pun "*La musique souvent me prend comme une mer!*,"[12] in which the seductive force of music is likened to that of the vast, all-embracing sea as well as to the comforting maternal presence .

The seductive essence has frequently inspired water's association with feminine imagery. The Greek goddess Aphrodite, divine symbol of beauty and love and ultimate

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[11] See "Sea" in *Man, Myth, and Magic*.

[12] Cited in Jean Roy, "Musique de l'eau," *Corps Ecrit* 16 (1985): 91.

enchantress of men, is said to have sprung to life from the foam of the sea.[13] Water has even been used as a metaphor for love: " . . . like water, love stayed with the man who held it loosely, as in an open, cupped hand; but the man who tried to grip it hard, in his fist, found that it flowed away and left him gripping nothing."[14] More often than not, however, this feminine allure reflects masculine anxiety: it presents the ultimate challenge to man's intellect as it exposes his carnal instincts and, thus, his vulnerability. Hence, the restless, beguiling sea has been renowned throughout literature for its ability to cast powerful spells over the minds of men — a capacity rivaled only by women. The sea is the mistress to whom the devoted souls of seafarers remain ever faithful, who steals away sailors from their wives and homes, who cuts loose moorings, detains, and sometimes abducts.

The elements of seduction and sensuality have often been represented by beguiling aquatic creatures such as the naiads, nymphs, mermaids, rusalki, sirens, undines, and water sprites.[15] Traditionally, many of these enchantresses personify the beauty and danger of the sea; some, such as the Lorelei[16] and the Sirens, are associated with rocks and shoals. To catch a glimpse of these creatures or hear their seductive song is always a portent of danger and disaster.

While it might seem likely that violent, raging waters with destructive potential would assume masculine traits, this is hardly the case. In Greek mythology, the

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[13] Hamilton, 32.

[14] Cited without attribution in Barbara Walker, *The Women's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983), 1066.

[15] As we see in this study, Ravel fell under the spell of Ondine.

[16] Liszt's song *Die Lorelei* (1841), a setting of Heinrich Heine's 1824 poem, was inspired by this legend.

association of water with the male gender is common but not always violent. While rivers, streams, and seas were populated by nymphs — the Oceanids, Naiads, and Nereids, respectively — all of the gods of the waters were male.[17] Poseidon, the God of the Sea and second in eminence only to Zeus, his brother, was quite capable of wreaking havoc when provoked. (The trials and torments he put the Greeks through after the fall of Troy are a good example.) Nevertheless, he is more often a spirit of tranquility: his chariot glides over the waters, quelling the thunderous waves, leaving calm in his wake.[18] Similarly, the domain of Ocean, the Titan whose river encircles the earth, was never troubled by wind or storm, while the Old Man of the Sea, Nereus, was most remarkable for his gentleness.[19] Thus, somewhat paradoxically, perhaps, water in its masculine guises would seem to represent divine benevolence and peace rather than tyranny or fury.

Death, Timelessness, and the Depths of the Mind

Just as water has the ability to give life, it can easily take life away. Floods and droughts have plagued human existence for all eternity; the Bible, pagan mythologies, Chinese and Egyptian histories alike contain tales of upheaval, suffering, and death as a result of water-related cataclysms. Water, with its ever flowing, diluting, and polymorphous qualities, can also be associated with dreams and timeless states.

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[17] Hamilton, 38.

[18] Ibid., 29.

[19] Ibid., 38.

Consequently, water and death have a strong association. In *The Odyssey,* for instance, Homer depicts the journey to Hades as traversing the earth's edge past the river Ocean;[20] later poets echo this tradition, usually locating the entrance to the underworld beside deep lakes and caverns.[21] The underworld of Greek myth, later described in exquisite detail by Virgil (70 B.C.-19 B.C.) and Dante (who transmuted it to Christianity), is notably separated from the world of the living by several primordial rivers: essentially by the convergence of Acheron, the river of woe, and Cocytus, the river of lamentation; but also by Phlegethon, the river of fire, Styx, the river by which the gods swear inviolable oaths, and Lethe, the river of forgetfulness.[22] In fact, in all Indo-Germanic — i.e., Greek, Indic, Nordic, and Celtic — mythologies, the worlds of the dead and the living are separated by a body of water emblematic of the stream of forgetfulness: water, the great purifier, strips the dead of their memory of life.[23] These recollections, the Greeks believed, conveyed by streams to the well of Mnemosyne, where they are deposited at the bottom of her clear, bubbling spring, nourish the living with knowledge of the past and insight into the future.[24]

Beyond these associations, literature is replete with examples of watery deaths (particularly suicides), for, as the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962) has pointed out, it is "especially suited for giving us the imagination of death," as water gives

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[20] See Homer's *The Odyssey*, Book XI, Lines 13-22. *The Odyssey of Homer*, trans. Richard Lattimore (New York: Harper and Row, 1965).

[21] Hamilton, 39.

[22] Ibid.

[23] See Illich, 30.

[24] Ibid., 31.

the impression of the suspension of both time and gravity.[25] Bachelard further describes water as a domain inhabited by both dead and living nymphs, perhaps the most famous of the former being Shakespeare's Ophelia, who chooses water for her own untimely demise. Water plays a crucial role in many of the works of Edgar Allan Poe (1809-49) as well. *A Descent into the Maelstrom* (1841), *MS Found in a Bottle* (1831), and the elegiac *Annabel Lee* (1849), to name some of the more famous examples, reveal dark and murky water as a favored substance of Poe's imagination.[26] Nowhere in his *oeuvre* is this more in evidence, however, than in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838), where death is provocatively suggested as water and blood become indistinguishable.

Unlike land, which is concrete and familiar to our experience, water is the substance of dreams and the imagination. Indeed, the unconscious world, where water plays such a significant role, is fundamental to the interpretation of Poe's works. In his probing *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter* (1942) Bachelard explores the psychology of this relationship and the myriad meanings latent in watery imagery. Carl Jung (1875-1961), too, connected water with the depths of the mind and the unconscious self. In identifying archetypes of the collective unconscious, Jung cites water as the most common symbol. He believed any expanse of water that appeared in the dream state to be a manifestation of the unconscious mind. For example, he describes the lake in the valley as "the unconscious which lies as it were underneath

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[25] Gaston Bachelard, *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*, trans. E. R. Farrell (Dallas: The Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, 1983), 81.

[26] Ibid., 46. Furthermore, it is worth noting that water provides a topical link between Poe and two composers who revered him, Debussy and Ravel.

consciousness."[27] In these watery depths of the mind we encounter a profound duality: the chaotic, formless, dark, and potentially destructive force of the subconscious coexists with the positive "springs" of life in the conscious mind.

Not surprisingly water, with its myriad meanings, has attracted artists and writers throughout the ages who have used it to endow their creations with symbolic richness. From the time of Dante (1265-1321)[28] and Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) to the present, water imagery has lent imaginative depth to art and literature. This became particularly true in the nineteenth century when Romanticism elevated the untamed qualities of Nature to an artistic ideal. Indeed the fluid character of water can be viewed almost as a metaphor for the larger aesthetic developments of the century. It seems only right, then, that water, with all its elusive qualities and many guises, could be so effectively portrayed by the most abstract of arts — music.

ROMANTICISM AND NATURE

A major preoccupation of the nineteenth century, and the inspiration for many of its greatest artistic achievements, was Nature. In fact, one could venture so far as to say that Nature is the single element that unites the multitude of diverse movements to which the period gave birth, from Neoclassicism (which actually took hold in the late eighteenth

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[27] C. G. Jung, *The Basic Writings of C. G. Jung*, ed. Violet Laslo (New York: The Modern Library, 1959), 302. The lake becomes an important symbol in Bertrand's poem, which inspired Ravel's "Ondine" (See Chapter VI).

[28] In the "Purgatorio" (1308-1321) the symbolic waters of purgation and rebirth flow plentifully.

century) and Romanticism through their offspring: Realism, Naturalism, and Impressionism. All came under the hegemonic sway of an almost religious devotion to the natural world. But unlike the Classical notion that beauty sprang from order and balance — conditions often suggested by Nature — the Romantic sensibility of the nineteenth century was fascinated by Nature's wild and untamed power. This aesthetic shift was manifested by the rise in popularity of the English garden, its uncontrived wildness standing in sharp contrast to the dictates of classical order.[29] For the Romantic, who sought emotional and spiritual transcendence, the natural world represented first-hand experience of the universe as well as a projection of the human spirit; it was, therefore, worshiped with a deep, almost religious, reverence and imbued with idealized qualities.

This devotion sprang from a variety of important developments in the eighteenth century. The Enlightenment had liberated thought from religious dogma;[30] Nature and natural instincts were celebrated as the source of true knowledge, which became the paramount concern of human existence. On a less philosophical level, however, this love of Nature was a consequence of the Industrial Revolution and the social and economic upheaval it engendered.[31] As people left their rural lives, moving to the cities and working in factories, they witnessed for the first time the devastating effects of civilization's encroachment on the environment. Overpopulation and industrialization

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[29] Charles Rosen, "Mountains and Song Cycles," *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 93.

[30] Leon Plantinga, *Romantic Music: A History of Musical Style in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1984), 3.

[31] Ibid., 1.

bred pollution and squalor. Many, finding themselves separated from Nature and the rural life they were accustomed to, yearned for its untrodden simplicity. Romantic philosophers, writers, and artists such as Rousseau, Goethe, Turner, and Constable translated this yearning into a quasi-religious veneration. Nature was at once wild and boundless, sublime and picturesque. It was the chaos that the individual struggled against and strove heroically to bridle as well as a naiveté in which one's spirituality could awaken.

Romanticism — the incredibly complex labyrinth of paradoxical ideas that comprised much of nineteenth-century thought[32] — thus had its roots in the eighteenth century, where they were often entwined with those of Neoclassicism. In fact, far from what is often thought of as a stark dichotomy, the two movements can be viewed as a continuum, with one growing out of the other.[33] They are different sides of the same coin,[34] part of the cyclical process described by Curt Sachs in which the aesthetic pendulum swings between the two extremes of *ethos* and *pathos*, order and sentiment, clarity and imagination, objectivity and subjectivity; thus, a similar relationship exists as that between the Ars Antiqua and Ars Nova, or between the Renaissance and Baroque.[35] Both Neoclassicism and Romanticism drew heavily upon the past; the former, as its name suggests, sought to emulate Antiquity, while Romanticism (from French "*roman*") found

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[32] Arthur O. Lovejoy, "On the Discrimination of Romanticisms," reprinted in *Essays in the History of Ideas,* 229-53 (Baltimore: 1948). Orig. pub. *Papers of the Modern Language Association* 39 (1924).

[33] Plantinga, 21-22.

[34] Friedrich Blume, *Classic and Romantic Music, A Comprehensive Survey*, trans. M. D. Herter Norton (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970), 124.

[35] Cited in Donald J. Grout, *A History of Western Music*, rev. ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973), 539.

inspiration in legend, myth, and folktale and "rediscovered" the Dark Ages. Both sprang from the Enlightenment's elevation of the inner life of the individual to a realm that had been the private domain of religion. And the *Sturm und Drang* of the 1770s, with its elements of high drama and the fantastic, foreshadowed the later Romantic fondness for heightened emotionality, freedom of will, and the sublime. But whereas Nature represented for the Neoclassicist the finite world of physical reality and the equipoise of the infinite human spirit, the Romantic saw Nature as the boundlessness — freedom — of the human spirit itself.

As early as the mid-eighteenth century, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) celebrated the simplicity and spontaneity of the "noble savage." His *Nouvelle Heloise* (1761), for example, contained the germs of all the important motifs of Romanticism: the primitive, ancient folktales, Nature, nostalgia, struggles against fate and gods, free will, the exotic, and the erotic. Philosophers such as Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), expanding on the ideas of the Enlightenment and its elevation of the human spirit out of the confines of the old religious dogma, extolled a level of reality that transcended the ordinary. The "fine arts," unique in their ability to evoke this other reality, became a secular religion in Germany and gave rise to a modern field of aesthetics. Hence the established artistic values of Neoclassicism — balance, restraint, objectivity, and clarity — gave way to a new set that put a premium on human invention: the free play of the imagination, originality, obscurity, symbolism, and the intuition of the subconscious, all of which the Romantic found present in Nature. One easily sees, then, how for poets, artists, and composers water — in its typical fluid state of constantly moving where gravity leads it — was such an attractive parallel to the

qualities of wildness, freedom, "eternal becoming," and novelty in the Romantic aesthetic.

It is important to bear in mind, however, as Carl Dahlhaus observes in *Nineteenth-Century Music*, that the terminology of Romanticism-Classicism is inherently problematic.[36] A distinction must be made between creative intent and reception when considering aesthetic concepts, and this is particularly important when it comes to Romanticism because of the close interdependence of all the arts and sciences in the nineteenth century.[37] Not only did all the fine arts inform one another, but philosophers and writers frequently theorized about music and painting. Hegel, for instance, called music the "archetypal Romantic art"[38] in reference to its supreme abstract qualities that lent themselves most readily to the expression of the transcendental emotionality and spirituality which the Romantics sought and to which the other arts aspired. Inspired by Ludwig Tieck's *Phantasien über die Kunst* (1799) and by the notion that music, once freed from depicting "finite" emotions, becomes the expression of "infinite yearning,"[39] E.T.A. Hoffmann (1776-1822) was among the first to interpret the works of Beethoven, Haydn, and Mozart — the quintessential "Classical" composers by later standards — as "genuinely romantic" mainly because of their striking originality and individuality.[40] In

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[36] On Romanticism in music and its contradictory history, see Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 15-26; Plantinga, 20-22; and Rosen, 71-78.

[37] Dahlhaus, 16.

[38] Cited in Rosen, 75.

[39] Dahlhaus, 18. According to Dahlhaus, Tieck professed this "indefinite quality" of instrumental music to be "superior to the exactness of vocal music, rather than inferior, as was believed during the Enlightenment."

[40] Ibid.

fact, the "Classical" designation in music is particularly misleading, for it is a nineteenth-century construct: an attempt to "canonize" a body of work, just as literature and art had canonized the works of Antiquity as supreme exemplars or models.[41]. What is most significant and characteristic of late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thought and art when seen as part of a single Classical-Romantic continuum, however, is the worship of Nature, both as manifest reality and as an extension of the human spirit; and it is Romanticism that elevated this reverence to its religious, philosophical, and aesthetic peak.

The idealization of Nature first found artistic expression in the works of the early Romantic poets in England and, almost simultaneously, in Germany. The creations of the English poet William Wordsworth are among the earliest distinguished examples of Romanticism. Wordsworth found solace and inspiration in the natural world and invoked the muse that would serve an entire generation of poets that included Byron, Coleridge, Keats, Novalis, and Shelley. Indeed, natural imagery not only pervades his poetry but also appears as the essence of the purely human impulse, distinct from and superior to conscious action. The final stanza from Wordsworth's masterful *Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* (1802-04) both conjures up a profound awe of the natural world and laments a growing separation of human beings from that world:

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[41] Ibid., 22.

> And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,
> Forebode not any severing of our loves!
> Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
> I only have relinquished one delight
> To live beneath your habitual sway.[42]

Here and throughout his *oeuvre*, Wordsworth elevates landscape poetry to new heights while, in the reverential tone, sounding the prevailing chord for the artists of the Romantic generation. His own "watery" description of poetry as the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" in the preface to *Lyrical Ballades* (1805) could be applied just as easily to the other arts of the period.

A similar transformation was taking place in landscape and seascape painting. Again the English were at the forefront of this movement, and the works of John Constable (1776-1837) and William Turner (1775-1851) provide stunning examples. In *Hampstead Heath* (1821) Constable's deep concern with conditions of light and atmosphere is apparent. His practice of painting from direct observation in order to create a natural effect stands in stark contrast to Turner's more subjective style. The latter's *The Slave Ship* (1839), a spectacularly bold canvas that captures the sea's wild and menacing power, goes far beyond mere observation, injecting both literary and social overtones as well as a lurid sense of color to create a shrill intensity. This portrayal of Nature in such a dramatically heightened state is emblematic of the Romantic era's overriding concern with the imagination and emotions.

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[42] William Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," in *Poems of Wordsworth*, ed. Matthew Arnold (London: Macmillan, 1915), 207.

Composers eventually showed a similar fascination with the natural environment — both real and imagined — but, as has often been the case, music lagged somewhat behind the other arts in manifesting these concerns in a regular, overt way. Because of its abstract nature, music has always proven resistant to the expression of concrete extramusical ideas and the prevailing dogma of the times.[43] In spite of the valiant efforts of many to realize these ideas musically, it has generally taken a true titan to effect such a transformation persuasively. In the *"Pastoral" Symphony* (1808) Beethoven successfully created one of the first orchestral musical landscapes, an idealized one, to be sure, for it does not attempt to depict an actual place[44] but rather, in the composer's words, to "be more the expression of feeling than painting."[45]

The influence of this symphony was far-reaching, as it created the model for what became one of nineteenth-century composers' most important vehicles: program music. Beethoven's successors took the programmatic concept a synaesthetic step further by attempting musically to "paint" visual images and "recite" narratives. Inspired by his travels in Scotland, Mendelssohn's *Hebrides Overture* (Op. 26, 1829) presents a stirring aural seascape. The listener is held captive in the thrall of the swelling foamy waves as they beat the craggy Scottish isle of Staffa. Writing to his father about the Hebrides, Mendelssohn found himself at a loss for words "to make clear what a strange mood has

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[43] Rosen, 132.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Cited in D. Tovey, *Essays in Music Analysis*, Vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), 44.

come over me" and reverted to music — quoting from the opening passage of the work — to express his perceptions.[46]

The sheer number of musical works inspired by elements of Nature — ranging from Weber's forest paintings in *Der Freischütz* (1817-21), Schumann's "*Spring" Symphony* (1841), and numerous passages in Wagner's operas *The Flying Dutchman* (1844), *Das Rheingold* (1873), and *Siegfried* (1876) to Smetana's *Ma Vlast* (1872-9), Strauss' *Alpine Symphony* (1911-5), and Debussy's *La Mer* (1903-5) and *Trois Nocturnes* (1897-9) — attests to the overwhelming impact Nature continued to have on composers throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As the aesthetic shifted from Romanticism to Realism in the second half of the nineteenth century, so did the perception of Nature and its expression, but Nature itself would sometimes come to dominate and even shape music and art. In the works of Debussy and Ravel as well as painter Claude Monet (1840-1926) Nature is distilled to its essence.

The strong alliance among the arts in the nineteenth century helped to reinforce the influence of Nature, as art, literature, drama, and music informed one another. The great flowering of poetry, particularly German poetry, provided the many composers in and around the vital artistic hubs of Weimar, Vienna, Paris, and other cities with a valuable new inspiration. The marriage of German poetry and music brought about the creation of the art song. The German poets shared with their English counterparts a predilection toward natural subjects. The art song and, by extension, the song cycle consequently translated their passions for the many sights and sounds of Nature into

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[46] *Felix Mendelssohn: A Life in Letters*, ed. Rudolf Elvers, trans. Craig Tomlinson (New York: Fromm International, 1989), 87.

intensely evocative music. As Charles Rosen has observed, the song cycle played a critical role in the artistic realization of Romantic ideals, giving "the lyrical expression of Nature an epic status," for it is Nature that "marries" all of the Romantic arts:

> The creation of the song cycle is a parallel to the replacement of epic poetry by landscape poetry and the elevation of landscape painting to the commanding position previously held by historical and religious painting — more than a parallel, indeed, as these achievements supported each other, and were all part of one cohesive development.[47]

And it was this harmonious union, which effectively brought together poetry, music, and "sound painting," that came to epitomize the era.

Thus one can characterize the artistic climate of the late nineteenth century and its significant interrelationships among the arts as "fluid." Richard Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* perhaps best exemplifies the attempt to allow the various arts to interact simultaneously to create a multi-sensory experience that seems to "flow" without formal restraint. This unbridled sensuality would in many ways set the stage for the luxuriant works of Ravel, whose music bathes the listener in tonal color in much the same way that the Impressionist painters employed color and light.

In such a climate, it does not seem to be mere coincidence that one natural element, water, became so central to artistic creation. Throughout the history of painting, watery landscapes, albeit fantastic ones, had been ever present in the backgrounds of portraits and religious subjects alike. Just as evinced by literature, water has always held a magical fascination for visual artists and lent symbolic mystery and complexity to more literal subjects and narratives. So it is no surprise that, at the brink of the twentieth

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[47] Rosen, 125.

century, some of the greatest achievements of painting and music, including Monet's *Water Lilies* (1895-1926), Ravel's *Jeux d'eau* (1901), and Debussy's *La Mer* (1903-5), should concern themselves with water imagery. It is astonishing, however, both how Monet's colors vibrate to produce a visceral effect that is beyond the merely visual and how music, the most abstract of the arts, is able to evoke so effectively the ephemeral essence of water — its sound, its flow, its freedom.

Although music is a sonic medium, it is not merely the sonic aspects of water that composers have sought to imitate. Water has many voices ranging from the babbling of a brook to the roar of the ocean, and it is often these sounds alone that break Nature's stillness. Composers as well as other artists have attempted to go beyond such mere imitation: to capture, in effect, the essence of water. The nineteenth-century symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-98) recognized the challenge for artists when he advised them to "paint not the thing itself but the effect which it produces."[48] One such effect that music, by its very nature, suggests is the element of movement. Music flows through time much like a stream or a river on its course. In this way it acquires a narrative capacity.

Music can inexplicably express spatial qualities and is capable of pictorial representation, although the efficacy of this perception is subject to speculation. Undoubtedly social and cultural conditioning play a role in this synaesthetic transformation of a sonic idiom to a visual language. Nevertheless nineteenth-century composers relied heavily on such tranference.

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[48] Cited in Gordon Millan, *A Throw of the Dice: The Life of Stéphane Mallarmé* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1994), 106.

In his book *Realism in Nineteenth-Century Music* Carl Dahlhaus provides an extended explanation of this process:

> As well as acoustic phenomena, music is generally credited with the ability to represent spatial movement (rising and falling). This is also commonly regarded as straightforward imitation of nature, although strictly speaking it is a metaphor, for the habit of using words "high" and "low" to describe musical pitches is a convention of limited historical validity: in classical antiquity "sharp" and "blunt" were used, and modern psychological studies of aural perception use "light" and "dark." Nevertheless, over the centuries the convention has become so deeply rooted in musical receptivity that it is involuntarily accepted as a natural attribute. In other words, although the reference of the music to the reality being represented is perceived as direct and immediate, it in fact relies on a metaphor which has, however, with the usage of centuries, become the second nature of music — or has at least become the fiction of a natural language of music. Musical phenomena appear to us to express movement in space as literally as fast or slow tempos express movement in time. And to the extent that aesthetic appearances represent the "truth" of art, it would actually be inappropriate to insist too rigidly on the difference between the elements which mingle in the concept of Tonmalerei: acoustic imitation on the one hand and the musical depiction of spatial movement on the other.[49]

The depiction or evocation of water[50] certainly cannot be reduced to a singular technique, the many diverse forms of water obviously requiring a comparable variety of effects: tremolos to describe the shimmering play of light on a lake's surface; rising and falling arpeggios and glissandi to depict the crashing of waves; legato and staccato effects to portray, correspondingly, a flowing stream and the patter of raindrops; certain harmonies and scales to imply transparency, murkiness, reflection, and buoyancy; high notes to convey bubbling, splashing water and low ones to connote depth and darkness; continuous ostinato figures to capture the perpetual babbling of a brook on its course.

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[49] Carl Dahlhaus, *Realism in Nineteenth Century Music*, trans. Mary Whittall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 18.

[50] This study will concern itself with water in its liquid state only.

Indeed, every composer who explores this realm adds to the vocabulary. Thus, examining this evolving repertoire, one discerns an engaging eloquence from various techniques for conjuring up fluid images. As we will demonstrate, a clear line of development of these techniques may be observed through three major composers' contributions to this repertoire: from the poetic landscapes[51] of Schubert's piano accompaniments through Liszt's tonal poetry, and culminating in the vivid impressions of Ravel. Much of this would not have been possible, however, without the emergence of the piano as a primary expressive vehicle. As the piano evolved, mirroring the ever broadening demands of the Romantic composers and aesthetics, it offered an unprecedented palette from which a subject as unlikely as water might be painted.

THE ROLE OF THE PIANO

The musical instrument is a crucial link between the creative mind of the composer and the ear of the listener. An instrument has the power to transform ideas into images, and of all instruments the piano has enormous potential to suggest things far beyond its nature. The piano is the most versatile instrument, possessing a seemingly infinite palette of coloristic effects and a range surpassing that of all other instruments.

The piano was *the* instrument of the nineteenth century, and its influence reached far beyond the musical realm into the lives of ordinary people. Recognizing this impact, the editor of the *New York Musical Times* in 1852 wrote

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[51] With Schubert, it is premature to speak of "waterscapes."

> The pianoforte is the most universal of instruments. Scarcely a family in this country, beyond the ordinary means of subsistence, is without one . . . . Lady, you are, perhaps seated at a pianoforte. Possibly you are engaged in the laudable task of mastering the "elements." Perhaps you have got beyond all that . . . and you can make adventurous voyages on the open sea of the seven-octave pianoforte from pole to pole of the instrument, untroubled by flats, shoals, sharps, sudden modulations, or any of the harmonious quicksands, which reckless composers delight to scatter in the path of the musical voyager.[52]

Superficial though the above association between the piano and water may seem, it is not entirely without substance, for the author stumbled upon an important connection between the two: the piano, as it developed during the nineteenth century, became the perfect vehicle for the expression of water.

Since its invention the piano has played a central role in composition. According to George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), " . . . the pianoforte is the most important of all musical instruments; its invention was to music what the invention of the printing press was to poetry."[53] Franz Liszt described the instrument as "the microcosm of music."[54] With few exceptions, the major composers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries played the piano. Their skills ranged from transcendental virtuosity to mere proficiency, yet, despite these varying levels of ability, composers consistently found the piano to be both a source of inspiration and a valuable tool for the expression of musical ideas.[55]

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[52] *The New York Musical Times*, Dec. 18, 1852, as cited in Fostle, 19.

[53] Cited in Dubal, 17.

[54] Letter to Princess Carolyn Sayn-Wittgenstein, dated Dec. 1877, cited in Derek Watson, *Liszt* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1989), 169.

[55] A discussion of Schubert, Liszt, and Ravel's particular instruments can be found in subsequent chapters.

From the time the piano was first introduced and throughout the eighteenth century, its changes were largely modifications and refinements of Bartolomeo Cristofori's (1655-1730) original design.[56] By the early 1800s, however, new increasing demands were beginning to be placed upon the instrument by the leading virtuosi and composers (often one and the same), including particularly the desire for a greater, more powerful sound, an expanded compass, and a more responsive action. These demands required radical changes in the piano's mechanism and structure, and what emerged by roughly mid-century was an instrument that, in all important aspects, very closely resembled the modern piano as we know it today.

The piano's evolution was influenced by the change in musical style from the Classical to the Romantic and, more specifically, by the rise of the piano virtuoso. Writing about the "true instrument" of the new musical generation, Robert Schumann (1810-56) commented:

> Piano music marks a significant stage in the history of music; it was in this music that the first signs of the genius appeared. The leading musicians of our day are pianists. The instrument itself has reached a high degree of perfection. As players have progressively improved their technique, and composition, thanks to Beethoven, has become increasingly bold, so the instrument too has grown in range and importance.[57]

Schumann was referring to the flood of piano geniuses who all came into the world around the same time: Felix Mendelssohn (1809), Robert Schumann (1810), Frédéric Chopin (1810), Franz Liszt (1811), Ferdinand Hiller (1811), Sigismond

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[56] Invented circa 1709, the fundamental action mechanism was perfected in 1720.

[57] Cited without date in Dieter Hildebrandt, *Pianoforte,* trans. Harriet Goodman (New York: George Braziller, 1985), 91.

Thalberg (1812), Valentin Alkan (1813), Stephen Heller (1814), and Adolf Henselt (1814), to name some. It is no mere coincidence that when these virtuoso-composers were approaching maturity in the 1830s, the piano was as well. These composers informed the piano aesthetic that determined the instrument's optimal structure.

The virtuosi created a revolutionary piano technique that radically changed the course of piano music, which now included dazzling technical display. Passages of rapid scales, thirds, octaves, broken octaves, glissandi, repeated notes, filigree, and sweeping arpeggios became standard features. This bravura style demanded a lot from the instruments and inflicted brutal punishment upon them. Franz Liszt, for example, became known as a "piano smasher" when, after a recital, he left his instrument in near shambles.[58]

Changes in piano technique demanded further alterations and refinements of the instrument. Carl Czerny (1791-1857), Beethoven's pupil and Liszt's teacher, was well aware of the mutual relationship that existed between the piano and its players, as demonstrated in a lecture given to his students in 1825:

> Even the fortepianos themselves are every year refined with new inventions and improvements, and it is impossible to predict when this complicated instrument will finally be perfected; and at the same rate the virtuosi of our time, in their playing as well as in their compositions, have brought a perfection of handling of the instrument, and a versatility to any performance, that one could not have imagined possible.[59]

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[58] See Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: Volume One, The Virtuoso Years, 1811-1847* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 280 n., 286.

[59] Ibid., 66.

This "perfection of handling" and versatility would not have been possible without the invention of the double-escapement action. Originally conceived by Sébastien Érard (1752-1831) — who had developed its prototype, the *double échappement* — and then patented by his nephew, Pierre Érard (1796-1855), in 1821, this new device allowed for the rapid repetition of a single note and thus greatly enhanced the responsiveness of the action. The new mechanism made possible virtuoso works such as Liszt's "La Campanella" (1831-32) and "Gondoliera" from *Venezia e Napoli* (supplement to *Années de pèlerinage*, *Deuxième année*, 1859), one of the earlier works to evoke water imagery successfully.

Several years later, in 1825, Alpheus Babcock (1785-1842) of Boston provided a solution to the vexing problem of the natural instability and weakness of the piano's wooden frame. The single-cast or overall-iron frame, which resembles the shape of a harp, provided the necessary support for the enormous string tension and, at the same time, amplified the sound. Despite its tremendous advantages, Babcock's invention was initially met with indifference and had little immediate impact on piano construction until he joined forces with the Boston-based firm of Chickering, which adopted his invention.[60]

It was not until mid-century, when the preeminent firm of Steinway and Sons brought together all of these crucial technological innovations, that the piano's design was revolutionized. Steinway's major contribution to the instrument was the invention, in 1859, of the overstrung scale system, whereby the strings are arranged in two tiers and

[60] Fostle, 50.

the longest bass strings are crossed over the treble.[61] The combination of the metal frame, a sturdier case, and overstringing created an instrument that possessed greater volume and resonance as well as a new sonority enriched by overtones, which were further amplified by the damper pedal.

The Steinway pianos set a new standard. They received critical acclaim at exhibitions worldwide, and their influence on the market was felt by the leading makers everywhere. It is noteworthy that, at the Paris exhibition of 1867, where Steinway won top prizes, Franz Liszt's "St. François de Paule marchant sur les flots" from *Deux Légendes* (1863)[62] was chosen to display the new capabilities of the Steinway instrument.[63] The thunderous rolling waves in the left-hand accompaniment — a "wash of sound"[64] — were ideally suited for demonstrating the piano's bass register, so powerful and rich in overtones. Inspired by pianists like Franz Liszt, the ideal piano, at once powerful and capable of infinite gradations of expression, had at last been developed.

The most famous of many testimonials came from Richard Wagner (1813-83). Lamenting a temporary separation from his Steinway, he paid homage to its merits:

> I know of nothing in painting, sculpture, architecture, literature, and unfortunately also music, which — since I have comprehension of this — could compare with the masterly perfection reached in pianoforte building. Our great tone masters, when writing the grandest of their creations for the pianoforte,

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[61] Cynthia Hoover, "The Steinways and Their Pianos in the Nineteenth Century," in Offprint *JAMS* 7 (1981): 17.

[62] This work will be examined in Chapter V.

[63] Cyril Ehrlich, *The Piano: A History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), 61.

[64] Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: The Man and his Music* (New York: Taplinger, 1970), 139.

> seem to have had a presentiment of the Ideal Grand Piano, as now attained by yourselves.[65]

The scientist Hermann Helmholtz (1821-94), moreover, wrote to Theodore Steinway (1825-89) in 1871 acknowledging the company's recent achievements with special praise for the improved tone, which he notably described as "even more liquid, singing and harmonious."[66] Furthermore, a most profound statement came from an unidentified *New York Times* writer who astutely recognized the mutual relationship between the instrument and the music it inspired:

> In estimating the improvements in the piano we must also be mindful of the changes affected by it. A new brilliant school of music has arisen, the professors of which attain their greatest excellency on this instrument. Composers consult it for every variety of expression. It is indeed doubtful whether the greatest masterpieces of the age have not derived much of their perfection from the ready capability of the piano to resolve the thoughts of their authors.[67]

The piano's evolution thus culminated in an instrument of astonishing expressive capacity. It had been transformed from its humble beginnings as the harpsichord's poorer relative to a "monster" capable of evoking the sublime and the ugly, ethereal heights and murky depths. Around the piano's broadening palette of sound and technical capabilities grew a poetic language reflective of the sentiments of the age, bent on conjuring images of natural physical phenomena. In the water music for piano of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the ideals, aesthetics, and technology of the age coalesce, and

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[65] Ibid., 54-55.

[66] Cited in Ehrlich, 51.

[67] Ibid., 55.

we can trace the movement from Classicism's pristine formalism to the more "fluid" language of the Romantics and Impressionists. As the writer Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) observed: "Mozart's melodies may be brilliant, memorable, infectious, but they don't palpitate, don't catch you between wind and water, don't send the listener off into erotic ecstasies."[68]

The analogy is telling for, while the Classical aesthetic relied on abstract formal elements and balance, the tempestuous Romantic sensibility — in seeking to express emotions, narratives, and ideas — stretched and finally abandoned traditional formal considerations. What emerged was a seemingly more elastic, spontaneous language, capable of evoking the fleeting sights and sounds of the outside world: the shimmer of light on the surface of a lake, the frolicking play of water in a fountain, the roaring waves of the ocean, the patter of raindrops in the garden.

Convinced that it is possible to evoke imagery and sensations musically, the composer of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries sought to create vivid soundscapes capable of illuminating poetic passages of shimmering sonic color. With the evolution of the piano and its growing preeminence, a musical language of water emerged. It is in the piano accompaniments of Schubert's Lieder, as we will presently observe, that water music truly begins to flow.

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[68] Dubal, 19.

CHAPTER II

THE DEPICTION OF WATER IN SCHUBERT'S SONGS

In the songs of Franz Schubert's (1797-1828), one observes an attraction to certain themes or subjects. One of these is Nature, and within that context water plays a prominent role. Many of the songs contain water imagery, habitually expressed in the piano accompaniment. This chapter will explore how Schubert became the first composer to express water effectively through the piano.

Schubert was among the most literary-minded of all early-nineteenth-century composers, and his life often revolved around poetry. Many of his closest acquaintances — among them Johann Mayrhofer (1787-1836), Franz Schober (1796-1882), and Josef von Spaun (1788-1865) — were poets whose output provided the composer with ever fresh material.[1] Schubert was well versed in literature (an admirable accomplishment in light of his modest education) and had an uncanny ability to grasp an author's most subtle intentions. As Charles Osborne has commented:

> . . . he understood how to interpret, with inventiveness and vitality, the different poetic individualities, like Goethe, Schiller, Wilhelm Müller, J. G. Seidl, Mayrhofer, Walter Scott and Heine, how to transform them into new flesh and blood and how to render faithfully the nature of each one by beautiful and noble characterization — these re-creations in song should alone be sufficient to demonstrate, merely by their own existence and without further proof, from how deep a nature, from how sensitive a soul these creations sprang. A man who so understands the poets is a poet himself![2]

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[1] For a relatively recent and most illuminating discussion of this topic, see Susan Youens "Schubert and His Poets: Issues and Conundrums," in *The Cambridge Companion to Schubert,* ed. Christopher H. Gibbs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 99-117.

[2] Charles Osborne, *Schubert and his Vienna* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 178.

Schubert's choice of poets ran the gamut: from the truly great masters — such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805), and Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) — to the lesser-known writers who belonged to his intimate circle. His song settings, in fact, often transcend their poetry, rendering otherwise minor literature immortal. Frequently this is achieved not merely through the composer's lyrical gifts but also through the consummate genius of his piano accompaniments; their rich sensitivity to the mood and character of the text endows each piece with a wealth of meaning and depth of expression. The subjects that attracted and inspired Schubert varied greatly, but, throughout, one observes the typical Romantic themes. Indeed, Schubert, was one of the first composers to be swept up in the wave of early Romanticism and one of the first whose music — particularly his Lieder — so thoroughly evinces the Romantic's preoccupation with pathos, myth, emotion, and, most particularly, Nature.

As already discussed in the previous chapter, Nature plays a central role in Romantic art, literature, and music, heightening the alliance among these disciplines. Nowhere is this union more clearly evident than in the elevation of the Lied into a major genre of the nineteenth century, one that was virtually dependent upon poetry for its sustenance. According to Charles Rosen, "[I]t was the lyric poetry of landscape that was the chief inspiration in the development of the Lied, and gave vocal music the grandeur that had until then been reserved for opera and oratorio."[3] With regard to Schubert's place in this process, Rosen notes that "the direction that Schubert's genius was to take

[3] Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995), 125.

was not revealed in the setting of dramatic texts or of narratives but in his engagement with short lyric poems, most often sentimental descriptions of nature . . . . "[4]

Nature, too, played a vital role in Schubert's life. He derived great pleasure and inspiration from his native Austrian landscape: the beautiful countryside surrounding Vienna — with its hills, valleys, woodlands, and countless castles — through which the graceful Danube River wends its way, a delicate thread holding the tapestry together. When he was nineteen, Schubert wrote in his diary:

> There is hardly anything more agreeable than to get out into the green country on an evening after a hot summer's day, a pleasure for which the fields between Währing and Döbling seem to have been especially created. In the uncertain twilight and in the company of my brother Karl, my heart warmed within me. "How beautiful," I thought and exclaimed, standing still delightedly.[5]

And in a belated obituary, published in 1829 (several months after the composer's death), Josef von Spaun paid tribute to his friend and remarked upon Schubert's love of Nature: "To the beauties of nature he was most receptive, and on fine summer days he almost daily made longish excursions into the beautiful environs of Vienna."[6]

Schubert never traveled far from home. His relationship with Count Esterházy's family, however, provided him with a welcome opportunity to spend the summer of 1818 at their country estate (serving as the children's music teacher). In the summer of 1825 Schubert left the city again, this time to roam happily about Upper Austria with his good

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., 61.

[6] Otto Erich Deutsch, *The Schubert Reader: A Life of Franz Schubert in Letters and Documents,* trans. Eric Blom (New York: W. W. Norton, 1947), 876.

friend Johann Michael Vogl,[7] a native to the area.[8] The region boasts of many beautiful mountains and lakes of which Schubert was particularly fond. Describing the landscape in a letter to his brother Ferdinand, he wrote: "The Waller lake, which spreads its bright, blue-green water to the right of the road, animates this delightful landscape most gloriously."[9]

Within the six-hundred-odd poems set to music by Schubert, there is a wealth of natural imagery, and references to water appear frequently: from a gently flowing brook or the majestic sea to confounding whirlpools or a treacherous river. The composer eagerly responded to these images. There are, of course, numerous instances in which these references are merely incidental and localized, and Schubert's treatment is seemingly of the word-painting variety. However, the musical depiction of water plays a prominent role in forty-eight songs, where water imagery is unequivocally present in the piano accompaniments.

Schubert inherited the rather meager beginnings of the Lied tradition from his German predecessors. Indeed, some of his own early endeavors appear to be modeled upon the works of the so-called North German School of Johann Friedrich Reichardt (1752-1814) and Karl Friedrich Zelter (1758-1832), the Berlin School of Ludwig Berger (1777-1839), and the Stuttgart School of Johann Rudolf Zumsteeg (1760-1802).

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[7] Vogl was a baritone singer who championed Schubert's Lieder.

[8] Deutsch, 890.

[9] Ibid., 457.

Reichardt was the first to demonstrate that the piano accompaniment could be made picturesque — for instance, to suggest a brook rippling over pebbles in *Wechsel* (n.d.) (Ex. II-1).[10] Berger's cycle *Die schöne Müllerin* (published in 1818) may have

Ex. II-1: REICHARDT, *Wechsel*, mm. 1-4.

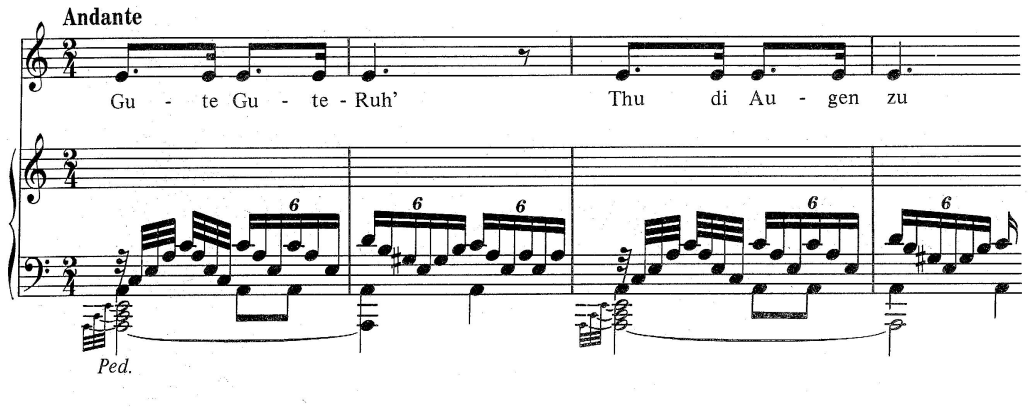


served as a model for Schubert's own setting. In "Des Baches Lied," for example, Berger demonstrates great invention when, as Leon Plantinga points out, "as the millstream sings its consolation to the despondent protagonist (now drowning in it), the words are intoned ominously on a single pitch while the piano plays dramatic argeggios over a tonic pedal" (Ex. II-2).[11]

[10] Alec Robertson, "The Songs," in *The Music of Schubert,* ed. Gerald Abraham (New York: W. W. Norton, 1947), 151.

[11] Leon Plantinga, Romantic Music: A History of Musical Style in Nineteenth-Century Europe (New York: W. W. Norton, 1984), 113.

Ex. II-2: BERGER, *Die schöne Müllerin:* "Des Baches Lied," mm. 1-4.



However, it was in the lengthy ballads of J. R. Zumsteeg (a composer in whom, according to Alec Robertson, Schubert could revel for days at a time)[12] that the young Schubert found a model of tonal audacity and virtuoso writing for the piano.[13] Zumsteeg's monumental setting (950 measures) of Goethe's ballad *Colma* (1793) makes apt use of various "theatrical" musical effects to evoke the text. The poet prompts these images, telling the reader that, when Colma speaks, "The wind howls among the peaks; the stream roars down from the rocks." Zumsteeg exploits the piano for dramatic representation, employing tremolo figures to imitate the howling of the wind and a descending scale to depict a waterfall.[14] These dramatic, pictorial gestures in the piano

[12] Robertson, 151

[13] Susan Youens, "Franz Schubert: The Prince of Song," in *German Lieder in the 19th Century,* ed. Rufus Hallmark (New York, Schirmer Books, 1996), 31.

[14] Plantinga, 116.

part provided Schubert with a prototype. It is interesting to note the similarity between the devices found in Zumsteeg's *Colma* and those in Schubert's early, long ballad *Der Taucher* (1813-14) (Exx. II-3 and II-4). Schubert's extended use of tremolos for

Ex. II-3: ZUMSTEEG, *Colma*, mm. 11-13.



Ex. II-4: SCHUBERT, *Der Taucher*, mm. 208-11.



heightened dramatic effect and numerous descending and ascending scale passages that relate to the diver plunging into and emerging from the water clearly echo the work of his predecessor.

As Susan Youens points out, "Schubert did not spring fully formed from Jove's head; he overshadowed all others in his passion for poetry and brilliance with which he transmuted it into music."[15] Although stylistic features of his predecessors resonate in his youthful works, in little time Schubert's accomplishments far surpassed those of all others as he developed and refined pre-existing conventions and broke new ground. One of his most significant contributions to the genre, however, was the emancipation and expansion of the role of the piano. These achievements were apparently recognized by critics in his day, as the following commentary from the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (January 23, 1828) shows:

> Herr S. knows how to choose poems which are really good (in themselves and for musical treatment) and have not yet been used up either; he is capable and usually succeeds in discovering in each what predominates emotionally and, therefore, for music, and above all he places that into his generally simple melody, while he allows his accompaniment which, however, is rarely mere accompaniment, to paint this further, and for that purpose he is fond of using images, parables of scenic features in poems. In both he often shows originality and invention of execution.[16]

SCHUBERT AND THE EARLY-NINETEENTH-CENTURY PIANO

Crucial to Schubert's gift for transforming "mere accompaniments" into soundscapes that capture the essence of Nature's wonders was an instrument of new expressive potential. The piano had evolved sufficiently to provide Schubert with a broader palette than his predecessors had had at their disposal.

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[15] Youens, "Franz Schubert: The Prince of Song," 31.

[16] Cited in Deutsch, 718.

In *Schubert's Songs,* Richard Capell noted that "the Schubertian song was not what other songs had been, but was the outcome of a delight in the new poetry and the new instrument."[17] The "new" instrument was the early-nineteenth-century piano, which had only recently gained supremacy over the keyboard instruments of the late eighteenth century and was fast becoming a standard fixture in many middle-class households. The new tonal resources and technical advances of the pianoforte enabled Schubert to conceive of "thrilling accompaniments of unprecedented intensity, extraordinary difficulty, and unifying power that rarely appeared in the Lieder of Schubert's contemporaries."[18] One has only to glance at Reichardt's setting of *Auf dem See* (1809-11) by Goethe and then Schubert's 1817 treatment of the same poem to see the obvious differences (Exx. II-5 and II-6). Reichardt's song modestly suggests a boat cradled on the waves by using a wave-like broken-chord figure (primarily in the left hand)

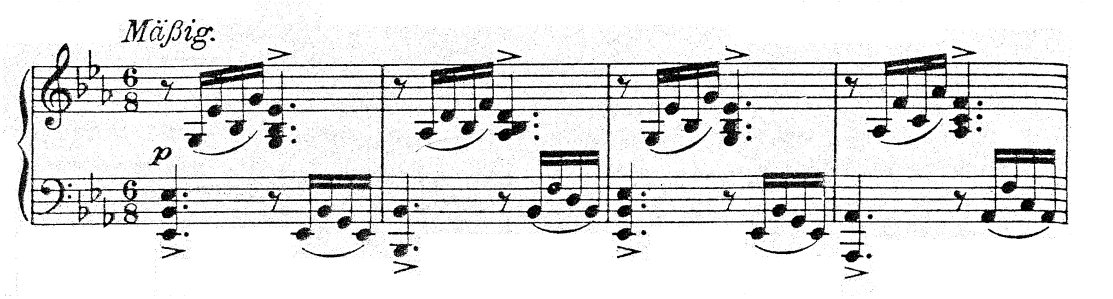
Ex. II-5: REICHARDT, *Auf dem See*, mm. 1-4.



[17] Richard Capell, *Schubert Songs* (1928, reprint,. New York: Da Capo Press, 1977), 35.

[18] Christopher H. Gibbs, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Schubert*, 9.

Ex. II-6: SCHUBERT, *Auf dem See*, D. 543, mm. 1-4.



throughout the barcarolle, a rather banal device typical of the genre. In marked contrast, the Schubert setting displays a richer, more imaginative approach to textual nuance: mimicking the regular pull of the oars with the dotted quarter notes embedded in the texture; creating a rippling effect by moving the figuration between hands; and using syncopated repeated chords in the contrasting middle section (Ex. II-7) to convey choppy waters and the corresponding shift in mood.

Ex. II-7: SCHUBERT, *Auf dem See*, mm. 21-24.



During Schubert's time there were primarily two types of pianos available, the Viennese and the English,[19] each with its own devotees. In his *A Complete Theoretical and Practical Course of Instruction in the Art of Playing the Piano Forte* (1827), Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837) summarized the attributes of each:

> The German piano may be played upon with ease by the weakest hand. It allows the performer to impart to his execution every possible degree of light and shade, speaks clearly and promptly, has a round, flute-like tone, which, in a large room, contrasts well with the accompanying orchestra, and does not impede rapidity of execution by requiring too great effort. The English piano has much to offer. Among other things, it must be praised for its durability and fullness of tone. Nevertheless this instrument does not admit the same facility of execution as the German piano. The touch is much heavier, the keys sink much deeper, and consequently, the return of the hammer on the repetition of a note cannot take place so quickly . . . . As a counterpoise of this, however, through the fullness of tone in the English Piano-Forte, the melody receives a peculiar charm and harmonious sweetness.[20]

The Viennese instrument had great appeal because of its warmth, clear singing tone, responsive, light action, and pedals[21] that gave it a variety of tone colors.[22] According to fortepianist Malcolm Bilson, the light action — which facilitated the execution of rapid passagework — was a very attractive feature: " . . . the weight of the

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[19] The Viennese piano-maker Konrad Graf and the English firm of John Broadwood were among the leading manufacturers at the time.

[20] Cited in Harold C. Schonberg, *The Lives of the Great Pianists from Mozart to the Present* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), 19-20.

[21] The Viennese pianos in the first quarter of the nineteenth century were equipped with a diverse array of pedals capable of producing "special" effects, including drums, bells, and Janissary effects. In addition to these, there were three pedals that became standard: the damper pedal, a soft pedal, and a so-called "Moderator," which created a special soft effect.

[22] William L. Sumner, *The Pianoforte* (London: MacDonald and Co., 1966), 156.

keys being far less than on a modern piano, one simply "floats" through certain passages. Schubert conceived what his pianos inspired him to write!"[23]

As far as is known, the only instrument Schubert ever owned was a six-octave (FF-f4) Konrad Graf pianoforte, which was presented to him by his father in 1814, when he was seventeen.[24] The instrument appears to have satisfied Schubert's needs as both a composer who constantly sought variety in sound effects and a performer who was known not for his virtuoso abilities but for his sensitive and expressive playing. Unlike Beethoven, who sought to extend the capabilities of the instrument, Schubert appears to have been content with the Viennese instruments of his day. The Graf was a very responsive and intimate instrument, well suited to his musical sensibilities, and differing greatly from the later grand piano.[25]

Several first-hand accounts provide us with a portrait of Schubert at the piano. Years after Schubert's death, his close friend Albert Stadler reminisced:

> To see and hear him play his own pianoforte compositions was a real pleasure. A beautiful touch, a quiet hand, clear, neat playing, full of insight and feeling. He still belonged to the old school of good pianoforte players, whose fingers had not yet begun to attack the poor keys like birds of prey. It was interesting to see him compose, for rarely did he use the pianoforte while doing it.[26]

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[23] Malcolm Bilson, "Schubert's Piano Music and the Pianos of His Time," *Piano Quarterly* 104 (1979): 56-61.

[24] Deutsch, 44.

[25] I had the privilege of playing a Viennese instrument (comparable to the Graf) made by Böhm (circa 1820) at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (special thanks to Stewart Pollens, conservator, who tuned the instrument especially for my visit). The experience was quite revealing. On such an instrument one instantly acquires greater facility because of the shallow key-dip and extremely light action.

[26] Osborne, 11.

However, perhaps the most definitive and revealing account of Schubert's playing comes from the artist himself. In an 1825 letter written to his parents, Schubert describes a musical evening:

> What pleased especially were the variations in my new Sonata for two hands, which I performed alone and not without merit, since several people assured me that the keys become singing voices under my hands, which if true, pleases me greatly, since I cannot endure the accursed chopping in which even distinguished pianoforte players indulge and which delights neither the ear nor the mind.[27]

This last statement sheds light on two important aspects of Schubert's writing for the piano; first, with the possible exception of the *"Wanderer" Fantasy*, everything he wrote for the instrument is devoid of virtuoso display and, second, his greatest concern was to make the piano sing. In examining his piano accompaniments, however, a third aspect will become apparent: namely, Schubert's penchant for creating imaginative musical effects capable of evoking water and other such phenomena.

THE SONGS

Forty-eight[28] Schubert Lieder contain significant musical references to water and, in most of these, water imagery pervades the piano accompaniment (see Table II-1, below). Every aspect of the water spectrum is represented in this select group of songs

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[27] Ibid., 436.

[28] Although "Gefror'ne Tränen" from *Winterreise* might be included, the piano accompaniment does not contain any discernable reference to flowing water.

— from a crystal-clear spring (*Der Jüngling an der Quelle*) to the vast ocean (*Meeres Stille*), as well as characters whose lives are inseparable from water (boatmen, fishermaidens, or, in one instance, a diver). Such a generous array seems to indicate that Schubert's creative powers were especially drawn to the challenge of depicting water. Furthermore, the variety of means for expressing water in these songs demonstrates the composer's boundless imagination. Again the observations of Richard Capell on Schubert and his attraction to water are insightful:

> How many of the favorite songs are about rivers, lakes, fishermen, millers, and mermaids! To the Viennese the Danube is what to us is the sea. The great yellow river and the lakes and streams that feed it had for Schubert the pleasing associations of holiday-land, and romance in the suggestion of a perpetual journeying to the unknown. As a duck to water his fancy took to watery themes.[29]

And Capell goes on to comment on the role of the new instrument:

> A certain part of the attraction may be supposed to have lain in the ready expression the pianoforte could give to thoughts of wavelike and eddying motion.[30]

Table II-1, arranged alphabetically by title, lists the songs and includes the Deutsch catalog number, year of composition, poet, original key, meter, tempo, type of water represented, and a brief description of the water motifs found in the piano accompaniment. Table II-2 then lists the songs in chronological order.

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[29] Capell, 64.

[30] Ibid.

TABLE II-1: SCHUBERT'S SONG SETTINGS WITH WATER IMAGERY[31]

Title, D. No., Year	Poet	Key, Meter, Tempo	Water Type	Description of Water Motifs
Am Bach im Frühling, D361 (1816)	Schober	Db, 4/4, Nicht zu langsam	Brook	Ascending running triplets suggest flowing water.
Am Flusse, D160 (1815)	Goethe	d, 3/8, Wehmütig	Stream	Repeated sixteenth-note chords reflect the calm flow of stream.
Am Flusse, D766 (1822)	Goethe	D, 2/2, Mässig	Stream	Continuous eighth-note, broken-chord figure connotes smooth, steady flow of stream.
Am Meer (Schwanengesang, Bk. II), D957 (1828)	Heine	C, 2/2, Sehr langsam	Sea	Tremolo chords convey threatening murmur of rising waters.
Am See, D124 (1814)	Mayrhofer	g, 6/8, Nicht zu langsam	Glassy lake	Static repeated chords reflect still waters of lake.
Am See, D746 (1817?)	Bruchmann	Eb, 6/8, Mässig	Lake	Smooth, rocking figure throughout suggests rippling surface of lake.
Am Strome, D539 (1817)	Mayrhofer	B, 3/4, Mässig	Stream (symbolizes "River of Life")	Ascending, running triplets suggest the constant flow of the stream.
An eine Quelle, D530 (1817)	Claudius	A, 4/4, [Mässig]	Spring	Simple texture and melodic content reflect the clarity and serenity of spring.
Auf dem Flusse (Winterreise), D911 (1827)	Müller	e, 2/4, Langsam	Stream/Ice	Staccato broken chords move slowly to suggest still-frozen water; this is interrupted by dissonant tremolo figure rising in R.H., which depicts swelling torrent.
Auf dem See (2nd version), D543 (1817?)	Goethe	Eb, 6/8-2/4, Mässig	Lake	Two pulsations per measure imply pull of oars; strong beat occurs in middle of measure; each measure implies advancing/receding motion of a wave breaking.
Auf dem Strom, D943 (1828)	Rellstab	E, 2/2, Mässig	River/Stream	Continuous broken, wave-like arpeggiation; repeated chords represent waves.
Auf dem Wasser zu singen, D774 (1823)	Stolberg-Stolberg	Ab, 6/8, Mässig geschwind	Boat gliding through water	Dripping sixteenth-note effect suggests waves lapping against boat.
Auf der Donau, D553 (1817)	Mayrhofer	Eb, 2/4, Langsam	Boat on "River of Life"	Wave-like arpeggio figure portrays image of rocking boat.
Auflösung, D807 (1824)	Mayrhofer	G, 4/4, Nicht zu geschwind	Image of "dissolve, world"	Continuous rippling, arpeggiated figure in R.H. is supported by tremolo figure in L.H.
Danksagung an den Bach (Schöne Müllerin), D795 (1823)	Müller	G, 2/4, Etwas langsam	Stream	Continuous repeated, broken-chord pattern in sixteenth notes conveys constant flow of stream.

[31] Information contained within is based on John Reed, *The Schubert Song Companion* (New York: Universe Books, 1985).

Title, D. No., Year	Poet	Key, Meter, Tempo	Water Type	Description of Water Motifs
Daphne am Bach, D411 (1816)	Stolberg-Stolberg	D, 2/4, [Mässig]	Brook	Continuous running, broken-chord figure in sixteenth notes appears in R.H. throughout.
Das Fischermädchen (Schwanengesang), D957 (1828)	Heine	Ab, 6/8, Etwas geschwind	Fishermaiden	Repeated trochaic figure throughout implies pulse of sea.
Der Fischer, D225 (1815)	Goethe	Bb, 2/4, Mässig	Fisherman	Continuous murmuring figure runs through middle voice of texture.
Der Fluss, D693 (1820)	F. Schlegel	B, 12/8, Langsam	River	Tremolo figure in R.H. is accompanied by arpeggiated chords in L.H.
Der Jüngling am Bache (2nd version), D638 (1819)	Schiller	c, 2/4, Mässig	Brook	Rocking motion in broken chords in R.H. is set against repeated-note pattern in L.H.
Der Jüngling an der Quelle, D300 (1821?)	Salis-Seewis	A, 6/8, Etwas langsam	Spring	Continuous rippling figure in R.H. with descending broken chords implies delicate, clear, cool stream.
Der liebliche Stern , D861 (1825)	Schulze	G, 2/4, Etwas langsam	Starlight on water	Shimmering pattern in R.H. throughout suggests starlight on water.
Der Müller und der Bach (Schöne Müllerin), D795 (1823)	Müller	g/G, 3/8, Mässig	Brook (personified)	Flowing broken-chord figuration symbolizing “Der Bach” begins at m. 29 when brook speaks.
Der Schiffer, D536 (1817?)	Mayrhofer	Eb, 2/4, Geschwind und feurig	Boatman	Agitated, broken-chord, and tremolo patterns throughout in R.H. depict stormy waters.
Der Schiffer, D694 (1820)	F. Schlegel	D, 6/8, Ziemlich langsam	Boatman	Two pulsations per measure depict pull of oars; fluid passagework, streams of notes in ascending scale fragments imply movement through water.
Der Strom, D565 (1817?)	poet unknown	d, 2/4, Schnell	River	Turbulent, raging water is portrayed by constant agitated pattern of contrary motion; broken-chord tremolos in both hands simultaneously; various effects.
Der Taucher, D77 (1813-14)	Schiller	d (numerous), 4/4, Allegro	Diver/Raging waters	Frequent use of tremolos, arpeggiated chords, ascending and descending scalar passages reflect the diver swimming.
Des Baches Wiegenlied (Schöne Müllerin), D795, (1823)	Müller	E, 2/2, Mässig	Fish swimming in brook	Rocking motif dominates accompaniment.
Des Fischers Liebesglück, D933 (1827)	Leitner	C, 6/8, Ziemlich langsam	Fisherman	Rocking motion (2 measures long) occurs only twice.
Die Forelle (4th version), D550 (1821)	Schubart	Db, 2/4, Etwas lebhaft	Fish moving in stream	Continuous upward scale fragment (somewhat chromatic) suggests fish swimming; muddy water portrayed by quivering thirds.
Erlafsee, D586 (1817)	Mayrhofer	F, 6/8, Ziemlich langsam	Lake	Repeated use of broken-triad figure suggests wind-ruffled water.

Title, D. No., Year	Poet	Key, Meter, Tempo	Water Type	Description of Water Motifs
Fischerweise, D881 (1826)	Schlechta	D, 2/2, Etwas geschwind	Fisherman's work song	Continuous rocking pattern suggests boat on the water.
Gesang der Geister über den Wassern, D484 (1816)	Goethe	G /C, 3/8-4/4-6/8, Geschwind	Various (stream, lake, waterfall)	Moving water is suggested by tremolo chord figuration in c Section; then by meandering, flowing pattern in 6/8.
Gondelfahrer, D808 (1824)	Mayrhofer	C, 6/8, Mässig	Boatman	Rocking figure in L.H. accompaniment suggests boat on water.
Halt! (Schöne Müllerin), D795 (1823)	Müller	C, 6/8, Nicht zu geschwind	Murmuring stream	Tremolo figure in R.H. pervades entire song.
Iphigenia, D573 (1817)	Mayrhofer	Gb, 4/4, Nicht zu langsam	Sea	Word-painting on "great waves of the sea as they break against the cold cliffs"; choppy repeated chords and tremolos capture this image.
Liebesbotschaft (Schwanengesang), D957 (1827-8)	Rellstab	G, 2/4, Ziemlich langsam	Rushing streamlet	Rippling figure in R.H. appears throughout accompaniment.
Lied eines Schiffers an die Dioskuren, D360 (1816)	Mayrhofer	Ab, 3/4, Langsam	Boatman's song	Menacing waves of the sea are suggested by arpeggiated bass figure and rolled chords in low register.
Mahomets Gesang (1st version), D549 (1817)	Goethe	E, 2/4, Mässig	Spring	Continuous cascading triplet figuration is dominated by stepwise and tertiary movement; "River of Life" theme.
Meeres Stille* (2 versions), D215A, 216 (1815)	Goethe	C, 2/2, Sehr langsam, ängstlich	Sea	Expansive rolled chords in whole notes suggest calm, but sinister, sea.
Naturgenuss, D188 (1815)	Matthisson	Bb, 6/8, Ruhig	Brook	Broken-triad pattern in R.H. continues throughout.
Schiffers Scheidelied, D910 (1827)	Schober	e, 4/4, Geschwind	Waves of the sea	Contrary-motion tremolos in both hands pervade entire song accompaniment.
Tränenregen (Schöne Müllerin), D795 (1823)	Müller	A, 6/8, Ziemlich langsam	Brook	Word-painting on "rippling brook" consisting of wavering figuration appears in mm. 12-13 and 22-24.
Wasserflut (Winterreise), D911 (1827)	Müller	e, 3/4, Langsam	Tears/Snow	Repeated chords played in constant dotted-rhythm figure in both hands pervade texture.
Widerschein (2nd version), D639 (1819-20)	Schlechta	Bb, 4/4, Langsam	Fisherman and stream	Swaying triplets and rocking motion suggest moving waters.
Wie Ulfru fischt, D525 (1817)	Mayrhofer	d, 2/2, Mässig	Fishing in unyielding waters	Continuous broken-chord figure in R.H. runs throughout song.
Wohin? (Schöne Müllerin), D795 (1823)	Müller	G, 6/8, Mässig	Brook	Continuous flowing pattern in sextuplet sixteenth notes comprised of broken triads and wavering seconds and thirds dominates accompaniment.

TABLE II-2: CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF SCHUBERT'S WATER SONGS[32]

1814	Am See (D124)
	Der Taucher (1813-14)
1815	Am Flusse (D160)
	Der Fischer
	Meeres Stille (2 versions)
	Naturgenuss
1816	Am Bach im Frühling
	Daphne am Bach
	Gesang der Geister über den Wassern
	Lied eines Schiffers an die Dioskuren
1817	Am See (or 1822?) (D746)
	Am Strome
	An eine Quelle
	Auf dem See (?)
	Auf der Donau
	Der Schiffer (?) (D536)
	Der Strom (?)
	Erlafsee
	Iphigenia
	Mahomets Gesang
	Wie Ulfru fischt
1819	Der Jüngling am Bache
	Widerschein
1820	Der Fluss
	Der Schiffer (D694)
1821	Der Jüngling an der Quelle (?)
	Die Forelle
1822	Am Flusse (D766)

[32] Dates of composition after John Reed, *The Schubert Song Companion*.

1823	Auf dem Wasser zu singen
	Danksagung an den Bach
	Der Müller und der Bach
	Des Baches Wiegenlied
	Halt!
	Tränenregen
	Wohin?
1824	Auflösung
	Gondelfahrer
1825	Der liebliche Stern
1826	Fischerweise
1827	Auf dem Flusse
	Des Fischers Liebesglück
	Liebesbotschaft
	Schiffers Scheidelied
	Wasserflut
1828	Am Meer
	Auf dem Strom
	Das Fischermädchen

These works span Schubert's entire career as a composer, beginning with the youthful work *Der Taucher* (1813-14) and ending with *Am Meer*, *Das Fischermädchen*, and *Liebesbotschaft*, all from the *Schwanengesang* songs of Schubert's last year. The year 1817 — one of Schubert's more prolific — was by far the most fruitful for these works, yielding eleven in all, while 1818 — among the composer's least — produced not a single example. Seven of the songs were written in 1823, with six of these belonging to the famous cycle, *Die schöne Müllerin*.

Though no fewer than nineteen poets are represented, it is apparent that the works of Mayrhofer (nine poems), Müller (eight), and Goethe (five) inspired Schubert above all

others with their vivid water imagery. As their work attests, these writers, too, had a special attraction to water.[33] However, one must bear in mind that, given the Romantic sensibility, especially in connection with Nature, the poets at times went beyond mere literal representation and used water metaphorically. Thus the role of water varies greatly in these poems, according to context.

As a cursory glance at the songs demonstrates, water appears in many forms. The Romantic attraction to water stemmed both from its physical station in Nature (with its intrinsically fluid states) and from its myriad symbolic connotations. In its complexity, water is an ideal manifestation of the Romantic impulses — yearning for the unknown, the tranquil, the menacing, the melancholic — and can evoke radically different meanings depending on what guise it assumes.

The most generic of Schubert's settings are the songs "on the water." Boats on the water are found in ten different works, of which six may be considered loosely as "barcarolles." As a genre, these tend to be tranquil excursions undergirded by gentle rocking figures. More dynamic and by far the most prevalent type among the songs is flowing water (i.e., springs, streams, brooks, rivers), which pervades eighteen of the songs and is incidental in another eight. These run the gamut from wistful murmurings to a joyful frolic or raging torrent.

Lakes or ponds suggest a more static, contemplative state. Apart from several of the "barcarolles" set on lakes, four pieces fall specifically into this category. The sea, perhaps on account of its physical remoteness from Vienna, is the subject of only three

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[33] Ironically, water seems to have been a dangerous obsession for Mayrhofer, who initially sought to commit suicide by drowning before finally taking his life by jumping out of a third-story window. Susan Youens, *Schubert's Poets and the Making of Lieder* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 169.

pieces while it provides the backdrop for another four. These songs are notably imbued with awe for the sea's immense grandeur and power and, in a couple of instances, inspired by legends.

Of the remaining pieces, eight are devoted to tales about fish. Four of these are fishermen's songs (including one of the "barcarolles"), three are about fish (among these, the famous *Die Forelle*), and one is a fanciful love song about a fishermaiden. Finally, there are several purely metaphorical settings: "Wasserflut" and "Tränenregen," which relate to tears, and *Auflösung*, a "welling" of turbulent emotion. In a similar manner, water in and of itself (particularly when flowing) often serves as an emblem for something universal, as in the musical setting of one of Mayrhofer's most hauntingly beautiful poems, *Auf der Donau*, where water represents "the river of life."

One wonders if Schubert might have favored a particular key, meter, or tempo for expressing water. Unlike the generic attempts of some of his predecessors, however, Schubert's imaginative approach cannot be pinned down to facile clichés. Looking at the statistical breakdown, no one key stands out as an overwhelming favorite for creating watery depictions — flat and sharp keys appearing with equal frequency — though Schubert clearly preferred major keys (thirty-eight) to minor (ten). Yet as John Reed has observed, Schubert was keenly aware of the "emotional color of individual keys," and he goes on to note that "E-flat major is indicative of awe and devotion. It may be awe in the presence of the sea (most of Schubert's 'on the water' songs are in E flat)."[34] Indeed, Schubert chooses this tonality in four of the ten "on the water" songs. Reed ascribes to C major "harmony with nature," and seven songs are set in this key, including, notably, the

[34] Reed, 484.

three sea songs. G major, meanwhile, the key of "love" and "serenity" (subjects frequently associated with water in the poetry), is the prevailing key in six settings, including the lovely *Liebesbotschaft* and the rapturous *Auflösung*.[35]

Of course, the poet's choice of water imagery is dependent upon the mood and meaning of the poem; the composer's selection of key attempts to capture these in turn. Certain types of water can be associated with different — and sometimes multiple — moods and meanings. Although many of these poems are typically tinged with melancholic complaint, for instance, water can both reflect the subject's grief and act as a fatalistic foil to it. In general, however, water type prevails in determining mode; clear, running streams conjuring bucolic, pastoral images are typically characterized by major keys, while raging water, murky depths, and frozen desolation are portrayed in minor keys.[36]

Meter is, naturally, influenced by the metric inclinations of the text. Interestingly, Schubert chose duple meter for forty-two of the settings — twenty-seven simple and fifteen compound — as opposed to triple meter, used in only six songs. As one might expect, Schubert makes use of the typical 6/8 meter of the barcarolle, a genre inextricably associated with water, and six of the compound duple settings can be characterized as such. In several of these pieces (such as *Am See*, D. 746, *Der Schiffer*, D. 694*,* and *Auf dem See*), the duple pulse effectively implies the steady pull of the oars.

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[35] Ibid. See "Schubert's Tonalities," Appendix II, 484-94.

[36] Of the nineteen songs concerning moving waters (springs, streams, brooks, and rivers), only three are in a minor key. The texts of all three are, not surprisingly, quite melancholy. Of these, *Am Flusse,* a setting of a Goethe poem, is actually marked *Wehmütig* (melancholy). A later setting of the same text is in a major key.

The consideration of tempo must take into account both the nature of the water and its movement and the mood of the poem. The passage of time is, by nature, one of the primary ways in which music expresses movement through space.[37] *Mässig* is the most commonly used tempo indication (it appears fifteen times) and relates in almost every case to the vigorous flow of a brook or spring. Still bodies of water (a peaceful sea, glassy lake, frozen stream) or a more gently pouring spring utilize a more placid *Langsam*. *Geschwind* is employed to suggest a swifter current or turbulence.

Table I reveals that bodies of water are characterized in many different ways. As has been observed, the mood and meaning of the text influence the type of water, which, consequently, may play a role in the choice of key and tempo. While it is beyond the scope of the present study to explore each and every setting, it is instructive to examine some of the more striking and representative examples.

SONGS ON THE WATER

A more in-depth examination of these songs will begin with a group of barcarolles or "on the water" songs, which deal primarily with the water's surface: the lapping of waves against the boat, rippling effects, the play of light on the water. As already noted, these pieces are characterized by their 6/8 meter and a continuous accompaniment figure evocative of a boat's movement through the water.

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[37] Another is pitch.

Am See, D. 746 (1817?), is based on the following poem by Franz Bruchmann (1798-1867):[38]

In des See's Wogenspiele Fallen durch den Sonnenschein Sterne, ach, gar viele, viele, Flammend leuchtend stets hinein.	Into the lake's play of waves, Through the sunlight, Stars, oh so many stars, Fall ceaselessly, flaming, gleaming.
Wenn der Mensch zum See geworden, In der Seele Wogenspiele Fallen aus der Himmels Pforten Sterne, ach, gar viele, viele.	If man becomes a lake, Stars, oh so many stars, Will fall from the gates of heaven Into the play of waves within his soul.

Schubert's simple barcarolle setting contains an unbroken pattern of ascending arpeggiation. Each figure originates from deep in the bass register (often utilizing the lowest notes on Schubert's keyboard) and captures a sense of the water's depth. Embedded in this texture, the regular occurrence of the dotted quarter note emphasizes the duple pulse. As John Reed points out, however, the strong beat is often in the middle of the measure "so that each bar seems to advance and recede, like a wave" (Ex. II-8).[39]

Ex. II-8: SCHUBERT, *Am See,* D. 746, mm. 1-3.



[38] All English translations are by Richard Wigmore and appear in Richard Wigmore, *Schubert: The Complete Song Texts* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1988).

[39] Reed, 52.

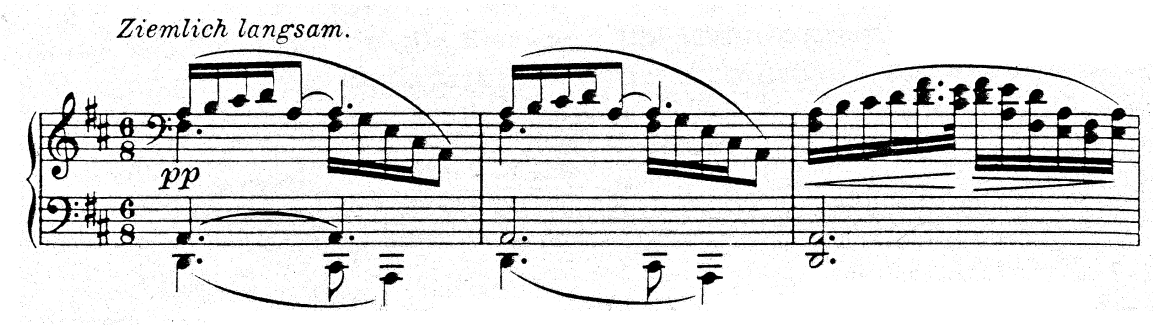
An 1820 setting of a Friedrich Schlegel (1722-1829) poem, *Der Schiffer,* D. 694, presents a slightly more elaborate barcarolle. A partial text follows:

(First verse)

Friedlich lieg'ich hingegossen,	Peacefully I lie stretched out,
Lenke hin und her das Ruder,	Turning the rudder this way and that,
Atme kühl im Licht des Mondes,	Breathing the cool air in the moonlight,
Träume süss im stillen Mute;	Tranquil in spirit, dreaming sweetly.
Gleiten lass ich auch den Kahn,	And I let the boat drift,
Schaue in die blanken Fluten,	Gazing into the shining waters,
Wo die Sterne lieblich Schimmern,	Where the stars shimmer enchantingly;
Spiele wieder mit dem Ruder.	And again I play with the Rudder.

Marked *Ziemlich langsam*, this piece evokes not just the steady pull of the oars but the image and feeling of a boat rocking on the water. As the left hand in the accompaniment moves back and forth between the tonic and dominant in mm. 1-3 (Ex. II-9), the right hand plays a smooth, gliding figure, namely the piano's familiar five-note "rippling"

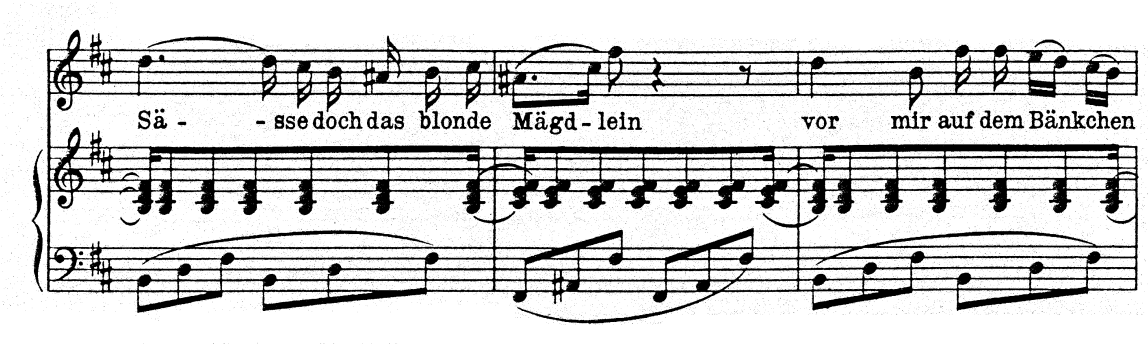
Ex. II-9: SCHUBERT, *Der Schiffer,* D. 694, mm. 1-3.



motif. This pattern is interrupted by a contrasting middle section (mm. 28-43, corresponding to a change of mood in the second verse) comprised of a series of

syncopated chords over broken triads, as the subject's peaceful idyll is disturbed (Ex. II-10).

Ex. II-10: SCHUBERT, *Der Schiffer,* D. 694, mm. 29-31.



Similar devices are found in *Auf dem See,* the 1817 setting of Goethe's poem inspired by his holiday on Lake Zurich in Switzerland:

Und frische Nahrung, neues Blut
Saug' ich aus freier Welt:
Wie ist Natur so hold und gut,
Die mich am Busen hält!

Die Welle wieget unsern Kahn
Im Rudertakt hinauf,
Und Berge, wollkig himmelan,
Begegnen unserm Lauf.

Aug', mein Aug', was sinkst du nieder?
Goldne Träume, kommt ihr wieder?
Weg, du Träum! so Gold du bist:
Hier auch Lieb und Leben ist.

Auf der Welle blinken
Tausend schwebende Sterne,
Weiche Nebel trinken
Rings die türmende Ferne;

And I suck fresh nourishment and new blood
From this wide world;
How gracious and kindly is Nature,
Who holds me to her breast!

The waves rock our boat up and down
To the rhythm of the oars,
And soaring, cloud-capped mountains
Meet us in our course.

My eyes, why are you cast down?
Golden dreams, will you return?
Begone, dream, golden as you are;
There is love here, and life too.

On the waves float twinkling
A thousand twinkling stars;
Soft mists drink up
The looming distances;

Morgenwind umflügelt	The morning breeze wings around
Die beschattete Bucht,	The shaded bay,
Und im See bespiegelt	And in the lake
Sich die reifende Frucht.	The ripening fruit is mirrored.

This poem presents a more complex world of images and, correspondingly, a richer set of effects in the accompaniment. Once again, the strong duple pulse is suggestive of the "rhythm of the oars," while the broken-chord figure conveys the lapping of the waves against the boat (see Ex. II-6 above). The syncopated chords (similar to those in *Der Schiffer*) this time portray the boat as it is "cradled" by the choppy waves (see Ex. II-7). In the final verse, the stars twinkling on the undulating surface of the water are suggested by the wavering sixteenth-note pattern in the inner voice (Ex. II-11).

Ex. II-11: SCHUBERT, *Auf dem See*, mm. 50-53.



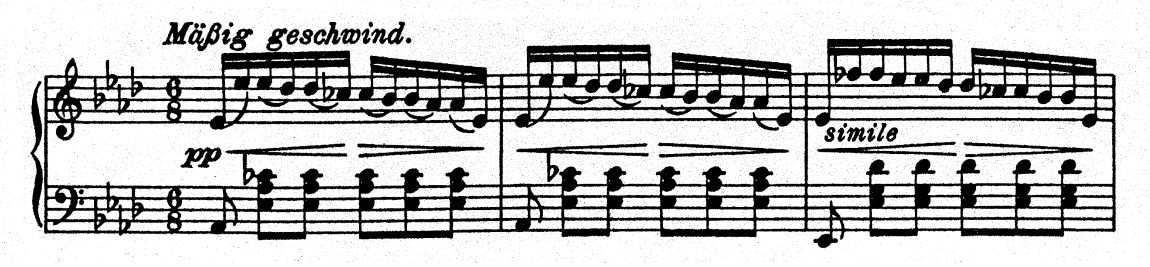
The most unusual of Schubert's barcarolles — and by far the most famous — is *Auf dem Wasser zu singen* (1823), based on a text by Friedrich Leopold Stolberg-Stolberg (1750-1819). The poem captures the magical image of a boat on the water at sunset:

(First verse)

Mitten im Schimmer der spiegelnden Wellen	Amid the shimmer of the mirroring waves
Gleitet, wie Schwäne, der wankende Kahn;	The rocking boat glides, swan-like;
Ach, auf der Freude sanft schimmernden Wellen	On gently shimmering waves of joy
Gleitet die Seele dahin wie der Kahn;	The soul, too, glides like a boat.
Denn von dem Himmel herab auf die Wellen	For from the sky the setting sun
Tanzet das Abendrot rund um den Kahn.	Dances upon the waves around the boat.

In Schubert's setting, a single motif permeates the song: the image of the glistening waves lapping against the boat as it glides through the water is captured in a falling sixteenth-note figure in the right hand (Ex. II-12). This type of figuration on the piano

Ex. II-12: SCHUBERT, *Auf dem Wasser zu singen*, mm. 1-3.



— with its descending repeated-note pattern — was unusual for its time and surely must have been inspired by the light, "floating" Viennese action. Franz Liszt, who transcribed fifty-six of Schubert's songs for piano solo (including this one), would later utilize this effect in some of his piano works (see *The Mephisto Waltz,* No. 1 [1836], "Au bord d'une source" [1854], and "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este" [1877]).

MOVING WATER

One of the more compelling aspects of water is its movement, which is naturally a common feature in many of these water songs. Such songs are among the most stunning examples of Schubert's depictions of water.

Der Strom (1817), one of the relatively few Schubert songs based on a text of uncertain authorship, evokes the restless yearning of a raging river, which is personified in the text:

Mein Leben wälzt sich murrend fort, Es steigt und fällt in krausen Wogen, Hier bäumt es sich, jagt nieder dort In wilden Zügen, hohen Bogen.	My life rolls grumbling onwards, Rising and falling in curling waves; Here it rears up, there it plunges down, With wild spurts and soaring curves.
Das stille Tal, das grüne Feld Durchkrauscht es nun mit leisem Beben, Sich Ruh'ersehnend, ruhigen Welt, Ergötzt es sich am ruhigen Leben.	Now, gently quivering, it ripples through Silent valleys and green fields, Yearning for peace, a tranquil world, And delighting in a life of calm.
Doch nimmer findend, was es sucht, Und immer sehnend tost es weiter, Unmutig rollt's auf steter Flucht, Wird nimmer froh, wird nimmer heiter.	Yet never finding what it seeks, Forever longing, it surges onwards; Discontented, it rolls on in ceaseless flight, Never joyful, never serene.

Cast in D minor (an historically "dramatic" key), and marked *Schnell*, Schubert's setting effectively captures the poem's thrust. The turbulent, driving energy of the river is conveyed by the forging, perpetual motion of the accompaniment figure (Ex. II-13).

Ex. II-13: SCHUBERT, *Der Strom*, mm. 46-49.



Both hands are engaged in an intricate sixteenth-note pattern, comprised of broken chords in contrary motion. Embedded in the texture is extensive ascending and descending chromatic movement in the bass that further heightens the tension and expresses the "rising and falling" current.

Schubert made two attempts, both incomplete, at setting Goethe's poem *Mahomets Gesang.* The first of these, D. 549, dates from 1817 and contains some very interesting effects.[40] The poem depicts several different types of water imagery, as it traces the journey of a spring from its source (through cascades, channels, valley meadows, onto the plain) to its convergence with other streams. The course of the spring becomes an emblem of the "river of life" theme. Given the wealth of water imagery, Schubert takes full advantage of every opportunity to employ a full array of effects.

[40] The second fragment, D. 721, dates from 1821.

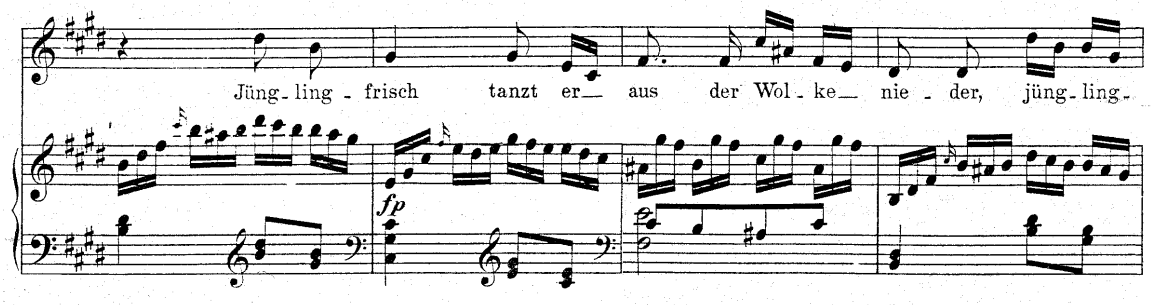
As in *Der Strom,* the accompaniment conveys the perpetual movement of the water. In this setting, the right hand dominates the texture with a continuous stream of sixteenth-note triplets. The piano part begins with a gentle meandering figure that combines stepwise motion with broken triads to describe the play of the spring among the rocks (Ex. II-14). Perhaps the most descriptive display occurs in mm. 26-44, as Schubert

Ex. II-14: SCHUBERT, *Mahomets Gesang*, D. 549, mm. 1-4.



captures the splashing water on the rocks at the foot of the falls with a playful, leaping figure embellished by grace-notes and turns (Ex. II-15). In the final measures of the song Schubert employs a series of rolling arpeggios to represent the streams as they are joined.

Ex. II-15: SCHUBERT, *Mahomets Gesang*, D. 549, mm. 26-29.



Liebesbotschaft, the first song in the *Schwanengesang* cycle (1827-28), is Schubert's last "brook song." Here Schubert depicts the "murmuring brook, so silver and bright" (*Rauschendes Bächlein, so silbern und hell*) in a rippling broken-chord pattern that shimmers throughout (Ex. II-16). Once again, the ubiquity of the pattern creates the sense of endlessly flowing water.

Ex. II-16: SCHUBERT, *Liebesbotschaft*, mm. 1-3.



Of all Schubert's song settings, perhaps the most fluid-sounding is *Der Jüngling an der Quelle* (1821). The text, by Johann Gaudenz von Salis-Seewis (1762-1834), is tinged with melancholy:

Leise rieselnder Quell'!	Softly rippling brook,
Ihr wallenden, flispernden Pappeln!	Swaying, whispering poplars,
Euer Schlummergeräusch	Your slumberous murmur
Wecket die Liebe nur auf,	Awakens only love.
Linderung sucht ich bei euch,	I sought consolation in you,
Und sie zu vergessen, die Spröde,	Wishing to forget her, who is so aloof.
Ach, und Blätter und Bach	But alas, the leaves and the brook
Seufzen, Luise, dir zu.	Sigh for you, Louise!

Schubert paints a picture of the delicate flow of a crystalline stream by combining several effects into a single gesture. The gentle, wavering sixteenth-note figure in the right hand that ripples throughout (colorfully suggesting passing sixths and sevenths in m. 1) is set above a flowing arpeggiated inner voice comprised of a slower stream of eighth notes (Ex. II-17). The counterpoint between these two parts is tempered by a simple bass line, which rarely departs from the tonic pitch. The harmony, too, does not wander far,

Ex. II-17: SCHUBERT, *Der Jüngling an der Quelle*, mm. 1-2.



hovering primarily around the tonic, subdominant, and dominant (with a brief excursion into the parallel minor) while the mainly triadic melody is remarkable for its simplicity. Thus the piece perfectly encapsulates the physical paradox of the stream: the incessant flow onward against the static constancy of its course.

Breadth, Depth, and Dissolution

While it seems quite plausible that music — and, particularly, the piano — is capable of evoking the movement of water as well as the play of light on its rippling surface or the languid, rocking motion of a boat, the expression of still water would seem a trickier proposition. It is a testament then to Schubert's rich imagination that he conceived of so forward-looking a setting as *Meeres Stille*.

Goethe's poem evokes the dead calm of a vast sea and the undercurrent of anxiety such a spectacle engenders:

Tiefe Stille herrscht im Wasser,	Profound calm reigns over the waters;
Ohne Regung ruht das Meer,	The sea lies motionless;
Und bekümmert sieht der Schiffer	Anxiously the sailor beholds
Glatte Fläche rings umher.	The glassy surface all around.
Keine Luft von keiner Seite!	No breeze from any quarter!
Todesstille fürchterlich!	A fearful, deathly calm!
In der ungeheuern Weite	In the vast expanse
Reget keine Welle sich.	No wave stirs.

In the second of two 1815 settings Schubert mirrors Goethe's hauntingly barren text using remarkably simple means, notably, unvarying rhythms and textures.[41] The breadth and depth of the sea are well captured in a series of long rolled chords that emanate from the lowest notes on the instrument, never reaching beyond the middle register (Ex. II-18).

Ex. II-18: SCHUBERT, *Meeres Stille*, D. 216, mm. 15-20.



This, coupled with the frequent use of diminished chords, unpredictable chromatic movement, and sporadic tonal ambiguity, produces a stark portrait of awe and disquiet.

In *Iphigenia* (1817) Schubert captures a far different aspect of the sea: its wrath. To illustrate Mayrhofer's image of "the sea, with its mighty waves crashing against the cold cliffs" (*die See mit hohen Wellen, die an Klippen sich zerschellen*), the accompaniment suddenly becomes turbulent. Dense, choppy chords are repeated over a chromatically ascending figure that rolls along in thirty-second notes (Ex. II-19).

[41] The sheer simplicity of conception, in itself, would seem to foreshadow Impressionism.

Ex. II-19: SCHUBERT, *Iphigenia*, mm. 16-17.



Based on another Mayrhofer text, *Auflösung* (1824) is a rhapsodic poem about death:

Verbirg dich, Sonne,
Denn die Gluten der Wonne
Versengen mein Gebein;
Verstummet, Töne,
Frühlings Schöne
Flüchte dich und lass mich allein!

Quellen doch aus allen
Falten Meiner Seele liebliche Gewalten,
Die mich umschlingen,
Himmlisch singen.
Geh unter, Welt, und stööre
Nimmer die süssen, ätherischen Chöre.

Hide yourself, sun,
For the fires of rapture
Burn through my whole being.
Be silent, sounds;
Spring beauty,
Flee, and let me be alone!

From every recess of my soul
Gentle powers well up
And envelop me
With celestial song.
Dissolve, world, and never more
Disturb the sweet ethereal choirs.

Here water is used as a metaphor for death. Schubert responds by creating a wellspring of sound that continually brims over with unbridled passion and energy. An arpeggiated figure repeatedly tumbles, then rises up to a peak. This gesture, which continues throughout the piece with few interruptions (the occasional spilling downward of an

arpeggio), is cast above a rumbling bass tremolo that exploits the lower depths of the instrument (Ex. II-20).

Ex. II-20: SCHUBERT, *Auflösung*, mm. 1-4.



. . .

Although a mere handful of Schubert's more striking water effects have been examined, it is apparent that he created a special musical language capable of evoking the image of water. Building upon the limited musical vocabulary of his predecessors — who employed wave-like arpeggios in their barcarolles and cascading runs of the word-painting variety as modest coloration to set off the more prominent vocal line — Schubert creates a fluent "voice" for the piano to suggest the subtler aspects of water and its various types of movement. In his barcarolles he enhances the texture of the accompaniment so that it becomes a rich musical element in its own right. Undulating figures move between hands to depict a boat's swaying motion; pulsating chords echo the steady pull of oars; tremolos suggest calm; syncopation connotes choppiness; and repeated-note figures capture the limpid play of light on the water's surface. In some

works, Schubert mimics the frolicsome progress of a stream with rippling lines that meander, spill, and rush toward their destination, or he portrays a more languorous brook with the use of repeated notes in a pedal-point manner. In others he is able to portray the depth and breadth of the ocean imaginatively with dense, rolling chords, or liken the "welling" of emotion to a gushing fountain, with lines which gracefully leap and fall. Working with an instrument of limited tonal resources (compared with the modern piano), Schubert nevertheless exploited its coloristic capabilities to maximum effect to transform the Lied accompaniment into a richly nuanced partner — capable of painting poetic soundscapes — to the lyrical vocal line.

As has been observed, several factors coalesced in the early nineteenth century that enabled Schubert to create this special musical language for water and lay the groundwork for generations to come. Schubert's keen interest in literature and love of Nature, the abundance of natural imagery in the Romantic poetry of the day, and the composer's elevation of the Lied to a high form of art, along with the Romantic's belief that music was uniquely capable of depicting ideas and images, made the evocation of water an intriguing challenge. Meanwhile the piano's evolution (in terms of responsiveness, dynamic range, and tone color), though still in its early phase, converged with these factors to meet some of the more modest demands of this challenge and inspire further explorations.

But can the listener genuinely recognize water in these piano accompaniments? More often than not, the answer is a decisive yes. Some of the early efforts clearly do not succeed entirely, as their visual figuration upon the page does not persuasively translate in aural terms. Sometimes, too, Schubert is less ambitious in this regard. A particular

text might present other, more pressing concerns (such as meaning or narrative), and in such instances relatively pedestrian means of repetitive figuration or word painting are employed to suggest the movement of water. Of course, the mere presence of text certainly lightens the burden of the accompaniment to bear meaning. Though modest in intention, Schubert's barcarolles, however, as a group effectively conjure the movement of a boat over the water's rippling surface. Moreover, in some notable Lieder — *Liebesbotschaft*, *Der Jüngling an der Quelle, Mahomets Gesang,* and *Auflösung*, in particular — Schubert is especially successful in his vivid evocation of flowing water. Finally, a piece such as *Meeres Stille* is breathtaking in its prescience; within the confines of his harmonic vocabulary, Schubert looks ahead to works by Ravel and Debussy. Indeed, as will be seen in the following chapters, Schubert planted the seed for his successors.

PART II: THE FOUNTAIN

CHAPTER III

LISZT'S TRANSCRIPTIONS OF SCHUBERT AND ROSSINI SONGS

Among the nineteenth century's leading composers, it is probably Franz Liszt (1811-86) whose life and work most poignantly embody the essence of the Romantic spirit. One has only to survey the sheer breadth of his output[1] and the extramusical "subject" matter it encompasses. As Alan Walker points out, the overwhelming majority of Liszt's compositions bear programmatic titles, which reflect familiar Romantic themes that derive from literature, poetry, and art, as well as religion and Nature.[2] Each of these had a profound effect on him and, throughout his long life, provided a perpetual source of inspiration for his music.

During the early part of the century, many Romantic artists — Mendelssohn, Turner, Constable, and Byron, to name but a few — set out on pilgrimages to foreign lands in search of adventure and a richness of experience from which they often drew inspiration for their works. In 1835, following in his contemporaries' footsteps, Liszt, at the age of twenty-three, and the Comtesse Marie d'Agoult (1805-76),[3] then twenty-nine,

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[1] In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., ed. Stanley Sadie, 29 vols. (London: Macmillan, 2001), vol. 14, 786-872, the worklist (compiled by Rena Charnin Mueller and Marcia Eckhardt), itself, spans 86 pages.

[2] Walker claims, in his article on Liszt in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd. ed., vol. 14, 755-86, that ninety percent are programmatic.

[3] The first of two women with whom he shared his life, the Comtesse, married at the time, met and fell in love with Liszt in 1833. Their tempestuous relationship produced three children and ended in bitter acrimony in 1844.

set out on such an excursion.[4] The young lovers spent the next four years wandering through Switzerland, Italy, France, and Austria.[5] During this time, they reveled in all that these places had to offer: from the exquisite natural beauty to treasures of art and literature.[6] These travels left a deep and lasting impression on Liszt, and one can only imagine how his intense infatuation with Marie d'Agoult, the woman he adored and who provided such stimulating companionship over the next nine years,[7] served to heighten his experience.

For Liszt these leisurely wanderings presented an opportune time to compose in relative tranquility. As a virtuoso pianist, Liszt had led a hectic life of touring and performing, which left little time or energy for his compositional gifts to develop and flourish. These "*Wanderjahre*" now yielded a rich legacy and basis for his future explorations. The young composer worked feverishly at the piano, transcribing Beethoven symphonies, Schubert Lieder, and various works from the popular operas of the day, as well as writing original works. Inevitably, many of the travel experiences that moved him so profoundly found musical expression.

His stay in Switzerland was immortalized in a collection of descriptive works entitled *Album d'un Voyageur* (original version composed 1835-38). This early opus, which evokes the sights and sounds of the Swiss landscape, is a pioneering work that

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[4] Their journey also served the purpose of an escape from scandal.

[5] For a detailed account of the influence of his travels on his works see János Kárpáti, "Liszt the Traveler," *New Hungarian Quarterly* 27 (1986): 108.

[6] During this period Liszt kept a diary. See Maria P. Eckhardt, "Diary of a Wayfarer," *JALS* 11 (June 1982), 10-18, and 12 (December 1982): 182-83.

[7] The many letters to Marie d'Agoult in Liszt's correspondence attest to his intense devotion to her.

provides the earliest examples of musical impressionism.[8] The first group of pieces, originally entitled *Impressions et Poésies* (later revised in 1854 and retitled *Années de pèlerinage, Première année: "Suisse"*) can, in this light, be viewed as prophetic.[9] With regard to aspects of form, thematic and motivic treatment, melodic composition, and harmonic color and movement, Liszt abandons many of the conventions of the Classical tradition in favor of a freer approach. But while such experimentation was hardly unusual for his Romantic contemporaries, Liszt goes a step further. In pieces such as "Au bord d'une source," the composer creates atmospheric sensations that strikingly foreshadow the music of a half century later.

Speaking with visionary wisdom befitting a much older, more seasoned musician, Liszt, writing in the fall of 1837, elucidated his intentions and ideas regarding musical aesthetics in the preface to the first edition of *Album d'un Voyageur*, published in 1842:

> About a year ago I published three Swiss airs under the title *Album d'un Voyageur*. These pieces were intended to be, and indeed they are nothing more than merely the detached fragment of a complete work which, under the collective title of *Album d'un Voyageur* will contain all that I intend to write for the piano from now during the next few years.
>
> I have latterly traveled through many new countries, have seen many different places, and visited many a spot hallowed by history and poetry; I have felt that the varied aspects of nature, and the different incidents associated with them, did not pass before my eyes like meaningless pictures, but that they evoked profound emotions within my soul; that a vague but direct affinity was established betwixt them and myself, a real, though indefinable understanding, a sure but inexplicable means of communication, and I have tried to give musical utterance to some of my strongest sensations, some of my liveliest impressions.

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[8] Most notably, Alan Walker and Charles Suttoni, among others, have made this claim.

[9] Some of these pieces are examined in depth below.

The preface continues by outlining the plan for the work but soon returns to a discussion of musical aesthetics.

> The intrinsic and poetic meaning of things, the inherent ideal of everything, seems to manifest itself pre-eminently in such artistic creations as, by their beauty of form, give rise to emotions and ideas in the soul. Although music is the least plastic of the arts, it nevertheless possesses a form of its own, and has not unreasonably been defined as architecture of sounds . . . .
>
> As instrumental music progresses, develops, and emerges from its early limitations, it will tend more and more to bear the impress of this ideality, which constitutes the perfection of the plastic arts. It will cease to be a mere combination of sounds and will become a poetic language more apt than poetry itself may be, 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.
>
> Convinced of this and with this tendency in mind, I undertook the work which is published to-day. It is written for the few rather than the many, — not ambitious of success, but of the approval of that minority which conceives art as having other uses than the beguiling of idle hours, and asks more from it than the futile distraction of a passing entertainment.[10]

The preface is valuable in that it not only offers a rare glimpse into the composer's thought process but is also one of the few instances in which Liszt actually draws a connection between his music and the source of his inspiration. In this light, the *Album d'un Voyageur* can be seen as a musical diary. The music that emerged from this experience is a testament to the impact that Nature had upon Liszt. Furthermore, Liszt makes clear what he perceives to be music's inherent capabilities and forecasts its evolution from an abstract sound architecture to a poetic means of revealing the depths of the soul. This strong desire to give musical expression to pure sensations and emotional responses is at the crux of the Romantic and, ultimately, the Impressionist aesthetic.

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[10] See Preface to Band IV in *Franz Liszt*: *Musikalische Werke*, trans. Fanny Copeland, rev. Mevanwy Roberts, ed. F. Busoni, et al (1907-36, reprint, Westmead, England: Gregg Press, 1966), xvii.

In these seven early pieces (two more were included in the *Années*, Book I), Liszt creates musical landscapes that evoke natural imagery. Water is the subject of two of these, and its evocation would seem to be a thread that ran through his life's work.[11] Even though only a handful of works — out of Liszt's prolific output — involve specifically watery themes, several of these stand out among the composer's most significant pieces. The chosen medium for the expression of water was, of course, the piano, which was central to Liszt's being. This was not, however, a mere coincidence, for, as noted in Chapter I, during the nineteenth century the piano's improved physical and coloristic capabilities allowed composers' imaginations free reign. Liszt, as a supreme virtuoso with a vivid imagination, was able to exploit the instrument's newfound potential, and perhaps the most striking examples of this are his pieces dealing with the expression of water.

From the composer's own testimony, we know that Liszt felt a deep bond with the evolving instrument (coincidentally using a metaphor that relates to water):

> . . . my piano is to me what a ship is to the sailor, what a steed is to the Arab, and perhaps more because even now my piano is myself, my speech, and my life. It is the intimate personal depository of everything that stirred wildly in my brain during the most impassioned days of my youth. It was there that all my wishes, all my dreams, all my joys, and all my sorrows lay.[12]

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[11] Andrew Fowler, in "Franz Liszt's *Années de Pèlerinage* as Megacycle," *JALS* 40 (1996): 126, has pointed out that water is a common metaphor throughout the cycle.

[12] Franz Liszt, *An Artist's Journey, Lettres d'un bachelier ès musique, 1835-1841*, trans. and annotated Charles Suttoni (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 45.

LISZT AND THE PIANO IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The nineteenth century was a time of rapid technological development that saw the piano metamorphose from the fortepiano to the modern instrument with which we are familiar today. This transformation quite fittingly mirrored the life and career of Franz Liszt. Liszt and the other great pianists of his generation — Friedrich Kalkbrenner (1785-1849), Henri Herz (1803-88), Stephen Heller (1813-88), Adolph von Henselt (1814-89), Sigismond Thalberg (1812-71), Alexander Dreyshock (1818-69), Ignaz Moscheles (1794-1870), and Johann Peter Pixis (1788-1874), to name a few — made unprecedented physical demands on the instrument with their astonishing techniques. This dazzling brand of pianism, which Liszt's compositions and playing so thoroughly epitomized, pushed the limits of the existing instrument's capabilities, thus challenging the leading piano makers of the day to build instruments that had more responsive actions, a more powerful sound, and a wider compass, while being more durable and able to stay in tune longer.

Liszt was constantly courted by the leading piano firms, who frequently sought his approval of their latest innovations, and, as a result, the composer always had a wide variety of pianos at his disposal. Without question, Liszt, more than any other pianist of his day, had the greatest influence on shaping the destiny of the piano's development. The history of the piano's structural and mechanical evolution has been thoroughly documented, and in his Liszt biography Derek Watson summarizes this:

> When he arrived in Paris late in 1823 he had the advantage of Érard instruments with wide range of tone, an expanded keyboard of seven octaves and the double-escapement device patented by Érard in 1822, which for the first time allowed the rapid repetition of notes and enhanced responsiveness to touch.

Watson goes on to describe other significant changes:

> During the 1830s piano frames were strengthened, heavier hammers and tension on the strings were introduced. The increasing use of metal framing and the development of cross-stringing further transformed pianos over the next two or three decades.[13]

As we shall see, the rapid repetition made possible by the double-escapement action proved particularly vital to the creation of certain watery effects. The advent of the cast-iron frame and the overstringing technique, furthermore, created an instrument with greater resonance and a lusher, more liquid tone color.

There has been ample speculation about which instruments Liszt might have preferred.[14] Watson, for his part, is unequivocal:

> Liszt's preference was for Érard, but on his virtuoso tours he used instruments by all leading manufacturers. When Érard's position as the leading innovator in piano construction began to wane, firms such as Bösendorfer, Bechstein, Chickering, and Steinway supplied the composer with increasingly refined models. His last pianos were powerful instruments with a range of up to seven and a half octaves, overstrung and metal-framed.[15]

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[13] Derek Watson, *Liszt* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1989), 169-70.

[14] See Geraldine Keeling, "The Liszt Pianos — Some Aspects of Preference and Technology," *New Hungarian Quarterly* 104 (1986): 220-231.

[15] Watson, 170.

The popular belief in Liszt's preference for Érard seems to be based on the praise one often finds in surviving letters. In a letter from 1825, for example, Liszt's father, Adam, writing to Carl Czerny (one of Liszt's teachers), proclaims: "The perfection of the Érard piano has reached the point that it is a century ahead of its time and impossible to describe — one has to see and hear it for oneself and play it oneself too."[16]

In 1847, when the pianist was at the tail-end of his traveling virtuoso days, Liszt wrote to Pierre Érard: "I owe you abounding thanks, my dear Érard, for the charming zeal you showed in sending one of your magnificent instruments to Constantinople for me . . . . I let my fingers wander over an instrument 'of such power and perfection . . . '"[17]

One might easily conclude that, from early on, Liszt preferred the Érard piano, probably for its incomparably faster action and its large sound. There is some evidence to support the contention that this preference endured throughout his lifetime as well. According to a recent claim, one of the last pianos Liszt owned was an Érard grand. Allegedly, this instrument was at the Villa d'Este in Tivoli for the last fifteen years of Liszt's life. Therefore, he would have composed "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este" at this piano as well as other late works such as "Aux Cyprès de la Villa d'Este" and "Angélus!" This piano, an eighty-five key, seven-foot rosewood grand, dates from around 1862. It is said to have been personally chosen by Liszt in 1870 and sent to his apartment at the Villa d'Este, where it was used primarily for composing, teaching, and

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[16] As quoted in Adrian Williams, *Portrait of Liszt by Himself and His Contemporaries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 23.

[17] According to Williams, this is an undated letter received by Erard in Paris on 5 August, 1847. Franz Liszt, *Selected Letters,* trans. and ed. Adrian Williams (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 256.

concerts.[18] Although Liszt certainly owned many fine instruments by a number of different makers during the course of his lifetime, he may well have retained an affection for the Érard's quicker and more responsive action, a feature which allowed him, for example, to create the tremolando effects in "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este."

An accurate history, however, of Liszt and his pianos is a complicated issue, for various reasons.[19] First, Liszt lived during an era that saw the piano emerge as *the* instrument of the nineteenth century and produced a flood of brilliant piano virtuosi/composers. The many new technological refinements of the instrument occurred over a relatively short period of roughly fifty years. Second, with each new innovation, all the leading pianists, including Liszt, naturally gravitated to the latest models. Few pianists, with the exception of Chopin, who maintained a loyal allegiance to Pleyel, stuck to one brand of piano.[20] Third, geographic location played an important role in determining which instruments Liszt (as well as all other traveling virtuosi) played. With his rather nomadic existence, he frequently played whatever local instrument was available. In addition, because the piano had rapidly undergone such sweeping changes and each make had its own innovative advantages, the instruments with which Liszt came into contact were of varying quality. They ran the gamut from the old, dilapidated

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[18] Concrete documentation of this has yet to be produced. This information was provided in the press kit that accompanied the piano on loan to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, in 2001. The piano had been recently rediscovered in an Italian convent by Carlo Domenici, who purchased it and had it restored. His claim as to its authenticity is based primarily on circumstantial evidence involving Liszt's missing rosary beads found inside the piano. Although this claim is endorsed by several noted Liszt authorities, it remains somewhat dubious.

[19] Geraldine Keeling embarked on this project many years ago, and, though she has accumulated a wealth of material and contributed several articles on the subject, the project remains incomplete.

[20] Edmund M. Frederick, "The 'Romantic' Sound in Four Pianos of Chopin's Era," *19th Century Music* 3/2 (1979): 152.

instrument he played at the home of the Russian Tzarina (this incident helped earn him a reputation as a piano-smasher) to the magnificent Steinway concert grand presented to him in 1880 — a piano which, in refurbished condition, compares favorably with any modern grand.

Ultimately, the question of whether Liszt had a preference, though illuminating, seems secondary. As an enormously gifted young pianist, Liszt would naturally have been drawn to the Érard, which, early in the nineteenth century, was the instrument at the forefront of technology, offering an unsurpassed resonance and responsiveness. But though he remained well disposed toward the Érard throughout his career, he clearly appreciated and owned many other instruments as well. Liszt was not constricted by any instrument; both as performer and composer he pushed the limits of the piano's capabilities. In the end his pianistic powers and extraordinary musical imagination transcended the instrument.

TRANSCRIPTIONS OF SCHUBERT LIEDER

From his earliest days as a composer, Liszt frequently turned his attention to transcribing for solo piano works that had been composed for other musical media. In fact, Alan Walker points out that well over half of his entire output consists of arrangements of his own or other composers' music. For Liszt the art of transcription[21] fulfilled several important purposes. First, it helped promote the works of such other

[21] Liszt himself takes credit for coining this term. See Rena Charnin Mueller's preface to the Dover edition of *Franz Liszt: The Schubert Song Transcriptions*, *Series I* (New York: Dover, 1995), x.

composers as Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, and Wagner, all of whom Liszt greatly admired. Given his extraordinary popularity as a performer, he was in a position to bring this music to the widest audience possible. Secondly, by transforming instrumental and vocal works into solo piano pieces, he not only created more repertoire for his own recitals but also made these pieces accessible to the general population of musicians, professional and amateur alike. In fact, so popular and commercially successful were these arrangements that Liszt's publishers clamored for more.[22] And thirdly, the transcription process itself was a way for Liszt to explore new territory and techniques for the ever-expanding capabilities of the piano. On this subject Liszt speaks quite eloquently:

> . . . I consider the piano extremely important. In my opinion it ranks highest in the instrumental hierarchy. It is the most widely cultivated and popular of all instruments. Its importance and popularity are due in part to the harmonic capability that it alone possesses, and consequently to its ability to recapitulate and concentrate all of musical art within itself. Within the span of its seven octaves it encompasses the audible range of an orchestra, and the ten fingers of a single person are enough to render the harmonies produced by the union of over a hundred concerted instruments. The piano is a means of disseminating works that would otherwise remain unknown or unfamiliar to the general public because of the difficulty involved in assembling an orchestra. Thus it bears the same relation to an orchestral work that an engraving bears to a painting; it multiplies the original and makes it available to everyone, and even if it does not reproduce the colors, it at least reproduces the light and shadow.
>
> Thanks to improvements that have already been made and those that the diligent efforts of pianists add every day, the piano is continuing to expand its assimilative capability.[23]

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[22] Mueller, ix.

[23] Liszt, *An Artist's Journey*, 45.

Thus, as evidenced by Liszt's words, it is apparent that the piano's evolution played an integral role both in his own compositional thought processes and the cultivation of the transcription as a vehicle for displaying the instrument's expressive potential.

Liszt paid tribute to the song-writing talents of many composers, from Beethoven, Chopin, Schumann, Mendelssohn, Rossini, and Rubinstein, to the less famous, such as Robert Franz, Hans von Bülow, and Eduard Lassen. His most ambitious transcription project, however, was devoted to the songs of Franz Schubert. From 1833 to 1846 Liszt transcribed fifty-six Lieder by Schubert, whom he championed throughout his lifetime. In 1838, while on tour in Vienna, Liszt wrote to Marie d'Agoult, "The other evening I heard some of Schubert's Lieder, sung by a friend of his. I listened to only three or four, then I came home and dissolved into tears."[24] Thirty years later, Liszt recalled those days and spoke exultantly of Schubert, describing him as one

> . . . who lives in music like a bird in the air. O tender, ever-welling genius! O beloved hero of the heaven of my youth! From your soul's depths and heights pour forth melody, freshness, power, grace, reverie, passions, soothings, tears, and flames — and such is the enchantment of your world of emotions that we almost forget the greatness of your craftsmanship![25]

The mere fact that more than a third of the approximately 150 songs Liszt transcribed were Schubert's Lieder attests to this devotion and spiritual bond he felt with the composer. As Derek Watson points out, Liszt's profound attraction to Schubert goes to the core of Liszt's musical sensibility:

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[24] Williams, *Portrait*, 104.

[25] Liszt, *Selected Letters*, 693.

> [Schubert's] response to poetic imagery, his conviction that purely musical images of poetic ideas are capable of projection to the listener and his belief that he could illustrate such imagery without words, are keys to understanding Liszt's lifelong aesthetic. The musical image of the idea, the true symphonic poem, thus had its genesis in concept and form in Liszt's adoration of Schubert.[26]

The transcriptions of Schubert's songs represent the true manifestation of this.

More than in any of his other arrangements, Liszt adheres closely to the original versions, masterfully weaving Schubert's melodic line into the fabric of the accompaniment. His insistence that the text be printed within the score underlines his determination to translate Schubert's work faithfully to the solo piano format. Only occasionally does Liszt add pianistic flourishes of his own, these serving to enhance the poetic meaning. Such flourishes, it should be noted, are most often displayed in the song settings that contain water imagery and spring from Schubert's own inventive figurations that clearly fueled Liszt's imagination.

In looking at the selection of songs Liszt chose to transcribe, one finds that he shared Schubert's attraction to water. Of the fifty-six songs, ten involve water (though Liszt additionally set *Die Forelle* a second time):[27]

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[26] Watson, 214.

[27] Dates are according to the worklist in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians,* 2nd. ed.

TABLE III-1: LISZT'S TRANSCRIPTIONS OF SCHUBERT'S LIEDER

From the [12] *Lieder von Fr. Schubert* (published 1837-38):
Auf dem Wasser zu singen
Meeresstille

Der Gondelfahrer (1838)

From *Schwanengesang* (1838-39):
Das Fischermädchen
Am Meer
Liebesbotschaft

From *Winterreise* (1838-39)
Wasserflut

From *Sechs Melodien* (1846)
Die Forelle

Die Forelle (second version) (1846)

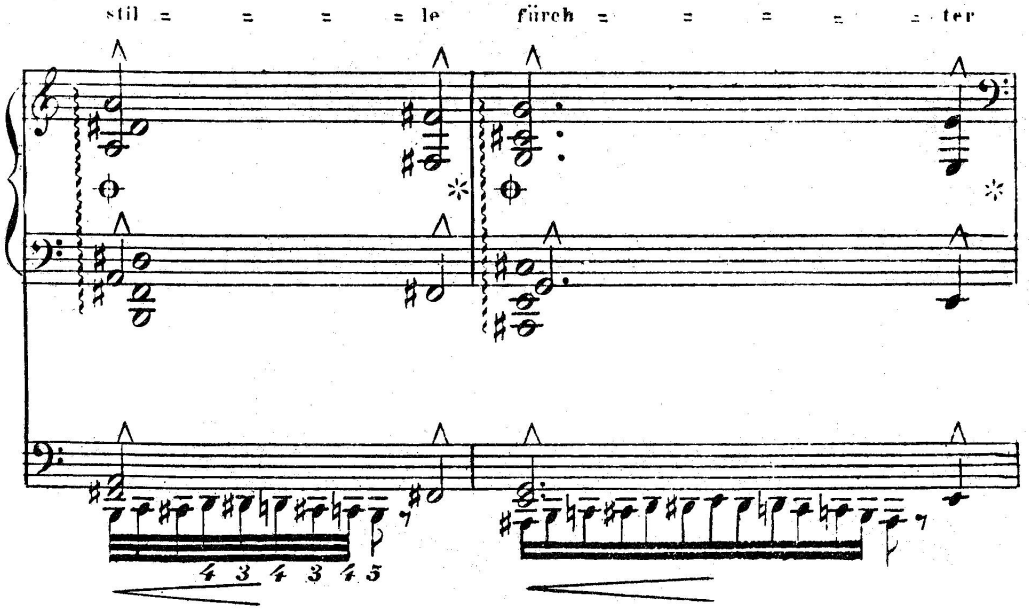
From *Müllerlieder* (1846)
Der Müller und der Bach
Wohin?

Throughout his Schubert song transcriptions, Liszt faithfully abides by the Viennese composer's keys, meters, verse settings, and harmonic structures. As previously mentioned, Liszt demonstrated great skill and ingenuity weaving the melody into the fabric of the accompaniment: the resultant transcriptions are seamless and natural. At the same time, Liszt found myriad ways to maintain variety and build drama in spite of the often repetitive nature of the strophic material. Since most of the transcriptions remain in large measure true to the original (distinguishing them from the

freer paraphrase), little has been noted regarding Liszt's compositional contributions. Several of the pieces that evoke water, in particular, seem to have fired Liszt's imagination. Evidently delighting in Schubert's vivid figurations, Liszt embellishes and occasionally expands these songs, transforming them into rich piano solos. We will first examine some of Liszt's subtler additions before looking at his more adventurous endeavors.

In *Meeresstille* (1838), apart from doubling the melodic line at the octave and filling out the arpeggiated accompaniment, Liszt preserves the mood of desolation and deadly stillness of Schubert's oceanscape. At the climax, however, Liszt injects a chromatic, undulating bass figure into Schubert's stark accompaniment that both evokes the ominous depths and summons a sense of foreboding beneath the placid surface (Ex. III-1). These minor embellishments are all the more striking in this bleak setting and,

Ex. III-1: LISZT, *Meeresstille*, mm. 22-23.



in fact, quite remarkable for the time; Liszt's subtle exploitation of the lowest register of the piano foreshadows the sonic potential of the instruments that were to emerge in the second half of the century. The effect is to remind us vividly that, despite the stillness, we are on the water.

While rendering still water presented a formidable challenge to the composer's imagination, the depiction of a boat's movement over water had a somewhat established compositional vocabulary via the barcarolle and Venetian boat songs, both of which characteristically employ a lilting 6/8 or 12/8 meter and gentle rocking figurations.[28] The stunning *Auf dem Wasser zu singen* (1837-38), however, transcends the barcarolle genre. Liszt seizes upon Schubert's lilting motif to translate the wonderfully evocative song into a vehicle for the piano's fluid characteristics.

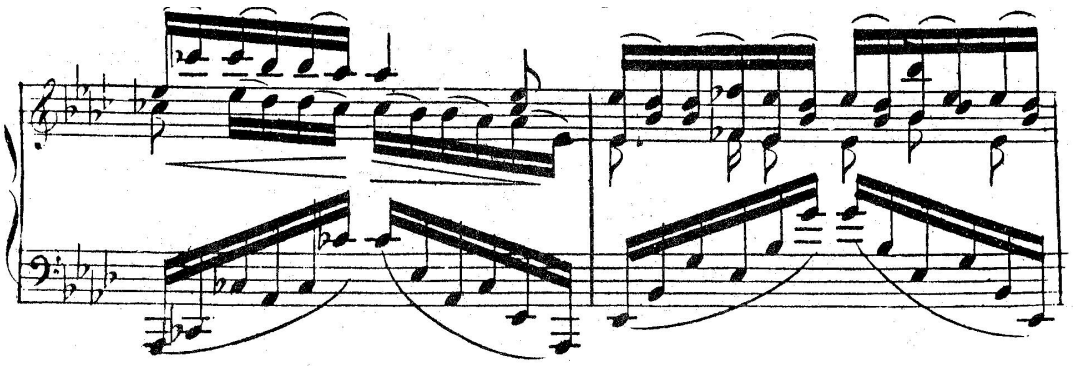
As in *Meeresstille*, Liszt adheres closely to the original. But whereas *Meeresstille* has a relatively short text, Schubert's setting of *Auf dem Wasser* has three stanzas, to which Liszt adds a fourth. Without the variety afforded by a changing text, Liszt, nevertheless, contrives to vary the strophic repetitions — deftly utilizing the piano's resources — without obscuring Schubert's intentions. Toward this end, he moves the melodic material to progressively higher registers — rising from bass to soprano — while

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[28] Early examples of watery imagery in the solo piano repertoire can be found in Mendelssohn's Venetian gondola songs from the *Songs Without Words.* These three pieces (Op. 19, No. 6; Op. 30, No. 6; Op. 62, No. 5) were undoubtedly inspired by Mendelssohn's travels to Venice, where he wrote Op. 19 in 1830. This was followed by Op. 30 in 1833 and Op. 62 in 1842. The two earlier pieces are characteristic of the barcarolle. In each, the left-hand accompaniment contains a gentle rocking figure that provides the background for the smooth lyrical melody. While these same elements are still present in Op. 62, we also find a more literal attempt actually to depict the water itself. In the middle section, Mendelssohn introduces a repeated note into the texture that suggests the flat surface of the water. This effect continues through the final section. Another striking motif, the falling fourth, so prominent throughout the work, is transformed here to become a tritone and is heard in the low register where it seemingly intimates the depth of the water. In the last eight measures of the piece, even more literal gestures can be heard suggesting both shimmering and rippling effects.

gradually filling out and enriching the textures of both the melody and accompaniment. Having built the piece to a climax, Liszt freely adds the fourth stanza, notably consolidating the melodic line with the ubiquitous lapping figure in the right hand while introducing an expansive rocking figure in the left (Ex. III-2). These flowing lines serve to enhance Schubert's effects. The piece closes with a calm, shimmering tremolo heard in the upper register of the instrument.

Ex. III-2: LISZT, *Auf dem Wasser zu singen*, mm. 87-88.



As observed previously, Schubert returned repeatedly to poems about brooks for inspiration, and it is in Liszt's transcriptions of these songs that one can most clearly glimpse the seeds of his (Liszt's) mature water pieces. As seen in the previous chapter, in his final brook song, *Liebesbotschaft* (from *Schwanengesang,* 1828), Schubert employed a continuous broken-chord figure in sixteenth notes to suggest the perpetual movement and murmur of a stream (see Ex. II-16 above). Liszt's fealty to this model (transcribed in 1838-39) is, once again, almost complete but for his inventive reshaping of this figuration

through the course of the piece. For example, at m. 40 Liszt adds a counter-tremolo figure that subtlely thickens the texture (Exx. III-3 and III-4). Twelve bars later he

Ex. III-3: SCHUBERT, *Liebesbotschaft*, mm. 39-41.

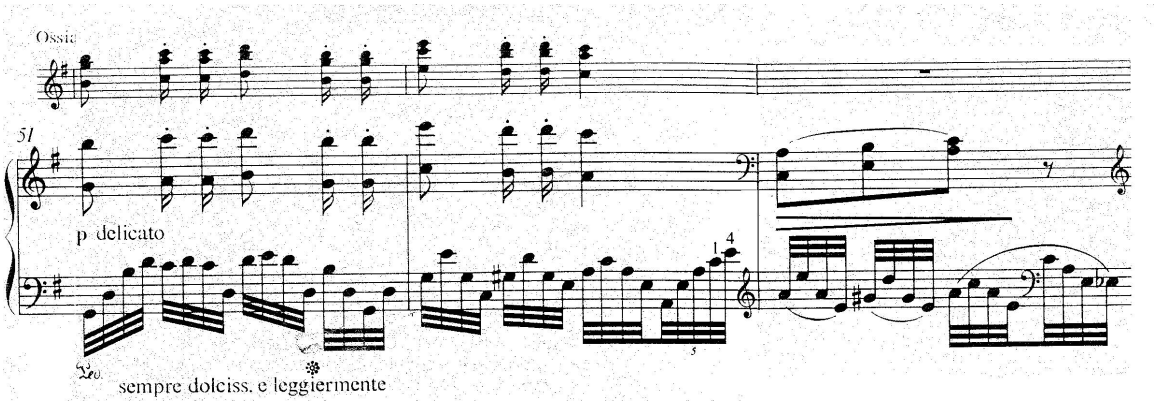


Ex. III-4: LISZT, *Liebesbotschaft*, mm. 39-41.



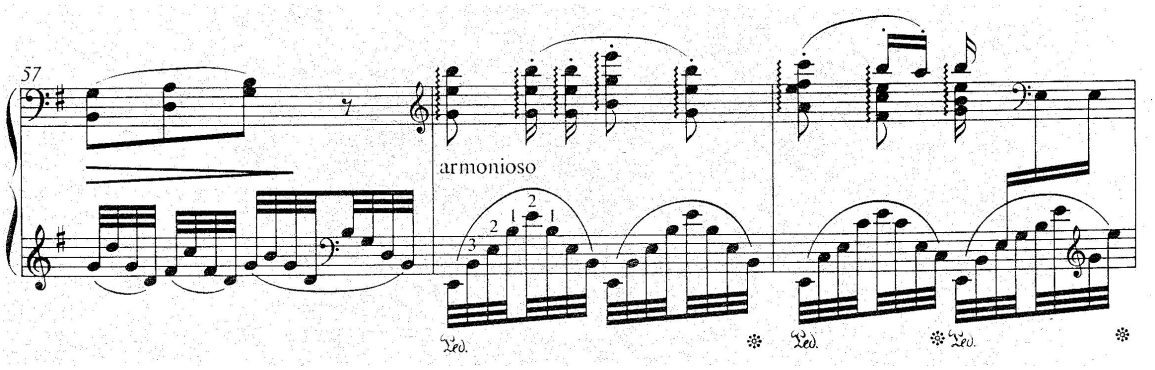
introduces an altogether new accompaniment. Abandoning Schubert's four-note broken-chord pattern, Liszt adopts an irregular, flowing pattern (replete with a quintuplet) that extends over three measures (Ex. III-5). This leads to a final passage where, over a

Ex. III-5: LISZT, *Liebesbotschaft*, mm. 52-54.



backdrop of wavelike arpeggios, Liszt creates a silvery, liquid effect by placing the melody in the high register and harmonizing it with rolled chords (Ex. III-6).

Ex. III-6: LISZT, *Liebesbotschaft*, mm. 57-59.



Liszt's last foray in Schubert song transcription was in 1846, when he turned his attention to *Die schöne Müllerin* (which Liszt published as *Müllerlieder*). The brook,

which runs throughout the cycle, figures most prominently in two of Liszt's six transcriptions. In "Der Müller und der Bach," Liszt once again follows the original closely, although he adds a reprise of the miller's song toward the end. Schubert's sextuplet broken-chord figure, which signifies the brook, is transformed into a rolling sixteenth-note arpeggio and expanded to groups of nine in the *Ossia* version, creating an irregular two-against-three combination (Ex. III-7). The added reprise features the melody above a gentle double tremolo that mimics the murmur of the brook.

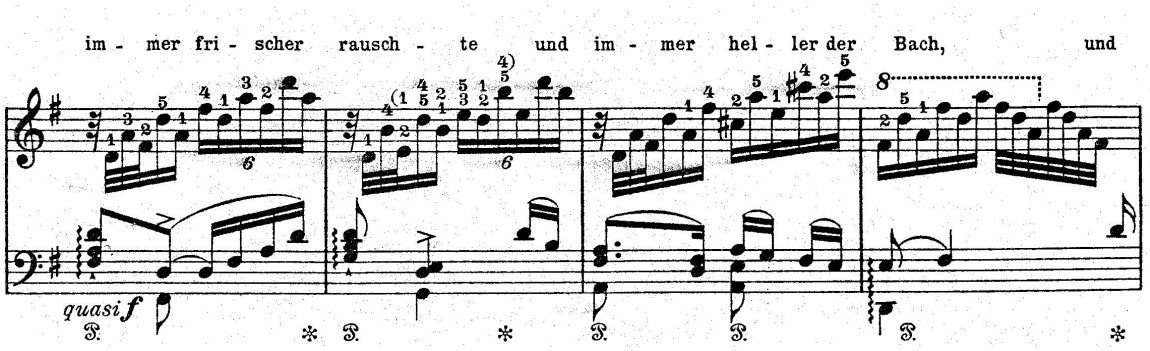
Ex. III-7: LISZT, "Der Müller und der Bach," mm. 63-67.



Unlike his treatment of the previously mentioned transcriptions, Liszt takes a freer, and more virtuosic, approach in "Wohin?" (1846, also from *Müllerlieder*). Whereas Schubert employed an unwavering accompaniment pattern, Liszt uses a variety of contrasting materials to set off each section of the song. Liszt's sensitivity to the unsung text, especially at references to water, is striking. For example, on the words "*und immer frischer rauschte, und immer heller der Bach,*" Liszt employs a sparkling

broken-chord figure in the right hand that repeatedly ascends before spilling downward (Ex. III-8). This same gesture is echoed twice with subtle variation, the last of which

Ex. III-8: LISZT, "Wohin?," mm. 27-30.



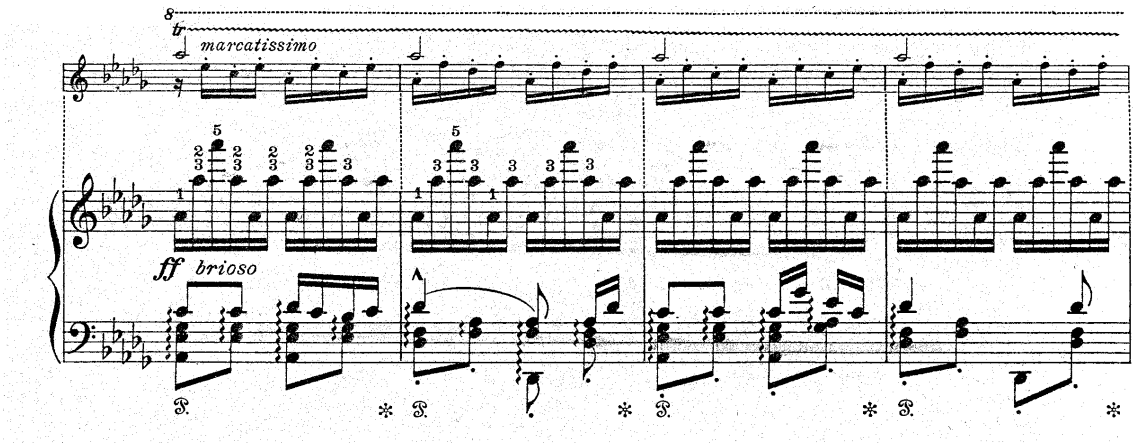
concludes with a playful splashing figure reflecting the final line of text, "*Es geh'n ja Mühlenräder in jedem klaren Bach*." This leads into a coda (which Liszt added) appropriately marked "*pianississimo murmurando*" that signals a return to the opening "babbling brook."

In 1846 Liszt transcribed two versions of *Die Forelle*. Both depart dramatically from his approach to the other Schubert transcriptions and display the virtuoso showmanship often associated with Liszt. Most significantly, these pieces also contain the most imaginative gestures that evoke water and the trout's aquatic movements. In each version Liszt adopts a variation technique (as did Schubert in his string quintet on the song) for this modified-strophic setting.

The first version begins with a seven-bar introduction based on Schubert's famous motif suggesting the frolicking fish. Indeed, throughout his transcription Liszt

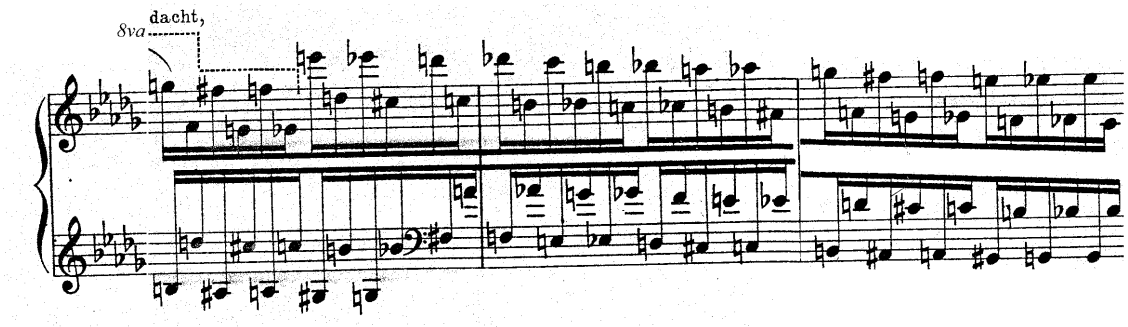
thoroughly explores this playful gesture by manipulating it in a variety of ways. Following the first two stanzas, Liszt adds a third iteration of the "A" theme, before presenting the B section material (mm. 79-96). Here he introduces a dribbling effect in the right hand as the left hand continues with the theme in broad rolled chords (Ex. III-9).

Ex. III-9: LISZT, *Die Forelle*, first version, mm. 63-66.



Not surprisingly, it is in the freer cadential passages that we observe the more adventurous side of Liszt as he explores new ways of evoking fluid imagery. In the midst of the B section, Liszt inserts a short cadenza: a chromatic descending shower of alternating minor thirteenths and thirds (Ex. III-10). Another short cadenza appears before the final reprise where, by inverting Schubert's original chromatic motif, Liszt creates a stream of notes descending from the uppermost register of the piano (Ex. III-11).

Ex. III-10: LISZT, *Die Forelle*, first version, mm. 87-89.



Ex. III-11: LISZT, *Die Forelle*, first version, mm. 104-5.

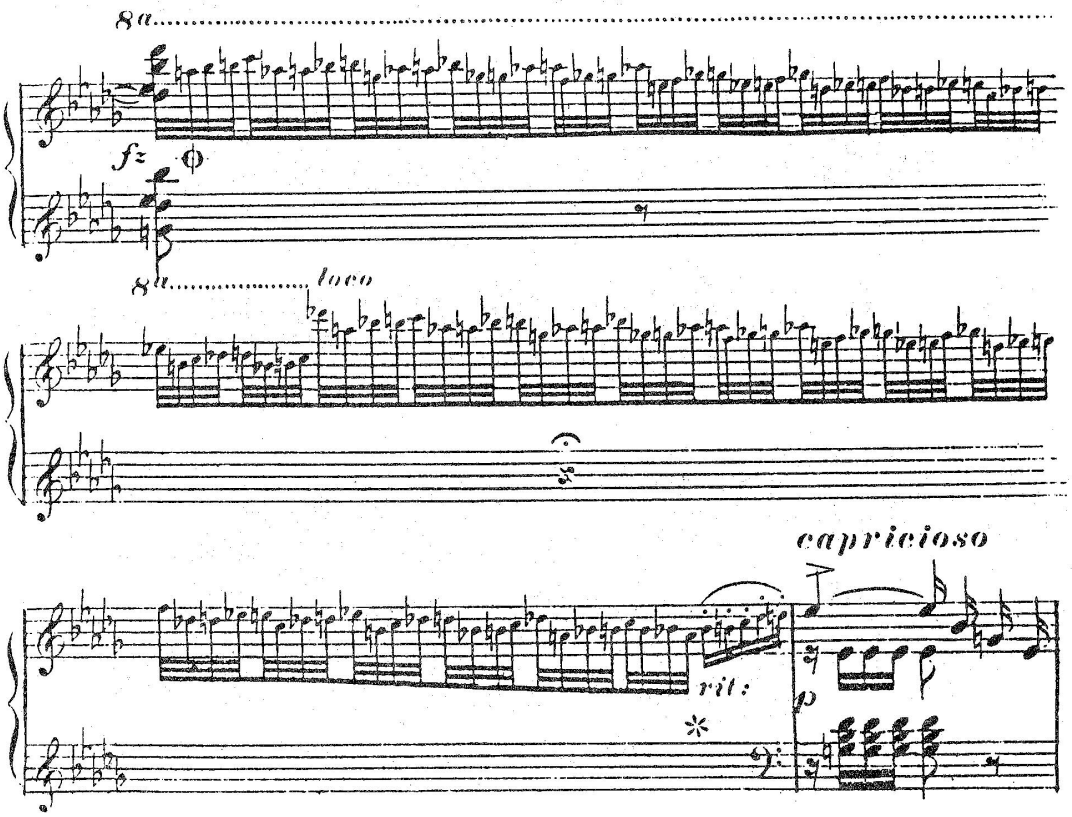


Though the second version begins with a longer and more developed introduction, it unfolds in a similar fashion to the first. However, new figurations emerge that are noteworthy. Once more in the third stanza Liszt introduces a shimmering ostinato figure in the right hand (Ex. III-12). The corresponding cadenza at the end of the B section (m. 94), meanwhile, is again a chromatic descending pattern — this time more extended — that creates a cascade effect (Ex. III-13).

Ex. III-12: LISZT, *Die Forelle*, second version, mm. 70-71.

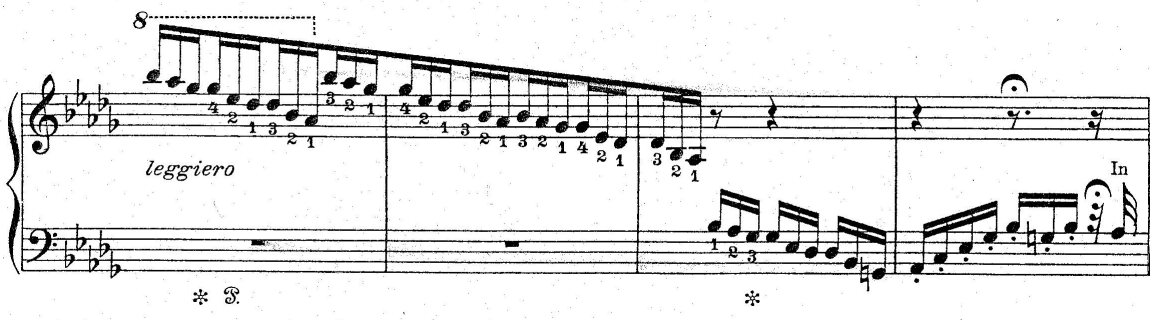


Ex. III-13: LISZT, *Die Forelle*, second version, mm. 94-95.

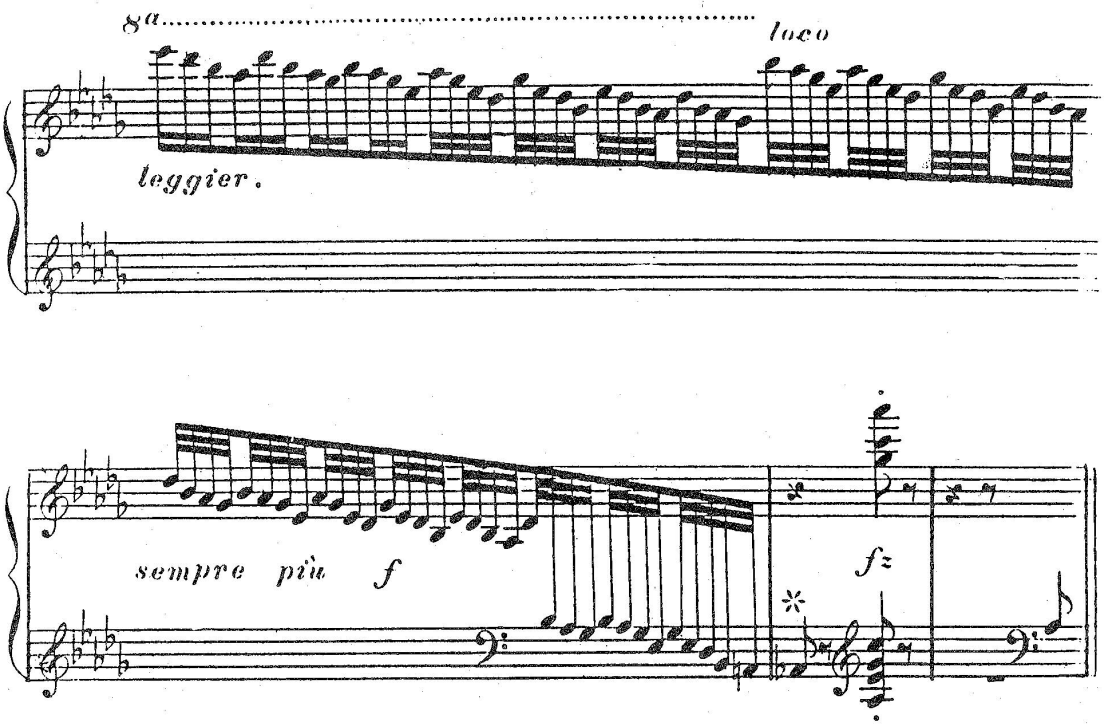


Perhaps most striking of all in both versions, however, is Liszt's use of the pentatonic scale. Framing each piece is a pair of pentatonic cadential flourishes; the first, a gently spilling stream of notes (Exx. III-14 and III-15), is echoed in the final bars by a

Ex. III-14: LISZT, *Die Forelle*, first version, mm. 4-7.

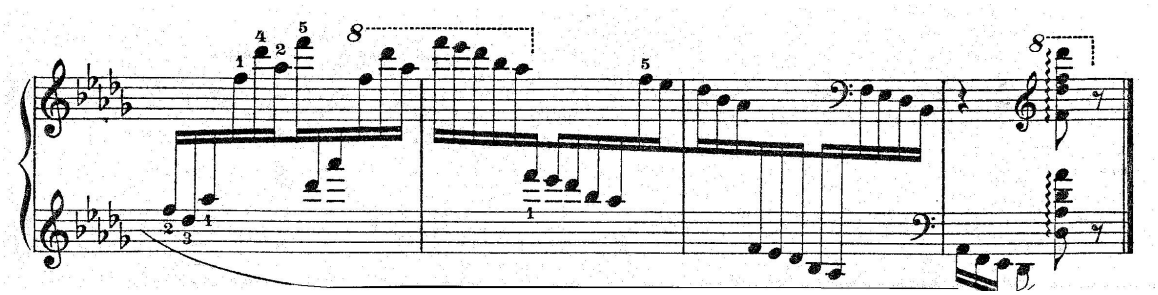


Ex. III-15: LISZT, *Die Forelle*, second version, mm. 11-13.

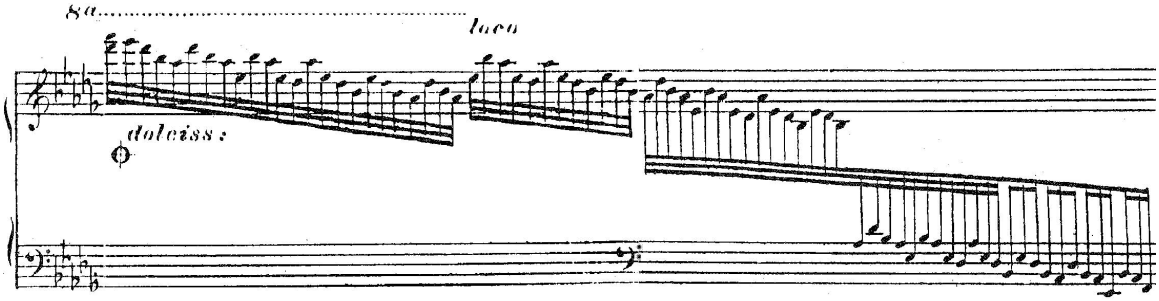


second. In the first version, the closing passage takes the shape of a harp-like cascade of notes (Ex. III-16), while in the second Liszt simply mimics the opening cadenza (Ex. III-17). The introduction of the transparent pentatonic pattern to the otherwise conventional soundscape produces a startling effect, one that, along with the importation of other nondiatonic scales, would come to play an important role in the later water works of Liszt and the Impressionists.[29]

Ex. III-16: LISZT, *Die Forelle*, first version, mm. 111-14.



Ex. III-17: LISZT, *Die Forelle*, second version, m. 114.



[29] Interestingly, Chopin's *Barcarolle* (1845-46), contemporaneous to both versions of *Die Forelle*, contains a striking pentatonic flourish in the coda.

. . .

Looking at the Schubert songs alongside the Liszt transcriptions, one senses the profound influence of the earlier composer upon Liszt. Liszt appears to have been particularly fascinated and inspired by Schubert's depiction of water and the devices he employed. From Liszt's elaboration upon these devices we can see the emergence of an effective vocabulary for expressing water, one found in both his own works and the solo piano literature for generations to come.

TRANSCRIPTIONS OF ROSSINI SONGS

Having examined Liszt's transcriptions of Schubert's Lieder, it is revealing to consider his treatment of the songs of another composer from the same period: Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868). In the early 1830s, after a hiatus from musical composition, Rossini composed a set of vocal chamber pieces with piano accompaniment that was subsequently published in 1835 as *Les Soirées musicales*. Capturing a wide range of moods, from the stormy drama of "Li marinari" to the pastoral tranquility of "La pastorella dell'Alpi," these songs are fine examples of Rossini's gift for lyrical melody; they demonstrate that, despite a dormant spell in his compositional career, Rossini had lost none of his inspiration or skill as a composer. In that same year, attracted no doubt by the subject matter,[30] Liszt paid tribute to the great Italian composer by composing two

[30]These "natural" subjects were evidently close to Liszt's heart. Having sojourned through Switzerland during this time, Liszt composed a number of works based on similar themes for his *Album d'un voyageur*

fantasies based on themes and motives from *Les Soirées musicales*, the first entitled "La serenata e L'orgia" (published as Op. 8 No. 1) and the second, "La pastorella dell'Alpi e Li marinari" (published as Op. 8 No. 2), both dating from 1835-36. Two years later, in an attempt to court both Ricordi and the Milanese audience, Liszt transcribed the entire set of songs for piano. Once again, the transcription process served the dual purpose of creating new repertoire for his recital programs while disseminating the music to a wider audience.

Of the twelve songs, four are of interest for this study: "La regata veneziana," "La gita in gondola," "Li marinari," and "La pesca" are all essentially boat songs. In his approach to transcribing these — and, for that matter, the entire set — Liszt remains quite faithful to Rossini's models.[31] In examining the Schubert transcriptions above, it was observed that Liszt generally adhered to the melodic, harmonic, and formal elements of the originals, while, simultaneously, adopting a freer approach to the evocative imagery of the accompaniments in some of those songs that involve watery subjects. Here, however, in the Rossini songs, Liszt's treatment is simpler and more straightforward. The most striking aspect of these songs, however, is their pure lyricism; the piano accompaniments, meanwhile, are for the most part unobtrusive foils for the beautiful melodies. One might ask, then, why Liszt would take a more conservative approach with Rossini's songs. Perhaps the answer lies in both musical and non-musical factors.

(1835-38), among them "Fleurs mélodiques des Alpes" and "Allegro pastorale." Many of these were later incorporated into the *Années de pèlerinage, Première année: "Suisse"* (1848-54), which also included such titles as "Orage" (Liszt's fantasia on "Li marinari" is, in fact, subtitled "Storm Duet") and "Pastorale." The inclusion of "Chapelle de Guillaume Tell" in both collections further strengthens the link between Rossini and Liszt.

[31] Given such faithful treatment, it is curious that *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd. ed., lists these transcriptions as paraphrases rather than *partitions de piano* (i.e. straight transcriptions). Only the two Fantasias from 1835 legitimately belong in the former category.

First, while Schubert was no longer alive when Liszt embarked upon his Schubert transcription project, Rossini was not only living but played an important role in Liszt's life, from the time they first met in 1822, when Liszt was eleven, until the Italian composer's death in 1868. The two shared a warm friendship, and, by all accounts, Liszt had tremendous admiration for the older composer. In fact, Rossini's name appears often in Liszt's correspondence. A letter from Milan dated 1838 (the year of publication of Liszt's *Soirées musicales* transcriptions) sheds light on the nature of their relationship. Liszt writes:

> Rossini is in Milan . . . and is still Rossini: i.e. a man of genius whom success and popularity have made almost a great man . . . . We see each other often, and very *gladly*. I really can't but be pleased with my relations with him thus far, and am convinced that that is how they will always be.[32]

Second, Schubert, although beloved in his hometown of Vienna (where he was second in popularity only to Rossini),[33] was still relatively unknown elsewhere. Up to this time his works had been heard by relatively few. Liszt's transcriptions were intended, in part, to bring Schubert's songs to a wider audience, where they would receive the attention he felt they deserved. Rossini, on the other hand, was a celebrated international composer who enjoyed widespread success. Liszt's motivation with regard to Rossini, therefore, can be viewed as more a matter of paying tribute to the Italian composer than of championing his works. Perhaps feeling more constrained by these factors, Liszt was less inclined to take liberties.

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[32] Liszt, *Selected Letters*, 81.

[33] Otto Biba, "Schubert's Position in Viennese Musical Life," *19th Century Music* 3/1 (1979): 106-13.

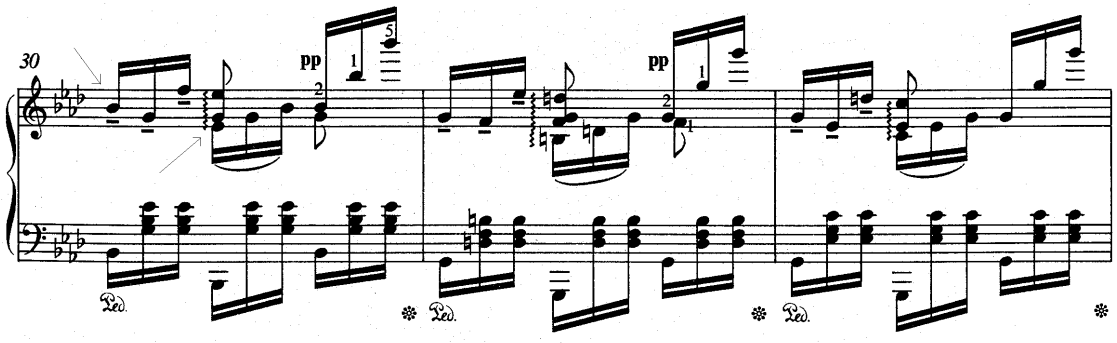
Musical considerations, however, may have played a role as well. In three of the four songs ("La gita in gondola" being the exception), Liszt masterfully weaves not one (as seen in the Schubert) but two vocal lines into the fabric of the piece while preserving Rossini's accompaniments. This skill is nowhere more apparent than in "La pesca," in which the duet's two melodies are more distinctly differentiated from one another (Exx. III-18 and III-19).[34] Here, too, Liszt preserves Rossini's simple accompaniment. Unlike the vivid material so deeply embedded in Schubert's Lied, Rossini's accompaniments appear as rudimentary platforms for his soaring melodies. The sparseness of Liszt's treatment (here as well as elsewhere) therefore preserves the clarity of his model.

[34] In his efforts to maintain the integrity of the Rossini songs, Liszt adopts identical metronome markings.

Ex. III-18: ROSSINI, *Soirées musicales*, "La pesca," mm. 29-32.



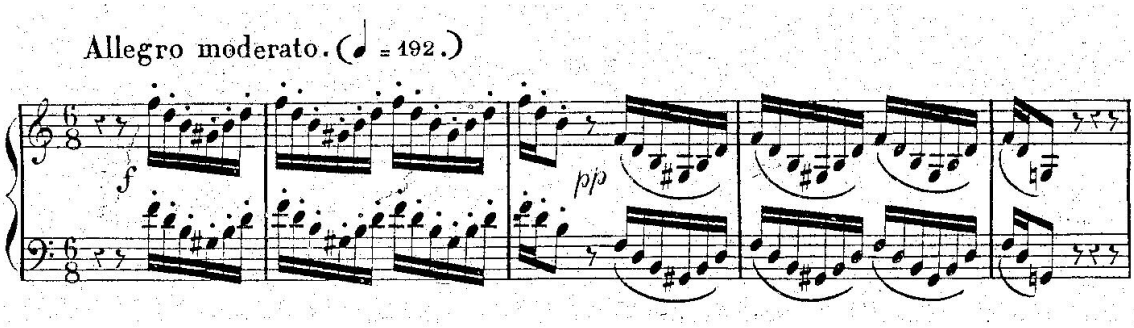
Ex. III-19: LISZT, *Soirées musicales*, "La pesca," mm. 30-32.



This strict adherence to the Rossini original is also evident in the piano introductions and interludes, in which Liszt is not bound by the vocal lines and could have taken greater liberties had he wished to do so. In the opening bars of the

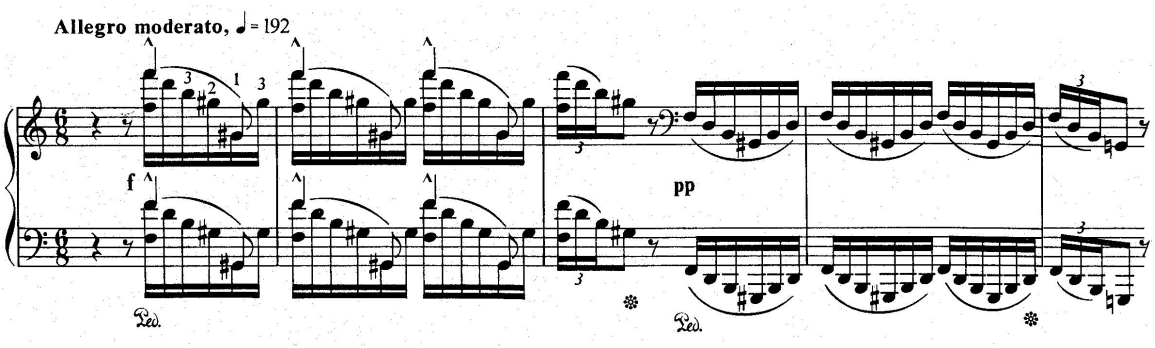
introduction to “La regata veneziana,” Rossini’s accompaniment presents a pair of wave-like figures, the most overt suggestion of water in the entire song (Ex. III-20). At this

Ex. III-20: ROSSINI, “La regata veneziana,” mm. 1-5.



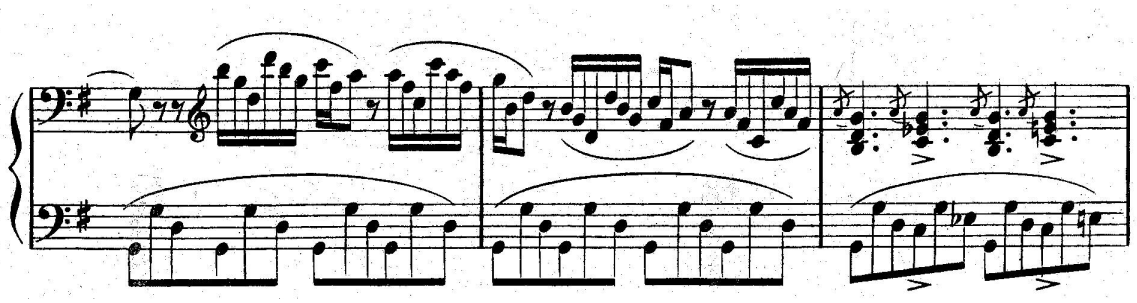
point Liszt had a perfect opportunity to elaborate but, instead, added only minor alterations, such as octave doublings and displacements and subtle rhythmic variations at the end of each figure (Ex. III-21).

Ex. III-21: LISZT, “La regata veneziana,” mm. 1-5.



Similarly, in the barcarolle "La gita in gondola," Rossini's piano writing is again most evocative in the introduction. A rolling arpeggiated figure, typical of boat songs, recurs in the interludes between the verses (Ex. III-22). The prominence of these

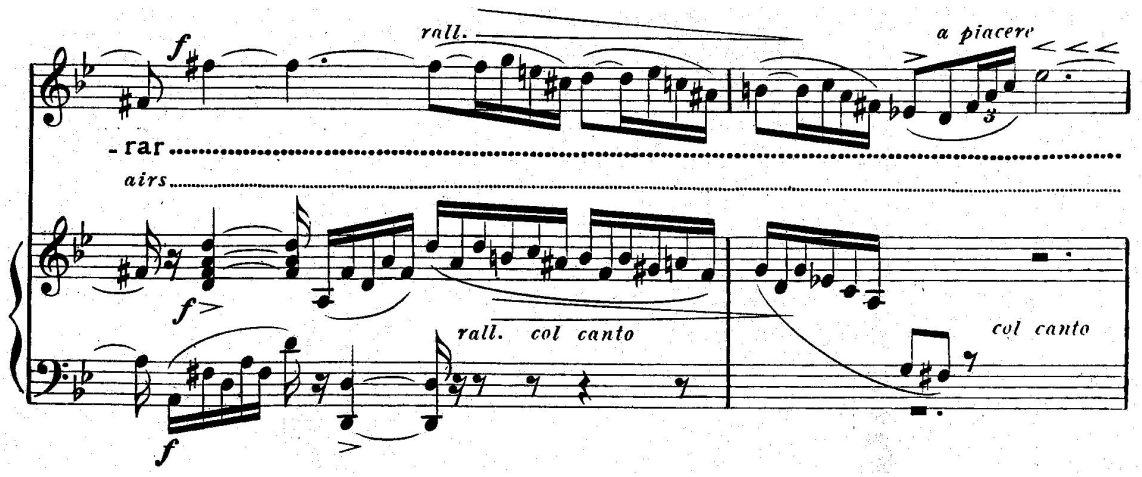
Ex. III-22: ROSSINI, "La gita in gondola," mm. 3-5.



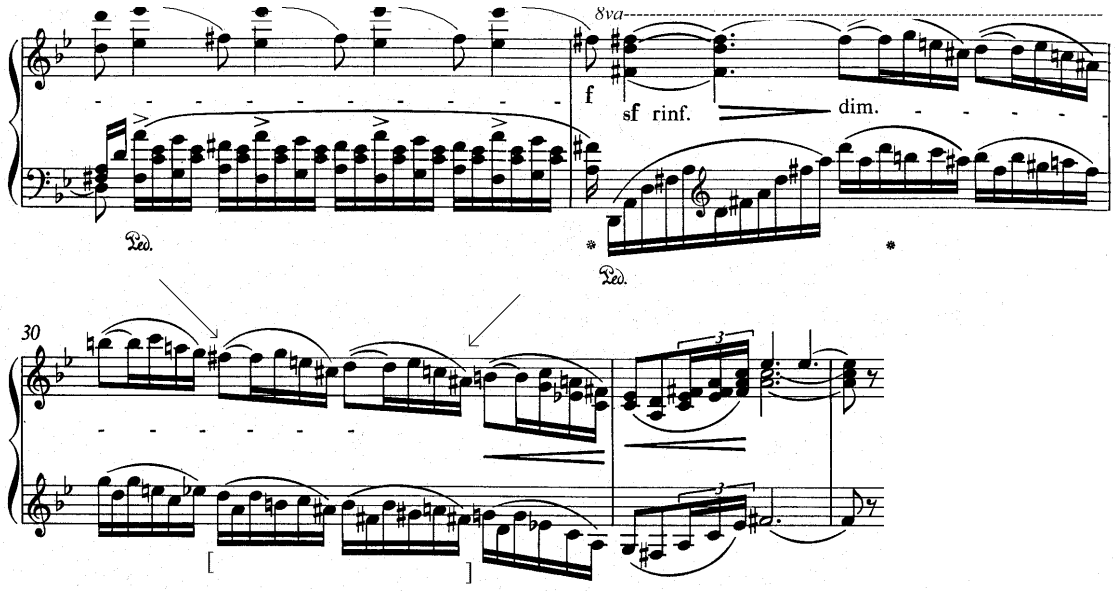
passages effectively distinguishes Rossini's approach from Schubert's: while the latter typically created a consistent accompaniment pattern that permeates the song, Rossini's piano parts are highly segmented as they constantly introduce new figurations. This circumstance presumably gave Liszt less motivation and room for expansion and elaboration when transcribing Rossini.

Liszt's version mirrors the original with only a few exceptions. The most notable of these minor divergences occurs in the middle of the song, where there is a short vocal cadenza. Here, Liszt expands upon Rossini's falling sixteenth-note figure (Exx. III-23 and III-24). At the very end, where Rossini closes with a simple rolled chord, Liszt adds a quiet arpeggio that stretches across six octaves (not shown).

Ex. III-23: ROSSINI, “La gita in gondola,” mm. 29-30.



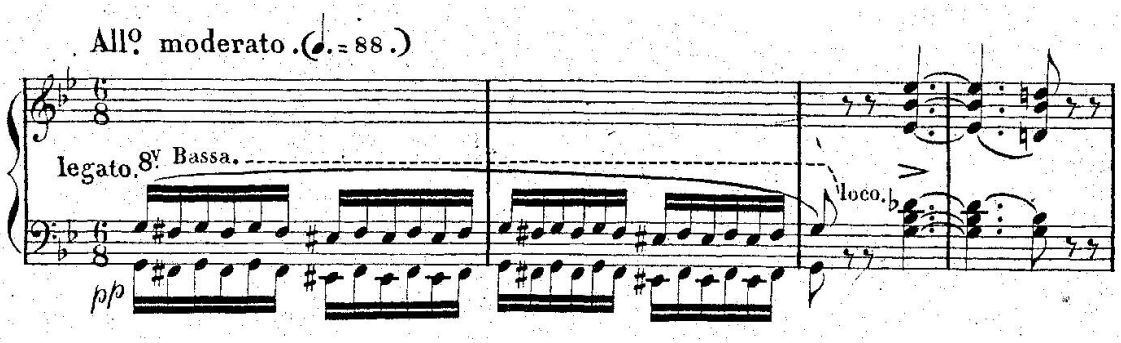
Ex. III-24: LISZT, “La gita in gondola,” mm. 28-31.



"Li marinari," a duet for tenor and bass, is the longest and most dramatic piece in the set. As previously mentioned, Liszt produced both a transcription and a paraphrase based on this song.[35] Of all the songs, this one contains the most colorful accompaniment and provides Liszt with the greatest opportunity for embellishment.

The piece describes a changing seascape and is composed of two distinct sections; the first, in G minor, depicts a storm at sea and is followed by a peaceful barcarolle in G major. Creating an atmosphere of foreboding and imminent turmoil, the storm section begins with a rumbling trill-like figure in the lower octaves of the keyboard (Ex. III-25).

Ex. III-25: ROSSINI: "Li marinari," mm. 1-4.



This gesture recurs at irregular intervals throughout the first section of the song, and acts as a unifying motif (Ex. III-26). In Liszt's transcription, however, the figure becomes ubiquitous as he often replaces the original accompaniment material with trill-like figures that echo those of Rossini's opening (Exx. III-27a and b). With the storm fast

[35] Based primarily on "Li marinari" and "La pastorella dell'Alpi," the paraphrase reworks material from other songs in the set as well, most notably "La regata veneziana."

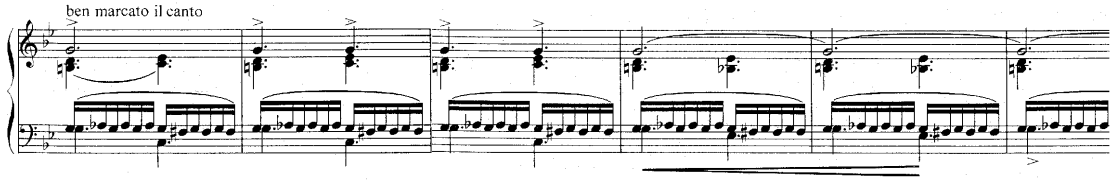
Ex. III-26: ROSSINI, “Li marinari,” first reiteration of “trill” motif, mm. 34-40.



Ex. III-27a: ROSSINI, “Li marinari,” mm. 14-25.

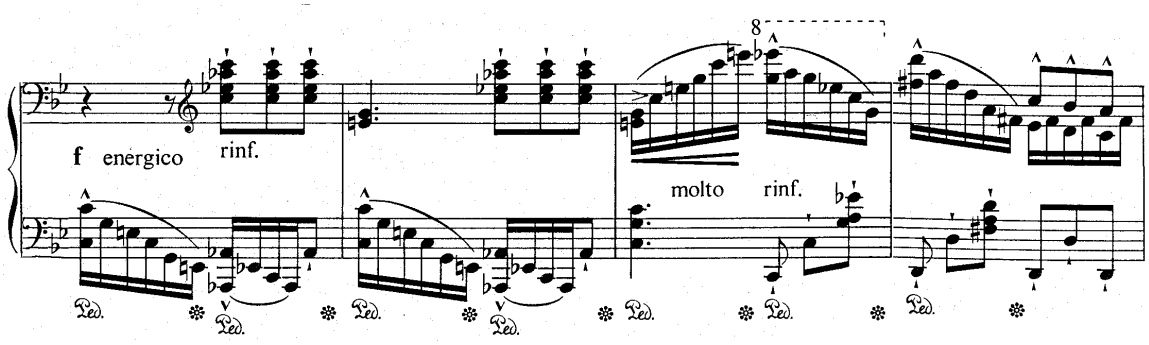


Ex. III-27b: LISZT, “Li marinari,” mm. 15-20.

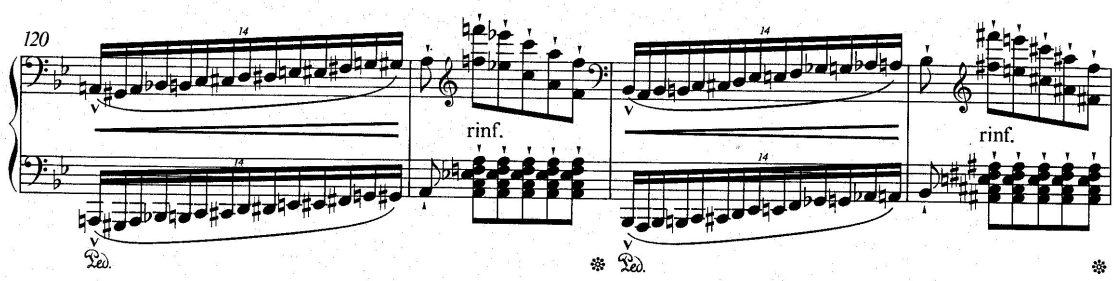


approaching — initially, the waves swelling (*mugge l'onda*) and, later, "the thunder rumbling, the wind whistling, the lightening already striking the water itself" (*Romba il tuono, il vento sibila, la saetta già striscio si fa aqua*) — Rossini's accompaniment, like the sea's surface, becomes increasingly agitated, and the trill-like gestures appear with growing frequency. Liszt, in turn, responds with even more heightened effects, introducing expanded arpeggios and sweeping chromatic runs of his own (Exx. III-28 and III-29).

Ex. III-28: LISZT, "Li marinari," mm. 108-11.

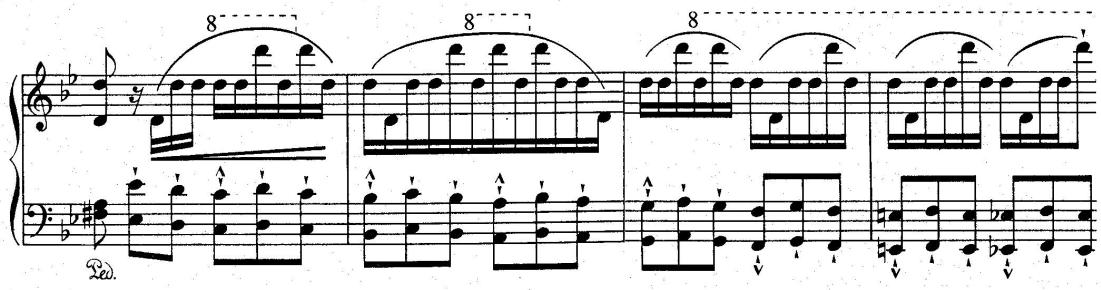


Ex. III-29: LISZT, "Li marinari," mm. 120-23.

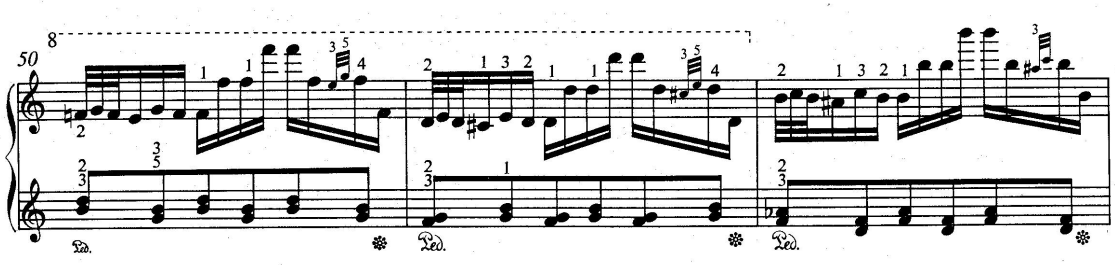


In mm. 131-34 Rossini's simple octave tremolo, signaling that the storm has subsided, reflects the abrupt shift in the text: "Now the sky is serene, the sun streams down from the heavens in its splendor" (*Ecco il ciel si fa sereno, spunta il Sol nel suo splendor*). Liszt expands on this gesture with a repeated-note figure spanning several octaves. The effect, which we will observe in later works, suggests the glistening, reflective play of light on the water's surface and is similar to a figure Liszt employs in his transcription of Schubert's *Der Gondelfahrer* (1838) (Exx. III-30 and III-31). The

Ex. III-30: LISZT, "Li marinari," mm. 131-34.

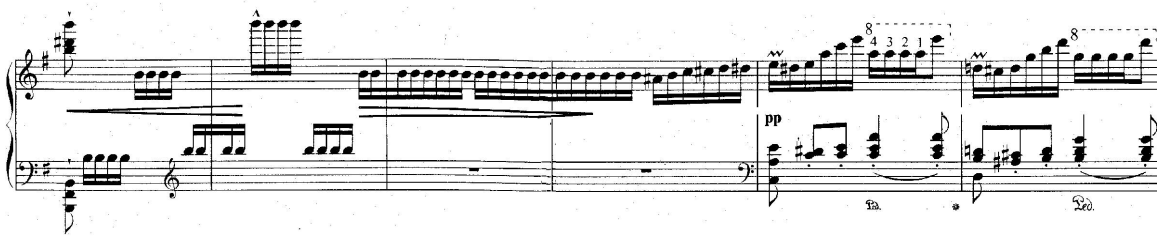


Ex. III-31: LISZT, *Der Gondelfahrer*, mm. 50-52.



barcarolle that follows is rather unremarkable in terms of the figuration, with the exception of the final page. Here again, in the brief cadenza and the material that follows, there is another example of a repeated-note figure that creates a sprightly kind of dripping effect (Ex. III-32).

Ex. III-32: LISZT, "Li marinari," mm. 218-23.



As previously noted, Liszt's "Li marinari" transcription was preceded by a paraphrase based on both "La pastorella dell'Alpi" and "Li marinari," as well as other themes from the complete set. As one might expect, given the nature of the genre, Liszt takes a virtuosic, kaleidoscopic approach in this paraphrase, with numerous sections that call for frequent changes of key, tempo, and meter.[36] The first ninety-six measures of the "Li marinari" portion of the work — which, itself, extends from m. 210 to m. 522 — bear a strong resemblance to the later transcription; they represent an abbreviated version of the storm section with only minor changes in the figurations. (One interesting difference between the paraphrase and the original song lies in the choice of key: Liszt has transposed the Storm Duet up a half step to G# minor.) Although Liszt's water imagery

[36] This includes a section based upon "La regata veneziana."

is on display in this piece, it in no way rivals what can be observed in the Schubert transcriptions.

. . .

Having compared Liszt's treatment of songs by Rossini and Schubert, it is apparent that Liszt's musical imagination was sparked by the inventiveness of the latter's accompaniments to a far greater degree, particularly where water imagery was present. One important difference is in the role of the piano. In the Schubert the piano accompaniment is integral to the song, whereas in the Rossini it is quite secondary. While Liszt was clearly fascinated by the idea of evoking watery imagery in general, it would seem that Schubert's music provided the initial impetus and pointed the way to the means by which to do so effectively. What follows is an examination of Liszt's accompaniments to a select group of his own songs and the way in which he transformed some of these into works for solo piano.

CHAPTER IV

LISZT SONGS AND TRANSCRIPTIONS OF HIS SONGS

During the course of his long career Liszt composed more than eighty different songs.[1] This substantial body of music, which undoubtedly contains some of his finest works, has unjustly suffered from neglect by performers and scholars alike. And, sadly, his significance as a song composer has often been overlooked, for Liszt provides the link between the songs of Schubert and Robert Schumann (1810-56) and those of Hugo Wolf (1860-1903) and Richard Strauss (1864-1949).[2]

The creation of these songs can generally be seen as falling into three periods. The early songs, written from the late 1830s until 1847, number roughly thirty. This period corresponds to Liszt's days as a travelling virtuoso. The inspiration for these early works can be traced to many different sources: his travels to Italy, "the land of song"; his alliance with the outstanding French tenor Adolphe Nourrit (1809-39); his intimate involvement with Schubert's Lieder; and his meetings with Schumann. While one finds the original versions of some of his most famous songs among these early works — such as *Am Rhein, Die Lorelei, Mignon's Lied, Oh quand je dors,* and *Tre sonetti di Petrarca* — it is apparent from the occasional problems with text settings (especially the German

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[1] The exact number varies among the sources. The worklist in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., ed. Stanley Sadie, 29 vols. (London: Macmillan, 2001), vol. 14, p. 852-59, gives eighty-two separate entries. In considering the total number, however, one must take into account that he revised forty-one of these and arranged eight for voice and orchestra. (In fact, some songs exist in up to five different versions.) Therefore, the total number, including revisions and arrangements, is well over a hundred.

[2] See Derek Watson, *Liszt* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1989), 305.

texts) and the often over-inflated, highly virtuosic piano accompaniments (which sometimes overpower the vocal line) that Liszt was still honing his skills in this genre.

During his tenure in Weimar, from the late 1840s to 1860, Liszt not only added to his growing collection, but reworked many of his earlier efforts, often simplifying and refining the accompaniments and showing greater sensitivity to the text. The impetus for these endeavors was the *Gesammelte Lieder* planned for publication in 1859. Writing to his publisher, an anxious Liszt reveals his strong feelings for his songs:

> It is of great consequence to me not to delay any longer the publication of my 'Gesammelte Lieder' . . . . The songs can hold their own ground in their present form (regardless of the criticism of our choking and quarrelling opponents which will infallibly follow!); and if a few singers could be found, not of the raw and superficial kind, who would boldly venture to sing songs by the notorious non-composer, Franz Liszt, they would probably find a public for them.[3]

And later, he adds in an interesting footnote:

> A couple of them made a *furore* in certain salons which are very much set against me, as posthumous songs of Schubert — and they were encored! Of course I have begged the singer to carry the joke further.[4]

In 1871, after a hiatus of more than ten years, Liszt returned to the genre and wrote his remaining fourteen songs. The songs from this final period are marked by the "experimental," often austere, approach that is indicative of his late works.

On the whole the songs display great diversity. Liszt set texts in six different languages (German, French, Italian, Hungarian, English, and Russian), and his choice of

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[3] Cited in Ben Arnold, "Songs and Melodramas," in *The Liszt Companion*, ed. Ben Arnold (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2002), 404.

[4] Ibid.

poets includes Goethe, Heine, Hugo, Petrarch, Rellstab, Rückert, and Tennyson, among others. A wide range of themes can be found among the texts, from love (by far the most common), to death, heroism, God, and Nature. Among the eighty-two songs, water plays a role in seven, and of these four exist in numerous versions. In addition to the different versions, he arranged several for piano solo:[5]

[5] Dates according to *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd. ed.

TABLE IV-1: LISZT'S SONGS AND TRANSCRIPTIONS OF HIS SONGS

Am Rhein	1st version, 1840 Arranged for solo piano, 1843-44 2nd version, 1855
Die Lorelei	1st version, 1841 Arranged for solo piano, 1843-44 2nd version, 1856 Arranged for solo piano, 1861
Die Zelle in Nonnenwerth	1st version, 1841 2nd version, 1844 Arranged for solo piano as *Elegie,* 1845 3rd version, 1858 4th version, 1860
From *Three Songs from Schiller's "Wilhelm Tell"*	(1) "Der Fischerknabe" 1st version, 1845-50 2nd version, 1859
Die stille Wasserrose	1860
Die Fischerstochter	1879
O Meer in Abendstrahl	Duet (SA), 1881-83?

Although the subject of water runs throughout each of these seven songs, its musical presence varies from work to work. In the various versions of *Am Rhein, Die Lorelei,* and "Der Fischerknabe," for instance, the expression of water — in the piano accompaniment — is the dominant feature, while it plays a more limited role in the remaining four songs.

Certain generalizations may be made about these water songs. Although the bodies of water referred to in the texts vary, nearly all of the songs and transcriptions are set in a flowing triple or compound (duple and triple) meter. In most cases, a moderate tempo, usually *Allegretto*, is employed to help capture the fluid nature of water. The choice of mode is predominantly major, though it is difficult to speak of a favorite key. Given Liszt's predilection for harmonic adventure, it is no surprise that he uses an abundance of colorful chords and modulates quite frequently. Not unlike what happens in Schubert, however, there is often a slow harmonic rhythm, suggestive of water's continuous flow. One also observes certain recurrent chords and scales that become even more preponderant in the solo piano works. But perhaps the most obvious devices are the recurring figurations that describe or evoke specific fluid qualities. What becomes evident is that Liszt, following in Schubert's footsteps, transcends mere word-painting[6] and continues to develop a special musical language to express water and its attributes.

Three of the early songs —*Am Rhein, Die Lorelei,* and *Die Zelle in Nonnenwerth* —are united by a central feature: the Rhine River. That Liszt chose these particular poems was no coincidence, for they relate directly to the time he spent in the region. The songs are therefore strongly rooted in Liszt's personal experience. Each of these songs was later revised several times, and all three were transformed into piano solos. The earliest of the three, *Am Rhein* (also known as *Im Rhein, im schönen Strome*) (first version, 1840), is based upon Heine's revision of his earlier *Im Rhein, im heiligen Strome*, the source of Schumann's well-known song in *Dichterliebe,*[7] in which, however,

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[6] In weaker moments, Liszt sometimes resorts to word-painting, as in *Es war ein König in Thule*, when the goblet, sinking into the sea, is depicted by a falling chromatic line.

[7] John Douglas, "Franz Liszt as Song Composer," *NATS* 43/4 (1986-87): 4.

Schumann makes no attempt to evoke the image of the river. The text of the later version, used by Liszt, follows:

Am Rhein, im schönen Strome,
Da spiegelt sich in den Wellen,
Mit seinem grossen Dome,
Das grosse, heil'ge Köln.

Im Dom, da steht ein Bildnis
Auf gold'nem Leder gemalt;
In meines Lebens Wildnis
Hat's freundlich hineingestrahlt.

Es schweben Blumen und Englein
Um unsre liebe Frau;
Die Augen, die Lippen, die Wänglein,
Die gleichen der Liebsten genau.[8]

Liszt must have identified strongly with this poem, for it holds a wealth of symbolic meaning that speaks directly to some of what he held most dear — his devout faith and his adoration for Marie d'Agoult. The poem begins with the image of Cologne Cathedral reflected on the surface of the river, and the river thus becomes a metaphor for the text's religious meaning. Liszt, taking his cue from the opening riparian words, expands upon this metaphor. From the outset of his first version, a rolling triplet figure dominates the piano accompaniment. This gesture effectively conveys the continuous flow of the river and serves to unify the work, both musically and dramatically (Ex. IV-1). The figure is enhanced by the use of rolled chords in the opening passage — as well

[8] In the Rhine, that noble river, is mirrored clear and plain, a great cathedral tower, Cologne's majestic fane. Within that mighty temple treasures a picture so bright, that o'er my life's sad journey 'tis shedding a ray of light. The angels hover with flowers around the Lady there, whose eyes gently smiling and lips so sweet resemble my darling so fair. From Liszt, *Thirty Songs*, ed. Carl Armbruster (1911, reprint, New York: Dover, 1975), 61-65, poetic translation by Arthur Westbrook.

Ex. IV-1: LISZT, *Am Rhein*, 1st version, mm. 5-8.



as in selected measures throughout — to create a more fluid environment. Most striking and significant to this study, however, is the piano cadenza (Ex. IV-2). Liszt creates a

Ex. IV-2: LISZT, *Am Rhein*, 1st version, mm. 73-79.



wash of sound based around an F# half-diminished-seventh harmony (F#-A-C-E) (mm. 74-77). Given that the song is predominantly in E major, this chord — the supertonic borrowed from the minor— is all the more intriguing. Perhaps because of the ambiguity of the chord's true root (the harmony can be variously interpreted as an incomplete D dominant ninth, F# half-diminished seventh, or A minor with added major sixth), its

isolated presentation without any clear function or resolution, and the major-second — E′-F#′ — in the bass, the resultant sound lacks tonal clarity. The harmony thus has a static character that produces a floating effect. Additionally, there is a transparent quality to this collection of pitches that apparently appealed to Liszt, for, as we shall observe in some of his later works, it will become a hallmark of his water-imagery vocabulary.

Prior to this passage, this harmony makes a fleeting appearance at the beginning of the third stanza. At what is the dramatic climax of the poem, this floating, ethereal chord (here an A minor with added major sixth functioning as supertonic in G) also suggests the hovering angels around the Madonna (mm. 43 and 47) (Ex. IV-3). This

Ex. IV-3: LISZT, *Am Rhein*, 1st version, mm. 43-47.

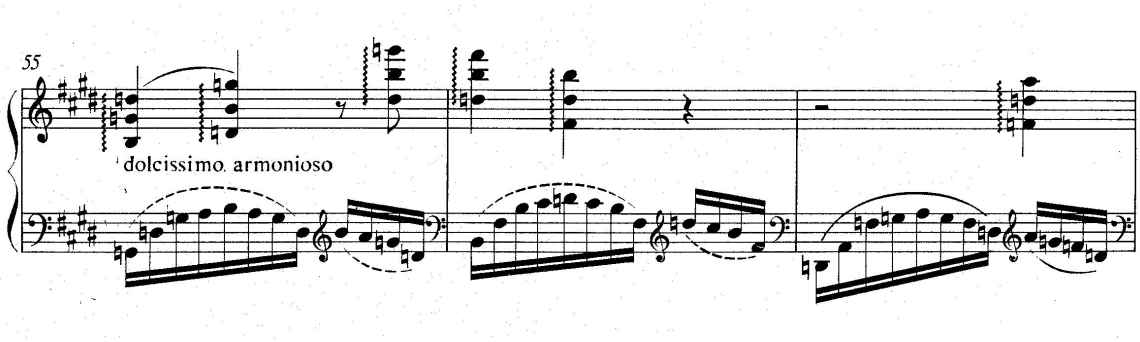


version was published with a more demanding *ossia* accompaniment that produces a far different effect. Instead of the rather peaceful, constantly flowing gesture, an intricate

figure — calling for alternating register shifts that utilize the upper octaves — creates a sparkling, rushing effect that unites the "beating" of angels' wings and the "swirling" of waters (see Ex. IV-III). Once again, this figure dominates the accompaniment. In the cadenza, as already noted, Liszt preserves and elaborates upon the cascading stream of notes and broad arpeggiated accompaniment (see Ex. IV-2).

A piano transcription of this first version followed several years later. As in his other song transcriptions, Liszt skillfully weaves the melody into the accompaniment. He apparently found the *Ossia* figure more attractive (or at least more pianistic), as it becomes the dominating feature in the solo version. For the most part, Liszt follows his original model rather closely. The two passages cited above, for example, are preserved intact. At mm. 55, however, he introduces a new accompaniment pattern, an arching arpeggio with an upper-register echo that underpins the melody, heard above in expansive rolled chords (Ex. IV-4). This is followed by ascending arpeggios that climax with a brief passage of cascading broken chords (Ex. IV-5).

Ex. IV-4: LISZT, *Am Rhein*, piano transcription, mm. 55-57.



Ex. IV-5: LISZT, *Am Rhein*, piano transcription, mm. 61-67.



In 1855 Liszt prepared a revised vocal version of *Am Rhein*. As is often the case with the revisions, he offers a simpler, more refined song.[9] In this version Liszt takes an

[9] While some consider the revised songs "improvements," others offer a different view. Eleni Panagiotopoulou, "An Evaluation of the Songs of Franz Liszt and Commentary on their Performance," *Liszt Society Journal* 25 (2000): 20, writes: "It would be a mistake to consider the latest version of a song as the ultimate polished one. Instead it should be considered the result of searching for different possibilities, solely for their own sake. The new version may not necessarily be as effective as the previous one, but it is at least different and for that reason has its own value." She concludes with this advice: "Each version should be considered an entity itself, with its own value and the performer can choose one or the other depending on taste, etc." And Philip Friedheim contends that "Liszt as much as, if not more than, any other composer of his stature continually revised, altered, and otherwise varied the published versions of his compositions throughout his lifetime . . . . [A] case can be made to support the contention that there is no final form for these compositions and that they exist as a series of possibilities always in the process of change, even as Liszt himself altered his compositions whenever he played them in public." Friedheim's remarks are taken from a review of early volumes of the *Neue Liszt Ausgabe*, cited in Rena Charnin Mueller, "Liszt's 'Tasso' Sketchbook: Studies in Sources and Revisions" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1986), 18.

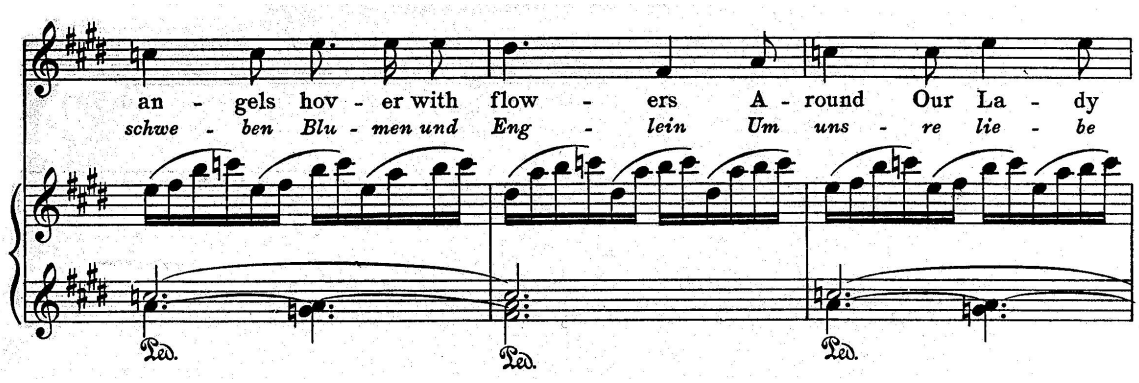
approach reminiscent of Schubert, replacing the original accompaniment with a gentle broken triad that effectively conveys the flow of the river. This pattern dominates the first two stanzas of the song (Ex. IV-6). In the third stanza the piano part ascends to

Ex. IV-6: LISZT, *Am Rhein*, 2nd version, mm. 1-2.



the upper register, as the text relates to the heavens. Liszt briefly adopts a new figuration that is placed above the ambiguous floating harmony discussed earlier (Ex. IV-7).

Ex. IV-7: LISZT, *Am Rhein*, 2nd version, mm. 37-39.



The inspiration for *Die Lorelei* and *Die Zelle in Nonnenwerth* can be traced directly to Liszt's travels through the Rhineland. In 1841 he discovered the remote island of Nonnenwerth on the Rhine. One of the few dwellings on the island was a deserted convent that had been converted into a hotel, which Liszt rented, and he and Marie d'Agoult spent their three summers there. During their stay, Felix Lichnowsky, nephew of Beethoven's patron, Carl von Lichnowsky, became one of their frequent guests. These visits inspired Lichnowsky to write the poem "Die Zelle in Nonnenwerth" that Liszt set to music in 1841. In this same region one finds the Lorelei, a famous rock that rises up steeply from the bank of the Rhine. This spot is also known for its miraculous echo and the treacherous waters that inspired the famous legend of Lorelei, the beautiful siren who lured sailors to their drowning deaths with her seductive song, upon which the poet Heinrich Heine based his popular *Die Lorelei* (1824).

Apparently, Liszt, too, was drawn to the tale of the siren and recorded his visit to the site bearing her name in a letter dated August 1841:

> Yesterday I passed the foot of the Lorelei's rock. She has disappeared, that wonderful fairy creature who combed her golden hair in the sunshine and sang such a powerful, enticing song that the fascinated river pilot, raising his eyes to her, forgot his tiller and was wrecked on the reefs.[10]

It was shortly after this visit that Liszt composed his first setting of the Heine poem.

With elements of recitative, aria, and dramatic action woven together within a barcarolle, Liszt's *Die Lorelei* is quasi-operatic in conception. The unfolding story is marked by several metric and tonal modulations. Unlike the original, the 1856 version

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[10] Franz Liszt, *An Artist's Journey, Lettres d'un bachelier ès musique, 1835-1841*, trans. and annotated Charles Suttoni (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 198.

includes a piano introduction,[11] a prophetic opening that sounds "Tristanesque" in its tonally ambiguity (Ex. IV-8). This leads directly into the narrator's recitative that sets up the story.

Ex. IV-8: LISZT, *Die Lorelei*, 2nd version, mm. 1-5.



The main body of the work is a barcarolle marked "*Molto tranquillo*." Liszt links the prologue to this section with a brief transitional passage, moving from E minor to major, that features a gently falling F# half-diminished-seventh chord (the supertonic) and leads into a graceful barcarolle figure (Ex. IV-9). The placid barcarolle is followed

[11] Arnold, 424.

Ex. IV-9: LISZT, *Die Lorelei*, 2nd version, mm. 26-33.



by a contrasting dramatic section, marked "*Allegro agitato molto*," where the boatman, distracted by Lorelei, succumbs to the dangerous waters and drowns. The agitated waters are reflected in the choppy figuration. This is combined with a repeated-note ostinato that rises chromatically as the boatman unwittingly approaches the hidden reef (Ex. IV-10). The treatment is similar in both versions of the song as well as the piano transcriptions. Particularly striking is the way in which Liszt manages to embed the melody within the texture of this dense accompaniment in the 1861 transcription (Ex. IV-11).

Ex. IV-10: LISZT, *Die Lorelei*, 2nd version, mm. 79-84.

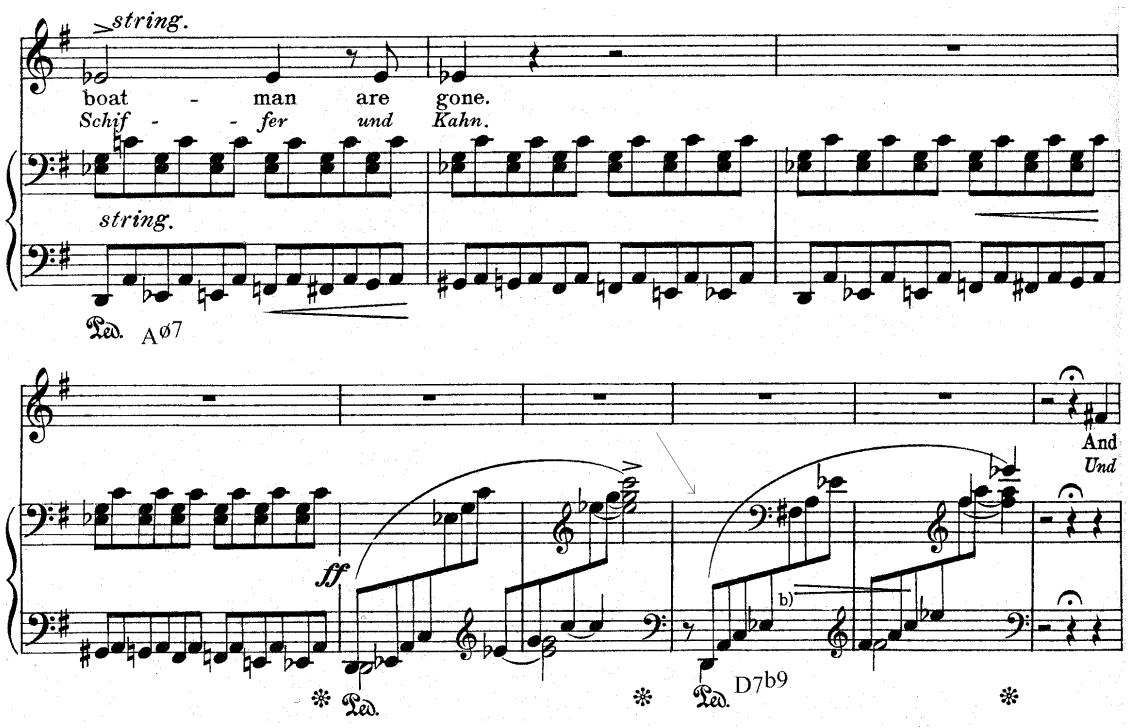


Ex. IV-11: LISZT, *Die Lorelei*, 2nd version, piano transcription, mm. 80-83.



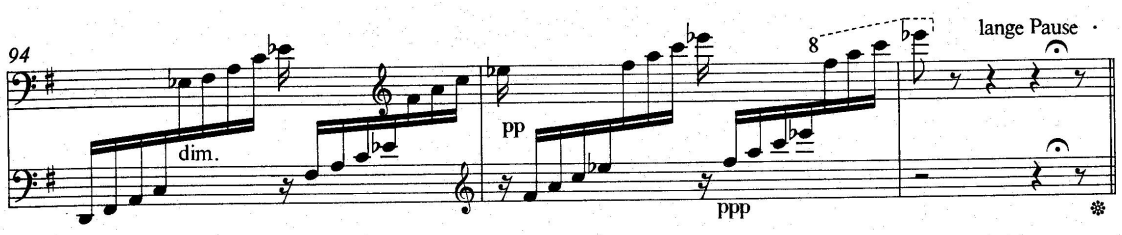
The passage that follows depicts the sinking boat. At this point Liszt conjures up a dramatic, swirling, chromatic line, set in the lower register, replete with tremolo figures above. Just as the boat is engulfed, this line culminates in a cadenza on an A half-diminished-seventh chord over continued chromatic rumblings (mm. 91-94) that leads to a climax on a D dominant-seventh harmony with flatted ninth (iiØ7-V7b9) (Ex. IV-12).

Ex. IV-12: LISZT, *Die Lorelei*, 2nd version, mm. 91-99.



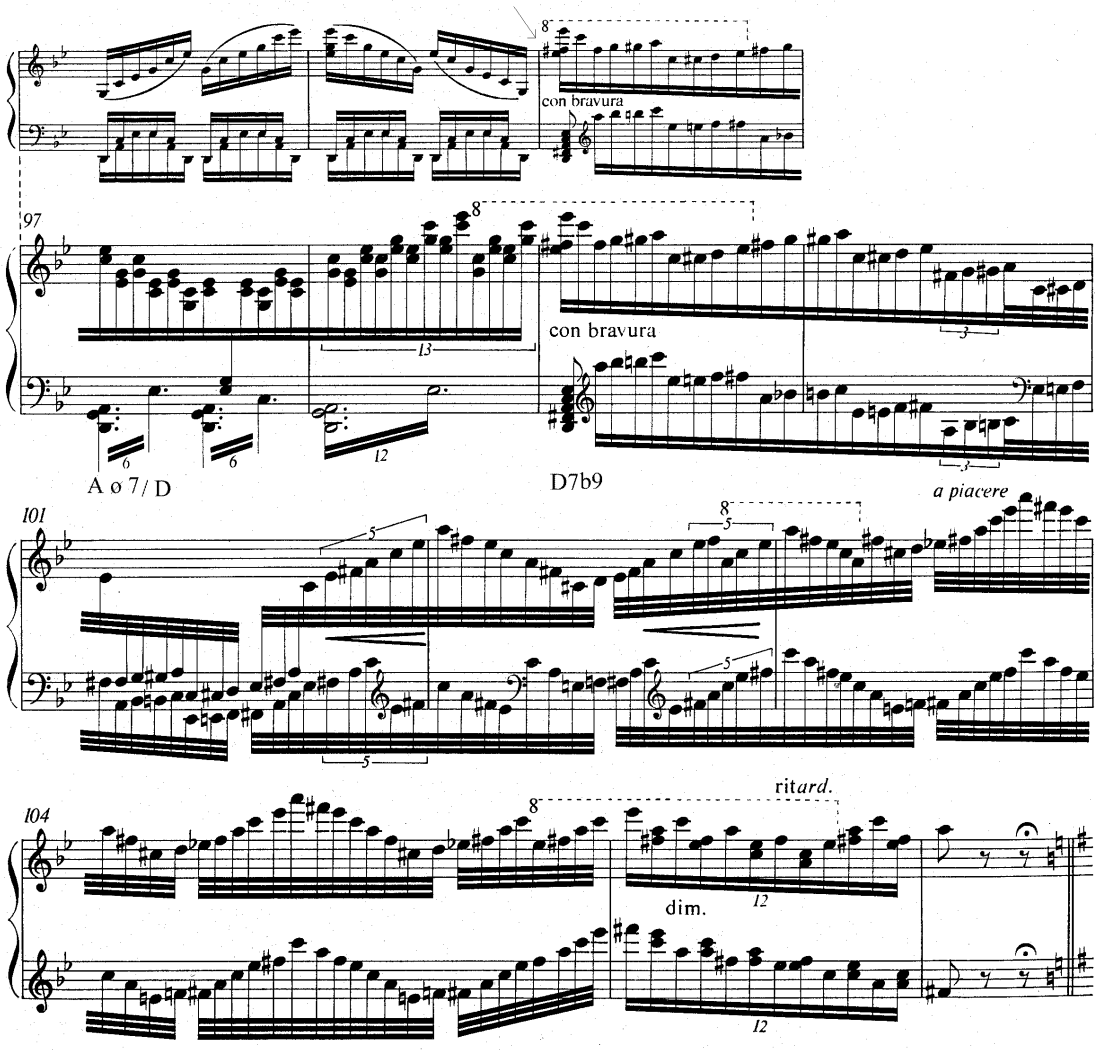
This rippling effect is particularly stunning in the 1861 piano transcription, in which the sweeping arpeggios rise progressively over several octaves (Ex. IV-13). Once again,

Ex. IV-13: LISZT, *Die Lorelei*, 2nd version, piano transcription, mm. 94-96.



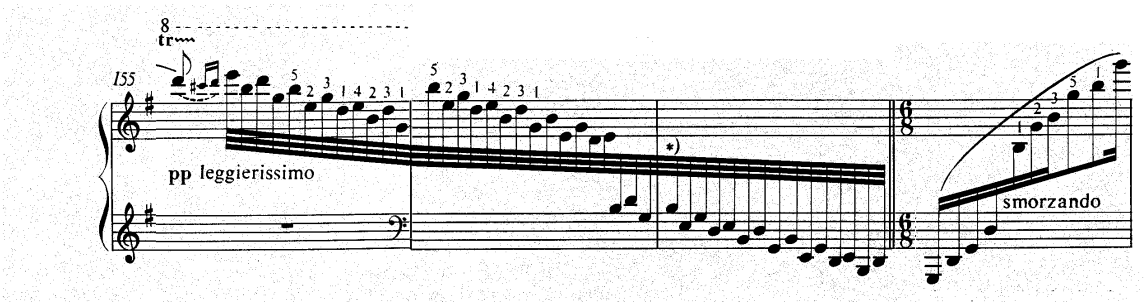
typical of the virtuosic writing one finds in the early works, the first piano transcription (1843-44) makes much greater demands of the pianist. This is most evident in the corresponding cadenza. Though it is based upon essentially the same harmonic progression (from A half-diminished seventh over D to D dominant seventh with flatted ninth) (mm. 97-99), the passage's ripples are, instead, waves (Ex. IV-14). Having

Ex. IV-14: LISZT, *Die Lorelei*, 1st version, piano transcription, mm. 97-106.

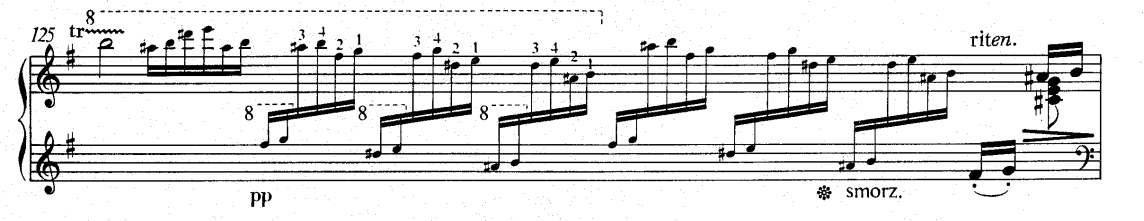


returned to the calm of the river's inexorable flow, however, both piano transcriptions close with delicate evocative flourishes: a falling broken chord, a G major triad with added sixth suggestive of a placid pentatonic sound, concludes the earlier version while the later work features a brief cadenza on a C# half-diminished seventh (#ivØ7) (Exx. IV-15a and b).

Ex. IV-15a: LISZT, *Die Lorelei*, 1st version, piano transcription, mm. 155-58.



Ex. IV-15b: LISZT, *Die Lorelei*, 2nd version, piano transcription, m. 125.



Written in the same year, *Die Zelle in Nonnenwerth*[12] shares a few (albeit superficial) elements with the original version of *Die Lorelei*. This song, too, recalls a German legend: the tale of Roland of Roncevaux, who died of love on the island. As in *Die Lorelei,* a recitative introduces the song. In contrast to the former, however, the mood of this opening is dark and desolate, composed of shifting minor chords. A good part of the material that follows is dominated by an unremarkable arpeggiated figure (Ex. IV-16). In the piano transcription Liszt elaborates on this accompaniment. In both

[12] Several subsequent versions were written, but only a piano transcription, entitled *Elegie*, was published.

versions, however, the evocation of water is not particularly striking as the icy stillness of the text prevails.

Ex. IV-16: LISZT, *Die Zelle in Nonnenwerth,* 1st version, mm. 15-17.



The expression of water plays only a limited role in *Die Stille Wasserrose, Die Fischerstochter*, and *O Meer im Abendstrahl*. Liszt neither reworked nor prepared piano transcriptions of these more mature works. Perhaps the most interesting piece of water imagery in *Die Stille Wasserrose* is the gently lapping chordal accompaniment that conveys the image of the pond in the poem (Ex. IV-17). In *O Meer in Abendstrahl* the austere accompaniment (for piano or harmonium) is reminiscent of Schubert's *Meeresstille*.

Ex. IV-17: LISZT, *Die Stille Wasserrose,* mm. 1-3.



The works of most interest, however, are the two versions of "Der Fischerknabe" (1845-50 and 1859), the first song in a cycle of three settings of Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* poems. Though Liszt did not arrange this work for piano solo, the piano part plays an extremely prominent role in both and calls for a pianist with a formidable technique. Alan Walker, commenting on the demanding role for the player, writes, "An even more difficult task awaits the 'accompanist' in 'Der Fischerknabe' (Schiller), which may well be described as a piano concerto with vocal obbligato."[13]

The text follows:

[13] Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: Volume Two, The Weimar Years*, *1848-1861* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 506.

Es lächelt der See, er ladet zum Bade,
der Knabe schlief ein am grünen Gestade.
Da hört er ein Klingen wie Flöten so süss,
wie Stimmen der Engel im Paradies.
Und wie er erwachet in seliger Lust,
da spülen die Wässer ihm um die Brust.
Und es ruft aus der Tiefe: "Lieb' Knabe, bist mein,
Ich locke den Schläfer, ich zieh' ihn herein.[14]

Liszt vividly creates a natural soundscape for this watery abduction. The earlier version, the more virtuosic of the two, begins with an extended piano introduction that features the main accompaniment motif: a broad rolling arpeggio. Although this figure resembles the unremarkable one seen in *Nonnenwerth*, there are some distinct differences: the lower register, static harmony, major key, and lack of dissonance. The effect is one of great calm, evocative of a serene lake. This pattern continues until the end of the third stanza, when, abruptly awakened from his peaceful dreams, the boy finds the water engulfing him.

At this point, Liszt turns the accompaniment into a descriptive cadenza. As the water rises, both hands reach to the upper register, outlining a D# half-diminished-seventh harmony (mm. 67 and 69), the supertonic in C# minor, before making a chromatic descent (Ex. IV-18). Several turbulent measures later, the boy is lured below,

[14] How smiles the fair lake where sunlight is gleaming; the boy on the shore is sleeping and dreaming. He hears then a melody, telling of love, as sweet as the voices of angels above. But when he awaketh from visions so blest, the waters are playing over his breast. And a voice from the deep calls, "Sweet boy, thou must go! For mine is the sleeper; I lure him below!" From Liszt, *Thirty Songs*, 1-5, poetic translation by Charles Fonteyn Manney.

Ex. IV-18: LISZT, "Der Fischerknabe," 1st version, mm. 65-73.



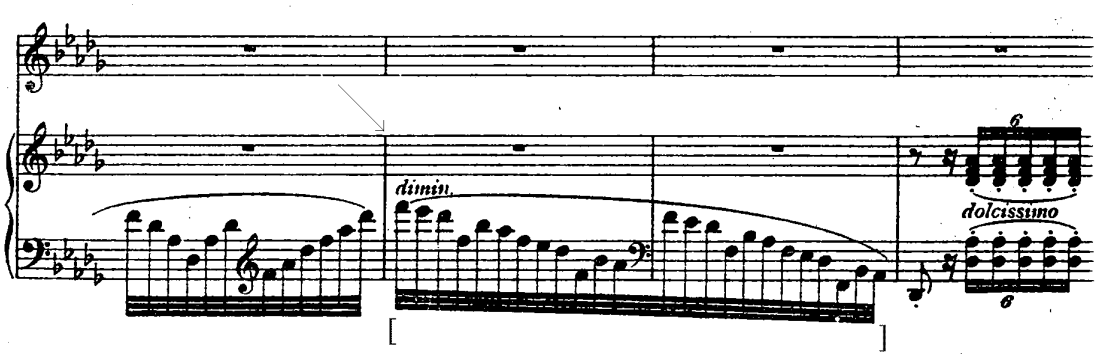
and Liszt turns the chromatic restlessness toward a peaceful resolution. The renewed calm of the lake's surface is captured in a steady tremolo pattern, played in both hands (Ex. IV-19). When the opening arpeggio figure returns for the final line of verse, it is

Ex. IV-19: LISZT, "Der Fischerknabe," 1st version, mm. 80-82.



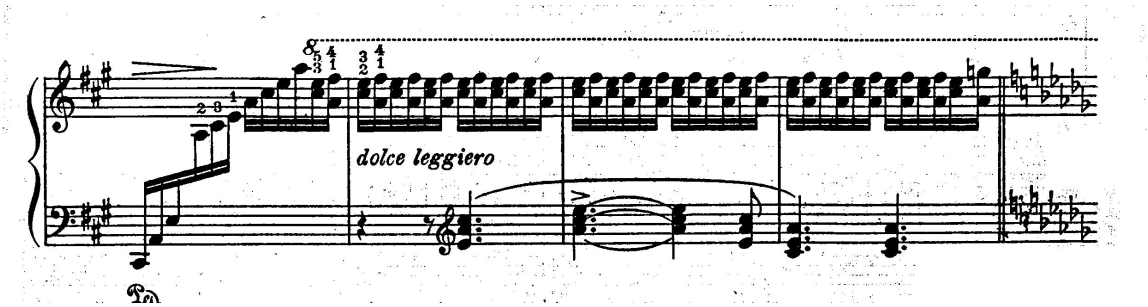
slightly altered, containing a repeated note that is, once again, evocative of the surface of the water, before reverting to its original undisturbed shape. Finally, the piano epilogue contains a striking pentatonic passage: a clear, descending stream of notes (Ex. IV-20).

Ex. IV-20: LISZT, "Der Fischerknabe," 1st version, mm. 115-18.



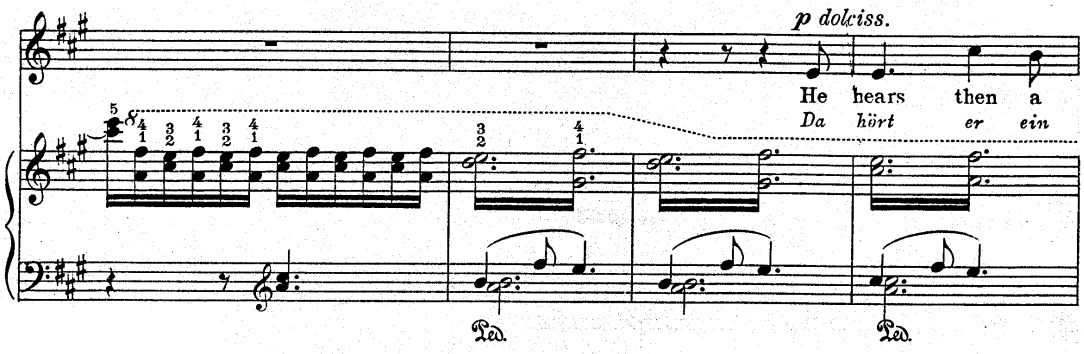
Liszt's second version of the song is set more simply. The piano introduction is abbreviated, and the accompaniment figure crests on a repeated note. The passage subsides into a shimmering tremolo in the upper register, possibly suggesting the image of "the water's play" on the boy's chest (Ex. IV-21). The extensive use of high tremolos

Ex. IV-21: LISZT, "Der Fischerknabe," 2nd version, mm. 11-14.



is probably the most striking feature of this version, and certain passages clearly foreshadow the later "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este" (1877) (Ex. IV-22). In the

Ex. IV-22: LISZT, "Der Fischerknabe," 2nd version, mm. 33-36.



concluding recitative-like passage, Liszt describes the boy's fate with discrete sets of rolled chords, spanning several octaves, that intimate both the depth and rippling surface of the water (Ex. IV-23).

Ex. IV-23: LISZT, "Der Fischerknabe," 2nd version, mm. 70-74.



. . .

In looking at these songs and transcriptions certain common elements emerge that form the beginnings of a musical vocabulary to describe water. In order to create the floating sensation of water Liszt drew upon the tonal ambiguity of certain harmonies and scales. Thus, the recurrent use at crucial junctures of dominant-ninth, dominant-seventh-flat-ninth, and, particularly, half-diminished-seventh chords, as well as pentatonic and chromatic scales, becomes evident in examining these works. High and low registers are exploited to express the surface and depth of water. Finally, Liszt's inventive application of certain figurations, inspired by Schubert, serve as sonically explicit depictions of water imagery: arpeggios and other wave-like figures, rolled chords, repeated notes, tremolos,

and broad ascending and descending streams of notes. In the forthcoming examination of the solo works, one may observe these practices reach fruition.

CHAPTER V

LISZT'S SOLO PIANO WORKS INSPIRED BY WATER

ANNÉES DE PÈLERINAGE, PREMIÈRE ANNÉE: "SUISSE"

In June 1835 Liszt and the Comtesse Marie d'Agoult set out on a tour of Switzerland. The journey, which lasted for more than a year, started in Basel and took them through the countryside along the Rhine.[1] In the course of their travels they visited numerous lakes, including Constance, Wallenstadt, Lucerne, and Léman (Geneva), the last of which laps upon the shores of Geneva, the final stop of their Swiss tour before traveling on to Italy. Lizst's attraction and, more importantly, his reaction to lakes are expressed vividly in his writings, two samples of which are particularly interesting and germane to this study. While staying at Lake Como in 1837 he wrote to his poet friend Louis de Ronchaud (1816-87):

> At the place where I am staying I can hear the melancholy sigh of the waves breaking over the pebbles and see the last rays of the setting sun gild the mountain tops. If you only knew what magic colors it casts on the waves as it leaves them! Sometimes they are a transparent rose, much like a pale ruby, sometimes an intense reddish hue like the desert sands, and at other times a mixture of purple, violet, and orange, which produces a fantastic color that is impossible to describe.[2]

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[1] See János Kárpáti, "Liszt the Traveler," *New Hungarian Quarterly* 27 (1986): 109-18; for a detailed itinerary that includes a map and reproduction of entries from Liszt's diary, see Maria P. Eckhardt, "Diary of a Wayfarer," *JALS* 11 (June 1982): 10-18, and 12 (December 1982): 182-83.

[2] Franz Liszt, *An Artist's Journey, Lettres d'un bachelier ès musique, 1835-1841*, trans. and annotated Charles Suttoni (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 66.

Many years later, in a letter to the Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein (1817-87),[3] dated July 4, 1853, Liszt wrote:

> I have always been fond of lakes, and can easily become intimate with their waves and their physiognomy. They are more in harmony with the tone of reverie which is habitual to me, than the great rivers or the ocean . . . . [4]

The young composer's spontaneous response to these experiences found musical expression in his first multi-piece set, *Album d'un voyageur,* which was compiled in 1837-38.[5] The album contains nineteen pieces organized into three books: "Impressions et Poésies," "Fleurs mélodiques des Alpes," and "Paraphrases." Liszt later reworked all but the first and last pieces in the first book and, in 1855, published the collection as *Années de pèlerinage, Première année: "Suisse,"*[6] the first in a series that would span the remaining years of his life. All of the pieces included in this set relate to Swiss folksongs, specific places, or Nature, with two being devoted to water. The programmatic element in these works is enhanced by the inclusion of mottos or prefaces in all but two of the pieces.[7] In *The Music of Liszt*, Humphrey Searle sums up Liszt's achievements in this cycle:

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[3] Liszt met the princess in 1847 while he was on tour in Kiev. Their union lasted until his death in 1886. She survived Liszt by only six months.

[4] Franz Liszt, *Selected Letters,* trans. and ed. Adrian Williams (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 343.

[5] Since the original manuscripts do not survive, the dating of these compositions is questionable. For a thoughtful discussion on this topic, see Alexander Main, "Liszt: New Dates for the Traveler's Album," *Journal of Musicological Research* 3/3 (1981): 411-22.

[6] The relationship between the original version and the revised work is explored in György Kroó, "*Années de Pèlerinage — Première Année:* Versions and Variants. A Challenge to the Thematic Catalogue," *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 34/3-4 (1992): 405-26.

[7] For a brief overview of the role literature plays in these works and others, see Marion Bauer, "The Literary Liszt," *Musical Quarterly* 22 (1936): 295-313.

> In it we see romantic landscape painting at its best; . . . Liszt, by freshness of his vision, did succeed in contributing an entirely new element to the music of his time, and one which he left as a legacy to subsequent generations of composers.[8]

"Au lac de Wallenstadt"

The second work in the set, "Au lac de Wallenstadt" (first version, 1837-38) is, along with "Au bord d'une source," Liszt's earliest water music for piano solo. The later version (1848-54) contains only minor changes from the original.[9] Marie's diary leaves little doubt about the conception and intention of this work:

> *Les bords du lac de Wallenstadt nous retinrent longtemps. Franz y composa, pour moi, une mélancolique harmonie, imitative du soupir des flots et la cadence des avirons, que je n'ai jamais pu entendre sans pleurer.*[10]

The work includes a preface from Lord Byron's (1788-1824) epic poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (canto LXXXV),[11] which reads:

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[8] Humphrey Searle, *The Music of Liszt*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Dover, 1966), 29.

[9] Except for the expansion of the brief introduction, the two are identical.

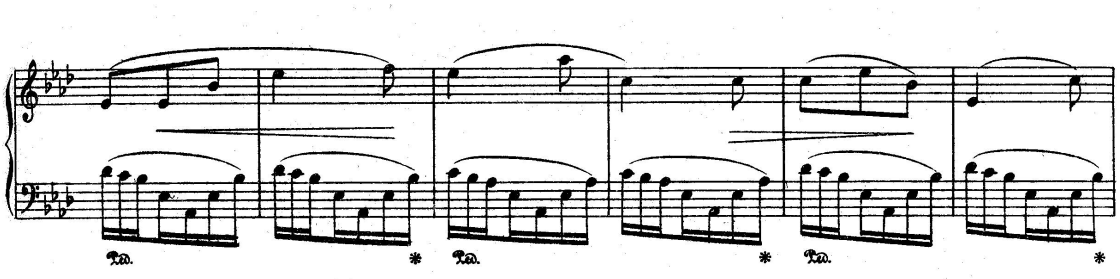
[10] "We remained a long time at the shores of Lake Wallenstadt. There, Franz composed a melancholy piece for me, imitative of the sighing of the waves and the rhythm of the oars, that I have never been able to hear without crying." From *Memoires*, *Souvenirs et Journaux de la Comtesse d'Agoult,* ed. and annotated by Charles F. Depêchez (Paris: Mercure de France, 1990), 320.

[11] For a discussion of the influence of Byron on Liszt's works, see Carl Woodring, "Byron and Liszt" in *Liszt and the Arts: Papers Presented at a Liszt Centennial Celebration by the Heyman Center for the Humanties,* ed. Steven Marcus (New York: Columbia University, Nov. 1986), 60-61.

> [Clear, placid Leman!] 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.

Here Liszt evokes the transparent stillness of the lake in a manner reminiscent of a Schubert Lied. A simple, yet hauntingly lyrical melody is placed above the gentle ostinato accompaniment in a 3/8 meter. By alternating a falling sixteenth-note triplet with four regular sixteenth notes in an arpeggiated pattern, Liszt effectively simulates the calm lapping of the lake. As in the early version of *Der Fischerknabe,* a tonic pedal is embedded in the ostinato figure (Ex. V-1). Both the slow harmonic rhythm — with the

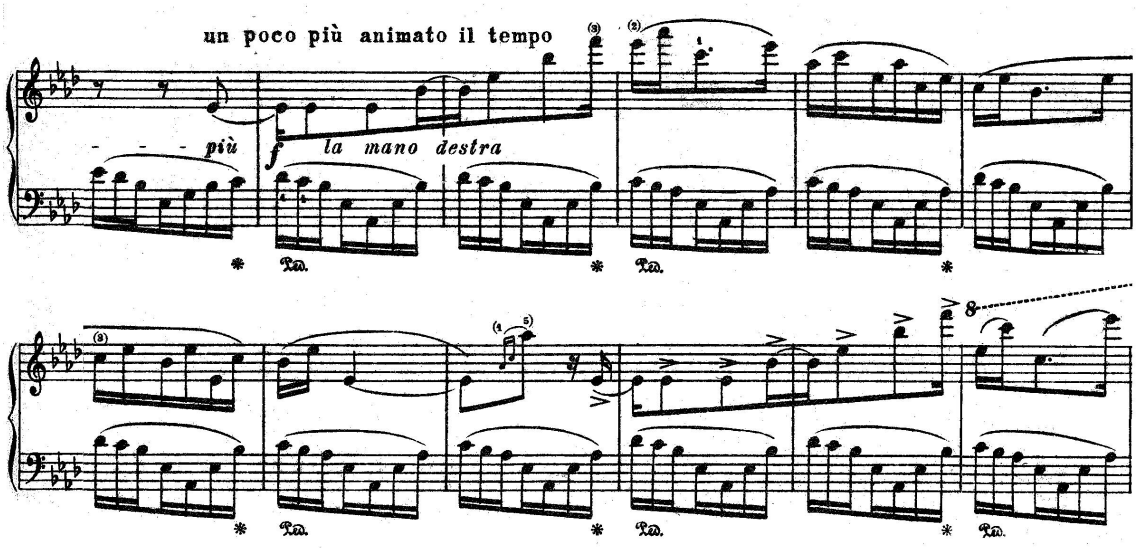
Ex. V-1: LISZT, "Au lac de Wallenstadt," from *Années*, mm. 13-18.



harmony vacillating between the tonic A flat and its dominant — and the triadic movement of the consonant melody contribute to the peaceful atmosphere. When the melody returns after a brief middle section that modulates to E major, it takes on a more liquid quality. At this point, Liszt creates a transparent, sparkling effect by embellishing

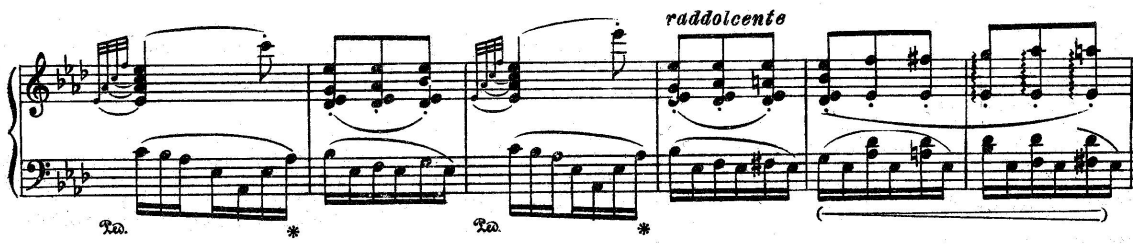
the melody, syncopating its rhythm and expanding the intervals so that the melodic line reaches into the upper registers (Ex. V-2).

Ex. V-2: LISZT, "Au lac de Wallenstadt," mm. 62-73.



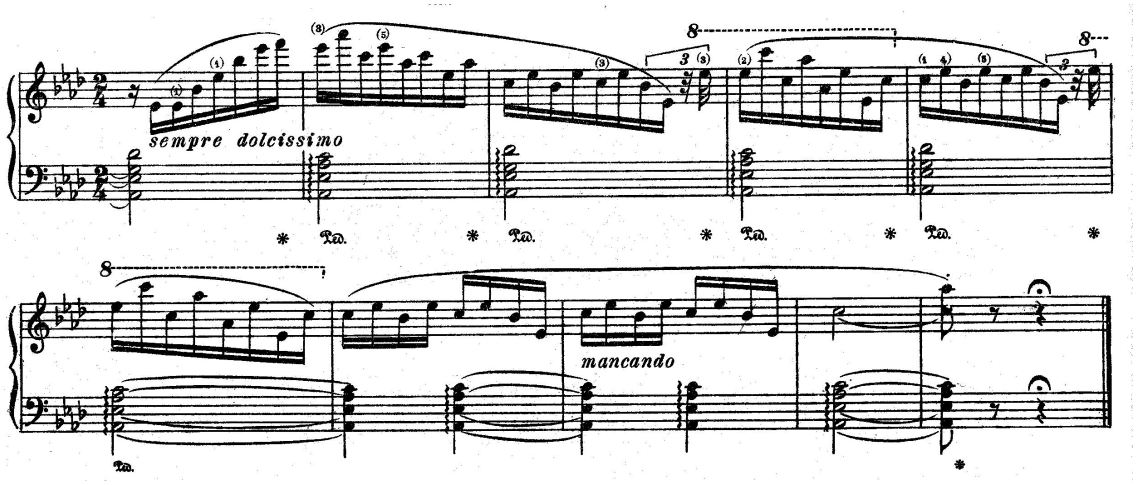
Just before the coda, Liszt adds rolled chords to the melodic material, their clear, bell-like quality underscoring the tranquil feeling that pervades the work (Ex. V-3).

Ex. V-3: LISZT, "Au lac de Wallenstadt," mm. 93-98.



The coda then echoes the restatement of the melody, with a falling broken-chord pattern that repeatedly dissolves into a murmuring figure in the right hand heard over rolled chords in the bass (Ex. V-4). Now in 2/4, this figure would seem to hint at the "purer spring" of the poem, an image that links this work to the other water-inspired work in the set, "Au bord d'une source."

Ex. V-4: LISZT, "Au lac de Wallenstadt," mm. 103-12.



"Au bord d'une source"

The title page of "Au bord d'une source" bears a quotation from Schiller's poem *Der Flüchtling* (lines 16-18):

In säuselnder Kühle
Beginnen die Spiele
Der jungen Natur.[12]

This highly original work distinguishes itself, in the words of the pianist and writer Louis Kentner, as "one of the most perfect 'water-pieces' ever written."[13] It points the way toward later impressionistic works of Debussy and Ravel, especially the latter's *Jeux d'eau*. The link between Liszt and Debussy through this work is also clear, for a firsthand account documents an informal performance in 1886 at which Liszt played this piece for the twenty-four-year-old Debussy with, not surprisingly, both the playing and the piece making a deep impression.[14]

Although the two pieces were originally paired in the *Album d'un Voyageur*,[15] "Au bord d'une source" stands in stark contrast to "Au lac de Wallenstadt." Most obvious is the difference in the nature of the water represented in each. While the latter so effectively captures the calm of the placid lake, "Au bord d'une source" conjures an effervescent spring, full of life and energy. As previously discussed, "Au lac de Wallenstadt" looks back to Schubert. The peaceful lake is evoked through economical means: slow harmonic rhythm, ostinato accompaniment, simple ternary structure,

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[12] From *The Fugitive*: In rustling coolness the play of young Nature begins.

[13] Louis Kentner, "Solo Piano Music (1827-61)," in *Franz Liszt, The Man and His Music*, ed. Alan Walker (New York: Taplinger, 1970), 120.

[14] Liszt, *Selected Letters*, 963.

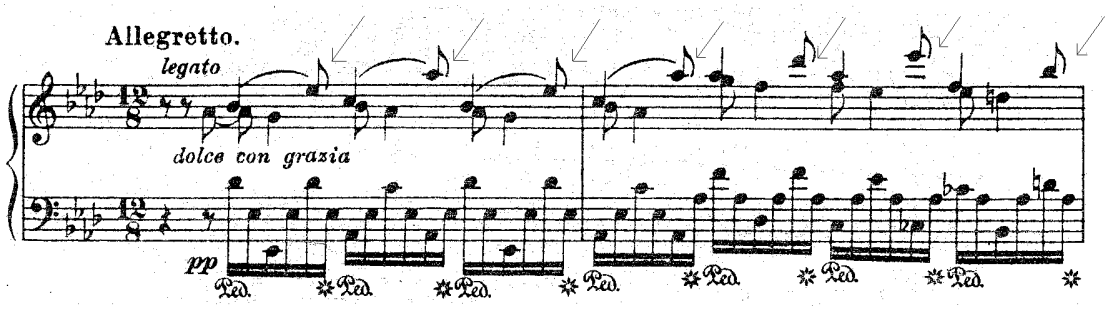
[15] See the worklist (compiled by Rena Charnin Mueller and Marcia Eckhardt), in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians,* 2nd ed., ed. Stanley Sadie, 29 vols. (London: Macmillan, 2001), vol. 14, 791, 2a and b.

transparent texture, and soaring, lyrical melody. It contains little Lisztian virtuosity. "Au bord d'une source," on the contrary, presents a considerable challenge for the pianist.

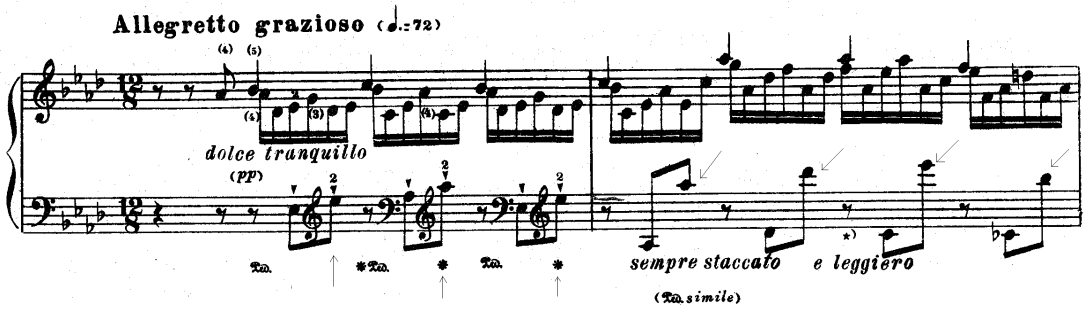
In numerous ways "Au bord d'une source" anticipates the twentieth century, using effects that later would be called "impressionistic." Liszt draws upon many different elements to present a rich soundscape that mirrors the liveliness of the spring. Though the harmony again hovers primarily around the current tonic and dominant, the harmonic rhythm is rapid throughout the work, and there are frequent modulations. The structure, episodic in nature, is more complex, with the main theme comprised of two parts (A and B) and reappearing in different guises. These variants display a variety of busy figurations and are punctuated by interludes and cadenzas. Though the texture is intricate, often knitting the hands in close interplay, the effect is surprisingly transparent. Most striking are the ubiquitous major and minor seconds in the right hand. Rather than creating tension, these dyads (often appoggiaturas) become a coloristic device that produces a brilliant sound evocative of a sparkling brook. Concurrently, sprightly, high pitches (on the third, sixth, ninth, and twelfth eighth notes of each measure) placed off the beat suggest random splashes from the rushing waters.

The two versions of "Au bord d'une source," though far from identical, share a similar formal and harmonic plan. Within this plan, however, the two diverge in their details. The feature that most effectively captures the perpetual motion and playful nature of the water in both is the figuration accompanying the melody and transforming it in each of its variations. Whereas the original version predominantly uses broad arpeggiated accompaniment patterns in the left hand, the later version compresses the texture (Exx. V-5 and V-6). Both versions begin with broken-chord accompaniments that

Ex. V-5: LISZT, "Au bord d'une source," from *Album* (before 1838), mm. 1-2.



Ex. V-6: LISZT, "Au bord d'une source," from *Années* (1848-54), mm. 1-2.

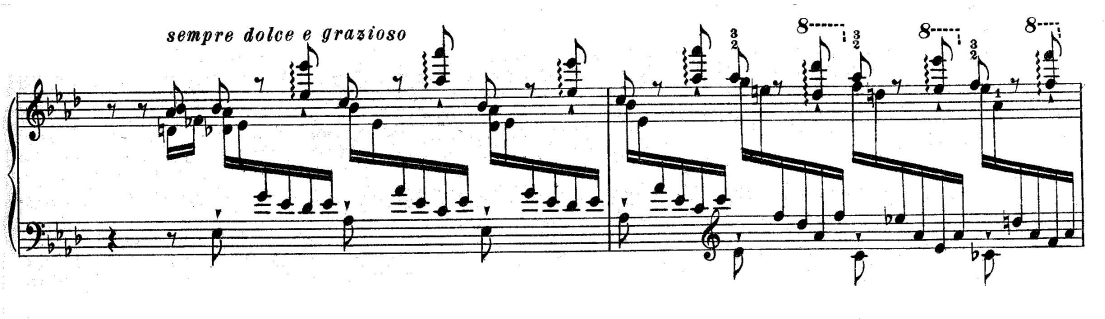


suggest the murmuring of the spring. The later version displays greater invention, however.[16] By shifting the sixteenth-note figure to an inner voice and adding more strands of sound, Liszt creates a vivacious, multi-faceted texture that mirrors the exuberant motion of the spring with its intermingling currents. The three succeeding variations on the main theme present an array of brilliant effects. In the first variation

[16] The present study will concern itself primarily with the later version as it appears in the Dover edition.

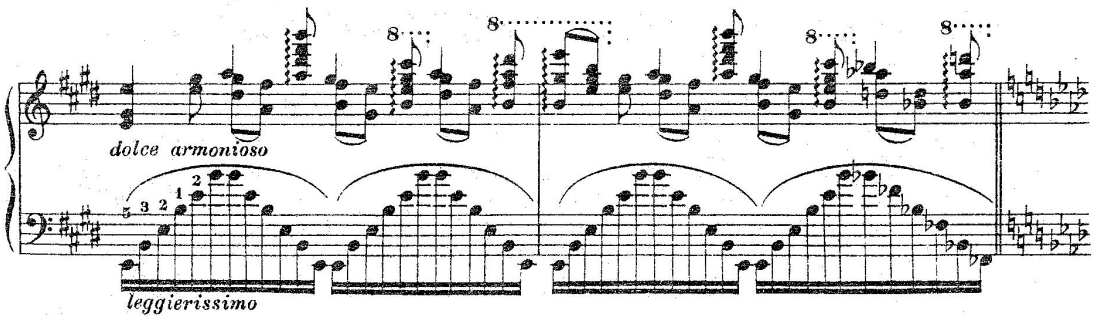
Liszt adds ornamental rolled octaves in the upper register, with minimal change to the inner figuration (Ex. V-7). In the B section of the theme, marked "*tranquillo (dolce*

Ex. V-7: LISZT, "Au bord d'une source," from *Années*, mm. 13-14.



armonioso)," he uses silvery rolled chords set in the high register. These chords float over a gently undulating broken-chord accompaniment that creates a particularly fluid sound (Exx. V-8 and V-9).

Ex. V-8: LISZT, "Au bord d'une source," from *Album*, mm. 17-18.

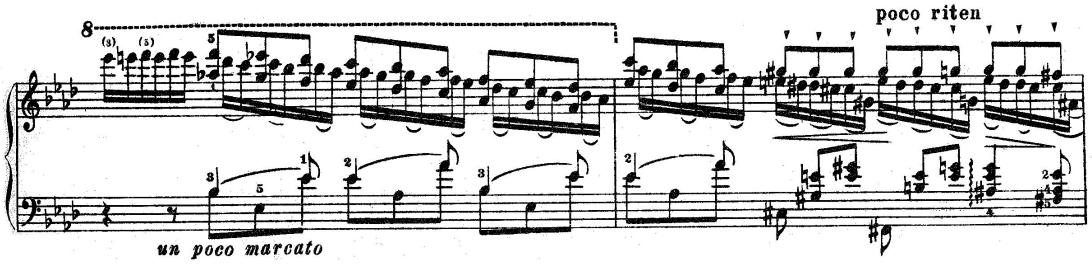


Ex. V-9: LISZT, "Au bord d'une source," from *Années*, mm. 17-18.

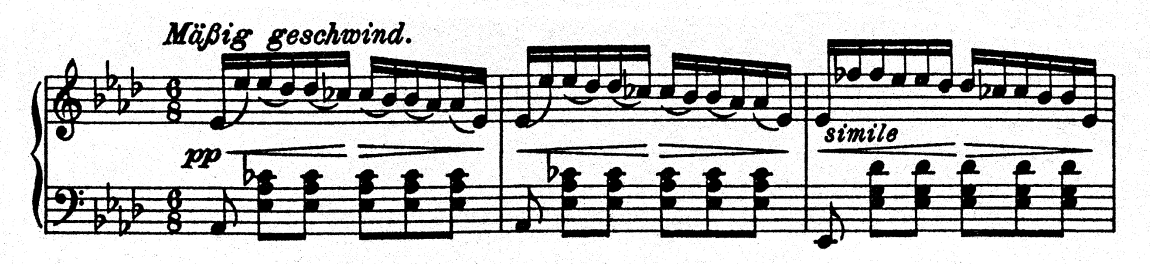


In the second variation, which emerges fragmentarily from a transitional passage, the inner-voice motif bears a strong resemblance to Schubert's lapping figuration in *Auf dem Wasser zu singen* (Exx. V-10 and V-11). Liszt places the theme in the left hand, where it is somewhat obscured by the descending material in the treble.

Ex. V-10: LISZT, "Au bord d'une source," from *Années*, mm. 31-32.

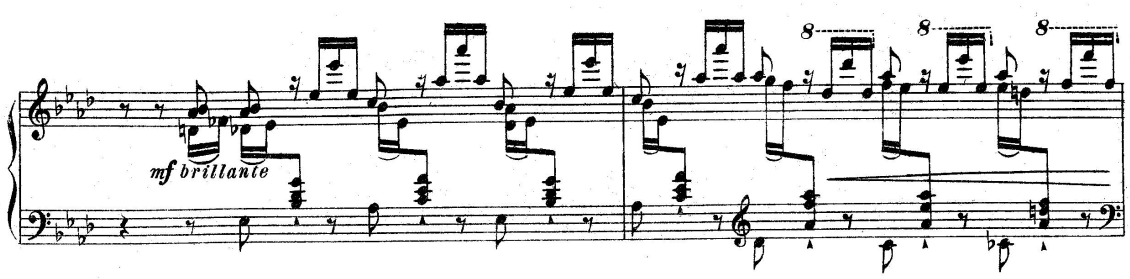


Ex. V-11: SCHUBERT, *Auf dem Wasser zu singen*, mm. 1-3.



The third variation, marked "*brillante*," creates a dazzling effect. At this climactic point, a broken-octave filigree figure in the upper register produces a glistening sound (Ex. V-12).

Ex. V-12: LISZT, "Au bord d'une source," from *Années*, mm. 41-42.

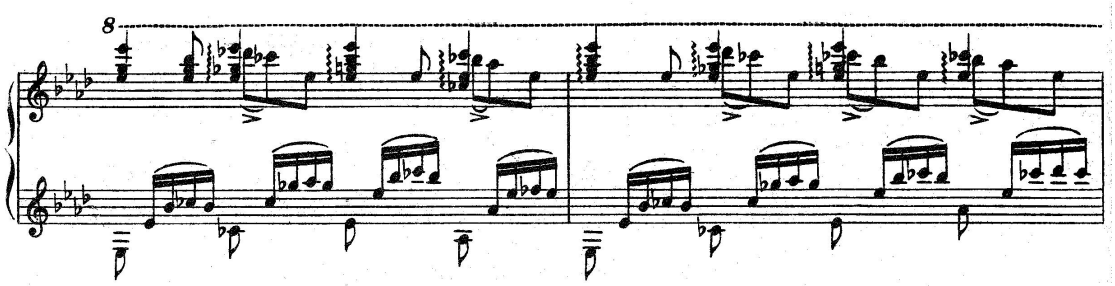


Two interludes, which will be referred to as C and C′, are noteworthy for their striking harmonies. Although the tonality is major throughout, both of these passages create a sense of harmonic ambiguity by borrowing elements from the minor. The first is based on a progression from a F half-diminished seventh to a B flat dominant seventh with flatted ninth (iiØ7-V7b9) in the key of the dominant, E flat (Ex. V-13). In C′ the harmony pivots around E flat major, alternating root position chords of C flat major (bVI) and A flat minor (the minor subdominant), both borrowed from E flat minor (Ex. V-14).

Ex. V-13: LISZT, "Au bord d'une source," from *Années*, m. 9.



Ex. V-14: LISZT, "Au bord d'une source," from *Années*, mm. 21-22.



The five cadenzas that correspond to each statement of the theme provide a stunning assortment of watery sounds. The first and third of these articulate a B flat dominant seventh with flatted ninth. Whereas in Liszt's original version these cadenzas begin with a splashy broken-chord pattern, the revised passages consist of a rising chromatic line intertwined with diminished figures. Both versions culminate in shimmering tremolos and tremolo-like figurations, particularly in the *Années*, where these are heard in the uppermost register (Exx. V-15 and V-16). In both versions the second

Ex. V-15: LISZT, "Au bord d'une source," from *Album*, mm. 10-11.



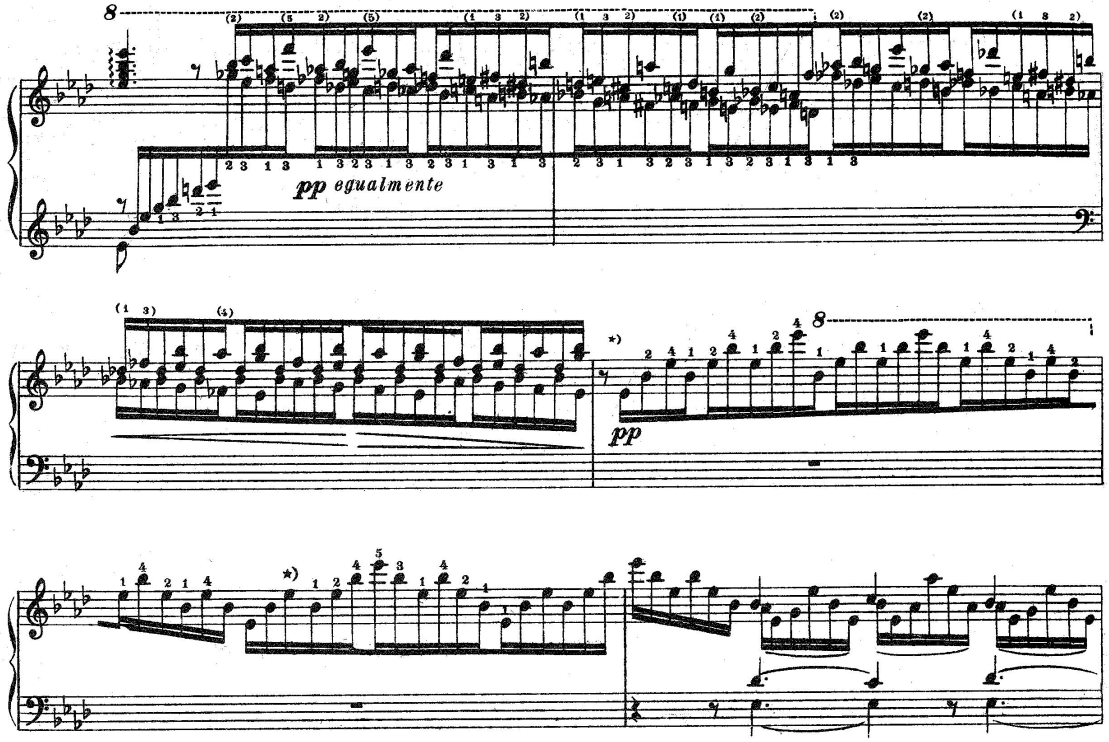
Ex V-16: LISZT, "Au bord d'une source," from *Années*, mm. 10-12.



cadenza is a chromatic shower of notes that begins in the upper register and resolves into a transparent rippling figure (comprised solely of E flat and B flat) that elides with the return of the theme (Ex. V-17).

As the most tonally striking of these passages in the revised version, the fourth cadenza marks the climax of the work. Following an interlude that creates a mild swirl of sound around a B flat minor seventh with added ninth over an E flat (the dominant) pedal, a broken pentatonic scale falls in a descending stream of notes (Ex. V-18). After so much intricate, close harmony, the effect is startling in its fluid clarity. During the

Ex. V-17: LISZT, "Au bord d'une source," from *Années*, mm. 23-28.



Ex. V-18: LISZT, "Au bord d'une source," from *Années*, mm. 47-50.



theme's brief recapitulation and coda the piece winds down. The final cadenza crests in a quiet murmuring figure on a D flat major triad with added sixth before subsiding in a gentle cascade on the tonic, A flat (Ex. V-19).

Ex. V-19: LISZT, "Au bord d'une source," from *Années*, mm. 63-67.



In its expression of water, "Au bord d'une source" is a major work, one without precedent. Its water imagery makes it both extraordinary for its time and an important precursor of Impressionism. It would be several decades before Liszt wrote another work of such significance devoted to water.

VENEZIA E NAPOLI AND *LA LUGUBRE GONDOLA*

The *Deuxième année* from *Années de pèlerinage,* entitled *Italie*, drew its inspiration from great works of Italian painting, sculpture, and poetry. Liszt was deeply moved by his first encounters with the masterpieces of Raphael and Michelangelo as well as the literature of Petrarch and Dante, all of which he discovered in his continuing travels with Marie d'Agoult. Years later, in 1854, as he planned another trip, this time with Princess Carolyne, he shared his thoughts on Italy with her:

> . . . talk to me of the countryside at Pisa, of the Roman Campagna, of Constantinople — and even Venice . . . . Later we must go to Italy. However vulgarized and abused it may be, that land still retains primordial energies and qualities which speak to the profoundest depths of the soul.[17]

Liszt composed the seven pieces that comprised the Italian book in 1838-39. As was the case with the Swiss book, these were later revised during the Weimar period. In 1840 Liszt wrote what he called a "supplement to the second year" entitled *Venezia e Napoli*. This collection, which was not published during Liszt's lifetime, originally consisted of four works: "Lento," "Allegro," "Andante placido," and "Tarantelles napolitaines."[18] Revised in 1859, the resultant set was published in 1861 and contains only three pieces, each based on melodies by other composers. They are:

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[17] Liszt, *Selected Letters*, 362.

[18] Numbers 1-3 of the original version can be found in the appendix to the Dover edition of the complete *Années*.

1. "Gondoliera" (based on "La biondina in gondoletta" by Giovanni Battista Perucchini [1784-1870]),
2. "Canzone" (based on the gondolier's song, "Nessun maggior dolore," in Rossini's *Otello*),[19] and
3. "Tarantella" (based on themes by Guillaume-Louis Cottrau [1797-1847]).

In their final form, the first and third pieces are based, respectively, on the third and fourth of the original set. Perhaps because these pieces can be characterized as concert paraphrases[20] rather than original compositions, the set was given supplemental status by Liszt and not included in the main body of the second book.

"Gondoliera"

Evocative of the sights and sounds of Venice, the first piece, "Gondoliera," is a musical portrait that beautifully renders the boats traveling on the water. During his stay, Liszt heard the popular Venetian songs sung by the gondoliers. One such experience is captured in a letter to Heinrich Heine: "Fortunately, a boat is passing beneath my

[19] Though a barcarolle, "Canzone" relies heavily upon Rossini's trill-like figuration and adds little new to the water music vocabulary.

[20] Unlike the seven pieces in the main book, each work relies heavily on virtuosity.

windows just now. It carries musicians, and a man's beautiful voice, accompanied by a chorus, is singing 'La notte è bella.'"[21] Liszt speaks eloquently of one gondola ride:

> . . . we all had to agree that nothing could compare with a gondola unencumbered by its doleful trappings. It barely touches the water, playing lightly and nimbly over the surface of the waves and slitting through them with its iron prow. Its elongated shape makes it supple and docile under the hand of the gondolier, who, standing at his hazardous post, propels it through the labyrinth of canals with incredible speed and daring . . . . Our little craft seemed to skim over the waves like a nautilus, as if it had a life and a will of its own.[22]

"Gondoliera" musically captures the essence of this experience.[23] The piece begins with a calm sixteen-measure introduction in typical barcarolle style with the rocking bass figure supporting an expansive arpeggio that extends across five octaves (Ex. V-20). The initial A major tonality gives way to F# major, as the main body of the

Ex. V-20: LISZT, "Gondoliera," mm 1-5.



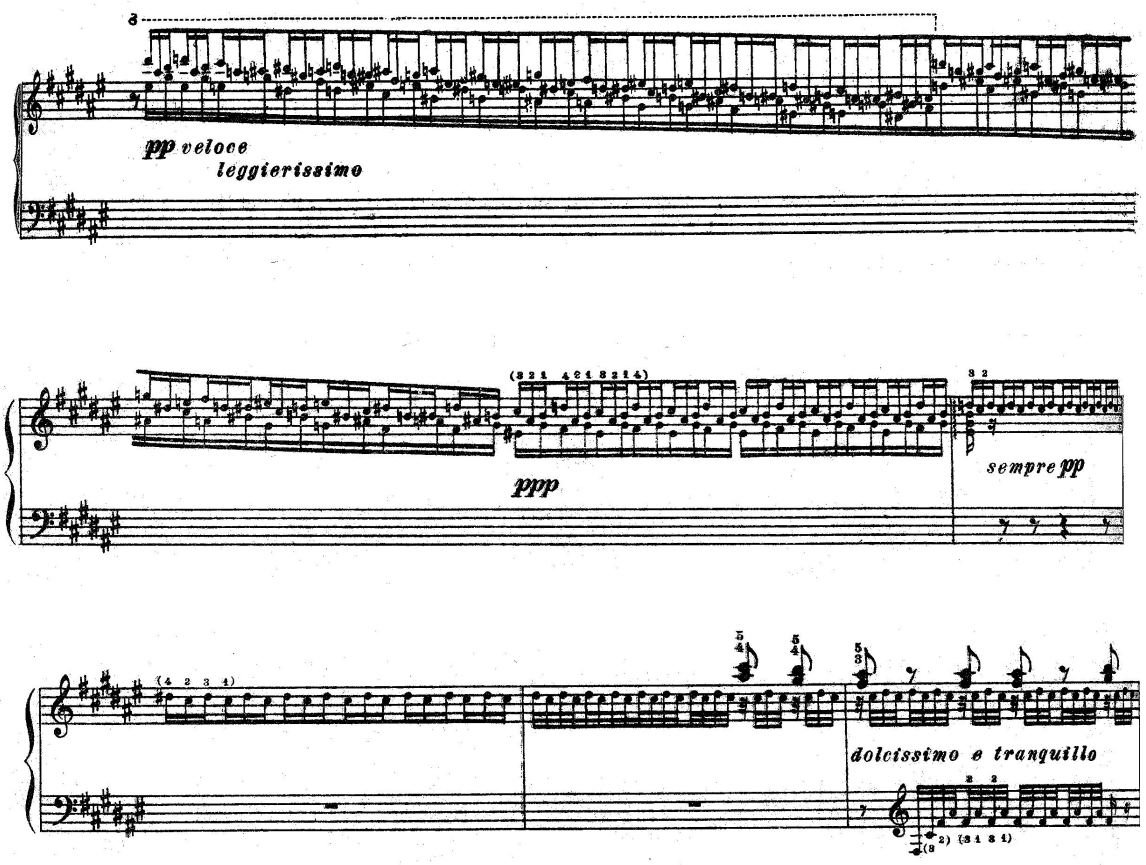
[21] Cited in Liszt, *An Artist's Journey*, 103. This song is by Perucchini, composer of popular Venetian songs.

[22] Ibid., 125.

[23] While the original version of this piece shares some of the same material, it offers a "scaled down" and less imaginative version of the later work. Gondoliers later also played a role in Liszt's symphonic poem *Tasso: lamento e trionfo* (1849), after Byron.

work begins. The principal subject, a lilting melody (attributed in the score as "'La Biondina in Gondoletta,' Canzone del Cavaliere Perucchini"), is introduced in thirds and sixths — again, a typical barcarolle gesture — and is accompanied by a simple descending broken-chord figure. As in "Au bord d'une source," this bipartite theme is refashioned in a series of variations with intervening cadenzas serving as transitional material. The third treatment of the theme is the most interesting for this study. The cadenza that precedes it is comprised of a virtual "shower" of notes: a chromatic descending passage of broken dominant-seventh-flat-ninth chords that begins in the highest register and dissolves into an extended trill (Ex. V-21). This trill, which is then

Ex. V-21: LISZT, "Gondoliera," mm. 63-67.



doubled in the left hand, creates (with damper pedal) a shimmering effect and becomes the backdrop for the ensuing reappearance of the melody, played with the outer part of the right hand. Upon the melody's repetition, Liszt moves the theme to the left hand as the right plays a delicate figure, replete with trills, that lightly "skims" up and down the keyboard evoking the image of the "little craft skimming over the waves" (Ex. V-22).

Ex. V-22: LISZT, "Gondoliera," mm. 74-77.



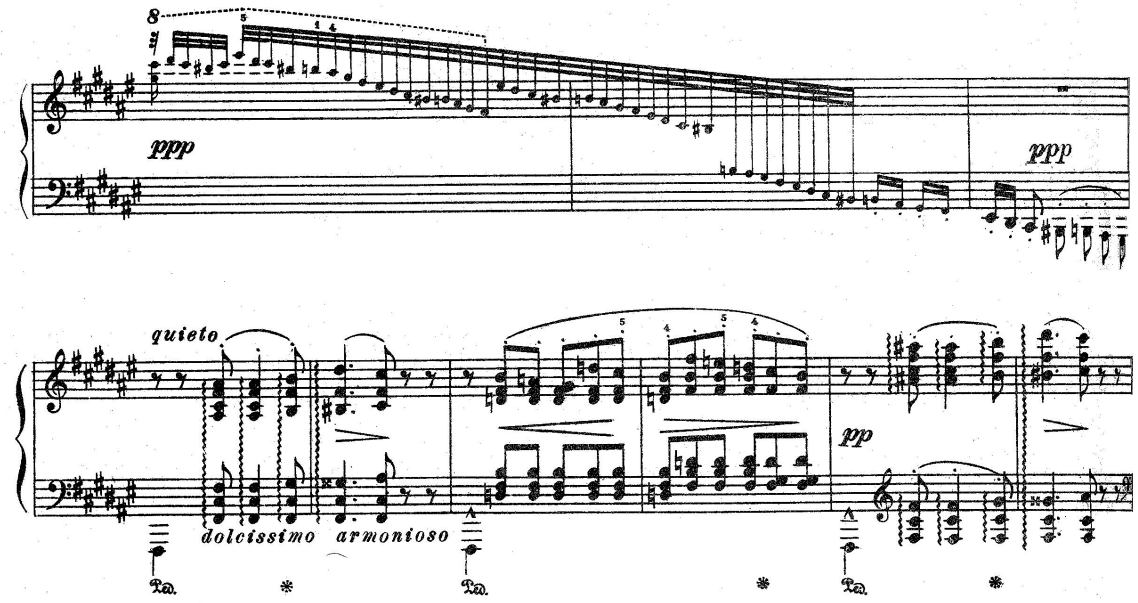
This gesture, which initially outlines, alternately, the tonic triad with an added sixth and a C# dominant ninth over a tonic pedal, is gradually reduced to a repeated-note figure comprised solely of C# and D# that, when heard in the higher registers, has an especially liquid sound (Ex. V-23). At m. 89 a shimmering tremolo figure briefly emerges, then

Ex. V-23: LISZT, "Gondoliera," mm. 86-88.



dissolves into a long descending scale that ultimately comes to rest on a tonic F#′ (Ex. V-24). Throughout most of the piece Liszt maintains a tonic pedal to underpin the

Ex. V-24: LISZT: "Gondoliera," mm. 91-98.



predominantly tonic-dominant harmonic structure. Here, in the epilogue, this pedal point becomes particularly effective. The low F#, suggestive of the quiet depths of the water (and perhaps tolling bells), punctuates the slow pulsating chords that paraphrase the melody — all depicting the image of boats rocking peacefully at day's end.

La Lugubre Gondola I and II

In 1882, near the end of his life, Liszt turned once more to the Venetian gondola for inspiration. This time, however, it was not the tranquil, lilting barcarolle but the solemn gondola funeral processions that preoccupied his imagination. In a letter dated January 7, 1883, to Olga von Meyendorff, he mused about his recent creations:

> . . . The oars of a *Gondole Lugubre* beat in my brain. I have tried to write them and had to rewrite them twice, whereupon other lugubrious things came back to mind and, willy-nilly, my scrawls on music sheets continued to the exclusion of all else . . . .[24]

The resulting two funereal elegies that he composed while visiting Venice, *La Lugubre Gondola I* and *II*, came to be viewed as premonitions of Wagner's death two months later.[25]

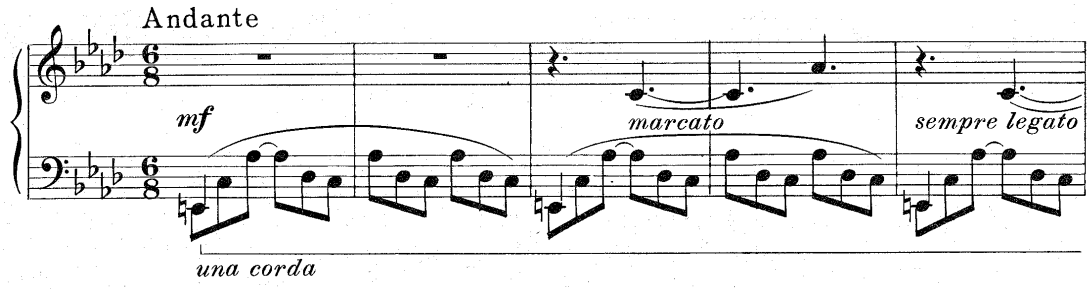
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[24] Franz Liszt, *The Letters of Franz Liszt to Olga von Meyendorff, 1871-1886*, in the Mildred Bliss Collection at Dumbarton Oaks, trans. William R. Tyler, introduction and notes by Edward N. Waters (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1979), 441.

[25] Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt, Volume Three, The Final Years, 1861-1886* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 426.

These unusual works stand in stark contrast to Liszt's other water pieces. Instead of the brilliant, evocative depictions of "Les Jeux d'eaux a la Villa d'Este," which precedes these works by only five years, Liszt presents simple rocking figures in the left hand suggestive of a boat's gentle sway on the canal (Ex. V-25). The harmony is

Ex. V-25: LISZT, *La Lugubre Gondola I*, mm. 1-5.



predominantly static. As is characteristic of many of his late works, Liszt creates extensive tonal ambiguity, exploiting the unmoored feeling of his augmented chords and their whole-tone connotations. In his book *Impressionism in Music*, Christopher Palmernotes that "the vagueness and imprecision of objects mirrored in a moving water surface is reflected here and in its companion piece (no. 2)."[26] An interesting parallel to this, Liszt's last foray into the expression of water, can be found in Ravel's final example of pianistic water imagery, *Frontispice* (1918), which also deviates dramatically from the composer's lush earlier works in its spareness and extreme tonal ambiguity.[27]

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[26] Christopher Palmer, *Impressionism in Music* (London: Hutchinson, 1973), 55.

[27] To be discussed later in this study.

WORKS OF RELIGIOUS INSPIRATION

"Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude" (1847)

"St François de Paule marchant sur les flots" (1863)

"Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este" (1877)

From early childhood religion played a central role in Liszt's life.[28] Although he led a "worldly" and often indulgent lifestyle, he was a devout Catholic, and, in 1865, he fulfilled his lifelong ambition of becoming a clergyman by taking minor orders. Given the significant place it held in the artist's life, therefore, it is not surprising that religion would give impetus to many of his compositions. While the majority of these are choral, orchestral, or organ works, a small number were written for piano. With its symbolic religious significance, water plays a role in three of these.

HARMONIES POÉTIQUES ET RELIGIEUSES:

"Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude"

As a young man Liszt was attracted to and influenced by the progressive social and religious ideas that flourished in post-Revolutionary France. Three men, Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825), Pierre Simon Ballanche (1776-1847), and, most of all, the

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[28] For a comprehensive discussion of this topic, see Paul Merrick, *Revolution and Religion in the Music of Franz Liszt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

charismatic Robert de Félicité Lamennais (1782-1854), played a role in shaping the young artist's view of himself as "a prophet of Art."[29] Although each had different ideas, all three shared the belief that the artist held a special place in society and recognized, according to Charles Suttoni, "both the emotional power he and his work exercised over people in promoting new ideas and the leadership role he could consequently play in bringing about social change."[30] Such a view resonated deeply in the young composer who, at the time, was still coming to terms with his place in the world.

In the early 1830s Lamennais became Liszt's spiritual mentor, and, not surprisingly, Liszt's religious enthusiasm found musical expression in several important works. Among these is *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* (1834), which was originally conceived for piano and orchestra. This early work had a long gestation period and eventually evolved into a cycle of ten pieces, written between 1845 and 1852 and published in 1853 under the same title.[31] The title and the dedication are borrowed from the French poet and statesman Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869), whose religious poetry also had a profound effect on Liszt.[32]

The third piece in the set, "Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude," is a work of sublime beauty and recognized as "one of his finest and most original works."[33] Searle has remarked that it "is unique among Liszt's works in that it expresses that feeling of

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[29] Liszt, *An Artist's Journey*, xx.

[30] Ibid, xxvii.

[31] It is interesting to note that from the start Liszt intended to compose a series of pieces, for in 1834 he wrote to Marie, "Our *Harmonie* will be dedicated to Lamartine, I shall first publish it alone, and later I shall write a half a dozen." Quoted in Merrick, 9.

[32] According to Liszt's letters, the two men developed a friendship that began in the 1830s.

[33] Searle, 55.

mystical contemplation which Beethoven attained in his last period, but which is rarely found elsewhere in music."[34] Apparently Liszt was very fond of this work and performed it frequently, as his own letters and the recollections of others attest.

The title page includes a quotation from the Lamartine poems that preface the entire cycle. This particular poem describes the tormented journey from doubt to true belief in God. The text of the Lamartine preface to the "Bénédiction" follows:[35]

D'où me vient, ô mon Dieu, cette paix qui m'inonde?
D'ou me vient cette foi dont mon coeur surabonde,
A moi qui tout à l'heure, incertain, agité,
Et sur les flots dù doute à tout vent ballotté,
Cherchais le bien, le vrai, dans les rêves des sages,
Et la paix dans des coeurs retentissant d'orages?
A peine sur mon front quelques jours ont glissé,
Il me semble qu'un siècle et qu'un monde ont passé,
Et que, séparé d'eux par un abîme immense,
Un nouvel homme en moi renaît et recommence.

Where, my God, does it come from, this peace that inundates me?
Where does it come from, this faith with which my heart overflows,
In me who a short time ago, uncertain, troubled,
And on the waves of doubt tossed by the wind,
Sought the good, the true, in the dreams of the wisemen,
And the peace in the pounding hearts of storms?
A few days slipped by, barely visible on my forehead,
It seems to me that a century and a world passed by,
And that, separated from them by a deep abyss,
A new man in me is reborn and begins again.[36]

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[34] Ibid.

[35] It has been suggested that the opening melody, introduced in the left hand, could have been an unconscious attempt to give the text a song setting. See Kentner, 129-30.

[36] Author's translation.

While the poem does not deal specifically with water, it contains several watery metaphors: "*m'inonde*," "*surabonde*," "*d'orages*," "*Et sur les flot du doute à tout vent ballotté*." Water's symbolic significance in religion seems to have inspired Liszt to create a work that vivdly highlights these clear textual references.

Liszt cast this composition in F# major, which, according to Alan Walker, is no coincidence:

> Liszt's choice of keys, for instance, is frequently determined by a higher expressive purpose and is rarely the result of random selection. It cannot be an accident that so much of his "divine" or "beatific" music unfolds in the key of F# major (*Bénédiction de Dieu, St. Francis of Assisi Preaching to the Birds*, the "Paradiso" section of the *Dante Sonata*, and *Les Jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este*—this last piece with its quotation from the Gospel according to St. John).[37]

The overall form of "Bénédiction" can be described as ABA´, although this hardly expresses the subtlety and complexity of the form.[38] The fluid writing is found only in the A sections. The piece opens with a gently undulating accompaniment to the main melody, marked "*sempre piano ed armonioso*," and is reflective of the opening of the poem (Ex. V-26). The wavelike arpeggio on a tonic chord with an added sixth, combined with the trill in the right hand, creates a fluid sound and establishes the contemplative atmosphere of the work. Liszt develops this figuration throughout the

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[37] Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: Volume Two, The Weimar Years*, *1848-1861* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 154, n. 49.

[38] For a discussion of the controversial aspects of the form as well as a more detailed formal analysis, see Arnold, "Piano Music: 1835-1861," in *The Liszt Companion*, ed. Ben Arnold (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2002), 91.

Ex. V-26: LISZT, "Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude," mm. 1-5.



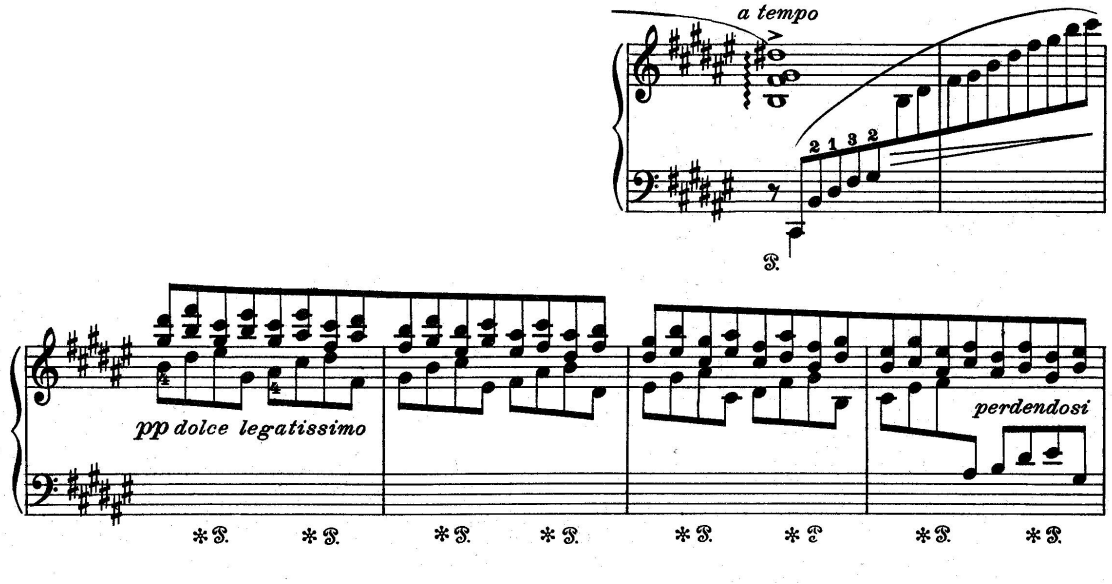
course of the A sections. Correspondingly, the main melody, too, is transformed, reappearing at m. 86 and again at m. 105 in rolled chords to create a watery sound (Ex. V-27).

Ex. V-27: LISZT, "Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude," mm. 105-08.



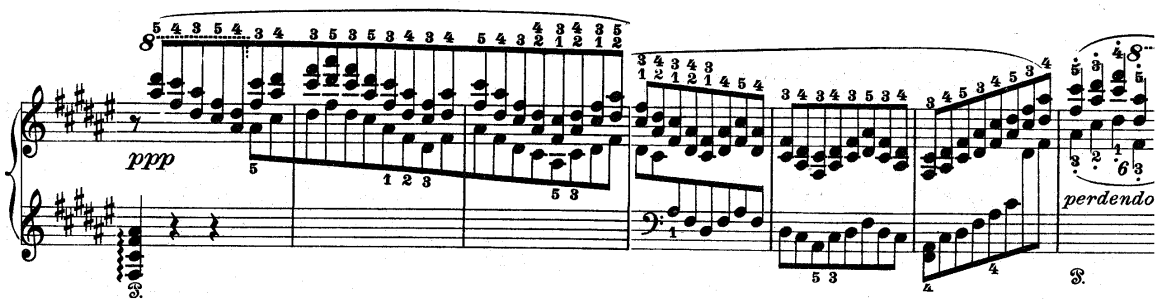
The A section is punctuated by a pair of strikingly bubbly cadenzas. The first, occurring just before the return of the main melody, begins with a pattern suggestive of a pentatonic scale based on a G# minor seventh over C# (ii7/V) followed by a diatonic sequence of fourths and fifths that creates a gentle shower (Ex. V-28). The second

Ex. V-28: LISZT, "Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude," mm. 76-81.



appears at the close of the A section and reiterates the tonic chord with added sixth in a rippling and bell-like pentatonic progression (Ex. V-29).

Ex. V-29: LISZT, "Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude," mm. 169-175.



Following the contrasting B section, the writing becomes even more suggestive of water. Liszt introduces a new accompaniment to underpin the main melody, which is once again heard in rolled chords. Built on the tonic chord with added sixth (again suggesting a pentatonic scale), expansive rolling arpeggios in triplets — implying a compound meter — literally create swells of sound in the bass (Ex. V-30). These

Ex. V-30: LISZT, "Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude," mm. 252-55.



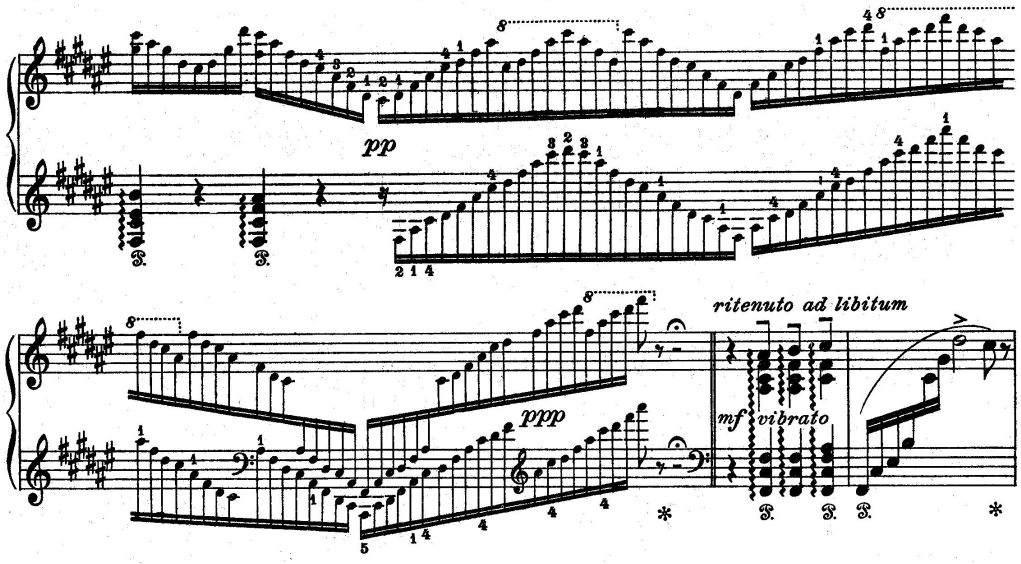
wavelike gestures build to a dramatic climax, at which point the meter changes to 3/2. The closing material that ensues is comprised of rippling streams of notes that produce an exceptionally liquid sonority (Ex. V-31). As in "Gondoliera," much of the harmony

Ex. V-31: LISZT, "Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude," mm. 309-10.

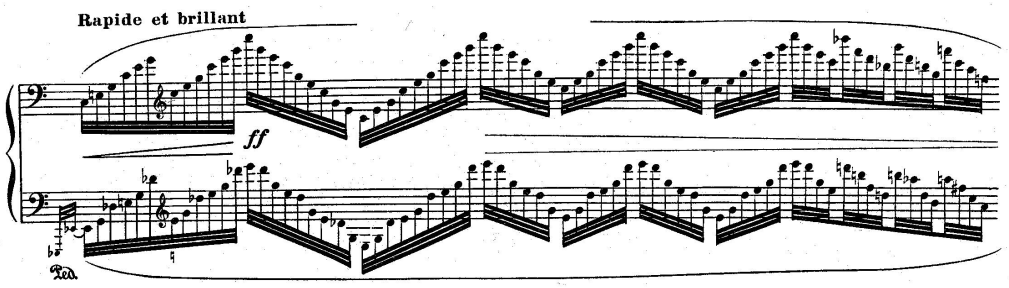


shifts between the tonic and the dominant over the tonic pedal. The passage concludes with broad waves of parallel arpeggios, which, upon comparison, bear a striking resemblance to passages in Ravel's 1908 "Ondine" from *Gaspard de la nuit* (Exx. V-32 and V-33; cf. Chapter VI [Ex. VI-41] below).

Ex. V-32: LISZT, "Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude," mm. 329-31.



Ex. V-33: RAVEL, "Ondine," m. 89.



DEUX LEGENDS:

"St. François de Paule marchant sur les flots"

Liszt composed *Deux Légendes* in 1863, while in residence at the monastery of the Madonna del Rosario, located outside of Rome. These pieces are inspired by the lives of the saints Francis of Assisi and Francis de Paule, his patron saint. Liszt seems to have had a special fondness for these pieces, for he often performed them in public and even chose to play these recent compositions on the occasion of a visit from Pope Pius IX to the monastery.[39] One interesting account of a performance comes from Saint-Saëns:

> . . . As I write I see again that long pale face casting seductive glances at his audience while from beneath his fingers, almost unconsciously, and with an astonishing range of nuances, there murmured, surged, boomed, and stormed the waves of the Legend of *St. Francis of Paule walking on the waters*. Never again shall we see or hear anything to compare to it.[40]

The inspiration for "St. François de Paule" comes from a drawing that hung in Liszt's music room at the Altenburg in Weimar.[41] Both the drawing and Liszt's stormy, dramatic work depict the legend of St. Francis de Paule. The story relates how, not having the fare, St. Francis was turned away at the ferry crossing of the Straits of Messina. The ferryman challenged St. Francis to prove his sainthood by walking across

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[39] According to Adrian Williams, this visit is said to be the only one ever made by a pope to a musician. See Adrian Williams, *Portrait of Liszt by Himself and His Contemporaries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 389.

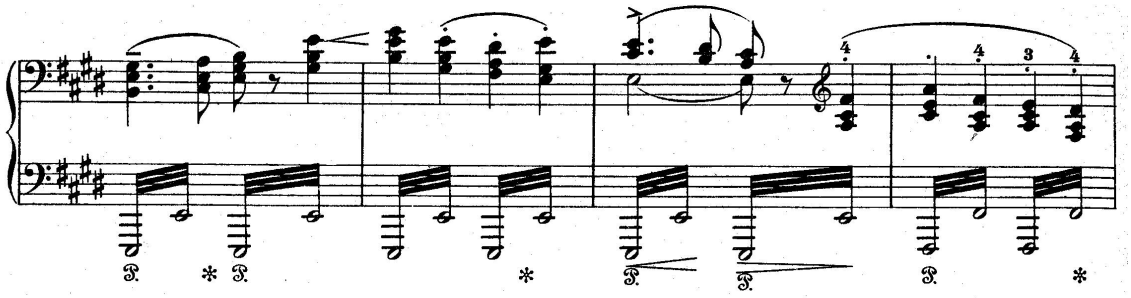
[40] Quoted in Walker, *Franz Liszt, Volume Three,* 98.

[41] Ibid., 360.

the water, at which point, St. Francis laid his cloak down upon the waves and safely floated across to the other side.

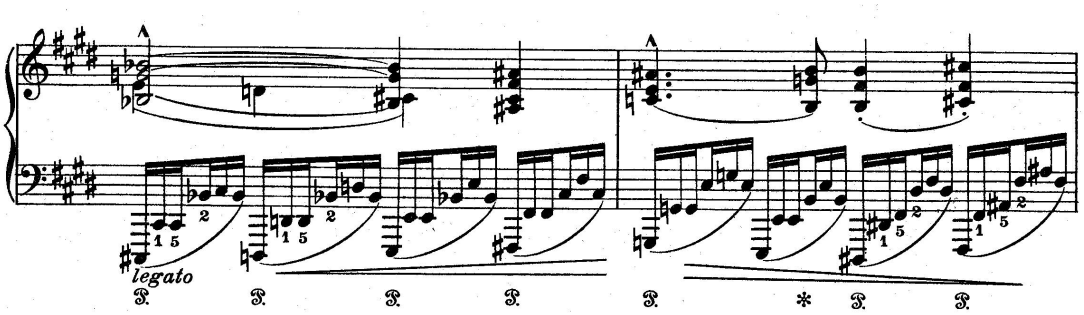
"St. François de Paule," a pianistic *tour de force,* boldly exploits the enhanced capacity and sonority of the instrument. It is ironic, then, that when Liszt wrote the *Légendes*, he felt compelled to apologize for the limitations of the instrument, even though these same pieces were chosen to demonstrate the wondrous potential of the newest Steinway models at the Paris exhibition in 1867.[42] The piece stands as a compendium of wavelike effects. The main theme, introduced in the opening measures in low octaves*,* is heard repeatedly against a series of dramatic accompaniments, each conjuring the increasing menace of the powerful ocean waves. These gestures begin with simple tremolos (Ex. V-34), which develop into embellished tremolos with repeated-note patterns (Ex. V-35). At m. 32 Liszt introduces a rising and falling chromatic line in the

Ex. V-34: LISZT, "St. François de Paule," mm. 7-10.



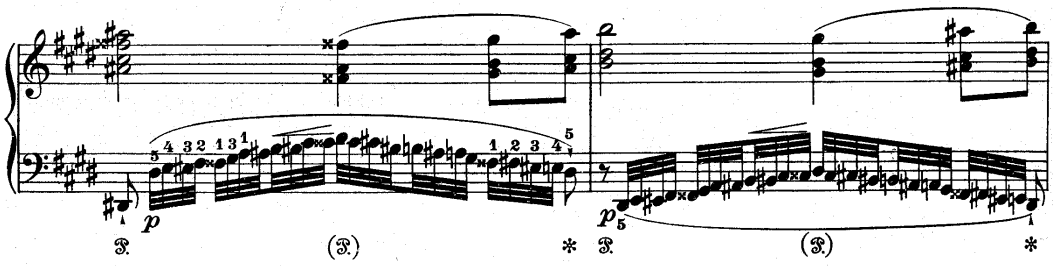
[42] See earlier discussion in Chapter I, p. 35.

Ex. V-35: LISZT, "St. François de Paule," mm. 22-23.



bass that effectively evokes the rolling waves (Ex. V-36). A more extended wavelike figure that instead utilizes both diatonic scales and arpeggios follows at m. 36 (Ex. V-37).

Ex. V-36: LISZT, "St. François de Paule," mm. 32-33.



Ex. V-37: LISZT, "St. François de Paule," mm. 36-39.



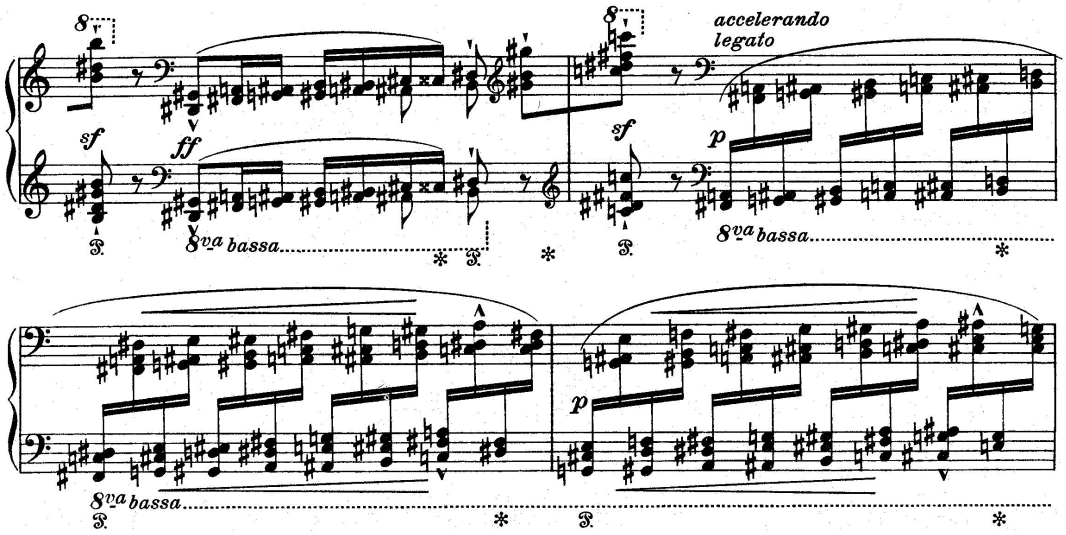
As the waters become increasingly stormy and treacherous, Liszt introduces rapid-octave passages (Ex. V-38). To simulate the growing swells he employs a sequence of

Ex. V-38: LISZT, "St. François de Paule," mm. 72-73.

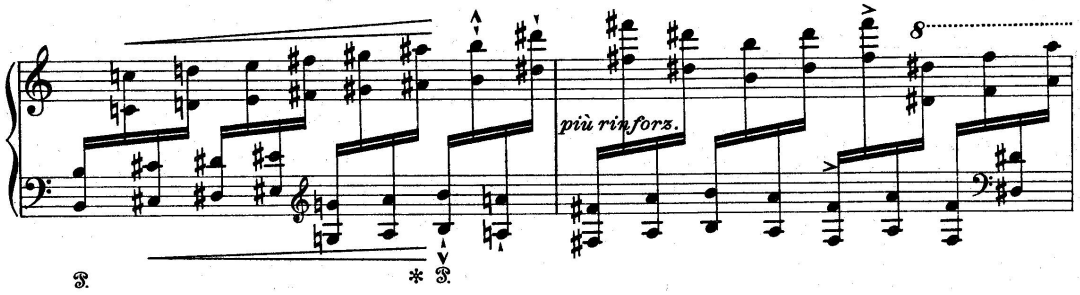


ascending chromatic thirds that blossom into chords (Ex. V-39) and finally climax with a frenzy of rapid alternating octaves starting in the bass and climbing the entire length of the keyboard (Ex. V-40).

Ex. V-39: LISZT, "St. François de Paule," mm. 84-87.

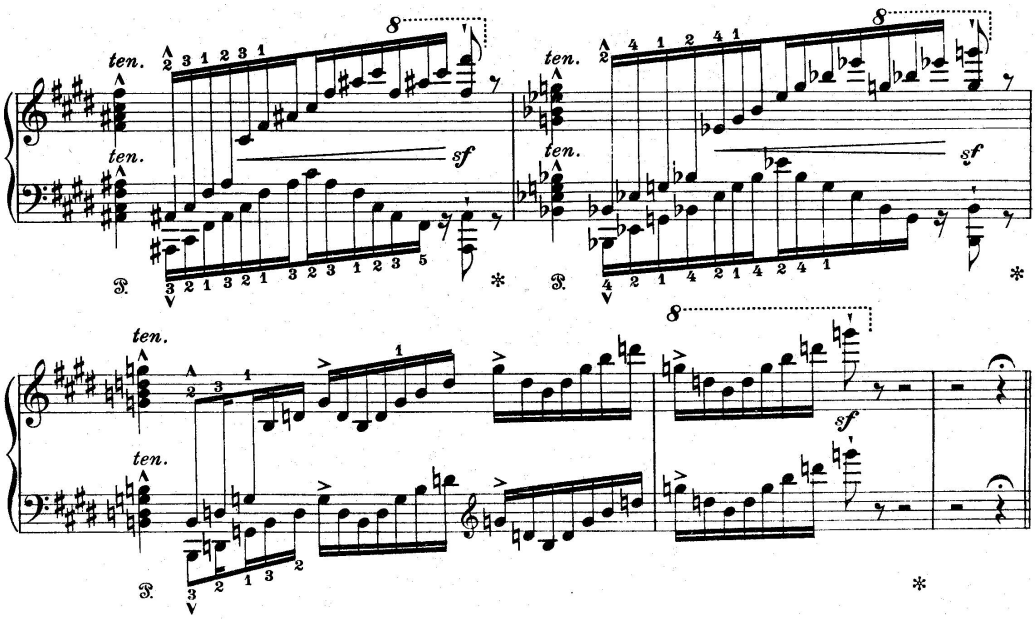


Ex. V-40: LISZT, "St. François de Paule," mm. 94-95.



When St. Francis safely reaches the other shore, his theme is given majestic treatment. One final reference to water is heard beginning at m. 133 in the broad, sweeping arpeggios heard just before the coda (Ex. V-41).

Ex. V-41: LISZT, "St. François de Paule," mm. 134-38.



ANNÉES DE PÈLERINAGE, TROISIÈME ANNÉE:

"Les jeux d'eau á la Villa d'Este"

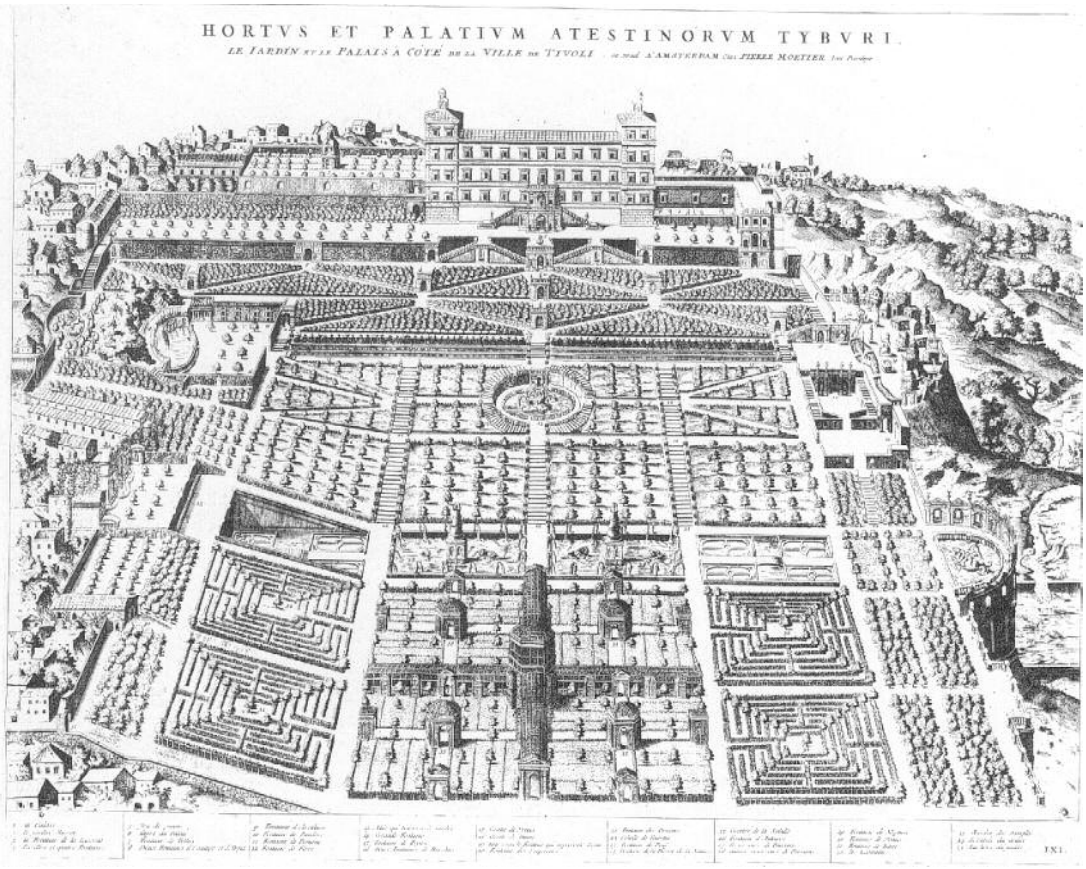


FIG. 1: PLAN OF THE GARDENS OF THE VILLA D'ESTE

A great champion of Liszt and his works, the pianist and composer Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924) wrote in 1916, "'Les jeux d'eau' still remains today the model for all musical fountains which have flowed ever since."[43] The influence of this work on the forthcoming generation of Impressionist composers, most notably Debussy and Ravel, has been widely acknowledged. Alan Walker, for one, claims that this composition is "one of the most important Liszt ever composed"[44] and has cited both Ravel's *Jeux d'eau* (1901) and Debussy's *L'Isle joyeuse* (1904) as exhibiting similarities to the work.

"Les jeux d'eaux" was inspired by the magnificent fountains located on the grounds of the Villa d'Este in Tivoli, just outside Rome. In his later years, Liszt had an open invitation from his friend, Cardinal Gustav Hohenlohe, to a suite of rooms at the villa overlooking the gardens. It was here that Liszt returned almost every spring and summer from 1867 until his death. According to his letters, he found this place most agreeable. "Everything pleases me here," he wrote in June of 1874 to Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein, "landscape, atmosphere, trees, bells, rooms, memories."[45] It may seem odd that Liszt makes no mention of the spectacular fountains in the letter. Apparently, though, the villa and its fountains, all of which had fallen into disrepair, were undergoing restoration and the fountains had, in fact, been turned off for some time.[46] However, in a letter written to Princess Carolyne later that summer, Liszt reports: "At the moment the water is being brought back to the dried up fountain in the courtyard of the

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[43] Ferruccio Busoni, *The Essence of Music and other Papers*, trans. Rosamond Ley (London: Rockcliff, 1957), 138.

[44] Walker, "Liszt and the Twentieth Century," in *Franz Liszt: The Man and his Music*, ed. A. Walker (New York: Taplinger, 1970), 352.

[45] Liszt, *Selected Letters*, 777.

[46] Walker, *Franz Liszt: The Final Years*, 165.

Villa d'Este. My time passes rapidly, and I am very content with my retreat — so much so that I should like to prolong it for the rest of my life!"[47] Liszt found both solace and inspiration in the gardens, with their magnificent cypress trees and the many spellbinding fountains.[48] Inevitably, three years later, in 1877, both of these found musical expression.

Written between 1866 and 1877,[49] Liszt's third and final book of the *Années de pèlerinage*, with its bold and experimental style, is a world apart from the two earlier books. The seven pieces in this cycle demonstrate Liszt's preoccupation with death and religion.[50] Three pieces in the set, "Aux cyprès de la Villa d'Este I," "Aux cyprès de la Villa d'Este II," and "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este," all written in 1877, grew directly out of Liszt's sojourn at the villa. By far the most extraordinary and musically accessible in the set is the last named piece, which is the centerpiece of the cycle.[51] Once again, Liszt chose the "beatific" key of F# major, to evoke the brilliance of the spectacular fountains.

Apart from being a beautifully constructed work, "Les jeux d'eaux" can be seen as a catalog of water imagery that sums up much of the composer's vocabulary for evoking water. Liszt transcends the mere depiction of the fountains, however, by turning

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[47] Liszt, *Selected Letters*, 781.

[48] A feat of hydraulic engineering that relies on gravity.

[49] For a discussion of the problems that arise in trying to determine precise dates for these late works, see Dolores Pesce, "Liszt's *Années de Pèlerinage, Book 3*: A 'Hungarian' Cycle?" in *19th Century Music* 13/3 (Spring 1990): 207-29.

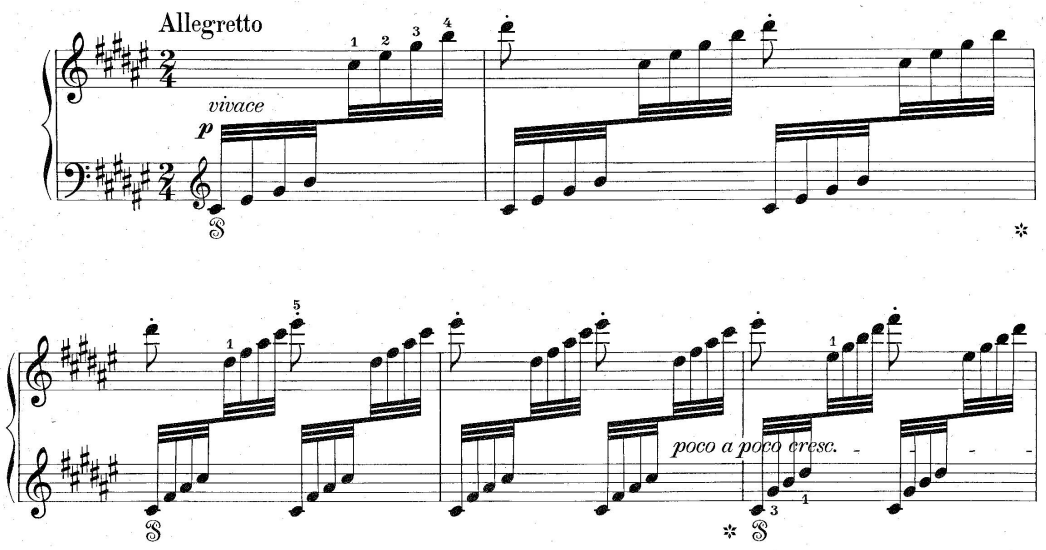
[50] "Angélus!," "Aux cyprès de la Villa d'Este I," "Aux cyprès de la Villa d'Este II," "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este," "Sunt lacrymae rerum," "Marche funèbre," and "Sursum corda."

[51] See David Butler Cannata, "Perception and Apperception in Liszt's Late Piano Music," *Journal of Musicology* 15/2 (1997): 178-207, regarding overall key scheme and structure of the cycle, as well as the role of religious allusion in late Liszt.

them into powerful spiritual symbols. Whereas it was observed that in "St. François de Paule" Liszt adopts a narrative, through-composed approach to express the powerful movement of an imposing body of water, here a developmental process is used to explore the spiritual serenity found in the mesmerizing fountains. Liszt uses lush harmonies, imaginative liquid figurations, and the piano's coloristic capabilities to describe the sparkling play of light and water. In particular, he exploits the outer registers of the instrument to great effect: the upper to evoke water's glistening and effervescent qualities and the lower, the fountains' grandeur. Contrary to his earlier practice, however, Liszt does not rely upon cadenzas for his most evocative imagery.

The work begins with an introduction suggesting the spouting jets of the fountains. Focusing on the upper registers of the instrument with their sparkling, silvery sonority, Liszt begins with a series of ascending extended arpeggios — most prominently the C# dominant-ninth chord — for coloristic effect (Ex. V-42). The immediate exploitation of upper-chord extensions presents a new, more transparent, world of sound.

Ex. V-42: LISZT, "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este," mm. 1-4.



The writing in this opening passage — and, for that matter, throughout the work — is devoid of chromaticism, and the result is a generally static harmony that ultimately imbues the work its profound serenity. The delicate ascending gestures culminate, at m. 10, in a cascading figure based on an E# half-diminished-seventh chord (an incomplete C# dominant ninth) (Ex. V-43). As this figure reaches its bottom, Liszt introduces the first of many tremolo figures that permeate this work (Ex. V-44). This double tremolo,

Ex. V-43: LISZT, "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este," mm. 8-13.

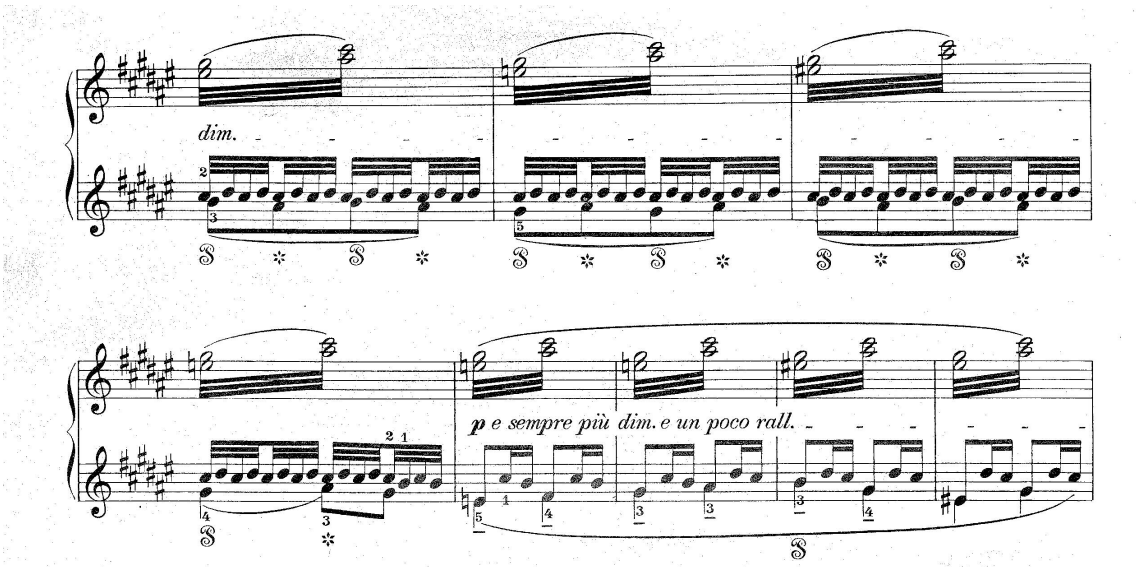


Ex. V-44: LISZT, "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este," mm. 17-19.



which begins *pianissimo*, gradually ascends and crescendos to a shimmering climax, after which it subsides into a passage of diatonic tremolos where we once again hear murmurs of the half-diminished sevenths and dominant ninths (Ex. V-45).

Ex. V-45: LISZT, "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este," mm. 26-33.



The main theme, introduced at m. 40, consists of three distinct components. The initial triadic melody is countered by a playful, bubbling motif in the left hand (mm.44-6), a gesture slightly reminiscent of the transitional figure found in Schubert's *Die Forelle* (cf. Exx. V-46 and V-47). This countermelody is rounded off with a trill that

Ex. V-46: LISZT, "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este," mm. 40-46.



Ex. V-47: SCHUBERT, *Die Forelle*, mm. 4-8.



has a descriptive, rather than ornamental, function. The first gesture is then answered by a melancholy idea that displays the pieces only prominent chromaticism and one of Liszt's signature harmonies, the augmented chord (Ex. V-48).[52] All of these are heard in

[52] For a discussion of Liszt's harmonic practice and his predilection for the augmented chord, see Walker, "Liszt and the Twentieth Century," in *Franz Liszt: The Man and his Music*, 353, and Allen Forte, "Liszt's Experimental Idiom and the Music of the Early Twentieth Century," *19th Century Music* 10/3 (1987): 209-28.

Ex. V-48: LISZT, "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este," mm. 48-54.



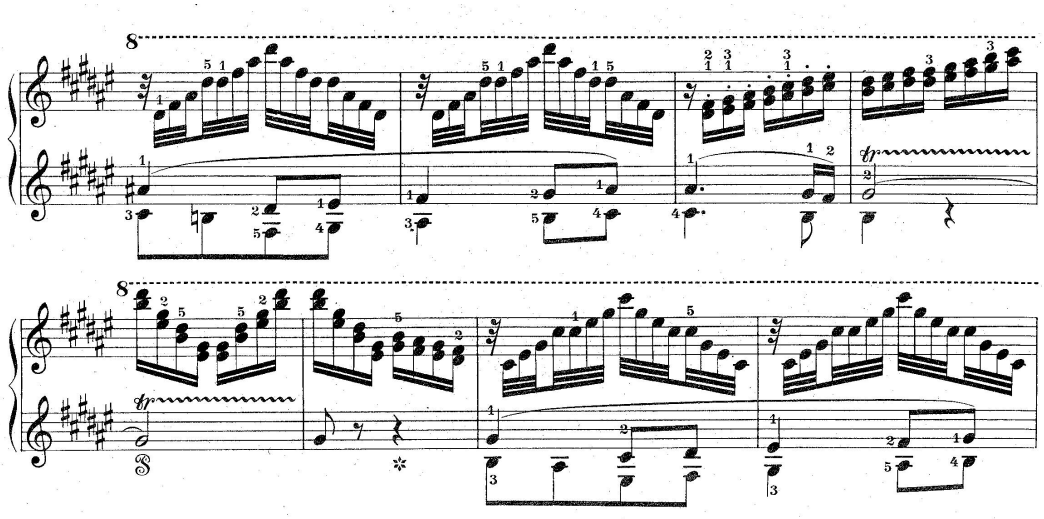
relief against a tremolando background. As this second idea unfolds into the third, Liszt introduces a new accompaniment: a splashing arpeggiated figure, composed of staccato thirds and fourths in the upper register (Ex. V-49). Initially suggestive of a pentatonic sound, this double-note figure trails off in a fragment that spans a tritone.

Ex. V-49: LISZT, "Les jeux d'eau à la Villa d'Este," mm. 54-63.



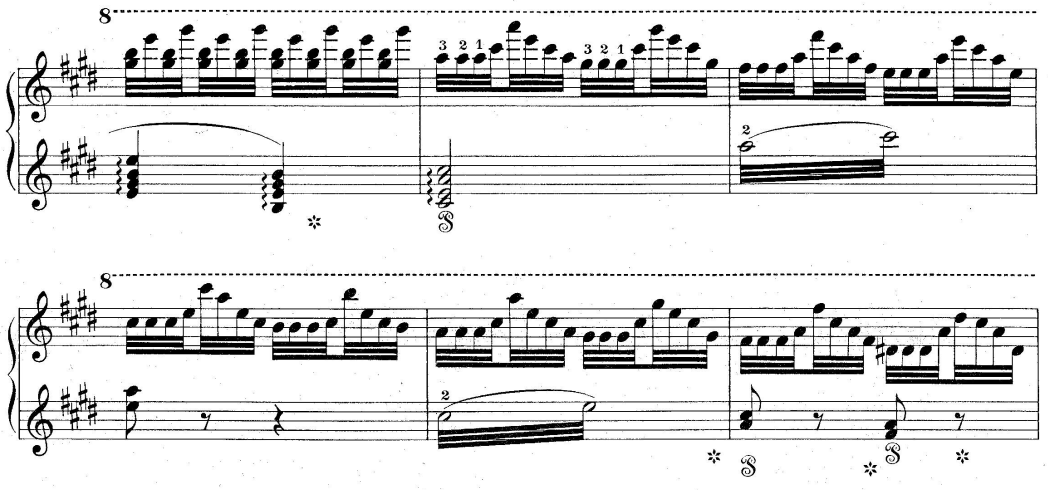
An episodic section, sequential in nature, follows in which trills play a prominent role, while the splashing figure continues in the accompaniment. At m. 108 Liszt, again utilizing the upper register, injects a streaming arpeggiated pattern that incorporates repeated notes to create an exceptionally liquid sound (Ex. V-50). Liszt proceeds to

Ex. V-50: LISZT, "Les jeux d'eau à la Villa d'Este," mm. 108-15.



develop the melodic ideas by setting them against different watery figurations. The triadic main theme, for instance, returns in rolled chords, with a tremolo background that quickly gives way to a stunning dribbling effect: a stepwise descending sequence comprised of rapid repeated notes and a falling arpeggio (Ex. V-51). In this passage Liszt's exploitation of the brilliance of the piano's top register is remarkable.

Ex. V-51: LISZT, "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este," mm. 135-40.



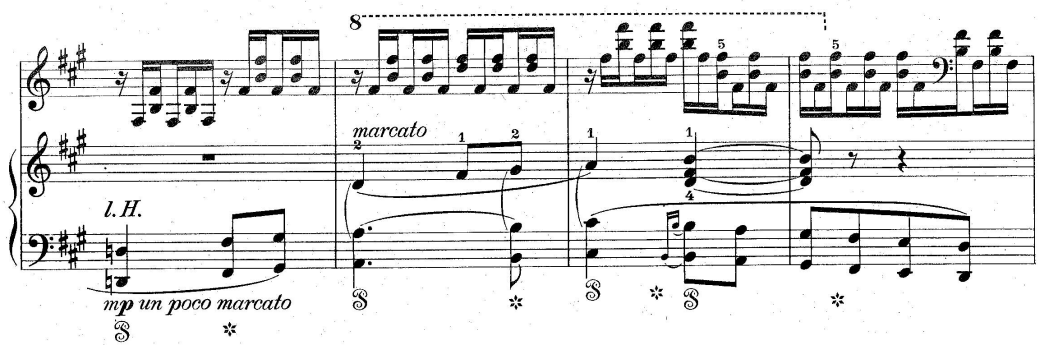
At the heart of the piece, roughly corresponding to the midpoint, Liszt inserts a biblical quote from the Gospel according to St. John iv/14: "*Sed aqua quam ego dabo, fiet in eo fons aquae salientis in vitam aeternam*" (But the water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into life everlasting). The significance of the appearance of this text is reflected musically by several notable changes. The first is the introduction of three staves to encompass the expanding range. Second, Liszt adopts, for the first time, a gently undulating triplet accompaniment in the left hand suggestive of a compound meter. Finally, after having shifted to E major at the beginning of the development section (m. 132), the tonality here slips briefly down to D major (Ex. V-52). The entire passage is marked by an atmosphere of reverential tranquility.

Ex. V-52: LISZT, "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este," mm. 144-47.



With its restless and agitated mood, the material that follows provides a stark contrast. Based upon the previously mentioned episodic section, this turbulent passage features tremolo figures that leap wildly from one register to another, while the melodic material, heard in trombone-like octaves in the bass, rises and intensifies (Ex. V-53).

Ex. V-53: LISZT, "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este," mm. 182-85.



At the piece's dramatic climax (m. 220), Liszt evokes the image of the fountains majestically welling up from the lower depths of the piano to shimmering heights. Once again flowing from the C# dominant-ninth chord, the initial upward-shooting arpeggios from Liszt's introduction return, this time sweeping across the keyboard's entire range to create an unprecedented wash of sound (Ex. V-54). The close, a much abbreviated

Ex. V-54: LISZT, "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este," mm. 220-26.



recapitulation that briefly echoes the main theme (the melancholy idea now dissolving into the tranquil triadic motif), is dominated by rolled chords and tremolos.

"Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este" abounds with water imagery in nearly every measure and is an extraordinary and revolutionary work. Through its lyrical beauty, lush harmonic language, and imaginative figurations that evocatively flow and shimmer, the piece captures the idyllic serenity of the villa's graceful fountains. As we have already

observed, it is essentially the sum of all of Liszt's depictions of water. In fact, in many respects, this work can be viewed as the culmination of many of the nineteenth century's musical trends: an evolution toward a more flexible approach to form, harmony, key structure, rhythm, and sound.

. . .

Having examined Liszt's solo piano works that evoke water, many compositional patterns and devices intrinsic to its expression can be heard and seen. The sonic and mechanical capabilities of the evolving nineteenth-century piano played an important role in shaping these pieces. In many of the works — and, especially, "Les jeux d'eaux" — Liszt uses the entire compass of the keyboard, exploiting the upper and lower registers for both spatial and coloristic effects. Furthermore, the rapid repetition of notes that appear in many of Liszt's most inventive figurations became possible only after the improvements in the piano's action. Water imagery became much more compelling as the instrument's sonority and resonating power improved dramatically through the course of the century.

In all of the solo pieces one finds several devices that suggest surface and light effects: the high tremolo, trill, and repeated note. The low tremolo, meanwhile, implies agitated or turbulent movement of water. The rolled chord, which effectively adds a shimmering color whenever it appears, is used in abundance. Most significant, however, is Liszt's employment of creative patterns and figurations, which, with the assumed but not denoted help of the damper pedal, suggest the movement of water: arpeggios,

wavelike figures based on broken chords, and scale passages, both ascending and descending.

Generally speaking, all of the pieces share several important features. All are in major keys, employ moderate tempi, and most, with the notable exceptions of "St. François de Paule" and "Les jeux d'eaux," utilize a lilting triple or compound meter. In addition, the harmonic rhythm in many of the works is predominantly static, implying the flowing and serene aspects of water. Certain harmonies and scales often appear in many of these works: the major chord with added sixth, dominant-ninth, half-diminished-seventh, and dominant-seventh-flat-ninth chords, and the pentatonic and chromatic scales. Some of these, such as the dominant-ninth and half-diminished-seventh chords and the pentatonic scale seem to suggest water's transparent and elusive nature, while the chromatic scale is frequently used to suggest liquid, flowing movement. Liszt's coloristic utilization of harmony and scales had a profound effect on the subsequent generation of composers.

Liszt's two greatest water pieces, "Au bord d'une source" and "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este," stand as bookends to his career and, between them, express water's effervescent quality and its spiritual essence. These pieces had an immediate impact on Ravel and cleared the path for his own impressionistic water works.

PART III: JEUX D'EAU



FIG. 2: FONTANA DEI DRAGHI, VILLA D'ESTE

CHAPTER VI

RAVEL'S WATER MUSIC FOR PIANO

In 1877, the year Liszt composed "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este," Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) was two years old. Twenty-four years later, Ravel, then a young conservatory student, would introduce his own *Jeux d'eau* (1901). This early work was to have profound consequences, for not only did it surpass Liszt's experiments, but it also pushed the limits of keyboard expression and virtuosity to greater heights. In so doing, it established Ravel's reputation as a formidable composer whose style was already fully developed.

Despite his early emergence and a career that spanned four decades, Ravel's output was relatively small. Of the approximately sixty extant works, more than half are instrumental, and the majority of those are devoted to the piano. An inventory of the piano pieces includes fifteen original works, three of which are suites and another three of which are scored for two pianos. Within this small body of music for solo piano, it is therefore remarkable to find three major works in which water plays a central role: *Jeux d'eau*, "Une barque sur l'océan" from *Miroirs* (1904-5) and "Ondine" from *Gaspard de la nuit* (1908). To account for this apparent fascination with water, one can only speculate, for, unlike Debussy, who wrote many works inspired by his well-known and documented attraction to water, Ravel was silent on the subject.[1] In exploring the various

[1] In addition to his orchestral masterpiece *La Mer,* Debussy wrote seven piano pieces that contain water imagery: "En bateau" from *Petite Suite* (1886), "Jardins sous la pluie" from *Estampes* (1903), *L'Isle joyeuse* (1904), "Reflets dans l'eau" from *Images I* (1905), "Poissons d'or" from *Images II* (1907), "La Cathédrale engloutie" from *Préludes I* (1910), and "Ondine" from *Préludes II* (1913), and water plays a

influences upon Ravel, however, one can make a compelling case as to why water played such a significant and prominent role.

Ravel grew up in *fin-de-siècle* Paris, the center of what was an artistic revolution. This home to Debussy, Satie, Fauré, Poulenc, Matisse, Manet, Monet, Mallarmé, Proust, Gide, and the adopted home of Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Falla, Picasso, Modigliani, Wilde and Stein[2] provided fertile ground for the cross-pollination among writers, painters, poets, and musicians. It was from this milieu that the influence of the French Impressionist painters and Symbolist writers led to the liberation of French music from German domination.

In 1889 Paris played host to the Exposition Universelle, a historic event in which fifty countries participated. Here, for the first time, a broad Western audience was introduced to exotic spectacles and sounds from the East such as the Javanese gamelan. The world was changing at a rapid pace with wondrous technological advances — such as the telephone, airplane, and automobile — and many more on the horizon while, at the same time, heading toward the brink of disaster that was the First World War. It was against this complex backdrop that Ravel, a man of great sensitivity, developed. Inspired by the many aesthetic movements of the period — Impressionism, Symbolism, Exoticism — as well as other diverse elements such as Basque and Spanish musics, jazz, Nature, and machines, Ravel created his own musical universe.

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critical role in half a dozen song accompaniments. The influence of water on his life is well documented. From the time he was a young man, he yearned for a career at sea, and throughout his lifetime, he would often vacation on the coast of Brittany. His letters contain numerous references to his passion for the sea. For a thorough discussion of this topic, see Simon Trezise, *Debussy: La Mer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[2] For a fascinating account of the avant-garde in France from 1885 to World War II, see Roger Shattuck, *The Banquet Years*, rev. ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1968).

Posterity has labeled Debussy and Ravel as Impressionist composers, despite their protests of such an association with the painters' movement.[3] Both composers enjoyed close contact with the leading artists of the day, and there can be little doubt that a certain cross-fertilization of ideas took place. In painting, the play of light and water was one of the notable emblems of the Impressionists' palette, and water would become one of the principal subjects. Debussy often spoke of his appreciation for the expressive power of the visual arts and frequently thought in painterly terms. According to the composer, the orchestral effects of *La Mer* were achieved by means of a "palette of sounds and by skillful brushstrokes[4] designed to convey in gradations of rare and brilliant colors the play of light and shade and the chiaroscuro of the everchanging seascape."[5] Yet he believed that the composer could surpass the painter with his art, for music — as a continuous, fluid art — could combine different intensities of light in a single soundscape. In his essay "Definition of Music as a Free Art" of 1903 Debussy stated his credo:

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[3] In an article that appeared in *Music Digest* (March 1928) entitled "Take Jazz Seriously," Ravel had this to say about impressionism: "If you ask me if we have an impressionist school of music I must admit that I have never associated the term with music. Painting, *ah ça c'est autre chose!* Monet and his school were impressionists. But in the kindred art there is no counterpart of this." Quoted in *A Ravel Reader; Correspondence, Articles, Interviews*, compiled and ed. Arbie Orenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 391.

[4] The profusion of patchy brushstrokes, when viewed by the observer at different distances, visually changes the perception of the work. This is not unlike the array of notes found in many of Debussy's and Ravel's piano works, especially those devoted to water; when played at tempo, they produce an entirely different effect.

[5] Cited in Edward Lockspeiser *Debussy: His Life and Mind, II (1902-1918)* (London: Cassell and Co., 1962), 16.

> Music is the expression of the movement of waters, the play of curves described by changing breezes. There is nothing more musical than a sunset. He who feels what he sees will find no more beautiful example of development in all that book which, alas, musicians read too little — the book of Nature . . . [6]

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Impressionists' preoccupation with the play of light and water[7] was reflected in the music of Debussy and Ravel.

On a broader scale, the aesthetics of the nineteenth century had evolved from the eighteenth century's ideal of classical formalism to a more fluid and impermanent construct expressive of Romanticism and its successors' ideas. The Impressionists' concerns with color, atmosphere, and the effects of light, and their special technique of blurring their images, served to desolidify their subjects. Similarly, the Symbolist poets sought greater fluidity by exploiting the musical and sonorous properties of words. These tendencies found expression in the music of Debussy and Ravel, as they, too, blurred their forms and luxuriated in the colors and sonorities of their harmonies. It is no coincidence, then, that water became the ideal subject for their art.

The piano played a central role in the music of Debussy and Ravel. Debussy's biographer Edward Lockspeiser has noted the instrument is "at once the most mechanical of instruments, the most illusory and the most evocative," ideal for the expression of water imagery.[8] While it has often been suggested that Debussy's pianistic style appears

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[6] Leon Vallas, *The Theories of Claude Debussy*, *Musicien français*, trans. Maire O'Brien (London: Oxford University Press, 1929), 8.

[7] Water appears in a large majority of paintings of the Impressionists. Just recently an entire exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum was devoted to *Manet and the Sea,* February 15-May 30, 2004, published catalog ed. Juliet Wilson-Bareau and David Degener, Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art. Of course, one cannot think of water and the Impressionists without first considering Claude Monet and his *Water Lilies* series.

[8] Lockspeiser, 43.

to have been inspired by Chopin,[9] Ravel's seems to derive more from Liszt. Their preference in instrument reflects their respective styles: Ravel, like Liszt to some degree, favored the straight-strung Érard for its clarity and lighter touch, while Debussy preferred the Blütner, which had a heavier action and a richer, fuller sound.

Ravel's art was a unique balance of firm musical ideals — clear melodic structures, precise rhythms, and classical forms — and a complete fluidity that has come to be associated with Impressionism. Unlike Debussy, however, who sought to describe the resultant sensations of viewing a subject, Ravel's music comes closer to describing the object itself. Perhaps Ravel's friend, the pianist Jacques Février, expressed this contrast best when he described Debussy as "*un poète voluptueux*" and Ravel as "*un classique sensuel*."[10]

While forging a forward-looking path in his compositions, Ravel frequently looked to the past for musical templates. He maintained that "composers should learn their craft like painters — by imitating good models."[11] As a teacher, he offered this advice to his students:

> If you have nothing to say, you cannot do better, until you decide to give up composing for good, than say something again what has already been well said. If you have something to say, that something will never emerge more distinctly than when you are being unwittingly unfaithful to your model.[12]

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[9] François Lesure, "Debussy, (Achille-) Claude," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd. ed., ed. Stanley Sadie, 29 vols. (London: Macmillan, 2001) vol. 7, 103.

[10] Cited in Roy Howat, "Ravel and the Piano," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ravel*, ed. Deborah Mawer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 77.

[11] Orenstein, *A Ravel Reader,* 119.

[12] Ibid.

These words hold the key to Ravel's genius, which was his ability to absorb the essential elements from other models, distill them, and then create something new.

His library contained the works of those composers whom he revered and studied scrupulously: Rameau, Bach, Mozart (whom he adored above all others), Schubert, Schumann, and Chopin. It appears Liszt enjoyed a special status as evidenced by the many volumes and different editions in the collection.[13] Ravel shared with Debussy a mutual admiration for Liszt. He was a champion and defender of the older composer and credited him with having provided enough musical matter to spawn several generations of future composers. From our vantage point, it is evident that Liszt was especially influential on Ravel's piano works, particularly those that deal with water. The *Transcendental Etudes* (1851) and works from *Années de pèlerinage* such as "Au bord d'une source" and "Les jeux d'eau à la Villa d'Este" provided Ravel with the models for many of his own innovations.

There are some interesting links to be drawn between Ravel and Liszt. Broadly speaking, each drew enormous inspiration from literature and poetry and, perhaps as a result, shared a predilection for program music. Both composers often reworked their own solo piano pieces for orchestra.[14] More specifically, however, they evinced similar interests that are reflected in their piano music, for example: the demonic (*Mephisto Waltz* and "Scarbo," respectively), bells ("La Campanella" and "La vallée des cloches"), Hungarian music (the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* and *Tzigane*) and, probably the most

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[13] Benjamin Ivry, *Maurice Ravel: A Life* (New York: Welcome Rain, 2000), 107.

[14] Ravel shared Liszt's tendency to avoid thinking in terms of a final version for his compositions. For example, *La Valse* (1920) exists in three different arrangements.

apparent link, water ("Les jeux d'eaux" and *Jeux d'eau*). Ravel's water pieces, furthermore, bear the mark of Liszt's virtuosity.

Jeux d'eau

Written while Ravel was still a student at the Conservatoire, *Jeux d'eau* stands as a clear departure from the musical vocabulary of the nineteenth century and has become a *locus classicus* for musical Impressionism. As the title suggests, the young composer was influenced by Liszt's own revolutionary water work, "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este," which, in myriad ways, had laid the foundation for the music of Ravel and Debussy. What is perhaps less remarked upon, however, is the equally significant debt the piece owes to Liszt's much earlier foray in watery writing, "Au bord d'une source," as will become apparent.

As was often the case, Ravel the "imitator" becomes Ravel the innovator. In *Jeux d'eau* he discovers a way to use the resources of the piano to create new scintillating sonorities and technical effects. Based on the play of water, this work marks a radical departure from his earlier piano pieces such as the *Sérénade grotesque* (1893), *Menuet antique* (1895), and *Pavane pour une Infante défunte* (1899). With the composition of *Jeux d'eau* Ravel created a boldly original work, one that would become strikingly characteristic of his mature style and define a new musical language. So revolutionary

was his creation that it gave rise to the alleged controversy that fueled the rivalry between Debussy and himself and ultimately led to the end of their friendship.[15]

On January 30, 1906, after hearing the premiere of Ravel's *Miroirs*, the influential music critic Pierre Lalo (1866-1943), a great admirer of Debussy's, wrote:

> The principal new work of the evening was a suite of five piano pieces by M. Maurice Ravel, which do not resemble students' exercises. I have often spoken of this musician, one of the most finely gifted of his generation, despite several very apparent and annoying faults. The most striking is the strange resemblance of his music to that of Claude Debussy.

He concluded his review with the following remark:

> Following Chopin, Schumann, and Liszt, M. Debussy has created a new manner of writing for the piano, a special style of particular virtuosity . . . . Today, one hardly hears any pieces which do not contain the arabesques, passage work, and the arpeggios discovered by M. Debussy.[16]

Taking exception to these remarks, Ravel wasted no time firing back with the sharp point of his pen:

> February 5, 1906
>
> Dear Sir,
>
> First of all, I wish to thank you sincerely for the long discussion you devoted to my latest pieces in your article, which, although not always laudatory, was serious and sincere. You find it ridiculous, as indeed I do, for me to defend my

---

[15] Unfortunately, no correspondence between the two composers has surfaced, but references to Ravel in Debussy's letters were cool and cynical in tone, for the most part. For example, in a letter to their mutual publisher Jacques Durand, Debussy said of Ravel's *Histoires naturelles,* "It's an extremely curious score! It's artificial and chimerical, rather like the house of a wizard! But 'le Cygne' is very pretty music, even so." Or this condescending remark to Louis Laloy: "As for Ravel, I recognize the marks of your usual ingenuity . . . . Even if I don't feel he's quite found his way, he'll be able to thank you for pointing one out for him . . . " For his part, Ravel admired Debussy enormously. When *Pelléas et Melisande* first opened in Paris, he attended every performance. To his mind, *Prélude à L'Après-midi d'un faune* was "a unique miracle of music" and close to perfection (the ideal state that Ravel constantly sought) and was the one piece he would wish to hear while on his deathbed. Orenstein, *A Ravel Reader*, 486.

[16] Orenstein, *A Ravel Reader,* 79 n.

> conception of music against yours. I will leave that task to my future works, which is more logical.
>
> I would however like to draw your attention to the following point. You dwell upon the fact that Debussy invented a rather special kind of pianistic writing. Now, *Jeux d'eau* was published at the beginning of 1902, when nothing more than Debussy's three pieces, *Pour le piano*, were extant. I don't have to tell you of my deep admiration for these pieces, but from a purely pianistic point of view, they contain nothing new. As a point of information, I would like to mention the *Menuet antique* (composed in 1895, published in 1898) in which you will already find some attempts at this writing.
>
> I hope you will excuse this legitimate claim, and, dear Sir, believe me, very truly yours,
>
> Maurice Ravel[17]

In retrospect, it now seems clear that Ravel's protest was valid, for, though he surely had been influenced by the older Debussy, it was his score that paved a new road in piano expression and technique. Only *after* its appearance did Debussy bring forth his most innovative works for the instrument, which in turn would have their effect on Ravel, in what became a truly fertile, if distant, exchange of musical ideas. Beginning with the effervescent "Jardin sous la pluie" from the triptych *Estampes* (1903) and including "Reflets dans l'eau" (*Images I*, 1905), his most stunning exemplar of the subject, Debussy would, himself, compose six solo piano works that feature water imagery. Though these exhibit much of the vocabulary under examination, Debussy was, by nature, the iconoclast while Ravel worked to expand dramatically upon the language laid down by his forebears; in the case of water, his progenitor was obviously Liszt.

Ravel's score opens with a quotation from Henri Régnier's (1864-1936) poem "Fête d'eau" from the collection *La Cité des eaux* (1902): "*Dieu fluvial riant de l'eau qui le chatouille*."[18] According to Ravel,

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[17] Ibid.

[18] A river god laughing at the water, which tickles (or titillates) him.

> This piece, inspired by the sound of water and the music of fountains, waterfalls and streams, is built on two themes like the first movement of a sonata, without being entirely subjected to the classical scheme of tonality.[19]

Though akin to the brilliant, translucent fountains captured in Liszt's earlier model, Ravel's *Jeux d'eau* goes further, conveying the essence of water. Fluidity pervades all aspects of the work: its formal design, colorful harmonies (that rely heavily on seconds, sevenths, ninths, elevenths, and thirteenths), exploitation of the piano's sonorous capabilities, innovative use of irregular rhythmic patterns, and great variety of liquid figurations all coalesce to create a musical panoply of water imagery.

The piece loosely adheres to sonata form in overall shape, though it freely departs from the strictures of classical tonality and blurs the boundaries of its diverse sections. The work opens on an E major seventh with added ninth harmony and closes on an E major seventh, the latter of which is a characteristic trait of Ravel's harmonic style. There are two principal themes (A, B) and a subordinate third theme (C) that is rhythmically derived from the second. The first subject (A), which appears at the outset without introduction, is not so much a melody as an extended arpeggiated figure (that outlines an E major-seventh chord with added ninth alternating with an A major seventh). Its undulating contour and quixotic rhythm is evocative of a delicately murmuring fountain (Ex. VI-1). This effect is reminiscent of the opening measures of Liszt's "Les

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[19] Cited in Roland-Manuel, *Maurice Ravel*, trans. Cynthia Jolly (London: Dennis Dobson, 1938), 31.

Ex. VI-1: RAVEL, *Jeux d'eau*, mm. 1-2. Theme "A," right hand.



jeux d'eau à la Villa d'Este" (see Ex. V-42), with its ascending broken chords, where a descriptive watery gesture — "the music of fountains" — takes the place of a more conventional melody. The gesture expresses the essence of water: its movement, its gently splashing murmur, its sparkling play with light.

The second theme (B), which appears at m. 19, is pentatonic (initially F#, G#, C#, D#, with B added in m. 21 where the melody is harmonized in fifths) and has a broader character, perhaps suggesting a flowing river. Its first appearance is accompanied by a brilliant chain of seconds heard above (Ex. VI-2). The pungency of these dyads, a device Liszt used to great effect in "Au bord d'une source," produces a sparkling quality.

Ex. VI-2: RAVEL, *Jeux d'eau*, mm. 19-22. Theme "B," left, then right, hand.



The underlying harmony, meanwhile, is relatively static. A subordinate theme (C), though rhythmically and melodically similar to the second, is more languid by contrast and is reminiscent of the opening subject in terms of mood (Ex. VI-3).

Ex. VI-3: RAVEL, *Jeux d'eau*, mm. 29-32. Theme "C," left hand.

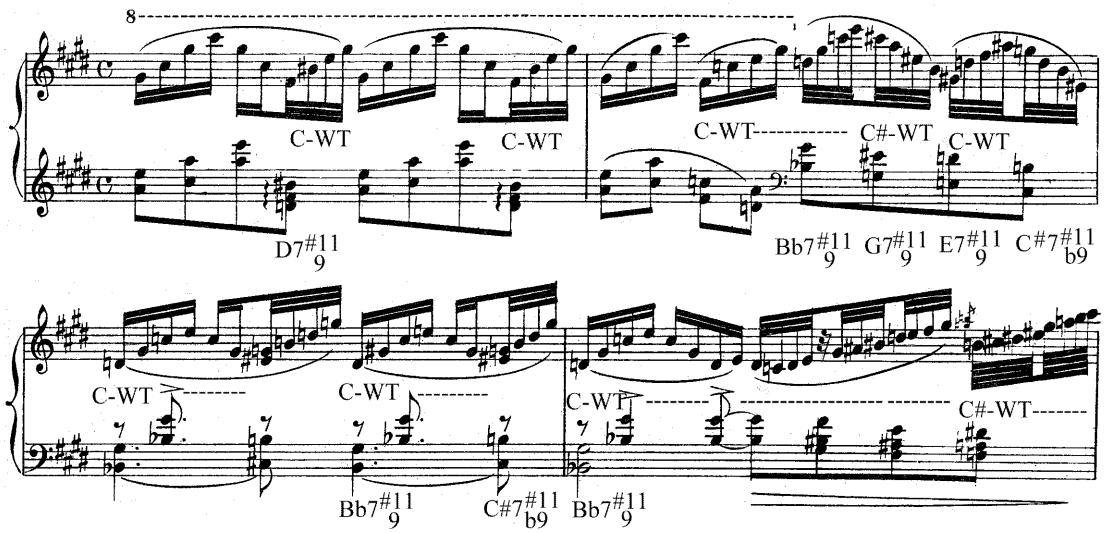


Characterized by dominant-ninth chords descending in seconds, the melody is heard against a series of repeated alternating fourths and fifths, also moving in seconds. This theme will serve as the primary source of material in the development section.

Apart from the aforementioned major harmonies, Ravel employs an extensive variety of colorful extended major and dominant-type chords — many of which are characteristic of his harmonic style but some of which bear specific associations to the depiction of water — as well as half-diminished-seventh chords and exotic scales. The conspicuous use of both whole-tone scales (on C and on C#), a relatively rare occurrence in Ravel's *oeuvre*,[20] in m. 6 suggests a floating quality early in the work (Ex. VI-4). This

[20] Howat, 80.

Ex. VI-4: RAVEL, *Jeux d'eau*, mm. 3-6.

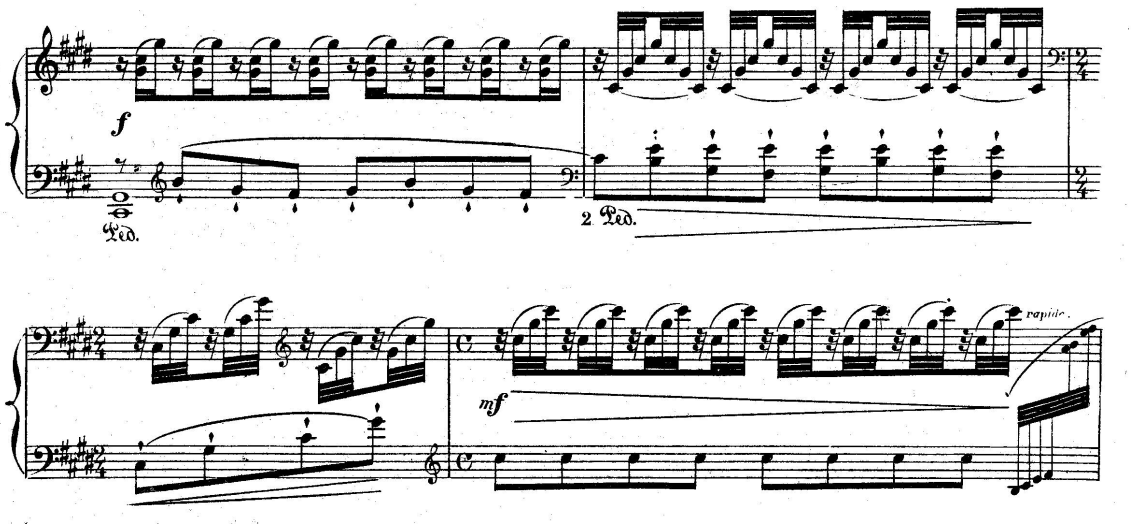


is anticipated in the preceding bars by the prevalence of dominant-ninth chords[21] with added sharp eleventh, each of which comprises a five-pitch whole-tone segment, and particularly in m. 4, where Ravel presents a string of three of these chords descending in minor thirds. To capture water's expansive, translucent qualities, Ravel makes extensive use of pentatonic scales and open fifths. The first such passage (mm. 15-18) occurs just prior to the introduction of the second theme where open fifth figurations[22] in the right hand are underpinned by a pentatonic line (Ex. VI-5). Another noteworthy example

[21] Though some are notated enharmonically as augmented sixths rather than dominant sevenths, the aural effect of these harmonies is the same. The added sharp eleventh takes the place of the absent perfect fifth.

[22] A device that Liszt had effectively employed in "Au bord d'une source." See Ex. V-17, mm. 26-27.

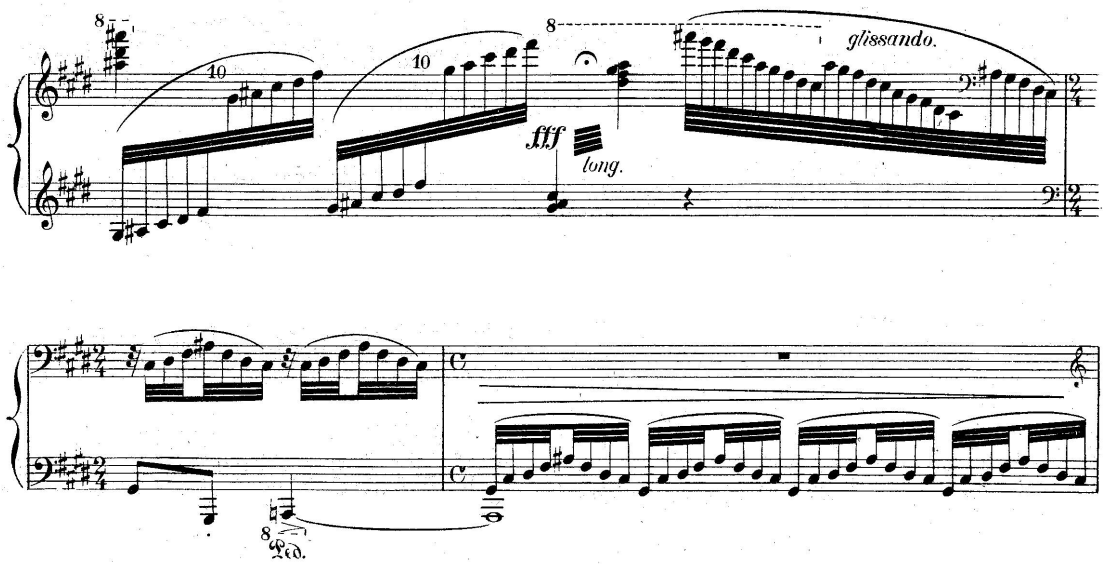
Ex. VI-5: RAVEL, *Jeux d'eau*, mm. 15-18.



appears at the climax of the development. Here, following a rising pentatonic scale that culminates on a shimmering tremolo and fermata, a glissando on the black keys spills downward over three octaves. This is succeeded by arpeggiated iterations of the same "black key" pentatonic collection over an A-natural pedal tone in the bass (Ex. VI-6).[23]

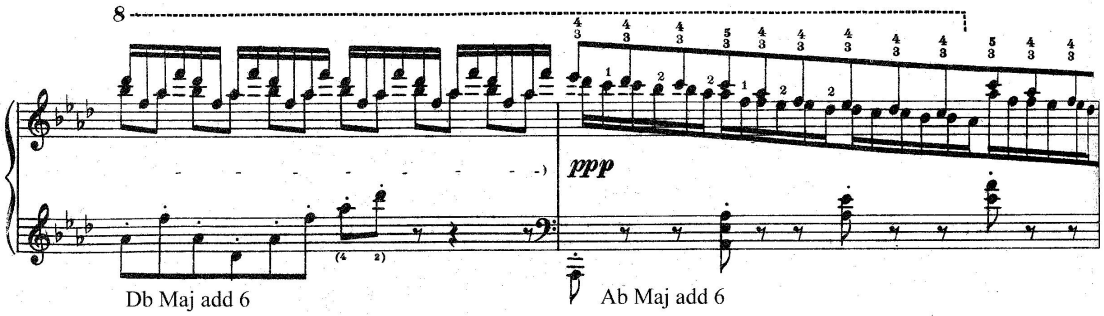
[23] The conspicuous use of this foreign A natural, the lowest note on the keyboard, rather than the expected G#, in mm. 49-50 will be discussed later in this study.

Ex. VI-6: RAVEL, *Jeux d'eau*, mm. 48-50.

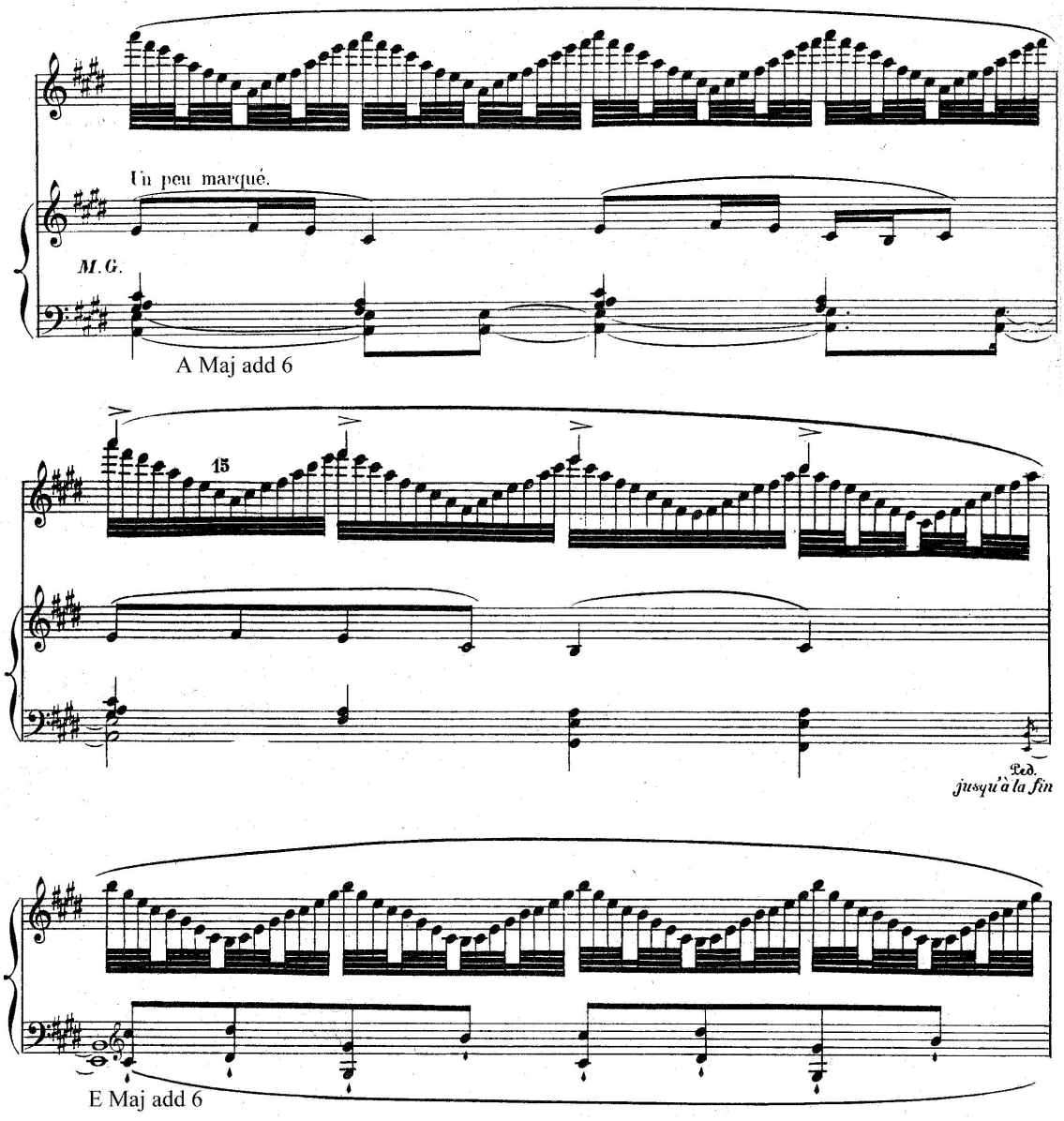


At the close, Ravel once again echoes Liszt's "Au bord d'une source," specifically in its harmonic design: an extended arpeggiated passage, suggestive of a pentatonic sound, is heard over the subdominant harmony with added sixth followed by the tonic with added sixth (Exx. VI-7a and b).

Ex. VI-7a: LISZT, "Au bord d'un source," mm. 63-64.

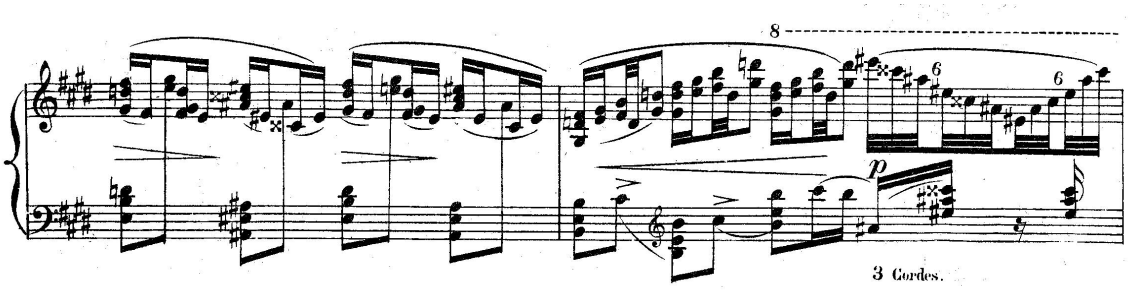


Ex. VI-7b: RAVEL, *Jeux d'eau*, mm. 80-82.



Throughout, the tritone plays a prominent role. At mm. 32-35, for instance, at what is the close of the subordinate theme (C) and the beginning of the development, Ravel introduces Lisztian tritone cadences where E dominant-ninth chords alternate with A# major (Ex. VI-8).[24] The subsequent material that flows from this passage

Ex. VI-8: RAVEL, *Jeux d'eau*, mm. 33-34.



prominently displays the half-diminished-seventh harmony— initially the G# half-diminished seventh that derives from and substitutes for the E dominant ninth (Ex. VI-9). Also worth noting is the extended use of a G# pedal that begins midway through the development, at its climax at m. 49, and continues well into the recapitulation, through bar 66. This pedal point introduces a new dimension: that of depth and murkiness. Its effect on the first theme, which again appears in E major at m. 62, is to add breadth and create tonal ambiguity.

[24] As Howat points out, this is a device Debussy would exploit at the end of *La Mer*. Howat, 77.

Ex. VI-9: RAVEL, *Jeux d'eau*, mm. 35-36.



In the cadenza, Ravel adds a novel device to the water vocabulary: he superimposes a C triad over an F# triad,[25] implying an extended dominant harmony built on an octatonic (diminished) collection, which effectively drowns the sense of tonality (Ex. VI-10).[26] This device, as will be observed, comes into play in the later water pieces, most prominently in "Ondine."

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[25] See Steven Baur, "Ravel's 'Russian' Period: Octatonicism in His Early Works, 1893-1908," *JAMS* 52 (1999), 564. Noting the marked resemblance to Stravinsky's famous harmonic innovation, Baur has called this Ravel's "*Petrushka* chord."

[26] While some have referred to this passage as bitonal, more recently, others have described it as octatonicism, although there is no evidence that Ravel viewed it as such. For an extensive discussion of this subject, see Peter Kaminsky, "Ravel's Late Music and the Problem of 'Polytonality'," *Music Theory Spectrum* 26 (2004): 237-64, and Baur, 531-92. Interestingly, Baur has noted that Richard Taruskin has traced the origins of octatonicism to the "prominent mediant relationships in the music of Schubert and Liszt."

Ex. VI-10, RAVEL, *Jeux d'eau*, mm. 72-73.



Jeux d'eau belongs to the same joyful and glistening world of water that Liszt created in "Au bord d'une source" and "Les jeux d'eaux á la Villa d'Este"; and, with regard to dynamics, once again Ravel takes his cue from the older composer. Underscoring the delicate aspects of water portrayed in these works, both Ravel and Liszt

employ relatively quiet dynamics throughout. With few exceptions (notably in the development, leading up to the climactic trill and glissando), most of *Jeux d'eau* is marked *piano*, *pianissimo*, and, in the cadenza, *pianississimo*.

Using a colorful palette of sonorities and the full breadth of the keyboard, Ravel adeptly draws from the instrument a wide variety of effects relating to various aspects of water. Most of the work relies heavily on the upper register to create sparkling, shimmering, and transparent effects. Yet there are crucial moments when he skillfully exploits the lower range, simulating water's depth. A vivid example occurs at the aforementioned developmental climax (mm. 48-49), as the glissando descends from the highest A# to the lowest note available (A natural), depicting a dramatic plunge to the water's depths (see Ex. VI-6). At this point, Ravel challenges the limits of the keyboard's compass and, as Roy Howat has suggested, is probably hinting at the "phantom" G# below the A actually heard.[27]

Ravel often implies a spatial dimension by repeating material in different registers; in mm. 19-21, for example, the second theme is heard three times in alternating registers. Conversely, he sometimes compresses his material within a narrow range in such a way as to require the overlapping of the hands. Blurring melody and harmony, this treatment occurs at both the initial statement of the second theme (B) (mm. 19-20; see Ex. VI-2), where the hands are interlocked, as well as at mm. 31-32, where the subordinate theme (C) is recast with the melody embedded within the accompaniment

[27] Howat, 77. A similar situation arises in "Scarbo" where, according to Nancy Bricard's edition, Ravel would have probably preferred a low F double-sharp and G# rather than the A natural in mm. 15, 334, 402, and 409. See "Scarbo" in *Ravel, Gaspard de la nuit,* ed. Nancy Bricard (Van Nuys, Calif.: Alfred, 1990).

(see Ex. VI-3).[28] Ravel adopts the opposite approach on the final pages where contrasting sonorities are heard in a triple-layered texture with a very broad compass. At this point, following Liszt's notational innovation in "Les jeux d'eaux," Ravel presents his material on three staves (see Ex. VI-7b).[29] One should bear in mind that Ravel conceived this work on his Érard piano,[30] a straight-strung instrument on which the contrast of color between the registers would sound more distinct than on a modern cross-strung piano.

In order to create as much fluidity as possible, Ravel treats meter and rhythm in *Jeux d'eau* with great flexibility and freedom. While the initial and predominant meter is common time,[31] there are many excursions into 2/4 and occasional passages of 3/4. In all, there are twenty-one metrical changes within the span of the work's eighty-five measures. The preponderance of small note values such as thirty-seconds and sixty-fourths creates the rapidity and lightness evocative of the animated waters.[32] To create a sense of the water's impulsive motion, Ravel builds rapid fluctuations into the rhythm by suddenly diminishing the note values within a bar. This device is crucial to the opening theme (see Ex. VI-1) and recurs throughout, most strikingly at m. 37 (Ex. VI-11). Such

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[28] This treatment can be traced back to Liszt's "Au bord d'une source."

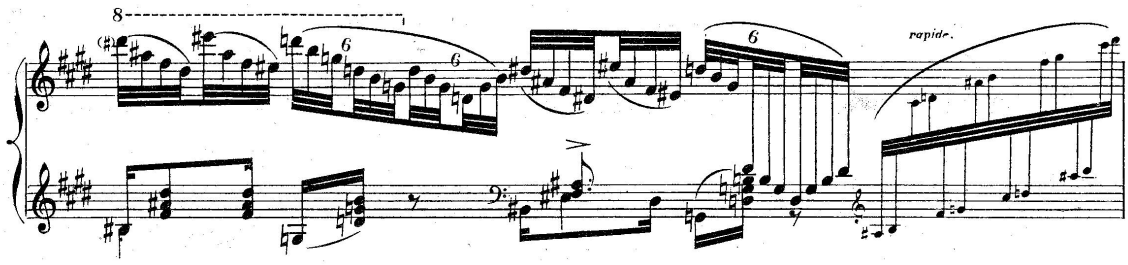
[29] Interestingly, the final pages of Debussy's "Pagodes" from *Estampes* bear a strong resemblance.

[30] It is quite possible that Liszt conceived his piece on an Érard as well. See Chapter V, n. 18.

[31] It is worth noting that Ravel has chosen the same meter as Liszt's fountain piece.

[32] Ravels tempo is eighth=144 and marked "*Très doux*."

Ex. VI-11: RAVEL, *Jeux d'eau*, m. 37.



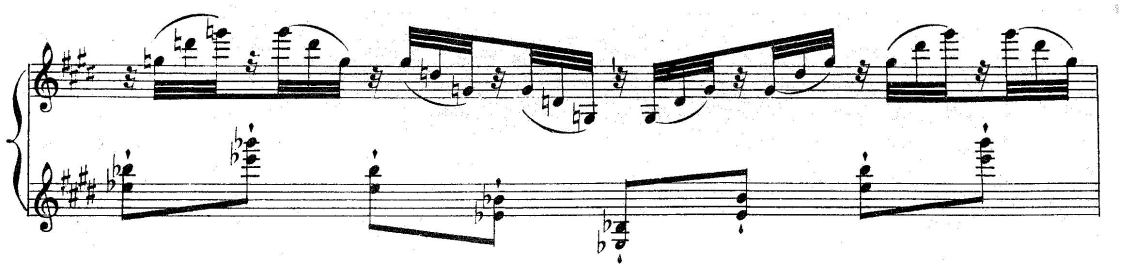
short, rapid runs, frequently located at transitional points, suggest sudden sprays of water. While much of *Jeux d'eau* exhibits Ravel's characteristic rhythmic precision, here, for the first time, he uses a new technique. Extending beyond the typical two-against-three or three-against-four patterns, he introduces more complex, irregular groupings. The juxtaposition of groups of quintuplets and septuplets in thirty-second-note values, when heard in rapid succession, creates a liquid effect (see Ex. VI-10). As will be observed, Ravel will employ this elastic rhythmic treatment with increasing frequency in his other works that express water.

Jeux d'eau not only celebrates the physical sensations of water but captures its illusive complexity with imaginative devices. In every measure, the listener is presented with a wide array of descriptive figures, such as glissandi, tremolos, runs, broken chords, and numerous wavelike gestures. At times, the score visually reflects some of the imagery in its graphic notation: the pointillistic droplets at mm. 15-17 (see Ex. VI-5), gently bubbling jets in the right hand ostinati at bars 29-30 (see Ex. VI-3), splashing major-second dyads in bars 19-20 (see Ex. VI-2), rising waters depicted by ascending chromatic scales throughout the development, symmetrical rippling waves in bars 80-82

(see Ex. VI-7b), and the previously noted sprays (see Ex. VI-11) are apparent to the eye as well as the ear.

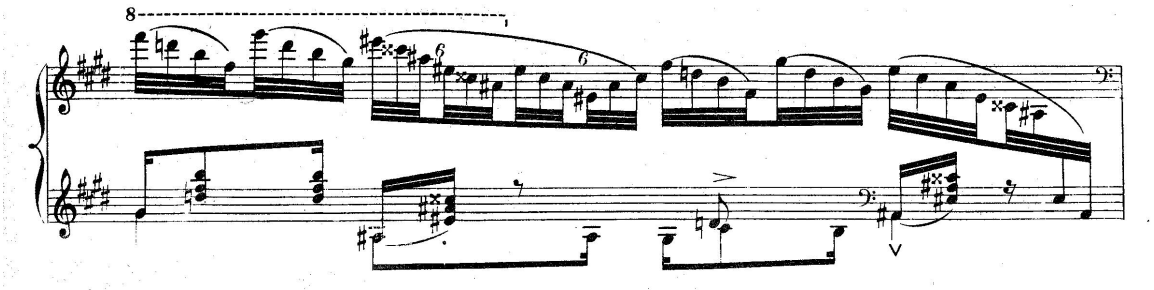
Several passages demand closer attention for their compelling depiction of water imagery. In the exposition, after a shimmering tremolo, Ravel playfully creates a splashing sensation: a simple open fifth broken-chord pattern leap-frogs up and down the keyboard alternating with open fifth dyads (Ex. VI-12). Later, in the short transitional

Ex. VI-12: RAVEL, *Jeux d'eau*, m. 27.



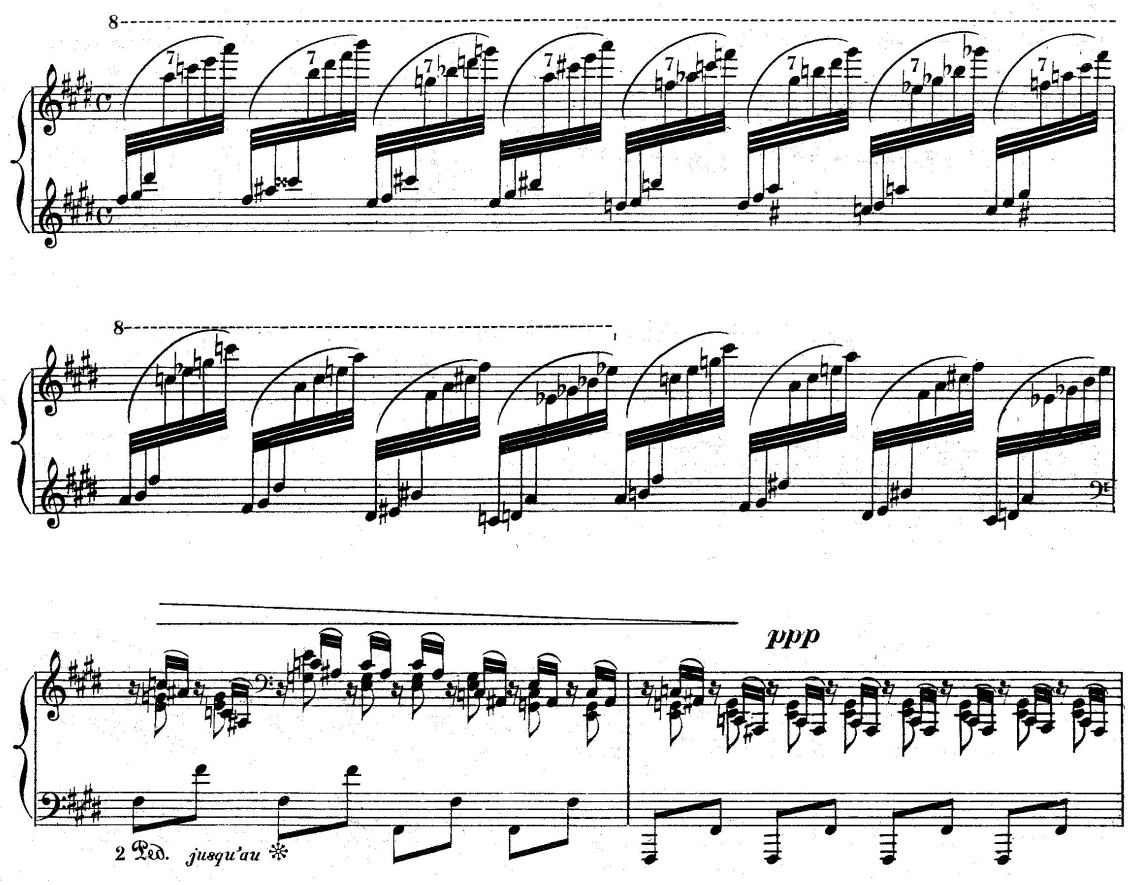
section that precedes the development, a stream of broken chords gently spills down from the upper register to produce a silvery liquid impression (Ex. VI-13). The composer

Ex. VI-13: RAVEL, *Jeux d'eau*, m. 35.



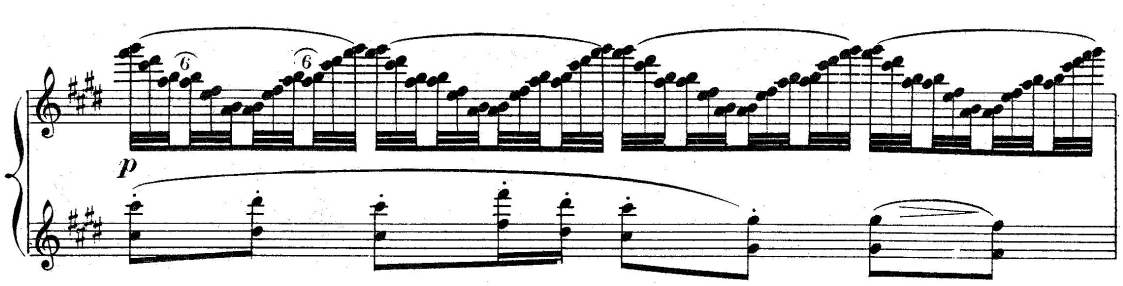
explores the murky depths at m. 50 (see Ex. VI-6) — after the aforementioned plunge to the bottom of the keyboard — with a static pentatonic wavelike figure in the left-hand, anchored by a G# pedal, that simulates an underwater environment. The prelude to the cadenza, starting at m. 67, presents some striking imagery: a series of shimmering broken-chord septuplets gradually rises before descending to the lowest register to depict a shower (Ex. VI-14).

Ex. VI-14: RAVEL, *Jeux d'eau*, mm. 68-71.



Ravel concludes his piece with the most evocative imagery as the second theme (B) reappears, first heard against the background of a glistening stream of major-second dyads (Ex. VI-15), then accompanied by a repeated broken-chord pattern that suggests

Ex. VI-15: RAVEL, *Jeux d'eau*, mm. 78-79.



undulating waves (see Ex. VI-7b). This final figure quietly dissolves into an arpeggio that subtly concludes with the chord's sixth resolving up a step to form a major-seventh harmony. This closing gesture of gently subsiding, wavelike arpeggios will reappear at the close of his other major works devoted to water and, most explicitly, in "Ondine."

MIROIRS:

"Une barque sur l'océan"

In the years between 1905 and 1908, Ravel entered into an intense period of activity that yielded, among other works, three extraordinary pieces for the piano: the *Sonatine* (1905), *Miroirs* (1904-5), and *Gaspard de la nuit* (1908). Ironically, this fertile

period followed his final failure to win the Prix de Rome, a prize that eluded him five times. By now, Ravel was a well-known composer, and his failure to obtain this coveted award created a widespread scandal that became known as "*L'Affaire Ravel*."[33]

To escape the attention and recover from the bitter disappointment, he accepted an invitation from his friends, the Edwards, to embark on a yachting cruise through Europe. Apparently the trip was the "right medicine," and Ravel reported his pleasurable experience in a letter dated August 23, 1905 and written from a seaside resort in Brittany:

> . . . I told you about a magnificent voyage through Belgium, Holland, and the banks of the Rhine up to Frankfort, through rivers, canals, and seas, in the yacht of my friends the Edwardses. I saw unforgettable things in this marvelous situation. During all of this time, I didn't compose two measures, but was storing up a host of impressions, and I expect this winter to be extraordinarily productive. I have never been so happy to be alive, and I firmly believe that joy is far more fertile than suffering . . .[34]

Upon his return, Ravel indicated to a friend that he wanted to "shake off *Jeux d'eau,*"[35] and it was only a short time later that he played "Oiseaux Tristes" — the second piece in his new work, *Miroirs,* — for his friends "Les Apaches."[36]

In an oft-quoted passage from his "Autobiographical Sketch," Ravel claims: "The *Miroirs* form a collection of piano pieces which in my harmonic evolution mark a change

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[33] Orenstein, *A Ravel Reader,* 68 n.

[34] Ibid.,75.

[35] Roland-Manuel, *Maurice Ravel*, 41.

[36] Les Apaches (which translates as ruffians or hooligans) consisted of Ravel's close friends: the French poet Leon-Paul Fargue (1876-1947); the Spanish pianist Ricardo Viñes (1875-1943), who played a prominent role in Ravel's life, premiering many of the composer's piano works as well as those of Debussy; the painter Paul Sordes (?-1937); the writer and critic Michael Dimitri Calvocoressi (1877-1944); and Ravel's principal pupil and confidant, the composer Maurice Delage (1879-1961). Les Apaches were dedicated to defending their artistic ideals and were loyal supporters of Debussy's *Pelléas*. Each piece in *Miroirs* was dedicated to a different member of the group.

considerable enough to have disconcerted musicians, who up to now, have been most accustomed to my style."[37]

The title *Miroirs* implies a reflection, and each piece in the set presents a different musical portrait: insects are evoked in "Noctuelles," birds in "Oiseaux tristes," the sea in "Une barque sur l'océan," a Spanish dance in "Alborado del gracioso," and a landscape in "La vallée des cloches." Ravel's portrayals are vivid, highly sensitive, personal impressions. The French pianist Marguerite Long, who worked closely with Ravel and was intimately associated with many of his piano works, described *Miroirs* in the following statement:

> This title itself is an aesthetic proposition. It underlies what the Impressionists have amply proved — the pre-eminence of reflected light from the direct image in the appeal to our sensibility and in the creation of an illusion. These pieces are extremely descriptive and pictorial. They banish all sentiment in expression but offer to the listener a number of refined sensory elements which can be appreciated according to his imagination.[38]

Because of the pictorial nature of the pieces, it was inevitable that Ravel's work would be compared to the paintings of the Impressionists and he responded with some ambivalence:

> The title *Miroirs* (Mirrors), five piano pieces composed in 1905, has authorized my critics to consider this collection among those works which belong to the impressionist movement. I do not contradict this at all, if one understands the term by analogy. A rather fleeting analogy, moreover, since impressionism does not seem to have any precise meaning outside the domain of painting. In any case, the word Mirror should not lead one to assume that I wish to affirm a subjectivistic theory of art. A sentence by Shakespeare helped me to

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[37] Roland-Manuel, *Maurice Ravel*, 41.

[38] Marguerite Long, *At the Piano with Ravel*, trans. Olive Senior-Ellis (London: J. M. Dent, 1971), 85.

> formulate a completely opposite position: . . . "the eye sees not itself / But by reflection, by some other things." (*Julius Caesar*, Act I, Scene 2.)[39]

Miroirs was written over a two-year interval, from 1904 to 1905, and, in light of Ravel's statement above, one would presume that the third piece in the collection, "Une barque," may have been inspired by his trip on the yacht when he "stored up a host of impressions." According to Arbie Orenstein, however, the autograph copy is actually dated May 1905, a month prior to the journey, a fact that would definitively contradict this assumption.[40] (One can only conjecture that Ravel's imagination was perhaps spurred by his anticipation of the voyage.)

Using a large canvas, Ravel paints a ravishing tone poem depicting the atmospheric moods of an ever-changing sea and its effects on a lone craft. In broad sweeping gestures worthy of the ocean, orchestral colors and instrumental sonorities such as harps and timpani are drawn from the piano. The reflection of light on the water's surface, as well as the sense of the depths below, is vividly captured in this extravagantly virtuosic piece that earned Ravel the title "*hydraulicien de génie*."[41]

The overall structure of "Une barque," the longest work in the set, is ternary. The middle section, murky and ominous, stands in contrast to the predominantly untroubled mood of the outer sections. The first section, encompassing the first eighty-two bars, contains two subjects that are given varied repetition. The stormy middle section (mm. 82-111), with its unpredictable episodic nature and dramatic climax, functions as a

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[39] Cited in Orenstein, *A Ravel Reader*, 35 n.

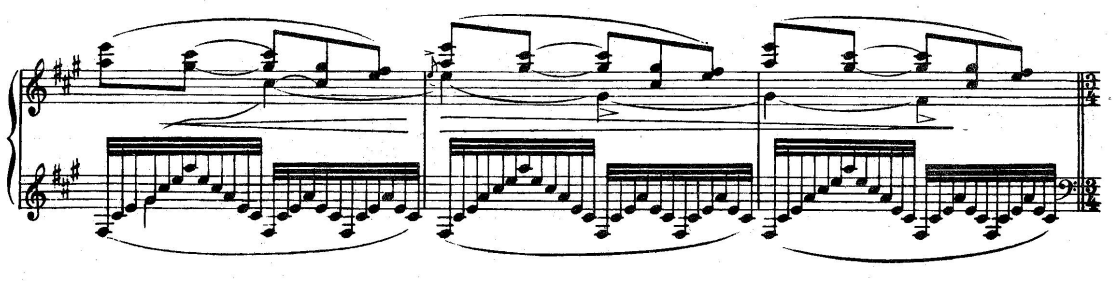
[40] Although the autograph copy is missing, Arbie Orenstein, who has seen the manuscript, confirms this as the date of completion.

[41] Long, 85.

development section. The final twenty-seven measures, from bar 111, represent an abbreviated recapitulation that recalls the two subjects in reverse order, creating a "mirror" image of the opening.

A clear melodic thread runs throughout this piece, often deeply embedded in watery figuration. This trait, common to Ravel's water pieces, can be traced back to Liszt's "Au bord d'un source." The opening subject floats amidst a wave-like figure in the left hand (Ex. VI-16). This inner-voice melody, which appears in m. 4 (notably

Ex. VI-16: RAVEL, "Une barque sur l'océan," mm. 8-10.



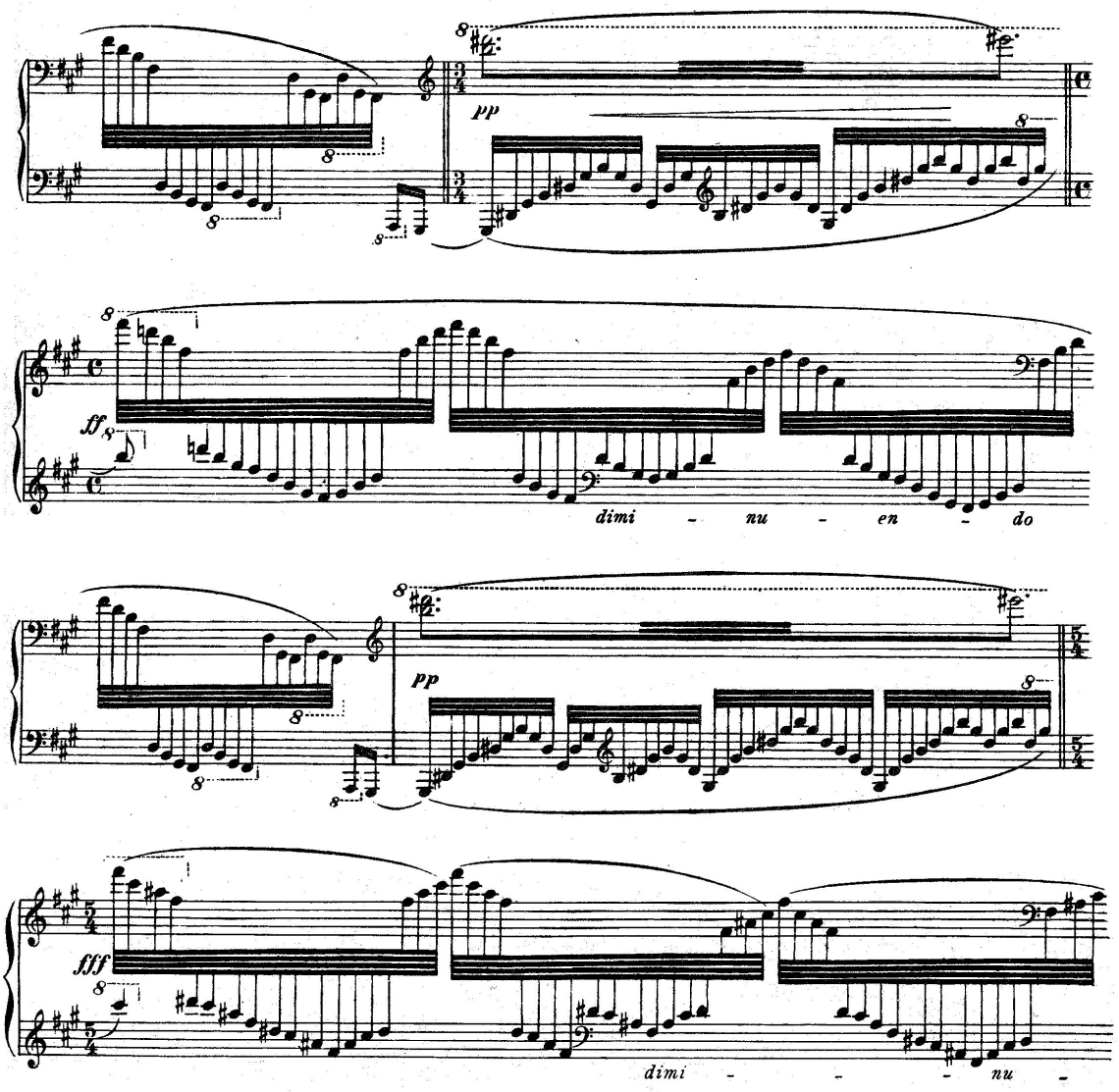
entering on the fourth thirty-second note of the bar), is based upon four pitches (G#-C#-E-F#) and is striking in its simplicity and clarity. An ostinato figure in the right hand, derived primarily from these same four tones, dominates the section. Comprised of open fifths, fourths, and a major second, this figure contains the two primary germs of the piece: the falling minor third and major second. The combined effect of these three elements — melody, ostinato, and accompaniment figure — evokes the gentle swaying of a boat on the calm, sunlit water.

This placid mood is further reinforced by tonal ambiguity, static harmony, and absence of dissonance. The entire opening section is built on an F# minor-seventh chord with added ninth: an F# pedal point in the accompaniment's bass underpins a rolling A major arpeggio figure. The tonality is obscured, however, by the relative lack of reinforcement of F# in the melodic line and ostinato material. The melody, for instance, begins rather aimlessly on a thrice-repeated rising fourth, G#-C#, that does little to suggest F# as the tonal center of gravity. It is not until seven bars later (in m. 10) that the line finally lights upon F#, albeit briefly. The ostinato figure, which also comes to rest on F#, is similarly vague. The resultant sound, along with the absence of harmonic motion, creates an aimless, floating sensation.

The second subject explicitly evokes the ocean swells cresting and breaking. This image is vividly depicted by the use of brilliant, shimmering tremolos, tumbling arpeggios, and glissandi (Ex. VI-17). Throughout this passage and its recurrences, Ravel utilizes the half-diminished-seventh and major triad with added sixth harmonies to great effect. In addition, the minor triad with added major sixth (see note below regarding chord nomenclature),[42] which is the first inversion of a half-diminished-seventh chord, plays a prominent role.

[42] For the purposes of this study, this harmony will be refered to as a minor sixth chord, not to be confused with the first inversion of a minor triad.

Ex. VI-17: RAVEL, "Une barque sur l'océan," mm. 39-43, second subject.



The middle section reflects a stark change in atmosphere and begins with a sense of foreboding. Beginning at m. 82, Ravel calls attention to the glistening surface of the

water with an extended[43] repeated-note pattern that alternates between two upper-register octaves in the right hand. This provides a backdrop for the simple plaintive melody that enters in the following bar, characterized by a falling minor third of ambiguous tonal origin (Ex. VI-18). This haunting melody is repeatedly interrupted by rumblings from

Ex. VI-18: RAVEL, "Une barque sur l'océan," m. 83.



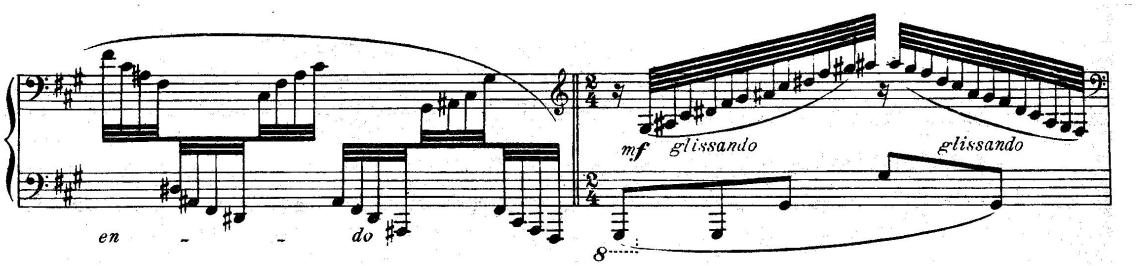
the lower bass region, suggestive of the ominous depths below. As the passage begins to build toward the climax and the water becomes increasingly turbulent, both melody and accompaniment intensify. This culminates in a sequence of furious tumbling arpeggios and broken chords. This final passage, built on a "murky" E flat dominant-seventh chord with added sharp eleven, provides a distinct contrast to the more transparent harmonies of the outer sections.

Drawing upon the full color potential of his chords, Ravel creates a harmonically static atmosphere. Most striking is his prominent use of half-diminished-seventh and major with added sixth harmonies, the latter of which, as has been discussed previously, is often suggestive of the pentatonic scale. Evoking a crystalline calm, pentatonic scales

[43] The prolonged use of this pattern demands great endurance from the player as it becomes increasingly more difficult to maintain.

are featured in several significant passages, including m. 44, where such a scalar passage flows directly from the F# major with added sixth arpeggios of the preceding bars (Ex. VI-19) and, more expansively, mm. 55-60 (Ex. VI-20).

Ex. VI-19: RAVEL, "Une barque sur l'océan," mm. 43-44.



Ex. VI-20: RAVEL, "Une barque sur l'océan," mm. 53-57.



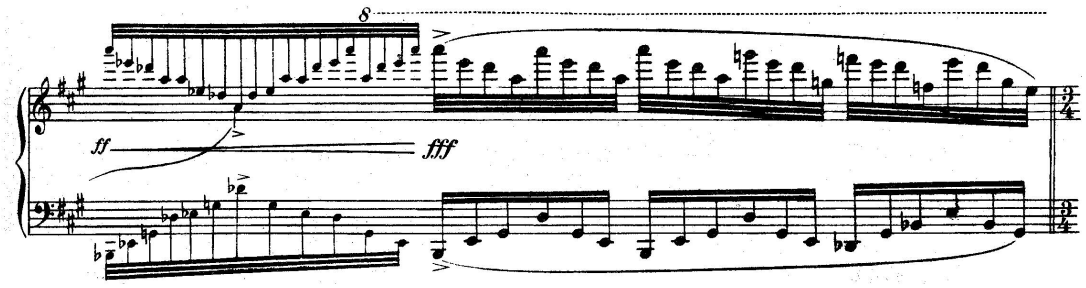
As in *Jeux d'eau* but to a far greater extent, Ravel utilizes freely shifting meters and flexible rhythms to create a fluid effect. The work opens with two meters

superimposed upon one another, a typical 6/8 barcarolle meter along with 2/4. This combination blurs the sense of meter and creates shifting relationships between the hands. In m. 11, this meter gives way to a fleeting passage in 3/4 that is followed by the return to the opening double meter at m. 13. Thus begins a series of frequent meter changes that range from 1/4 to 2/4 to 3/4 to common time and several passages in 5/4. Indeed, within the span of the work's 139 measures, the meter changes thirty-six times, ultimately obscuring the sense of meter.

Ravel underscores his elastic treatment of rhythm from the outset with the prescription "*D'un rythme souple*."[44] To this end, he continues his generous use of small note values, such as thirty-seconds and sixty-fourths, literally flooding each page with notes, and employs many irregular groupings. The most obvious example of this occurs in the opening ostinato, where an eighth-note duplet is followed by a triplet in the right hand against the steady duple pattern in the left (see Ex. VI-16). The complex combination engendered by the double meter and uneven patterns creates a multifaceted texture that contributes to an overall sense of fluidity. Later, at m. 56, the gentle, murmuring wave-figure cited previously is presented in groups of seven (see Ex. VI-20). One other notable passage occurs at the piece's climax, where tumbling arpeggio waves, heard in irregular four-against-three combinations, contribute to the wash of sound (Ex. VI-21).

[44] No tempo marking is given.

Ex. VI-21: RAVEL, "Une barque sur l'océan," m. 103.



Unlike *Jeux d'eau* and, for that matter, most of Liszt's water pieces, where the upper register was exploited for its brilliant sonority, "Une barque sur l'océan" is luxuriously laid out across the entire length of the keyboard, thus making use of the full spectrum of color. Perhaps nowhere in the repertoire is the spatial capacity of the keyboard so keenly exploited as, in effect, the keyboard becomes a mirror of the ocean's breadth and depth. Many of the figures span the entire keyboard, as in the second subject, for example (see Ex. VI-17). This work distinguishes itself, however, by exploring the piano's bottom registers with frequent plunges into the lower octaves, and Ravel even goes so far as to notate a low G#, a note not available on most instruments (see Ex. VI-19). Making the first of many appearances, the striking "timpani" leitmotif at m. 28 — heard in the lower bass — is a recurring reminder of the ocean's power and ominous depths (Ex. VI-22).

Ex. VI-22: RAVEL, "Une barque sur l'océan," m. 28.



Having utilized such a full, sonorous palette, Ravel enhances these colors with extensive use of the pedal. An unusual directive is given by Ravel at the opening: *"Très enveloppé de pédales*." This serves to amplify the resonating capabilities of the instrument.

Throughout "Une barque" Ravel makes stunning use of flowing arpeggios, upper-register tremolos, broken-chord patterns, and several harp-like effects. The ubiquitous presence of the arpeggio represents the ocean's swells and their changing character throughout the piece. The opening wave-like figure in the left hand, for instance, reflects the gentle rise and fall of the water's initially calm surface. To indicate the intensification of these swells, Ravel moves the arpeggio figure into the upper treble and begins a series of expansive rolling arpeggios heard against rising chords in the bass. The image of gentle little waves on a calm sea, conversely, is reflected in the stationary murmuring broken-chord figure that features a pentatonic collection (see Ex. VI-20). The middle section, which builds steadily, erupts at m. 103 in a sequence of furious, tumbling waves. Using the full breadth of the keyboard, the hands move to opposite extremes, in contrary motion, as the right hand descending in broken chords is heard against the rising

arpeggiated figure in the left (see Ex. VI-21). Eventually the waves subside into a quiet rumble in the lower register, and a tremolo figure in the right hand prepares for the recapitulation and the return of the second subject (Ex. VI-23).

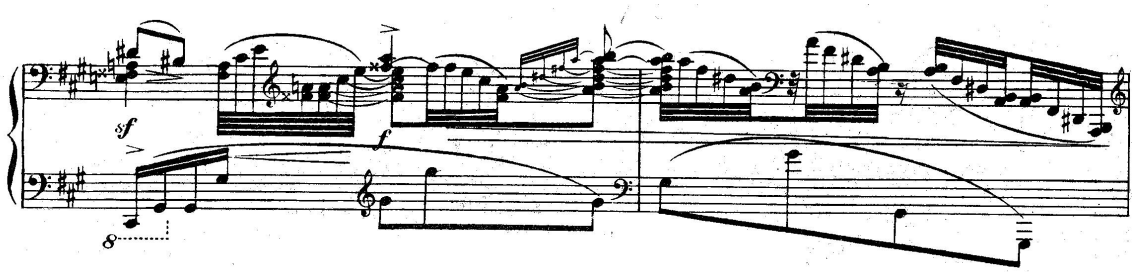
Ex. VI-23: RAVEL, "Une barque sur l'océan," m. 109.



The second subject, as discussed earlier, demonstrates Ravel's most visceral expression of water. Episodic in nature, it paints an unmistakable image of swells forming into foamy waves and breaking. A shimmering tremolo in the upper register is accompanied by a climbing arpeggio figure (based on minor-sixth and major triad with added sixth harmonies) that crests and tumbles in a group of luxuriant cascading half-diminished-seventh arpeggios. A harp-like wash of sound results (see Ex. VI-17). Ravel presents this material three times, finishing off the passage with brilliant pentatonic glissandi (see Ex. VI-19).

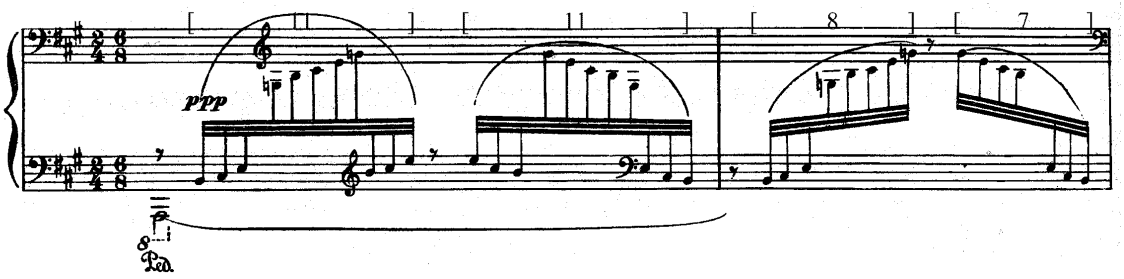
In addition to the glissandi mentioned above, Ravel employs a number of other harp-like effects that enrich the fluid imagery in the work. The accented and dissonant arpeggiated figure in m. 49 that follows the glissandi passage captures the impetuous, rushing movement of the water (Ex. VI-24). Finally, toward the end of the work, a

Ex. VI-24: RAVEL, "Une barque sur l'océan," m. 49-50.



delicate arpeggio figure is heard as calm is restored and the piece comes quietly to a close (Ex. VI-25).[45]

Ex. VI-25: RAVEL, "Une barque sur l'océan," mm. 117-18.



Perhaps the orchestral colors and sonorities evoked in this piece inspired the orchestral transcription Ravel made at the end of 1906. However, after the unsuccessful

[45] According to Nancy Bricard, Ravel indicated "comme une harpe" in pianist Vlado Perlemuter's score. See Ravel, *Miroirs*, ed. Nancy Bricard (Van Nuys, Calif.: Alfred, 1993), 50.

first performance in February 1907, Ravel immediately had the work withdrawn, and it was published only posthumously. Roy Howat has noted that

> Ravel's dissatisfaction with his orchestration of "Une Barque," despite the apparently orchestral nature of the original, contrasts strangely with his successful later orchestration of the brilliantly pianistic "Alborado del gracioso." Reasons are not hard to find. The rolling arpeggios of "Une barque" lose much of their dynamism when orchestrated as tremolandos. Additionally, crescendos that take the piano from pianissimo to fortissimo or fff in two or three bars generally leave the orchestra little time to show its dynamic range.[46]

Interestingly, another piano piece with references to water, Claude Debussy's *L'Isle joyeuse* (1904), suffered a similar fate: despite the kaleidoscopic palette afforded the composer by the large ensemble, the orchestral transcription was less effective than the original piano version.

HISTOIRES NATURELLES:

"Le Cygne"

Given the relatively small number of works Ravel composed during his lifetime, the thirty-nine songs occupy a prominent place not only in terms of sheer number, but also for the fact that they provide a cross-section of key elements of Ravel's style. One finds exoticism, irony, "literalism" (text painting on multiple planes), and archaism.[47]

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[46] Howat, 79.

[47] Peter Kaminsky, "Vocal Music and the Lures of Exoticism and Irony," in the *Cambridge Companion to Ravel*, 162.

Some of these elements are in full display in Ravel's song cycle *Histoires Naturelles* (1906), which draws its subjects from the world of animals.

Based on Jules Renard's (1864-1910) prose-poem vignettes of animal life, these songs can be seen as an extension of the aesthetic principles of *Miroirs*. In each of the five songs — "Le Paon" (The Peacock), "Le Grillon" (The Cricket), "Le Cygne" (The Swan), "Le Martin-Pecheur" (The Kingfisher), and "La Pintade" (The Guinea Fowl) — the piano accompaniment effectively reflects the imagery of the text. Ravel's remarks to their author made his intention clear:

> I have tried to say in music what you say with words, when you are in front of a tree, for example. I think and feel in music, and should like to think and feel the same things as you."[48]

The third song of the cycle, "Le Cygne," demonstrates Ravel's professed approach to setting these poems, as the song vividly depicts the tale of the beautiful white swan and, most explicitly, his graceful movement across the water:

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[48] Cited in Orenstein, *A Ravel Reader,* 36 n.

Il glisse sur le bassin, comme un traîneau blanc, de nuage en nuage. Car il n'a faim que des nuages floconneux qu'il voit naître, bouger, et se perdre dans l'eau. C'est l'un d'eux qu'il désire. Il le vise du bec, et il plonge tout à coup son col vêtu de neige. Puis, tel un bras de femme sort d'une manche, il le retire. Il n'a rien. Il regarde: les nuages effarouchés ont disparu. Il ne reste qu'un instant désabusé, car les nuages tardent peu à revenir, et, là-bas, où meurent les ondulations de l'eau, en voici un qui se reforme. Doucement, sur son léger coussin de plumes, le cygne rame et s'approche . . . Il s'épuise à pêcher de vains reflets, et peut-être qu'il mourra, victime de cette illusion, avant d'attraper un seul morceau de nuage. Mais qu'est-ce que je dis? Chaque fois qu'il plonge, il fouille du bec la vase nourrissante et ramène un ver. Il engraisse comme une oie.

He glides on the pond, like a white sleigh, from cloud to cloud. For his hunger is only for the fleecy clouds that he sees forming, moving and being lost in the water. It is one of them that he desires. He aims at it with his beak, and suddenly immerses his snow-clad neck. Then, just as a woman's arm emerges from a sleeve, he pulls it back. He has caught nothing. He looks: The startled clouds have disappeared. He remains disillusioned for a moment, for the clouds return before very long, and, over there, where the ripples on the water are dying away, one cloud is already forming. Softly, on his light feather cushion, the swan paddles and approaches . . . . He exhausts himself fishing for empty reflections, and perhaps he will die, a victim to that illusion, before catching a single piece of cloud. But what am I talking about? Every time he dives, he burrows in the nourishing mud with his beak and comes back with a worm. He's fattening up like a goose.[49]

Formally, Ravel's setting reflects the poem's dichotomy between reality and illusion as well as its shifts between narrative and asides. Illustrating the latter, Peter Kaminsky has noted,

[49] Translation by Arbie Orenstein, *Maurice Ravel Songs 1896-1914*, ed. Arbie Orenstein (New York: Dover, 1990), xxi.

> A wonderful example concludes "Le cygne" when the legato arpeggios depicting the swan on the water abruptly give way to recitative, staccato chords and the implied key of C major (the flattened supertonic of the tonic B). The shift signals the narrator's ironic realization that the entire narrative hitherto was an illusion: instead of the swan dying in his attempt to capture the cloud's reflection in the water, he is in reality fattening up on the worms which he pulls from the mud.[50]

To echo these dualities, Ravel adopts a ternary form with a brief coda. The outer sections are dominated by the perpetual motion of the flowing septuplet figure that connotes the swan gliding on the surface of the water (Ex. VI-26). This fluidity is contrasted by the slow, static middle section where the "disillusioned" swan ponders his failed endeavor.

Once again, as in "Une barque," the opening passage courts tonal ambiguity. Ravel opens with a B major chord (in first inversion) with added sixth and ninth; the inclusion of the sixth, G#, which could also suggest G# minor, and a C# inner-voice pedal on the ninth immediately undermine the strength of the tonal center. The melody is similarly equivocal: while its initial entrance in the second measure would seem to establish the preeminence of B major, it quickly bends toward G# minor. The overall harmonic soundscape suggests a pentatonic collection that ultimately bathes the opening in a static crystalline sound and pervades much of the song. In m. 3, however, this is further colored by the introduction of the non-diatonic E# to create a G# minor-sixth harmony (or E# half-diminished seventh).

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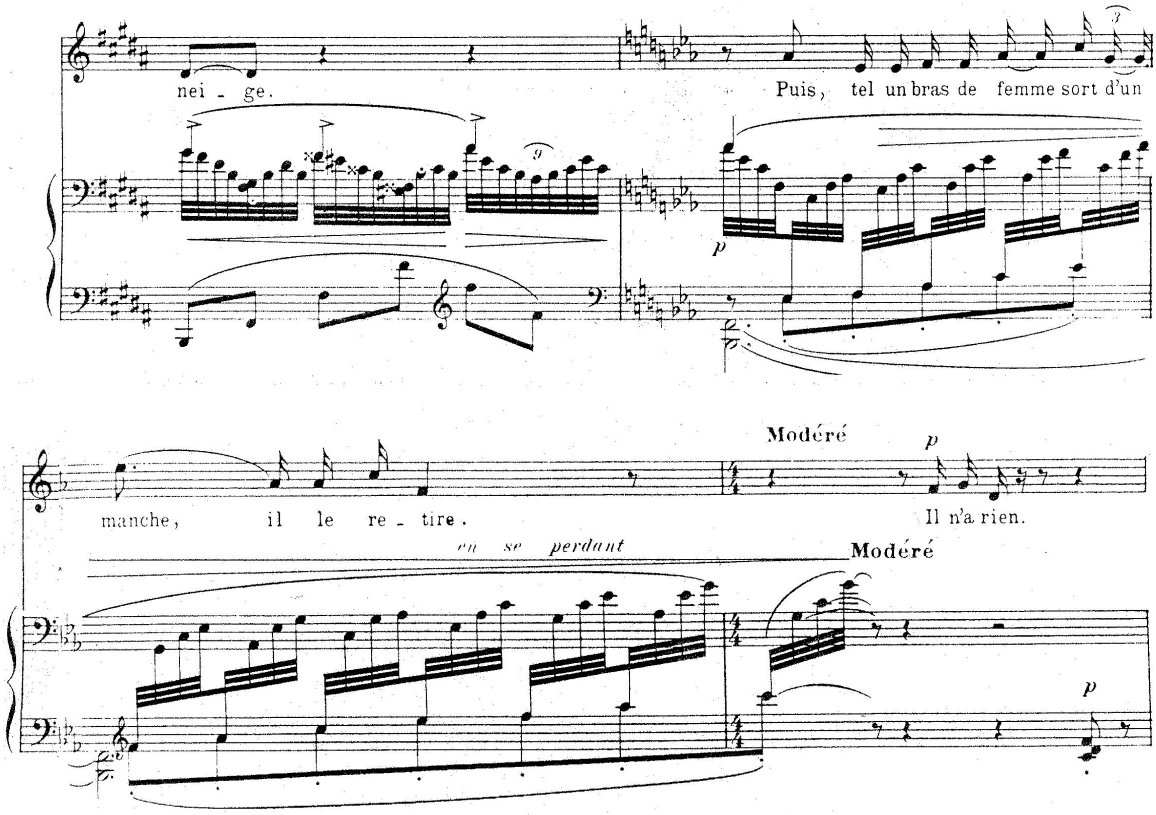
[50] Kaminsky, "Vocal Music and the Lures of Exoticism and Irony," 169.

Ex. VI-26: RAVEL, "Le Cygne," mm. 1-4.



The harmonic language throughout the section is familiar to this study, dominated as it is by major with added sixth, minor-sixth, half-diminished-seventh, and dominant-ninth chords. The eventual modulation to G# major in the fifth bar, for instance, again utilizes the tonic chord with added sixth, while the movement back toward B major, beginning in m. 8, employs the dominant ninth on F#. Most striking is the section's climax, the transition to the piece's middle section, where Ravel departs from the ostinato and once again makes prominent use of pentatonic material (Ex. VI-27).

Ex. VI-27: RAVEL, "Le Cygne," mm. 12-15.



Ravel adopts many of the same musical devices that were so successful in "Une barque." The opening passage bears the identical indication, "*enveloppé de pédales*," again enhancing the fluid sonority by creating a sustained wash of sound. The pulse of the opening 4/4 meter is further blurred by the groups of septuplets in the right hand heard against even eighth notes in the left. The meter, which quickly changes to 5/4 in the fifth bar, shifts frequently: sixteen times within the span of thirty-nine measures.

GASPARD DE LA NUIT, TROIS POEMES POUR PIANO D'APRÈS ALOYSIUS BERTRAND:

"Ondine"

Ravel's triptych *Gaspard de la nuit* (1908) stands not only as one of the towering masterpieces in the piano literature but also as a work that exploits the limits of both player and instrument. In fact, it was clearly Ravel's intention to surpass all other virtuoso works by writing "pieces of transcendental virtuosity for the piano more difficult than Balakirev's *Islamey*."[51] *Gaspard* is undoubtedly one of the most difficult works for the piano, for it demands not only supreme technical command of the instrument but also great insight and imagination.

The work was inspired by a book of prose poems by the obscure French writer Aloysius Bertrand (1807-42) entitled *Gaspard de la nuit; Fantasies à la manière de Rembrandt et de Callot* (1842). Although the original 1842 publication received little attention, its posthumous reissue in *Le Mercure de France* in 1908 attracted more interest. Ravel was introduced to the poems by his close friend the pianist Ricardo Viñes, and it was he who gave the first performance of *Gaspard* in January 1909.

These Romantic prose poems conjure a supernatural world of strange visions and bewitching characters. The nocturnal Gaspard of the title is the Devil, and each poem represents a different story he tells or a picture he draws. Bertrand prefaced each poem with a quotation from another writer.

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[51] Roland-Manuel, *Ravel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), 65.

For his piano work, Ravel selected three diverse poems: "Ondine," "Le Gibet," and "Scarbo." The most evocative and attractive of the three is the first piece of the set, "Ondine."[52] The central figure of the poem is the water nymph Ondine who, with her haunting song, tries to seduce a mortal man and lure him to her palace beneath the lake.[53] The text of the poem, including the opening quotation, follows:

. . . Je croyais entendre
Une vague harmonie enchanter mon sommeil,
Et près de moi s'épandre un murmure pareil
Aux chants entrecoupés d'une voix triste et tendre.
Charles Brugnot. — Les deux Génies.

—"Ecoute!—Ecoute!—C'est moi, c'est Ondine qui frôle de ces gouttes d'eau les losanges sonores de ta fenêtre illuminée par les mornes rayons de la lune; et voici, en robe de moire, la dame châtelaine qui contemple à son balcon la belle nuit étoilée et le beau lac endormi.

"Chaque flot est un ondin qui nage dans le courant, chaque courant est un sentier qui serpente vers mon palais, et mon palais est bâti fluide, au fond du lac, dans le triangle du feu, de la terre et de l'air.

"Ecoute!—Ecoute!—Mon père bat l'eau coassante d'une branche d'aulne verte, et mes sœurs caressent de leurs bras d'écume les fraîches îles d'herbes, de nénuphars et de glaïeuls, ou se moquent du saule caduc et barbu qui pêche à la ligne."

Sa chanson murmurée, elle me supplia de recevoir son anneau à mon doigt, pour être l'époux d'une Ondine, et de visiter avec elle son palais, pour être le roi des lacs.

Et comme je lui répondais que j'aimais une mortelle, boudeuse et dépitée, elle pleura quelques larmes, poussa un éclat de rire, et s'évanouit en giboulées qui ruisselèrent blanches le long de mes vitraux bleus.

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[52] In 1913, Debussy published a piano work by the same name in his second book of *Préludes*. Musically, the two pieces have very little in common. Ravel's "Ondine" is dedicated to the pianist Harold Bauer who played it many times all over the world and considered this work to be Ravel's finest piano composition. See Harold Bauer, *His Book* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1948), 236-37.

[53] "Onde" is the French word for "wave."

> . . . I thought I heard
> A vague harmony enchanting my slumber
> And, near me, spreading, a murmur like
> The interrupted songs of a sad, tender voice.
> Charles Brugnot. — *The Two Genii.*

> "Listen! Listen! It is I, it is Undine brushing with these drops of water the resonant diamond-panes of your window illuminated by the dull moonbeams; and here, in a dress of moire, is the lady of the castle on her balcony gazing at the beautiful starry night and the beautiful slumbering lake.
>
> "Each wave is a water sprite swimming in the current, each current is a path winding toward my palace, and my palace is of fluid construction, at the bottom of the lake, within the triangle formed by fire, earth, and air.
>
> "Listen! Listen! My father is beating the croaking water with a branch of green alder, and my sisters are caressing the cool islands of grasses, water lilies, and gladioli with their arms of foam, or are laughing at the tottering, bearded willow that is angling."
>
> After murmuring her song, she besought me to accept her ring on my finger, to be the husband of an undine, and to visit her palace with her, to be the king of the lakes.
>
> And when I replied that I was in love with a mortal woman, she was sulky and vexed; she wept a few tears, burst out laughing and vanished in showers that formed white trickles down my blue windowpanes.[54]

Ravel's work transfigures the poem and, at the same time, creates his quintessential water study, surpassing his previous forays. Edward Lockspeiser claims that "nowhere in music, and seldom in the impressionistic painting of this period, have the iridescent images of glistening and transparent water been so convincingly conveyed."[55] In this work one observes both the composer and his instrument, the twentieth-century piano, at the height of their powers. Charles Rosen has noted that

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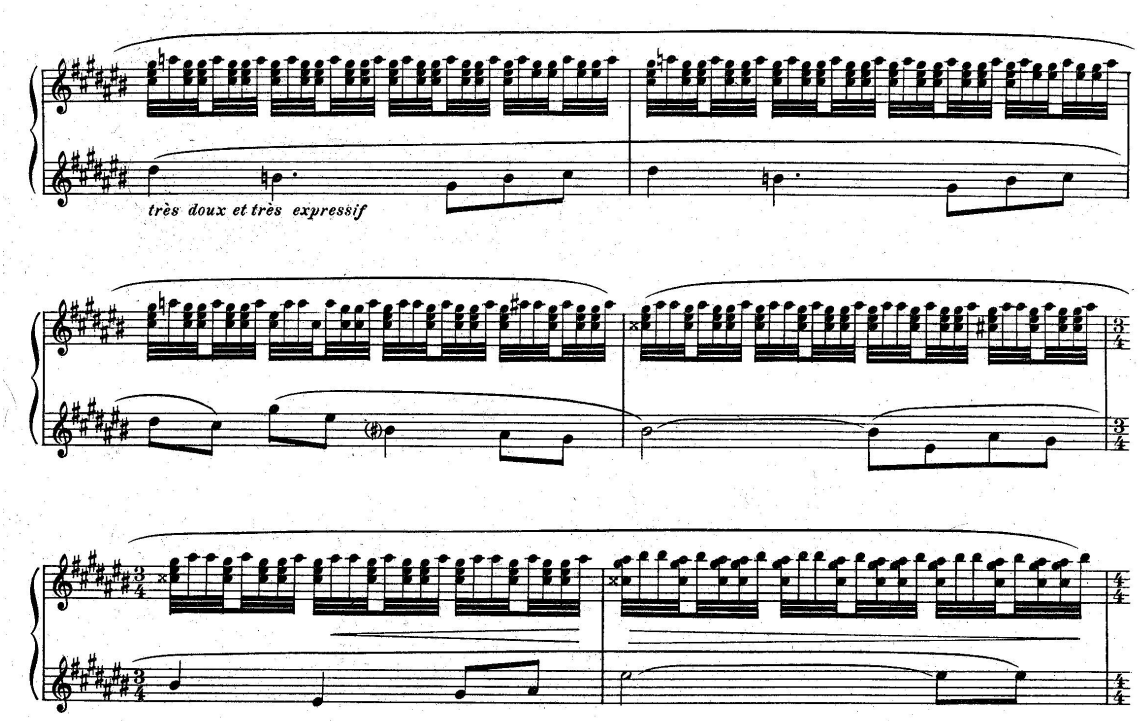
[54] Translation from *Piano Masterpieces of Maurice Ravel* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1986), 88.

[55] Lockspeiser, 37.

> Ravel's musical ideas are always so closely related to the instrument for which they were written and for the specific sonorous capacities of the instrument . . . . *Gaspard de la nuit* starts not from the poems of Bertrand, but from the piano's capacity to represent the images of those of the poem. The shimmering sound of the water translated into piano tones is the center of "Ondine" . . . . [56]

Ravel's "Ondine" is a pianistic tone poem with a strong narrative element. From the first measure, the music underscores the text. The listener is immediately drawn in by the lone shimmering chord ostinato that suggests the poem's opening plea: "Ecoute! Ecoute!" (see Ex. VI-31). This brief introduction sets the scene for Ondine's entrancing song (Ex. VI-28).

Ex. VI-28: RAVEL, "Ondine," mm. 2-7.



[56] Charles Rosen, "Where Ravel Ends and Debussy Begins," *Cahiers Debussy,* nouvelle série, 3 (1979): 37-38.

Formally, the work loosely mirrors the five-stanza structure of the poem. The close adherence to the text is most evident in the closing pages, where the music vividly portrays the poem's startling conclusion. Ondine's theme and the opening accompaniment, which in part define the form, return again and again, recast in different guises — subsequently using octaves, rolled octaves, and elaborations on the accompanying figure. As the pianist David Burge has described them, each variant is

> . . . more ravishing than the one before. Ravel's ingenuity in finding ways to divide melody and accompaniment between the hands is demonstrated again and again.[57]

Out of this opening melody, Ravel spins the other motives.[58] The second motif, which appears at m. 10, clearly grows out of bar 6 of the main theme and, in turn, is echoed in the second part of a later motif (Exx. VI-29 and VI-30). This close relationship between the various themes serves to create a continuous, fluid structure that extends beyond traditional forms.[59]

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[57] David Burge*, Twentieth Century Piano Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990), 49.

[58] For a detailed breakdown of the motives, see Howat, 82.

[59] According to Howat "'Ondine' and 'Le Gibet' push even Ravelian sonata form to the verge of unidentifiability." (Ibid.) Even if one concedes the vague outlines of sonata form these are thoroughly obscured to create a fluid structure.

Ex. VI-29: RAVEL, “Ondine,” mm. 10-13.



Ex. VI-30: RAVEL, “Ondine,” mm. 32-35.



As previously mentioned, the work begins with an enigmatic ostinato figure. Comprised of a tonic C# major triad interspersed with the added minor sixth (A natural) that suggests an augmented sonority, this novel harmonic device vividly echoes the "vague harmony" alluded to in the piece's epigram by Brugnot (Ex. VI-31). The exotic

Ex. VI-31: RAVEL, "Ondine," m. 1.



combination, presented in a syncopated rhythm and with sustained damper pedal, creates a shimmering effect and immediately obscures the tonality. Marked *pianississimo*, this figure poses serious physical demands on the pianist, requiring a steady hand that literally has to float on the keys. Both the semitone and the repeated note vividly illustrate the images in the text: the drops of water on the windowpanes, the reflected moonbeams, and the starlit surface of the lake. This figure, in its numerous variants, permeates the piece.

Further blurring the tonality, Ondine's "sad and tender song," which enters in the second measure, outlines a G# minor triad; when heard in combination with the shimmering ostinato figure, the harmony implies a C# dominant-ninth chord (C#-E#-G#-B-D# [see Ex. VI-28]). This is the same chord that so conspicuously opens Liszt's "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este." However, Ravel's close voicing of the chord as a tone

cluster in the treble clef produces a more ambiguous effect, invoking a more mysterious quality of water than Liszt's brilliant fountains.

Ravel's choice of C# major as tonal center[60] gives the entire piece a heightened, enriched color that effectively mirrors the sensual aspect of the text and convincingly brings the seductress, Ondine, to life. Ravel, however, undermines tonal clarity by creating a fluid key structure that rarely alights on a specific tonal area for any significant duration. Throughout the work, Ravel veils a strong sense of major tonics by continually introducing a minor seventh, thus transforming such triads into dominant chords as discussed above. Similarly, the minor key centers are somewhat obscured by the addition of the major sixth, a color tone that, as previously discussed, creates a half-diminished seventh harmony in first inversion. In fact, as will soon be discussed, the effect of the most stable passage in the piece, at mm. 72-78 (see Ex. VI-34), is startling because of its singularity.

Once again, as in the previous water pieces examined, much of the harmony is static, and the dominant-ninth and minor-sixth — or half-diminished-seventh — chords play prominent roles; the major triad with added sixth, meanwhile, is reserved for the piece's most stunning passage. From the outset, the harmony progresses from the initial C# dominant ninth through several half-diminished-seventh and minor-sixth chords,

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[60] As Roy Howat has noted, this key (or its enharmonic equivalent, D flat) was chosen by composers for other similarly spectacular works: by Liszt for "Waldesrauschen," by Debussy for "Reflets dans l'eau," and by Balakirev for *Islamey*. Ibid., 81.

frequently voiced closely in the treble range. One strikingly fluid passage occurs at mm. 16-21 where the harmony hovers around a C# minor sixth (Ex. VI-32).[61] Beneath

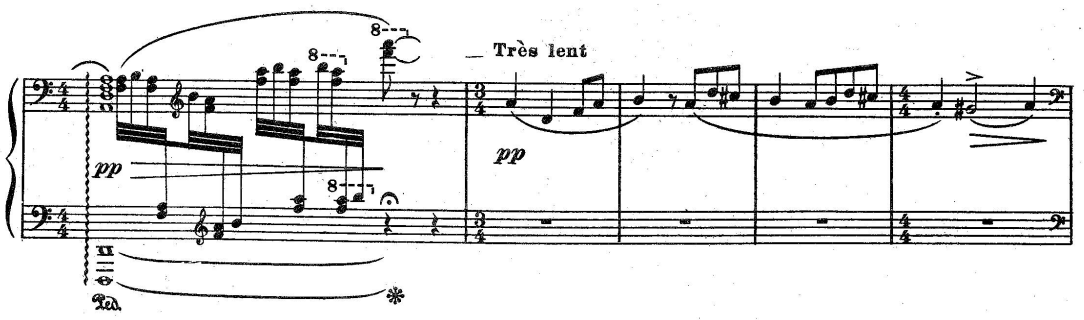
Ex. VI-32: RAVEL, "Ondine," mm. 16-21.



[61] Interspersed with the C# minor sixth harmony is its dominant, a G# dominant ninth with added flat sixth (E natural), which introduces an augmented sound (E, G#, B#), analogous to the opening "vague harmony," to the episode.

luxuriant arpeggios, the bass line through this episode strikingly outlines this chord. The minor-sixth chord again plays a distinctive role in the "recapitulation" (m. 80) where, at the dramatic crux of the work, Ondine's theme culminates in m. 83 on a D minor sixth (Ex. VI-33).

Ex. VI-33: RAVEL: "Ondine," mm. 83-87.

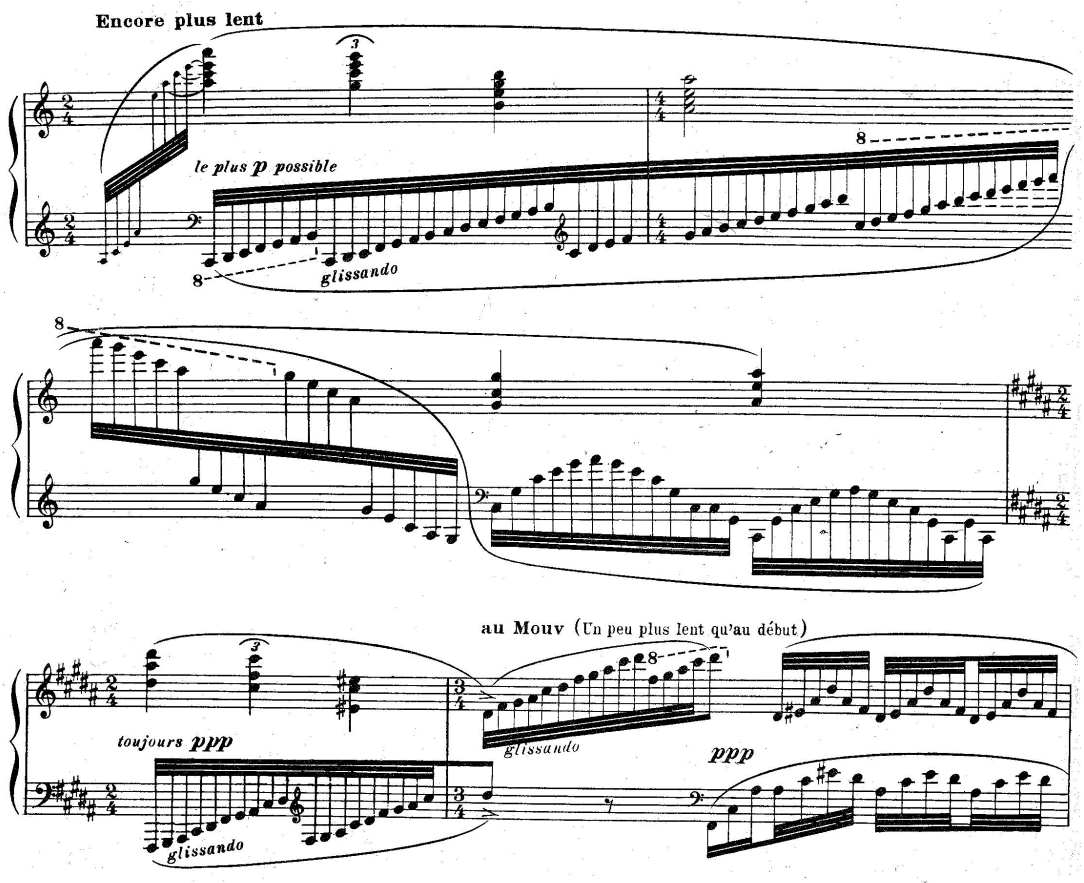


Derived from the second motif (see VI-29), the sullen recitative that follows also outlines the minor-sixth harmony. It is also notable that the extended cadenza that ensues finally resolves on a D# half-diminished-seventh chord (see Ex. VI-41). The cadenza again displays Ravel's penchant for blurring tonality[62] (here a C triad is superimposed over an E flat dominant seventh with flatted ninth), as did the cadenza in *Jeux d'eau*.

Perhaps the most liquid passage in the repertoire, the music that begins at the *"Encore plus lent"*(m. 72) features the major triad with added sixth harmony (Ex. VI-34).

[62] See n.25.

Ex. VI-34: RAVEL: "Ondine," mm. 72-75.



This strikingly serene episode, which follows the piece's most rhapsodic material (the plunging harmonic sequence at the *"Un peu plus lent*" [see Ex. VI-36]), creates a stark contrast to the intensely seductive character of the balance of the work. As previously observed, the major triad with added sixth chord implies a pentatonic scale and produces a transparent sound suggestive of Ondine's underwater realm. Ravel exploits this aspect, writing extended glissandi that shift from an initial A minor harmony to a C major with added sixth and onto an F# major with added sixth (with a passing major seventh). This

harmony is further extended through a rippling sequence before Ravel rounds off the passage with a brilliant flourish featuring a D# dominant-ninth chord, just prior to the "recapitulation" (Ex. VI-35).

Ex. VI-35: RAVEL, "Ondine," mm. 77-79.



As seen in his previous water pieces, Ravel continues his practice of frequently shifting meter, a feature that creates an elastic sense of time. This work employs meters that run the gamut from 2/4 to 5/4, changing forty-seven times in ninety-one measures. This frequency of change makes "Ondine" the most metrically changeable of the works examined thus far.

Rhythmically, Ravel achieves maximum fluidity by continuing to use numerous complex, irregular groupings. The most extreme example of this practice occurs at the

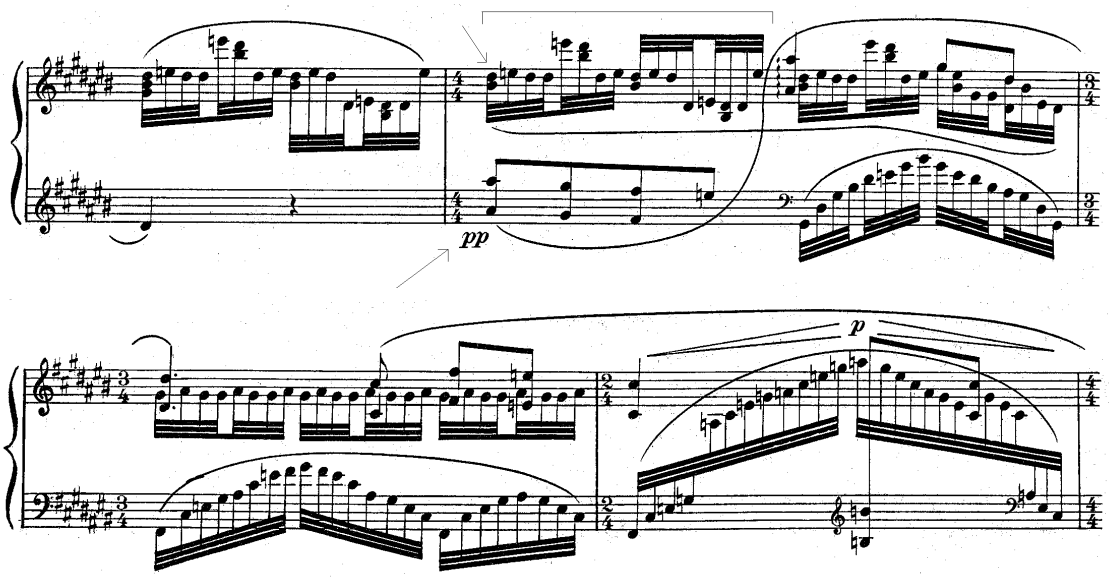
tumultuous climax, where the hands, pitted against one another in contrary motion, articulate groups of seven-against-six, six-against-seven, seven-against-five, six-against-five, and six-against-six (Ex. VI-36).

Ex. VI-36, RAVEL: "Ondine," mm. 67-72.



One of the most remarkable aspects of this piece — and one that makes it so technically demanding for the pianist — is its textural complexity. Again, as witnessed in previous water works, Ravel obscures the boundary between melody and accompaniment. Expansive melodies are skillfully woven into the fabric of various intricate accompaniments, yet they manage to emerge, to float to the surface. Physically, the distance between the hands is often very small, and frequently they are intertwined (Ex. VI-37). Many times the hands share the melody and, as David Burge has noted,

Ex. VI-37: RAVEL, "Ondine," mm. 38-41.



"Ravel's ingenuity in finding ways to divide melody and accompaniment between the hands is demonstrated again and again,"[63] as is the case at m. 51 where the melody is integrated amid figuration (Ex. VI-38; see melody in eighth and quarter notes).

[63] Burge, 49.

Ex. VI-38: RAVEL, "Ondine," mm. 51-54.



Ravel's choice of sonority relates directly to the two worlds represented in the poem: the real (above the lake's surface) and the fantastic (Ondine's aquatic domain). For the most part, Ravel utilizes the upper register to evoke the luminosity of the water's surface as is demonstrated by the opening ostinato, seen above (see Ex. VI-31). The lower registers conjure the mysterious underwater world below,[64] as can be heard most effectively at mm. 78-79 where the bass line emerges to express the water's depth (see Ex. VI-35).

[64] This duality mirrors Freud's theory relating to the conscious and unconscious states, as well as makes erotic references to water.

In "Ondine" Ravel builds upon his already impressive repertoire of watery figurations and demonstrates even greater imagination than before. The French pianist Alfred Cortot (1877-1962) accurately described this achievement:

> It is positively a kind of miracle that he knew how to renew, after the precedents of *Jeux d'eau* and "Une Barque sur l'océan," the pianistic effects destined to evoke, yet another time, the captivating mirage of water and its mysterious movements. Because far from becoming dulled by his exceptional descriptive successes, the imaginative power of Ravel found here the occasion to express itself without repetition, without imitation of himself, and with a constant spirit of invention and instrumental discovery.[65]

Ravel employs all manner of arpeggios, glissandi, chromatic passages, rolled chords, broken chords, repeated notes, and broken octaves to great effect. The last two of these devices, for instance, are vividly displayed in the passage shown in Ex. VI-38 to produce a limpid sound. Several especially liquid effects are derived from the opening accompaniment pattern, which Ravel deploys in numerous permutations whereby the pattern is spread over several octaves (Ex. VI-39) or ornamented with flourishes (Ex. VI-40).

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[65] Cited in the Foreward to *Ravel, Gaspard de la nuit,* ed. Nancy Bricard, 10.

Ex. VI-39: RAVEL, "Ondine," mm. 14-15.



Ex. VI-40: RAVEL, "Ondine," mm. 42-44.



The composer reserves the most evocative imagery, however, for the final pages. According to Charles Rosen:

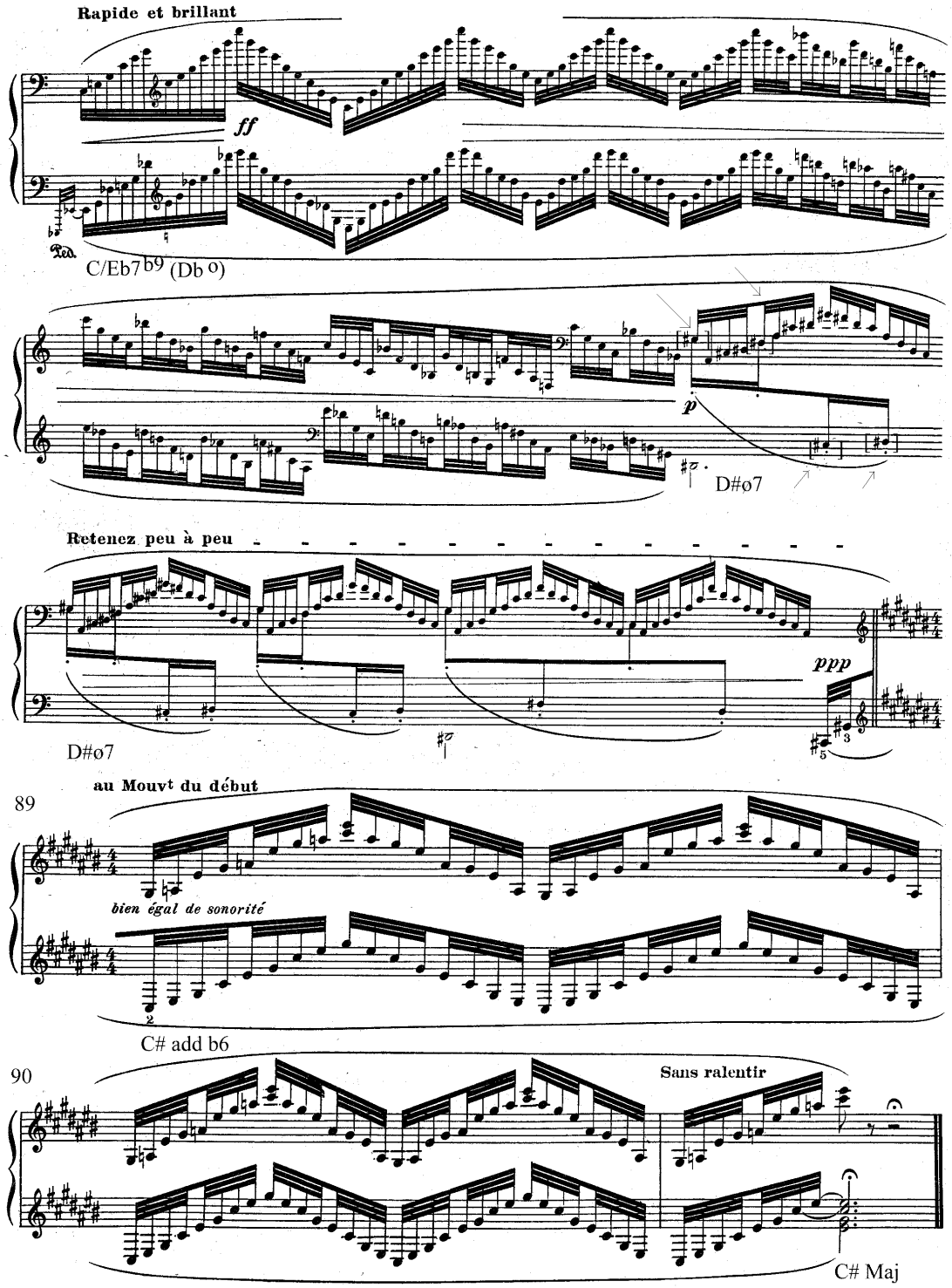
> "Ondine" ends with as graphic an aural representation of something visual as Strauss could ever have hoped for: A splash followed by a series of concentric circles that become ever wider and wider as the water becomes tranquil once again.[66]

The explosive "burst of laughter" heard in the broad arpeggios at m. 89 is followed by the image of Ondine "vanishing in a shower," as depicted by a dramatic series of cascading broken chords, and plunging to the depths, again evoked by the use of the lower register, as she returns to her palace beneath the lake (Ex. VI-41). The circles Rosen refers to are connoted by the G#-F#-C#-D# fragment in the inner voice as the cadenza resolves. This is succeeded by a return to a variant of the opening C# major triad with added flat sixth ostinato at *"au Mouvement du début,"* now transformed into a series of undulating arpeggios. With these, Ravel leaves us with the poem's final image: Ondine's wake gradually subsides and the lake's surface returns to its placid stillness.

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[66] Rosen, 38.

Ex. VI-41: RAVEL, "Ondine," mm. 88-91.



. . .

These water works of Ravel represent the pinnacle of water music for the piano and are the culmination of the evolutionary process that began with Schubert and progressed through Liszt. With *Jeux d'eau* Ravel paid homage to Liszt while at the same time breaking new ground, expanding and enriching the potential of keyboard technique and beginning the next chapter in the evolution of this special repertoire. The significance of *Jeux d'eau* cannot be overstated, for with its creation Ravel set the stage for many of the Impressionist works that followed. It is not coincidental that this piece relates to water, which in so many ways is emblematic of the Impressionist language. Ravel drew upon "Au bord d'un source" and "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este" in creating *Jeux d'eau* and, most significantly, sought to expand upon Lisztian virtuosity by redefining the limits of both player and instrument.

In examining *Jeux d'eau* and the subsequent water pieces, one discovers common elements unique to these works. In response to the subject matter Ravel's treatment of form, meter, and rhythm are strikingly fluid, more so than in his other piano music. Again, we find the same characteristic harmonies and scales that we observed in Liszt: the major with added sixth, dominant-ninth, half-diminished-seventh (and the closely related minor-sixth) chords, as well as pentatonic and, on occasion, whole-tone scales. Ravel's penchant for dyads of seconds, tone clusters, and closely voiced harmonies is particularly pervasive, highlighting water's translucent and sometimes sparkling nature. In the three solo works, Ravel blurs tonality, especially in the cadenzas of *Jeux d'eau* and "Ondine" where he superimposes one chord over another. In general, these works exhibit

a rather static harmonic rhythm and, often, the composer merely luxuriates in the sensuous colors of his harmonies.

Exploiting the piano's coloristic capacity, Ravel takes full advantage of the entire compass of the keyboard. Like Liszt, he favors the upper registers to portray water's luminous and transparent quality. The entire keyboard, however, is utilized for purposes of expressing space and depth, with particular significance given to change of register and the use of pedal tones. By blurring harmony and articulation, the generous use of the damper pedal, as per Ravel's specific indications, produces an even greater sense of fluidity and maximizes the resonant qualities of the piano.

Finally, the most characteristic element that defines these works is the astonishing variety of watery figurations — often enveloping the melody — that graphically depict water imagery. Drawing upon broken chords, arpeggios, rolled chords, tremolos, glissandi, ostinati, repeated notes, and octave figurations, Ravel demonstrates boundless imagination and an uncanny gift for graphic representation through music. In the end Ravel, whom Debussy called a "wizard,"[67] successfully combines all these diverse elements, and in these special works we easily imagine that we are hearing water flow freely from the piano.

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[67] Claude Debussy, *Debussy: Letters*, selected and ed. François Lesure and Roger Nichols, trans. Roger Nichols (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 177.

CONCLUSION:

EPILOGUE AND SUMMARY

From our vantage point, it is clear that the evocation of water in compositions for the piano reached its zenith in the works of Ravel. Other composers, however, contributed to this repertoire, too. In addition to the numerous examples found in Debussy's piano music, the theme of water can be found in the works of other early-twentieth-century composers such as Déodat de Sévérac's (1872-1921) "Vers le mas en fête" from the suite *En Languedoc* (1903-04) and Charles Tomlinson Griffes' (1884-1920) "The Fountain of the Acqua Paola" from *Roman Sketches* (1915-16). Sévérac, who had a penchant for natural imagery, echoes Debussy in both harmonic language and pianistic style. Indeed, "Ver le mas en fête" sounds remarkably similar to the "Prélude" from *Pour le piano* (1896-1901). In "The Fountain of the Acqua Paola" (1916), Griffes carries on the legacy of Liszt and Ravel, as his piece echoes "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este" and *Jeux d'eau,* as well as "Ondine" in its harmonic language,[1] figuration, and virtuosity.

Debussy, while well aware of Ravel's work, followed his own path, taking a more abstract, introspective approach. Nevertheless, his pieces devoted to water — and particularly "Reflets dans l'eau" from *Images I* (1905) — display the cross-fertilization that took place between the two composers. Though less overtly virtuosic and

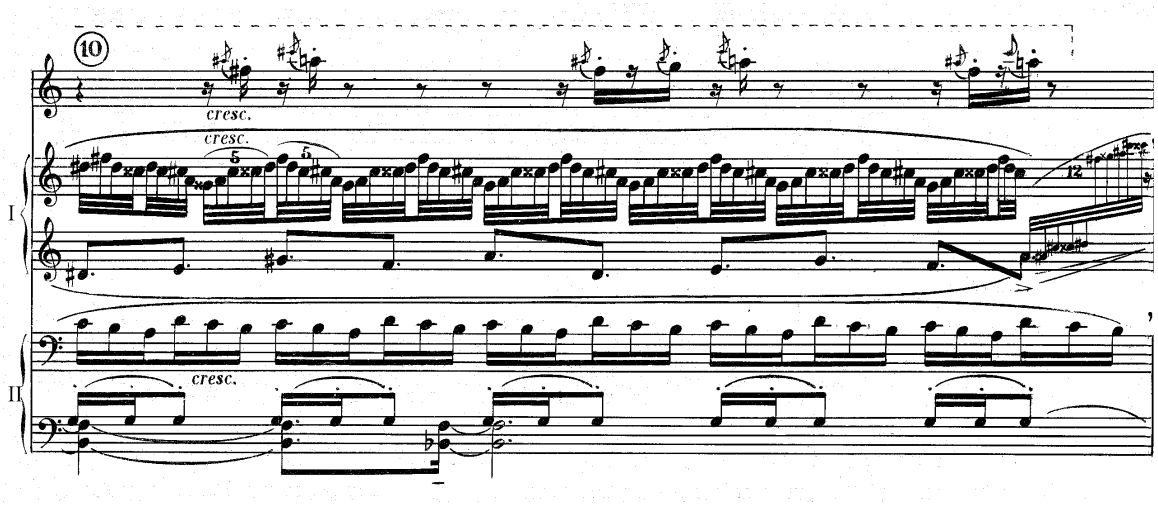
[1] In addition to the generally static harmonic rhythm and ample use of the major triad with added sixth and the half-diminished seventh chord, "Fountain" is notably in D flat major, the enharmonic equivalent of "Ondine"'s C#. Most striking is its clear allusion to Ravel's piece at the close where a D flat augmented triad (spelled with a flatted sixth) resolves to D flat major.

representational than those of Ravel, Debussy's water works employ many of the same characteristic harmonic and rhythmic devices we have observed. His own inventive figurations are more "impressionistic" than Ravel's graphically descriptive examples.

Following the upheaval of the First World War, the arts and aesthetics went through a profound change, mirroring the new social milieu. Atonality and serialism eclipsed the tonal language that had evolved over more than 300 years and culminated in the colorful harmonic vocabulary of the Impressionists. Ravel was not insulated from these changes. The death of his mother and the devastating effects of the war took their toll and ultimately marked a turning point in his style. Of the small number of piano pieces he composed in these later years, *Frontispice* (1918) stands out as an oddity. Written for two pianos, five hands, this anomalous work is based on a poem entitled "Sonate pour un jet d'eau" by the Italian poet Ricciotto Canudo (1877-1923) who had asked Ravel to write a musical preface. Canudo's *S. P. 503 "Le Poème du Vardar,"*[2] from which the poem is taken, is a philosophically oriented collection inspired by the poet's own combat experiences. "Sonate pour un jet d'eau" expresses the brutal reality of the war in terms that evoke Nature, and, as the title suggests, contains a recurrent motif of water imagery, which, one would expect, attracted Ravel's sensibilities. In response, Ravel wrote a brief fifteen bars in which many of these images are conveyed using the sparest of means. Ravel's palette is now much simpler: gone are the lush harmonies and figurations of his earlier period. The flow of water is omnipresent in the uninterrupted stream of eighth notes in the first piano part and comes to the fore in the string of thirty-seconds that usher in the conclusion of the work (Ex. VII-1). This obscure piece bears

[2] The cryptic "S. P. 503" of the title refers to a postal code in Paris.

Ex. VII-1: Ravel, *Frontispice*, m. 10.



little resemblance to Ravel's earlier expressions of water and demonstrates how profoundly the composer's language had been transformed by the Great War.[3]

. . .

As has been demonstrated, during the nineteenth century a number of diverse yet related forces converged to make feasible the evocation of water through music for the piano. The powerful presence of Nature kindled the imagination of Romantic writers, artists, and musicians, providing them with an abundant source of inspiration for their works. Water, long a source of religious and cultural fascination for its numerous wondrous qualities, was an especially attractive subject as evidenced by the sheer number

[3] Dahlhaus has actually cited 1914 as a historical juncture, with Stravinsky's *Le sacre du printemps* (1913) and Schoenberg's *Ewartung* (1909) marking the "beginning of the 'twentieth century' . . . " Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 2.

of works devoted to it. Musical Romanticism placed a strong emphasis on the narrative, descriptive element, which helped foster program music and the belief that actual objects and actions could be suggested through musical means. At the same time, composers were stretching the formal limits of the harmonic, rhythmic, and tonal language to create a more elastic art. These developments culminated in Impressionism, where music was arguably at its most fluid. Thus, in many ways, the music devoted to water subjects can be seen as emblematic of some of the larger currents of the nineteenth century.

Coinciding with these developments, the rapidly evolving piano was a dominant force in nineteenth-century music. Possessing rich expressive capabilities (great power and resonance, a broad dynamic range, and enriched sonority), the instrument became an extremely versatile voice of incomparable expressive range. This capacity ignited composers' imaginations and they, in turn, challenged piano technology to reach greater heights. Endowed with these new physical and sonic resources, the piano then provided the composer with a responsive vehicle that could express water imagery in a compelling way.

The development of the evocation of water at the piano can be traced from its origins in Schubert's inventive song accompaniments, through Liszt's song transcriptions, songs, and piano solo works, to the piano works of Ravel. These composers represent roughly three successive generations, spanning the entire Romantic period through Impressionism. Each had a profound effect on his successor, and nowhere is this more apparent than in their piano works that contain water imagery.[4]

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[4] Another common thread that links these three composers is their predilection for the waltz, originating with Schubert's *Valses nobles* and *Valses sentimentales.*

The genesis of the major repertoire evoking water begins with the song accompaniments of Schubert. In the many songs that contain water imagery, the musical language of water begins to coalesce. Building upon the limited vocabulary he inherited from his predecessors and working with an early model pianoforte, Schubert, with seemingly boundless imagination, creates a great variety of effects. Through his piano accompaniments he depicted springs, brooks, rivers, lakes, seas, boats, fish, and a host of other figures and subjects associated with water; these many devices amount to a compendium of water imagery. Liszt, through his early transcriptions of Schubert songs, clearly absorbed the earlier composer's poetic prowess. Drawing upon both his own profound response to Nature and Schubert's models, he was well positioned to expand upon the water vocabulary. Liszt took full advantage of the more advanced tools and resources at his disposal — the rapidly evolving instrument and more colorful, adventurous scales and harmonies — and introduced the virtuosic element to this pursuit, creating ever more evocative figurations. His most significant water works, "Au bord d'une source" and "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este," are among his most important pieces and set the stage for the work of succeeding generations of composers. Similarly, Ravel's *Jeux d'eau* is at once an extension of Liszt's "Les jeux d'eaux" and a groundbreaking departure. Raising the virtuosic threshold to greater heights, Ravel extended the vocabulary to allow for a more vivid representation of water.

Viewing these works as a whole, we can take stock of their common features and summarize the various ways water is evoked. There are numerous devices that, though possessing little intrinsic meaning on their own, vividly conjure water in its diverse guises when employed in conjunction with one another. These involve tonality,

harmony, harmonic rhythm, melody, meter, rhythm, sonority, and, most importantly, figuration. While no single tonality appears to be associated exclusively with this subject, the vast majority of the pieces, from Schubert's songs to Ravel's water works, are in the major mode, thus reflecting the benevolent aspects of water: its clarity, tranquility, effervescence, playfulness, and gentle flowing quality. The more infrequent use of minor is usually associated with water's more foreboding character. One piece stands out in this regard: Ravel's "Un Barque sur l'océan" effectively captures water's duality, contrasting the ocean's inviting and dangerous natures through its tonal ambiguity. Mirroring water's constant nature, the harmonic rhythm in the majority of these works is predominantly static.

Through the pieces of Liszt and Ravel, several distinctive chords came to be closely associated with the expression of water and its elusive qualities. The dominant ninth, the closely related half-diminished seventh, and its inversion, the minor triad with added sixth, are employed extensively for their coloristic attributes. The major triad with added sixth, also frequently heard, is suggestive of a pentatonic mode and also possesses a serene, transparent quality. We might speculate that the reason these particular harmonies emerged as the chords of choice for this purpose rests on their own elusive sonic properties. The major sixth added to both major and minor triads creates tonal ambiguity: the major flirts with its relative minor while the minor becomes the first inversion of a half-diminished-seventh harmony, which itself has an unresolved quality. The dominant ninth, so prominent in "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este" and "Ondine," has a bright color that lends itself to capturing water's transparent, lively essence. Pentatonic scales, relatively free of dissonance, provide a sense of purity, transparency,

and luminescence to a number of passages. The occasional use of the whole-tone scale, with its lack of tonal direction, conjures a floating effect.

The role of meter is a peripheral one. While early examples of Liszt, such as "Au lac de Wallenstadt," "Au bord d'une source," and "Gondoliera," employ triple or compound meters, reminiscent of the gentle flow of the barcarolle, his later pieces are often in duple meters. Ravel's works, meanwhile, shift meters freely — and frequently — thus obscuring or "drowning" the sense of meter altogether. Ravel also adds a new dimension to the expression of water by employing irregular rhythmic figures, enabling him to capture water's unpredictable movement convincingly.

The most striking element in this repertoire is figuration, which functions both sonically and graphically. This music distinguishes itself visually with its profusion of notes arranged in intricate, descriptive shapes. Building upon Schubert's early devices, such as broken-chord figures, wave-like arpeggios, rolled chords, repeated-note patterns, tremolos, and ascending and descending scalar passages, both Liszt and Ravel expanded the vocabulary to make it increasingly more virtuosic. Their figurations became more elaborate, employing glissandi and other harp-like effects, octave tremolos, broken-fifth figures, and dyads at the second. These suggestive figures, in conjunction with an ever more colorful harmonic language, allowed these composers to paint increasingly vivid imagery. A common feature that we have observed through many of these pieces, from "Au bord d'une source" through Ravel's works, is the weaving of simple melodic threads into intricate figurations.

None of the aforementioned devices, however, would have been successful in evoking water had it not been for the development of the piano throughout the nineteenth

century. With a greater range of color and dynamics, its wide compass, and the atmospheric effects made possible by the use of the pedals, the piano enabled Liszt and Ravel to write music effectively suggesting water. The silvery, liquid sound of the piano's upper register, so prominent in many of these works, is utilized to particularly stunning effect, as is the resonant lower register, enhanced by the damper pedal, providing an illusion of depth.

Ultimately, the efficacy of this language depends on context. While none of these compositional devices is exclusive to the expression of water, their cumulative effect captures water in its various states. The composers in this study did not, however, merely attempt to imitate onomatopoetically the sound of water. Rather, they sought to express its essence: its movement, transparency, buoyancy, and depth, as well as its interplay with light. The measure of their success lies in the fact that the body of works they created is, like water itself, attractive, alluring, and endlessly mesmerizing.

APPENDIX

THE MUSIC

A selective list of solo piano music of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century

Albéniz, Isaac (1860-1909):
"Barcarolle" from *12 Piezas Caracteristicas,* Op. 92

Alkan, Charles Henri Valentin (1813-88):
Barcarolle, Op. 65 No. 6

Alwyn, William (1905-85):
The Sea is Angry
Waterlilies

Bartók, Béla (1881-1945):
"Barcarolla" from *Out of Doors*

Bax, Arnold (1883-1953):
Winter Waters — Tragic Landscape
Nereid
Water Music

Beach, Mrs. H.H.A. (1867-1944):
"Barcarolle" from *Morceaux Caractéristiques,* Op. 28
By the Still Waters, Op. 114

Bloch, Ernest (1880-1959):
Poems of the Sea

Bridge, Frank (1879-1941):
"Water Nymphs" from *Four Characteristic Pieces*
"The Midnight Tide" from *The Hour Glass*

Burgmuller, Johann Friedrich (1806-74)
"Refrain du Gondolier" } from *Etudes de Genre,*
"La Source" } Op. 109

Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Mario (1895-1968):
Alghe
I Naviganti
Il Raggio verde

Chabrier, Emmanuel (1841-94):
"Tourbillon" from *Pièces pittoresques*

Chopin, Frédéric (1810-49):
Barcarolle, Op.60

Debussy, Claude (1862-1918):
"La Cathédrale engloutie" from *Préludes, Premier Livre*
"En bateau" from *Petite Suite*
"Jardins sous la pluie" from *Estampes*
L'Isle joyeuse
"Ondine" from *Preludes, Deuxième Livre*
"Poissons d'or" from *Images II*
"Reflets dans l'eau" from *Images I*

Downey, John (1927-):
Eastlake Terrace

Fauré, Gabriel (1845-1924):
13 Barcarolles:
No. 1 in A minor, Op. 26
No. 2 in G major, Op. 41
No. 3 in G flat major, Op. 42
No. 4 in A flat major, Op. 44
No. 5 in F sharp minor, Op. 66
No. 6 in E flat major, Op. 70
No. 7 in D minor, Op. 90
No. 8 in D flat major, Op. 96
No. 9 in A minor, Op. 101
No. 10 in A minor, Op. 104 No. 2
No. 11 in G minor, Op. 105 No. 1
No. 12 in E flat major, Op. 105 No. 2
No. 13 in C major, Op. 116

Gade, Niels (1817-90):
Aquarellen, Op. 19

Grieg, Edvard (1843-1907):
"The Brooklet" from *Lyric Pieces,* Op. 62
"To the Spring" from *Lyric Pieces,* Op. 43
"Sailor's Song" from *Lyric Pieces,* Op. 68

Griffes, Charles Tomlinson (1884-1920):
"Barcarolle" from *Fantasy Pieces,* Op. 6
"The Fountain of the Acqua Paola" from *Roman Sketches,* Op.7
"The Lake at Evening" from *Three Tone Poems,* Op. 5

Heller, Stephen (1813-88):
"The Brook" from *25 Studies,* Op. 45
"Reverie du Gondolier" from *Studies*, Op. 121
"The River" from *25 Studies,* Op. 47

Ibert, Jacques (1890-1962):
"Sérénade sur l'eau" from *Petite Suite en Quinze Images*

Ireland, John (1879-1962):
"Amberley Wild Brooks" from *Two Pieces*
"The Island Spell" from *Decorations*
"Chelsea Reach" from *London Pieces*
"A Sea Idyll" from *In Those Days*
"Song of the Springtides" from *Sarnia*

Joplin, Scott (1868-1917):
The Cascades

Kodály, Zoltán (1882-1967):
"Il pleut dans mon coeur comme il pleut sur la ville" from
Seven Piano Pieces, Op. 11

Koechlin, Charles (1867-1951):
"En ramant sur le lac" } from *L'Anciènne Maison de Campagne*,
"La vieille fontaine" } Op. 124
Paysages et Marines, Op. 63

Leschetizky, Theodore (1830-1915):
"Barcarola (Venezia)" from *Souvenirs d'Italie,* Op. 39
"La Source" etude from *4 Morceaux,* Op. 36

Liszt, Franz (1811-86):
"Au bord d'une source" } from *Années de Pèlerinage*,
"Au Lac de Wallenstadt" } *Première Année: "Suisse"*
"Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude" from *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*
"Canzone" } from *Années de Pèlerinage, Deuxième Année: "Italie"*
"Gondoliera" } *Supplement: Venezia e Napoli*
"Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este" from *Années de Pèlerinage, Troisième Année*
La Lugubre Gondola I and *II*
"St. François de Paule marchant sur les flots" from *Deux Légendes*

Luening, Otto (1900-96):
"Swans" from *Five Intermezzos*

MacDowell, Edward (1861-1908):
Eight Sea Pieces, Op. 55
"To a Water Lily" from *Ten Woodland Sketches,* Op. 51

Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Felix (1809-47):
"The Brook," Op. 30 No. 5 }
"Boat-Song," Op. 102 No. 7 }
"On the Seashore," Op. 53 No. 1 } from *Songs Without Words*
"Venetian Gondola Songs," Op. 19 No. 6,
Op. 30 No. 6, Op. 62 No. 5 }

Moscheles, Ignaz (1794-1870):
"Moonlight on the Seashore" from *Grand Characteristic Studies,* Op. 95

Mussorgsky, Modest (1839-81):
"Capriccio" from *On the Southern Shores of the Crimea, No. 2*
"Gurzuf" from *On the Southern Shores of the Crimea, No. 1*
Tear

Nevin, Ethelbert Woodbridge (1862-1901):
Water Scenes, Op. 13

Palmgren, Selim (1878-1951):
"The Sea" from *24 Preludes,* Op. 17

Poulenc, Francis (1899-1963):
"Barcarolle" from *Napoli*
"En bateau" from *Promenades*

Rachmaninoff, Sergei (1873-1943):
"Barcarole" from *Seven Pieces,* Op. 10
The Brooklet (transcription of Schubert Lied)

Ravel, Maurice (1875-1937):
Frontispice
Jeux d'eau
"Ondine" from *Gaspard de la Nuit*
"Une barque sur l'océan" from *Miroirs*

Rivier, Jean (1896-1987):
Torrents

Roger-Ducasse, Jean (1873-1954):
Barcarolle II
Barcarolle III

Rorem, Ned (1923-):
Three Barcarolles

Roussel, Albert (1869-1937):
"Danse au bord de l'eau" from *Rustiques,* Op. 5

Rubinstein, Anton (1829-94):
Barcarole, Op. 30 No. 1
2 Barcaroles, Op. 50
Ondine, Op. 1

Samazeuilh, Gustave (1877-1967):
Le chant de la Mer

Satie, Erik (1866-1925):
"Fishing" }
"Yachting" }
"Bathing" } from *Sports and Divertissements*
"The Octopus" }
"Water Slide" }

Schulz-Evler, Adolf (1852-1905):
By the Beautiful Blue Danube

Sévérac, Déodat (1872-1921):
"Vers le Mas en fête" from *En Languedoc*

Sibelius, Jean (1865-1957):
"Fischerlied" from *Ten Pieces,* Op. 58
"Forest Lake" from *Five Sketches,* Op. 114

Smetana, Bedrich (1824-84):
Concert Study on the Seashore

Still, William Grant (1895-1978):
"Mystic Pool" from *Seven Traceries*

Szymanowski, Karol (1882-1937):
"L'isles des Sirènes" from *Métopes,* Op. 29

Tchaikovsky, Peter Ilich (1840-93):
"Barcarolle (June)" from *The Seasons,* Op. 37B

Vaughan Williams, Ralph (1872-1958):
The Lake in the Mountains

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