

MUSIC APPRECIATION SECTION**GREAT COMPOSERS OF MUSIC**

SECOND SERIES

By BERT PAUL OSBON *

II. LISZT

*Liszt at the age of 14*

Franz Liszt was the great piano virtuoso of the nineteenth century. A long-haired, long-fingered gypsy pianist in his youth, a kind, white-haired abbe in later life, but in each having all the charm of the other—such was Franz Liszt.

Liszt (pronounced list) was born in Hungary in central Europe in 1811. He was a very delicate and sickly boy until he reached the age of six. But he liked music. One day, while his father was playing a *concerto* on the piano, little Franz came up beside him and implored him to repeat the last movement over and over again. "What would you like to be when you grow up?" asked his father. "A musician like that man there," said the boy pointing to a picture of Beethoven. The next day his father began to give him piano lessons. The father of little Franz was a musical amateur who played the piano and other instruments.

Franz spent hours practicing the scales,

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and made such rapid progress that when he was nine years old, his piano-playing was so advanced that he played in a concert. A company of noblemen then offered to give the boy an annual scholarship amounting to 2,000 pesos a year for six years to pay the expenses of a music education. This the father accepted, gave up his position, and took the boy at once to Vienna.

In Vienna Franz studied under excellent teachers and made such splendid progress that at the age of eleven his playing in public made a sensation. Beethoven, who heard him play then, displayed unusual emotion. He was so amazed at the boy's wonderful technic, that he went to the stage, grasped the child, and kissed him on the forehead.

Young Liszt was then taken to Paris for further study. While he was in France he heard Paganini, the world's greatest violinist, play the violin. Liszt decided he would learn to play the piano as well as Paganini played the violin. Later, he accomplished this desire, and became one of the greatest pianists of all time.

When he was 16 he decided to follow a pianistic career, teaching, composing, and giving concerts. In Paris he studied further under skillful teachers, and before long his fame as a pianist spread all over Europe. He made wonderful concert tours. Everywhere his amazing ability as a pianist gave him rank as the greatest. He received enormous sums of money from his concerts.

After giving a series of concerts, Liszt

would retire for several years and then suddenly emerge once more and dazzle the world with his brilliant piano playing.

Liszt received musical inspiration from a strange group of people known as gypsies. Many gypsies lived in Hungary. No one ever knew where they came from. No matter among what people they lived, they remained a separate people. They always lead a wandering life. Gypsy music has a strange charm.

In the village in which Liszt lived as a boy there was a camping place for wandering gypsies. At night, amid the blaze of great bonfires, the men with violins and cymbals, and the girls in brilliant colored dresses, ear-rings, and necklaces, would dance and sing the rugged gypsy folk-tunes. Little Franz would drink in these weirdly abrupt rhythms and melodies until he knew them well.

Liszt understood the gypsies more than did any other man. He gathered together the wild music of their camp life and their dances, and wove these melodies with their barbaric rhythms into a series of tone pictures which he called rhapsodies.

Gypsies are people of many moods. Sometimes dark dreams of sorrow oppress them. Sometimes careless joy and gay humor chase the dark moods away. The bright mood may suddenly change to a burst of furious passion. These moods are present in their music.

A gypsy dance begins with a slow movement, the *lassen*. In the *lassen* one feels the slumbering quiet of dreams.

Then like a flash the *lassen* changes to a wild whirling movement, the *friska*. Then back to the first quiet movement, and the dance comes to an end. Liszt wrote fourteen of these *rhapsodies* on Hungarian gypsy themes, but the most famous of these is *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2*. You should hear this played by a good pianist or on the phonograph.

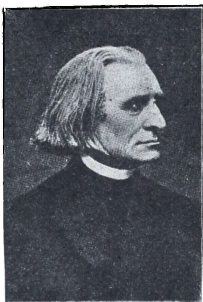
Liszt invented a new orchestral form of music which he called a "symphonic poem," because the music tells a poetic story in free symphonic form.

Later he lived in Rome, and the pope honored him by giving to him the title of Abbe. This is a title granted by the Catholic Church in France for a clergyman not bound by monastic vows, and not receiving his living from the church, but often employed as a teacher or the like.

Liszt now donned the abbe's long black robe, and his music took on something like priestly vestments too. Instead of fiery Hungarian *rhapsodies* or brilliant trans-

criptions for the piano, a requiem or an oratorio flowed from his peaceful pen. But he continued to teach and conduct in Germany and in Hungary, while living in Rome as the pope's Palestrina. (See the *Music Appreciation Section* of the January, 1941, issue of THE YOUNG CITIZEN.)

Liszt made a powerful use of what is known as "program music", that is, music which follows a story and does not have the usual musical form. He did much for the development of piano music. You should hear his beautiful



FRANZ LISZT

Liebestraum No. 3 for the piano.

He died, appropriately enough, at a music festival given by his friend Wagner in Baireuth, on July 13, 1886 while visiting his daughter Cosima. Dazzling piano virtuoso, conductor and composer, teacher, apostle of new music, writer and editor, friend of rich and poor, he had many claims to fame.

A REVIEW

1. What kind of a pianist was Liszt?
2. When and where was he born? Died when?
3. What did he say to his father when a boy about his ambition?
4. When a boy did Liszt practice much on the piano?
5. Was this necessary? Why?
6. What did some wealthy men do for him?
7. Where did Liszt study?
8. With what people was Liszt familiar?
9. What did he get from them? Did he use these in his compositions?
10. Tell about a gypsy dance.
11. What is a *rhapsody* in music? (See the dictionary.)
12. How many *rhapsodies* did Liszt write?
13. What new orchestra form did Liszt invent? Tell about it.
14. What honor was conferred upon Liszt by the pope?
15. Why is Liszt famous?
16. Spell and pronounce his name correctly.
17. What is program music?
18. Liszt developed music for what instrument?
19. Where did Liszt die?
20. Have you heard any of his music?

THE FIRST MUSIC

As far back as we know anything about the people who have lived on earth, they have always had music. At first, all of the music was sung. Then simple musical instruments were made, and people played upon them as they sang.

It was in those early days that the first folk songs were sung. Of course there were no printed books or printed music then. The songs were nearly all quite short, and were learned by hearing other people sing or play them.

After many years, people learned to print music. The first music was printed a few years before Columbus discovered America. This music did not look like the music we have today.

Later, men began to write music. At first they wrote only short pieces. After a while people wanted longer and larger pieces to play. So gradually music, such as we have today, was developed.

QUESTIONS

1. How old is printed music?
2. Which is older, music or the musical instrument?
3. How were people in early days able to sing, if they did not have books?
4. What were these songs called?
5. Was the first printed music like what we now have?
6. When was the first music printed?
7. What kind of music was written at first?
8. Do you think most people like music?
9. Do you think there will always be music in the world? Why?
10. Do you like music?
11. Do you hear as much good music as possible?