

in imitation of horse's gallop. A middle section "Il canto espressivo ed appassionato assai" ("Sung expressively and with much passion"), is a lyrical and romantic variation of the initial melody. This theme erupts in wild leaps, growing faster, more violent, and halting to *recitativo*, describing final breaths of a dying horse. A grandiose finale conveys the last verse of the poem: "il tombe, et se relève roi!" ("he falls then rises a king"). Liszt orchestrated this étude, composing a Symphonic poem *Mazeppa*.

~Sophia Agranovich

Sophia Agranovich

Multi-award-winning soloist, chamber musician, recording artist and educator, **Sophia Agranovich** is "a bold, daring pianist in the tradition of the Golden Age Romantics...A tigress of the keyboard" – Fanfare. Her performances are captivating audiences by the "orison of uncommon beauty" – Audiophile, "interpretation that dares to be different", "magnificent shading and superior musicianship" – American Record Guide.

A Steinway Artist, Ms. Agranovich has per-

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formed in USA, Europe, Israel, and Canada, and was invited to China. Some of her prestigious venues are David Geffen Hall, Bruno Walter Auditorium and Paul Hall at Lincoln Center, Carnegie Well Recital Hall, Merkin Concert Hall, Roerich and Metropolitan museums, Steinway Hall and galleries, Bargemusic, Tenri Cultural Institute, Polish Cultural Foundation, Lambert Castle, Watchung Arts Center, Salle Cortot, Ehrbarsaal and Kaiser Hall. Ms. Agranovich has collaborated with such notable musicians as Mark Peskanov, Shlomo Mintz, Christopher Collins Lee, Andrew Litton, Alexander Mishnaevsky, Andrew Lamy, Brett Deubner, Gregory Singer, Anatole Wiecek, Kathleen Supove, and members of the major orchestras. From 2010 through 2022 Sophia Agranovich has released ten solo albums to a wide critical acclaim.

Ms. Agranovich was awarded First Prize in the Bergen Philharmonic Competition, Gold Medal and eight Silver Medals from Global Music Awards, two Gold Medals from Prestige Music Awards, Best Classical Solo from Akademia Music Awards, three Best Classical Piano Albums from Clouzine International Music Awards, four Radio Music Awards and Hall of Fame from Indie Music Channel, two Platinum and a Gold award from LIT

International Talent Awards, Industry Leader and Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Awards, and many more. Her albums and live concerts are broadcast worldwide, most recently in Brazil on Universidade FM 106.9 "Company of the Music", in Canada on CKWR 'Women in Music', Berlin, Munich, Rome, New Zealand, London, Tokyo, Osaka, Paris, Tel-Aviv, and in New York on WWFM 'Piano Matters', WQXR Greene Space and WQXR 'Reflections from the Keyboard' with David Dubal.

A native of Ukraine, Sophia Agranovich won the Ukrainian Young Artists Competition—now Mykola Lysenko International Competition—at ten, being the youngest participant. Her concerts were broadcast on national TV and radio stations since she was six. At fifteen, Ms. Agranovich entered the Juilliard School in New York City as a student of legendary professor Sascha Gorodnitzki. She also studied with eminent Nadia Reisenberg. Ms. Agranovich earned Bachelor and Master Degrees from the Juilliard School, holding full scholarship and a Fellowship teaching Piano Minor at Juilliard. After graduating Juilliard, Ms. Agranovich began working towards her Doctorate at the Columbia University, but deferred that pursuit to raise a

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family, which led to a 23-year career in Information Technology. Having earned a certification in Computer Science, she worked as a systems analyst for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company where she received the Presidential Quality Award for Computer Systems Design and Support, and later as a senior programmer/analyst/project manager/vice president at Merrill Lynch. Ms. Agranovich also studied naturopathy, traditional Indian medicine and traditional Chinese medicine, receiving certifications in Yoga, Pilates, and other holistic disciplines. She taught Yoga and Pilates at the local YMCA.

Sophia Agranovich is an esteemed pedagogue and is a recipient of numerous teaching awards. Her students often win top prizes in regional, national and international competitions and are playing at international prestigious venues. Their performances were broadcast on radio and TV. Ms. Agranovich is an active member of various professional music organizations, listed in Who's Who in America and Who's Who in the World, a voting member of NARAS, Artistic Director of 'Classicals at the Circle' music series at the Watchung Arts Center, Program Chair and Board member of Music Educators Association of New Jersey.

Franz Liszt

(October 22, 1811 – July 31, 1886)

Rhapsodies, Études and Transcriptions

Sophia Agranovich, piano

- | | | |
|---|--|-------|
| 1 | Hungarian Rhapsody No. 6, S. 244/6, in D-flat Major | 7:22 |
| 2 | Hungarian Rhapsody No. 13, S. 244/13, in A minor | 9:15 |
| 3 | <i>Ständchen</i> ("Serenade"), S 560 No.7
(from Schubert: <i>Schwanengesang</i> , D. 957 No. 4) | 6:20 |
| 4 | <i>Erlkönig</i> ("Elf King"), S. 558 No. 4 (Schubert: Op. 1, D. 328) | 5:22 |
| 5 | <i>Die Forelle</i> ("The Trout"), S. 554 (Schubert: D 550) | 4:12 |
| Études d'exécution transcendante (The Transcendental Études), S.139 | | |
| 6 | No. 9 in A-flat Major, "Ricordanza" ("Remembrance") | 10:14 |
| 7 | No. 4 in D minor, "Mazeppa" | 8:05 |

Total Time: 50:55

Recorded on September 6, 2021 at Wharton Hall, New Jersey, United States.
Produced and engineered by Joseph DeVico. Program notes: Sophia Agranovich.
Cover art: Portrait of Ferenc Liszt (1856) by Wilhelm von Kaulbach (1805–1874), Memorial Museum, Budapest; Sophia Agranovich (2022), photo and design by Bill Walendzinski. Piano: Steinway D.

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Franz Liszt

Rhapsodies, Études and Transcriptions



Hungarian Rhapsodies:

No. 6 and No. 13

Transcendental Études:

Ricordanza
Mazeppa

Schubert-Liszt:

Ständchen
Erlkönig
Die Forelle

Sophia Agranovich



Franz Liszt

(October 22, 1811 – July 31, 1886)

Inspired by two successive visits to his native Hungary during 1839-40, Franz Liszt paid a tribute to his heritage by composing nineteen Hungarian Rhapsodies. Subsequently, Nos. 2, 5, 6, 9, 12, and 14 were orchestrated by Franz Doppler with Liszt's revisions. The orchestral rhapsodies Nos. 1-6 correspond to the piano solo Nos. 14, 12, 6, 2, 5 and 9. Liszt transcribed the same six, plus additional three, for piano duet, and arranged two for violin, cello and piano. The rhapsodies were heavily influenced by Roma Gypsy music with its romantic improvisation, dramatic expression, extreme rhythmical freedom, unusual modalities and sound colorations, flourishes of ornamentation, volatile phrasing, Hungarian gypsy scale, imitation of cymbal tremolos and contralto of the low clarinet, virtuosic cadenzas of fiddlers and other sound effects of Roma bands. This idiom was used to a much lesser degree by Haydn and Schubert, and it is Liszt who broke free from classical tradition, influencing Brahms, Kodaly, Bartok, and even American jazz. The rhapsodies often had themes which Liszt believed to be folk tunes,

but were actually written by Hungarian composers, and adapted by Gypsy bands. Each rhapsody is based on the *verbunkos*, a two-part Hungarian dance, reflecting Gypsy improvisation—the *lassan* ("slow") and the *friska* or *friss* ("fast"). In the impassioned and gloomy *lassan*, folk melodies are repeated in variations and are sprinkled with virtuosic cadenzas. The *friska* is comprised of dance tunes that spur to a swift brilliant coda.

Hungarian Rhapsody No. 6 in D-flat Major, S. 244/6, was written in 1847, published in 1853, and dedicated to Count Anton von Apponyi. Based on themes from Liszt's *Magyar Dalok*, and *Magyar rapszódíák*, from S. 242, it was orchestrated four years later, together with his other 5 rhapsodies. Liszt wrote a third version for piano 4 hands in 1874. This rhapsody has four sections, each employing a separate Hungarian folk melody (*Chlopitzky nótá*, *Cserebogár*, *sárga cserebogár*, and *verbunkos*). The first two are part of an introduction, consisting of a glorious march followed by a rapid dance, both imbued with off-beat accents producing bizarre and wild flavor. *Lassan* is based on a morbid Hungarian poem: "My father is dead, my mother is dead, I have no brothers and sisters, and all the money that I have left will just buy

a rope to hang myself with." Liszt's music reflects its pensive crying and eruptive mood in improvisatory Gypsy style. *Friska* is playful and sunny, leading to exhilaration of repeated notes and scales in octaves toward a bravura conclusion. This rhapsody is one of Liszt's most technically challenging and extroverted.

Hungarian Rhapsody No. 13 in A minor, S. 244/13, was written in 1847 and published in 1853. It was dedicated to Count Leo Festetics. It is the least performed, but one of the most musically beautiful rhapsodies by Liszt. It begins with a rich sound of a melancholy melody in the middle piano register, gradually growing more impassioned and effervescently embellished. The following A major section has a merrier mood and dance-like turns, although at times interrupted with anguish of the introductory motif. Virtuosic and fiery *Friska* section is in *Vivace* tempo, and is building with impetuous energy towards the grandiloquent *Presto assai* coda in A Major. The last tune is the authentic Hungarian folk song *Nem, nem, nem, nem megyünk mi innen el*. It also quotes *Akkor szép az erdő, mikor zöld* and is based on the 17th number of *Magyar Dallok*, Volume I. In

this rhapsody Liszt truly captures sounds of Gypsy bands, "Hungarian cadence" rhythm and Hungarian Gypsy minor scale.

A significant amount of Liszt's 700+ compositions consists from transcriptions, arrangements, variations, paraphrases, and fantasies on the themes of operas, symphonies, songs and other works by different composers. Some of the reproductions were orchestrated, but most were written for piano. Liszt included them in his recitals, thus familiarizing audience with new repertoire and unselfishly promoting other composers. Among Liszt's first arrangements were 56 lieder written by Franz Schubert, to whom his music Liszt had a special affinity. Thanks to Liszt, Schubert's compositions became widely known. Liszt kept integrity of the essence of Schubert's music with its original concept of melodies and distinctive accompaniment, and he even included words in his scores. However, he often enhanced the piano version texture for a diversity of poetic expression. Alan Walker writes: "The main technical problem facing Liszt was obvious: how to incorporate the vocal line into Schubert's piano accompaniment, thereby making a self-contained key-

board work with no loss of musical substance. Some of Schubert's accompaniments, after all, are very difficult, and themselves demand a virtuoso technique. To reproduce the vocal line as well seems an impossible feat. But Liszt always succeeds in finding a solution."

The entire *Schwanengesang* cycle was transcribed by Liszt in 1838-9, and published in 1840. **Ständchen ("Serenade")**, S. 560 No.7 (Schubert - D. 957 No. 4) is based on a poem by Ludwig Rellstab, in which an admirer pleads with his beloved to make him happy. Liszt is faithful to the original score, except in one of the sections he adds a canon to the original theme for a gentle echo effect, making it even more sweetly nostalgic and heart-melting.

One of Schubert's most famous works, **Erk König ("Elf King")**, S. 558 No. 4 (Schubert - Op. 1, D. 328), has been orchestrated by Hector Berlioz, Max Reger and Liszt, and arranged by Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst for solo violin. Liszt had transcribed it for piano in 1837-8 and published in 1838. This lieder is based on Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's poem that is considered his most notorious ballad and is a part of 1782

Singspiel *Die Fischerin*. It portrays the death of a child, pursued by a supernatural demonic creature, Erlekönig. The roles of a narrator, a father, his young son, and the "Elf King" have to be depicted by a performer, each with different expression, rhythm, harmony and texture. Liszt "orchestrated" the piano transcription by adding octaves, chords, and leaps (emphasizing galloping effect), extended arpeggios and dramatic expression markings. It is a very difficult piece technically and musically, and has been described as one of the "commanding compositions of the century". It has been widely popular since it was published.

Die Forelle ("The Trout"), S. 554 (Schubert - D. 550) is a part of *Three Songs*. It is the second of Liszt's two versions; both composed and published in 1846. It is based on the poem by Christian F.D. Schubart. Liszt added to the original an introduction with cadenza, taking more liberties here than in his other Schubert's transcriptions. Music flows in a dance-like charming fashion with zest and gaiety, imitating shimmering of the water in capricious virtuosic outbursts.

Ständchen, *Erlekönig* and *Die Forelle* were among Liszt's favorite performance pieces.

Liszt began composing *Études d'exécution transcendante* (Transcendental Etudes) in 1826, when he was only fifteen. The original was titled *Étude in douze exercices* (Studies in Twelve Exercises) and was planned to be expanded to a set of 48 études, which had never materialized. In 1837 Liszt revised original version, naming it *Douze Grande Études* (Twelve Great Studies). In 1851-52, Liszt created a final revision to accommodate pianists with smaller hands, and dedicated *Études* to Carl Czerny, his former teacher.

Transcendental Étude No. 9 in A-flat, "Ricordanza" ("Remembrance"), is dreamy, melancholy and yearning in expression, with eruptions of ardent sentiment. Busoni called it "a bundle of faded love letters". It is written in Rondo form. A main theme, marked *dolce, con grazia*, is recurring between improvisational episodes with passionate and elegant cadenzas requiring refined finger work. Its *espressivo* and *rubato* ornamented melodic lines with gentle harp-like accompaniment remind of *bel canto fiorituri* in opera arias by Bellini and Donizetti and of Chopin's Nocturnes. This *Étude* challenges

performer's ability to evoke the rainbow of subtle and contrasting emotions: from bitter-sweet memories of joyful times to poignancy and desperation, from capricious flirty mood to throes of heart pain.

Transcendental Étude No. 4 in D minor, "Mazeppa", is based on the poem by Victor Hugo from his collection of poems *Les Orientales*, published in 1829. It is included in Liszt's original manuscript. The poem describes the life of a Ukrainian nobleman, Ivan Stepanovich Mazepa-Koledinsky (c. 1632-1709), who was a page at the court of John Casimir, King of Poland. Mazeppa had a love affair with the wife of a Podolian count. He was punished by being tied naked to a wild horse and set free to roam, eventually reaching Ukraine. Mazeppa was saved by Ukrainian Cossacks and became their military leader. This story has a wide cultural legacy in literature, poetry, music, theater and art.

Both musically and technically, Liszt's *Mazeppa* is ranked among the most difficult of the *Transcendental Études*. It demands endurance, great speed and virtuosity, due to the abundance of double notes, octaves and chords that jump spanning multiple octaves,