

# At the Piano

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The series “At the Piano” is intended for all those who have some experience playing the piano and would now like to play easier original works by famous composers. Students, teachers and those returning to the piano will encounter a wealth of well-known works.

## Contents

Each volume in the series is devoted exclusively to one composer. This is because each composer has his own style and thus places his own very personal demands on his piano works – not only from the point of view of technique but also as regards musical interpretation.

## Technique

All of the pieces have been arranged in progressive level of difficulty. They enable you to practise very different pianistic skills, including runs, breaking chords, arpeggios, parallel thirds, trills, playing chords and polyphonic playing. Thus most of the pieces also prepare you for more demanding pieces by the composer in question. We have endeavoured to keep variety in mind when compiling the pieces: slower ones follow faster ones, dances come after studies, variations after sonata movements, etc.

## Urtext

All of the pieces have been edited according to the strictest Urtext principles, as have all Urtext editions by G. Henle Publishers. In short, this means that the musical text is unaltered and presents the composer’s intentions. Additions that are essential – even great composers occasionally make mistakes – have been given in parentheses. And as we do not wish to dispense with the

aid of fingerings, we clearly differentiate between the ones we have added (in normal writing) and those that are original (in italics). Composers in the Baroque, Classical and even Early Romantic periods were extremely sparing with indications regarding articulation, phrasing, dynamics and tempo. This was because in those days they could assume that experienced players already knew how something was to be played. This might not always be immediately clear to musicians today. Nevertheless, in our Urtext editions we deliberately do without “well-intentioned” additions and questionable alterations, as are often to be found in other editions. Those who use our editions are free of such patronisation; they can be sure of the authenticity of the musical text and make the most of the ensuing flexibility for their own stylistically confident interpretation.

## Guide

This cannot, of course, be done without any help at all. The series “At the Piano” provides an introduction to dealing with Urtext editions as well as a first pedagogical guide on how to get to grips with original works of an easy and medium level of difficulty from a technical and musical point of view. To this end, each piece is preceded by some information on practising it, on its history and on understanding the musical text. In so doing we would like to provide players with a foundation upon which they can develop their own approach to the work, their own personal interpretation and above all, enjoy making music. Pianists who are enthusiastic and prepared to put in a little effort – no matter whether young or old, starting to play or returning to the instrument – will then be able to play their Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, Brahms or even Liszt with conviction.

# Playing Liszt

Franz Liszt (1811–86) was assuredly one of the most flamboyant artistic personalities of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, not only on account of his outstanding virtuosity, but also due to his profound interests and activities aside from music. His career was marked by his untiring willingness to support other composers (as a pianist, conductor and organiser), his tremendous charitable commitments and not least by a number of sensational affairs.

 Born in the area around the Austro-Hungarian border, he began his career as a child prodigy and already appeared for the first time in public as a pianist at the age of nine. In 1823 he went to Paris and in the years that followed embarked from there on concert tours to England and Switzerland. He also already began composing at an early age (including a variation on the Diabelli Waltz on which Beethoven had written his famous Variations). At the age of 16 Liszt lost his father, who had up to then accompanied him everywhere in the role of tutor and impresario. In the crisis that followed the young artist intensively pursued religious, philosophical and socio-political topics, establishing contacts with the intellectual scene in Paris.

It was there that in 1832 he got to know Marie Comtesse d'Agoult, who was married at the time but who then got divorced on Liszt's account. They travelled together through Switzerland and Italy several times from 1835 onwards. He worked his impressions into an extensive piano cycle, which he published in 1842 with the title *Album d'un voyageur* (Album of a Traveller). Time and again he undertook smaller and larger concert tours, which not only allowed his fame to increase almost inestimably but also had a decisive influence on his development as a composer due to the diverse musical impressions he received. In an unflagging burst of activity he composed works for immediate everyday use, showpiece études and transcriptions of opera melodies or popular songs, which showcased his unbelievable virtuosity, as well as piano pieces in which he

set his personal experiences and literary influences (see nos. 3–5 and 7) to music.

 Just as his appearances as a pianist in the 1830s and 1840s exhibited features such as exaggeration and extravagance, his compositions from this time are also often characterised by an excessive fantasy and untamed treatment of form. Yet one should also not overlook his contribution as an interpreter of works by his fellow composers – whether by “Classical” ones such as Beethoven, or contemporary ones such as Schumann or Mendelssohn. When undertaking this, he retreated out of the limelight, putting himself into the service of the matter at hand. It was not by chance that Beethoven's biographer Anton Schindler said that Liszt had “contributed more to the correct understanding of Beethoven's music than any other instrumentalist of our time”.

When Liszt settled in Weimar in 1848 thanks to the influence of Princess Carolyne zu Sayn-Wittgenstein, he began to organise his earlier compositions, to revise them and at the same time to streamline them from a pianistic and also a formal perspective. Many works were then published again partly in a completely new form, including the *Album d'un voyageur*, which he published again in 1855 as *Première Année – Suisse* in the *Années de Pèlerinage* (see no. 8). In 1858 the *Deuxième Année – Italie* (see nos. 6 and 9) followed. The three *Liebesträume* (see no. 11) already appeared in 1850, which Liszt had likewise composed earlier.

In his later years, the composer greatly reduced his number of concert tours and busied himself with numerous charitable ventures. At the same time he turned more closely to religion and metaphysical topics, taking minor orders in the Church and becoming an abbé. Marked by illness, he became increasingly preoccupied with death and dying, which also influenced his works of the time (see no. 10). He composed smaller works for piano, whose harmony goes beyond the borders of tonality and whose sparse language points far ahead into the future. It was at this time that he also wrote the miniatures for Baroness von Meyendorff (see nos. 1 and 2).