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Franz Liszt's Songs on Poems by Victor Hugo

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FRANZ LISZT’S SONGS ON POEMS BY VICTOR HUGO

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Franz Liszt composed over eighty songs in German, French, Italian, Hungarian, Russian, and English. Although most of his songs are set to German poems, the songs in French are among the most significant works, especially those set to poems by Victor Hugo. Liszt-Hugo songs were composed between 1842 and 1844. Throughout his life Liszt read French Romantic literature and was strongly inspired by it. He also had close relationships with several great poets, especially Hugo. Among the seven Liszt-Hugo songs, “Oh! quand je dors” (S. 282), “Comment, disaient-ils” (S. 276), “Enfant, si j’étais roi” (S. 283), and “S’il est un charmant gazon” (S. 284) were revised after fifteen years. This treatise provides biographical information on Franz Liszt and Victor Hugo, and an examination of Liszt’s settings of Hugo poems with regard to text, formal structure, rhythm, texture, melody, and harmony. Two different versions of the four songs mentioned above are compared and Liszt’s development as a song composer over a fifteen-year period is discussed. Three other relatively unknown songs are also investigated: “La tombe et la rose” (S. 285), “Gastibelza” (S. 286), and “Quand tu chantes” (S. 306a).
CHAPTER 1

FRANZ LISZT AND VICTOR HUGO

The Life of Franz Liszt

Franz Liszt was born on October 22, 1811, in Raiding, Hungary, which became an Austrian district after World War I. His father, Adam Liszt (1776-1827), was an amateur musician and was employed by the administration of the Esterhazy estate. Adam Liszt played the violin and the cello as well as the piano, and was his son’s first piano teacher. His mother, Maria Anna Lager (1788-1866), was German-born. The Liszt family moved to Vienna in 1822, where Franz studied composition with Antonio Salieri (1750-1825) and took piano lessons from Carl Czerny (1791-1857). In Vienna, Franz earned local fame with his performances, including one in the presence of Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827), and his first composition, a variation on a waltz by Diabelli, was published. After a year, they moved from Vienna to Paris, where Adam Liszt wanted his son to enter the Paris Conservatory, but Franz was refused because he was not a French citizen. However, he continued to study piano and composition privately and a few years later, at the age of fourteen, composed his only opera, *Don Sanche*, which premiered in Paris in 1825. In these early years, Franz Liszt gave concerts in Paris, England, and Switzerland. In August 1827, while accompanying his son on tour, Adam Liszt died. Despite the sorrow surrounding his father’s death, the following year the young Liszt fell in love with one of his pupils, the Countess Caroline de Saint-Cricq, but this relationship soon ended, due to her father’s objection. The death of Liszt’s father and his first disappointed love caused depression in the young virtuoso; he sought comfort by immersing himself in the study of Catholicism and reading Romantic literature.

Liszt was in Paris around 1830, when the Romantic movement blossomed among musicians, poets and artists. There he met Victor Hugo (1802-1885), Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869), Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), Alfred de Vigny (1797-1863), Alfred de Musset (1810-1857) and some other important poets, as well as Nicolò Paganini (1782-1840), Hector Berlioz (1803-1869), Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849) and many other composers. Liszt was strongly influenced by these talented artists, especially the violinist Paganini, whose technique he
emulated in his piano compositions. In 1833 Liszt also met Countess Marie d'Agoult (1805-1876), a young woman from a noble family in France. She held a high position in Parisian society and had her own salon where Liszt held concerts. However, her married life was unhappy, so she and Liszt fled from her husband to Switzerland, where Liszt taught piano at the Geneva Conservatory. They had two daughters, Blandine (1835-1862) and Cosima (1837-1930), and one son, Daniel (1839-1859).

According to Klára Hamburger, the years between 1839 and 1847 were some of Liszt’s busiest years because he toured almost all the countries in Europe.\(^1\) During this period he met Robert Schumann (1810-1856) and Richard Wagner (1813-1883) and established strong friendships with them.\(^2\) Schumann, among other music critics, was impressed with Liszt’s brilliant performances and hailed him as a pianistic genius. Members of the general public who attended Liszt's concerts during these years were undoubtedly dazzled by his solo recitals. He was the first to play entire programs from memory and to place the piano at a right angle to the stage. Even the term “recital” was his.\(^3\) Liszt performed not only works by such renowned composers as Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) and Beethoven, but also his own compositions.

After years of frequent quarreling, Liszt separated from the countess permanently in 1844. A few years later, he met another woman, Princess Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein (1819-1887). Like Marie d'Agoult, she was also an author. In the following year, Sayn-Wittgenstein and Liszt settled down in Weimar and Liszt stopped performing publicly for several years. Instead, he spent more time composing and conducting. During this period, Liszt composed most of his important works—symphonic poems, two piano concertos, and many songs. Some musicologists claim that Liszt's compositions from his Weimar period represent some of his most important music. Meanwhile, as a conductor of the court theater, he conducted operas by Christoph Willibald von Gluck (1714-1787) and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), as well as contemporaries such as Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868) and Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901). Liszt also conducted premieres of Wagner’s *Lohengrin* and Berlioz’s *Benvenuto Cellini*.

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In 1861 Liszt left Germany and arrived in Rome. As a devout Roman Catholic, he had always been attracted to church music. Prior to coming to Rome, he had written several pieces on sacred subjects, including *Missa solennis* and *Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth* (The Legend of St. Elizabeth). However, his time in Rome deepened his ardent religious interest, leading him to become an abbé. Liszt continued to compose sacred music as well as some of his most significant piano works, such as the third volume of *Années de pèlerinage* (Years of Pilgrimage) and *Douze grandes études*. He also traveled to music festivals in Germany, visited friends in Hungary, and attended the performances of his own pieces in Paris, where his mother was still living. It was here, in 1866, that Liszt saw his mother for the last time. His daughter Cosima, who had originally married Liszt’s pupil, Hans von Bülow, had started a new relationship with Wagner. Although Liszt tried to dissuade his daughter from falling in love with Wagner, it was to no avail. Because of this affair, Liszt did not see Cosima and Wagner for several years.

He returned to Weimar in January 1869, but continued to visit Rome and Budapest regularly. He referred to this period as his “*vie trifurquée*” (threefold life). As he got older, Liszt lived in modesty and austerity. He taught his students without charge and helped the poor, even though he himself had no permanent home and was very lonely. At the end of his life, Liszt was recognized as an outstanding teacher and, in 1875, he was appointed president of the Hungarian Academy of Music. During these last years of his life, he produced a large number of important piano pieces, songs, and sacred music. He completed the final volume of *Années de pèlerinage*, the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, and the *Mephisto Waltzes*, and composed several songs. *Via Crucis* and *Christus* are among the most significant sacred pieces of his last period. In 1886 Liszt traveled to England, France, and Belgium. He then went to Bayreuth to see his daughter Cosima, who had married Wagner, and attended the Bayreuth Festival. He spent his final days with her and died on July 31, 1886.
Liszt’s Vocal Works

Throughout his life Liszt loved to read not only poetry by Victor Hugo, Musset, Heine, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), but also writings of philosophers and historians. He had close relationships with a number of great poets, especially Hugo and Heine, and he treasured these associations.\(^4\) Liszt had already known Victor Hugo in 1827 and invited him to his concerts. Also, Liszt met Heine in Paris in 1831, and, despite an age difference of fourteen years, they attended social meetings together and praised each other’s work.

Liszt’s close associations with poets are evident in the large amount of his music that is based on literature. For example, Liszt composed art songs throughout his career, except during the period when his attention turned to sacred music. Over a span of about forty-five years, he wrote more than eighty songs, many of which were based on works of the great poets. His orchestral works such as the *Faust Symphony*, *Dante Symphony* and the symphonic poems are also based on literary works. The second volume of the *Années de pèlerinage* includes the keyboard transcriptions of his *Tre sonetti di Petrarca*, based on works by Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374), and “Après une lecture du Dante, fantasia quasi sonata,” the title of which was derived from Hugo’s poem. Liszt left over 150 piano transcriptions of songs, many of which are based on Franz Schubert’s (1797-1828) lieder. Gradually, he became more interested in composing his own songs, although they do not figure prominently in Liszt’s total body of works.\(^5\) He composed only one opera early in his career, but later wrote a large number of fantasies and paraphrases on operas by Mozart, Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848), Verdi, Wagner, Charles Gounod (1818-1893) and others.

Although he was Hungarian by birth, Liszt never learned to speak the Hungarian language fluently because Raiding, where he was born, was in a German-speaking part of Hungary. Consequently, most of his songs are settings of German poems. Like Schubert and Schumann, Liszt frequently set poems of Goethe and Heine.\(^6\) Schumann, although he was only one year Liszt’s senior, held dramatically different opinions on the concept and style of music. However, he was enthusiastic about Liszt’s first German song, “Im Rhein, im schönen Strome”

\(^6\) Headington, 222.
(In the Rhine, in the Beautiful River). The two composers first met in Dresden in 1840, right after Schumann had composed “Im Rhein, im heiligen Strome” (In the Rhine, in the Holy River), a revised version of the poem by Heine. After this first meeting, Liszt and Schumann nurtured a friendship and dedicated several of their pieces to each other. Liszt also set poems of other German poets such as Johann Herder (1744-1803), Ludwig Uhland (1787-1862), Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866), Hoffmann von Fallersleben (1798-1874), Emanuel Geibel (1815-1884), and Friedrich Bodenstedt (1819-1892).

Although Liszt’s native language was German and he mainly lived in German-speaking environments, he was actually more fluent in French. William Dart pointed out, “One weakness often encountered in Liszt’s lieder is that of poor word-setting, especially of the German poems.” His errors of accentuation were often criticized and led to revisions. He felt more comfortable with the French language, but he set fewer French poems. Liszt wrote only thirteen French songs on poems by seven poets—Victor Hugo, Alfred de Musset, Alexandre Dumas, père (1802-1870), Pierre-Jean de Béranger (1780-1857), Émile de Girardin (1802-1881), Étienne Monnier, and Caroline von Pavloff. All of these songs were written in the 1840s except “Tristesse.” According to Ben Arnold, Liszt’s principal French songs are settings of poems by Victor Hugo. Four of these songs, “Oh! quand je dors,” “Comment, disaient-ils,” “Enfant, si j’étais roi,” and “S’il est un charmant gazon,” all of which were written in the early 1840s, are frequently performed and recorded today. Three others, “La tombe et la rose,” “Gastibelza,” and “Quand tu chantes” are relatively unknown. Liszt also set three sonnets by Petrarch in Italian, a few poems in Hungarian, and one each in Russian and English.

Several versions of Liszt’s songs from early in his career, the origins of which date to the 1840s, survive today. Liszt revised his earlier settings in order to publish a collection of his songs, entitled Gesammelte Lieder, in 1860. Liszt, in a letter to the Austrian composer Josef Dessauer (1798-1876), states that his “earlier songs are mostly too ultra sentimental, and frequently too full in the accompaniment.” In Liszt’s earlier songs, piano parts are very prominent and sometimes excessive. While these songs tended to be dramatic or operatic, the revised versions

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10 Headington, 223.
11 Arnold, 415.
are conspicuously simpler. As he revised them two or three times, the lengths of the songs were also shortened. One anecdote provides further evidence of Liszt’s changing stylistic taste. When Felix Mottl (1856-1911) asked advice from Liszt about writing his own songs, Liszt suggested simplifying them, particularly with regard to accompaniments and modulations.\textsuperscript{12} This process of simplification applies to the revisions Liszt made of his settings of poetry by the Romantic author Victor Hugo. This treatise will examine Liszt-Hugo songs composed between 1842 and 1844, and the revisions will be compared to his earlier versions. The three rarely performed songs, “La tombe et la rose,” “Gastibelza,” and “Quand tu chantes,” are also discussed in this study.

\textbf{Victor Hugo and Romanticism}

Victor-Marie Hugo was a poet, novelist, dramatist, and statesman. He is often considered the most influential man in French Romanticism. Today, as well as during his lifetime, Victor Hugo commands universal admiration. His best-known novels, \textit{Les misérables} and \textit{Notre-Dame de Paris} (\textit{The Hunchback of Notre-Dame}) are read widely, and musical settings of his poetry are performed regularly in concerts.

Hugo was born on February 26, 1802, in Besançon, France, as the third son of Joseph Léopold Sigisbert Hugo (1773-1828) and Sophie Trébuchet (1772-1821). Hugo mostly lived in France, but because of his father’s position as an officer in Napoleon’s army, the family often moved, including to Italy and Spain. Due to his parents’ unhappy married life, he was separated from his father and lived with his mother and brothers. Feuillantines Convent, one of the places where he lived as a child, is beautifully described in his volume of poetry \textit{Les rayons et les ombres} (Lights and Shadows).\textsuperscript{13} In 1811 Victor and his brother Eugène (1800-1837) entered a boarding school; they excelled in mathematics and the sciences. Their father urged them to study at the École Polytechnique and become soldiers, but instead, both of them attended law school. Victor became distinguished in the literary arts and won literary contests in Toulouse.

\textsuperscript{12} Adrian Williams, \textit{Portrait of Liszt: By Himself and His Contemporaries} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 568.

(the *Jeux floraux* competition) and in the French Academy. Soon after, with his brothers Abel (1798-1855) and Eugène, he founded a review called *Le conservateur littéraire*. In 1822 Hugo published his first volume of poems, *Odes et poésies diverses* (Odes and Diverse Poetry) and was granted a royal pension by Louis XVIII. Royalist and Catholic characteristics, due to his mother’s influence, distinguished his early works.\(^\text{14}\)

Victor Hugo fell in love with his childhood friend, Adèle Foucher (1803-1868), but his mother forbade them to marry. However, they married soon after his mother’s death in 1822. Their first child, Léopold, was born the following year, but he died as an infant. Soon after, Hugo and Adèle had another child, Léopoldine, and three more children were born during the next several years.

In 1827 Hugo published the play *Cromwell*, which was never performed in its entirety because it was too long and required too many actors. It gained popularity, however, because of his preface, a document of over seventy pages. In it he appealed to his fellow artists to liberate themselves from the restrictions of classical style. He expounded on his philosophy and coined the phrase, “Tout ce qui est dans la nature est dans l’art” (All that is in nature is in art). It is widely acknowledged that Hugo, in this document, founded the Romantic movement in France. He continued to write another drama, *Hernani*, the premiere of which caused the famous argument between the Classicists and the Romanticists (“The Battle of Hernani”). *Hernani* was not the first Romantic play in France, but its premiere is recognized as one of the most important events in French theater of the nineteenth century. Hugo also founded the Parisian literary group called *Cénacle*, in which several important figures discussed literature, theatre, art, and politics in Hugo’s apartment. Among the distinguished artists present at these meetings were Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863), who is considered to be Hugo’s equivalent in painting, Alfred de Vigny, Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850), Prosper Mérimée (1803-1870), Gérard de Nerval (1808-1855), and Théophile Gautier (1811-1872).

Before the July Revolution (1830), Victor Hugo had leaned toward humanitarianism and liberalism in his writing. Between 1829 and 1840, he published several volumes of poetry: *Les orientales* (1829), *Les feuilles d’automne* (Autumn Leaves, 1831), *Les chants du crépuscule* (Twilight Songs, 1835), and *Les rayons et les ombres* (1840). Hugo expressed his ensuing depression in his *Les feuilles d’automne*; Adèle had fallen in love with one of his friends, Charles

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 3.
Augustin Sainte-Beuve (1804-1869). Not long afterwards, he met the actress Juliette Drouet (1806-1883), who had been cast in a main role of his *Lucrèce Borgia* (1833). For the next fifty years, Juliette was Hugo’s mistress.\(^\text{15}\)

In 1843, during a trip with Juliette, Hugo read a newspaper article reporting that his daughter, Léopoldine, and her husband had drowned. After hearing the shocking news, he wrote practically nothing for several years.\(^\text{16}\) It was not until several years later that he began to work on *Les misères*, which later became *Les misérables*, and *Les contemplations*, but both projects took ten years to complete. Instead of writing, he devoted himself to politics, supporting republicanism.\(^\text{17}\) In the beginning, he was a supporter of Louis Napoleon-Bonaparte. However, when Louis Napoleon established the Second Empire by staging a coup d’état, Hugo resisted him. As a result, he was exiled until the end of the Franco-Prussian war. He fled from France to Brussels, then to the islands of Jersey and Guernsey. During this period, although he was depressed and politically frustrated, he wrote some poetry and the successful novel *Les misérables*. In 1868, during his exile, his wife Adèle died. After the downfall of Napoleon III, Hugo was able to return to France, where he played a major role in the building of the Third Republic. He lived as a national hero for over a decade. Victor Hugo died on May 22, 1885, two years after Juliette Drouet’s death in 1883. Although he never wanted a religious ceremony, a national funeral attended by more than two million people was held after his death.

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\(^\text{15}\) Ibid., 4.


CHAPTER 2

A STUDY OF FRANZ LISZT’S SONGS ON POEMS BY VICTOR HUGO

Oh! quand je dors

Oh! quand je dors, viens auprès de ma couche,
Comme à Pétrarque apparaissait Laura,
Et qu’en passant ton haleine me touche…
Soudain ma bouche s’entr’ouvrira!

Sur mon front morne où peut-être s’achève
Un songe noir qui trop longtemps dura,
Que ton regard comme un astre se lève…
Soudain mon rêve rayonnera!

Puis sur ma lèvre où voltige une flamme,
Éclair d’amour que Dieu même épura,
Pose un baiser, et d’ange deviens femme…
Soudain mon âme s’éveillera!

Oh viens! Comme à Pétrarque apparaissait Laura!

Oh! When I sleep

Oh! When I sleep, come next to my bed,
As Laura appeared to Petrarch,
And in passing let your breath touch me…
Suddenly my lips will open up!

On my mournful brow where perhaps is ending
A dark dream which lasted too long,
Let your glance like a star be lifted…
Suddenly my dream will shine!

Then on my lips where flutters a flame,
Light of love that God himself purified,
Place your kiss, and change from angel to woman…
Suddenly my spirit will awaken!

Oh come! As Laura appeared to Petrarch!18

18 All poems are translated by this author.
This romantic poem is twenty-seventh in Victor Hugo’s volume of poetry *Les rayons et les ombres*, which was published in 1840. At this time, he believed that all of nature had meaning.\(^\text{19}\) The poetry in this collection includes encomia to Juliette Drouet, poems on the atmosphere of nature, and the author’s bittersweet memories of childhood, especially in Feuillantines. The collection contains some of his most famous poems, including “Oceano nox” (Ocean at Night), and “Tristesse d’Olympos” (Olympio’s sadness).\(^\text{20}\) These poems often addressed political, social, and religious issues, although this is not evident in “Oh! quand je dors.” The relationship of Petrarch and Laura in this poem is likely meant to reflect those of the poet and Juliette Drouet as well as Liszt and Marie d’Agoult.\(^\text{21}\)

Although this text was also set by several other composers, including Georges Bizet (1838-1875), Edouard Lalo (1823-1892), and Bernard van Dieren (1887-1936), Liszt’s setting is most often performed in today’s concert halls. “O komm in Traum,” a German translation of this poem by his contemporary Peter Cornelius (1824-1874), is also often presented.

Liszt composed the first version in 1842 during one of his concert tours. Fifteen years later, he reworked the original for a published collection of his songs. As a matter of practice, Liszt usually shortened his songs when he reset the original versions. “Oh! quand je dors” follows this pattern; it is abridged from 104 bars to 93 bars. Other songs that he shortened include “Comment, disaient-ils” (from 90 to 87 measures), “Enfant, si j’étais roi” (from 84 to 66), and “S’il est un charmant gazon” (from 70 to 58).\(^\text{22}\) Likewise, in the song “Oh! quand je dors,” the coda in the first version has thirty-five measures while the later version of the coda has only sixteen.\(^\text{23}\) The second version became his best known French song, and this version is more often performed and recorded than the original.

In the piano introduction, the same motive is used in both versions. The underlying harmonies are slightly different, however, and, Liszt extended the melody line by doubling rhythmic values in measure 4 (Figures 1 and 2).

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\(^{19}\) Peyre, 23.


\(^{22}\) Arnold, 407.

As in the revised versions of his other songs, the piano accompaniment became simpler and thinner in texture. From his original version, Liszt took several notes out of the principal accompanying figure that appeared at the beginning of the song. As a result, while measures are divided into two with pedal points sounding twice per measure in his earlier setting (Figure 3), the music flows better in the later version (Figure 4).

24 All examples are taken from Kalmus Miniature Scores with permission (Melville, N.Y.: Belwin Mills Publishing Corp.).
A more evident difference in texture can be observed in the third verse. In Liszt’s revision, the voice part is similar to the first version (Figure 5), whereas the piano accompaniment becomes much more transparent with single notes in an ascending pattern (Figure 6).
Liszt placed much importance on the piano part because he was a virtuoso pianist himself. At first glance, the music does not seem difficult to play, but one must be able to make effective legatos and staccatos while using the pedal. In the interludes, the melody line in the top voices should be voiced and balanced with the lower voices. Rubato is also an important element to be considered; without it, the arpeggiated eighth notes sound too rigid in this romantic song. In the piano introduction, the melody is the same as the first vocal line and is repeated several times throughout to unify the song.\(^{25}\)

In the 1860 version, Liszt began the song in E major with a very unusual harmony, the first inversion of the altered submediant chord. It moves chromatically to another altered chord in the following measure. The tonality is quite vague until measure 8. Throughout the introduction, he created a dreamy mood, using chords that ascend chromatically in the left hand (Figure 2). As the voice enters, the piano accompaniment remains simple (Figure 4). In the short interludes, the piano echoes the vocal melody.

Liszt rewrote the entire second verse in his later version. Not only is the melody different from the 1842 version, so is the harmony. Also, in the piano interlude (Figure 7) that leads to the text “Sur mon front morne,” he switched the melody from the highest voice to the lowest voice, and the half notes of the right hand ring like bells, an effect which is not present in the earlier version. The same material in the piano part continues as an answer to the singer until the key change. A modulation from E major into the Neapolitan, F major, with only a two-bar interlude.

\(^{25}\) Hamburger, 65.
(Figure 8), uses an enharmonic spelling (E-sharp to F-natural) in measure 43. The enharmonic modulation shows Schubert’s influence on Liszt’s harmonic language.\textsuperscript{26}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure7.png}
\caption{“Oh! quand je dors,” revised version, mm. 26-35}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure8.png}
\caption{“Oh! quand je dors,” revised version, mm. 41-44}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{26} Miller, ix.
It is also worthwhile to compare the two versions between the second and third stanzas of this song. When Liszt first wrote this song in 1842, he was traveling in Europe on a concert tour. In general, as a virtuoso pianist, he naturally liked to show off his brilliant technique. Thus, from the last part of the second stanza, the piano is quite soloistic and independent from the vocal line. In the closing section of the second verse, the piano part sets the mood instead of the voice part. On the other hand, his later version includes a vocal cadenza with the piano accompaniment tacit.

Christopher Headington has discussed the varieties of cadences in Liszt’s songs. According to him, chord progressions in final cadences show features of Liszt’s extraordinary harmonic language. In the coda of “Oh! quand je dors” (Figure 9), the first inversion of the half diminished seventh chord on F-sharp (measure 85) resolves to the tonic chord in E major (measure 86). The following chord is the first inversion of the supertonic chord with C-sharp, which goes to the chord that began this song. The E-sharp is lowered in the next chord, which is a regular submediant of E major, and the song ends with two tonic chords. This cadence can be considered a plagal cadence that substitutes vi for IV.

Figure 9: “Oh! quand je dors,” revised version, mm. 82-93

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27 Headington, 243.
Comment, disaient-ils

Comment, disaient-ils,
Avec nos nacelles,
Fuir les alguazils?
Ramez! Ramez! disaient-elles.

Comment, disaient-ils,
Oublier querelles,
Misère et périls?
Dormez! Dormez! disaient-elles.

Comment, disaient-ils,
Enchanter les belles
Sans philtres subtils?
Aimez! Aimez! disaient-elles.

Ramez! Dormez! Aimez! disaient-elles.

How, the Men Said

How, the men said,
With our skiff,
To flee from the police?
Row! Row! the women said.

How, the men said,
To forget quarrels,
Misery, and danger?
Sleep! Sleep! the women said.

How, the men said,
To charm the beautiful women
Without artful potions?
Love! Love! the women said.

Row! Sleep! Love! the women said.

Here is another poem taken from Hugo’s *Les rayons et les ombres*. The original poem is entitled “Autre guitare.” The same text was set by composers Lalo, Bizet, Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921), Jules Massenet (1842-1912) and others. As in another Hugo-Liszt song, “Gastibelza,” “Comment, disaient-ils” refers to a Spanish subject. Liszt made this reference
aurally evident at the beginning of the song with the indication *staccato, quasi chitarre*, and again at the end of the song with the quick arpeggiated chords in the accompaniment. The narrator tells of a dialogue between men and women. Liszt clearly differentiated the women’s characters from the men’s in the accompaniment by changing the staccato guitar-like figure to legato arpeggiated chords whenever the women answer the men’s questions. The composer also used modulation and changes in tempo to highlight the distinction more effectively. Therefore, he clarified the contrast between the questions and the answers.

Like the song “Oh! quand je dors,” there are two versions of “Comment, disaient-ils,” also first set in 1842 and revised in 1859. More differences between the original and revised versions can be found in this song than in Liszt’s other revisions. In fact, he drastically changed both the voice part and piano accompaniment. The changes are so dramatic that Klára Hamburger considers the two versions good examples to show the development of Liszt’s style as a song composer between 1848 and 1859.28

As previously discussed, Liszt usually simplified his earlier songs when revising them. This is also true of “Comment, disaient-ils,” in which he not only replaced the second-beat chord of the left hand with a rest, but also removed slurs that connect pairs of eighth notes (Figures 10 and 11). Additionally, the left hand is thinner with fewer notes and in a higher register than the first version, resulting in a guitar-like accompaniment.

![Figure 10: “Comment, disaient-ils,” first version, mm. 1-4](image)

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28 Hamburger, 68.
Liszt often reset the text in his revisions. For instance, he originally put the third syllable of the word “alguazils” on the strong beat (Figure 12), but later, he lengthened the first two notes to place the first syllable on the next strong beat (Figure 13). The second version shows more effective contrast rhythmically as well as melodically.
The song consists of three verses in strophic form, but instead of an exact repetition, the key of each verse modulates from G-sharp minor to a different key. The first verse modulates from G-sharp minor to its relative major (B) during the women’s answer, then returns to G-sharp minor at the beginning of the second verse. In the second verse, except for a slight change of rhythm in the voice part, the accompaniment and the harmony are the same until an abrupt modulation to F major. While the third stanza of the first version (Figure 14) begins in A-flat major, the parallel major of G-sharp minor, the revised version returns to the initial key, G-sharp minor (Figure 15). As a result, the scores of the two versions look very different, but the voice parts sound the same, except where Liszt changed the melody at the text “belles sans.”

Figure 14: “Comment, disaient-ils,” first version, mm. 42-49

Figure 15: “Comment, disaient-ils,” revised version, mm. 51-59

A few measures later, when the women answer, the early version modulates from A-flat major to A major, and then goes back to A-flat major where it stays until the end of the song. The later version modulates abruptly from G-sharp minor to A-flat major, the enharmonic parallel key. The second version closes with a coda of twenty-one measures, whereas the coda of Liszt’s first setting is twelve measures longer and includes frequent repetitions of text.

There are also differences between the two versions of “Comment, disaient-ils” in the piano interludes. In the 1842 version, the three bars between the questions of the men and the
answers of the women are marked *rinforzando* followed by *ritardando* and *diminuendo*. On the other hand, in 1859, he indicated the opposite with *accelerando* and *crescendo*. In his earlier version, the interludes segue into the entrance of the women’s voice, while there are one-measure silences before the women’s answers in the later song.

The tempo is relaxed during the women’s section in both versions. In the original version, the descending melody in the voice is doubled in the piano over a waltz-like left-hand accompaniment (Figure 16).\(^{29}\) However, the revised song sounds much simpler with octave leaps in the voice and arpeggios in the piano. Also, the text is less repetitious in the later version (Figure 17).

Enfant, si j’étais roi

Enfant, si j’étais roi, je donnerais l’empire,
Et mon char, et mon sceptre, et mon peuple à genoux,
Et ma couronne d’or, et mes bains de porphyre,
Et mes flottes à qui la mer ne peut suffire,
Pour un regard de vous!

Si j’étais Dieu, la terre et l’air avec les ondes,
Les anges, les démons courbés devant ma loi,
Et le profond chaos aux entrailles fécondes,
L’éternité, l’espace et les cieux et les mondes
Pour un baiser de toi!
Child, If I Were King

Child, if I were king, I would give the empire,
And my chariot and my scepter and my kneeling people,
And my crown of gold, and my bath of porphyry,
And my fleets that the sea cannot contain,
   For one look of you!

If I were God, the earth and the air with the seas,
The angels, the demons bowed before my rule,
   And the chaos of the fertile deep,
Eternity, space, and the skies and the universe
   For one kiss of you!

This poem is the twenty-second poem of Hugo’s *Les feuilles d'automne*. As shown in Hugo’s original title “Une femme,” this poem is a love song. Victor Massé (1822-1884) entitled his setting of the same poem “À une femme.”

Unlike the relationships between most of Liszt’s other songs and their revisions, there are enough fundamental differences between the original “Enfant, si j’étais roi” and the revision to show them in list format as follows:

| Table 1. Comparative Analysis in Two Settings of “Enfant, si j’étais roi” |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Year of composition | 1844 | 1859 |
| Year of publication | 1844 | 1860 |
| Key | A-flat major | A-flat major/A major |
| Meter | 3/4 | 4/4 |
| Tempo | Andante moderato | Quasi allegro |
| Voice type | soprano or tenor | tenor |
| Length | 84 bars | 66 bars |
| Piano introduction | long (7 bars) | short (2 bars) |
| Piano postlude | long (14 bars) | short (2 bars) |
The most obvious difference between the two versions is the fact that Liszt changed the meter from 3/4 to 4/4. In spite of the different meters, he maintained the syllabic integrity of the text by lengthening notes and adding rests. One of his changes, however, can be found in the phrase, “je donnerais l’empire” (I would give the empire). In the first setting, “je” is a pick-up note and the first syllable of “donnerais” is on the strong beat (Figure 18), while in his second setting, “je” is on the downbeat of measure 5 (Figure 19). In this way “I” is more emphasized than “give” in the revised song.

![Figure 18: “Enfant, si j’étais roi,” first version, mm. 7-12](image)

Another phrase in which Liszt changed the accents is “et mes bains de porphyre, et mes flottes, à qui la mer ne peut suffire.” The “et” in measure 24 and “à” in measure 27 of this text are shown as downbeats in his first version (Figure 20), while both words are on the second beat after a rest in the revised version (Figure 21). As he inserted rests, the shape of the phrase changed in the later version. Instead of an ascending melody as in the first version, a vocal line that moves up and down is more practical for singers.

![Figure 19: “Enfant, si j’étais roi,” revised version, mm. 2-7](image)

The main key in both editions of “Enfant, si j’étais roi” is A-flat major. As in the previous song, “Comment, disaient-ils,” there are no major differences in the harmonic structure of the two versions. Both versions tonicize F major and A major in the middle of the first verse. Interestingly, in the second version, Liszt indeed changed the key signature to A major in that section. As in the part of Schubert’s “Erlkönig” in which the Erlking lures the child, the key
modulates to the Neapolitan key in “Enfant, si j’étais roi,” in this case because the main character of the song tries to charm a woman with flattering words (Figures 20 and 21).

Figure 20: “Enfant, si j’étais roi,” first version, mm. 24-32

Figure 21: “Enfant, si j’étais roi,” revised version, mm. 16-23
As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Liszt generally decreased the length of his second settings. This is not only because he usually shortened the repetition of the text, but he also eliminated some of the virtuosic piano solo passages. In the original version of “Enfant, si j’étais roi,” Liszt began with a long piano prelude, while in the revised version he simply started the song with a two-bar introduction.

In scholarly literature on his mélodies, one of the topics often discussed is Liszt’s demands on the performers. In general, a strong and sustained voice is required for the singer, at least enough not to be overwhelmed by the heavy piano sound. Not only does the pianist need to be technically proficient to play the virtuosic piano part, he/she should also have a keen ear for balance with a singer. The second verse of “Enfant, si j’étais roi” is a good example of where these skills are necessary.

The second stanza of the poem includes several words that describe immensity, such as “God,” “earth,” “eternity,” and “universe.” As shown below in Figure 22, the texture of the piano part is very thick. As in most of Liszt’s piano music, both hands are fully engaged. Particularly in the original version, the register of the voice is so low that the vigorous piano accompaniment can easily overwhelm the voice. Probably for this reason, Liszt changed both the voice part and the piano part in his second version (Figure 23).

In the piano part, the chromatic broken octaves of the left hand are reduced from arpeggiated octave triplets to four sixteenth notes in each beat. The dynamic level is also diminished from ff to f. Overall, the piano accompaniment is thinner in texture but still has a sense of thickness. On the other hand, in the voice part, Liszt probably realized that few singers could survive in the low register with a full-sounding piano accompaniment. Therefore, he replaced C-sharp 4 (Figure 22) with the higher octave, C-sharp 5 (Figure 23) on the word “chaos.”

At the end of the original setting, Liszt restated part of the first verse in a long postlude, giving much importance to the piano part. Consequently, as Ronald Turner has noted, Liszt’s earlier songs are more likely to be piano works with vocal accompaniments.\(^{30}\) In general, the voice part in the revised version is equally as important as the piano part.

\(^{30}\) Turner, 18.
Figure 22: “Enfant, si j’étais roi,” first version, mm. 49-54

Figure 23: “Enfant, si j’étais roi,” revised version, mm. 40-46
S’il est un charmant gazon

S’il est un charmant gazon
Que le ciel arrose,
Où brille en toute saison
Quelque fleur éclose,
Où l’on cueille à pleine main
Lys, chèvre-feuille et jasmin,
J’en veux faire le chemin
Où ton pied se pose!

S’il est un rêve d’amour,
Parfumé de rose,
Où l’on trouve chaque jour
Quelque douce chose,
Un rêve que Dieu bénit,
Où l’âme à l’âme s’unite,
Oh! J’en veux faire le nid
Où ton cœur se pose!

If There Is a Charming Lawn

If there is a charming lawn
That the sky waters,
Where gleams in every season
Some flower blossoms,
Where one gathers in full hands
Lily, honeysuckle, and jasmine,
I want to make it the path
Where you place your feet!

If there is a dream of love,
Scented with roses,
Where one finds every day
Some sweet thing,
A dream that God blesses,
Where soul to soul unites,
Oh! I want to make it the nest
Where you place your heart!

This poem is twenty-second in Hugo’s poetry volume Les chants du crépuscule, where it is entitled “Nouvelle chanson sur un vieil air” (New song on an old melody). Several French
composers have set this poem as well, and among them Gabriel Fauré’s (1845-1924) “Rêve d’amour” is as famous as Liszt’s. Liszt set only the first and last verses from this poem, omitting the following second stanza:

S’il est un sein bien aimant  
Dont l’honneur dispose,  
Dont le ferme dévouement  
N’ait rien de morose,  
Si toujours ce noble sein  
Bat pour un digne dessein,  
J’en veux faire le coussin  
Où ton front se pose!

If there is a loving breast  
Where honor dwells,  
Where tender devotion  
Will have no gloominess,  
If always this noble breast  
Beats for a worthy aim,  
I would make it the pillow  
Where your head is placed!

The meter in both of Liszt’s versions is 6/8, but the earlier version is more rhythmically complicated. The song can be divided into two-bar phrases, in which the piano part consists of all sixteenth notes in the earlier version (Figure 24). Within the phrase, the vocal line keeps the feeling of 6/8. On the other hand, in the piano accompaniment, the first bar of the two-bar segment (measure 1) is grouped as one beat (two sixteenth notes or rests) plus five beats, while the second bar (measure 2) is slurred in three larger beats, as in 3/4. Because of the hemiolas in the second bar, the segment is an alternation between 6/8 and 3/4 until measure 11, where the hemiolas appear consistently in every bar. An odd rhythmic feel is created by placing the tonic A-flat not on the usual strong beat but on the second or the fourth sixteenth note. This can cause confusion for singers and pianists.
A more complex place than the beginning is at the words “J’en veux faire le chemin où ton pied se pose” in the first version (Figure 25). From measures 19 to 21 and 48 to 50, the sixteenth notes are grouped in the same way as those of measure 2. However, the group is delayed by a half beat (eighth note) here, so the bar lines are unclear.
The second version, however, shows a substantial difference in this part (Figure 26). The sixteenth notes in the piano accompaniment are completely removed from the original version. Liszt also simplified the vocal line in which the prosody seems awkward in his first setting. Because the vocal melody repeatedly moves a fourth up and a fifth down, it is difficult for singers. In the later version, Liszt wrote a smoothly descending vocal line, keeping the regular rhythm in 6/8.

Figure 26: “S’il est un charmant gazon,” revised version, mm. 16-20

Figure 27: “S’il est un charmant gazon,” revised version, mm. 9-16
The two versions are harmonically quite similar. In measure 11 of the second version (Figure 27), the key modulates to A minor. After A major (the parallel key of A minor) appears in measure 13, there is an abrupt return to A-flat major through a chromatic scale. The same harmonic progression occurs in the first version, even though the A major section is longer due to the repeated text, and D-minor arpeggios appear instead of a chromatically ascending melody (Figure 28).

Figure 28: “S’il est un charmant gazon,” first version, mm. 11-15
In the postlude, the melody and harmony of the two versions are only slightly varied. The first difference is the G-flat passing tone in measure 65 of the first version (Figure 29), which was replaced by G-natural in measure 53 of the revised version (Figure 30). In the first version, the G-flat, which is the seventh of the previous harmony (V\(^7\)/IV), does not sound thoroughly resolved to IV. He also changed G-flat to G-natural, the leading tone of A-flat major.

Figure 29: “S’il est un charmant gazon,” first version, mm. 63-67

Figure 30: “S’il est un charmant gazon,” revised version, mm. 50-58
Liszt originally ended the song with a tonic chord in A-flat major, but in his later version he ends with a dominant seventh chord over a tied tonic (A-flat) in the bass (measure 56). Its resolution is added only as *ad libitum*. The *ad libitum* cadence is usually more satisfying in performance, otherwise the song will feel unfinished to the audience.\(^\text{31}\)

Although Liszt marked *Allegretto* in his first version, the song doesn’t seem to work well in this tempo because of its confusing rhythms. When he rewrote it in 1859, he added *con moto e grazioso* in the beginning and *leggiero* in the piano part. His aim in doing so was probably to ensure that the performers present a more flowing and lighter character.

\begin{center}
\textbf{La tombe et la rose}
\end{center}

La tombe dit à la rose:  
Des pleur don’t l’aube t’arrose  
Que fais-tu, fleur des amours?  

La rose dit à la tombe:  
Que fais-tu de ce qui tombe  
Dans ton gouffre ouvert toujours?  

La rose dit: Tombeau sombre,  
De ces pleurs je fais dans l’ombre  
Un parfum d’ambre et de miel.  

La tombe dit: Fleur plaintive,  
De chaque âme qui m’arrive  
Je fais un ange du ciel.

\(^{31}\) Turner, 23.
The Tomb and the Rose

The tomb says to the rose:
With the tears with which the dawn waters you
What do you make, flower of love?
The rose says to the tomb:
What do you make with one who falls
In your ever opened abyss?

The rose says: Gloomy tomb,
With these tears, I make in the shadows
A scent of amber and of honey.
The tomb says: Pitiful flower,
With each soul that arrives in me
I make an angel of heaven.

Liszt composed seven Hugo songs between 1842 and 1844. He revised the previously discussed four songs in 1859; only “La tombe et la rose,” “Gastibelza,” and “Quand tu chantes” were left without any corrections.

This poem is thirty-first in Victor Hugo’s volume of poetry *Les voix intérieures* (Interior Voices), published in 1837. In these poems, Hugo expresses the inner sense of the forms and forces of nature. In addition, he believes people have music in themselves if they know how to listen. Therefore, the inner voice is another means of communication.

“La tombe et la rose” is slower and darker than the above-mentioned four songs. As in “Comment, disaient-ils” and “S’il est un charmant gazon,” the piano introduction does not function as a solo, but merely as accompaniment for the voice to enter. The song is in G minor and marked Lento. Beginning with a narrator’s voice, it proceeds as a dialogue between the tomb and the rose. Throughout the song, the narrator’s melody reflects neutrality between the two. It is primarily in conjunct motion with fewer leaps than in the melodies representing the tomb and the rose. The accompaniment, in a low register with repeated portato chords, provides a haunting background (Figure 31).

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33 Frey, 284.
At the moment the tomb asks the flower a question (measure 7), the key modulates to the Neapolitan (A-flat major). Liszt maintains broken chord figurations in the left hand, producing a smoother character, and it is legato instead of staccato.

Where the narrator says “La rose dit à la tombe,” the piano plays the same triplet figure as in the opening. Due to the absence of a downbeat and to the higher register, the accompaniment is lighter. The key modulates through D minor to B-flat major, the relative major of G minor. The vocal line in the second half of the first stanza is raised a whole step, with the exception of some words (Figure 32).
The second stanza begins in a dramatic way. While the right hand of the piano part plays tremolos, the left hand leaps back and forth over the right hand from low to high registers every measure. As the flower answers, the leaping melody stays in the highest voice.

In Klára Hamburger’s opinion, Liszt’s prosody in this song is almost correct. She never specifies what she thinks is incorrect, but one problem can be found in the flower’s answer. The text, for the most part, is set in a natural rhythm, but the flow is interrupted because of the disjunct, instrumental-like melody in Figure 33. Liszt might have assumed that any well-trained singer would be able to negotiate the difficulties of this song without need for him to revise it.

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34 Hamburger, 62.
In the dark character of the tomb’s answer, the harmony is unstable and mostly in a minor key. However, when the tomb says “Je fais un ange du ciel,” G minor becomes G major and the music becomes brighter. To emphasize this, Liszt used the secondary V\(^7\) with a dominant pedal on the word “ange.” After repeating this abrupt switch from darkness to light, the G minor song ends in G major.

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**Gastibelza**

Gastibelza, l'homme à la carabine,
Chantait ainsi:
Quelqu'un a-t-il connu Doña Sabine?
Quelqu'un d'ici?
Dansez, chantez, villageois! La nuit gagne
Le mont Falou.
Le vent qui vient à travers la montagne
Me rendra fou!

Quelqu'un de vous a-t-il connu Sabine,
Ma señora?
Sa mère était la vieille Maugrabine
D'Antequera,
Qui chaque nuit criait dans la Tour Magne
Comme un hibou.
Le vent qui vient à travers la montagne
Me rendra fou!

Dansez! chantez! Des biens que l'heure envoie
Il faut user.
Elle était jeune et son œil plein de joie
Faisait penser.
À ce vieillard qu'un enfant accompagne
Jetez un sou.
Le vent qui vient à travers la montagne
Me rendra fou!
Dansez, chantez, villageois! La nuit gagne
Le mont Falou.
Sabine, un jour,
A tout vendu, sa beauté de colombe,
Et son amour!
Pour l'anneau d'or du comte de Saldagne,
Pour un bijou.
Le vent qui vient à travers la montagne
Me rendra fou!

Sur ce vieux banc souffrez que je m'appuie,
Car je suis las!
Avec ce comte elle s'est donc enfuie,
Enfuie, hélas!
Par le chemin qui va à travers la Serdagne,
Je ne sais où.
Le vent qui vient à travers la montagne
Me rendra fou!

Je la voyais passer de ma demeure,
Et c'était tout.
Mais à présent je m'ennuie à toute heure,
Plein de dégoût.
Rêveur oisif, l'âme dans la campagne,
La dague au clou.
Le vent qui vient à travers la montagne
Me rendra fou!

**Gastibelza**

Gastibelza, the man with the carbine,
Sang as follows:
Did anybody know Donna Sabine?
Anyone from here?
Dance, sing, villages! Night is overtaking
The mount Falou.
The wind that goes across the mountain
Will make me mad!

Did one of you know Sabine,
My dear lady?
Her mother was the old Maugrabine
From Antequerra,
Who each night cried in the tower Magne
Like an owl.
The wind that goes across the mountain
Will make me mad!
Dance! Sing! The good things that time sends
   We should use.
She was young and her eye, full of joy,
   Made one think.
To this old man that a child accompanies
   Throw a penny.
The wind that goes across the mountain
   Will make me mad!

Dance, sing, villagers! Night is overtaking
   The mount Falou.
Sabine, one day,
Sold everything, her dove-like beauty,
   And her love!
For the ring of gold of the Count of Saldagne,
   For a jewel.
The wind that goes across the mountain
   Will make me mad!
On this old bench allow me to rest,
   Because I am tired!
With this Count she fled away then,
   Fled away, alas!
By the path that goes across the Serdagne,
   I don’t know where.
The wind that goes across the mountain
   Will make me mad!

   I saw her pass by my home,
   And that was all.
But now I am bored all the time,
   Full of disgust.
Idle dreamer, his soul in the country,
   His dagger sharpened.
The wind that goes across the mountain
   Will make me mad!

Several composers have set this poem in different versions. Although “Gastibelza” is best known today in France as a popular song by Georges Brassens (1921-1981), Hippolyte Monpou’s (1804-1841) song was also famous in Hugo’s lifetime. Liszt selected the first three and last three stanzas from Hugo’s eleven-stanza poem, while Brassens and Monpou chose to set

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different stanzas. Each stanza has two lines of refrain, which Liszt repeated in a different way than in the poem.

This song is composed for bass voice. Like the song “Comment, disaient-ils,” “Gastibelza” is a rich evocation of Spain and its culture. The continuous use of bolero rhythms and several Spanish words in the text result in traditional Spanish-sounding music. By raising the fourth degree of the G minor scale, a Gypsy flavor is achieved (Figure 34). The original title of this poem is “Guitare,” and it was paired with “Autre guitare.”

Liszt’s subtitle is “Bolero,” and he uses a bolero rhythm as the basis for the piano introduction and interludes. In the introduction, the open fifth preceded by a grace note is reminiscent of the opening of Schumann’s “Der arme Peter I” and Schubert’s “Der Leiermann” (measures 1-2). In these songs, the characters feel the bleakness of romantic disappointment. Although Schumann's piece characterizes a wedding waltz in G major and Liszt borrows the bolero rhythm, both of them are based on dance music in 3/4. If one considers their relationship and influence on each other, Liszt probably followed Schumann’s example.

Figure 34: “Gastibelza,” mm. 1-11
“Gastibelza” is doubtless one of Liszt’s most difficult songs for both voice and piano. The song begins with a long piano solo, which the pianist should play with a certain amount of rhythmic freedom rather than with precise note values, in order to evoke the local Spanish color. The piano and voice parts imitate one another throughout the song, as in Figures 35 and 36, where the vocal line is immediately answered by the piano accompaniment.

Figure 35: “Gastibelza,” mm. 16-19

Figure 36: “Gastibelza,” mm. 20-22

Liszt employs much chromaticism in this song, especially in the repeated last line of each verse (Figure 37), where the voice and the piano accompaniment move up and down chromatically.
The first two verses are quite similar to each other. At the end of the second verse, which uses music from the song’s introduction, the music closes resolutely with a virtuosic piano section. Suddenly, the character changes and, in sharp contrast to the previous section that ends in G minor, the tonality becomes E-flat major (Figure 38). Although the bolero rhythm is no longer present, the character of dance music is reflected in an animated 9/8. After several tempo changes, the song returns to the bolero.

There are several reasons why Liszt’s “Gastibelza” is rarely performed in concert. One is because of the technical difficulties in both parts as shown in Figure 39. Many octave tremolos and leaps in this extended song can be exhausting for the pianist. In addition, the tessitura is so wide that the vocalist also tires quickly, and the wildly jumping notes in the voice part seem
almost impossible to sing. In spite of these obstacles, “Gastibelza” can be a wonderful choice for a recital. In fact, it might even take the place of an aria in some programs. An opera singer, particularly, will have the technical abilities and energy necessary to give a satisfactory performance of this challenging work.

Figure 39: “Gastibelza,” mm. 177-186
Quand tu chantes

Quand tu chantes, bercée
Le soir entre mes bras,
Entends-tu ma pensée
Qui te répond tout bas?
Ton doux chant me rappelle
Les plus beaux de mes jours.
   Chantez, ma belle,
   Chantez toujours!

When You Sing

When you sing in the evening
   Cradled in my arms,
Can you hear my thoughts
   That respond to you softly?
Your sweet song recalls to me
   The happiest of my days.
   Sing, my beautiful one,
   Sing forever!

This song had been unknown until 1972 when it was discovered in a used bookstore in London. The National Széchényi Library of Budapest obtained the manuscript in the same year and the song was discussed in detail by István Kecskeméti in the periodical *Magyar Zene*.36

He states that the score had belonged to an amateur musician named Matilde Juva Branca. The manuscripts are on two pages with four sides of music. Liszt’s song occupies three sides, and on the fourth page, another manuscript, a song by Alfred Piatti (1822-1901), was included with the dedication written and signed in his own hand. Liszt’s song contained “F. Liszt/Paris/28 Mai 1849,” on the bottom of the page.37 However, Liszt scholars found that he was not even in Paris in 1849. The exact date of composition of this song had been researched by Liszt’s biographers. Recently, Alan Walker listed the year of composition as 1842, the same year Liszt

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wrote other Hugo songs. The unnamed poet was found to be Victor Hugo and only one stanza was used in the song.

The arpeggiated accompaniment in the piano part opens “Quand tu chantes,” which is in A major and is marked Andantino. The 9/8 meter and dolce amoroso indication reflect the mood of berceuse. This song is similar to Liszt’s “O Lieb, so lang du lieben kannst” (Oh Love, So Long As You Can), a setting of a poem by Ferdinand Freiligrath (1810-1876) that is better known in the piano transcription version, Liebestraum No. 3. 

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39 Kecskeméti, 744.
CONCLUSION

Liszt was one of the greatest musicians of his day, his roles as composer, virtuoso pianist, and conductor recognized as equally important. In the genres of symphonic poems, transcendental etudes, and piano transcriptions of other famous composers’ works, he was considered one of the leading composers. His relationships with well-known composers and poets were a strong influence on his music. Among them, Victor Hugo was one of the most influential and was Liszt’s favorite author. Throughout his lifetime Liszt continued to read the great literary works by Hugo and composed seven songs and two symphonic poems on Hugo’s poetry. A letter written to Hugo in 1884 reflects their strong relationship:

In the years of my youth you honored me with your kindness, and during my last visit to Paris with your gracious remembrance. . . . there is nothing I need say to you of myself, except that for 50 years I have been reading your works with the keenest and most profound admiration.  

Art song is a musical genre that epitomizes the unity of text and music. For a successful performance, both singer and pianist need to learn not only the translation and meaning of the words but also the historical background of the poem in order to fully understand and interpret the song. Liszt-Hugo songs are significant in terms of the union between these two outstanding artists in the Romantic period. In comparing and contrasting Liszt’s two versions, one can observe the development of his song writing and the differences in his approach to the text. The later versions clearly exemplify a better balance between voice and piano. Even though a number of weaknesses are found in his early versions, they are still magnificent works that show Liszt’s musical genius.

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41 Turner, 31.
APPENDIX : Reprint Authorization Letter

April 12, 2007

Shin-Young Park
The Florida State University
2415 Old St. Augustine Rd. #222
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Re: Liszt Songs Volume 1, No 1-11 (K09378); Liszt Songs Vol. 4, No. 23-44 (K09378)

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Kendris, Christopher. *Five Hundred One French Verbs*. 4th ed. Hauppauge, N.Y.:
Barron’s Educational Series, 1996.


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Shin-Young Park is originally from Seoul, Korea where she began her musical training at the Sunwha Art School. She attended Yonsei University and received the B.M. degree in Piano Performance. During her undergraduate studies, she served as an accompanist for opera productions, voice studios, and choir. After her graduation, she began her professional study in a non-degree accompanying program at the Sungshin Women’s University. She has participated in the National Music Festival and Competitions at Caprarola, Italy and in the Nice International Summer Academy at Nice, France. In 2001 she moved to the United States and earned her M.M. degree in Piano Accompanying and Chamber Music from the University of Michigan. While at Michigan she was an active vocal coach and recital pianist and also enjoyed playing chamber music. As a member of the Eero Trio, she was a semifinalist in the Fischoff Chamber Music Competition in 2004. She continued her studies at the Florida State University where she studied with Dr. Carolyn Bridger and received the D.M. in Piano Performance: Chamber Music and Accompanying in August 2007. In the summer of 2007, she served as vocal coach/pianist in Seoul Arts Center’s opera production of Die Zauberflöte.