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Translating Musical Meaning: The Nineteenth-Century Performer as Narrator

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'Historical Performance': Theory or Practice?

Some research into 'historical performance' studies the past at the expense of the present, aiming to discover 'what was done' in bygone eras rather than to guide the modern performer.[1] This chapter, by contrast, has a practical goal: it enlists both historical and analytical evidence in an effort to capture the 'spirit' of a work as a prelude to live performance. Not only does it complement recent speculative writing on what historical performance 'should' entail and how analysis 'should' inform performance; it also casts light on nineteenth-century performance practice in particular, which remains relatively uncharted research territory. Past forays into this domain have typically concentrated on 'factual' matters like editions and instruments, virtually ignoring such issues as how composers conveyed 'meaning' (defined in any number of ways) in the score and how contemporary performers translated it into sound. By broaching these issues in terms relevant to this day and age, I shall show how the performer of nineteenth-century music can bring the score to life as a narrator of the expressive message inherent therein.[2]

I have written elsewhere that it is the performer who 'determines the music's essential "narrative" content by following indications in the score as to "plot",

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[1] 'Positivist [performance practice] scholarship is interested in letter, not spirit . . . , the goal being avowedly to determine "What was done", not "What is to be done", let alone "How to do it". Direct application to actual performance is not the primary aim of such studies. They are not "utilitarian" but "pure research"' (Richard Taruskin, 'The Pastness of the Present and the Presence of the Past', in Nicholas Kenyon (ed.), *Authenticity and Early Music* (Oxford, 1988), 201).

[2] My references here and later to 'innate' meaning presuppose the definition of criteria (stylistic and otherwise) for the determination thereof. (See John Rink, 'Authentic Chopin: History, Analysis and Intuition in Performance', in John Rink and Jim Samson (eds.), *Chopin Studies 2* (Cambridge, 1994), 236 n.) Even though an interpretation will vary with the occasion, performers *must* commit themselves to a particular inferred 'meaning' in a given performance if the playing is to have any sense of conviction. Weighing up options on the concert platform is simply not viable.

and, as in the enactment of any "plot archetype", by shaping the unfolding tale on the spur of the moment in an expressively appropriate manner'.[3] This kind of 'narration'—a particular legacy of nineteenth-century performance practice—involves the creation of a unifying thread, a *grande ligne* linking the constituent parts of a performance into a rhythmically activated synthesis.[4] Vital for intelligible, effective performance, it means giving the music a sense of shape in time by devising a hierarchy of temporally defined musical gestures from the small to the large scale. While playing, the performer engages in a continual dialogue between the comprehensive architecture and the 'here-and-now', between some sort of goal-directed impulse at the uppermost hierarchical level (the piece 'in a nutshell'[5]) and subsidiary motions[6] extending down to the beat or sub-beat level, with different parts of the hierarchy activated at different points within the performance.[7]

To link the narrative thread that guides a performance to a verbal narrative—a story in words—would miss the point of the metaphor.[8] The narrative I am referring to is musically constituted: a time-dependent unfolding of successive musical events, palpably linked to produce a coherent 'statement' embodied in sound alone, which is of course the principal expressive medium available to the instrumentalist. This is not to suggest that musical *meaning* is itself defined in one and only one way;[9] but any communication thereof by the performer will take place largely via sensory experience, just as the codes devised by the composer to represent it in the score are themselves conceived in sound.

[3] John Rink, 'Chopin's Ballades and the Dialectic: Analysis in Historical Perspective', *Music Analysis*, 13/1 (1994), 112.

[4] William Rothstein comments that the performer synthesizes a musical narrative 'from all he or she knows and feels about the work: listeners, in turn, will construct their own narratives, guided by the performer' ('Analysis and the Act of Performance', in John Rink (ed.), *The Practice of Performance: Studies in Musical Interpretation* (Cambridge, 1995), 237). See also Jonathan Dunsby, *Performing Music: Shared Concerns* (Oxford, 1995), 82 ff.

For information about the *grande ligne* in nineteenth-century performance practice (and especially its relation to Schenker's *Urlinie* concept), see Thérèse Malengreau, 'De la "grande ligne" romantique à la ligne fondamentale de Schenker', in the forthcoming proceedings of the Third European Conference on Music Analysis, Montpellier, Feb. 1995.

[5] Erwin Stein, *Form and Performance* (London, 1962), 71. Performers might represent such an impulse as a physical gesture, tracing a contour with arm and hand as if to say, 'The piece goes like *this*'.

[6] For a discussion of gesture in performance, see Patrick Shove and Bruno Repp, 'Musical Motion and Performance: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives', in Rink (ed.), *Practice of Performance*, 55–83.

[7] Both anecdotal and psychological evidence indicates this constant interplay between hierarchical levels. See respectively Louis Kentner, 'The Interpretation of Liszt's Piano Music', in Alan Walker (ed.), *Franz Liszt: The Man and his Music* (London, 1970), 202; and Eric Clarke, 'Generative Principles in Music Performance', in John Sloboda (ed.), *Generative Processes in Music* (Oxford, 1989), 1–26. Clarke's use of hierarchical 'tree diagrams' to depict knowledge structures in performance is particularly noteworthy.

[8] Note, however, the terms in which Wilhelm von Lenz describes Liszt's powerful performance rhetoric: 'Liszt does not merely *play piano*; he tells, at the piano, the story of his own destiny' (*The Great Piano Virtuosos of our Time from Personal Acquaintance*, trans. Madeleine R. Baker (New York, 1973), 1).

Some performers do construct imaginary stories to guide their interpretations, but that is not what is being described here.

[9] See n. 2 above; cf. Gary Tomlinson, 'The Historian, the Performer, and Authentic Meaning in Music', in Kenyon (ed.), *Authenticity*, 115–36. See also Anthony Pople (ed.), *Theory, Analysis and Meaning in Music* (Cambridge, 1994).

That this was recognized by nineteenth-century composers such as Liszt (the focus of much of this chapter) can be seen in the preface to his *Album d'un voyageur* (1842), where he acknowledges using 'the most appropriate rhythms, motions, and figures to express the fantasy, passion, or thought that inspired them'. What Liszt calls the 'architecture of sounds' conveys the sense of the music[10]—particularly in performance, which has unique powers to communicate in the original expressive idiom rather than some foreign (verbal) language.

Nevertheless, a different 'translation'—from notation to sound—must occur when constructing a musical narrative for performance, and to achieve this is by no means straightforward, even in repertoire from the mid- to late nineteenth century, where an 'apparent continuity of tradition'[11] often seduces musicians into making perilously false assumptions about 'stylistically correct' interpretation. Although it smacks of the glib imperatives of some historical performance specialists, only one conclusion can be drawn: to make sense of the music in whole or in part virtually requires an understanding of original compositional and interpretative contexts and criteria—not in order to achieve a putative authenticity (a chimerical if not downright naïve goal, despite the continuing allegiance of some to that aim[12]), but to provide essential terms of reference for 'meaningful' modern-day performances.

But contextual awareness, however necessary, is not sufficient to achieve the synthesis described above, which requires a broader interpretative vision to make the music cohere in time. Time—or the manipulation of time, timing—is the crucial ingredient, the *sine qua non*, of performance, and not just of nineteenth-century music (which is dogged by particular temporal problems—about how to relate sections,[13] shape a line with rubato,[14] or treat the notorious metronome markings in some composers' scores). Of music's principal expressive parameters—timing, dynamics, and articulation—it is both the most elusive and

[10] 'La première [partie de l'*Album*] comprendra une suite de morceaux qui . . . prendront successivement les rhythmes [*sic*], les mouvements, les figures les plus propres à exprimer la rêverie, la passion ou la pensée qui les aura inspirés. . . . ce n'est pas sans justesse qu'on l'a défini: une architecture de sons' (Franz Liszt, 'Avant-propos', in *Album d'un voyageur* (Vienna, 1842), 5). All translations in this chapter are mine except where indicated.

[11] Robert Winter, 'Performing Practice: After 1750', in Stanley Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments* (3 vols., London, 1984), iii. 53. This 'continuous tradition' follows the dawn of modern performance practice c.1840—in particular, the development of present-day instruments and playing techniques, the growing distinction between composition and performance, and the rise of 'interpretation', with one artist responding to and recreating another's work.

[12] See e.g. Peter Seymour, 'Oratory and Performance', in J. Paynter *et al.* (eds.), *Companion to Contemporary Musical Thought* (2 vols., London, 1992), ii. 914. Rink, 'Authentic Chopin', demonstrates how historical information and analytical enquiry can shape an interpretation without eclipsing the performer's artistic vision, thus achieving a different 'authenticity'.

[13] See Jon Finson, 'Performing Practice in the Late Nineteenth Century, with Special Reference to the Music of Brahms', *Musical Quarterly*, 70/4 (1984), 457–75. See also John Rink, 'Performing in Time: Rhythm, Metre and Tempo in Brahms's *Fantasien* Op. 116', in Rink (ed.), *Practice of Performance*, 254–82.

[14] See Richard Hudson, *Stolen Time: The History of Tempo Rubato* (Oxford, 1994); David Rowland, 'Chopin's *Tempo Rubato* in Context', in Rink and Samson (eds.), *Chopin Studies 2*, 199–213; and Edward F. Kravitt, 'Tempo as an Expressive Element in the Late Romantic Lied', *Musical Quarterly*, 49/4 (1973), 497–518.

(ironically) the very key to performing nineteenth-century repertoire, which exploits time to highly dramatic ends. Whereas the prevailing model for musical performance in the eighteenth century was oratory, in the nineteenth it was drama: indeed, a particular nineteenth-century performance rhetoric can be defined not according to the Classical tradition adapted, say, by Mattheson, but with regard to explicitly dramatic properties exploiting familiar rhetorical devices—structure, gestures, figures, inflections, emphases, pauses—to new and different ends. This rhetoric is implicit in Richard Taruskin's description of 'vital' performance in terms of 'fluctuations of tempo and intensity' and other 'dynamic qualities', which, he says, explains 'why romantic music—and romantic performance practice—are more richly endowed than any other kind with crescendos and diminuendos, accelerandos and ritardandos, not to mention tempo rubato and a highly variegated timbral palette'.[15] A case in point is Wagner, for whom 'the sublime was associated particularly with the fluctuant, dynamic aspects of his music—its waxing and waning, its harmonic fluidity, its oceanic, infinitely evolving *forma formans*'.[16]

Another such example is Liszt, whose 'constantly fluctuating tempi'[17] in certain compositions reflect his idiosyncratic performance style. Violently opposed to the rigidity of musical time inspired by the metronome's invention.[18] Liszt excoriated 'up-and-down', 'windmill'-like conducting, telling his orchestral players 'not to keep strictly to his beat (*sich nicht allzu streng zu seinen Tact zu halten*)',[19] but to employ the rubato for which his piano playing was renowned. His commitment to flexibility of timing extended from early on (at a lesson in 1832 he taught that 'one must not stamp music with a uniform balance, but speed it up or slow it down with spirit and according to the meaning that it possesses'[20]) to late in his career, when, in 1870, he wrote: 'A metronomical perfor-

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[15] Taruskin, 'Pastness of the Present', 160.

[16] Ibid. 185. See Kravitt, 'Tempo', 503, about Wagner's use of tempo. Nicholas Cook explores the Wagnerian tradition of 'flexible declamation' as practised by Wilhelm Furtwängler in 'The Conductor and the Theorist: Furtwängler, Schenker and the First Movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony', in Rink (ed.), *Practice of Performance*, 105–25, esp. 122 ff.

[17] Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt*, Vol. 2: *The Weimar Years 1848–1861* (London, 1989), 270.

[18] See George Barth, *The Pianist as Orator: Beethoven and the Transformation of Keyboard Style* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1992), regarding the fundamental changes in musical time-keeping that the metronome engendered.

[19] Quoted in a review, signed 'H', in the *Niederrheinische Musik-Zeitung für Kunstfreunde und Künstler*, 1/18 (1853), 140–1. Compare the following passage from Liszt's preface to his symphonic poems (Weimar, 1856): 'It is not enough for a composition to be beaten out regularly and performed mechanically and more or less correctly: no composer can be satisfied with this kind of performance or recognise it as a faithful interpretation of his thought. The vital nerve (*nerf vital*) of good symphonic playing lies in understanding, which the conductor above all must possess and communicate' (Preface to *Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne*, trans. Humphrey Searle (London, 1976), p. viii). See also Liszt's letter to Richard Pohl (Weimar, 5 Nov. 1853), in La Mara (ed.), *Letters of Franz Liszt*, trans. Constance Bache (2 vols., London, 1894), i. 175, where he attacks the 'imperturbable beating of the time' typical of some conductors: 'In many cases even the rough, literal maintenance of the time and of each continuous bar | 1, 2, 3, 4, | 1, 2, 3, 4, | clashes with the sense and expression. There, as elsewhere, *the letter killeth the spirit*'.

[20] 'On ne doit pas imprimer à la musique un balancement uniforme, mais l'animer, la ralentir avec esprit et selon le sens qu'elle comporte' (lesson given to Valérie Boissier on 31 Jan. 1832, described in Madame Auguste Boissier, *Liszt pédagogue: leçons de piano données par Liszt à Mademoiselle Valérie Boissier à Paris en 1832* (Paris, 1927), 35). Else-

mance is certainly tiresome and nonsensical; time and rhythm must be adapted to and identified with the melody, the harmony, the accent and the poetry'.[21] Based on a principle of 'free declamation', his distinctive rubato occasionally led to charges of 'excessive rhythmic fluidity',[22] but it always remained 'intelligible',[23] consisting (as Carl von Lachmund observed)

> of subtle variations of tempo and expression within a free declamation, entirely different from Chopin's give-and-take system (*Eilen und Zögern*). Liszt's rubato is more a sudden, light suspension of the rhythm on this or that significant note, so that the phrasing will above all be clearly and convincingly brought out. While playing, Liszt seemed barely preoccupied with keeping in time, and yet neither the aesthetic symmetry nor the rhythm was affected.[24]

To capture this flexible declamation, Liszt experimented with notation in the *Album d'un voyageur* and other early works.[25] indicating very brief pauses (marked =), small decreases in tempo (——), and, occasionally, tiny accelerandos (⬜) in accordance with the 'sense' or inflection of the music at that point. After renouncing his virtuoso career in the late 1840s, he streamlined the expression markings in his music, assimilating the tempo fluctuations crudely but valiantly notated in earlier works into the essence of the score, to be read out by the interpreter according to context, stylistic norms, and, to some extent, personal taste. Given the importance that Liszt assigned to them, it is tempting to insist that modern performers must convey these 'innate' tempo fluctuations— as part of the music's implicit rhetoric—for effective performance to occur. A rational but subtly expressive flexibility of tempo would transcend both the arbitrary, indulgent liberties of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century performers and the more rigid approach to tempo that followed later in this century,[26] enabling the music's 'spirit' to be communicated more in keeping with original intentions, and thus, perhaps, with greater cogency.

Declarations of what the performer must do—however inflammatory—might also be made regarding the poetic content of Liszt's music. Many of his works are of course directly tied to literature, but sometimes problematically. Not only did his 'translations' from literature to music attract the 'reproaches of aesthetic purists',[27] but, as Schoenberg asserted in 1911 in a provocative—some would

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where (61) we read of Liszt: 'Il chante, ses phrases musicales l'inspirent et dans sa verve il les déclame comme un grand acteur, cherchant avec ses doigts à atteindre l'expression juste.'

[21] He goes on: 'But how [to] indicate all this? I shudder at the thought of it' (letter to Siegmund Lebert, Villa d'Este, 10 Jan. 1870, in *Letters of Franz Liszt*, ii. 194).

[22] Berlioz, *The Memoirs of Hector Berlioz*, trans. and ed. David Cairns (London, 1969), 551.

[23] Carl Czerny's judgement (*c*.1845), quoted in Rowland, 'Chopin's *Tempo Rubato*', 208.

[24] Carl von Lachmund, *Mein Leben mit Franz Liszt* (Eschwege, 1970), 62, quoted in Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as Seen by his Pupils*, trans. Naomi Shohet with Krysia Osostowicz and Roy Howat, ed. Roy Howat (Cambridge, 1986), 122 n.

[25] Most of the pieces in question were composed *c*.1837–8.

[26] For discussion, see Taruskin, 'Pastness of the Present', and Kravitt, 'Tempo'.

[27] Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1989), 149.

say outrageous—article, they often amounted to little more than 'second-hand poetry': 'instead of exclusively allowing his own visionary form, the poet in himself, direct musical expression', Liszt 'suppressed the poet in himself'; his 'real, inner personality, therefore, pervades his work to a smaller degree . . . than ought to be the case'.[28] In short, claims Schoenberg, his 'translations' can be stilted: although Liszt considered music a 'poetic language more apt perhaps than poetry itself' for expressing the transcendent, the inexplicable, the inaccessible,[29] he intones it at times with a foreign tongue, sometimes slight, sometimes pronounced distortions[30] in syntax, inflection, and turn of phrase affecting the accent and even the meaning.[31]

Where Liszt does succeed in capturing the 'spirit' of poetry without stifling the life of the music, allowing it instead to speak in its own terms, with its own internal musical logic,[32] he embodies that 'spirit' in specific parameters (motives, harmonies, melodies, textures, timbres, and so on) and, above all, in certain processes which act out the music's drama, all of which expressively connote more than the sum of their parts. One of these processes—the 'transformation of themes'—is a particularly vital narrative strategy, as Carl Dahlhaus suggests:

Liszt himself explicitly drew the conclusion that it is not so much musical themes and motives themselves as the transformations they undergo and the relations made to pertain between them that determine the 'speechlike' aspect of instrumental music: 'It is precisely the unlimited alterations which a motive may undergo—in rhythm, key (*Modulation*), tempo, accompaniment, instrumentation, transformation, and so forth—that make up the language by means of which one can express thoughts (*Ideen*) and, as it were, dramatic action (*dramatische Handlung*).'[33]

This, insists Dahlhaus, leads to a simple conclusion: 'Liszt's "literarization" of music . . . *should be analyzed from the vantage point of structure*. . . . It is not "lit-

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[28] Arnold Schoenberg, 'Franz Liszt's Work and Being', in *Style and Idea*, ed. Leo Stein, trans. Leo Black (London, 1975), 443–5, *passim*. I am grateful to Alexander Goehr for drawing this essay to my attention.

[29] 'A mesure que la musique instrumentale progresse, . . . elle tend . . . à devenir non plus une simple combinaison de sons, mais un langage poétique plus apte peut-être que la poésie elle-même à exprimer tout ce qui en nous franchit les horizons accoutumés; tout ce qui échappe à l'analyse; tout ce qui s'agite à des profondeurs inaccessibles de désirs impérissables, de pressentiments infinis' (Liszt, 'Avant-propos', 5).

[30] In performance Liszt could more than compensate for these, given his unrivalled skill as a communicator. See William S. Newman, 'Liszt's Interpreting of Beethoven's Piano Sonatas', *Musical Quarterly*, 58/2 (1972), 206; compare Clara Schumann's appraisal, quoted in David Rowland, *A History of Pianoforte Pedalling* (Cambridge, 1993), 118.

[31] One of many works that rebut Schoenberg's claims is 'Vallée d'Obermann' (to which we shall return), the subject of which 'really "possessed" the composer', hence the 'absolute conviction' palpable throughout (Humphrey Searle, *The Music of Liszt* (London, 1954), 23).

[32] Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 361–2, writes that 'neither the existence nor the nonexistence of a program has the slightest bearing on whether a work does or does not have an internal musical logic'. (The comment concerns Richard Strauss, but applies generally.)

[33] Ibid. 242. The internal quotation is from Franz Liszt, 'Dornröschen. Genast's Gedicht und Raff's Musik gleichen Namens (1856)', in Lina Ramann (ed.), *Gesammelte Schriften* (6 vols., Leipzig, 1882), v. 172. My thanks to Rena Mueller for providing this information. (The quotation has been slightly modified to conform more closely to Liszt's original.)

erarization" per se which is "poetic", but rather the substance that attaches to a work of music when the composer succeeds, as it were, in picking up the *thread* of a major work of literature.'[34]

The implications of this for the performer are equally simple: to construct a musical narrative initially requires close study of the score—'structural analysis'[35]—in order to reveal its particular message or meaning, as a preliminary to translating it into sound. This sort of 'reading', which will vary from performer to performer,[36] itself derives from the interpretative ethos of the mid- to late nineteenth century, when, according to Dahlhaus, 'structural hearing meant immersing oneself in the internal workings of a piece of music' to an almost metaphysical expressive end.[37] That it had to do with more than the ostensibly systematic, objective analytical results often sought these days can be seen in an excerpt from Pivert de Senancour's epistolary novel *Oberman* from 1804 (which inspired the work to be studied below) stating that when music is played in a 'manner which is not just technically correct, but which is faithful to its spirit, if the player really feels the music', the listener will be transported to a different plane—thus indicating how profoundly a sensitive musical 'narration' could affect its auditors.[38]

The case-study that follows focuses on Liszt's 'Vallée d'Obermann' to show how the modern performer can construct such a narrative. After describing the three literary epigraphs that were published with the work and defining its essential structural properties, I shall sketch the hierarchical set of gestures that constitute the narrative thread, alluding to the precursor version of the piece to demonstrate how the more refined harmony, thematic material, and form of the second version shape the course of musical events—that is, the narrative itself. The goal is to articulate a rhetoric of performance suitable for this music and possibly other nineteenth-century repertoire, responding to the piece in terms sympathetic to original contexts and its expressive *raison d'être*.[39]

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[34] Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 149–50; emphases added. (Compare Louis Köhler's review of the *Années de Pèlerinage: Suisse* in *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 43/7 (1855), 69.)

[35] By this I refer not to particular techniques or methodologies (e.g. Schenker analysis), but to a more broadly conceived, flexible analytical approach directly relevant to the performer. For discussion, see John Rink, review of Wallace Berry, *Musical Structure and Performance*, in *Music Analysis*, 9/3 (1990), 319–39.

[36] There are no absolutes in this realm, apart from every performer's need for total commitment to an interpretation (see n. 2 above). For discussion see Rink, 'Authentic Chopin'.

[37] He goes on to say: 'In its original form, it [structural hearing] was accompanied by a metaphysic and a religion of art. Only in our century, in the name of that same structural hearing, were these mediating factors dismissed as extraneous additives to the acoustic phenomenon' (Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 95).

[38] 'S'il [le ranz des vaches] est exprimé d'une manière plus juste que savante, si celui qui le joue le sent bien; les premiers sons vous placent dans les hautes vallées, près des rocs nus et d'un gris roussâtre, sous le ciel froid, sous le soleil ardent' ([Etienne Pivert de] Senancour, *Oberman* (2 vols., Paris, 1804), i. 263–4; trans. from Peter le Huray and James Day, *Music and Aesthetics in the Eighteenth and Early-Nineteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1981), 539). The excerpt comes from the lengthy 'troisième fragment', 'De l'expression romantique, et du ranz des vaches', which Liszt later used as an epigraph before 'Le Mals du pays' in his *Années de Pèlerinage: Suisse*.

[39] For the sake of argument, the ensuing discussion presupposes (idealistically!) that the pianist has perfect technical control of both the music and the modern instrument on which the piece will be played.

Reading the Score

'Vallée d'Obermann' has variously been described as a 'gigantic poetic medita-
tion', an 'earlier *Verklärte Nacht*', an act of 'self-confession *(Selbstbekenntnis)*', and
the 'Ur-type of ultra-Romantic music'.[40] Liszt himself called it 'gloomy', 'hyper-
elegiac', and 'the monochord of the inexorable loneliness of human suffering',[41]
freely acknowledging its inspiration from Senancour's novel, the main charac-
ter of which, 'in self-imposed exile in Switzerland',[42] suffers debilitating self-
doubt and existential pessimism. Oberman's emotional crisis serves Liszt as an
'associative inner programme',[43] the epigraphs relating (by his own admission)
to the book's 'central elements'.

The first version, composed between 1835 and 1838, was published in two
roughly contemporaneous editions: Richault's *Première Année de Pèlerinage*
(1841) and Haslinger's three-part *Album d'un voyageur* (1842), the latter of
which, originally planned for 1840, had already been superseded by the artisti-
cally more ambitious *Année* volume when it finally appeared.[44] By 1852 Liszt had
substantially 'corrected, expanded, and transformed' the set, having 'arrived at
last at that point where the style is adequate to the thought',[45] and three years
later—when the reworked *Années de Pèlerinage: Suisse* was published by Schott—
he repudiated the *Album d'un voyageur*, excluding it from a catalogue of his
works.[46]

Liszt made changes not only to the musical text of 'Vallée d'Obermann', but
also to the epigraphs, moving the long 'De l'expression romantique . . .' else-
where in the set, and adding to the remaining excerpts from letters 4 and 63 in
Oberman a third brief passage, from Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, which
renders more explicit the self-doubt and alienation felt by the 'exiled' protagonist

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[40] Respectively, Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, 'Les Années de Pèlerinage de Liszt', *Revue musicale de Suisse romande*,
33/4 (1980), 154; Searle, *Music of Liszt*, 27; Walter Rüsch, *Franz Liszts Années de Pèlerinage: Beiträge zur Geschichte
seiner Persönlichkeit und seines Stiles* (Bellinzona, 1934), 23; and A. H. Cornette, *Liszt en zijne 'Années de Pèlerinage'*
(Antwerp, 1923), 21.

[41] 'Obermann könnte man das Monochord der unerbittlichen Einsamkeit der menschlichen Schmerzen
nennen. . . . Das düstere, hyper-elegische Fragment "la Vallée d'Obermann" . . . bringt mehrere Hauptmomente
des Werkes von Sénancourt worauf auch die gewählten Epigraphen hinweisen' (letter to Franz Schott, Weimar,
18 May 1855, quoted in Edgar Istel, 'Elf ungedruckte Briefe Liszts an Schott', *Die Musik*, 5/19/13 (1905–6),
46).

[42] William H. Hughes, 'Liszt's *Première Année de Pèlerinage: Suisse*: A Comparative Study of Early and Revised
Versions' (D.M.A diss., University of Rochester, 1985), 151.

[43] Márta Grabócz, 'Die Wirkung des Programms auf die Entwicklung der instrumentalen Formen in Liszts
Klavierwerken', *Studia Musicologica*, 22 (1980), 318.

[44] The complicated history of the *Album d'un voyageur* is traced in György Króo, ' "La ligne intérieure"—the Years
of Transformation and the "Album d'un voyageur" ', *Studia Musicologica*, 28 (1986), 249–60; see also Searle, *Music
of Liszt*, 23 ff. The composition date is proposed by Alexander Main for the entire set of *Impressions et poésies*
(of which 'Vallée d'Obermann' formed part) in 'Liszt and Lamartine: Two Early Letters', in Serge Gut (ed.), *Liszt-
Studien 2: Kongreßbericht Eisenstadt 1978* (Munich, 1981), 137–9. Other commentators have suggested a date of
1837–8 specifically for 'Vallée d'Obermann'.

[45] Letter to Carl Czerny, Weimar, 19 Apr. 1852, in *Letters of Franz Liszt*, i. 131.

[46] See his letter of 17 Jan. 1855 to Alfred Dörffel, ibid. i. 231.

(whether Oberman, Senancour, or Liszt himself).[47] As for the music, the first version's extravagant decoration and virtuosity, both of which inhibit the music's progression, give way in the greatly streamlined second version to a tighter emotional focus and more dynamic use of structure, whereby a sense of flow is created from within, the expressive content having been absorbed into the notes themselves.

The basis of this inner dynamic—and indeed the music's drama in general— is the 'transformation of themes' process referred to above.[48] One musical theme, analogous to one human character, undergoes an emotional metamorphosis in what Márta Grabócz calls an 'evolutionary form (*Evolutionsform*)' based on a single cell most baldly stated in bar 1 of the *Album* version.[49] Both Grabócz and William Hughes independently identify four main sections in the piece. Figure 10.1 depicts the structure discerned by Hughes, who in both versions isolates two rhythmically distinct forms of the theme (A and B, respectively in minor and major keys),[50] while Table 10.1 summarizes Grabócz's semantic chart of the second version, which, in keeping with the *Sprechende Prinzip* that she deems prevalent in this period, dissects the work according to four isotopes.[51] These differ from both the five isotopes assigned by Eero Tarasti[52] and yet another four designated elsewhere by Grabócz,[53] and although this discrepancy undermines their credibility, the essentially static vision of the music of Grabócz and Tarasti is in fact more troubling. Despite their professed attention to 'evolutionary form' and rhetorical process,[54] the performer would be hard pressed to make much practical use of their analyses, as all the activation of the music in time remains to be done. Hughes's blow-by-blow description is more helpful in that regard,[55] but a grasp of the whole—a 'broader interpretative vision' or *grande ligne* to guide the narrative—is still lacking.

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[47] Interestingly, these epigraphs were not included in the edition of 'Vallée d'Obermann' that was published separately in 1855 (the *Années de Pèlerinage: Suisse* came out both as a set and as individual numbers), which suggests that the music had to stand on its own, the poetry providing only a frame of reference.

[48] Márta Grabócz (*Morphologie des œuvres pour piano de Liszt: Influence du programme sur l'évolution des formes instrumentales* (Budapest, 1986; revd. ed. Paris, 1996), 143) calls this process 'un des principaux modèles dramaturgiques chez Liszt'. Compare Hughes, 'Liszt's Première Année', 153; see also Karen S. Wilson, 'A Historical Study and Stylistic Analysis of Franz Liszt's *Années de Pèlerinage*' (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 1977).

[49] Grabócz, 'Die Wirkung', 302. Various authors (including August Stradal, Richard Stein, and Grabócz herself) have linked this motive—a descending third, G–F♯–E, played ♩ ♩ ♩ —with two questions in the first epigraph: 'Que veux-je? Que suis-je?'

[50] Hughes, 'Liszt's Première Année', 154, 156.

[51] Grabócz, *Morphologie*, 141–8, 178. Notwithstanding the problems identified below, Grabócz's analyses are perceptive and often persuasive.

[52] Eero Tarasti, 'The Case of *Obermann*: Franz Liszt and Marie d'Agoult in Switzerland', in Jan Steszewski and Maciej Jablonski (eds.), *Interdisciplinary Studies in Musicology* (Poznań, 1993), 96 ff.

[53] Grabócz, 'Die Wirkung', 318–19.

[54] Grabócz (*Morphologie*, 145) traces this from *exposition* through *développement/intrigue/noeud* to *dénouement/résolution*, defined by the successive *variations de caractère*, i.e. thematic transformations. Note that both Grabócz and Tarasti use an over-deterministic verbal medium to pin-point the work's meaning, as opposed to the more suggestive, *musical* mode of expression available to the performer. (See p. 218 above.)

[55] Hughes, 'Liszt's Première Année', 151–201. Compare the diachronic outline in Michèle Biget, 'Écriture(s) instrumentale(s). Liszt: La Vallée d'Obermann', *Analyse musicale*, 21 (1990), 90.
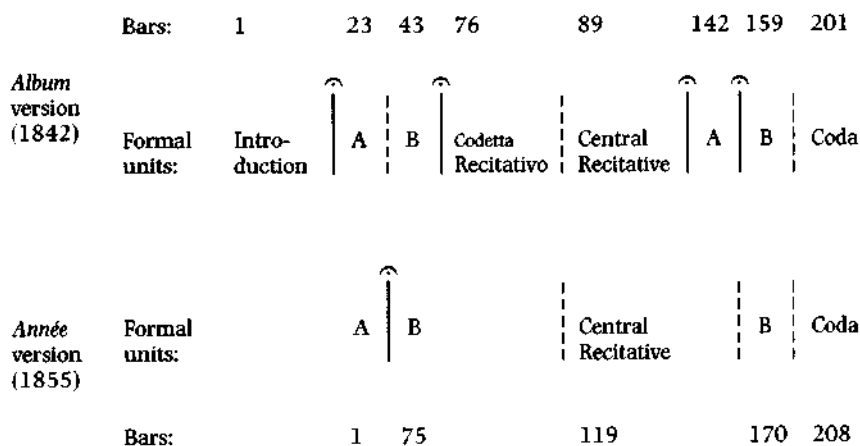
Bars:	1		23	43	76		89		142	159	201

Album version (1842) Formal units: Intro-duction | A | B | Codetta Recitativo | Central Recitative | A | B | Coda

Année version (1855) Formal units: A | B | Central Recitative | B | Coda

Bars:			1	75			119			170	208

Fig. 10.1. 'Vallée d'Obermann': formal outline, versions 1 and 2 (after Fig. 9.1 in Hughes, 'Liszt's *Première Année*', 156).

Before unravelling the narrative thread as I see it, I shall first demonstrate the mediation between poetry and music not as Grabócz and Tarasti do, but by proposing salient intertextual references previously overlooked by commentators. Not only is 'Vallée d'Obermann' linked through the epigraphs to notions of impotence, exile, and alienation, but there are also specific musical allusions to the archetypal Romantic work expressing these ideas: Schubert's song 'Der Wanderer' (composed 1816),[56] which Liszt transcribed for piano in 1837–8, around the time of the first version of 'Vallée d'Obermann'. The intertextual connections include the A–C♯–B reaching-over motive at the climactic 'wo bist du?' in bars 54–5 of Schubert's song, found throughout both versions of 'Vallée d'Obermann' at expressively significant moments and as one of two 'basic shapes' (Ex. 10.1a); the progression from an augmented-sixth chord to the tonic at the same point in the Schubert and at the end of Liszt's second version, bars 215–16 (note that E major is the goal tonic in both pieces; see again Ex. 10.1a), as well as in bars 68 and 70–1; and the melody and accompanying augmented-sixth progression at another crucial moment in 'Der Wanderer', bars 20–2, where the singer (literally 'der Seufzer') asks 'wo? immer wo?', quoted in the second version of 'Vallée d'Obermann' at bars 178–9 (compare also 173 and 195), the registration, texture, and arpeggio figuration of which recall the parallel passage in bars 20–3 of Liszt's transcription (Ex. 10.1b).[57] Both the ubiquitous reaching-

[56] The second and third versions were written in 1818 and 1822 respectively; the text is by Georg Philipp Schmidt, although the title is Schubert's. Both Eigeldinger ('Les Années', 147–8) and Tarasti ('Case of *Obermann*', 91) stress the importance of 'wandering' and 'pilgrimage' to the Romantic imagination, but, like other authors, do not observe the musical links between 'Vallée d'Obermann' and 'Der Wanderer' that I adduce below.

[57] Links also exist between Liszt's transcription and the *first* version of 'Vallée d'Obermann', including the tempo marking ('Lento assai') and the *recitando* indications early in both pieces. It is difficult, however, to establish anteriority. The first version lacks both the expressively significant augmented-sixth harmonies and the 'wo? immer wo?' motive (although augmented sixths do occur in bars 58, 59, and 170).

Table 10.1 Summary of Grabócz's semantic chart

Syntagmatic axis:	first thematic complex	second thematic complex	third thematic complex	fourth thematic complex
Structural function	theme and rhetorical development	theme and formal variations	motto and 'development'	theme and formal variations
Bars	1–74	75–118	119–69	170–216
Key	opposition of tonic axis (E minor–G minor–B♭ minor–D♭ minor [sic]) and subdominant axis (A minor–C minor–B♭ minor–F♯ minor)	C major and modulation	C♯ minor, D minor, E minor and modulation	E major
Tempo and expression marks	*Lento assai, espressivo; Più lento, dolcissimo*	*Un poco più di moto ma sempre Lento, pp, dolcissimo*	*Recitativo, pp, trem. appassionato ff; agitato molto; Presto ff tempestuoso*	*Lento, dolce, una corda; dolce armonioso; sempre animando sin'al fine fff*
Semes or classemes	lamenting-reciting and lugubrious	*pastoral-amoroso, bel canto*	storm semes, macabre semes, fanfare semes	*bel canto,* pathetic, pastoral-pantheist semes
Semantic isotopes	macabre quest	pastoral-*amoroso*	macabre struggle	pantheist

Ex. 10.1a. *A–C–B motive: (i) Schubert, 'Der Wanderer', bars 54–5; (ii) 'Vallée d'Obermann', bars 1–2, 9–10, 25–6, 169, 171, and 215–16.*

(i)

(ii)

over motive and these other harmonic and melodic elements, which are concentrated in the final section (in other words, when transcendence *seems* possible, after the recitative's turbulent *Verklärung*, but is nevertheless threatened by the implied questions: 'wo? immer wo?', 'wo bist du?'), serve as palpable indications of the music's expressive content, readily accessible to contemporary and modern listeners alike.

Ex. 10.1*b*. '*Immer wo*' harmony/melody: (i) Schubert, 'Der Wanderer', bars 20–2; (ii) Liszt, transcription of 'Der Wanderer', bars 20–3; (iii) 'Vallée d'Obermann', bars 178–9, 173, and 195.

(i)

(ii)

(iii)

Other devices convey meaning more subtly than these quotations, however, and the pianist's task is to discern them (whether consciously or not) and devise a temporal basis for projecting them. Both Grabócz and Tarasti identify such 'meaningful' parameters as motives, themes and thematic variations, tonal

construction, phraseology, cadences, 'gestural shifts', and register;[58] while Michèle Biget singles out timbre as an 'agent of compositional process'.[59] To this list could be added an element of more direct relevance to the performer but often ignored in the literature on performance: *contour*, of both individual musical lines and the broader expressive gestures traced by different parameters at various hierarchical levels within the music—in other words, the 'goal-directed impulses' mentioned above, which together define the performance's topography. The following remarks will focus on contour in three passages—the opening, the recitative, and the final section—followed by consideration of large-scale shape and timing.

Opening

The second version of 'Vallée d'Obermann' lacks the first version's 22-bar introduction, instead launching directly into the doleful theme, which, according to Liszt, should be 'very strong and very accented (*sehr stark und sehr accentuirt*)' in performance.[60] To gauge the extraordinary effect of this radical opening requires sensitivity to contemporary harmonic vocabulary and syntax, and awareness of Liszt's changes to the first version. (See Ex. 10.2*a*.) The unstable tonic in the first two bars (the root is absent, the harmony clouded by dissonance) and the bold, tonally ambiguous progression in bars 1–8 from E minor through G minor to B flat minor (versus the straightforward i–III–V motion in the *Album* version) immediately capture the mood of uncertainty conveyed in the three epigraphs.[61] A second indecisive idea (derived from the reaching-over 'basic shape') enters in bars 9–10 and leads to incrementally greater levels of intensity, building towards a climax at bar 20 (*rinforzando*), whereupon the register plummets and the music grinds to a halt, with searching 'questions' ('Più lento') thereafter in bars 26–33. Thus an important pattern is forged from the start, based on a gradually mounting degree of intensity directly followed by retraction—in short, a kind of oscillation not unlike that embodied both registrally (Ex. 10.2*b*) and temporally (Ex. 10.2*c*) in the left-hand theme at the opening, as well as in the innumerable dynamic swells that shape the music when

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[58] Grabócz, 'Die Wirkung', 305, and *Morphologie*, 144; Tarasti, 'Case of *Obermann*', 99 and *passim*. Compare Liszt's remarks, quoted above, about his use of 'rhythms, motions, and figures' to express thought and emotion. Both reasons of space and the cogency of Grabócz's analyses prevent me from elaborating on the semantic role of such parameters.

[59] Biget, 'Écriture(s)', 94.

[60] Reported in Wilhelm Jerger, *Franz Liszts Klavierunterricht von 1884–1886 dargestellt an den Tagebuchaufzeichnungen von August Göllerich* (Regensburg, 1975), 140. Liszt also told Göllerich that bars 75 ff. and 180 ff. should be played 'nicht zu langsam' (ibid. 116), while bars 20–5 should be 'extremely broad (*ungemein Breit*)' in tempo (ibid. 140). In the context of this study, it is noteworthy that Liszt's comments concern tempo and dynamic emphasis.

[61] For discussion of the opening, see Allen Forte, 'Liszt's Experimental Idiom and Music of the Early Twentieth Century', *19th-Century Music*, 10/3 (1987), 212–14, and R. Larry Todd, 'The "Unwelcome Guest" Regaled: Franz Liszt and the Augmented Triad', *19th-Century Music*, 12/2 (1988), 109 (see also 96).

based on author's performance.

(a)

First version

Sostenuto

Second version

Lento assai

Key: e

g

bb

(b)

Bar: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8

(c)

'Main tempo'
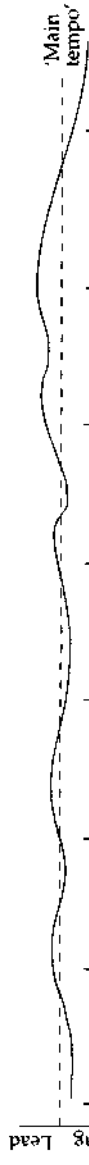
Lead   Lag

Bar: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8

Ex. 10.3. 'Vallée d'Obermann'. (a) comparison of registral contour in bars 139–41 and 161–9; (b) registral and temporal oscillations in cadenza, bar 169, based on author's performance.

played.[62] Emotional flux characterizes the rest of the first section, which proceeds in phases defined by tempo changes (*rall.*, *poco rit.*, *rit.*, and 'Più lento'), the warmer *dolcissimo* at bar 51, the return of the questions at bar 59, and the *dolente* coda, with its final *pesante* articulation of the theme deep in the bass, the *lunga pausa* preparing for the transcendent second section in bar 75 (marked 'Un poco più di moto ma sempre Lento', *pp*, *dolcissimo*, and *una corda*), where the 'B' version of the theme first enters, in C major. Here too we find phases of intensification and relaxation, the registral compass, rhythmic activity, and harmonic momentum increasing or decreasing in sweeps of varying magnitude, and the tempo fluctuating correspondingly, with the 'collapse' in bar 118 precipitating the recitative.

Recitative

The energy level stays extremely high in bars 119–60, despite even greater swings between registers, rhythmic units, textures, harmonies, and so forth as the descending-third 'basic cell' is worked and reworked in both hands. The Presto at 139 ff., marked *ff* and 'tempestuoso', finds the motive in a zigzag pattern moving sequentially higher, tensions culminating with the extended, *fff* statement at 148 ff. After violent registral shifts in bars 151–5, the music winds down in bars 156–9, with the sudden stop on a first-inversion F minor chord in bar 160 (versus the anticlimactic Neapolitan sixth, F *major*, in the earlier version) both unexpected and, in its futility, something of a blow after the stormy *Verklärung* just completed. Here follows not so much a transformation of themes as a transformation of contour, the shape from the earlier Presto returning in a nine-bar augmentation (marked 'Lento') leading to a cadenza, which, as the tempo slows, culminates with the A–C–B 'basic shape' from 'Der Wanderer'[63] (Ex. 10.3*a*). In essence, the expressive contour in these nine bars

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[62] Tarasti ('Case of *Obermann*', 94–5) considers the theme 'a sort of "iconic" image of the valley' in the title, and 'the use of various registers throughout the piece illustrate[s] the peaks and abysses of those landscapes' in Senancour's novel. A more convincing 'iconicity' will be posited below, however.

Oscillation in dynamics colour bars 1–8, e.g., with swells (i.e. ⟵◁ ▷⟶) over the tripartite quaver units in the right hand and over the two-bar melodic ideas in the left. Throughout the piece similar swells shape the ubiquitous ♩♩ ♩ and ♪♩ ♪ rhythmic units, as well as the accompanimental patterns accelerating from ·♫ through ·♫♫♫ to 𝅘𝅥𝅯𝅘𝅥𝅯 .

As noted in the captions, the graphs in Exx. 10.2*c*, 10.3*b*, and Fig. 10.2 are based on my own performance of 'Vallée d'Obermann'; they simulate MIDI-derived diagrams, but were sketched free-hand in an admittedly less 'scientific' but perhaps more 'musical' fashion. No doubt they would vary from one rendition to another on my part, although it is worth noting that psychological research indicates a remarkable consistency of expressive micro- and macro-structure when a performance strategy has been thoroughly worked out by the player. It goes without saying that different contours would emerge from other pianists' interpretations; however, Alfred Brendel's reading (Philips 420 202-2) also features considerable temporal flux, whereas Pascal Rogé's (Decca SXL 6485) is more metronomic—and in my view much less vital than Brendel's.

[63] The shape is stressed even more in the alternative ending sketched in Liszt's manuscript and reproduced in the Henle edition. Compare also the cadenza in the first version (bar 141), which starts similarly, though at twice the speed, but then descends in an uninflected harmonic minor scale to middle C, followed by B. Thus, both the 'wo bist du?' motive and the registral oscillation of the later version are lacking.

acts as a microcosm of the foregoing recitative's unceasing fluctuations, the flexible timing of the cadenza making all the more poignant the line's 'vocal' folding and unfolding—its registral undulation—as it approaches the final section (Ex. 10.3*b*).

Apotheosis

Whereas in the first version theme A returns in E minor after the cadenza,[64] the second version states the B theme in E major in perhaps the most consolatory passage in the piece (one of only two relatively stable moments), the registration's rich colour and the flowing rhythm providing a balm after the *tempestuoso* recitative. Liszt keeps the mood *dolce* (see bars 170, 175, and 180) until the *sempre animando sin' al fine* in bar 188, which marks the start of an inexorable drive towards the end. Before this, however, as well as after, a state of flux affects the course of events, with a particularly pronounced retraction in bars 184–7 (where the left hand alludes to the A theme), before which an aspirational, ascending form of the B theme is heard for the first time.[65] Another new shape enters in bar 204, where, at the peak of rapture, the linear descent from the theme returns in a much extended, accelerated version sweeping beyond the more confined registral compass of the original. Accompanied by an exultant sequential progression, it offers the second and last moment of stability in the work; as we have seen, the final bars are clouded by harmonic uncertainty and by the 'wo bist du?' motive, the fifth in the treble adding to the open-ended feel.[66]

Constructing a Musical Narrative

Even this brief sketch of 'Vallée d'Obermann' reveals the patterns of oscillation or flux variously manifested throughout the work. What remains is to depict these more vividly, which I shall do by tracing an 'intensity curve'[67]—that is, a graphic representation of the music's ebb and flow, its 'contour' in time, determined by all active elements (harmony, melody, rhythm, dynamics, etc.) working either independently, in sync, or out of phase with one another to create the changing degrees of energy and thus the overall shape. As an analytical tool,

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[64] The theme's recapitulation in E minor makes the *Verklärung* seem pointless in retrospect.

[65] In the first version, unlike the second, ascending patterns occur much earlier, destroying the effect of the eventual apotheosis. The 'Wanderer' quote at bars 178–9, discussed above, also injects a sense of doubt ('wo? immer wo?'), as do its anticipation and echo.

[66] Grabócz (*Morphologie*, 147) notes the blend of '*glorification*' and '*intonations macabres*' in this '*coda "aliénante"*', while Todd (' "Unwelcome Guest" ', 109) claims that the augmented triad 'strengthens the motivic cohesiveness of the work'.

[67] This concept was first proposed by Wallace Berry in *Structural Functions in Music* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1976), although it had various precursors—e.g. the work of Manfred Clynes, described in n. 68 below.

the intensity curve has limitations, not least the difficulty of defining and objectively quantifying intensity, but from the performer's viewpoint the construct is powerful:[68] there are parallels between it and the 'intonatory curve'—or 'intonation contour'—of a spoken narrative[69] (one of the models for performance in the nineteenth century and beyond, as suggested earlier), and implicit in the concept is the *grande ligne* which, I have been arguing, lies behind the coherent performance of much Romantic and post-Romantic repertoire.

Taking into account the work's evolutionary form and emotional metamorphosis, and indeed all the processes identified above, an intensity curve can be drawn as an oscillating line expanding in amplitude and period as the piece progresses (see Fig. 10.2), achieving an overall ascent despite the many instances of retraction at various layers of the hierarchy implicit beneath this upper-level manifestation. To some extent the curve reflects a plot archetype exploited in much nineteenth-century music, which, like the eighteenth-century improvisatory style that partly inspired it, typically involved a succession of alternating affects, a systematic juxtaposition of opposites.[70] In 'Vallée d'Obermann', however, it plays a quite distinctive role in the music's synthesis in time and in the conveying of its particular expressive message.

Perhaps the most striking conclusion to be drawn concerns the relationship between the different contours within the work's hierarchy: the intensity curve at the uppermost level (again, the piece 'in a nutshell') closely corresponds in its incessant fluctuations to the 'iconic' thematic and temporal contours of bars 1–8 (as shown in Exx. 10.2b and c), the up-and-down zigzag used sequentially in bars

[68] It is hardly coincidental that the intensity curve was conceived by an accomplished pianist and conductor, whose *Structural Functions* depicts rhythmic and metric impulses in the form of conducting gestures. Berry used it as an analytical device rather than a means of representing musical performance, but, given its attention to such features as timing, generation and relaxation of momentum, relative high and low points, etc., its descriptive powers in respect of performance are profound, likewise its potential as a *prescriptive* tool in performance pedagogy. Compare the use of gesture described in n. 5 above, which teachers continually exploit to demonstrate to students the shape of phrases.

The intensity curve concept is echoed in recent psychoacoustic research by Neil Todd, who posits 'integrated energy flux' as a determinant of musical expression. Todd synthesizes tempo, dynamics, and other components of expression through a series of filters to produce a hierarchy of integrated energy profiles in the form of 'rhythmograms', which can be likened to intensity curves. (For discussion, see Eric Clarke, 'Expression in Performance: Generativity, Perception and Semiosis', in Rink (ed.), *Practice of Performance*. 24.) One important difference, however, is that Todd's approach is 'knowledge-free'; i.e. it is based simply on the combined acoustic properties of the various components, whereas an intensity curve relies upon the analyst/performer's musical judgements to prioritize the elements according to their *relative*, contextual importance.

Perhaps even closer echoes exist in the research of Manfred Clynes, who has devised a 'sentograph' to measure 'essentic forms' (which, he claims, characterize basic emotions and embody the structurally defined source of meaning in music). Subjects produce 'pressure curves' by pressing rhythmically on the sentograph while music is being played or imagined, thus registering its emotional progression. (For discussion, see Shove and Repp, 'Musical Motion and Performance'. 72–5.)

[69] This point is elaborated in Rink, 'Chopin's Ballades', 112.

[70] This was certainly true of Liszt's playing, the rhetorical force and dramatic logic of which Madame Boissier, for one, attributed to shifting emotional states and expressive variety. See for instance *Liszt Pédagogue*, 17–18, 39, and esp. 87–8: ' "La musique doit être variée" dit-il, "et les mêmes nuances, expressions, modifications ne doivent pas se répéter: les phrases musicales sont soumises aux mêmes règles que les phrases dans un discours; on défend de répéter les mêmes mots, il ne faut pas que la même tournure d'expression reparaisse, cela fatigue." '
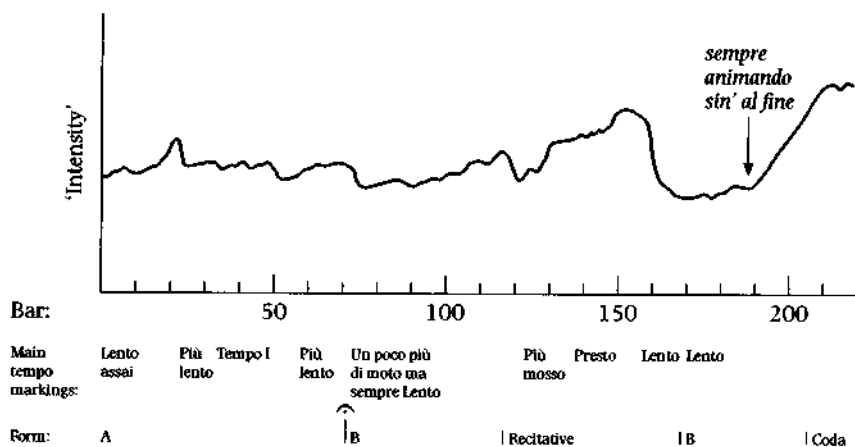
Fig. 10.2. 'Vallée d'Obermann': intensity curve, based on author's performance.

139 ff. and greatly augmented at the end of the third section (seen in Ex. 10.3), and indeed the various other oscillations—not least the omnipresent dynamic swells—located throughout the piece and identified in my analysis. What is more, when the music is played with the flexibility of tempo depicted in bars 1–8 and 169 and advocated in general by Liszt—namely, increases or decreases like those explicitly marked in the first version and absorbed into the second; that is, 'subtle variations of tempo and expression within a free declamation' determined by 'the meaning that the music possesses'—the performance as a whole literally *resonates*,[71] driven by a continual flux in all elements, an inner pulsation which, like a human pulse, like human breathing, speeds up or slows down in increasingly agitated or relaxed states. In short, the topography of the performance as represented here offers a musical counterpart to or enactment of the emotional quest of Senancour's protagonist, creating a structural homology between his *vacillation* on the one hand and the music's *oscillation* on the other, a resonance not only within the music as music, but with the poetic meaning it attempts to convey. Surely this explains why 'Vallée d'Obermann' is such a resounding masterpiece:[72] Liszt at once achieves an internal musical logic *and* translates poetic meaning into sound not in a 'second-hand' fashion but with 'absolute conviction', the unity between parts and whole paralleled by a unity between the music's aesthetic aims and their structural manifestation. By activating that

[71] *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass., 1974) defines resonance as 'a vibration of large amplitude in a mechanical or electrical system caused by a relatively small periodic stimulus of the same or nearly the same period as the natural vibration period of the system'. Here, the resonant 'system' is the 'monochord of human suffering' referred to by Liszt.

[72] The first version, by contrast, is undermined by what Hughes ('Liszt's *Première Année*', 172) calls an 'oddly naïve, almost melodramatic' succession of moods, which 'pass in front of the listener as static tableaux' (195).

structure in time, by following the fluctuating *grande ligne* that guides the musical narrative, the performer acts out the music's drama, communicating a kind of meaning which can only be heard, which exists in sound alone, and taking the listener on an expressive journey up and down the emotional peaks charted by the musical materials themselves.

There is a brief epilogue to this discussion. As an old man, Liszt refused to hear 'Vallée d'Obermann' in entirety (the one time he relented caused great distress[73]), and he recommended that August Göllerich conclude his performances of the piece after the first section, in bar 74, before the first hint of 'reconciliation' in the C major passage.[74] Furthermore, he sanctioned Eduard Lassen's reworking of 'Vallée d'Obermann' for piano trio (dubbed 'Tristia' by Liszt himself[75]), adding to the (undated) manuscript a passage allowing the piece to conclude, albeit in open-ended fashion, after the first section, and drafting a new 21-bar introduction, an 8-bar transition to the 'second movement' (marked 'II' in the score), and another conclusion to close the piece *ad libitum* before the recitative,[76] all of these passages possessing the vague, disconcerting quality of Liszt's late style. Not only do the various changes highlight the fluidity of the 'work concept' as understood by Liszt, but through their negating effect they elucidate the meaning of the 1855 version as described here: whereas in the published composition the tortuous progression through conflicting states leads to transfiguration and eventual apotheosis, the later versions deny the possibility of transcendence, relegating the protagonist to permanent alienation, an exile so absolute that the emotional quest embodied in the music can never really end.

This chapter has approached general issues through the prism of a specific work in order to portray the hierarchical structure of performance and to cast new light on nineteenth-century interpretation in particular, offering guide-lines enabling modern performers to recover at least in part the essential qualities of an original dramaturgy. Just as the communication of 'meaning' lay at the heart of a nineteenth-century performance rhetoric, so it must guide modern performances of that music if they are fully to persuade modern listeners—if 'resonance' is to occur. By 'reading' the score and attending to those elements that bear meaning (themes, motives, rhythms, etc.), and then by constructing a temporal framework for their projection, the performer assumes the role of narrator, tracing a *grande ligne* to mediate between the poetic and the structural,

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[73] See August Göllerich, *Franz Liszt* (Berlin, 1908), 119.

[74] See Jerger, *Franz Liszts Klavierunterricht*, 140.

[75] This subtitle is probably derived from either Ovid's 'poetic epistle' *Tristia* or Berlioz's eponymous pieces for choir and orchestra, published in full score in 1852 (with two lines from Ovid printed on the cover) and dedicated to Prince Eugène Sayn-Wittgenstein, nephew of Liszt's consort Carolyne. See David Charlton (ed.), *Hector Berlioz. New Edition of the Complete Works*, vol. 12b (Kassel, 1993), pp. ix–xii. I am grateful to Dr Charlton for providing this information.

[76] Full details are given in Wolfgang Marggraf, 'Eine Klaviertrio-Bearbeitung des "Vallée d'Obermann" aus Liszts Spätzeit', *Studia Musicologica*, 28 (1986), 295–302. The latter 'drafts' referred to here exist only in Lassen's hand, but (Marggraf assumes on the basis of stylistic evidence) were originally Liszt's own.

to recount the drama within the notes. The performer's use of analysis to reveal the 'spirit' of music not only re-validates the close study of musical scores in this post-structuralist era; it also broadens our understanding of what 'historical performance' might properly involve, at the same time providing a salutary reminder that not all critical interpretations elucidate music as sound. Only the performer has control over the sounding aspect of music, and critical, historical, or analytical judgements may bear little or no relation to music's process. That does not of course deny their value; but it serves to highlight the special powers that performance has to communicate musical meaning, to embody the narrative that recounts an emotional destiny almost beyond human comprehension.