

Henry LITOLFF

PIANO MUSIC, VOLUME ONE

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HENRY LITOLFF: PIANO MUSIC, VOLUME ONE

by William Melton

Henry Charles Litolff was the son of Martin Louis Litolff, a violinist from Colmar whose Peninsular War service ended when he was taken prisoner by British troops. After the Napoleonic era concluded at Waterloo, Litolff gravitated to London in search of work. There he married the Scottish-born Sophie Hayes, and their son Henry was born on 7 August 1818. Henry's early music lessons were with his father, but at the age of twelve he was accepted as pupil, gratis, by the eminent pianist-composer Ignaz Moscheles. Charlotte Moscheles remembered that among her husband's pupils was

Henry Litolff, who was given to him as a poor, talented but rather neglected boy by his friend Collard, and whose talent he recognised immediately. His father, an Alsatian, who only sparsely supported his numerous children with his dance music, was unable to procure a piano for Henry; but he practised in Collard's factory and was so well prepared for every lesson that he delighted and amazed Moscheles by playing his etudes and concertos.¹

The precocious youngster performed for astonished guests at the Moscheles home and gave his debut concert at Covent Garden on 24 July 1832 at the age of thirteen. He remained with Moscheles for five years, Carl Friedrich Weitzmann asserting that the brash young Henry 'belonged to the most important of the many pupils trained by Moscheles,'² a rarefied club. At age seventeen Litolff eloped with Elisabeth Etherington, a year his junior, the couple first moving to Gretna Green (a village in the Scottish borders, where minors could, and still can, legally marry) and then to Melun, south-east of Paris. There he taught piano until a successful concert in the capital

¹ Ignaz and Charlotte Moscheles, *Aus Moscheles' Leben nach Briefen und Tagebüchern*, Vol. 1, Duncker & Humblot, Leipzig, 1873, p. 221.

² Carl Friedrich Weitzmann, *Geschichte des Clavierspiels und der Clavierliteratur*, J. G. Cotta, Stuttgart, 1863, p. 121.

propelled him into a performing career. He was encouraged in this course of action by the tenor Gilbert-Louis Duprez, the pedagogue Pierre-Josef-Guillaume Zimmerman and the piano-maker Jean-Henri Pape. The iconic Conservatoire professor Antoine Marmontel was impressed with the young man's musical gifts, with one reservation: 'Litolff did not possess, nor would he ever possess, that fine flower of delicacy and poetic charm which characterised Chopin's talent'.³ At the urging of the Belgian musical sage François-Joseph Fétis, Litolff travelled to Brussels in 1839 (conspicuously leaving his wife behind). There he cultivated appreciative audiences for two seasons, earning accolades that he would remember a decade-and-a-half later when he composed the overture *Chant des Belges*, Op. 101, dedicated to King Leopold I of Belgium. In 1844, after a two-year stint as an opera kapellmeister in Warsaw, Litolff became the quintessential itinerant musician, concertising across Germany, with longer stops at Leipzig, Dresden – where he gave lessons to the teenaged Hans von Bülow – Berlin and Prague. It is in this last city that the sobriquet 'the English Liszt' may first have been coined, as Bülow wrote to his mother about Litolff's success:

I read lately in the Vienna paper, in the news from Prague (delayed). Herr Litolff has given five concerts with enormous success [...]. He interested people both by his playing and compositions, as well as by his adventurous life. He possesses uncommon delicacy, and with it great energy, and might in many respects be compared with Liszt, though in the latter one recognises always the Hungarian, in Litolff always the Englishman!⁴

Litolff in the flesh was described as 'a small man with a lively and nervous pace, a petulant eye, and a tumultuous head of hair'.⁵ A reviewer in Berlin wrote at hearing Litolff for the first time:

We can only compare the astonishing playing of this ingenious musician with that of Franz Liszt; yet Litolff, for all his ravishing fire, is not as reckless as Liszt, who at times, as he knows that he can risk anything and generally wins, gives his spirits free rein. As

³ Antoine Marmontel, *Virtuoses contemporains*, Heugel, Paris, 1882, p. 31.

⁴ Letter of 30 May 1845, quoted in Charlotte von Bülow, *The Early Correspondence of Hans von Bülow*, Constance Bache (trans.), Appleton, New York, 1896, pp. 12–13.

⁵ Touchatout, 'Litolff (Henri)', *La Trombinoscope*, Vol. 3, No. 179, 1875, p. 3.

a composer, however, Litolff seems to us not only more important than Liszt, but more important than any of the other piano heroes of our age [...].⁶

In 1846 Litolff returned to London intent on obtaining a divorce. Instead, his wife was awarded £2,000 in damages and he spent the following months in debtors' prison. With the help of a guard's daughter, he escaped and made his way to the coast and then to Holland. In Amsterdam his virtuosity was admired (he was especially celebrated for his performances of Beethoven), but he was also esteemed for his own compositions, like the *Concerto symphonique*, No. 3, Op. 45, for piano and orchestra on Dutch national themes. Afterwards he made a recuperative stay at the German spa town of Bad Harzburg. *Signale für die musikalische Welt* reported that

Litolff is currently in Harzburg for a summer retreat with the author of his opera libretto, Herr [Friedrich] Fischer. [...] In spite of his very fragile health, he continues to work with great zeal on completing his romantic opera in three acts: *The Kynast*. The first two acts are finished, the third is sketched out.⁷

According to *Die Musik*, *Die Braut vom Kynast* ("The Bride of Kynast")⁸ 'had its premiere at Braunschweig on 3 October 1847, and was very warmly received. The work remained in the repertoire throughout the winter and its popularity did not diminish.'⁹ Litolff also made invaluable friends in the Braunschweig music-publisher Gottfried Meyer and his wife Julie. In Frankfurt am Main, where *Die Braut vom Kynast* was performed in March 1848, the reception was less favourable and reviews were poor, the judgement of the larger city essentially quashing the chances of the opera in the future. Litolff then made a concert tour to Vienna but that was cut short by the Revolution of 1848; Litolff's liberal sympathies and compositions in support of the uprising dictated a retreat to Dresden and then back to Braunschweig. There the death of Gottfried Meyer

⁶ H. T., 'Nachrichten: Berlin', *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, Vol. 47, No. 42, 15 October 1845, p. 745.

⁷ Anon., 'Dur und Moll', *Signale für die musikalische Welt*, Vol. 5, No. 28, 1847, p. 221.

⁸ The medieval Castle Kynast in Silesia, now in ruins, was the setting of tales and ballads by Ludwig Bechstein, Theodor Körner and Joseph Eichendorff about the aristocratic heiress Kunigunde, who abhorred the idea of marriage (similar to Puccini's *Turandot*), and presented suitors with dangerous tasks that led to their deaths.

⁹ Paul Magnette, 'Henri Litolff: Seine Laufbahn in Deutschland', *Die Musik*, Vol. 13, No. 13, 1 April 1914, p. 19.

in 1849 and a final grant of divorce from Litolff's first wife opened the way for him to wed Julie Meyer in 1851. Braunschweig hosted Litolff for what would prove to be his most stable decade. The 'hypochondriac, who was always alternately dozing in idle lethargy or driven by demonic diligence and restless zeal for life,'¹⁰ was now a respected citizen of the city. Meyer's publishing house became Henry Litolff's Verlag and Litolff's connections with noted composers of his era (among them Berlioz, Cornelius, Heller, Joachim, Liszt, Anton Rubinstein and Józef and Henryk Wieniawski) resulted in a flowering of affordable publications and the establishment of the Braunschweig Music Festival. As a publisher, Litolff also edited the complete Beethoven symphonies as well as many pedagogical works, and also managed to aid young composers – among them Johannes Brahms, who was commissioned to arrange Litolff's overture *Maximilien Robespierre* for piano and physharmonica.¹¹

François-Joseph Fétis wrote a feature article about Litolff in the *Revue et gazette musicale* which lauded the composer's gift of imagination.

This is where Litolff distinguishes himself from the others; one can say of him that he is a poet, that he feels, that he has ideas, inspiration and charm. In this respect, he seems to me to sum up all of Germany's current value for instrumental music. I am well aware that he has considerable faults: he does not know how to finish; he repeats too often not only the same ideas, but the same forms of these ideas. The tendency towards colour is a constant preoccupation of his.

Finally, his genius – for we can use this word in reference to him – his genius, like any other genius, suffers from the influence of his time, which tends towards exaggeration; but all this is redeemed by the originality of his thought, by the abundance and unexpectedness of his episodes, by the charm of certain phrases, and finally, by a happiness of effects in the instrumentation which is less the result of experience than of an inner revelation.

¹⁰ Fritz Stein, 'Litolff, Henry Charles', *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Friedrich Blume (ed.), Vol. 8, Bärenreiter, Kassel, 1960, p. 104.

¹¹ Invented in 1818 by Anton Haeckl, the physharmonica was a keyboard instrument similar to a small harmonium. Pedals were used to work the bellows that supplied reeds with air. The physharmonica offered four octaves, no stops and a sweet but somewhat underpowered sound.

I therefore can say with confidence that there is a great musical artist in Germany: this man is Litolff.¹²

After years of occasional hurried meetings with Litolff, Liszt arrived in Braunschweig for a visit, writing,

Litolff had me stay with him and was easier than usual to get along with. His wife is very good, reserved and quite proper. We had a little music this morning, and will continue later on. At 4 o'clock he assembled the regimental band, which is really excellent here, as well as unusually well stocked with bowed instruments. The first piece performed was an Overture by Fétis [...]. Then came two Overtures by Litolff: The Girondins and a Triumphal Overture on the Belgian National Anthem. Both works are far from lacking in talent, though they veer towards the flamboyant style [...]. I have therefore urged Litolff that he should not cultivate this genre much longer – for he has, in my opinion, better things to do.¹³

Unfortunately, the distractions of business and his chronic illnesses prevented Litolff from writing or performing, and over the next several years his compositions amounted to just two overtures. By 1854 he was concertising again and was also appointed Kapellmeister at the court of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. His contemporary Eduard Bernsdorf wrote in 1857, expressing a widespread view of the composer held by the critical community,

Litolff occupies an outstanding position among the piano virtuosos of our time; great bravura is as characteristic of his playing as his intelligence and taste. As a composer he is richly gifted, but his ideas appear without discipline or logical development. Next to the truly significant and beautiful, one often finds the grotesque and bizarre; adjacent to the most sensible and tender-felt are the unnatural and unhealthy.¹⁴

¹² François-Joseph Fétis, 'Henri Litolff', *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, Vol. 21, No. 51, 17 December 1854, p. 409.

¹³ Letter to Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein, 25 May 1855, in *Franz Liszt's Briefe*, La Mara (ed.), Vol. 4, Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig, 1899, p. 213.

¹⁴ Eduard Bernsdorf, *Neues Universal-Lexikon der Tonkunst*, Vol. 2, Schaefer, Dresden, 1857, p. 793.

Further concert tours were too attractive for Litolff to refuse, but his return to a nomadic lifestyle had become too much for his second wife. She divorced him in 1858, and afterwards the publishing house was directed by Meyer's son Theodor, who had been adopted by Litolff and taken his surname.¹⁵

Litolff now returned to Paris, and the higher opinion of him which was held by many practical musicians was forcefully expressed by Hector Berlioz:

Litolff is a composer of the highest order. He possesses science, inspiration and good sense. [...] The freshness of ideas of all kinds is combined with a certain sharpness of accent which strikes the listener, seizes his attention and moves him deeply. The melodic style, always noble, is enhanced by harmonies of such grace and distinction that vulgar musicians simply do not recognise them.¹⁶

In 1860 Litolff married Comtesse Louise de La Rochefoucauld. His conducting career bloomed, and he came into contact with stage composers like Bizet, Chabrier, Délibes, Gounod and Massenet (Gounod confided to Bizet that Litolff was 'a remarkable man as a composer, a strong man, energetic in conception, powerful, feverish in detail, but always deliberate in the whole; rich, piquant, striking instrumentation, never boring'¹⁷). A whirlwind tour of Warsaw, St Petersburg and Moscow was made in 1867. 'At Petersburg Litolff gave several concerts to great acclaim',¹⁸ and the Grand Duchess Elena Pavlova presented him with a ring set with diamonds and rubies.¹⁹ Litolff's overture *Maximilien Robespierre* made a successful debut in 1870; Nicolas Slonimsky found that the overture 'carries the idea of programmatic music to its utmost limit, with a vivid description of Robespierre's execution (drumbeats, etc.)'.²⁰

¹⁵ The high standard in publishing was carried forward into the next century, and following Theodor Litolff came the composer's grandson Richard and his wife Hanna. In 1940 Henry Litolff's Verlag was made a division of C. F. Peters of Leipzig.

¹⁶ Hector Berlioz, 'Henry Litolff: Son quatrième concerto symphonique, 5 mars 1858', *Les musiciens et la musique*, Calman-Lévy, Paris, 1903, p. 312.

¹⁷ Quoted in Hortense Parent, *Répertoire encyclopédique du pianiste*, Hachette, Paris, 1907, p. 194.

¹⁸ Anon., 'Tagesgeschichte', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 63, No. 20, 10 May 1867, p. 178.

¹⁹ Ulrich Niebuhr, *Henry Litolff (1818–1891): Bedeutung und Einfluss im Musikleben Russlands*, Deutscher Wissenschafts-Verlag, Baden-Baden, 2011, p. 6.

²⁰ Nicolas Slonimsky, 'Litolff, Henry Charles', *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, Schirmer, New York, 1984, p. 1373.

After Louise's death in 1873 during the Siege of Paris, Litolff took a fourth wife, Lucie-Mathilde Herrier, his seventeen-year-old nurse. His talents were now largely given to composing, and he produced eight stage works over his last quarter-century. These included the *opéra féerie* in three acts, *La belle au bois dormant* ('Sleeping Beauty' or 'Little Briar Rose'; 1874), *Les templiers/Die Tempelherren* ('The Templars') in five acts (1885–86) and six different *opéra-comiques* with a view to emulating Jacques Offenbach's successes (*Héloïse et Abélard* was his eyebrow-raising choice in 1872). In 1876 the lexicographer Hermann Mendel characterised Litolff as 'a superb pianist and richly gifted, intelligent composer of the present day'.²¹ But his ongoing maladies, particularly rheumatoid arthritis of the hands and wrists, now forced him to cease performing and teaching altogether. A performance of *The Templars* at La Monnaie in Brussels in early 1886 saw Litolff reunited with Franz Liszt after three decades; Liszt was seven years older, but still quite active in what would be his final year. The writer Armand Silverstre observed the two men:

Liszt was an elegant older man with snowy hair, a well-known figure in the popular imagination, while Litolff, whose features bore the marks of time, had nevertheless lost none of his eagle-like energy and the fiery power of his gaze. Both men wept warm tears and remained long entwined in their embrace. How we have changed, Litolff remarked with melancholy. And Liszt, whose ironic, worldly humour had not deserted him, replied with a tearful smile, You're right, we've both become more handsome.²²

Henry Litolff's last opera, *Le roi Lear* ('King Lear'), in three acts (1890), lay unfinished at his death at Bois-Colombes, north-west of Paris, on 5 August 1891. Streets in both Bois-Colombes and Braunschweig were named in his honour. In 1896 a memorial concert was finally held in Paris, where four of Litolff's finest piano works were performed by the young virtuoso Ignacy Paderewski. Adolf Prosniz, the distinguished Vienna Conservatoire professor of piano, gave a distillation of the paradoxical musician:

²¹ Hermann Mendel, *Musikalisches Conversations-Lexikon*, Vol. 6, Oppenheim, Berlin, 1876, p. 407.

²² Quoted in Rudolf Hagemann, *Henry Litolff*, Hagemann, Herne, 1981, p. 135.



Litolff caricatured by J. Lefman in La Trombinoscope (1875)

‘A passionate but unenlightened pianist, a composer of original talent, more phenomenal than musical, such was Litolff’.²³

Litolff’s canon of works included the aforementioned operas, some short orchestral pieces, choral works (including the oratorio *Ruth und Boas*), chamber music (three piano trios and a string quartet) and the four works for piano and orchestra styled *Concertos symphoniques* (an additional piece was given to violin and orchestra). These concertos have been described as ‘symphonies with piano obbligato, the thematic

²³ Adolf Prosniz, *Handbuch der Klavier-Literatur 1830 bis 1904: historisch-kritische Übersicht*, Doblinger/Herzmansky, Leipzig and Vienna, 1907, p. 60.

material usually being reserved for the orchestra; the scherzo movements contain some of his most brilliant writing.²⁴ Franz Liszt was impressed by the *concerto symphonique* idea and dedicated his own Piano Concerto No. 1 in E flat major to Litolff, whose most durable work has proved to be the Scherzo from the *Concerto symphonique* No. 4 in D minor. There are currently twenty-plus recordings of this sparkling testament to Litolff's virtuosity on the market, the soloists including Shura Cherkassky, Clifford Curzon, Misha Dichter, Peter Donohoe, Philippe Entremont, Peter Katin, Moura Lympany, John Ogdon, Leonard Pennario and Yuja Wang.

The last and most numerous of Litolff's compositional genres was music for solo piano. Such pieces stemmed from an entirely different rationale from the virtuoso concerto. Salon concerts in the nineteenth century popularised miniatures that evoked diverse moods or even musical travelogues, and the piano itself had an importance in a way that has been long since superseded. As the Litolff scholar Ted M. Blair noted,

There are only three pieces in Litolff's entire output which do not have descriptive titles. This is not unusual, for the entire nineteenth century was deluged with piano music with all kinds of descriptive titles. The nineteenth-century composer was constantly striving for individual expression, and the piano seemed to be the most suitable instrument not only as a medium for this expression but also for the 'awakening of associations.'²⁵

The piano was indeed capable of conjuring a wide palette of such associations – whether recreating religious fervour through ecclesiastical harmonies, a forest landscape with fifths that recall hunting horns, or evoking military scenes or dances.

A listing of Litolff's solo piano music follows: *Rondo élégant*, Op. 2; *Grande Marche fantastique*, Op. 3; *Rêverie au Bal*, *Grande Valse*, Op. 5; *Fantasia on Rossini's Othello*, Op. 6; 3 *Mazurkas*, Op. 17; 2 *Etudes de Concert*, Op. 18; *Souvenir de Lucia de Lammermoor*, Op. 19; *Grande Caprice de Concert de Lucrezia Borgia*, Op. 20; *Grande Fantaisie-Caprice de Concert de Robert le Diable*, Op. 21; 6 *Opuscles*, Op. 25; 3 *Caprices*

²⁴ Fritz Stein, 'Litolff, Henry (Charles)', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, Vol. 11, Macmillan, London, 1980, p. 82.

²⁵ Ted M. Blair, *Henry Charles Litolff: (1818–1891). His Life and Piano Music*, Dissertation, University of Iowa, 1968, p. 63.

en forme de Valse, Op. 28; Moments de Tristesse, 2 Nocturnes, Op. 30; Invitation à la Polka, Op. 31; 3 Lieder ohne Worte, Op. 31(b); Die Preußische Post, Op. 35; Invitation à la Tarantelle, Op. 36; Grand Caprice de Concert en forme de l'Étude, Op. 37; Souvenirs de la Pologne, 3 Mazurkas, Op. 40; Souvenirs d'Harzburg, Op. 43; Promenade du Soir au Bord du Rhin, Fantasia, Op. 44; Feuille d'Album, Op. 50; 3 Lieder ohne Worte, Op. 51; 3 Morceaux caractéristiques, Op. 54; Terpsichore, Étude de bravoure, Op. 57; Souvenir d'Enfance, Op. 59; Sérénade, Op. 61; Nocturne, Op. 62; Le Retour, Pièce de concert, Op. 63; Élégie, Op. 64; 6 Arabesques, Op. 65; Valse de Bravoure, Op. 66; 3 Idylles, Op. 70; 3 Aquarelles, Op. 71; La Harpe d'Éole, Op. 72; Ballade, Op. 73; Souvenir d'un beau Jour, Pensée musicale, Op. 74; Une Fleur du Bal, Op. 77; Chant d'amour, Étude, Op. 78; Tarantelle infernale, Op. 79; Spinnlied No. 1, Op. 81 (1850); 3 Esquisses musicales, Op. 82; 6 Lieder ohne worte, Op. 83; Grande Valse brillante, Op. 89; Romance, Op. 90; Perles harmoniques, Op. 95; Chant du Printemps, Impromptu, Op. 96; Bacchanale, Scherzo, Op. 97; 3 Impromptus, Op. 98; Spinnlied No. 2, Op. 104 (1860); Maitau, Lied ohne Worte, Op. 105; Les Octaves, Concert piece, Op. 106 (1860); Valse élégante, Op. 107; Polka caractéristique, Op. 108; La Mazurka, Impromptu, Op. 109; Andante, Op. 110; La Chasse, 3 Étude de concert, Op. 111; Le Carnaval de Paris, Op. 112; Melodie, Op. 113; Souvenir de Vienne, Caprice, Op. 114; Scherzo, Op. 115; À la mémoire de Meyerbeer, Marche funèbre, Op. 116; Impressions de Voyage, Op. 117; Neckende Geister, Impromptu, Op. 124; Dernière Aurore, Lied ohne Worte, Op. 125; Frascati-Valse, Op. 126; Der Abendstern, Valse, Op. 127. Works without Opus numbers: *Airs de Ballet, Adagio No. 2; Airs de Ballet, Galop No. 4; Andante, Menuette, Allegretto Vivace; Catarina Valse; L'Étoile du soir, Grand valse; Impéria, Suite de valse; Marche de la Légion Académique des Étudiants; Mes Souvenirs (1. Valse-caprice, 2. Rêverie); Prelude for Miss Elvira; Sophie-Polka.*

Of the 95 individual piano pieces by Litolff investigated by Ted Blair, 'fifty-six use ABA form and the remainder are either simply variations of this form or alternating forms of some kind, e.g., ABACA'.²⁶

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 67–68.

Like much 19th-century lyrical piano music his pieces are unicellular – a whole movement is based on a single motif that is fully exploited but never divided, determining the development rather than being only a part of it. As a structural device it has parallels in other 19th-century techniques and is naturally apt to the presentation of a single mood.²⁷

Simplicity of form was reinforced by a certain indolence: recurring sections were often repeated exactly, without variation.

Apparently, judging from the few manuscripts available, it saved time, for he never bothered to write out the repeat; rather, he used the corresponding measure numbers. Examples of exact repetition are too numerous to mention. Undoubtedly, literal repetitions weakened the total structures of many of Litolff's piano pieces.²⁸

Yet the weaknesses that were often ascribed to the genre are not necessarily disqualifying. The Bohemian composer-critic Baron Rudolph Procházka recommended Litolff's 'many musical miniatures, which have become less well known because of their high technical demands',²⁹ with Ted Blair writing that:

Litolff's piano compositions, as a whole, cannot be easily categorized though they are [...] of the salon-type, written to provoke or recall actual places, things, ideas, and ideals. In the author's opinion, many of Litolff's piano pieces deserve to be performed.³⁰

Ludwig Finscher added the caveat that 'Serious research on Litolff which comprehensively collects and critically evaluates sources of Litolff research hardly exists'.³¹

The **6 Opuscles, Op. 25**, were published by A. M. Schlesinger of Berlin in 1846. An opuscle, which arrived in English via French from the Latin *opusculum*, is a brief (or insignificant) literary or musical work. 'Tarantelle calabraise' ('Calabrian Tarantella') [7] begins with the challenging instruction *Il più presto possibile*, its frantic *leggiero*

²⁷ Ted M. Blair and Thomas Cooper, 'Litolff, Henry (Charles)', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Stanley Sadie (ed.), Vol. 14, Macmillan, London, 2001, p. 893.

²⁸ Blair, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

²⁹ Rudolph Procházka, 'Henry Litolff: Ein Künstlerbild', *Neue Musik-Zeitung*, Vol. 12, No. 13, 1891, p. 150.

³⁰ Blair, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

³¹ 'Litolff, Henri (Charles)', *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Ludwig Finscher (ed.), Vol. 11, Bärenreiter, Kassel, 2004, p. 320.

quavers in $\frac{6}{8}$ tearing along stepwise above a punctuating bass-line (*il Basso ben staccato*, later *marcato il Basso*) in A minor. Textures and rhythms are repeated given the ABA form – the middle section substitutes lilting rests on the second and fifth quavers of each bar of melody, now underpinned by a higher degree of chromaticism – but the ‘Tarantelle’ is a potential bravura piece if the tempo is driven as urged. In the review by the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, which had a lofty reputation to preserve after the departure of its iconic editor Robert Schumann two years previously, only the thinnest praise was offered.

The *Tarantelle* is pleasing in its simplicity and we gladly recommend it, though the poetic touch, which is inherent in [Stephen] Heller, is not to be found. Instead, here we have layered prose. The music is sound and the whole piece progresses well enough, except for the ending, which arrives too abruptly and does not completely satisfy. Whomever collects tarantellas might acquire a copy; it is easy to place it in the right category, as one could discover its ‘Calabrian’ character from the music or from the copperplate engraving printed on the title page, which, according to the faintly visible designation ‘Saltarello romano’, may actually be of Roman origin. But take advantage of this opportunity to enrich your collection!³²

The next piece, subdivided into ‘2 Vagabondes-Polkas’, is dedicated to Comte Paul Chandon de Briailles, the director of the Champagne house of Moët & Chandon from 1852 to 1895 and an amateur composer. Both simple dances (which were also published in a version for orchestra) share the *Tempo di Polka* designation in $\frac{2}{4}$ and AABA form. After a *ff* introduction the first polka [8] begins *piano* in A major, to which it returns after sequences in G major, closing in *ff*. The second piece [9] starts in C major (after eight introductory bars grouped around the dominant G major), with an accented contrasting theme in F major. The *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, now openly derisive, commented:

The second issue of the same opus number contains two polkas; the addition ‘vagabondes’ is quite appropriate, as they do not rise above the province of the village fair. Such things should be placed in the critical category of ‘trendy or factory work.’³³

³² Anon., ‘Für Pianoforte; Litolff’, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 5 July 1846, p. 5.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

'La Mazourka' [10] begins *ff* in A flat minor, *Tempo di Mazurka* ($\frac{3}{4}$), before it reduces to *piano leggiero, delicato*. The opening and its parallel major *pesante* contrast are arranged ABAB. The A section also contains a short contrasting passage internally, Ted Blair noting that 'the repetition of the first section is varied, Litloff making the first more difficult and the second much easier'.³⁴

The 'Valse styrienne' [11], *Non troppo presto* in D major, offers leaping *staccato* quavers over crotchet chord movement in the bass. As the melodic material is monothematic throughout, this simple waltz in ABA form makes only a harmonic shift to G major, marked *pp* and *delicately*, before a return to D major. The following 'Polonaise brillante' [12], dedicated to Guillaume Diettrich, begins *grandioso* in *ff* D major, *Tempo di Polacca* ($\frac{3}{4}$). A lighter Trio in G minor, *piano grazioso*, proves to be the middle section of song-form construction after the return of D major. Blair saw the piece as 'The most difficult of this group: octaves and wide chords are employed'.³⁵ The 'Bolero' [13] is the final movement of the *Opuscules*, opening in G minor, $\frac{3}{4}$, *con bravura*. The form is again ABA, with the middle section in the relative major of B flat. A plethora of grace notes and trills see the codetta to its finish, the penultimate bar *ff*, the last bar *piano*. The latter *Opuscules* evoked yet more scorn from the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*:

The praise which we latterly gave to some of the works of this composer must unfortunately be withheld from the abovementioned pieces. They are, in fact, meaningless even within the genre of those pieces of music which one grants from the outset the right to be insubstantial if they are at least glamorous and entertaining for the moment and produce applause for the skill of the performer. Yet they do not possess even this semblance of value. Mr. Litloff remarks with a sort of gravitas about his Opus 19, that he played it in his concerts (though for whom he intends this remark we have not been able to fathom). If we add that he has modestly called his collection of short movements *Opuscules*, then we have said everything we can say about the works before us.³⁶

³⁴ Blair, *op. cit.*, pp. 186–87.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

³⁶ Anon., 'Für Pianoforte; Litloff', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 26, No. 4, 11 January 1847, p. 13.

The **6 Arabesken, Op. 65**, were published by Meyer-Litolf in Braunschweig in 1854 and dedicated to Charlotte Moscheles, the wife of Ignaz Moscheles. The first piece, 'Heimgedenken' ('Memories of Home') [1], offers a Schumannesque intimacy that is rare in the Litolf canon, and begins *Allegretto quasi Andantino* in common time with a chromatic introduction, *pp semplice*. After settling into C major in bar fourteen, it then proceeds in duple quavers in the right hand over triple quavers in the bass, marked *con estro poetico, il basso ben tranquillo*.

The two-against-three in the first section is the only difficulty in *Heimgedanken*. The grace notes are played on the beat, not to form a dissonance, but to place emphasis on a melodic note which has been stated just previously or afterwards. There are some long reaches, but none of paramount difficulty.³⁷

With the **B** section in E major (*sempre legato e tranquillo ben sostenuto la melodia*), the triplet quavers ascend to the melody and the return of the opening C major passes through *ppp smorzando* and *ritardando* to conclude on a semibreve fermata. The second piece, 'Polen' ('Poland') [2], is adorned with an unattributed poem:

See the white farmhouse
Lonely on the blue lake,
A Polish song is heard
Ringing with dusky woe.
Goodbye to my fatherland!
As lost as a song in the wind;
Only song and dance and woe
Remain to console Poland's children.

In *Andantino abbattuto*, and $\frac{3}{8}$, the sinuous semiquaver melody wends its way in F major with hints of F minor, *piano con molto espressione*. There is a contrasting *Tempo die Mazurka, mf ben marcato svegliato*, in C major and with added chromaticism after the return of the opening F major. There is also a return of the **B** section, making the

³⁷ Blair, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

form ABAB, before an *Andante* of four bars based on the opening acts as a codetta, *ppp smorzando*.

'Sehnsucht' ('Yearning') [3] offers a songful *Andante* in F major ($\frac{3}{4}$), styled *piano dolce* and later *lusingando, tranquillo*. A second section in F minor ($\frac{2}{4}$) is marked *Allegretto agitato*, and ends *poco più presto* before the return of the opening F major, concluding with *rallentando ppp*. As Blair asserts,

Litoff was near or on equal ground with Beethoven in the writing of scherzo movements [, which] is amply demonstrated in the middle section. The rhythmical drive, phrasing, dynamic markings, and the use of fermatas inhibiting the action make it particularly exciting. The *lusingando* (flattering or intimate) sections are written with simple melodies and similar accompaniments.³⁸

'Der Gondolier' [4] is prefaced by more verse, again without attribution:

A splendid Moon with gondola swaying
Turns thoughts into dreams,
O Venice, you dream of the sea,
Are you a figment of moonlight, or cloud?
Nearness fades, as does distance,
Softly sings my gondolier,
And I dream, o star of stars
I dream of you, of you!

'The Gondolier' opens with a *Non troppo presto* introduction before settling into a G major *pp leggerissimo*, with widely lunging semiquaver arpeggios in the bass under a crooning melodic line, all bound by the rocking $\frac{12}{8}$ metre. At *ben sostenuto la Melodia* the hands exchange rhythms, the urgent semiquaver motion in *mf* and D major moving to the treble and the bass-line slowing to dotted crotchets. The evocative lyrical opening returns in the awaited song-form conclusion with codetta.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 203–4.

‘Erwartung’ (‘Expectation’) [5] begins *Allegro agitato, piano* in A minor and common time, the melody featuring octave leaps. After a simple *piano* middle section in F major, the opening returns in A minor. Blair noted that the piece

is a study in melodic articulation due to its various markings and syncopated accompaniments. The music is simply constructed, but its inherent good melody and accompaniment certainly make it appealing.³⁹

The final *Arabeske* is ‘Frohes Wiedersehn’ (‘Happy Reunion’) [6]. Here the tempo is the daunting *Il più presto possibile e sempre leggerissimo* in $\frac{6}{8}$, semiquavers energising the melody in E major with their movement dominating the entire piece. Only a brief harmonic shift interrupts the motion before a return to the opening E major and conclusion.

Invitation à la Polka, Op. 31 [14], published by Heugel, Paris, in 1846, was dedicated to Mlle Julie Ebers. After six phrases in alternating rhapsodic or fugal style that finish in fermata silence, the spirited C major polka theme first appears in bar thirteen, *Capricioso [sic]* in $\frac{2}{4}$. A grace-note-strewn contrast in G major and the expected song-form return of the original polka theme complete the piece. The review in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* was predictably dismissive:

The polka has nothing to distinguish it from an ordinary polka; it is simply ordinary dance music, preceded by a bizarre, trivial introduction, and the interested reader, if he wants to get to know the work, will do well to do so on the arm of a comely dancer, which we have unfortunately neglected to do.⁴⁰

Une fleur du bal (‘A Flower of the Ball’), *Op. 77* [17], *valse brillante*, was published by Meyer-Litolf in Braunschweig in 1853. The simple but extended ABA waltz starts off *Vivace*, with rapid quavers in thirds and sixths and repeated tones in specified 3–2–1 fingering. A slower, lyrical section in B major (*ben cantabile la melodia*) serves as gentle reprieve before the torrent of *vivace* quavers returns.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

⁴⁰ Anon., ‘Für Pianoforte; Litolf, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 24, No. 40, 17 May 1846, p. 157.

Valse élégante, Op. 107 [16], was issued by Brandus et Dufour in Paris in 1861. The structure is yet another ABA (with a short introduction) in which the B section in A flat major (*a Tempo ben cantabile la melodia*) is in syncopated rhythmic contrast to the gracefully flowing opening in E flat major (*Allegro ma non troppo*).

La Mazurka, Op. 109 [15], styled an *impromptu*, was composed for and dedicated to the German pianist-composer Jacques Rosenhain and printed by S. Richault, Paris, in 1862. After an eleven-bar introduction that mimics duple metre in $\frac{3}{4}$, the *Allegro* begins *piano leggiero* in B flat minor with the melody in dotted dance rhythms in the bass with quaver offbeats in the right hand. A contrast in the parallel major moves to a highly chromatic region before the return of the opening, this time firmly in B flat major.

Written on the title page of this copy is the date September, 1861, which looks very much like Litolff's penmanship. The left-hand melody with the stresses on the third counts beginning in measure 7, changes in the other sections to the right. It is not unlike Litolff to begin a piece simply as in this one but end it in a highly virtuoso style.⁴¹

Published by Litolff in Braunschweig in 1862, the *Scherzo*, Op. 115 [18], was dedicated to Antoine Marmontel. After a 24-bar introduction, semiquavers and quavers in G sharp minor begin the *Presto, staccato* ($\frac{6}{8}$). A contrasting section in E major slows to dotted crotchets and minims, but soon the earlier semiquavers appear again in the left hand, the whole veering harmonically in developmental fashion before the return of the opening. A coda in the enharmonic parallel A flat major seals the movement, *ff, strepitoso* and *stringendo*. Blair recommended the *Scherzo* highly as a *staccato* study:

Litolff is best rhythmically [...] in the scherzos or the scherzo-like sections of his music. Here, he always has a driving rhythm which ultimately moves to a larger accent, with a consequent change in the harmonic rhythm. This can be seen in his *Scherzo*, Opus 115, where, by the articulation markings, the use of *sf*'s, and the general placement of the dynamics, the rhythm is made more exciting.⁴²

⁴¹ Blair, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 66–67.

William Melton is the author of Humperdinck: A Life of the Composer of Hänsel und Gretel (Toccata Press, London, 2020) and The Wagner Tuba: A History (edition ebenos, Aachen, 2008) and was a contributor to The Cambridge Wagner Encyclopedia (2013). He did postgraduate studies in music history at the University of California at Los Angeles before a four-decade career as a horn-player with the Sinfonie Orchester Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle). Further writings include articles on lesser-known Romantics including Felix Draeseke, Friedrich Gernsheim, Henri Kling and Friedrich Klose, and he has researched and edited the scores of the 'Forgotten Romantics' series for the publisher edition ebenos.

The outstanding Tibetan pianist **Tingyue Jiang** was born in 1996. She began playing the piano at the age of three, won the national piano competition in Hong Kong at the age of eight, and was selected as 'National Outstanding Student' at nine. In the following years, she was awarded many grand prizes in piano competitions in China. At seventeen, she was admitted to Shanghai Tongji University, where she studied with Huan Qi, and then continued working for her Master's degree at Mannes College of Music, New York, where she studied with Jerome Rose. She completed her Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of North Texas, where she studied with the international recording artist and performer, the late Joseph Banowetz.

As a concert pianist, she has performed extensively in both the People's Republic of China and the United States, one highlight being a performance of Beethoven's 'Emperor' Concerto with the Student Symphony Orchestra of Tongji University conducted by the Chinese composer Xiaoping Zhang. In addition, she has earned numerous awards in national and international competitions: she was a finalist in the sixth Paderewski International Piano Competition in Farmington, Connecticut, and the twelfth Chopin International Piano Competition in Hartford, also in Connecticut. In 2017 she was named an 'Outstanding Graduate' of Tongji University. Her other



distinctions include the first prize of the Yamaha Asian Music Scholarship in 2016, when she also gained first prize in the Chinese works group. A year earlier she was a finalist in the group of colleges of the Internationaler Deutscher Irmler-Klavierwettbewerb in Qingdao, and won first prize in the Shanghai division of the Yamaha National Piano Competition, also in 2015. This is her debut recording.



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HENRY LITOLFF Piano Music, Volume One

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Tingyue Jiang, piano

TT 68:50

FIRST RECORDINGS