

FRANZ LISZT

ICH LIEBE DICH

Transcription for Piano Solo

A Facsimile
of the Autograph Manuscript
in the Music Division of
The Library of Congress

1993

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(Gedicht von Rückert)

Lanjam, Leidenschaftlich. Ich lie - be Dich weit ich dich lieben muß;

Handwritten musical score for the first system, featuring a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part includes several 'Ped' (pedal) markings and a 'una corda' instruction.

Ich liebe Dich weit ich nicht anders kann;

Handwritten musical score for the second system, continuing the vocal and piano parts. It includes 'Ped' markings and a 'una corda' instruction.

Ich lie - be Dich nach einem Himmelschlüss; M. 4/4
(6/8)

Handwritten musical score for the third system, including a 'Forcorte' marking and a 'una corda' instruction.

mezzo voce

Ich lie - be Dich durch einen zai - ber baum.

zitenwü -
 (fab) (Sol)
 (ze) (ze)
 (fab) (mib)
 vs =

Dich lieb' ich wie die Rose ihren Strauch;

Dich lieb' ich wie die Sonne meinen Strahl;

Dich lieb' ich weil du bist mein Lebenshauch;

Dich lieb' ich weil dich lieben ist mein Sein

THE MANUSCRIPT*

The pleasure we take in viewing a composer's manuscripts, even in facsimile, is irreplaceable. It is an infinitely more subtle experience than gazing at the typeset page—which purports to communicate the same information more readily. The manuscript reveals character. An entire world lurks beneath the surface of what a more leisurely age used to call "penmanship." (How much more seductive is that word than the cold, forbidding term "rastrology" with which musicology has lately been encumbered!) It is a world that contains an infinite variety of qualities—hope, joy, haste, languor, suffering, even ecstasy—all of which flow through the pen, jostle for expression on the written page, and quietly await their interpreter. A manuscript, in brief, is a companionable thing. When we confront it, we confront a portion of biography itself. Who wrote it? When and where? Under what circumstances? For whom was it intended? The questions draw one forward on a voyage of perpetual discovery.

And this pleasure is really a bonus, for it is self-evidently distinct from the pleasure of the work itself. The creative fire that has been captured on the manuscript will largely determine what the ultimate value of that manuscript shall be. Whether it burns brightly or dimly, it is the fire that counts. But how to release it from the symbols that imprison it on the page? This involves much more than carrying out a set of instructions, much more than reproducing the notes on the page. (After all, we often hear performances in which the notes are all there, but the piece is missing.) The art of interpretation is the art of releasing fire. It has to do with discovering the relationships *between* notes, not with notes themselves. Franz Liszt once expressed this idea in a beautiful aphorism: "Music is a series of tones that long for, and embrace each other." It is the fulfillment of that longing of the "embrace of tones" that lies at the centre of great performance. And it is here that the study of manuscripts can help.

Liszt composed his setting of Rückert's "Ich liebe dich" in 1857, while he was living in Weimar. Like many other songs of the period, it may well have been given its first performance at one of the Sunday matinées held in the music room of the Altenburg, Liszt's home at the time, surrounded

by his friends and pupils. Liszt himself liked to be the accompanist on such occasions, and he had three wonderful singers with whom he worked: Rosina von Milde, Emilie Genast, and Franz Götze. We do not know when the piano transcription of "Ich liebe dich" appeared, but there is no reason to suppose that it was not done at the same time as the song itself was written. Liszt composed very quickly, and he sometimes wrote the original and its transcription simultaneously—a concept rather at odds with the modern tendency to regard music as second class simply because it has been "transcribed." In fact, his transcriptions are often so faithful that they take on the authority of a model. The two, in brief, become interchangeable. This is an aesthetic dilemma for the modern scholar with which Liszt himself was not in the least concerned.

There is much in "Ich liebe dich" to interest the student of harmony. Liszt was always in advance of his time as far as harmonic syntax was concerned. The song represents some wonderful moments as Liszt, inspired by Rückert's words, reaches out to capture the harmony within which to enshrine the thought. When we hear his uplifting setting of the phrase, "Ich liebe dich nach einem Himmelschluss" ["I love you, for it was decreed in Heaven"], we come to understand why Liszt's songs (which in the past were neglected by singers and scholars alike) are now regarded as the missing link between Schumann and Mahler.

Purchased by the Library of Congress in November 1958, this autograph was one of a number of Liszt's manuscripts previously in the possession of Baroness Olga von Meyendorff. The Baroness was an intimate friend of Liszt's later years, although she came on the scene long after "Ich liebe dich" was composed.

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