Introduction

The signature on a musical score claims it, but that claim is not straightforward. This book will examine its nature and status in relation to the *Etudes d'exécution transcendante* by Liszt. It will further ask just what kind of musical work this is, how it relates to its two earlier versions, and even how we might begin to make judgements about it. The *Transcendentals* had a pre-history, well known in general outline. Liszt's youthful *Etude en douze exercices* was reworked as his *Douze Grandes Etudes* and they in turn were reworked as the *Etudes d'exécution transcendante*. The three sets of etudes, together with the symphonic poem *Mazeppa*, based on the fourth etude, make up the body of music addressed by this book. Naturally one of my aims is to examine the music itself. Perhaps the 'naturally' can no longer be taken for granted. Music analysis, the discipline where the specificity of music is most obviously celebrated, has been challenged by several, now-familiar anti-essentialist critiques: that closed concepts of a work, involving such notions as structure, unity, wholeness and complexity, need to be replaced by open concepts whose defining criteria are neither precise nor complete;[1] that what we analyse is a schematic structure which is bound to remain less than its realisation as a work;[2] that the work anyway is collectively authored;[3] that its identity is unstable, shaped anew in multiple receptions.[4] These critiques were salutary. As well as exposing the ideological roots of analysis and de-naturalising some of its assumptions, they opened music up to interpretative strategies that had already proved their worth in other disciplines. Yet they carried with them certain dangers, implicit in the change of 'root-metaphor' from organicism to contextualism.[5] Homologies of compositional and contextual figures can of course be suggestive. But it is evident that they cannot do adequate

[1] Morris Weitz, 'The Role of Theory in Aesthetics', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 15 (1956), pp. 27–35; also *The Opening Mind: A Philosophical Study of Humanistic Concepts* (Chicago, 1977), and chapter 4 of Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford, 1992).

[2] See especially Roman Ingarden, *The Work of Music and the Problem of its Identity*, trans. A. Czerniawski, ed. J. G. Harrell (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1986; orig. edn, 1928).

[3] See, famously, Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image – Music – Text* (London, 1977), pp. 142–8.

[4] Classic texts in reception aesthetics are Hans Robert Jauss, *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. T. Bahti (Minneapolis, 1982) and Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore and London, 1978).

[5] Naomi Cumming's term, in 'Analogy in Leonard B. Meyer's Theory of Musical Meaning', in Jamie C. Kassler (ed.), *Metaphor: A Musical Dimension* (Sydney, 1991), pp. 177–92.

justice to the notoriously elusive meanings of music. More often than not the quest for the plot that will enable the good fit is all too transparent. Worse still, the music may be not just over-interpreted, but appropriated by the politicised and predatory agendas of special interest groups.

I see every reason to value music's commonalities with other disciplines, provided that its specificities are also protected. Likewise, I accept the potency of enriching metaphors, provided that their status as metaphors is not in question. At root, though, I believe that a direct, close-to-the-text engagement with musical materials is likely to prove more revealing than the seductive hermeneutics of the 1980s and 1990s, and that such an engagement need not signal an undeconstructed formalist orthodoxy; on the contrary, it may provide the necessary ballast for a more thoroughly grounded, evidence-based hermeneutics. Accordingly, I will examine the music of all three sets of etudes in reasonably close detail in this book, though I recognise that conventional analytical approaches leave something of a shortfall in explication. In particular it is not obvious to me that existing methods can easily accommodate the concept of virtuosity that is so clearly prescribed by the etudes. Virtuosity brings into sharp focus the relationship between music's object-status and its event-status. It marks out a relational field in which text, instrument, performer and audience are all indispensable to defining significance. It draws the performer right into the heart of the work, foregrounding presentational strategies that are hard to illuminate through the familiar, pedigreed methods of music analysis. And it spotlights the instrument, elevating the idiomatic (the figure), a category much less amenable to analysis than theme, harmony and form.

In any case, what I described as a 'direct, close-to-the-text engagement with musical materials' need not constitute analysis at all, except in a very informal meaning of the term. I do not really intend the detailed examination of music in this book to bolster those well-seasoned ideologies of unity and hierarchy that have been central to music analysis as a discipline. Rather it will be allied to, and will support, critical evaluations of some of the major topics of early nineteenth-century music history, or that at least is my hope. One might characterise this larger ambition as an attempt to place the music within a larger cultural setting. Yet that would not entirely cover it. It would be more truthful to acknowledge that the three sets of etudes were chosen partly because they seem to demand this larger topical approach; indeed the ordering of the components within my bipartite title is significant in this regard. Liszt's recompositions do after all highlight a number of topics that are lodged somewhere close to centre stage in the instrumental repertories of the early nineteenth century. I aim to expose and explore these topics, and in so doing to arrive at useful historical generalisations about the Romantic age in music, and about the special significance of the piano in its characterisation. Moreover, I find it attractive that the topics venture into several specialised corners of our disciplinary field, allowing for points of contact between researches in historical musicology, music theory, and music aesthetics, and within those broad categories between performance studies, genetic analysis and critical hermeneutics. With any luck the three sets of etudes will form a kind of linking thread, forging connections across a range of approaches as well as a range of topics, and in ways that are neither narrowly analytical nor cloudily sociological. The major topics will

come into focus as the book unfolds. But it will be helpful at this stage to formalise them, and even to label them.

A composer–performer culture. This topic, exposed in general terms in chapter 1, is the background presence that informs much of my discussion of the *Etude en douze exercices* in chapter 2. I am not concerned here to present a conventional social history as the backcloth against which to discuss these fairly simple pieces, but rather to demonstrate how a repertory can reveal the practice of which it is a part. This involves recovering something of the practice of early nineteenth-century pianism, a performance-orientated rather than a work-orientated practice, and that means filtering out habits and values that are deeply ingrained in our way of thinking today. Everyone knows that the past is unavailable to us, but by examining the ecology that made possible Liszt's youthful composition we may begin to broaden our understanding of its authorship, and in so doing make room for the 'intention' of its text, to borrow Umberto Eco's useful formulation.[6] What interests me here is the intersection between individual and collective creativity, especially as registered through musical materials. An obvious effect of theory-based analysis has been to emphasise musical structures at the expense of musical materials. I hope that by homing in on materials, a category I will explore in chapters 2 and 4, I will not only illuminate the shared culture to which the work contributes, a culture that was less inclined to separate text and performance than we are today, but also allow for some informed speculation about the listening strategies of the historical (early nineteenth-century) subject. To generalise wildly, I suspect that contemporary audiences might well have focused rather more on the material content of a repertory, a content that freely crosses the boundaries of individual works, than we do today. They might have heard, in other words, a succession of familiar genre markers, tonal types, expressive gestures, idiomatic figures and the like, where we tend to focus rather more on work character – on the integration of elements rather than the combination of materials. It is likely, too, that the contemporary listener would have been much more aware of the basis of these materials, or many of them, in popular genres. Our present age may need to rediscover the obvious in this respect.

Methodologically, then, this first topic invites the examination of a cultural practice and its repertory. It is intriguing that the repertory of early nineteenth-century pianism is now eagerly embraced by the 'early music revival'. I accept that this can be genuinely revealing of the kind of sound-world the composer had in mind. But I would argue that placing Liszt's early *Etude* in the context of a cultural practice – both through an archaeological quest and an exercise in historical imagination – is likely to take us closer to original meanings than any attempt to reproduce that sound-world. At the same time I am alive to the dialogical nature of this larger enterprise. I have used the sub-titles 'recovered past' and 'active present' in chapter 2 to focus what I hope may be a productive dialogue (as opposed to a spurious fusion) between the historical Liszt and the present-day Liszt: between, in very rough translation, musical materials and musical structures. In the final part of the chapter I engage in a modest and informal analytical exercise both on the cycle as a whole and on some of its individual exercises. The premise underlying this analytical work is that a focus on form

[6] Umberto Eco, *Interpretation and Over-interpretation*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge, 1992).

and design, on a sense of work character and individuation, might usefully complement the quest for musical materials, which is my primary concern at this initial stage of the enquiry. At the same time I acknowledge that both these exercises – recovering materials and finding forms – are inescapably undertaken from the perspective of today's world, complicating any dialogue we might establish between 'now' and 'then'.

The concept of virtuosity. Virtuosity ought to be a subject for today. It brings into focus key questions about the relation of performance to text, and therefore about the limits of what we can usefully say about musical works without reference to their performance – to the act of performance. It spotlights the performance, undervalued in music history: the 'extreme occasion', as Edward Said described it.[7] And also the performer, an individual pursuing personal fulfilment of one sort or another, but also a participant in the larger practice, with unspoken and unwritten obligations and responsibilities. As a very particular exemplification of the burgeoning field of performance studies today, virtuosity will be addressed in chapter 3, in relation to the *Grandes Etudes*. I recognise that the concept of virtuosity has no single congealed meaning, and that its manifestations have not remained invariant through music history; even its definitions, to say nothing of its connotations, have been subject to transformation. And I further recognise that the term should not be confined to music history. If the early nineteenth century was in some special sense an age of virtuosity, it embraced a broad spectrum of skill-based activities, encompassing formal culture, competitive games, culinary arts, public spectacles and even, as Paul Metzner suggests, criminal detection.[8] And if Paris was in some special sense the 'capital' of virtuosity in the early nineteenth century, it was no doubt due to a rather specific set of socio-political circumstances that enabled the celebration of what has been aptly described as 'public man'.[9]

I want to argue that as virtuosity meshed with a Romantic aesthetic, it generated a dialectical relationship with a strengthening sense of the autonomous musical work, involving taste and ideology as well as form and closure. Already in the late eighteenth century keyboard virtuosity had acquired those pejorative connotations of excess, artifice and kitsch that were associated with the virtuosity of the opera house. The language of contemporary criticism is revealing here. It suggests that the extremes of display and sentiment through which executants established their reputations with a larger public were considered if not morally suspect, then at least a violation of taste, itself an elusive quality, but one that often seemed to hinge on the status of individuality. Highly valued when kept within certain boundaries, individuality courted censure when it exceeded them, just as it courted popularity. And often it was a fetishism of the (mechanical) instrument that lay at the roots of both the censure and the popularity, with a consequent sense that the performance exceeded the work. Two subtexts of virtuosity are already suggested here: a surrender to mechanism, and the stigma of the gratuitous. They will be explored in chapter 3, as will a third subtext, the occlusion of reference. But for now we may note, more straightforwardly, the historical sequence described by Dahlhaus, in which the virtuosity of the first half of the nineteenth

[7] Edward W. Said, *Musical Elaborations* (London, 1991).
[8] Paul Metzner, *Crescendo of the Virtuoso* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1998).
[9] Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (Cambridge, 1977).

century is presumed to have made room for the affirmation of work character that typified its second half.[10] Virtuosity, in short, gave way to interpretation. We may note, too, Lydia Goehr's similar, if more nuanced, observation of a shift in balance between two competing principles at work in the performance traditions of Western art music as a whole. She characterises them as 'the perfect performance of music' and 'the perfect musical performance', and together they form useful reference points for a study of early nineteenth-century virtuosity.[11] One might go a stage further, and suggest that there are covert values lurking in these categories, bearing on the canonising of some composers and the marginalisation of others.

The significance of recomposition. Arrangement, transcription and recomposition all raise basic questions about compositional process within nineteenth-century pianism. Before Liszt recomposed his own music, he transcribed and 'paraphrased' that of others. In a series of remarkable, and often under-valued, transcriptions or arrangements of everything from Berlioz and Beethoven symphonies to Schubert songs and Donizetti operas, he steered a dangerous and exhilarating path between commentary and tribute. It may be that the line separating categories such as arrangement, transcription and recomposition needs to be looked at in rather broader terms than the legalistic definitions of an analytical aesthetics,[12] and that a more flexible view of roles and motivations would not find an abundance of clear water between them, to borrow a party-political metaphor. In any event, there are issues that arise equally from all of them. One concerns the intersection between age-old processes of compositional borrowing, including self-borrowing, and a Romantic ideology that privileged the singular and the inimitable. Bach was certainly an important exemplary model for the nineteenth century in this respect, not only licensing arrangement and recomposition for an age of individuality, but providing a model for how any apparent incompatibility might be overcome; as Lawrence Dreyfus has potently demonstrated, Bach wrested from his pre-existent materials statements that were not just unique, but were registered 'against the grain' of the model.[13] It is in any case reasonable to ask just where a line can be drawn between composition and recomposition, given that new creative thoughts usually amount to a restructuring of existing figures and systems. The question will be addressed in chapter 4 by way of a sideways glance at etudes by Chopin.

A further issue concerns the relationship between Idea and Form, and specifically if we can reasonably speak of an idea and its several forms. Here we might argue that, despite the difficulty in reconciling recomposition and the Romantic ideology, Liszt's cyclical returns to a common starting-point, by no means unique to the works studied here, belonged to a familiar enough Romantic trope, one in which cyclical return was a measure of difference rather than similarity.[14] That trope, as common in literature as in music, allowed that

[10] Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. B. Robinson (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1989).
[11] Lydia Goehr, 'The Perfect Performance of Music and the Perfect Musical Performance', *new formations*, 27 (Winter 1995–6), pp. 1–22.
[12] For an example of the analytical approach, see Stephen Davies, 'Transcription, Authenticity and Performance', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 28 (1988), pp. 216–27.
[13] Lawrence Dreyfus, *Bach and the Patterns of Invention* (Cambridge MA, 1996), especially chapter 2.
[14] See Rainer Nägele, *Echoes of Translation: Reading between Texts* (Baltimore and London, 1997), pp. 5–6.

an almost neo-Platonic authorial idea – privileged, inaccessible and embodying a central purpose and intention – might be multiply and imperfectly represented in the world of forms, including sounding forms. Compositional reworking invites an examination of the 'idea', of which (one may hazard) a performance, no less than a recomposition, might be a version. Despite Schoenberg's attempts at elucidation, the musical 'idea' remains a slippery formulation, and one that is often difficult to separate from the piece *in toto*. Nonetheless, I will try to make some sense of it in chapter 4, invoking Liszt's commentaries as well as Schoenberg's. However we understand the idea and its forms, it seems clear that mechanisms of translation are central to this topic. We are encouraged to reflect on what is said and meant (the idea) as against the mode of saying and meaning (the presentation). Indeed where music is concerned, we are invited specifically to consider just what can constitute idea and object within a temporal, performer-dependent and symbolic art. There is of course a qualitative distinction in this respect between the recompositions of 1837 and the revisions of 1851 which resulted in the *Transcendentals*. These revisions will be the subject of chapter 5, which will also examine formal and tonal processes in this, the final, version of the etudes.

Music and the poetic. In 1851, Liszt added poetic titles to ten of the etudes, and at around the same time he turned one of them into a symphonic poem. These decisions need to be considered in light of his understanding of the category 'poetic', which considerably expands the familiar early nineteenth-century usage. Not only does the poetic signal music's putative expressive powers; it places the status and dignity of music on the critical agenda. In chapter 6, which deals exclusively with the *Transcendentals*, Liszt's understanding of the poetic will be examined in tandem with the idea of absolute music. Their rival claims (synthesised in Wagner and also in Liszt) echoed a central debate within the philosophical aesthetics of the early nineteenth century, and it can be argued that the all-important polemic of the 1850s, in which Liszt was heavily implicated, partly recycled that debate, albeit now addressing a rather different agenda (essentially about historicism and the constitution of the new). In light of this, it is tempting to invoke ontological questions associated with programme music, especially as Liszt went on to compose a symphonic poem based on the fourth etude. It is easy to demonstrate, of course, that his choice of titles for the *Transcendentals* (invoking Hugo, the medieval-gothic romance, the cult of nature, the dream-world of the artist) was fairly arbitrary, and then to conclude that their essential significance lies in the material and formal rather than the poetic domain. Yet, however randomly chosen, the title remains part of the piece. At the very least, it influences our listening strategies. Beyond that, it effectively supports and crystallises any existing tendencies of the music to exemplify a topic, genre or affective meaning, and for that reason it encourages excursions into the semiotics of music. Again we cut across the boundaries of the works, opening up their meanings through shared expressive codes. Again we call into question the singular nature of authorship. And again we are obliged to ask how this kind of poetic agenda has fared within the Western tradition.

The musical work. As these topics are introduced successively, they bring into increasingly sharp focus not just questions of authorship, but also of work character. Here my concern is with the work-concept in nineteenth-century music, by which I (and others) mean the assumption that a musical culture is manifest first and foremost in, and is indeed regulated

by, self-contained musical works. This topic has been much debated,[15] and it will bear somewhat on the argument of chapter 7, which looks at multiple versions of *Mazeppa*. Since these versions take us from 1826 to 1874, they naturally raise again the issue of authorship, and in particular the extent to which an authorial voice can formulate and sustain its identity through contextually and temporally separated utterances. They also invite us to reflect on the tension – even the opposition – between a gradually strengthening sense of the work as an object of contemplation, independent of contexts, and a performance- and genre-orientated musical culture, to which the work-concept posed something of a threat. My five topics might be regarded in one sense as progressively mediating this opposition, which arguably boils down to a developing opposition between the musical performance and the musical work. At the same time it seems fairly clear that the strengthening of the work-concept was in part a political development, allied not only to the development of a middle-class culture but more specifically to German nationalism and its cultural triumph. The legacy of this remains with us today, and inevitably colours any attempt we make to evaluate Liszt's achievement. I will address his reputation in chapter 7, and I will ask specifically if in the face of so many contingencies there is any room left for an aesthetic judgement of his music. This is tantamount to asking if the aesthetic has standing in our modern world.

[15] For a rehearsal of the arguments surrounding the work-concept, see the chapters by Lydia Goehr and Reinhard Strohm in Michael Talbot (ed.), *The Musical Work: Reality or Invention?* (Liverpool, 2000).

Chapter One

Ecology by numbers

3 TIMES 12 ETUDES

In 1827, when Liszt was sixteen years old, a volume of twelve exercises, almost certainly composed in the early months of the previous year, was published by Boisselot in Marseilles. Its full title was *Etude pour le piano en quarante-huit exercices dans tous les tons majeurs et mineurs*, Op. 6, and it was therefore intended as the first of four volumes. The other three were not composed, though it has been suggested that a recently uncovered piece in F♯ major may have been destined for No. 13.[1] The work was issued simultaneously by Dufaut et Dubois in Paris, where Liszt and his father had been based since December 1823, shortly after his course of lessons with Czerny came to an end.[2] Liszt's (or Boisselot's) use of 'etude' as a collective term for a group of exercises has attracted attention in the Liszt commentaries. In fact it was a common enough practice in the early history of the genre, though already somewhat outmoded in 1827.[3] By 1839, when the work was reissued by Hofmeister in Leipzig, the usage had completely died out, and its demise is reflected in the double plural of the German publisher's confused and confusing title, *Etudes . . . en douze exercices*, Op. 1.[4] In the preface to his edition of the work, Busoni pointed out that this opus number indicated that the *Etude* was the first work of Liszt to have been published in Germany.[5] The title page of the Hofmeister edition has a rather curious vignette depicting a child in a cradle, together with the explanatory, and apologetic, note: 'Travail de la Jeunesse'. It was published without permission, a form of 'piracy' that was common enough in the nineteenth

[1] See the worklist compiled by Rena Charnin Mueller and Mária Eckhardt for the Liszt entry in Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell (eds.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd edn (London, 2001), vol. 14, pp. 785–872.

[2] Intriguingly, Charles Salaman remembered an amended version of the sixth exercise; see Adrian Williams, *Portrait of Liszt by Himself and his Contemporaries* (Oxford, 1990), p. 31.

[3] See Peter Felix Ganz, 'The Development of the Etude for Pianoforte', diss., Northwestern University (1960), p. 298. Ganz's dissertation is still an invaluable source of information on the early history of the genre.

[4] Lina Ramann gives the erroneous date 1835 for the reissue, and this date has been followed by several later commentators. *Franz Liszt als Künstler und Mensch*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1880), p. 87.

[5] Ferruccio Busoni, *The Essence of Music*, trans. Rosamund Ley (London, 1957), p. 157. For a discussion of the rival claims to the designation Op. 1, see Georg Schütz, 'Form, Satz- und Klaviertechnik in den drei Fassungen der *Grossen Etüden* von Franz Liszt', in Zsoltán Gárdonyi and Siegfried Mauser (eds.), *Virtuosität und Avantgarde: Untersuchungen zum Klavierwerk Franz Liszts* (Mainz, 1988), p. 71.

century,[6] and this contributed to a distinct cooling in the relationship between Liszt and the publisher. The Complete Editions give the work as *Etude en douze exercices*, and this is its usual title today.[7]

Liszt himself remarked that he composed these exercises in his thirteenth year (1824), and this was taken by Alan Walker as evidence that he may have begun working on them in that year.[8] We should be less trusting of the composer's memory, given that on another occasion he claimed to have composed them in Marseilles in 1827. It seems likely that the place of publication was more reliably remembered than the date, especially as the work was published in Marseilles. The most plausible date of composition, then, lies between the two dates given by Liszt, in early 1826, when he stayed in Marseilles for a short period, following a concert tour of southern France. This is the date assigned it by most Lisztians, from Peter Raabe onwards,[9] and it is supported, too, by the dedication on the French editions. This was to Lydie Garella, a young pianist who lived in Marseilles, with whom Liszt apparently played duets during his stay there. Much later, in August 1877, he told his biographer Lina Ramann that he had had an adolescent crush on the girl and that the dedication was intended as an act of homage to the object of this early, uncharacteristically innocent, love.[10]

The concerts in southern France were just part of an extensive programme of tours organised for Liszt by his father from early 1824 through to 1828, including several visits to England, as well as to Switzerland and other parts of the French provinces. For a variety of reasons – the death of his father, an unhappy love affair, and no doubt the inevitable ageing of the *petit prodige* – Liszt withdrew from the public platform from around the middle of 1828, supporting his mother, who had by then moved to Paris, largely through teaching. It seems he suffered a kind of depression at this time (oddly enough, just as Chopin was enduring a similar malaise out there in Warsaw), and it was by no means a fruitful period compositionally. It was shortly after this, in the immediate aftermath of the 1830 July Revolution, which inspired his own unfinished 'Revolutionary Symphony', forerunner of *Héroïde funèbre*, that he engaged with the teachings of the Saint-Simonians and Felicité de Lamennais, and began to develop notions of the social and moral obligations of art and the artist that remained with him in one form or another throughout his life. And it was also in the early 1830s that he heard Paganini and began to associate with some of the leading artists and writers domiciled in Paris, as well as with composers such as Berlioz and Chopin. These events 'roused Liszt from his lethargy and morbid brooding', as Frederick Niecks

[6] A detailed exposition of publishing practices in the nineteenth century, including the problems associated with variable copyright laws in Europe, can be found in Jeffrey Kallberg, 'Chopin in the Market-Place', *Notes*, 39, 3 and 4 (March–June 1983), pp. 535–69 and 795–824.

[7] By the complete editions, I mean *Franz Liszt: Musikalische Werke*, edited by Busoni, Raabe, Wolfrum and others, and *Franz Liszt: Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke*, where the etudes were edited by Zsoltán Gárdonyi and István Szélenyi.

[8] *Letters of Franz Liszt*, coll. and ed. La Mara, trans. Constance Bache, 2 vols. (London, 1894), vol. 1, p. 231; Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years 1811–1847* (London, 1983), p. 118.

[9] Peter Raabe, *Liszts Schaffen* (Tutzing, 1968; orig. edn, 1931), p. 242.

[10] Ramann, *Franz Liszt als Künstler und Mensch*, vol. 1, p. 93. See Mária Eckhardt, 'Liszt à Marseille', in *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientarum Hungaricae*, 24 (1982), pp. 163–97, for an account of the visit to Marseilles, casting doubt on Ramann's claims of a visit in 1825 and discussing reviews of the concerts in 1826.

put it.[11] In April 1832, his well-known response to Paganini contributed to a new burst of creativity, and a resumption (in 1833) of his career as a professional pianist. He also met Marie d'Agoult towards the end of 1832, and their relationship developed in intensity through to the early summer of 1835, at which point she left her husband. In June 1835 the lovers effectively eloped to Geneva, where they remained for well over a year.

Immediately before departing for Geneva, Liszt wrote to Ferdinand Hiller, outlining some of the major projects planned for the immediate future. It is clear from this letter that he was already thinking about a set of *Grandes Etudes* at that time, though there is no indication of their form or character.[12] On the other hand, in a letter to his mother, written in March 1836 from Geneva, he requested 'a copy of my published *Etudes* and, still better, . . . the *manuscript* of the *12 Etudes*,[13] and this suggests that the basic conception of the work – a recomposition of the early exercises – was already in his mind. It is by no means certain, however, that he put anything on paper then, though it is very likely that he played through the early exercises and conceived at least some of the recompositions *in intellectu*. In any event the real work was undertaken in the autumn months of 1837, while he and Marie d'Agoult were staying in northern Italy, after a year based at the Hôtel de France in Paris. The outcome was a set of twelve *Grandes Etudes* based loosely on the early exercises, and completed, according to Marie, in late October.[14] In the new etudes the clean, classical cut of the originals was replaced by a fierce, hugely challenging virtuosity, stretching even the most developed technique of the day (or any day) to its limits. All the same, the links with the early set are clearly perceptible, and the tonal scheme remains the same (pairings of tonal relatives: C major-A minor, F major-D minor, and so on, ending with B♭ minor). The one anomaly is that the original No. 7 was transposed from E♭ to D♭ and was reworked as No. 11, while a new etude in E♭ major replaced it as No. 7. Even the newly composed etude retained a link with the youthful Liszt, however, in that it reworked the introduction of his *Impromptu brillant sur des thèmes de Rossini et Spontini*, Op. 3 (one of the early pieces sent to Geneva by his mother).

There is an extant autograph Stichvorlage for the first of these new etudes, with the title *Préludes* [*sic*] given in Liszt's hand.[15] Interestingly this was also the title used by Marie d'Agoult in her letter of 23 October announcing the completion of the work. This autograph was destined for the Haslinger edition, though it differs from the published form in several minor respects. There is a further autograph of the newly composed No. 7, and the page numbering of this (fols. 55–66) suggests that it was at some point detached from the complete

[11] Frederick Niecks, *Programme Music in the Last Four Centuries: A Contribution to the History of Musical Expression* (London and New York, [1907]), p. 273.

[12] This letter, published as part of a collection of 'unknown' letters edited by Gerhard Tischler, is quoted by Alan Walker in *Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years*, p. 219.

[13] See Adrian Williams (ed.), *Franz Liszt: Selected Letters* (Oxford, 1998), p. 51.

[14] Many commentators, including Raabe, opt for 1838 as the date of completion. However, Marie's letter of October 1837 celebrates the fact that 'Franz has just finished his twelve preludes [*sic*]'. Moreover in January 1838, Liszt himself wrote to Adolphe Pictet from Milan: 'With the *12 Etudes* – monsters – and a small volume entitled *Impressions et Poésies* which I have just finished, I am not displeased'. See Williams (ed.), *Selected Letters*, p. 80.

[15] This is held by the National Széchényi Library, Budapest (Ms. Mus. 24). For a description, see Mária Eckhardt, *Liszt's Music Manuscripts in the National Széchényi Library* (Budapest, 1968), pp. 96–9.