



Bisel Classics

Joachim
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**UNGARISCHE
RHAPSODIE**

op. 113



**PIANO
SOLO**

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Preface

The genesis of the rhapsody has its roots early in the 19C and it flourished in works for solo piano where it represented one aspect of an intensification of interest in exploring all the realms of Romantic poetic sentiment. In a parallel literary movement, odes, *idylls*, *romances* and *eclogues* moved alongside their musical counterparts and the return to Greek classical values was reflected in a cultural synthesis in which these epic forces were seen as fundamental to the fabric of nature and existence. The rhapsody sought to exploit this sense of epic feeling with impassioned and capricious explorations of musical structure and form. The frequent cadential breaks are a characteristic device within the style. The ternary form rhapsody emerged as one type with a contrasting middle section but by the second half of the 19C the improvisational character of the form resisted categorisation in any formal theoretical model. It proved to be an enduringly popular salon item however, and not long after Raff composed this piece for piano the generic type of the rhapsody was to be supplanted and projected on the much broader canvas of the orchestral form.

Raff composed the piece in Wiesbaden 1863 and it evokes the spirit of Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies published from 1839 onwards. In particular, the extended arpeggios of mm.36, 38 and 42 in Raff, bear an uncanny resemblance to the *glissando* effect Liszt would use in his Hungarian Rhapsody No.10 and several other works. An effect so fleeting that Liszt advised one pupil to ensure she limit her touch of the keys to her nails only, thus avoiding the least

traction on the keys which might serve to dull the execution of the arpeggio. Raff had worked for Liszt as a musical assistant and secretary from 1849 and the influence of Liszt was both immense and troubling and he left Liszt's employ in 1856 determined to rediscover his own musical personality. The gap of seven years and with his new life in Wiesbaden offering a more comfortable existence, it seems Raff was ready to pay his respects to his former master in this presentwork.

The identity of August von Egloffstein is something of a mystery but the attribution to Württemberg is less enigmatic however, because even though Raff had been born in Lachen, Switzerland, Raff's father had fled the Black Forest to avoid conscription bringing the family over to Germany and settling in Württemberg, taking up nationality there. In an age before the creation of the German Empire in 1871, Raff would have considered himself a Württembergian. Even afterwards, he was as proud of this heritage as of his Swiss homeland and he carried the Württemberg passport throughout his life. It seems that in honouring a son of Württemberg, he was honouring his adopted homeland too.

Stephen Begley, April 2010.

Vorwort

Der Ursprung der Rhapsodie hat seine Wurzeln im frühen 19. Jahrhundert. Sie erlebte in Stücken für das Soloklavier ihre Blütezeit, wo sie einen Aspekt im Erstarren des Interesses an der Erforschung des romantischen poetischen Gefühls verkörperte. In einer parallelen literarischen Bewegung liefen *Oden*, *Idyllen*, *Romanzen* und *Eklogen* neben ihren musikalischen Entsprechungen einher; die Rückkehr zu klassischen griechischen Werten wurde mittels einer kulturellen Synthese reflektiert, in der diese epischen Kräfte als grundlegend im Gewebe von Natur und Existenz verstanden wurden. Die Rhapsodie versuchte, diese Wahrnehmung des epischen Gefühls mit leidenschaftlichen und unberechenbaren Erforschungen der musikalischen Struktur und Form auszuschöpfen. Die häufigen Kadenz-Einschübe sind ein charakteristisches Mittel innerhalb dieses Stils. Die Rhapsodie mit dreiteiligem Formschema trat als ein Typus mit kontrastierendem mittlerem Abschnitt hervor, hingegen widerstand der improvisierte formale Charakter bis zur zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts jeglicher Kategorisierung in ein formales theoretisches Modell. Sie bewährte sich jedoch als ein anhaltend populäres Salonstück, und nicht lange nachdem Raff dieses Stück für Klavier komponiert hatte, wurde der Gattungstyp der Rhapsodie auf die wesentlich breitere Leinwand der Orchesterform versetzt und abgebildet.

Raff komponierte das Stück 1863 in Wiesbaden; es beschwört den Geist von Liszts Ungarischen Rhapsodien, die ab 1839 herausgegeben wurden. Vor allem besitzen die ausgedehnten Arpeggios der Takte 36, 38 und 42 bei Raff