Songs for piano alone: a look at Franz Liszt's Buch der Lieder für Piano allein Books I and II

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Abstract:
Music circles have often questioned the artistic integrity of piano transcriptions: should they should be on the same par as "original works" or are they merely imitations of somebody else's work? Franz Liszt produced hundreds of piano transcriptions of works by other composers making him one of the leading piano transcriptionists of all time. While transcriptions are the results of rethinking and remolding pre-existing materials, how should we view the "transcriptions" of the composer's own original work? Liszt has certainly taken much of his original non-piano works and transcribed them for solo piano. But would these really be transcriptions, or different versions? This thesis explores the question of how transcriptions of Liszt's own works should be treated, particularly the solo piano pieces in the two books of Buch der Lieder für Piano allein. While some pieces are clearly transcriptions of previous art songs, some pieces should really be characterized as independent piano pieces first before art songs.

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Liszts, Franz. Wartburg-Lieder aus dem lyrischen Festspiel: Der Brunt Willkomm auf Wurtburg. [nach diesem Titel suchen]. C.F.K. Kahnt, Leipzig, 1873. Books signed and inscribed by Franz Liszt are uncommon. Franz Liszt wrote hundreds of piano transcriptions of works by other composers making him one of the leading piano transcriptionists of all time. While transcriptions are the results of rethinking and remolding pre-existing materials, how should we view the “transcriptions” of the composer’s own original work? Liszt has certainly taken much of his original non-piano works and transcribed them for solo piano. But would these really be transcriptions, or different versions? This thesis explores the question of how transcriptions of Liszt’s own works should be treated, particularly the solo piano pieces in the two books of Buch der Lieder für Piano allein. While some pieces are clearly transcriptions of previous art songs, some pieces should really be characterized as independent piano pieces first before art songs.
or are they merely imitations of somebody else’s work? Franz Liszt produced hundreds of piano transcriptions of works by other composers, making him one of the leading piano transcriptionists of all time. While transcriptions are the results of rethinking and remolding pre-existing materials, how should we view the transcriptions of the composer’s own original works? Franz Liszt, eagerly supported by his father, was from his early childhood on celebrated as a prodigy on the piano. When in 1823 the family moved to Vienna, the promotion of his musical education was the main purpose. Study trips to Paris as well as concert tours through France, Switzerland, and England followed. No matter how dexterous and skillful are piano performers nowadays, most of them are unanimous about the unsurpassed piano techniques of Franz Liszt. Testimonials of contemporaries speak for themselves: very few concerts could cause greater excitement and furor than those of the Hungarian virtuoso.