**Program for Richard Fountain**

**Wayland Baptist University**

**March 7, 2019**

**“Liszt van Beethoven: The Nine Symphonies”**

**Season Two, Episode Two**

**“Andante favori,” WoO 57…………………….Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)**

**Sonata in F major, Op. 10, no. 2……………………………………..L. van Beethoven**

1. Allegro
2. Allegretto
3. Presto

**Symphony No. 8 in F major, Op. 93………....................Ludwig van Beethoven**

**Transcribed for piano solo by Franz Liszt (1811-1886)**

I. Allegro vivace e con brio

II. Allegretto scherzando

III. Tempo di Menuetto

IV. Allegro vivace

*This program is presented in partnership with the West Texas Chapter of the American Liszt Society.*

***Program Notes***

Beethoven’s symphonies have been cornerstones of classical music for many, many decades, and today performances and recordings have become so ubiquitous that musicians frequently take them for granted. However, in the years after Beethoven’s death these works still needed conductors to champion them and guide orchestras through the composer’s expanded vocabulary of technical and musical challenges. Liszt’s role as such a champion, both as conductor and as transcriber, is a surprising corner of musical history. As the original touring virtuoso in the 1830’s, Liszt performed versions of the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh symphonies as part of his immense repertoire, presenting these masterworks to audiences from the British Isles to Iberia and Russia. Many of these audiences otherwise would not have had the opportunity to hear a Beethoven symphony performed, since the only orchestras of recognizable quality were in the great musical centers of the time such as Berlin, Vienna, Paris, and Leipzig.

After Liszt retired from the concert stage, he settled in the relatively small rural town of Weimar to direct the court orchestra. In addition to premiering and championing many of the great operas of the early 19th century, Liszt repeatedly and persistently programmed Beethoven’s symphonies, becoming known as a definitive interpreter. During a two-year retreat between 1863 and 1865 in a monastery just outside Rome, Liszt completed transcribing the full cycle of Beethoven symphonies - remarkably, on a very average upright piano with a missing “D!” His goals were manifold: to broaden the audience and appreciation for Beethoven’s music, certainly, but also to showcase the full range of capabilities of the new iron-frame concert pianos and to prove that the complex texture of an orchestral work could be faithfully reproduced by two hands on a piano. These transcriptions are remarkable in that one could very nearly conduct from the score - Liszt provides “cues” for each instrument or family of instruments as they enter, and almost every note from the orchestral original is present in the piano score. Liszt refused to engage in virtuosic showmanship or editorial revisionism, instead retaining slurs, articulations, dynamics, and other markings in an unusually scholarly manner for editors of his day.

In pairing a solo sonata in the same key as each symphony, I hope to illuminate several things. First, composers from the Baroque through the Classical era, and even some Romantic composers (including Liszt), often associated particular moods or “affects” with particular keys. Second, it is remarkable how Liszt’s symphonic transcriptions actually “sound” like Beethoven in their textures and voicing. At times one almost feels like this music could have been written for the piano - particularly when the transcriptions are heard in combination with the sonatas.

**Beethoven – “Andante favori,” WoO 57 (8’ 30”)**

The “Andante favori” is actually a discarded slow movement to one of Beethoven’s more famous piano sonatas – the “Waldstein,” op. 53. After completing the sonata, Beethoven discovered that the three movements as written created quite a large work, well over half an hour in duration. At the time, this would have been rather longer than many entire symphonies, not to mention instrumental sonatas. Worried that audiences would not put up with a solo work of such length, Beethoven cut the Andante favori and replaced it with a much shorter “Introduzione” in the same key. Since then, even with its unusual combination of simplicity and profundity, this piece has occupied a strange corner of the repertoire, too long to function as an encore a la “Für Elise,” but too short to program on its own. In tonight’s program the Andante favori serves as an appetizer to the Op. 10, no. 2 sonata, which preceded the Andante by six or seven years.

**Beethoven - Sonata in F major, Op. 10, no. 2 (16’)**

Beethoven’s early works have an odd tendency to come in sets of three – the Piano Trios, op. 1, the op. 2 piano sonatas, the String Trios, op. 9, these op. 10 piano sonatas, and the op. 12 violin sonatas. During the course of the present cycle all of the op. 10 sonatas will be performed, with op. 10, no.1 keeping the Fifth Symphony company and op. 10, no. 3 pairing with the Second Symphony.

Even though we often assume that “early” Beethoven is just an extension of Haydn and the late Classical style, closer examination reveals several departures from this tradition. For example, while the op. 10, no. 2 sonata includes the customary three movements, Beethoven dispenses with a slow movement and instead writes a moody “Allegretto” in the parallel key of F minor. This middle movement presents a striking contrast to the F major of the outer movements, with their vibrant, sparkling energy. Another unusual feature of the sonata is the form of the finale, which consists of two very unequal “halves,” 32 measures and 118 measures, both of which are repeated. This formal oddity reoccurs in Beethoven’s other F-major sonata, op. 54, and reminds one much more of Domenico Scarlatti than Haydn (although Scarlatti’s binary sonatas have far more balanced halves).

**Liszt-Beethoven Symphony No. 8 in F major, Op. 93 (29’)**

Beethoven’s Eighth has the dubious honor, along with the Fourth, of being the least-performed of his symphonies. It is also, along with the First, the shortest, finishing more than fifteen minutes earlier than the Seventh. Although the Seventh and Eighth Symphonies, like the Fifth and Sixth, were written contemporaneously, they invite the listener into completely different worlds. It has become something of a truism that the odd-numbered Beethoven symphonies are outward, extroverted, all-encompassing works, while the even-numbered symphonies are quieter, “leaner,” more introverted.

The Eighth Symphony begins in a burst of light and energy. From the outset Beethoven invites the listener to the dance, moving along in quick ¾ time as if in a whirling waltz. Throughout the first movement, and really through the entire work, darker sounds seem to function only as brief irrelevancies in an atmosphere of relentless joy and optimism. As in the Seventh Symphony, Beethoven decides against a slow movement, writing an “Allegretto scherzando” full of extremely light, short notes. A fairly conventional Menuetto precedes the sparkling finale, whose virtuosic display of leaps, tremolos, and dynamic contrasts unfolds in continual forward motion. This movement also includes one of Liszt’s most ingenious solutions to reproducing orchestral textures at the piano, transforming rapid repeated notes in the strings (unplayable on piano) into oscillating figures that allow the pianist to recreate both the voicing and energy of the original writing.