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C O N C E R T O R G A N I S T | O R G A N T U T O R

Programme notes: Franz Liszt *Ad nos...*

Liszt's *Ad nos...* is an undisputed cornerstone of the nineteenth-century organ repertoire. After hearing Meyerbeer's opera *Le Prophète in Dresden* in 1850, Liszt used one short theme (the chorale of the Anabaptists) as the basis of his organ fantasia.

The work is a fascinating and remarkable example of cyclical form (music based on just one idea, presented in a myriad of different ways) and falls into three distinct sections.

The first is an extended fantasy, effectively dividing the theme in two (the triumphant trumpet-like writing in the middle of this section marking the second half of Meyerbeer's chorale). The tension of this writing is dissipated by the complete statement of the chorale at the outset of the *Adagio*.

There follows a gentle set of variations in the remote key of F sharp major (which had mystical associations for the composer) before a violent cadenza-like bridge veers the music into a fugue

The mix of virtuosic, extrovert textures (such as the gypsy rhythms in the first subject) and academic rigour (it is a double fugue) shows something of the complexity of Liszt's musical personality, and the power of the final C major apotheosis, after such a long and often tensely argued journey, is overwhelming.

Meyerbeer was the work's dedicatee and was extremely impressed with the result. The premiere was not given until 1855, by the young organist Alexander Winterberger at the inauguration of the new Ladegast organ in Merseburg Dom. The work presents many interpretive issues for the performer. What was the intended range of tempi (there are no metronome markings)? How rhapsodic was the original registration scheme (German organists were conservative in this regard, although we gather that Liszt disliked Winterberger's unrelenting plenum in the B.A.C.H Fantasia)? How religiously did Liszt intend his pedal part designations?

Despite these issues and the considerable technical demands made of the performer, the work has enjoyed an unbroken performance history of nearly one hundred and fifty years.

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