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Franz Liszt's Transcription of Johann Sebastian Bach's Prelude and Fugue in a Minor (BWV 543).

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FRANZ LISZT'S TRANSCRIPTION OF JOHANN SEBASTIAN
BACH'S PRELUDE AND FUGUE IN A MINOR (BWV 543)

A Written Document

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in

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by

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ABSTRACT

Franz Liszt’s piano transcription of Johann Sebastian Bach’s Prelude and Fugue in A Minor for organ (BWV 543) is the primary focus of this study. Liszt was a great admirer of Bach’s works; therefore, his transcription is very true to the original, changes being made only to make the organ work more playable on the piano. Chapter One sketches the important roles of both composers in keyboard literature. Chapter Two includes information on Bach as an organist and transcriber during the Weimar (1708-1717) and Leipzig (1723-1750) periods. Chapter Three focuses on Liszt as an organist and his personal ideas for registration in Bach’s organ works. Chapter Four involves Liszt’s interests in transcribing and performing for the piano; Bach’s influence on Liszt; and the several Bach-Liszt transcriptions that have influenced other musicians of later generations. Chapter Five is a note-by-note comparison of the similarities and differences between Liszt’s piano transcription of the Prelude and Fugue in A Minor and its original. The changes that Liszt made are divided into five categories: different notes, different note values and
rests, octave doubling, displacement of pitches, and ties.

Chapter Six is a summary that briefly discusses Liszt’s reasons for altering Bach’s original work, thereby providing evidence that his transcription is inventive, skillful, and idiomatic.
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) and Franz Liszt (1811-1886) are among the most important composers in the history of keyboard literature. Both were prolific composers as well as great virtuosos on different keyboard instruments, and they were very important representatives of the Baroque and Romantic periods respectively. In addition, both showed a predilection for writing skillful transcriptions for keyboard instruments. This paper and its accompanying lecture recital focuses on the differences and similarities between Bach’s Prelude and Fugue in A Minor (BWV 543) and Liszt’s piano transcription of the same work.
CHAPTER II. BACH’S A MINOR ORGAN PRELUDE AND FUGUE

J. S. Bach moved from city to city to pursue music positions throughout his life. Posts were held at Arnstadt, Mülhausen, Weimar, Côthen, and Leipzig. Perhaps the most important were those at the Court of Weimar (1708-1717), where he was organist; at the Ducal Court of Anhalt-Côthen (1717-1723), where he was Kappelmeister; and finally in Leipzig (1723-1750), where he was cantor at St. Thomas Church. Bach’s Prelude and Fugue in A Minor has two versions: the early version BWV 543a and the revised version BWV 543. George Stauffer suggests that BWV 543a was perhaps written between 1706 and 1708;¹ and BWV 543, the later version of BWV 543a, perhaps was modified after about 1730.² According to C. R. Arnold, Bach’s organ Prelude in A Minor, BWV 543, was probably written in 1709 during the Weimar

²Ibid., 120.
period (date given by Schmieder), and the Fugue was a later work, composed at some time in the Leipzig period. ³

Bach was the court organist of Duke Wilhelm Ernst of Weimar for ten years and wrote most of his organ works during this period. He composed chorale settings including the Orgelbüchlein (Little Organ Book), organ preludes and fugues BWV 532, 533, 536, Toccata, Adagio, and Fugue in C Major (BWV 564), and Toccata in D Minor (BWV 565). In Leipzig, during the last period of his life, he was active in conducting, teaching, and composing music until his death. In addition to cantatas, passions, six trio sonatas, chorales, Clavierübung (Keyboard Practice) part III (BWV 669-689), and Canonic Variations on Vom Himmel hoch ("From Heaven Above to Earth I Come") (BWV 769), Bach also wrote works for the organ: Preludes and Fugues in G Major (BWV 541), B Minor (BWV 544), C Major (BWV 547), E Minor (BWV 548), and the Toccata and Fugue in D Minor (BWV 538).

Bach wrote many transcriptions that were based on his own works as well as works by other composers. He

transcribed four concertos by Vivaldi for the organ during the Weimar period. They are: BWV 593 in A Major, BWV 594 in C Major, BWV 596 in D Minor, BWV 597 in E flat Major; he also transcribed two of Prince Johann Ernst’s concertos — G Major and C Major (BWV 592 and BWV 595).

George Stauffer mentions in his book, *The Organ Preludes of J. S. Bach*, that one manuscript source for the Prelude and Fugue in A minor, BWV 543 indicates the heading “Praeludium con Pedale. pro Organo pleno.” This term, “Organum plenum,” was commonly used by Bach to mean “full organ.”

Bach marked “à due Clavier e Pedale” (or “à due

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'Stauffer, 218. The North German *plenum* during the period of the late seventeenth century was interpreted as a registration composed of a full Principal chorus made up of principal stops at sixteen-foot, eight-foot, four-foot, and two-foot pitches. To these principal stops were added mixtures. According to T. Harmon, the *plenum* registration around the time of Bach in central Germany are listed below: “In the Manuals: the principal chorus and mixtures are to be drawn plus any other stops which add either gravity or brightness to the total ensemble; the reed stops are generally excluded from the manual plenum; the plenum is concentrated in the sound produced on one manual (the Hauptwerk in most cases) and the other manuals are used mainly to add strength or brightness to this one manual through coupling. In the pedal: the same general rule as in the first above applies to the pedal as well; thirty-foot stops may be drawn if the music does not move too quickly; reeds stops may be employed; the manual divisions should not be coupled to the pedal.” During the early eighteenth
Manuale è Pedale") to indicate a two-manual piece. Actually, he did not specify manual changes in his organ works except for the Toccata in D Minor, BWV 538/1, and the Prelude in E flat Major, BWV 552/1. There is no indication of manual changes for the Prelude and Fugue in A Minor, BWV 543.

In the past there were various ideas about elaborate registration and manual changes in Bach; in fact, changing manuals in Bach’s organ works continues to be a vital issue to organists in this final decade of the twentieth century. Current research suggests that the plenum sound required by Bach is centralized only on one manual (without manual or registration changes for most of his organ preludes and fugues), even though the prelude and especially the fugue of BWV 543 have been traditionally performed on more than one

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century the principals are to be doubled with flutes of the same pitch. The Oberwerk is coupled to the Hauptwerk, and the Hauptwerk is coupled to the Pedal. Therefore, the plenum began to sound heavier and thicker than it sounded previously. Thomas Fredric Harmon, The Registration of J.S. Bach’s Organ Works (Buren: Uitgeverij Frits Knuf B. V, 1981), 231.

Stauffer, 163.

Stauffer, 161.
manual. Since registration problems involved in changing manuals are unavoidable, I have chosen to play both the Prelude and Fugue of BWV 543 on one manual, but with different plena.

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'Stauffer, 170.'
CHAPTER III. LISZT THE ORGANIST

In 1848, the Grand Duchess Maria Pawlovna at Weimar appointed Liszt as Hofkapellmeister, the "director extraordinaire" of the court musical program. Known not only as a piano virtuoso but also as a fine organist who knew the art of improvisation on the organ, Liszt amazed George Sand with his skillful improvisations in 1836. After hearing his improvisation on the "Dies irae" from Mozart's Requiem, she commented about his performance as follows: "Never did the outline of his . . . profile seem purer and paler than in this dark air of mystical fear and religious grief."

Liszt was deeply moved by and attracted to organ music after he listened to the playing of Christoph Ernst Friedrich Weyse (1774-1842). He declared in his letter written in August 1841,

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the organist, Weyse, knew how to recapture the learned inspirations and enduring solemnity of Johann Sebastian! I was nearly moved to tears several times as I listened. The double fugue in five-quarter time [five voices?] that he improvised and that lasted, without exaggeration, nearly half an hour filled me with admiration. Never before had the organ revealed the fullness of its grandeur and magnificence to me like this.  

Liszt did not often give organ performances. One of the few organ recitals he gave was held at the Protestant Church of SS Peter and Paul in Moscow on 4 May 1843. The recital was a success because it raised over 13,000 rubles, which he donated to the Orphans Fund. Indeed, it seemed quite natural for Liszt to replace the piano with the organ. When he made a concert tour to Fünfkirchen in 1846, he played a version of his piano transcription of Donizetti's *Marche funèbre de Dom Sébastien* (1844) on his organ recital program.

Although he rarely performed in public as a concert organist, he fully realized the potential of the organ, and he composed for the instrument. In 1850, Liszt wrote his

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first work for the organ; in fact, all of Liszt's original works and transcriptions for organ were composed after 1850. Among his major organ works are: Fantasie und Fugue über den Choral 'Ad nos. ad salutarem undam (1850); Präludium und Fugue über den Namen BACH (the first version, 1855; the second version, 1870); Pio IX ('Der papsthymnus') (1863?); Missa pro organo lectarum celebrationi missarum adjumento inserviens (1879); and Requiem für die orgel(1883). The Präludium und Fugue über den Namen BACH and the Variations on Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen (1863) were both inspired by J. S. Bach. Bach's influences on Liszt are apparent; early in 1860 Liszt wrote organ transcriptions of Bach's Einleitung und Fugue aus der Kantate "Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis" (BWV 21) and Andante "Aus tiefer Not" aus der Kantate (BWV 38). In 1864 he also completed another transcription for the organ — Adagio aus der Sonata IV für Violine und Cembalo (BWV 1017).

Regarding organ registration of Bach's works around 1850, the German organ school was characterized by a

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2) Arnold, 173.
colorful orchestral treatment of the instrument. Although the organists in Leipzig taught that Bach’s organ works should be played on the full organ without changing manuals, Liszt went in his own direction. Alexander Wilhem Gottschalg (1827-1908), a copyist and editor of Liszt, recalled:

... old Father Sebastian, unrivaled in his field, no longer [was] to be played as boringly as before. When I once ran through Bach’s Dorian Toccata and the brilliant Passacaglia with full organ to my master, Dr. Franz Liszt, he said, ‘Do you really believe that Bach played both compositions consistently on the full organ? Never, and never again! Besides, he was too sensitive an artist.’ ... Liszt taught that it was artistically correct to use even, for example — and not just as a comic trick — the taboo glockenspiel (which had almost completely dropped out of use on modern organs) in the Dorian toccata and in his Fantasy on Le Prophète.  

Liszt encouraged colorful registration. When Gottschalg played Bach’s Toccata and Fugue in D Minor on full organ and all on one manual, Liszt was quick to comment:

Surely Bach, whose registrations were so admired by his contemporaries, did not play his works like that! When playing on a three-manual instrument, why should the other two manuals be ignored?

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15 Haselböck, 57.

Liszt received his first piano lessons from his father, Adam Liszt. At age eleven, he studied with Carl Czerny (1791-1857) for eighteen months in Vienna. Czerny commented about his student: "It was evident at once that nature had intended him as a pianist." In addition to Czerny, Niccolò Paganini (1782-1840) exerted a great influence on Liszt. He attended Paganini's violin concerts in Paris in 1831 and 1832. On 2 May 1832, Liszt wrote the following to Pierre Wolff (a friend in Geneva):

For two weeks my mind and my fingers have been working like two damned souls; Homer, the Bible, Plato, Locke, Byron, Hugo, Lamartine, Chateaubriand, Beethoven, Bach, Hummel, Mozart, Weber are all around me . . . . I practice exercises four to five hours a day (thirds, sixths, octaves, tremolos, repeated notes, cadenzas, etc . . . ). "And I too am a painter!" cried Michelangelo the first time he saw a masterpiece. . . . Although insignificant and poor, your friend has been repeating unceasingly these words of the great man since the last performance of Paganini . . . . what a man, what a violin, what an artist! Good heavens! How much suffering, misery, and torture in those four strings!  

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Liszt was obviously motivated by Paganini's stunning violin technique, and as a result, he developed a new concept of piano virtuosity. In 1838, he wrote six Études d'exécution transcendante d'après Paganini; five of these pieces are transcriptions from the Twenty-four Caprices for violin by Paganini. In 1851, Liszt simplified the first version and gave it the title Grandes Études de Paganini. Like Paganini, he became a touring virtuoso, traveling and performing his original piano works and transcriptions between 1832 and 1849.19

Robert Schumann's accounts of Liszt's three piano concerts at Leipzig in March, 1840, show that transcriptions were frequently performed in his concerts. The transcriptions included: the scherzo and finale of Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony; a fantasy on themes by

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19 These concerts were often called recitals. According to Percy M. Young, Liszt was the first to popularize the term when his appearance in London on 9 June 1840 was advertised as follows: "M. Liszt will give Recitals on the Pianoforte of the following pieces . . . ." Percy M. Young, "Recital," in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, ed. Stanley Sadie, (1980). 

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Giovanni Pacini; Schubert's art songs Ave Maria, Serenade, and the Erlking.  

The piano transcription was used as a popular form by pianists to entertain audiences, especially before recording processes were developed — the latest symphony or opera was heard only in live performance; therefore, piano transcriptions helped to promote the pianist and the music alike. Liszt's audiences were delighted to hear his piano transcriptions. For example, in Paris Liszt was supposed to play the Beethoven "Kreutzer" Sonata with a violinist in a concert, but someone called out from the audience asking for a Meyerbeer-Liszt piano transcription (based on theme from Meyerbeer's opera Robert le Diable). As a result, the piano transcription was played first and Beethoven's sonata came second.  

During Liszt's early years, the grand piano had undergone several improvements (the one-piece cast-iron  

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frame, cross-stringing, etc.) that made it very similar to the instrument of today.\textsuperscript{22} Because these changes pre-date the transcription to be examined, I do not believe a discussion of those developments is necessary for this study. However, information about a new "invention" — the sostenuto pedal — is pertinent here because the sostenuto can be effectively used in Liszt’s transcriptions.

The sostenuto pedal was first exhibited between 1 May and 30 June 1844 at the Paris Exposition by the French piano factory Boisselot and Sons of Marseilles. Almost one month later (between 25 July and 6 August), Liszt visited Paris and then traveled with Louis Boisselot to Spain and Portugal. There is no evidence that Liszt tried the piano with the sostenuto pedal at the Paris Exposition, but according to Geraldine Keeling, "his [Liszt’s] extensive contact with the firm in the months that followed would certainly have led to discussion of the new invention."\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{22}Geraldine Keeling, "Musical life: the Liszt pianos – some aspects of preference and technology," The New Hungarian Quarterly 27 (Winter, 1986): 221-223. It is known that Liszt played pianos such as the Erard, the Boisselot, the Bösendorfer, the Chickering, the Bechstein, and the Steinway.

\textsuperscript{23}Ibid., 228
It is surprising to discover that Liszt wrote more transcriptions and arrangements than original works for piano. According to Robert Dumm:

[Of Liszt's] nearly six-hundred pieces for pianoforte, only a little more than one-third, i.e., two-hundred-eighteen pieces, are original works. This leaves three-hundred seventy-six transcriptions or arrangements. Among these are seventy large-scale operatic fantasias and one-hundred-thirty transcriptions of songs.\(^2\)

Dumm adds that these transcriptions, combined with Liszt's continual revision of his own works, make it difficult to determine the exact number of separate original compositions.

During Liszt's lifetime he transcribed his own compositions as well as works written by Bach, Beethoven, Berlioz, L. Bertin, Bulhakov, Bülow, Chopin, Cui, Conradi, Dargomizhsky, D. Ferdinand, Dessauer, Draeseke, Franz, Gounod, Hummel, Lassen, Mendelssohn, Meyerbeer, Mozart, Rossini, Rubinstein, Saint-Saëns, Schubert, Schumann, and Weber. Among these piano transcriptions are Berlioz's Symphonie Fantastique, Beethoven's nine symphonies,

fifty-six Schubert songs, arias from forty-one different operas, and six of Bach’s organ preludes and fugues.  

Liszt’s admiration of Bach’s music is mentioned in a letter written in 1863. He confessed:

However notwithstanding all my admiration for Händel, my preference for Bach still holds good, and when I have edified myself sufficiently with Händel’s common chords, I long for the precious dissonances of the Passion, the B minor Mass, and other of Bach’s polyphonic wares.

On 19 December 1847, Liszt wrote a letter to his music publisher Carl Haslinger in Vienna expressing interest in Bach’s works, saying “Send me also the Schumann Opus (Kreisleriana, etc.) published by yourself and Mechetti, together with Bach’s six Pedal Fugues, in which I wish to steep myself more fully.” The results of his interest in Bach were piano transcriptions of six of the German master’s organ preludes and fugues: BWV 543 in A Minor, BWV 545 in C

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Major, BWV 546 in C Minor, BWV 547 in C Major, BWV 548 in E Minor, and BWV 544 in B Minor. These were written between 1842 and 1850, and were published in 1852. In Charles Rosen’s opinion, the transcription of Bach’s Prelude and Fugue in A Minor (the work central to this study) was the first and perhaps most famous of these transcriptions.

In 1844, a person named Jules Laurens had a chance to ask Liszt to play the A minor transcription. According to Charles Rosen, Laurens was a Bach purist, so he wanted to hear what Liszt had done with the master’s original work.

According to Rosen, Laurens recounted the following:

[Liszt asked] “How do you want me to play it?”
“How? But... the way it ought to be played.”
“Here it is, to start with, as the author must have understood it, played it himself, or intended it to be played.” And Liszt played. And it was admirable, the perfection itself of the classical style exactly in conformity with the original.
“Here it is a second time, as I feel it, with a slightly more picturesque movement, a more modern style and the effects demanded by an improved

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\(^{28}\) Haselböck, 57. Liszt also transcribed the Fantasy and Fugue in G Minor, BWV 542; the Präludium und Fugue über den Namen BACH; and wrote a piano version of the Variations on Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen. The themes of the Variations were based on the basso ostinato of Bach’s cantata number twelve for the third Sunday after Easter and the basso ostinato of Crucifixus from Bach’s Mass in B Minor.

instrument." And it was, with these nuances, different... but no less admirable.

"Finally, a third time, here it is the way I would play it for the public — to astonish, as a charlatan." And, lighting a cigar which passed at moments from between his lips to his fingers, executing with his ten fingers the part written for the organ pedals... he was prodigious, incredible, fabulous, and received gratefully with enthusiasm.10

For Liszt, the piano transcription of Bach's Prelude and Fugue in A Minor obviously involved varied possibilities of playing, and, as mentioned above, it was a very popular work. Alan Walker has described how Liszt made use of the Fugue theme as a game with his students:

The banquet concluded with a performance of Bach's Prelude and Fugue in A minor (known to every one of Liszt's students through his piano transcription), with each participant taking one note of the angular subject in turn as it moved around the table, the point of the game being to see how far the melody could be taken before everything collapsed. Liszt enjoyed the game and even joined in.31

On 20 May 1877, Liszt revealed his bitter-sweet thought on this transcription in one of his letters to Madame Olga von Meyendorff:

I played several piano pieces for them [Prince and Princess Albrecht] — starting with the Fugue and Prelude in A minor for organ, long ago transcribed for piano, by your very humble servant: [at this point in

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the letter, Liszt copied the Fugue theme, yet the bar lines were misplaced.] Mme Schumann having in the past been so kind as to play this transcription in public, it has been accepted as tolerable, even in the conservatories of the pure conservatories (Hochschulen) where my name is excluded, and is considered an insult to sound doctrine.32

Liszt was one of the leading founders of the Bach Gesellschaft at a time when Bach’s works were not commonly known.32 He was also an influential figure on the following generation of composers who transcribed Bach’s compositions; therefore, his transcriptions may be regarded to a great extent as pioneering efforts. The six preludes and fugues are the forerunners of the many transcriptions of Bach’s organ works for the piano made by a number of later composers such as Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924).33 Among other musicians who transcribed Bach’s organ works for the piano were Liszt’s students Carl Tausig (1841-1871) and Eugen d’Albert (1830-1894).34


CHAPTER V. A COMPARISON OF THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE ORGAN AND PIANO VERSIONS

Liszt's transcriptions of the six preludes and fugues remain faithful to the spirit of their originals, and they are written in a simple and straightforward manner. In Haselböck's opinion:

As a vehicle of Romantic piano technique, his arrangement [meaning Liszt's style of transcribing Bach's preludes and fugues for organ] shows an affectionate understanding of a past world of sonority, in its fidelity to the original notes.\[36\]

There are no tempo, dynamic, or articulation markings found in the original or in the transcription. It is clear, then, that Liszt successfully transferred Bach's work from the organ to the piano with very few major changes. For the purpose of this study, I have divided these changes into the following categories: different notes, different note values and rests, octave doubling, displacement of pitches, and ties — examples of each are discussed and illustrated in the following pages. For complete examples from all the above categories see Appendix, page 44.

\[36\] Haselböck, 57.
A. Different Notes

In measure 25 of Bach's Prelude a half-note $b$ was written on the downbeat; in Liszt's transcription $b$ was possibly omitted because it would be awkward to play. The pianist would have to use difficult finger substitutions on the tied notes $a'$ and $e'$ at some point between beats one and four in measure 24 to play $b$ on the downbeat of measure 25 (see Fig. 1). In fact, Liszt omitted several notes (see Appendix, page 44), making the transcription more pianistic. For another example, the fifth note (a) in measure 30 of the Fugue appears in the pedal of Bach's version. Liszt's version is a practical solution — the dissonance that would sound much more harshly on the piano by striking $b$ and $a$ simultaneously is eliminated (see Fig. 2, page 22).

Figure 1a: Bach Prelude, mm. 24-25
Liszt occasionally added notes to fill in chords, creating parallelism in sequential triads, especially in the right hand. Bach wrote no $g$ in the last chord of measure 121 in the Fugue (Fig. 3a, page 23). In the piano version
Liszt added $b$ to continue the chord sequences that started on the second beat of measure 119. This technique is also used in measures 122 and 123 (see the circled notes on Fig. 3b).

Figure 3a: Bach Fugue, mm. 119-123

Figure 3b: Liszt transcription, mm. 119-123
In Bach’s Fugue the fourth to tenth sixteenth-notes in the left hand of measure 130 are a, g sharp, f sharp, e, d', and c'; in Liszt’s version the notes have been altered to d', c', b, d', b, and a (see Fig. 4). Liszt changed the notes to avoid the crossing of voices between the organ pedal and the left hand figuration. Also, if Liszt had copied Bach’s original notes, the pianist would have to play an awkward succession of double notes with the left hand. Liszt’s changes allow clarity in the bass line while preserving the faster moving inner voice.

Figure 4a: Bach Fugue, m. 130

Figure 4b: Liszt transcription, m. 130
B. Different Note Values and Rests

Although the notes of the two works are usually the same, different note values and rests do appear in the piano transcription. In measure 46 of the Prelude, Liszt changed the rhythmic values of $a$ and $e$ from quarter notes to sixteenth notes for practical reasons (Fig. 5).

![Figure 5a: Bach Prelude, m. 46](image1)

In measure 106 of Bach's organ Fugue, the $d'$ on the first beat in the middle voice is tied to the second beat and followed by a sixteenth-note $c'$. In the piano transcription, Liszt omitted the suspended $d'$, allowing only $c'$ to be heard on the second beat of the measure (see Fig. 6).

![Figure 5b: Liszt transcription, m. 46](image2)
on this page). Another example in this category can be seen in Figure 7, page 27. There is no sixteenth-note rest in Bach’s organ version in measure 142; however, Liszt added one to indicate that the right hand is to assist in the octaves. Not only the rest but also the changed beaming in measure 142 proves this.

Figure 6a: Bach Fugue, m. 106

Figure 6b: Liszt transcription, m. 106
C. Octave Doubling

In the transcription, Liszt doubled the organ pedal notes in octaves from measure 46 to measure 53 in the Prelude (see Fig. 8 on pages 28 and 29), because the octave doubling provides a more organ-like sonority on the piano. Playing a series of octaves with the left hand at a rapid tempo can be technically demanding. Pianists have the option of playing the octave passage either with the left hand alone or with both hands from the second sixteenth-note of measure 46 through the third beat of measure 47 (Fig. 8b).
Figure 8a: Bach Prelude, mm. 46-53
D. Displacement of Pitches

In Liszt's transcription the left hand (plus the right hand, at times) plays Bach's pedal notes throughout the entire piece. Since pianists only have two hands, Liszt often displaced Bach's notes for pianistic purposes. For example, from measure 10 to the downbeat of measure 21 of Bach's Prelude, the pedal note A was changed to A' in the piano version. Also, instead of tying the note as Bach did,
Liszt repeated A' every two bars for fourteen measures (see Fig. 9, mm. 10-13, on the following page). It is important to note that the actual pitches of the organ pedal notes sound an octave lower from the written notes due to the use of a stop at sixteenth-foot pitch. (As we know, Liszt knew organ registration well, so he skillfully arranged notes in octaves to simulate the organ pitches; hence, his approach is always faithful to the original Bach version.) For sustaining long pedal points in the bass, the pianist has two options: using both the sostenuto and damper pedal, or using the damper pedal only. I think that using both pedals together helps to sustain the bass sound and makes the figuration above the bass clearer and more articulated. If one prefers not to use the sostenuto pedal, a "flutter pedal" technique may be chosen to partially sustain the pedal point and to clear the texture above it.1

1Joseph Banowetz, "Pedaling Technique," in Teaching Piano vol. I, ed. Denes Agay (New York: Yorktown Music Press, Inc, 1981), 119. Banowetz suggests using the sostenuto pedal in Bach's Prelude from measure 10 through m. 23 to sustain the low A. To avoid having a possible mixed sound by catching the tone of the right hand C, the pianist may press down the key of low A and hold the sostenuto pedal before starting the piece.
Another example of the displacement of notes can be seen from the second beat of measure 96 to the second beat.
of measure 97 of the Fugue (see Fig. 10). Bach wrote the first twelve notes of the fugue subject in the c' area, yet Liszt placed the notes an octave higher (see notes in brackets in Fig. 10b). In the transcription, the organ pedal notes are played by the left hand in octaves from the second beat of measure 95 through the downbeat of measure 101, making it impossible for the theme to be performed in the original octave. Therefore, Liszt placed the theme up an octave, enabling the right hand to play it.
In measure 127, the notes $g$ sharp in the bass clef and $b'$ in the treble clef occur on the downbeat in the organ version. Liszt moved the $g$ sharp an octave higher so that the left hand only plays $E$ and $f$ (see Fig. 11). Without this displacement, performance on the piano would be extremely awkward.
Since the piano and organ are constructed differently, the organ can sustain a tone as long as the key is pressed down, whereas on the piano the tone decays quickly even if the key is held. Instead of copying the tied notes that are written in Bach’s version, Liszt omitted most ties. For example, on the second beat of measure 131 in Bach’s Fugue, the right hand $b'$ is tied into measure 132; Liszt did not copy the tie, but, instead, repeated the same note to allow the dissonance created by the suspension to be heard clearly. This kind of alteration applies also to the sequential passages seen in measures 133 and 134 (Fig. 12).

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To avoid breaking the tenth in Liszt’s measure 132, the pianist with a good stretch can play $c'$ with the right hand.
Figure 12a: Bach Fugue, mm. 131-134 (Bach’s ties)

Figure 12b: Liszt transcription, mm. 131-134 (Liszt’s repeated notes).

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CHAPTER V. SUMMARY

Ferruccio Busoni once declared: "Truly Bach is the Alpha of pianoforte composition and Liszt the Omega." Indeed, Liszt proceeded in the path of Bach and reached a personal pinnacle in the history of keyboard music. The piano transcription of Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in A Minor* provides evidence that Liszt composed the transcription with the most scrupulous respect for the original text, yet modifying it with pianistic writing. His transcriptions are widely admired, evoking opinions such as Sitwell's: "They [Liszt's transcriptions] are transferred from one instrument to the other with most telling effect and are magnificent in their splendor and sobriety."  

In the piano version, the notes are basically the same as those in the organ version, and in my study I have mentioned the probable reasons for the changes that Liszt made in the piano transcription. As seen in the category "different notes," Liszt cleverly solved some problems by

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40Sitwell, 134.
omitting, adding, or changing notes. His strategy of omitting certain notes reduced the level of technical difficulties; by adding and changing notes he amplified the richness of sound and provided a more comfortable and effortless way to play; and his changes in note values and rests were made for the sake of pianistic writing.

In addition, octave doubling was a technique Liszt frequently used in his transcription. He often arranged Bach’s pedal notes in octaves, and as a result, the passage created not only a solid and deep organ-like sound but also the effect of pianistic virtuosity.

Displacement of pitches was another effective modification that Liszt employed; the result often eliminated awkwardness of playing. Also, Liszt did not retain all of Bach’s tied notes, because the piano tone decays rather quickly as opposed to the sustaining ability of the organ. There is no doubt that Liszt expected the performer to use the pedals frequently to sustain the sonority.

Liszt seems to have tried to achieve a dual goal for the piano transcription — to make the music more accessible and to write idiomatically for the piano. The transcription of the Prelude and Fugue in A Minor reveals his penetrating
insights and knowledge of Bach’s work. In his transcriptions, he influenced many generations of composers who employed the genre, and he greatly broadened the pianist’s repertoire.
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APPENDIX: A COMPARISON OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE ORIGINAL WORK AND THE TRANSCRIPTION

Different Notes

**BACH**
- P.m.18: The ninth note is e'  
- P.m.25: The l. h. downbeat note is b  
- F.m.30: The fifth note in the pedal is a  
- F.m.109: The second note in the l. h. is c  
- F.m.121: The last chord of the bar has no g'  
- F.m.122: The last chord has no f'  
- F.m.123: There is no b on the second beat  
- F.m.123: There is a g sharp on the fifth beat

**LISZT**
- Changed to d'  
- b is omitted  
- a is omitted  
- c is omitted  
- g' is added in the r. h.  
- f' is added to the r. h.  
- b is added to the second chord in the r. h.  
- changed to g' natural

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"The abbreviations used in this and other categories are as follows: P = Prelude, F = Fugue, r. h. = right hand, l. h. = left hand. The designations for individual pitches are indicated below; they were taken from Llewelyn S. Lloyd, "Pitch notation," The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, ed. Stanley Sadie, (1980)."
F,m.130: the fourth to tenth sixteenth-notes in the l. h. are: a-g sharp-f sharp-e-d'-c'-b changed to d'-c'-b-d'-b-a-b in the l. h.

F,m.132: e' is not written on the first beat; there is no c' on the second beat e' is in the first chord of the r. h.; c' is added to the second beat

F,m.140: l. h. has b on beat four b is omitted on beat four

Different Note Values and Rests

P,m.38: there is no rest on the downbeat a sixteenth-note rest is added on the downbeat
P,m.46: a and e on the downbeat are quarter notes a and e are sixteenth notes
P,m.49: l. h. downbeat e' is a quarter note e' is a sixteenth-note
P,m.53: f' is a quarter note on the second beat f' is a sixteenth note
F,m.106: d' on the downbeat is tied over to the second beat c' is on the second beat
F,m.115: on the downbeat in the pedal e is a quarter-note followed by an eighth rest e is a dotted quarter-note
F,m.119: a dotted quarter-note B is on the downbeat a quarter-note B is on the downbeat
F,m.123: on the fourth beat a quarter-note c' is followed by an eighth rest on the fourth beat c' is an eighth note without the eighth rest
F,m.142: no rest on the downbeat sixteenth-note rest is on the downbeat
Octave Doubling

P, mm. 22-31: single notes in the pedal
l. h. doubled in octaves

P, mm. 32-34: single notes in the pedal
l. h. doubled in octaves from the fourth beat of m. 32 to m. 34
l. h. doubled in octaves

P, mm. 35-37: single notes in the pedal from the fourth beat of m. 35 to the second beat of m. 37
l. h. doubled in octaves

P, m. 38: single note C in the pedal
C is added

P, mm. 40-44: single notes in the pedal from the third beat of measure 40 to the downbeat of m. 44
l. h. has octaves

P, mm. 46-53: single notes in the pedal
l. h. has octaves

F, mm. 35-38: single notes in the pedal
l. h. has octaves from the fifth count of m. 35 to the downbeat of m. 38

F, mm. 41-43: single notes in the pedal
l. h. has octaves from m. 41 to the fifth count of m. 43

F, mm. 95-101: single notes in the pedal
l. h. has octaves from the second beat of m. 95 to the downbeat of m. 101

F, mm. 119-123: single notes in the pedal
l. h. has octaves from the second beat of m. 119 to the second beat of m. 123

F, mm. 132-136: single pedal notes
l. h. has octaves

F, mm. 138-151: single notes in the pedal
l. h. has octaves

F, m. 140: f'' is not doubled on the second beat of the bar
octave doubling f'' plus f' in r. h. on the second beat of the bar

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Displacement of pitches

P, mm. 10-21: pedal note A is tied throughout

P, mm. 42: the first and second eighth notes in the pedal are E and e

P, mm. 35: downbeat is g

F, mm. 43: the fifth and sixth notes in the pedal are e and E

F, mm. 131-132: pedal has a-g sharp-a

F, mm. 96-97: l. h. plays the whole-note A' tied to next measure, then repeated, then tied, etc.

E and e are written as an octave in the l. h.

downbeat is G

l. h. has E and e

A-G sharp-A in l. h.

placed an octave higher in
F, mm. 120-123: a, g, f, e, and a' are tied to the next note in the same voice.

In mm. 120-122, no ties.

In mm. 123, e is tied to the next note in the same voice.

In mm. 131, in beat two the r. h. b' is tied to a quarter-note b' in the next measure. No tie.

In mm. 132, c" and a' have ties. No ties.

In mm. 133, g' is tied throughout the whole measure. No tie.

In mm. 134, a' and f' have ties. No ties.
VITA

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Miss Shao is the recipient of various honors and the winner of numerous competitions. Among these are the Louisiana State University Concerto Competition, the Arkansas State University Piano Competition, the Monroe Symphony Orchestra Young Artist Competition, the University of Kentucky Concerto Competition, the Music Teachers National Association Wurlitzer Collegiate Artist Contest, and a full scholarship from the Evergreen Foundation to study piano performance at The Peabody Conservatory of Music of The Johns Hopkins University. She is an active accompanist, a teacher with a private piano studio, and a member of Pi Kappa Lambda National Music Honor Society and Music Teachers National Association.
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Date of Examination:

September 4, 1997