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| <b>Institution:</b> University of Cambridge  |   |  |
| <b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UoA 33  |   |  |
| <b>Title of case study:</b> A 'Familiar' Composer Transformed: Rediscovering Liszt as opera composer within Weimar's cultural heritage   |   |  |
| <b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2016-2019   |   |  |
| <b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>   |   |  |
| <b>Name(s):</b><br>David Trippett  | <b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b><br>Reader in Music | <b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> September 2015 to the present |
| <b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> October 2016 to the present  |   |  |
| <b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No  |   |  |
| <b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words) <p><i>Sardanapalo</i>, an unfinished opera by Franz Liszt, lay silently in a manuscript thought fragmentary and illegible. Trippett's critical reconstruction brought it to life through international performances, radio broadcasts, published editions, a CD recording, public talks, lecture recitals, and online films. Premiered in Weimar (2018), where Liszt lived for 12 years, the reconstructed opera has significantly impacted the city's sense of identity and cultural heritage. It raised the profile of the Staatskapelle Weimar, generating multi-modal economic impact for the region. By introducing to the repertoire a significant, 'new' work by a canonical composer not previously associated with opera, Trippett's reconstruction changed perceptions of Liszt among cultural commentators, performers, and concert organisers. It also changed audiences' awareness of the creative, often collaborative processes of 19<sup>th</sup>-century opera, and helped performers to think in new ways about notation and its flexibility.</p>   |   |  |
| <b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words) <p>The research of David Trippett into Liszt's manuscript resulted in the first critical and performing editions, the world premiere performances and the first recordings of <i>Sardanapalo</i>. None had previously been attempted. Liszt's manuscript had been deemed fragmentary and largely illegible since it was first mentioned by Maria Lipsius in 1911. The Italian libretto exists only as rapidly sketched underlay; both music and text were uncommonly hard to decipher. Trippett's research established a new time line for the opera's genesis. It demonstrated that Liszt intended his assistant, Joachim Raff, to provisionally orchestrate the music in 1852, and never completed Acts 2-3 (and abandoned the project) because he was expecting revisions to the libretto which never arrived.</p> <p>The project represents a 'mixed methods' package of historical and archival scholarship, applied research in the production of editions, and practice-based methods in working with performers. As such it has resulted in a variety of impacts.</p> <p>In his research, Trippett:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) deciphered and transcribed the musical score (via high-resolution digital imaging), and assessed to what extent it contained music that could be rescued (October 2015). Various passages that were unclear or not fully written out had to be cross-referenced within the score to comparable passages to become decipherable. Trippett's research revealed that Liszt had thought through and notated all the cardinal elements (harmony, melody, rhythm, counterpoint, texture), but often presented these in shorthand, and amid a range of missing accidentals, deletions, revisions and alternative versions that needed to be unpicked. In effect it reverse-engineered the creative process [R2];</li> <li>(ii) worked out for the first time that Liszt's abbreviations and implied patterning revealed virtually the entire music for Act 1 (March 2016) [R2];</li> <li>(iii) collaborated with Marco Beghelli (University of Bologna) to decipher and, where necessary, reconstruct the libretto, based on the rhyming and metrical scheme (2016-19). This involved extensive, close comparison with the text of Lord Byron's tragedy <i>Sardanapalus</i> (1821), on which Liszt based his opera [R2];</li> </ul> |   |  |

- (iv) researched the historical, biographical and philological context of the opera's emergence, the reasons for its abandonment, and its historical and historiographical significance to scholars' understanding of mid-19th-century aesthetics [R1];
- (v) between 2018-19, applied this research to produce the first critical edition—including by realizing the abbreviations and implied patterns—for the authoritative *Neue Liszt Ausgabe* (Editio Musica Budapest) [R2];
- (vi) worked at the keyboard with singers, conductors, and instrumentalists from the Royal Opera House and the Staatskapelle Weimar, in a collaborative, practice-based process that fed into certain necessarily creative decisions about tempo, articulation and dynamics for the editions and approaches to performance [R3, E3];
- (vii) orchestrated the score idiomatically to match the idiom of progressive mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century opera (2017-2020). The orchestration was based on Liszt's own instrumental cues and specifications of orchestral texture in his manuscript, as well as an extensive study of the operatic scores Liszt conducted and paraphrased for piano during the 1830s and 1840s (Berlioz, Wagner, Bellini, Donizetti, Verdi, Meyerbeer) [R4].

With the full orchestral score in place, and in the context of significant media coverage, Trippett formed partnerships with professional stakeholders, who jointly contributed to the global impact of the project.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

**R1** David Trippett, 'An Uncrossable Rubicon: Liszt's *Sardanapalo* revisited,' *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, Vol. 143, No. 2 (October 2018), pp. 361-432.

[<https://doi.org/10.1080/02690403.2018.1507120>]. Quality threshold indicator: peer-reviewed article.

**R2** Franz Liszt, *Sardanapalo, Act 1 (Fragment)*, ed. David Trippett, *Neue Liszt Ausgabe* (Editio Musica Budapest, 2019). ISMN: 9790080200179. Quality threshold indicator: the authoritative critical edition of Liszt's music.

**R3** CD: *Liszt: Sardanapalo*, with Joyce El-Khoury (Mirra), Airam Hernández (King), Oleksandr Pushniak (Beleso), Weimar Staatskapelle, Kirill Karabits; Audite, AUDITE97764, released 8 February 2019. Quality threshold indicators: international performers and CD label.

**R4** Franz Liszt, *Sardanapalo: Opera fragment in one act*, ed. and orch. David Trippett (Schott Music, 2019). Hire only. Quality threshold indicator: a top-tier publisher of classical music.

Funding: this project was funded by a European Research Council Starting Grant awarded to David Trippett for 'Sound and Materialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century' (EUR1,496,345), September 2015-May 2021; and a Philip Leverhulme Prize awarded to David Trippett (GBP100,000), 1 September 2015-31 August 2019.

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

#### Impact and Beneficiaries

- **Cultural heritage benefit, tourism benefit** (Weimar and Budapest, where Liszt worked)
- **Changed attitude to Liszt** (international audiences; CD/downloads/performance)
- **Knowledge exchange, new understanding** (worldwide radio/TV/lecture audience)
- **Knowledge co-production, changed attitudes, performance opportunities** (musicians and singers).

Liszt is not known for opera. Trippett's discovery that his mature opera *Sardanapalo* could be critically reconstructed not only offered a startlingly new perspective on Liszt, but also, in

collaboration with industry professionals, the rare opportunity to hear a world premiere of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century work.

### Press, media and music industry reach

A key pathway to the impacts outlined below was the international media attention generated by the opera. By average audience figures, this reached approximately 789 million individuals: in print (announcements/features/reviews), online (documentary, reviews and music excerpts), and on TV, radio and podcasts [average figures collated in **E1, E2, E3**]. Among over 100 reports, this includes:

- articles and interviews in *New York Times*, *Times*, China's *Global Times*, *Die Welt* [**E2 pp.8-11**], *Guardian*, *Bild*, and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* [**E3 pp.50, 58, 94**];
- TV news and performance excerpts broadcast by CNN International and on BBC Four [**E2 pp.27, 15**];
- radio features and interviews in Germany (*ARD*, *MDR*, *WDR*, *NDR*), UK (*BBC Radio 4 'Today'*; *BBC Radio 3 'Breakfast'*, *'Essential Classics'*, *'In Tune'*; *BBC Radio Wales*; *Classic FM*), France (*France musique*), Sweden (*SverigesRadio*), and Canada (*CBC*) [**E2 pp.4, 43**; **E3 pp.110-112**; **E4 pp.27-39**].

A trailer for the research documentary (dir. Tom Andrews) on *Sardanapalo* has been viewed over 45,000 times on Facebook / YouTube [**E1, pp.1-2**]. Six performances of *Sardanapalo* in Weimar (19 and 20.8.18), Lercici (27.8.18), Washington DC (27.4.19), Novi Sad (9.4.19), and Linz (31.1.20) sold approximately 4,435 tickets (sold out, based on venue capacity). The CD became the #1 best-selling classical CD in the UK (Official Charts, 2.2019), #1 in the iTunes Classical chart (Belgium), and tracks were incorporated into general playlists of major steaming services (Spotify, Apple Music, Primaphonic, Idagio). In the first year following its release, 2,047 physical CDs were sold, and between January 2019 and July 2020 there were over 161,104 individual downloads and streams (not including Naxos streams) [**E6**]. Significantly, the wide dissemination engaged audiences beyond those already interested in music. One Weimar audience member commented: 'I became interested *because* of the news coverage'. Others confirmed the pull of the sustained media interest: 'Actually, the reason why I decided to travel to Germany was the opera' and 'I have been enthusiastically following the developments on this project online for the past seven months' [**E3 pp.36, 37**].

### Cultural/heritage impact on Weimar

Following the premiere of an aria on live BBC TV/Radio 3 on 15.6.17 (iPlayer for one month), the opera premiered in Weimar on 19.7.18, was recorded for CD and broadcast internationally twice (8.9.18, *Deutschlandfunk*; 13.3.19, *Sveriges Radio*). A local journalist pointed to the cultural capital accruing to Weimar as a result: 'the name Weimar means something in the world once more' (*Thüringer Allgemeine*, 13.6.19) [**E4 p.2**]. Audience reaction confirmed: 'It is hugely important, in that the city's identity is bound to Liszt and the great cultural achievements of German Classicism. The opera's premiere reinforces and deepens that identity' (19.8.18) [**E3 p.42**]. As a result of the project, the city's Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv digitised Liszt's manuscript, making it freely available online [**E3 p.118**].

It provided an opportunity for the Staatskapelle Weimar to secure its international status through reviews of the CD: 'a splendid document of the *Spielkultur* of DNT Weimar' (*Fono Forum*) [**E4, p.3**]. Regarding tourism, one journalist said the project added 'another factor to the region's most important income source' (Hirsch, 20.8.18) [**E3 p.18**]. As Kirill Karabits (Chief cond. Bournemouth Symphony / MD Deutsches Nationaltheater Weimar, 2016-2019) remarked, concert-goers travelled internationally to attend: 'we've had so many people from all over the world coming to Weimar just to hear this; it doesn't happen every time ... From all the aspects, it has been a fantastic project for [Staatskapelle Weimar]. Musically, psychologically, and from the point of media coverage for the orchestra' (17.8.18) [**E3 p.6**]. The Concert master added: 'An absolute honour for the orchestra that we got to premiere this piece' [**E3 p.20**].

The cultural significance for locals in Weimar went deeper than being honoured and intrigued, and boosting tourism, as a *Thüringer Allgemeine* journalist notes: '[consider] the region's history as part of the DDR. Almost 80% of the working population had to change their field of work since then – a transition that affected the local sense of identity and made many people feel disoriented. Against a background like this, music and the arts can provide orientation, impart values and return a sense of identity. In this context, the Liszt project is truly fabulous' (20.8.18) [E3 p.17].

Four planned performances, in Weimar (Deutsche Nationaltheater und Staatskapelle Weimar, 6 and 28.2.20; 21.3.20) and at the Spring Festival in Budapest (Müpa, 16.4.20), were postponed due to Covid-19, but anticipated in Hungary's national media. Budapest's performance has been rescheduled for 6.4.22. These performances show the opera has truly entered the Staatskapelle Weimar's repertory and is bringing together communities in Germany and Hungary through Liszt's dual affiliations [E5].

### Impact on public perception and understanding of Liszt

Audiences widely confirmed that hearing *Sardanapalo* changed their perception of Liszt as a composer: 'It transformed my view of Liszt. I had no idea he wrote vocal music'; 'it has really inspired me to think differently about Liszt and about 19<sup>th</sup>-century Italian opera in general' [E7 p.2; p.5]; 'Over a number of years I've been continually amazed to discover the many facets to Liszt's genius, but this is a revelation' [E8 p.4]; 'I now see Liszt as an impressive composer of opera on a large scale, moving towards later 19<sup>th</sup>-century styles' [E3 p.40]. For conductor Karabits: 'I didn't know that Liszt ever tried to write an Italian opera in *bel canto* style, you know, who knew that? Nobody knew' [E3 p.3].

Two lecture recitals and ten public talks enhanced understanding among non-musicians of how 19<sup>th</sup>-century composers worked, and what reconstructing / editing unfinished music entails: 'I can't read music, and yet I still left with a changed view of the creative process' [E9 p.2]; 'This has been a revelation for me – I didn't know how manuscripts relate to music editions. It has completely changed my perspective' [E3 p.38]; 'this expanded my horizons as to [Liszt's] versatility and of how musicologists act as archaeologists' [E8 p.4]; 'this event absolutely affected my understanding of the creative process in composition. It was a very precious experience for me to see an experienced musician explain the process of reconstructing an unfinished work' [E9 p.2]. Of the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World audience, 61% confirmed they would listen to more of Liszt's vocal music [E7 p.4].

Widespread international press confirmed the consequences of the changed understanding: 'It is not too big a statement to say that the work's emergence changes musical history' (*The Times*) [E4 p.5]; 'Hearing the mastery of *Sardanapalo* ... light is cast on a heretofore unsuspected facet of one of the 19th century's great creative figures' (*Washington Post*) [E8 p.21].

### Co-production of knowledge and engagement

Trippett worked collaboratively with ten singers to discover unnotated aspects of the vocal parts: tempo, articulation, dynamics, and phrasing. This process had an impact on their professional practice and changed their view of notation and 19<sup>th</sup>-century opera: 'it brought me ... a whole different set of tools, technical and mental - well, intellectual - tools to deal with a further repertoire' (soprano soloist, E10 p.13). The 80 orchestral members of the Staatskapelle Weimar contributed similarly: 'rehearsals have led to greater understanding of the complex connections in the process of composition and instrumentation' (Weimar orchestra member, E3 p.30). Karabits adds: 'not only [does] it give [the orchestra] the chance to explore something that they didn't know before, but, I mean, musically, it has been an adventure ... you put people on the spot and then they can actually ask for some changes and say "this doesn't work" – and they did' [E3 pp.5-6]. This co-production benefitted symbiotically the research project and the musicians' awareness of freedoms within 19<sup>th</sup>-century compositional practice.



**Impact on professional musicians' careers, development and creative practice**

Performing *Sardanapalo* significantly impacted young musicians' careers. Soprano Anush Hovhannisyan received international attention for premiering an aria at the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World: 'I would hope that many people would have heard my name for the first time, thanks to this project' [E10 p.14]. Tenor Joshua Blue said after the Washington premiere: 'I am a big fan of putting my stamp on first performances. It goes a long way, you put it on the resume, and someone inevitably asks, "What is this?"' [E8 p.9].

Established musicians benefitted similarly. For Karabits, performing *Sardanapalo* was a career highlight: 'I'm conducting something no one's ever heard before ... This is very exciting and a great responsibility' (interview with *Deutsche Welle* 18.8.18) [E3 p.65]. The resulting CD features prominently in his recent interviews (e.g. *Gramophone*, January 2019; *Crescendo*, July 2020) [E4 pp.6-8]. It remained in the UK charts for four weeks, was widely awarded Album of the Month / Week (*Gramophone*, *Sunday Times*, *Guardian*, *Financial Times*, *Opera Now*, *Concerti*), received a multi-page feature in *BBC Music Magazine*, and was broadcast on BBC R3 (three times), CBC, Radio France, MDR and ARD [E4 pp.9-19; 27-39]. The recording was also listed among the *Guardian's* top 10 Classical CDs of 2019, and was nominated for an International Classical Music Award (finalist) [E4 pp.20-21]. The *Sardanapalo* success led to a multi-CD contract for Staatskapelle Weimar to record Liszt's orchestral music with Karabits (latest CD released 25.9.19), as reviewers have enthusiastically noted [E4 pp.22-26].

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

**E1** Viewing figures from the documentary film about the process of reconstructing the opera (June 2017; 7,945 views); from the documentary trailer (45,202 views across Facebook and YouTube); from the opera trailer (8,348 views); and from the CD trailer (10,880 views).

**E2** Records of press coverage from the time of the announcement of the opera's reconstruction, March 2017. (Content in various languages)

**E3** World Premiere, Weimar, August 2018: interviews with the conductor of the Staatskapelle Weimar, the soprano soloist, the baritone soloist, and a local journalist at the *Thüringer Allgemeine*. Comment cards from audience members, orchestra members, chorus members. Press coverage. (Content in various languages)

**E4** CD reviews and related interviews from European and American newspapers and magazines, specialist and general; [radio coverage and broadcasts of the CD; ICMA nomination](#). (Content in various languages)

**E5** Press coverage related to Budapest press conference prior to the cancelled performance due to COVID-19 (16 April 2020). (Content in Hungarian)

**E6** Economic data: box office figures, CD sales, downloads and streams (Audite).

**E7** Cardiff Singer of the World (June 2017), online survey.

**E8** Library of Congress performance, Washington DC, April 2019: interviews with singers, library archivists and key participants. Comment cards from audience members. Press coverage of the event.

**E9** Feedback from a lecture-recital at the Cambridge Festival of Ideas in October 2016 to an audience of approximately 100 people.

**E10** Italian premiere, Lerici, August 2018: interviews with the conductor, the soprano soloist, the bass soloist, the tenor soloist and two members of the orchestra. Comment cards from audience members and orchestra members. Press coverage of the event.