

## Kirill Karabits



### Dvořák: Cello Concerto & Klid - Bloch: Schelomo

Ernest Bloch | Antonín Dvořák

CD aud 97.734

[www.myclassicalnotes.com](http://www.myclassicalnotes.com) June 23, 2017 ( - 2017.06.23)

source: <http://www.myclassicalnotes.com/2017/06/...>

#### Dvorak Cello Concerto by Marc Coppey

Antonín Dvořák and Ernest Bloch provide clear performing instructions, but also demand a high degree of free interpretation. Marc Coppey manages to realize both of these aspects, maintaining a convincing balance and communicating intensively with the orchestra.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

Sunday Times 2nd July 2017 (Stephen Pettitt - 2017.07.02)

THE SUNDAY TIMES  
THE SUNDAY TIMES

Coppey brings to Schelomo — Ernest Bloch's dark-hued evocation of the...

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[www.pizzicato.lu](http://www.pizzicato.lu) 30/06/2017 (Remy Franck - 2017.06.30)

source: <https://www.pizzicato.lu/exzeptionell-in...>

**pizzicato**  
Remy Franck's Blog about Classical Music

#### Exzeptionell, in allen Hinsichten

Nur ganz selten habe ich Ernest Blochs 'Schelomo' in einer so stimmungsvollen, hoch inspirierten Fassung gehört wie auf dieser neuen CD mit dem französischen Cellisten Marc Coppey.

In 'Schelomo' (Salomon), das Bloch selbst eine 'Rhapsodie hébraïque pour violoncelle et grand orchestre' (1916-17) nannte, übernimmt das Cello den Part des weisen Königs mit einer teils melancholischen, teils feierlichen Klangrede: Coppey 'singt' diesen Part auf seinem Goffriller-Cello mit bewegender Intensität, nicht vordergründig sentimental, aber mit einer wunderbar vergeistigten Vertiefung in das Sujet. Dabei kann er voll auf den Dirigenten Kirill Karabits zählen, der den Cello-Gesang mit einem sehr inspirierten Orchester unterstützt. Karabits, einer der besten Farbenkünstler unter den Dirigenten, lässt das DSO mit schönster Differenzierung musizieren.

Dvoraks kurzes, sehr charmant und ausdrucksvoll gespieltes Adagio 'Klid' (Waldesruhe) führt zum Cellokonzert op. 104.

Was einem in diesem Werk sofort auffällt, ist die ungemein reliefreiche Orchestereinleitung, die zeigt, welcher genialer Dirigent Karabits ist. Die einzelnen Motive werden sehr deutlich herausgearbeitet, die verschiedenen Orchestergruppen in grandiosen Farben voneinander abgehoben. Und so sind die Weichen hier ganz klar gestellt. Mehr als in irgendeiner Aufnahme des Dvorak-Konzerts spielt das Orchester hier eine wichtige, eine tragende Rolle. Dass Karabits für diese Aufnahme gewonnen werden konnte ist ein absoluter Glücksfall. Nicht, dass Coppey nicht gut spielen würde, ganz im Gegenteil, aber sein Spiel erreicht erst im Einklang mit dem Orchester seine volle Wirkung.

Es gibt Aufnahmen, da hat man nach einem einzigen Durchgang alles gehört. Diese hier ist musikalisch so reich, dass man davor steht wie vor dem üppigsten aller Buffets und sich mal hier, mal dort was nimmt, aber bei weiteren Durchgängen immer wieder Neues entdeckt.

Darüber hinaus ist auch das wunderbar lyrische und zugleich oft auch zupackende Spiel von Marc Coppey ein Atout, zumal Dirigent und Solist perfekt zusammen atmen.

This is one really outstanding recording, perfect for multiple deep listening experiences. Bloch's Schelomo comes in a very inspired, beautifully atmospheric performance, and one only can admire Marc Coppey's attractive, lyrical sound. Another exceptional treat is Dvorak's Cello Concerto. Breathing harmoniously together, conductor Kirill Karabits and Marc Coppey share a perfect mutual inspiration. Moreover, Kirill Karabits proves the colour magician he has always been, and thus there is a lot to discover in the orchestral accompaniment. I never heard so rich an orchestral playing in this concerto. The well-detailed, resonant recording adds to the impact of those gorgeous Bloch and Dvorak performances.

**Gramophone 08/2017 (Rob Cowan - 2017.08.01)**

**source:**

<https://www.gramophone.co.uk/review/bloc...>

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While not wishing to mislead with excessive praise, Marc Coppey's 2016 account of the Dvořák Concerto more reminded me of Emanuel Feuermann's various recordings than any others that I've heard in recent years, and by that I mean Feuermann as a mellow-toned 26-year-old (under Michael Taube) and on richer, later broadcast recordings with Leon Barzin and Hans Lange conducting. Then again, I've always been smitten with Feuermann's approach to the work, his seamless, full tone, quietly expressive phrasing, strength of projection and evenly deployed vibrato.

Coppey's first entry (3'28") suggests unflappable confidence and when the music takes flight soon afterwards he employs a keen-edged staccato while retaining his characteristic rich body of tone. Also, Coppey's approach exploits the instrument's entire range with ease: the lovely second subject is as gently seductive as the more assertive passages are bracing. Try the perfect diminuendo at 1'36" into the Adagio: this sort of playing has me reaching for the rewind facility just for the pleasure of enjoying it a second or third time. Other cellists, most notably Casals and Fournier weave their own magic but, as of yet, their younger equivalents have not appeared. Those of Coppey's rivals who have justifiable claims on our attentions include the impassioned and tonally varied Alisa Weilerstein but there is something about Coppey's aching restraint (if that doesn't seem too contradictory a term) that even after such a brief period of acquaintance has had me return to his version on a number of occasions. So far the magic hasn't abated.

Bloch's Schelomo was another Feuermann staple but although Coppey again hits target, he's pipped to the post, in the stereo field at least, by the superb Feuermann pupil George Neikrug, who, like his master, is granted an incendiary account of the orchestral score under Leopold Stokowski. Kirill Karabits and his Berlin forces, good as they are (and of course better recorded), don't quite match that level of intensity, whereas they provide sensitive and detailed accounts of the two Dvořák scores – Silent Woods is no less effective than the concerto – which adds further credence to an extremely strong recommendation.

Als reziproke Spiegelbilder versteht der Straßburger Cellist Marc Coppey die beiden zentralen Werke seiner neuen Aufnahme: Blochs "Schelomo" entstand noch in Europa, wurde dann in den USA uraufgeführt; Dvorak schrieb sein Cellokonzert noch in Amerika, bevor er nach Europa zurückkehrte.

Mehr als 20 Minuten dauert Blochs "Hebräische Rhapsodie", deren Charakter ständigem Wandel unterzogen ist. Man möchte Coppey daher gratulieren, dass er nicht ständig seine cellistische Bravour ausstellt. Dann nämlich gerät dieses Werk schnell zu einer One-Instrument-Show. Klar, das Cello steht im Fokus, ihm wird eine Vielzahl von Sprecharten abverlangt, doch Coppey geht mit dieser Luxus-Situation um wie ein Kammermusiker, der um die Bedeutung seiner Partner genau weiß. Insofern bilden Solist und das Deutsche Symphonie-Orchester Berlin unter Kirill Karabits eine Einheit.

Coppey geht es nicht um die Demonstration solistischer Überlegenheit, er lässt sein Cello nicht schmachten und meidet auch jede stratosphärische Brillanz. Genau das macht die Stärke seines Spiels aus: Es wirkt ehrlich und sehr plastisch, vor allem stellt es die Wandlungsfähigkeit seines Instruments, eines Goffriller von 1711, unter Beweis.

Beim Dvorak-Konzert ist die diskografische Spitze noch dichter beisammen, doch vom Aufnahme-Erbe lässt sich Coppey nicht beeindrucken. Allenfalls lässt er ein bisschen die Fournier-Linie durchschimmern. Noblesse und Diskretion schwingen mit, Melancholie, und wenn es expressiv sein soll, dann nie vordergründig. Coppey erzeugt einen glanzvollen, runden Ton, schlank wo möglich, breit wo nötig. Ihm geht es nicht darum, die furiosen Passagen im Lichte der Raffinesse darzustellen. Die Musik soll durch sich selbst sprechen, nicht durch Eigenheiten des Interpreten. Auch darin sind ihm die Berliner und Karabits ebenbürtige Partner. Eine herrlich unspektakuläre Aufnahme.

[www.pizzicato.lu](http://www.pizzicato.lu) 09/08/2017 (Guy Engels - 2017.08.09)

source: <https://www.pizzicato.lu/ein-charismatis...>

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Remy Franck's Blog about Classical Music

### Ein charismatischer Musiker

Nachdem Marc Coppey uns vor einem Jahr mit seinem Farbenrausch in den Cellokonzerten von C.Ph.E. Bach begeistert hat, legt der Cellist jetzt mit der Bloch-Dvorak-Einspielung nach. Einmal mehr erleben wir den Musiker auf der Höhe seiner Kunst, erleben wir, wie er seinen Bogen mal kraftvoll, dynamisch, dann wieder lyrisch und schwelgerisch über die Saiten gleiten lässt.

Mit dem Deutschen Symphonieorchester Berlin hat Marc Coppey einen nicht minder ausdrucksstarken Partner zur Seite. In Blochs 'Schelomo' treibt Kirill Karabits sein Orchester zu einem kraft- und spannungsvollen Spiel an – ein herrlicher Gegenpart zu den Monologen, den intimen Gedanken des Cellos.

Auch in Dvoraks Cellokonzert wartet das Orchester mit einem frischen, knackigen Klang auf. Marc Coppey lässt sein Cello in den Ecksätzen wuchtig, virtuos und schwelgerisch singen. Im Adagio hingegen lässt er die Welt vergessen. Die Musik kommt aus tiefstem Inneren von einem sehr charismatischen Interpreten: Eine der wahrhaftigsten Interpretationen dieses Concertos, die wir in letzter Zeit gehört haben.

Marc Coppey's performances of Bloch's Schelomo and Dvorak's Cello Concerto are absolutely striking, both technically and expressively. Conducted by the very inspired Kirill Karabits, the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin is an excellent partner for the French cellist.

[www.highresaudio.com](http://www.highresaudio.com) 27.07.2017 ( - 2017.07.27)  
source: <https://www.highresaudio.com/en/review/m...>



The excellent recording technique this album has been created, is customary practice for audite and it is particularly effective in the form of the present high-resolution download.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[www.artalinna.com](http://www.artalinna.com) 5 August 2017 (Jean-Charles Hoffelé - 1999.11.30)  
source: <http://www.artalinna.com/?p=7993>



## Le Graal du Violoncelle

[Marc Coppey] s'engage dans l'œuvre avec une intensité, une furia, quelque chose de précipité et de quasiment à court de souffle qui dès les premières pages saisit.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

Audiophile Audition August 17, 2017  
(Gary Lemco - 2017.08.17)

source:

<http://www.audaud.com/dvorak-cello-conce...>



## Marc Coppey and Kirill Karabits collaborate in two epic cello scores with singular passion

Coppey and Karabits address this movement with a singularly epic relish, grand in scope and deep in feeling, well befitting the extraordinary richness of this concerto masterpiece.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[allmusic.com](http://www.allmusic.com) 29.08.2017 (James Manheim - 2017.08.29)  
source: <http://www.allmusic.com/album/ernest-blo...>



Coppey offers a full-blooded, passionate reading [...] It's a virtuoso performance with fine coordination between orchestra and soloist. Highly recommended.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Diapason Oktober 2017 (Jean-Michel Molkhou - 2017.10.01)**



Par son esprit incantatoire, sa profondeur méditative, ses couleurs orientales, Schelomo (1916) reste une des pages les plus révélatrices du hysticisme d'Ernest Bloch – qui puise son inspiration dans la pensée du Roi Salomon mais aussi dans des thèmes du folklore juif. Le grand violoncelliste américain Lynn Harrell enseigne d'ailleurs à ses élèves que pour appréhender l'âme de cette oeuvre poignante, il faut avoir entendu un office dans une synagogue ou mieux, avoir assisté à une soirée de Shabbat. De style quasi improvisé, la partie soliste chante autant qu'elle ne déclame, soutenue par un orchestre chargé d'évoquer la splendeur antique.

Marc Coppey en délivre une lecture d'une forte intériorité, dont la pudeur nous touche profondément. La voix de son Goffriller transmet toute sa tendresse, tandis que Kirill Karabits équilibre magnificence et retenue – il ne semble jamais contraindre le soliste. L'essence rhapsodique de l'oeuvre tout comme sa gravité dramatique sont traduits avec un art qui apparente la nouvelle gravure au légendaire 78 tours d'Emanuel Feuermann et Stokowski, en 1940.

Dans le concerto de Dvorak, n'attendez pas l'opulence d'un Rostropovich. Coppey, qui fut un temps le violoncelliste du Quatuor Ysaye, dialogue en fin chambriste avec les musiciens du DSO Berlin. Soliste et orchestre ne se livrent pas l'habituelle joute héroïque qui anime la plupart des versions. La baguette de Kirill Karabits sculpte en finesse les timbres de l'excellente formation berlinoise. Ici le pathétisme reste élégant. Le soin apporté aux couleurs, aux nuances, aux respirations, aux enchaînements est souligné par une prise de son sans réverbération artificielle.

Entre les deux monuments, Klid (Le Silence de la forêt), transcription par Dvorak lui-même d'une page pour piano à quatre mains, confirme le raffinement d'un disque inspiré.

**ClicMag N° 53 Octobre 2017 (Jean-Charles Hoffelé - 2017.10.01)**



L'unique concerto que Dvorak écrivit pour Hanus Wihan (qui renonça à sa...

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**The Strad November 2017 (Joanne Talbot - 2017.11.01)**

source: <https://www.thestrad.com/reviews/marc-co...>



Partnered by expressively sensitive orchestral playing from the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin under Kirill Karabits, coupled with a beautifully clear resonant recording, there is simply everything to recommend in this performance. [...] This is undoubtedly one of the finest versions of this much-recorded work to date.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Fanfare** October 2017 (Huntley Dent - 2017.10.01)

source: <http://dev.fanfarearchive.com/amember/pr...>

fanfare

The standard repertoire for cello and orchestra doesn't contain many French works, but the French performing style has a strong profile. I was reminded of this at the opening of Schelomo by the sweet, singing tone and refined phrasing of Strasbourg-born cellist Marc Coppey. Bloch's *Rhapsodie hébraïque* from 1915–16 was the culmination of his Jewish Cycle, and by far the best known portion of it. Originally conceived as a vocal work set to texts from the Book of Ecclesiastes, Schelomo took final form with the cello standing in for King Solomon. Besides the title, there's no Old Testament story to follow, and I tend to hear the music as a Romantic piece of Jewish musical nostalgia. (The work's success seems to have gone to the composer's head—Bloch came to see the music in psychoanalytic terms as an unconscious expression of the creative process.)

Because it borders on the fulsome, the music tempts cellists to overplay their part and sink into sentimentality or to sound rhetorically profound. Coppey avoids both pitfalls, finding genuine eloquence through a natural approach to the score's emotionality. Not recognizing the cellist's name, I looked online and found that Coppey was born in 1969, won a major Bach competition at 18, and soon found himself in the company of two luminaries, Yehudi Menuhin and Mstislav Rostropovich. His schooling took place in Strasbourg, Paris, and Bloomington. His biography mentions wider interests as a singer, pianist, and composer. Fanfare readers are most likely to associate Coppey's name with the Ysaÿe Quartet, where he was a member from 1995 to 2000.

Being ubiquitous, the Dvořák Cello Concerto has been the vehicle for a kaleidoscope of styles; my taste runs to the grand, passionate, and personal style of Rostropovich and du Pré. The fairly low-key conducting of Kirill Karabits in the first-movement introduction makes clear that this isn't his way, so Coppey's first entrance, which is more florid and simply loud (thanks to very close miking) isn't quite in sync. Using a focused and beautiful tone, especially in the upper register, the soloist grabs one's attention as the dominant force in the performance. Conductor and cellist agree that the lyrical second theme in the first movement should be delicate and gentle. I was also impressed at how even Coppey's tone is from top to bottom, and how good his intonation is. He doesn't dig in for a big sound in his low notes but prefers a supple, uniform timbre.

There's an impressive musicality about everything here. I was reminded of my most recent encounter with the Dvořák Concerto, from Christian Poltéra, Thomas Dausgaard, and the same Deutsches Symphony Berlin as on the present release (reviewed in Fanfare 40:1). That was a very memorable reading, but Coppey and Karabits give nothing away to it for vigor, expression, and musicality. The Adagio gains added eloquence by being a little quieter than usual, as in the Bloch. The finale is lean, propulsive, and exciting. What more can we ask?

As a filler we get Klid, a meditative piece for piano duet that Dvořák later arranged for cello and piano before orchestrating it. Better known as Silent Woods, it is the slow movement of a four-part suite titled From the Bohemian Forest. The music was new to me, but its six minutes is based on a lovely, flowing theme, as you'd expect from one of music's great melodists. Coppey performs with rapt sensitivity.

Given so much to appreciate and nothing to criticize, this release deserves a warm welcome. I'm motivated to seek out everything this exceptional cellist has recorded previously, including the Bach suites from 2003.



**Fanfare** October 2017 (Steven Kruger - 2017.10.01)

source: <http://www.fanfarearchive.com/articles/a...>

fanfare

Cellists come in three general varieties, I often think: lugubrious, slithery, or chaste. Lugubrious cellists wrestle their instruments with bear claws, heave about in bardic misery and adjust the weight of the world with pregnant pauses. Rostropovich comes to mind, and du Pré. Slithery cellists, on the other hand, are fleet and scrape-less, all about elision and dazzling uplift on glycerin-coated wings—think Heinrich Schiff or Christian Poltéra. Then we have the chaste: cellists pure-of-tone, reserved, smooth, aristocratic. János Starker comes to mind, and now the simply gorgeous playing of Strasbourg-born Marc Coppey, worthy successor to his teacher, who brings us the most enjoyable, quietly artful version of Schelomo I know.

It's hard to recall Ernest Bloch was once a popular Swiss/American Jewish composer. Bloch held grandiose convictions about his talents and what we'd call his DNA, and thought himself the inner source of a future Hebraic musical style for Palestine. Later becoming an American immigrant, Bloch was convinced he could replace the U.S. national anthem with his rhapsody America. He failed to do either. But he did certainly anticipate Cecil B. DeMille.

These days we're lucky to hear Baal Shem or run into a chamber orchestra performing one of the two concerti grossi. But listen with care to Schelomo, written in 1916, and you encounter influences others picked up from him, a sure sign of how seriously Bloch was once taken. In fact, ask me quickly what Schelomo sounds like, and I'm tempted to say "Jewish Respighi." There's an ostinato melody for two bassoons which Bloch uses as contrast in the middle of the piece. It's a Jewish childhood tune his mother used to sing. Start humming and you can imagine how easily it might evoke a few years later the pulsating grandeur of catacombs in Respighi's The Pines of Rome. There are several massive climaxes in Schelomo. One of them winds down in a manner suggestive of the first movement of the Shostakovich Fifth Symphony, written decades later. So everyone was certainly paying attention, it would seem.

And well they should, here. This is the first fully hysteria-free interpretation I've heard. Schelomo, the cello's voice, represents biblical King Solomon, and Bloch's music portrays the crashing of Solomon's world through vanity. Bloch witnessed the same thing happening to the Europe he knew, then busy slaughtering itself in World War I—message enough. But ever since World War II, you get the impression that Schelomo must have been about the Holocaust (which it could not have anticipated), and it's usually played for fingernail-edged intensity and glass-shattering anxiety. Munch and Piatigorsky nearly burn a hole in the stage with their classic 1950s rendition. Not here: This performance is so refined and beautiful, it could nearly be Fauré. Kirill Karabits and Marc Coppey are very much on the same page, with little agogic rubato and everything smoothly dovetailed. For the first time, I really like Schelomo as music, not message.

Coppey and Karabits's refined approach leads to a different sort of Dvořák Cello Concerto than we often hear, of course, a touch understated. An interesting comparison is to be had with a CD released by the Deutsches SO three years ago for BIS, with cellist Christian Poltéra and Thomas Dausgaard conducting. Dausgaard is an original, intuitive musician who has a remarkable way of bouncing forward and finding flecks of light in inner voices. And Poltéra is an impassioned cellist who "slithers." The Deutsches Symphony plays beautifully for both conductors, but you can guess I find Dausgaard more exciting. Nonetheless, Coppey keeps growing on one here. And Karabits achieves a kind of temperamental perfection. We have quite a wonderful release before us, when all is said and done, and the lyrical, gentle Silent Woods is just the right sort of complement from Dvořák's pen to Marc Coppey's more chaste instincts. Audite's sound is as good as BIS's, but with the cello presented slightly more forward. It amuses me to note what must be the principal French horn in both performances play his big first movement solo with very un-German vibrato, but with no harm done. Be sure to hear this.

New recordings of Dvořák's B-Minor Cello Concerto continue apace, but it has been quite a while since a new recording of Bloch's "Hebraic Rhapsody," *Schelomo*, has come my way. The piece doesn't seem to be as popular as it once was. In a not too distant review of Marc Coppey performing cellos concertos by Haydn and C. P. E. Bach (39:6), I suggested that the cellist's manner of address might be better suited to repertoire of the Romantic period which he has recorded before, namely works by Grieg, Richard Strauss, Maurice Emmanuel, and Théodore Dubois. And as if right on cue, here Coppey is in two mainstream masterpieces of the Romantic cello literature.

I may have been a bit unkind to Bloch's *Schelomo* in a performance by Truls Mørk in 28:6, when I referred to the "Ben-Hur, Hollywood kitsch" aspects of the score. It's true—and the composer admitted as much—that the "Jewish character of the work was not achieved using ancient melodies." Bloch was, however, deeply moved and inspired by the book of Ecclesiastes, authorship of which is attributed to the aged King Solomon, who, as an old and despairing man, had seen the follies of life and concluded, in pessimism and sorrow, that "All is vanity."

According to Bloch, the idea for *Schelomo* actually had its beginnings in 1915 in sketches for a large choral-orchestral setting of the Ecclesiastes text. But he wasn't fluent in Hebrew and the translations into German, French, and English just didn't seem to work. It wasn't until Bloch met the cellist Alexander Barjansky that his path forward became clear. Solomon would speak not in words but in a language more immediate, direct, and understandable by audiences of diverse languages and dialects. *Schelomo* would be a portrait of the ancient king—represented by the solo cello—recalling and commenting on the swirl of events and experiences—represented by the orchestra—that shaped his life and led him to his profound loss of faith in humanity.

As booklet note author Habakuk Traber points out, "*Schelomo* is the only piece in Bloch's oeuvre to have a dark ending." But Traber didn't need to tell us that; Bloch tells us that himself: "Even the darkest of my works end with hope. This work alone concludes in a complete negation, but the subject demands it!" And no wonder. The work was completed in 1916 while the composer and his family were still in Geneva during some of the darkest days of World War I. By the following year, Bloch had emigrated to the U.S., and *Schelomo* received its first performance on May 3, 1917 in Carnegie Hall. The soloist was Hans Kindler, principal cellist of the Philadelphia Orchestra under Stokowski, and the concert was conducted by Artur Bodanzky.

Dvořák's B-Minor Cello Concerto is so familiar on record and on concert stages across the globe that it needs no introduction. The album note does observe, however, that in at least one way Dvořák's concerto is a mirror image of Bloch's *Schelomo*. Where Bloch's work was composed in Europe but premiered in the U.S., Dvořák's score was composed mainly in New York during the composer's time in America, but its ending was revised slightly when Dvořák returned home to Prague, and the work was premiered in London. Why that particular polarity of place of composition vs. place of first performance makes Bloch's *Schelomo* and Dvořák's concerto birds of a feather I'm not sure, but they do make satisfying discmates.

Unfortunately, I wish satisfying was a word I could use to describe the performances or say that they merit the excellent program note and recording afforded them, but compared to the many outstanding contenders in both works, these hardly rise above the mediocre. In much of the technically difficult passagework, cellist Marc Coppey sounds labored, and even in relaxed moments of lyrical calm his tone, which is a bit on the grainy side to begin with, is not the loveliest I've heard. But Coppey's technical and tonal shortcomings are minor beside Kirill Karabits's lackadaisical conducting and the German Symphony Orchestra Berlin's lapses in good behavior. The orchestra's horns, it seems, have a problem sustaining notes of any significant duration without wavering, and their intonation in places is suspect as well. On top of that, there's some lack of coordination both between and within sections of the orchestra in all-out ensemble passages, as towards the end of the first movement of the Dvořák. It makes for a somewhat muddy-sounding melee,



which I attribute to Karabits's inattention to detail and discipline. These are not works that play themselves without strong leadership from the podium. Previous reviews of Karabits in these pages have been generally quite positive, but I notice that they are all with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, the ensemble he has led as principal conductor since 2009. This, as far as I know, is his first and only recording with the Berlin-based German Symphony Orchestra, so maybe this was a case of conductor and musicians getting to know each other.

Someone once quipped about lawyers that there are so many of them if you laid them out end to end it would be a good thing. I don't know that it would necessarily be a good thing if you laid out all the recordings of Dvořák's B-Minor Cello Concerto end to end, but I do know there are so many of them it would make for a fairly long walk to get to the front of the line. And who would you find when you got there? Well, that's debatable, but I'm pretty sure it wouldn't be Coppey and Karabits.

As for Schelomo, the line isn't nearly as long, so it's a bit easier to pick a leader among the pack. Apart from Zara Nelsova's classic efforts with Abravanel and Ansermet, I very much liked Truls Mørk's performance when I reviewed it in 28:6. I felt that he gave us a portrait of an older and wiser Solomon than the one who had a youthful dalliance with the Queen of Sheba. But I also still find the version by Steven Isserlis with Richard Hickox and the London Symphony Orchestra compelling. I don't think this effort by Marc Coppey and Kirill Karabits earns a place at the head of the line for either the Bloch or the Dvořák.

**Radio-Télévision belge de la Communauté française** 08 janvier 2018  
( - 2018.01.08)

source: <https://www.rtbf.be/musiq3/actualite/a-l...>



#### BROADCAST

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*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Fanfare** December 2017 (Raymond Tuttle - 2017.12.01)

source: <http://www.fanfarearchive.com/articles/a...>



I must admit that I sighed a little as I got ready to review this CD. "Here we go, another Dvořák Cello Concerto," I thought. Even so, my interest and then my excitement mounted as I listened to this disc, because it has so much going for it. It opens with Bloch's Schelomo, a work that I enjoy, but that often seems a little long for its material, and also a little Hollywood-hysterical. The first thing I noticed was how good everything sounds. Cellist Marc Coppey produces an unusually burnished and smooth sound in all three of these works, and both he and the orchestra play with considerable tonal character. And then there's the engineering, which strikes me as superior in its clarity and balance. It also is exceptionally realistic. Pulled in by the sound per se, I was then taken with the sensitivity of the playing. Many lovely things occur during these readings, particularly where Coppey is concerned. One of those lovely things takes place in the last movement of Dvořák's concerto—at the five-minute mark, to be exact, where, after some transitional material, the cellist returns briefly to the movement's opening theme. Coppey plays this passage with eloquent simplicity, and with the most refined and rich tone. Even some of the best cellists have difficulty avoiding awkwardness in some of this concerto's more awkward passages, but not Coppey. He attended conservatories in his native Strasbourg, then Paris, and then Bloomington, and he won the Leipzig Bach Competition in 1988. I think that this is the first time that I have heard him play; I'm certainly going to be checking out his earlier recordings after this! His Bach cello suites are on YouTube. At first listen, they seem a little Romantic to me, but the sound and the assurance of his playing are not to be ignored.

Steven Kruger, Huntley Dent, and Jerry Dubins all beat me to reviews of this program because they were working with a download. (I'm old school, preferring, when I can, to review a physical CD.) I made a point of not reading their reviews until I had formed my own opinion and written the previous paragraph. Dent was similarly impressed with the evenness and beauty of Coppey's tone. Kruger also liked the program very much. Dubins, on the other hand, wrote, "In much of the technically difficult passagework, cellist Marc Coppey sounds labored, and even in relaxed moments of lyrical calm his tone, which is a bit on the grainy side to begin with, is not the loveliest I've heard. But Coppey's technical and tonal shortcomings are minor beside Kirill Karabits's lackadaisical conducting and the German Symphony Orchestra Berlin's lapses in good behavior." Much as I respect Dubins's opinion, I don't share it. (Maybe he should check his computer cables!) In a very competitive field, in which cellists such as Rostropovich, Starker, and Piatigorsky all have given us excellent recordings of this music, Coppey does not supplant them—but he has no reason to be ashamed in their august company. If you're looking for a modern recording of these works in very fine sound, I have no hesitation about recommending this new release to you.

**American Record Guide** November / December 2017 (David W Moore - 2017.11.01)

source: <http://argsubsonline.com/subscribers/ARG...>



The selling point here is the order of the program and the liner notes by Coppey with a further set by Habakuk Traber. These present Schelomo as a work written as Bloch was planning to move to the United States, while the Dvorak concerto was written here while the composer was homesick for his native Bohemia. The quiet Silent Woods is placed between them and, as Coppey puts it: "forges a connection between the reflections of an individual and the violence of being uprooted".

These works are favorites of mine, and I am happy to hear them in this context. The recorded quality is excellent, clean and dramatic; but the interpretations are not always as impressive as the sound. Coppey plays beautifully, but the orchestra is not always clear in its phrasing—I miss some of the answers to the cello's side of the conversation. The dramatic statements are fine on both sides, but the relations are often more vague than they should be, and the orchestra is not always audible in softer passages.

**Classica – le meilleur de la musique classique & de la hi-fi Numéro 201 - Avril 2018 (Yannick Millon - 2018.04.01)**



La rhapsodie hébraïque Schelomo d'Ernest Bloch, basée sur la vie du roi...

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*



## Sergei Prokofiev: Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution

Sergei Prokofiev

CD aud 97.754

[Neue Presse](#) 11.11.2017 (Henning Queren - 2017.11.11)

Neue Presse

### Klingende Revolution

Für Freunde monumentaler Klänge.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[www.pizzicato.lu](http://www.pizzicato.lu) 21/11/2017 (Remy Franck - 2017.11.21)

source: <https://www.pizzicato.lu/musik-eines-sta...>

pizzicato  
Remy Franck's Blog about Classical Music

### Musik eines Staatsgefangenen

Prokofievs Kantate für den 20. Jahrestag der Oktoberrevolution ist alles andere als eine musikalische Hymne an diese Revolution. Im Gegenteil: die Musik, die Prokofiev 1936 komponierte, enthält nichts Positives und nichts Verherrlichendes. Sie ist, unter dem Strich, eine Summe kriegischer und verängstigter Klänge, die den Komponisten 1937 dazu gebracht haben mag, das Werk vorerst mal nicht zu veröffentlichen, um nicht den Zorn des Regimes hervorzurufen. Eine durch die ausgewählten Texte so sarkastische und im Grunde subversive Betrachtung der Revolution und von Stalins neuer Verfassung wäre bestimmt schlecht angekommen zu einem Zeitpunkt als der Stalin-Terror auf seinem Höhepunkt war und Hunderttausende Menschen das Leben kostete.

Stalin, der Lenin nach dessen Schlaganfällen einfach ausschaltete, hätte u.a den zarten Gesang zu Ehren Lenins in gutem Mütterchen-Russland-Stil kaum geschätzt, zumal die Musik zu seiner 'Verfassung' im letzten Teil eher beängstigend klingt.

Diese Unterschiede, diesen Sarkasmus des Komponisten arbeitet Kirill Karabits in seiner Interpretation gut heraus, und die Musik bekommt über weite Strecken einen motorisch-apokalyptischen Charakter, die Prokofievs eigene Stimmung wiedergibt, betrachtete er sich doch nach seiner immer noch ganz verständlichen und mit Spielschulden im Ausland nicht zu erklärenden Rückkehr in die Sowjetunion gewissermaßen als Staatsgefangener, wie Prokofievs Biograph Victor Seroff in seiner Biographie 'Eine sowjetische Tragödie' schrieb.

Entsprechend ist diese Interpretation nicht wirklich monumental und vermeidet jeden Revolutionspathos. Karabits arbeitet in seiner durchgehend spannungsvollen Wiedergabe vor allem die explosive Energie des Stückes heraus.

Die Staatskapelle Weimar mit zusätzlicher Untersetzung des Luftwaffenmusikkorps Erfurt und der Senff-Chor setzen dieses Dirigat sehr gut um, und die Aufnahme verstärkt den schnittigen, extrem klaren

und transparenten Ensembleklang.

Kirill Karabits frees Prokofiev's October Revolution Cantata from any possible revolutionary pathos, so enhancing the satirical and destructive character of the music, which Prokofiev didn't dare to publish. The large ensemble reunited for this performance delivers a tenseful and slender sound superbly caught by the microphones.

[www.opusklassiek.nl](http://www.opusklassiek.nl) november 2017 (Aart van der Wal - 2017.11.01)

source: <https://www.opusklassiek.nl/cd-recensies...>



Onder de inspirerende leiding van Kirill Karabits [...] is het een waar spektakelstuk 'aus einem Guss' geworden, schitterend vastgelegd door 'Tonmeister' Boris Hofmann. Precies honderd jaar geleden was er de Oktoberrevolutie. Vandaag resteert niet meer dan een muzikale herinnering, maar wel een van een groot componist.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[Der neue Merker](http://der-neue-merker.eu) 26. November 2017 (Dr. Ingobert Waltenberger - 2017.11.26)

source: <http://der-neue-merker.eu/sergei-prokofi...>



Das Kunstfest Weimar und Kirill Karabits, Chefdirigent des Deutschen Nationaltheaters und der Staatskapelle Weimar, haben sich entschlossen, 2017 den historischen Ereignissen mit einer beeindruckenden Aufführung dieser pompös aufgeblasenen opernhafte Kantate zu gedenken.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

Thüringische Landeszeitung 23. November 2017 ( - 2017.11.23)

source: <http://www.tlz.de/web/zgt/suche/detail/-...>



**Tschingderassabum: Live-Mitschnitt aus der Weimarahalle auf CD**

*Weimars Staatskapelle hat Prokofjews gewaltige Revolutions-Kantate auf CD eingespielt*

Es war die monströseste Musikaufführung beim Weimarer Kunstfest seit je [...] Aspekte, die eine solch konterkarierende Lesart des vermeintlichen Huldigungs-Epos provozieren, offenbart Karabits eisern, beharrlich. Pathos vermeidet er, soweit möglich.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk MDR Kultur | 23.11.2017 (Dr. Dieter David Scholz - 2017.11.23)



## BROADCAST

Beim diesjährigen Weimarer Kunstfest hat Kirill Karabits das Werk auf der Suche nach dem musikalischen Erbe der kommunistischen Epoche ausgegraben und aufgeführt. Beim Label Audite ist es jetzt in hervorragender technischer Qualität eingespielt worden. Die von Lust am Radau wie von Partiturtreue und spieltechnischer Präzision geprägte Einspielung ist von mitreißender Dynamik und Wucht. Man darf von einer Referenzaufnahme sprechen.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

<http://operalounge.de> 01.12.1017 (Daniel Hauser - 2017.12.01)  
source: <http://operalounge.de/cd/diverses-cd/rus...>



## Schostakowitsch, Tschaikowsky und Prokofjew bei Audite, Sony und Melodya

*Russisches*

Sergei Prokofjews Kantate zum 20. Jahrestag der Oktoberrevolution. Hundert Jahre Oktoberrevolution. Fast dreißig Jahre nach dem Zusammenbruch der Sowjetunion muss das große Spektakel ausbleiben. Anders sah dies freilich zu Zeiten Stalins aus, der das Sowjetimperium zwischen Ende der 1920er Jahre und 1953 beherrschte – oder vielmehr terrorisierte. Zum 1937 anstehenden 20. Jahrestag der Großen Sozialistischen Oktoberrevolution (wie sie seinerzeit offiziell genannt wurde) komponierte niemand Geringerer als Sergei Prokofjew, zweifelsohne alles andere als ein Stalinist, eine Kantate für Sprecher, zwei vierstimmige gemischte Chöre, Akkordeon-, Blechbläser- und Schlagzeug-Ensemble und Orchester mit insgesamt zehn Sätzen. Ganze zwei Jahre dauerte die Arbeit an dem propagandistischen Werk, das dann freilich zum Jubiläumstag gar nicht zur Aufführung gelangte – Prokofjew war in Ungnade gefallen (offiziell wurde das Spektakel wegen „linksradikaler Abweichung und Vulgarität“ abgesagt). Ein riesiges Konzert auf dem Roten Platz in Moskau mit 500 Musikern und Sängern hätte die Feierlichkeiten am 7. November (julianisch 25. Oktober) 1937 krönen sollen. Für die Textauswahl war der seinerzeit in Paris lebende Philosoph und Musikwissenschaftler Pjotr Swutschinski zuständig. Freilich hätte man durchaus sarkastische Töne heraushören können, die Prokofjew auf dem Höhepunkt des Großen Terrors zum Verhängnis werden hätten können. Tatsächlich sollte es noch beinahe drei Jahrzehnte dauern, ehe die Kantate doch noch erklang, lange nach dem am gleichen Tag erfolgten Tode Stalins und des Komponisten. 1966 brachte sie der berühmte sowjetische Dirigent Kirill Kondraschin zur Uraufführung, allerdings in bearbeiteter Form (eine Einspielung erfolgte im Jahr darauf). Die beiden Sätze mit Stalin-Bezug (Nr. 8 und 10) wurden gestrichen, dafür am Ende der zweite Satz wiederholt. Stehen blieben die Texte von Marx, Engels und Lenin. In seiner Urfassung konnte man das Werk erst 1992, ironischerweise kurz nach dem Ende der UdSSR, in London unter Neeme Järvi hören.

Nun also, zum 100. Jubiläum, besorgt mit dem Ukrainer Kirill Karabits ein weiterer renommierter Dirigent der jüngeren Generation eine Neueinspielung dieses zumindest problematischen Werkes im Zuge des Kunstfestes Weimar (Audite 97.754). Ihm zur Seite stehen der Ernst Senff Chor Berlin, die Staatskapelle Weimar und Mitglieder des Luftwaffenmusikkorps Erfurt. Es wurde also gewissermaßen alles in Gang gesetzt, um diesem wenig bekannten Werk eine neue Chance zu verschaffen und seinem künstlerischen Wert auf den Grund zu gehen. Vom Sturm auf das Winterpalais des Zaren über Lenins Tod bis hin zur Verabschiedung einer neuen Verfassung durch Stalin zieht sich das episch angelegte Opus. Dass es sich um eine Live-Aufnahme handelt, kann man gelegentlichen Publikumsgeräuschen entnehmen. Ansonsten ist der Klang ausgezeichnet eingefangen worden. Inwieweit der deutsche Chor den russischen Texten gerecht wird, müsste indes ein Muttersprachler beurteilen. Hervorgehoben werden sollte, dass die gerade erst im August erfolgte Aufführung bereits jetzt, im November, pünktlich zum 100. Jubiläum, auf CD erscheint.

Vergleicht man die Neuaufnahme mit der 50 Jahre alten unter Kondraschin (Melodija), fallen in den vergleichbaren Sätzen (damals entfielen ja derer zwei) die sehr ähnlichen, teilweise bis auf die Sekunde identischen Spielzeiten auf. Hat sich Karabits an Kondraschin orientiert? In einigen wenigen Abschnitten lässt dieser sich ein klein wenig mehr Zeit, so in der Zwischenmusik des dritten Satzes und beim Sieg der Revolution im siebten Satz. Dies allein ist freilich kein Qualitätsmerkmal. Dass die Moskauer Philharmoniker und der Staatliche Jurlow-Chor zu Breschnews Zeiten noch idiomatischer agieren als die gleichwohl sehr engagierten deutschen Kräfte, liegt auf der Hand. Besonders während des Revolutionssatzes (Nr. 6) geht Karabits gleichwohl aufs Ganze. Die ihm innewohnende Brutalität wird durch schrille Glocken und Sirenen und mörderische Maschinengewehrschüsse unterstrichen. Als Krönung des Ganzen dann noch ein Sprecher mit Megaphon, der die Stimme Lenins verkörpert. Karabits ließ es sich nicht nehmen, dies selbst zu übernehmen. Der dramatische Höhepunkt des Werkes darf hier verortet werden. Nach dem triumphalen Sieg sodann pathetisch verklärend der im achten Satz erfolgende Eid. Die an vorletzter Stelle plazierte, rein instrumentale, etwa sechsminütige sogenannte Sinfonie könnte aus einer derselben des Komponisten stammen. Zuletzt die von Stalin auf den Weg gebrachte Verfassung, die diesen Namen kaum verdiente und in der alten Sowjetaufnahme auch gestrichen wurde. Naturgemäß erreicht das Pathos im Finale seinen Höhepunkt. Schwere Kost, die man sich allenfalls anlässlich allfälliger Jubiläen antun sollte. [...]

**concerti - Das Konzert- und Opernmagazin Januar 2018 (RD - 2018.01.01)**



### Lautstarke Agitation

Diese Hommage macht sogar Tschaikowskys Ouvertüre 1812 zum Kinderlied! Prokofjews Kantate zum zwanzigjährigen Jubiläum der Oktoberrevolution ist ein tückischer Monolith. [...] Eine vorsätzlich fragwürdige Leistungsschau mit hypnotisierender Stoßkraft.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Stereoplay 2|2018 (MC - 2018.02.01)**



### Unbekümmert bombastisch

Es ist der Ehrlichkeit des Dirigenten und seinem gestalterischen Weitblick zu verdanken, dass die collageartige Ästhetik dieser Kantate ihre Wirkung nicht verfehlt. Der plastische Klang des Live-Dokuments macht den unbekümmerten Bombast der Klangsprache auch zu Hause nachvollziehbar.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*





Prokofiev's Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution is a work that requires vast forces, so opportunities to hear it don't come along every day. In 2009 I got the chance to experience a live performance when I attended one of a pair of performances in which Valery Gergiev conducted the combined forces of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, the CBSO Chorus and the Chorus & Orchestra of the Mariinsky Theatre. It was an astonishing experience, not least because the Cantata formed merely the first half of a programme that was completed by nothing less than the immense *Grande Messe des Morts* by Berlioz. In preparation for that concert I bought Neeme Järvi's 1992 Chandos recording. I have it still, though I would be deceiving readers if I said that I had listened to the disc much since 2009, though Järvi's is a fine recording. It was made in London immediately following a concert in which he gave the Cantata its UK premiere.

The fact that it took the Cantata some 55 years to achieve a UK performance may partly be explained by the huge forces required, of which more in a moment. However, that's not the whole story. It is, inevitably, a *pièce d'occasion* - and a highly politicised one at that - but even so it didn't find favour in Stalin's Soviet Union. You might have thought that a cantata which sets words from the writings and speeches of Marx, Lenin and Stalin would have ticked all the boxes, but such was not the case. When he wrote his excellent booklet note to accompany the Järvi recording Christopher Palmer had to admit that the reasons why the Cantata attracted disapproval were, at that time, unknown. He cited the conjecture of Oleg Prokofiev, the composer's son, that by the time the work was finished, at the zenith of Stalin's Great Terror, no one in the Soviet Union's artistic circles dared to put their head above the parapet. Consequently, everyone was afraid to take responsibility for staging Prokofiev's new score. Dorothea Redepenning, the author of the fascinating Audite note, is able to draw on more recent scholarship and it seems that Oleg Prokofiev was correct. In 1937 musical officialdom was wary of - or downright hostile towards - the idea of allowing the words of Lenin or Stalin to be set to music. Prokofiev was pressed to set different, preferably folk-like texts instead but he refused. After much frantic behind the scenes activity Prokofiev played through the Cantata at the piano in front of the State Committee on the Arts, singing the vocal parts himself. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this run-through went badly and the work was doomed. It was not included in the musical celebrations of the Revolution's anniversary and, in fact, it was not heard until 1966. Even then cuts were made to make it more ideologically acceptable in the Soviet Union during the post-Stalinist era. Kirill Kondrashin, who directed the delayed premiere, was obliged to excise movements 8 and 10, Palmer tells us, because these set words by the now-discredited Stalin. He also made a large cut in the purely orchestral ninth movement. Kondrashin's recording uses that truncated version of the score, I believe. I think I'm right in saying that the Järvi recording was the first to use the complete score.

So too does Kirill Karabits on this new recording. It was made live at a concert which was part of Kunstfest Weimar 2017, which marked the centenary of the Bolshevik Revolution. Kirill Karabits is Chief Conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. He set down with them a complete Prokofiev symphony cycle which I admired so I was keen to hear him direct this rarely-heard cantata. Since 2016 Karabits has also been Music Director of the Deutsches Nationaltheater und Staatskapelle Weimar and for this live recording he is at the helm of the Staatskapelle Weimar.

Prokofiev wrote the work shortly after his return to Russia from his lengthy self-imposed exile from post-Revolutionary Russia. It seems that he had been pondering a composition based on Lenin's writings for some years so this work was not written on impulse in some burst of patriotic fervour by a returning exile. It is scored on a lavish scale. The basic orchestra is huge, including quadruple woodwind, eight horns, four each of trumpets and trombones and a pair of tubas. There's also a vast array of percussion and an eight-part mixed choir. Lest they be forgotten, a substantial string section is also needed. But that's not all. Prokofiev also wrote important parts for an accordion band and for a brass ensemble that is completely separate from the main orchestra's brass section. There's a photograph in Audite's booklet which shows all the performers assembled for the concert. The choir and orchestra are squeezed onto the stage but two groups of players can't be accommodated on the platform itself; off to the conductor's left is

the percussion department and on his right the extra brass are deployed – I count 14 brass players.

The key question is this: is it worth assembling this phalanx of performers for a work lasting just over 40 minutes? When I attended the Gergiev concert I reached the view that the sheer physical impact of the piece in the concert hall takes one aback. However, while I was impressed by this and by the technical excellence of the performance I was not greatly moved by the music. Having listened to this new Karabits recording – and made some comparisons with the Järvi – I've come to a rather different conclusion.

The Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution is cast in ten sections. The first bears an epigraph from The Communist Manifesto: 'A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of communism...' However, these words are not heard; it is a purely orchestral movement. Prokofiev's music, vividly scored, conveys a sense of conflict and lowering power. The music also struck me as having an air of menace but, since there's no Shostakovich-like subversive irony in this score, Prokofiev probably didn't intend to suggest menace.

The textual source of the second movement is an unlikely one for a musical composition: Marx's Theses on Feuerbach. Here, the listener is struck by the contrast between, on the one hand, the staccato writing for the male voices and, on the other hand, the rather lovely lyrical music for the female voices, which soars over the men's' material. Eventually, all the voices sing the lyrical music, which is very typical Prokofiev. There follows a short instrumental Interlude which features quite spooky orchestration.

Movement four, setting some words of Lenin, is music of struggle and determination; that fits the tenor of the words very well. Another orchestral Interlude follows. Here, the music is urgent, even strident, and Karabits ensures that his orchestra projects it strongly. Then we reach the sixth section, which is the longest and most dramatic. Here, using an assemblage of extracts from speeches and articles authored by Lenin in October 1917, Prokofiev depicts the Revolution itself. There's a high level of dissonance and considerable urgency in the writing and the present performance is red-blooded and gripping. Throughout the Cantata the contribution of the Ernst Senff Choir is marvellous but in this movement special mention must be made of the clarity of their diction. In the hubbub I couldn't always follow the words but most of the time I could hear what they were singing. From about 6:00 onwards the writing is particularly tumultuous with contributions from, among others, an alarm bell and a siren. At 6:55 we hear the accordion band for the first time. I presume their involvement here and elsewhere later in the score is intended to suggest proletarian involvement in the Revolution. To be honest, the scoring rather suggests piling Pelion on Ossa as the movement progresses but it must be said that Prokofiev sustains a genuine sense of the fervour of the crowd and the febrile atmosphere of the Revolution is conveyed. In the midst of the musical melee a speaker is required to declaim some of Lenin's words through a megaphone. Here Karabits does the job himself – presumably leaving the vast ensemble to its own devices for a few seconds. Neeme Järvi has Gennady Rozhdestvensky, no less, to do the honours. It doesn't sound to me as though the distinguished conductor used a megaphone – I'm sure Karabits does – but his voice is marginally the clearer of the two.

After all this frenetic excitement, the seventh movement, 'Victory', is, as you might expect, a big, aspiring chorus which gives thanks for the success of the Revolution. At 4:16 listeners who are new to the work may be slightly surprised by an unexpected sound. It's the choir, who are instructed to march on the spot as they sing "We need a measured advance of the iron battalions of the proletariat". Their marching continues almost to the end of the movement and it's surprisingly effective.

Movement eight brings the first of 'Uncle Joe' Stalin's contributions to the proceedings – this was one of the movements that was cut in 1966. 'The Oath' is an extract from the oration he delivered at Lenin's funeral bier. This is a hymn of Soviet Socialist Realism though Prokofiev surprises from time to time through his rather restrained use of dynamics. At the end, however, there are no holds barred: rhetorical pledges of loyalty to Lenin's memory are declaimed at maximum volume.

The penultimate movement is an orchestral Symphony. Much of the music is vigorous and celebratory, though from time to time we hear passages in a gentler vein and these are welcome. The movement features a good deal of very typical – and very effective – Prokofiev scoring. The finale bears the title 'The Constitution' and it's another setting of a Stalin speech. The movement is something of a slow burner but

eventually rises to a huge C major apotheosis. I recall that the audience responded enthusiastically to the performance I attended in Birmingham and the Weimar audience is no less appreciative.

I said that I'd reached a different view of the Cantata as a result of hearing the Karabits recording – and re-sampling the Järvi version. I found that the trick was to ignore, or at least overlook, the words once I'd got a good idea of what's going on; thereafter I simply concentrated on the music itself. The music isn't top drawer Prokofiev but I now think that it's better – much better, in fact – than I first thought. The choral writing is very effective but it's the colourful, inventive and vivid orchestral scoring that really invests the work with considerable interest. The work's cause is helped no end by the fervour and dynamism of the present performance. Here Kirill Karabits confirms again his stature as a Prokofiev interpreter. The performance is never less than exciting and the quality of both the choral singing and the playing of the Staatskapelle Weimar is superb.

What advice, then, should I give prospective purchasers? The Neeme Järvi performance is a very fine one, though I fancy that the Karabits version has the extra electricity of a live performance. The Chandos recording wears its 25 years very lightly. It's still a most impressive piece of engineering. However, the Audite recording, made in collaboration with Deutschlandradio, has rather more impact and this, I think, is for two reasons. Firstly, the excellent Philharmonia Chorus is a little further back in the sound picture on the Järvi disc – I think also that the professional Ernst Senff Choir sings even more incisively than do their British rivals. Secondly, the Chandos recording was made in a church - All Saints, Tooting – whereas, to judge from the booklet photograph, the Karabits performance was given in a wood-lined modern concert hall.

So, I think the Karabits performance and recording both have a slight edge. However, one can't overlook that the Järvi disc comes with a substantial filler in the shape of excerpts from the ballet, The Tale of the Stone Flower. In all, his disc runs to 72:43. By contrast, the Audite playing time of just 41:55 looks distinctly short measure. I looked up the Weimar concert programme and found that the accompanying piece was the 2007 Concerto for Turntables and Orchestra by Prokofiev's grandson, Gabriel Prokofiev (b 1975). There are probably good reasons why that piece wasn't included on the disc also but it's a pity that some kind of 'filler' could not have been included to make this new disc a more economical proposition.

On balance, if you already have the Järvi in your collection you can rest easy: it remains a fine version. However, if you can live with the short playing time, I think this new Karabits recording has the edge over the Järvi disc. It's a very impressive addition to the Ukrainian conductor's discography and it's certainly opened my ears to Prokofiev's cantata, revealing it as a work of great interest.

**Rondo 16.12.2017 (Guido Fischer - 2017.12.16)**

source: <http://www.rondomagazin.de/kritiken.php?...>

**RONDO**  
Jazz, Klassik & mehr Magazine

[...] die im Rahmen des Kunstfests Weimar mitgeschnittene Neuaufnahme [ist] aber mehr als nur das Zeitdokument einer vergangenen Epoche. Was das bisweilen collagenartige Gefüge angeht, bei dem russische Volksliedanleihen auf schneidende Rhythmen, Akkordeon- auf Sirenenklänge, Straßen-Parolen auf sakrale Hymnen treffen, gelingt der höchst engagierten Teamleistung unter der Leitung des Ukrainers Kirill Karabits ein Agitprop-Sound, der nicht von gestern ist, sondern in seiner Modernität durchaus packend.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**The Arts Fuse 26.01.2018 (Jonathan Blumhofer - 2018.01.26)**

source: <http://artsfuse.org/167493/classical-cd-...>

The  
Arts  
Fuse

The current performance by the Ernst Senff Chor, Staatskapelle Weimar, and conductor Karabits fully embraces the music's wild contrasts of extremes. The choral contributions are mighty: sometimes fierce, sometimes warm, always robust and precise. Much the same can be said for the orchestral playing, which is full of biting rhythms, aggressive attacks, and a wild array of colors. It says much about the interpretation, though, that the piece comes over with such cohesion, never, even in its loudest episodes, simply dissolving into noise. This is an ensemble and conductor that have the music in their blood and they proselytize for it accordingly.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Gramophone February 2018 (David Gutman - 2018.02.01)**

source:

<https://www.gramophone.co.uk/review/prok...>

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Following Prokofiev's decision to reinvent himself as a Soviet composer, he wrote much that remains ideologically controversial. Less nakedly propagandist than Zdravitsa ('Hail to Stalin'), a toast to the dictator on his 60th birthday, the earlier Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution proved too radical for the commissars and was not given in Russia until 1965 (and then only in bowdlerised form). Kirill Kondrashin taped approved highlights for Melodiya (EMI, 8/70) but the rest could not be performed thanks to its inclusion of texts by the now anathematised Stalin. Finally, in 1992, Neeme Järvi set down the whole thing in London, presiding over an unorthodox line-up including accordion players, military band, marching feet and a cameo appearance by Gennady Rozhdestvensky with loudhailer, incarnating the voice of Lenin. At the live event from which the present recording derives, Kirill Karabits himself swivelled round to do the honours, baton in one hand, megaphone in the other. The only complete account with claims to timbral authenticity, Alexander Titov's from 1997 (St Petersburg Classics CGC006), has enjoyed more limited circulation, although the CD is available online.

Set against the familiar Chandos option, Karabits drives noticeably faster in those movements which include a text. While there are sound musical reasons for the attendant lightening of texture, there may also be a conscious attempt to downplay the ideological content. The results are undeniably exciting if less than seismic, the recorded sound wonderfully clear without threatening to overwhelm domestic speakers. No coupling either; but anyone who enjoys Karabits's lithe and lucid work with his other, British orchestra will relish this unexpected add-on to his Bournemouth-made Prokofiev symphony cycle (Onyx).

Could this be the new 1812 Overture? Or should we be wary when a score so directly represents a submission to and celebration of unpalatable politics? There's little evidence of irony in Prokofiev's October Cantata yet Karabits's musicians, many of them former East Germans, seem unfazed, plainly relishing Prokofiev's unlikely mix of 1920s agitprop, cinematic pattern music and longbreathed, 'socialist-realist' melody. A modicum of applause is retained and you may even want to join in.

[www.gobuz.com](http://www.gobuz.com) 27. November 2017 (Sandra Zoor - 2017.11.27)  
source: <https://www.gobuz.com/DE-de/info/Actuali...>



### Revolution mit Prokofjew

*Zum 100. Jahrestag der Oktoberrevolution veröffentlicht das Label Audite ein historisches Dokument...*

Die Kantate changiert zwischen revolutionärem Ungestüm und lyrischen Melodien, zwischen russischer Folklore und tosendem Militärgetümmel. Ein bemerkenswertes historisches Dokument auf höchstem kompositorischem Niveau

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**BBC Music Magazine March 2018 ( - 2018.03.01)**



### STUDIO FOCUS Kirill Karabits

*The conductor on his live recording of Prokofiev's Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution*

The 20th anniversary of the October Revolution in 1937 triggered many patriotic works, including this one... One could say this is a propaganda piece but at the same time there's truth in it. While Prokofiev had to make compromises – he originally used only text by Lenin, but was then told to add words by Stalin too – he still remained true to himself. He is praising a new type of man born after the revolution, and he is saying that society will be forever changed. He really believes this, and you can hear it in the music.

But the work wasn't performed as part of the celebrations...

The authorities wanted something straightforward and secure, and this wasn't – no one could predict how people would react to it. It's so overwhelming and strong – it's a masterpiece rather than something that praises the Communist Party.

How did you come to record it?

It wasn't planned as a recording. My main motivation was to perform it. With 2017 being the 100th anniversary of the October Revolution, I said to myself, if I were ever to conduct it, now is the moment. The Kunstfest Weimar like unusual projects so I had the idea to present two Prokofievs in one of their concerts last summer – this work, alongside Gabriel Prokofiev's Concerto for Turntables. Then Deutschlandradio in Berlin heard about it and wanted to do a broadcast. So then we talked to audite and they said they'd love to release the recording.

How challenging was it to perform/record?

The selection of voices and instruments Prokofiev uses is extraordinary – there's a huge orchestra, an accordion ensemble, a large choir, a military band with extra percussion... With around 200 performers in total, we couldn't all fit on the stage so we had to use part of the hall as well. It was also an extraordinary task for the radio people to record it. They recorded our first rehearsal and also the general rehearsal so, while most of the material on the recording is from the live performance, they had enough extra material to choose from.

Tell us about the gunshots and the megaphone...

It wasn't a real gun but it looked like one, so we had to warn the audience to stay calm. And I got to imitate Lenin by speaking his words into a megaphone... It wasn't easy to do because I had to turn to the audience while carrying on conducting! It was all very theatrical, but that's what Prokofiev wanted.

How involved were you in the editing?



They sent me the final edit, I listened carefully and gave back my comments. I'm very pleased with the end result. I wasn't compromising as a conductor just because I knew it was being recorded. It's a fantastic document of an extraordinary concert – we'll probably have to wait another 100 years for another performance!

The recording, on audite, is released in the UK on February 16 and will be reviewed next issue.

## Choir & Organ January / February 20218 ( - 2018.01.01)

CHOIR  
&  
ORGAN

### On release

*New discs coming out in...January and February 2018*

The Russian Revolution, whose centenary was marked in various ways throughout 2017, has always been regarded with abhorrence, ambivalence, or jubilation. According to his autobiography, the composer Prokofiev initially 'welcomed (the February revolution) joyfully'; by the time he wrote Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution [audite 97754] his feelings may have been somewhat more conflicted, as Stalin's 'Great Terror' raged. However, after more than a decade living abroad, he had resettled in Moscow, and with artists in the country treading a tightrope at that time, any qualms he might have had about the regime were quashed, at least in public. Nevertheless, and despite setting texts by Marx, Lenin and Stalin, the monumental Cantata fell foul of the Committee for Artistic Affairs and was banned from being performed for not meeting the criteria of 'socialist realism', only eventually being premiered 1966.

**RBB Kulturradio Fr 15.12.2017 | 13:10 (Matthias Käther - 2017.12.15)**

source: <https://www.kulturradio.de/programm/sche...>



### BROADCAST

Sendebeleg siehe PDF!

**SWR SWR2 Musikstunde, 04.12.2017 (Michael Struck-Schloen - 2017.12.04)**



### BROADCAST

*Moloch Moskau – eine musikalische Entdeckung*

Mitte der dreißiger Jahre wurden Moskau und die Sowjetunion von einer Welle staatlicher Gewalt überzogen; Hunderttausende, darunter viele Künstler und Intellektuelle, starben in den Gulags und den Folterkellern der Geheimpolizei. Ein patriotischer Russe wie Sergej Prokofjew jedoch, der seine Heimat kurz nach der Revolution verlassen hatte und 1936 reuig zurückkehrte, hatte keine Probleme, den Genossen Stalin auch in dieser Zeit des Terrors in einer großen Kantate zu feiern.

Musik: Sergej Prokofjew: Kantate zum 20. Jahrestag der Oktoberrevolution op. 74  
7. Sieg (Text: W. I. Lenin)

„Sieg“, ein Satz aus Sergej Prokofjews Kantate zum 20. Jahrestag der Oktoberrevolution auf einen Text von Wladimir Iljitsch Lenin. 1937 war das Werk fertig, doch die Partei verzichtete auf eine Aufführung – offenbar ging ihr die Vertonung der Texte von Lenin und Stalin letztlich zu weit. Während Stalin nach dem



Zweiten Weltkrieg in der Stadt Moskau architektonisch seine Duftmarken setzte und sieben kolossale Hochhäuser im sozialistischen Zuckerbäckerstil bauen ließ – die so genannten „Sieben Schwestern“ –, hielt er sich im Kreml erstaunlich zurück. Vielleicht war ihm die Zarenresidenz letztlich nicht geheuer. Erst sein Nachfolger und ideologischer Totengräber Nikita Chruschtschow hat sich im Kreml noch einmal verewigt, als er für die Parteitage der KPDSU einen neuen Kongresspalast aus Glas, Beton und Marmor bauen ließ. Um das Gebäude im kantigen Funktionalismus nicht allzu penetrant aus dem historischen Ensemble herausstechen zu lassen, wurde es 17 Meter in den Kremloboden hineingepflanzt – besticht aber immer noch durch imposante Hässlichkeit. Heute regiert Wladimir Putin im Kreml wieder unter dem russischen Doppeladler – und fühlt sich in seinem Selbstverständnis den Zaren näher als den Sowjetfürsten. Die Kirchen sind wieder geöffnet, die Religion und der Glaube an die Macht des Geldes haben den Kampf für die Weltrevolution ersetzt. Ein Verwaltungsgebäude aus dem Jahr 1934 hat Putin schon abreißen lassen, um wieder Platz für das Tschudow- und das Himmelfahrtskloster zu machen, zwei prominente Opfer von Stalins Abrisspolitik. Aber noch fehlt das Geld für eine Rekonstruktion der Kirchenbauten – und so dürfen an der Baustelle erst einmal die Archäologen die Geschichte des Kremls untersuchen. Finden dürften Sie genug. Die politische Jubelstimmung, die mit der Perestroika aufkam, ist mit Putins Aufstieg weitgehend verfliegen; Hoffnungen auf einen demokratischen Wandel sind dem Lamento über den autoritären Regierungsstil des Präsidenten gewichen. [...]

[www.artalinna.com](http://www.artalinna.com) 22 January 2018 (Jean-Charles Hoffelé - 2018.01.22)  
source: <http://www.artalinna.com/?p=8960>



### Sang et cendres

Le concert ici restitué fut donc un événement, Kirill Karabits y réglant avec brio [...]

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[www.europadisc.co.uk](http://www.europadisc.co.uk) 01.02.2018 ( - 2018.02.01)  
source: <https://www.europadisc.co.uk/>



Karabits here shows himself a natural master of Prokofiev's musical language, knowing exactly when to apply drive and grandeur without destroying the music's underlying lyricism. [...] With superb orchestral support, the choral contributions are uniformly excellent, the balance ideal, the sense of commitment palpable.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**BBC Radio 3** 24.02.2018 (Andrew McGregor - 2018.02.24)



### BROADCAST

[...] the music is gritty, colourfully theatrical. There's nothing apologetic about the way they engage with it – they make you believe in Prokofiev's music. [...] If it's ever to shake off the tag of being a piece of propaganda with slim musical pickings then I suspect this is the recording.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

If your paradigm for Soviet music of the 1930s is Shostakovich – and that's probably a mistake – then one searches Prokofiev's cantata in vain for any hint of tonal or programmatic ambiguity. And yet there was considerable disagreement over the composer's use of texts by the Bolshevik founding fathers (setting Lenin to music? unthinkable!) and his adoption of 'futurist' sound effects (which were known to be anathema to the late leader). The result was that despite Molotov urging that the final score should be left to the composer's discretion, the cantata was rejected for public performance. It was recorded last August as part of the Kunstfest Weimar, which seeks to explore east-west materials in a reunited Germany. The huge score is stirring, unashamedly affirmative but so dramatically delivered that it is easy to forget how negative and inhumane was the regime it was affirming. A model live recording from the Weimarahalle, which always has good sound.

### Diapason N° 666 - Mars 2018 (Christophe Huss - 2018.03.01)

Cette fresque de 1937 « pour deux chœurs mixtes, orchestre symphonique, orchestre de cuivres, ensemble d'accordéons et instruments bruyants » a de quoi impressionner l'amateur de déchaînements orchestraux et choraux. Certes, elle pâtit de son statut de musique officielle du régime soviétique, au même titre que Le Chant des forêts de Chostakovitch. Ses différents textes, rapiécés pour fêter le vingtième anniversaire de la révolution d'Octobre, ont pour auteurs Marx, Engels, Lénine et Staline. Moins immédiatement flatteuse que ' Alexandre Nevski ou Ivan le Terrible, la cantate de Prokofiev a été ressortie des tiroirs en plusieurs endroits en 2017 à l'occasion du centenaire de ladite révolution, qui nous vaut la présente parution.

Au disque, cet Opus 74 est associé à la gravure Melodiya de Kirill Kondrachine... qui en assura la création ! Car la partition, destinée à plusieurs centaines d'exécutants, ne fut pas jouée en 1937, et Prokofiev ne l'entendit jamais. En mai 1966, lorsque Kondrachine en donna la première audition, Staline était tombé en disgrâce et les mouvements composés sur ses textes (dont le finale !) furent retranchés, y compris pour le disque. Kondrachine s'en tira tant bien que mal en reprenant le deuxième mouvement ( Les Philosophes ) en guise de conclusion, mais la solution, bancale, ne faisait pas illusion. Il fallut attendre 1992 pour découvrir le premier enregistrement intégral, en dix volets, sous la baguette de Neeme Järvi pour Chandos. Avec Le Serment ( VIII ), l'intégralité de la Symphonie qui lui fait suite ( IX ) et le finale, intitulé La Constitution.

Kirill Karabits défend la même partition lors de ce concert du 23 août 2017 à Weimar. Sa direction fluide et vive tente de retrouver le souffle de Kondrachine, tandis que Järvi adoptait un ton plus grandiloquent. Les cinq minutes qui, tout compte fait, séparent les deux interprétations illustrent bien cette différence. En insistant sur l'aspect musical plus que sur le message, Karabits nous amène à percevoir la Cantate pour le vingtième anniversaire de la révolution d'Octobre comme le terrain expérimental de sa collaboration avec Eisenstein pour les films Alexandre Nevski ( 1938 ) et Ivan le Terrible ( 1942-1946 ). Il se plaît aussi à mettre en valeur les singularités de l'orchestration (groupe d'accordéons) et sa démesure. Le sixième volet, Révolution, véritable laboratoire de la « Bataille sur la glace » de Nevski, avec caisse claire obnubilante, sirènes et harangue de la foule au porte-voix constitue le moment fort du CD.

Il reste une marge infime pour surpasser encore cet accomplissement : un chœur russe, avec ses singulières couleurs vocales et un complément de programme dopant un minutage bien chiche.

Fono Forum April 2018 (Thomas Schulz - 2018.04.01)

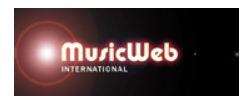
FONO FORUM  
KLASSIK JAZZ HIFI

„100 Jahre Kommunismus“ – so lautete das Motto des Kunstfests Weimar im vergangenen Jahr. Da lag es auf der Hand, ein Werk aufs Programm zu setzen, das konkret einem früheren Jubiläum der Ereignisse von 1917 gewidmet war, nämlich Prokofjews "Kantate zum 20. Jahrestag der Oktoberrevolution". Ungewöhnlich ist dieser Entschluss trotzdem, denn das Werk wird so gut wie nie aufgeführt, vor allem wegen der gigantischen Besetzung, die neben Orchester und Chor auch noch eine zusätzliche Blechbläserkapelle, ein Akkordeonensemble sowie eine futuristische Geräuschinstrumente einbeziehende Schlagzeuggruppe umfasst. Auch die Textzusammenstellung von Marx über Reden von Lenin und Stalin bis zur sowjetischen Verfassung von 1936 ist heute nur noch schwer zu goutieren. Übrigens nicht nur heutzutage: Bei den Mächtigen fand das Werk keine Gnade. So wurde die für 1937 angesetzte Uraufführung fallengelassen, und die Kantate erklang erst nach Prokofjews Tod.

Nichtsdestoweniger hat die Partitur einiges zu bieten – nämlich nicht nur niederschmetternde Wucht, sondern auch avantgardistische Kühnheit bis hin zu Geräuscheffekten (Gewehrsalven, Sirene, Sturmglocke), wie sie Stalin damals garantiert nicht gefallen hätten. Der Dirigent Kirill Karabits verwirklicht gemeinsam mit der Staatskapelle Weimar und dem Ernst Senff Chor Berlin auf bewundernswerte, ja gnadenlose Weise die Extremwerte, lässt es sich auch nicht nehmen, an einer Stelle das in der Partitur geforderte Megafon selbst in die Hand zu nehmen und Lenin'sche Parolen über dem orchestralen Getümmel zu skandieren. Das ist schon ein außergewöhnliches Erlebnis. Die Qualität der einzigen anderen Gesamtaufnahme des ungekürzten Werks unter Neeme Järvi (Chandos) wird mühelos erreicht, wenn nicht überboten. Da fällt auch die magere Spieldauer von 42 Minuten nicht weiter ins Gewicht.

**www.musicweb-international.com Thursday March 22nd (Dan Morgan - 2018.03.22)**

**source:** <http://www.musicweb-international.com/cl...>



Recorded a hundred years after the seismic event it celebrates, this piece finds Kirill Karabits in a very different world to that of Kara Karayev, whose ballet music is the subject of his superb new Chandos recording. However, he's no stranger to Prokofiev, as he and the Bournemouth Symphony have demonstrated with their symphony cycle for Onyx. Admittedly, my colleagues were rather more positive about that project than I was, but, for me at least, the Karayev album really marks out Karabits as a 'conductor of interest'. Indeed, it was one of my top picks for 2017.

As so often, serendipity has played a part in the genesis of this review. Waiting to board a train many years ago I bought a copy of the BBC Music magazine [Vol. 5 No. 2], barely glancing at the cover-mounted CD. Only when I got home I noticed it contained live performances of the Prokofiev Cantata and Shostakovich's To October, the latter written for the 10th anniversary of the Revolution. Both feature the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, augmented by the Geoffrey Mitchell Choir, under Mark Elder. These works were new to me, but such is the proselytizing passion of the performances that they quickly became firm favourites.

Then, a few weeks ago, John Quinn mentioned this new Karabits recording. I thought no more about it until a chance encounter on a web forum, which indicated a 24/48 download could be had, direct from Audite, for a miserly €4.99. Yes, it is only 42 minutes of music, but it's far better value than the CD, which costs up to three times as much online. Given that high-res downloads are generally overpriced, this one is a bona fide bargain. What's more, it includes a digital booklet with texts and translations: other labels, please note.

Speaking of bargains, Neeme Järvi's 1992 recording, with the Philharmonia Orchestra and Chorus, was reissued in 2009; the 16-bit download – with Pdf booklet and artwork – is available from Chandos.net for just £7.99. And that looks even more tempting when you factor in excerpts from Prokofiev's ballet, The

Stone Flower. It's a fine album – more on that later – but it's not in the same league as Järvi's sensational (R)SNO pairing of Alexander Nevsky and the Scythian Suite; recorded in spectacular sound, these are my benchmarks for both works. As an aside, I'm pleased that Chandos updated their website a while back; not only does it look good, it also works well.

Intended to chart the rise of the Soviet Union from the start of the Revolution in October 1917 to the consolidation of Stalin's power in the 1930s, this ten-movement Cantata fell victim to the political uncertainties of the time. Finally premiered in 1966, the piece demands a full orchestra, eight-part chorus, military band, bells, sirens, sundry ordnance and the 'voice of Lenin' heard through a megaphone. Karabits takes that role here – Gennadi Rozhdestvensky does it for Järvi – all of which adds to the fun. I say that because, at times, it's not easy to take this music too seriously. Ditto Shostakovich's To October, which actually sounds quite modest next to Prokofiev's ear-battering behemoth.

Goodness, the start of Karabits's Cantata is hair-raising, the percussion seat-pinning in its presence and power. The chorus is equally impressive when it enters in the second movement, Philosophers, and there's plenty of thump and thrust when it comes to Marching in Close Ranks and the Interlude that follows. Bombastic? Oh yes, but it's oddly compelling, too. The harp figures in Revolution are nicely done and the singing is suitably animated; ideally, the choral spread could be wider, the audio image deeper, but that's a minor quibble. At least the bells are bright and very audible, and the siren sounds terrific; as for the conductor, he makes a rousing Vladimir Ilyich, loud hailer and all.

Interestingly, Karabits often presages the style and sound of the upcoming Nevsky, raspy brass and febrile chorus to the fore. Victory and The Pledge, marked Andante and Andante pesante respectively, provide some respite before the rather attractive little Symphony and the hymn-like finale, The Constitution. The vast forces deployed – Järvi and Elder are more modest in that respect – ensure a pate-cracking performance, but, alas, it's not one I'd wish to revisit (although I am keen to hear Karabits conduct Nevsky and Ivan). Judging by the applause, the Weimar audience clearly felt they got plenty of bang for their buck.

John Quinn felt Karabits's Cantata had more impact than Järvi's, and, in general, I'd agree. However, there's a clarity – a seriousness, even – to the latter's reading that makes this newcomer seem even more overblown than it is. I suppose one could argue such public paeans need to be played for all they're worth, but the downside here is that Karabits misses much of the care and craft embedded in the score. Despite fine playing and singing, Järvi is probably too restrained. Nevertheless, Ralph Couzens– Ben Connellan assisting – provided a vivid, well-balanced recording that's a pleasure to listen to. The filler is a welcome bonus.

Recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall in February 1996, Elder's performance – engineered by Philip Burwell – is blessed with a rare sense of space. The choral spread is excellent, and, thanks to chorus master Stephen Jackson, there's a unanimity and full-throated fervour to the singing that rivals can't match. Most important, Elder's reading is intensely musical, without sacrificing raw excitement; the Maxim gun in Revolution, for example, is just marvellous. He also brings coherence and cumulative power to the piece, and, in so doing does full justice to the score; indeed, I can't imagine a more thoughtful and illuminating account of the Cantata than this. Even better, the CD can be had second-hand for a few quid. Now that's a bargain!

Karabits goes way over the top and Järvi doesn't go far enough; Elder gets it just right.

www.musicweb-international.com Thursday March 8th (Marc Rochester - 2018.03.08)

source: <http://www.musicweb-international.com/cl...>



In 1936 Prokofiev settled permanently in the Soviet Union having fled in the wake of the October Revolution of 1917. The general line is that he had become disillusioned with the West, had not achieved in either the US or France the kind of success he had hoped, and was desperately homesick. Dorothea Redepenning takes a somewhat different view in her booklet notes; which are, it has to be said, a rather unconvincing mixture of naivety, speculation and some historical fact. She sees Prokofiev's decision to return in a more cynical light, suggesting that, eclipsed by Rachmaninov in the US, and Stravinsky in France, Prokofiev seized the opportunity of the sudden political purge against Shostakovich (in the wake of his opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*) to dash home and become the Soviet Union's No.1 composer.

Certainly one wonders what prompted Prokofiev to submit to the iron fist of Soviet rule, and we cannot rule out bare-faced ambition. Yet it is difficult to reconcile the Prokofiev of enfant terrible repute with the 45-year-old man willing, it would seem, to compromise his artistic ideals for the simple lure of fame within a regime he already knew full well was discredited in the eyes of the international community. Stranger still was his willingness to bend to the will of his new political masters by composing this massive 10-section Cantata celebrating the 20th anniversary of the very event which had driven him from Russia in the first place. With texts by Karl Marx, Lenin and Stalin, as well as a generous dose of the kind of "social realism" demanded of Soviet composers at the time, it would seem outwardly that Prokofiev was effectively rolling on his back and wriggling his legs in the air, in the hope that the regime would tickle his tummy.

The music, however, tells a very different story. Again the general line is that Prokofiev decided the satirical undercurrent in his music was a shade too obvious for his own good, and suppressed the work (it was never performed until over a decade after both his and Stalin's death). But Redepenning has her own theory. She suggests that there were those who viewed the "setting of texts by Lenin or Stalin as heresy", and that some in power "were apparently irritated by the sound of Lenin's speeches in combination with Prokofiev's music". In light of this, Molotov himself intervened and suggested that Prokofiev's Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution be submitted for approval by the Committee on the Arts. On 19th June 1937 Prokofiev did indeed play through the work to the committee, but Redepenning states that he not only played the work on the piano but sung it "very badly" at the same time. Whether Prokofiev deliberately sang it very badly in order for it to be rejected, or simply because singing and playing simultaneously were not his thing, we can only speculate (Redepenning chooses not to).

All this looks as if the work might simply have been a typically overblown Soviet propaganda extravaganza to honour the heroes of the Bolshevik Revolution, the noble acts of Lenin and Stalin and the glorious devotion to the regime of the proletariat, and it is perhaps this, more even than the vast forces employed (amounting to several hundred individuals) that have kept the work on the periphery of Prokofiev discography. This recording unequivocally proves otherwise. This is a tremendous outpouring of the composer's genius, brilliant and inventive, clearly dating from the same time as *Romeo and Juliet* and *Alexander Nevsky* but both highly original and at times breathtakingly inventive.

A chorus of accordions, ostensibly included to tick the boxes required by the authorities to elevate the popular music of the people, seems such a fantastic new ingredient in Prokofiev's highly colourful orchestral palette, that one wonders why he did not use it in other works. The thundering percussion, the clanging bells, the blaring sirens and the speeches relayed through megaphone, might have political reasoning, but musically they add an unforgettable touch. Some of us may read the ghastly texts, hideous in their mundanity and triteness, and wonder how such drivel can inspire great music. (Others may wonder how such glorious political sentiments can begin to be matched by music of any description – never let it be said that MusicWeb International takes any particular political stance.) But the extraordinary thing about this work is how Prokofiev's music manages to walk that fine line between dramatic depiction of the events related in the words, and biting satire which, I am inclined to think, we recognise more with the benefit of hindsight.



Recorded live at a performance during last year's Weimar Kunstfests, one is conscious of a certain frisson of excitement and a tangible sense of electrical charge running through the performance – taking place, it should be said, on soil which, barely a quarter of a century before had been firmly within the Soviet bloc. The tremendous din of everything being thrown at the audience at the great climaxes of the sixth movement, "Revolution", perhaps one of the most unrestrained outbursts of musical violence since the Scythian Suite, obliterates any obvious audience noise, but the exuberant applause at the end (quickly curtailed on the recording) pays tribute to what is, by any reckoning, a powerful and electrifying performance in which Karabits marshals his massed forces with almost military precision; this is a truly fabulous exhibition of musical control. The recording captures the immensity of the sound superbly, although one suspects a constant hand on the levels to prevent the true dynamic range of the performance becoming too much of an obstacle to domestic listening.

<http://mz.kmpztr.ru> 01.04.2018 ( - 2018.04.01)  
source: <http://mz.kmpztr.ru/sergey-prokofev-kant...>



Karabits [versucht] auf diese Weise, die Einzigartigkeit der Kantate sowohl in der Musikgeschichte als auch in der Arbeit von Prokofjew zu zeigen. Und er macht es mit Erfolg: Wie in der Moskauer Interpretation von "Babi Yar" ist sein Formgefühl großartig. Fragmente, die individuell unterschiedlich erscheinen können, bilden ein ideales Ganzes, und das Finale vor dem Finale der orchestralen "Symphonie" ist einfach wunderschön. Für die erste Bekanntschaft ist Titovs Aufnahme vorzuziehen, aber für ein neues Treffen mit der Kantate ist die Aufnahme von Karabits gut.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[www.classical.net](http://www.classical.net) 11.04.2018 (Robert Cummings - 2018.04.11)  
source: <http://www.classical.net/music/recs/revi...>



Full texts are provided by Audite to round out what must be regarded as an important recording, one that is a must for Prokofiev's admirers.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[www.musicweb-international.com](http://www.musicweb-international.com) Monday May 14th 2018 (Richard Kraus - 2018.05.14)  
source: <http://www.musicweb-international.com/cl...>



Prokofiev composed this notoriously problematic cantata after his return to live in the Soviet Union, following nearly two decades of itinerant life in the West. Perhaps he was homesick, or perhaps, as he is said to have calculated, Rachmaninov already had the United States, and Stravinsky Western Europe, so there were too many Russian composers for the West to accommodate. This massive cantata was a rather transparent effort to ingratiate himself with the Soviet government, but turned out to be a horrible miscalculation, rejected for performance at the height of Stalin's purges.

In musical terms, Prokofiev created a neoclassical dramatic choral work, albeit one that assumed gargantuan form, with double choir, orchestra, accordions, brass band, siren, and marching feet. By contrast, Stravinsky's almost contemporaneous, 1930 Symphony of Psalms seems still more chaste. Stravinsky set conventional religious texts, while Prokofiev turned to the words of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin. Lenin and especially Stalin turned out to be too dangerous for anyone to dare perform in 1937, and the work did not receive its premier performance until 1966, long after Prokofiev's death, and with the two



movements based on Stalin removed (Simon Morrison's *The People's Artist*, invaluable for making sense of Prokofiev's Soviet years, provides ample detail).

With a different text, the cantata would likely have met a happier fate, even in those dark times. This is the period in which Prokofiev composed such popular works as *Romeo and Juliet*, the *Second Violin Concerto*, and *Alexander Nevsky*, and the *Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution* is clearly their musical cousin. Among the work's highlights is "the Philosophers," a setting of Marx's Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach ("Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it"). The men chant an ostinato in low voice, joined by a melody by sopranos and altos which soars above them. A short movement taken from Lenin's *What is to be Done?* is exciting, and a longer Lenin setting cranks up the tension even higher, at times resembling *Alexander Nevsky's Battle on the Ice*. Kirill Karabits assumes Lenin's voice through a megaphone. An energetic six minute "symphony" (one of four instrumental movements) seems as if it escaped from a ballet score, while the concluding movement, quoting Stalin on the Soviet Constitution, ends the work with uplift and peace, again sounding a lot like *Romeo and Juliet*.

It is probably easier to enjoy this cantata for its music if you do not know Russian. In 1937 Russians dared not sing Stalin's words because he was fearsome. After Stalin's death, they avoided singing them because they were odious. This Cantata is not alone in the composer's output. When it comes to great composers abasing themselves before Stalin, his 1939 *Zdravitsa* (Hail to Stalin) may set the standard. Yet Shostakovich's 1949 music for the film, *The Fall of Berlin*, contains a section, "Stalin's Garden," whose cloying angelic choir is either a masterpiece of obsequiousness or of cynical critique, or perhaps both. In any event, enough time has passed to listen to Prokofiev's Cantata as music. We do not ask if Mozart believed in the mass, or question if he should have composed *La Clemenza di Tito* to praise a reactionary Habsburg Emperor. Mozart and Prokofiev were working musicians, and sought patronage from those who were in a position to support their art.

There is a 1992 Chandos recording by Neeme Järvi which hold up quite well to this new recording. Järvi takes five minutes longer, but with no loss of energy. Karabits' zippiest tempos work better for me, and Audite captures detail obscured in the older recording. If you have the Järvi version, you do not need to replace it, but if you are new to the work, Karabits is preferable. The CD booklet has a photo of the musicians overflowing their stage. It is difficult to record such giant forces, and Audite engineers have done an excellent job in bringing clarity to what could easily sound muddy. This recording is distressingly short in timing, but has lots of players, so at least on a musician-per-minute basis it can be counted as a bargain.

This work turns out to be better than many may fear, once the anxiety about Stalin is set aside. Still, it is probably of appeal mostly to those who enjoy Semyon Kotko and other less-performed Soviet-era music by Prokofiev.

**Fanfare July/August 2018 (Peter J. Rabinowitz - 2018.07.01)**

fanfare

Great music can't be destroyed by a third-rate text, even one, like the libretto of *Madama Butterfly*, that is politically insensitive. But how about good music, or even very good music? The *Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution* is a work that raises that question with a vengeance, setting snatches of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin that are (even beyond the political issues) hardly favorable to musical treatment. "Site the rebel HQ at the central telephone exchange" simply doesn't encourage a serious musical response—and that's far from the most awkward line in the piece.

To my ears, the music (in contrast, say, to Shostakovich's in *The Sun Shines on the Motherland*) manages to hold its own—although I'd have to say that it does so more successfully if you put down the texts and listen without them. Written in 1937, it's vintage Soviet-period Prokofiev, composed right after *Romeo and Juliet* and just before *Alexander Nevsky*. Not surprisingly, it shares more with the similarly propagandistic

Nevsky than it does with Romeo. Certainly, the women's melody that soars above the chanting men in the second movement has that beauty-of-the-vast-steppes yearning we get in the more sentimentally nationalist moments in the later score; and the "Revolution" movement is a clear prototype for the "Battle on the Ice." And while the cantata has 10 movements and the concert version of Nevsky only seven, the two works have similar trajectories, moving from an ominous opening through a tremendous battle scene and a brief reflection on to a clangorous celebration. But the cantata makes Nevsky look tame. Indeed, in terms of sheer fire-power, it's Prokofiev's most extreme composition, featuring an eight-part chorus, a massive orchestra (16 woodwinds, 18 brass), an extra military band (more than a dozen brass players here), and an accordion group, not to mention extravagant percussion (including a siren), keyboard, and harps—all de-ployed, at the most dynamic moments, with a ferocity and textural density that looks back to the unflinching dissonances of the Second Symphony and The Fiery Angel.

It's not music for the faint of heart. In fact, for a variety of musical and political reasons, the work was not performed in its entirety for more than half a century (for details on its history, see my review of the Järvi performance and Daniel Morrison's of the Titov, Fanfare 16:4 and 40:1). But if you can take the ear-splitting onslaught, it is surprisingly—even surpassingly—uplifting: Anyone who tears up at the end of Nevsky or War and Peace will have a similar experience here. The effect is especially strong on this stunning new performance by Kirill Karabits, who charges through the music without a trace of apology. With superior work from his orchestra and chorus and first-rate engineering (maintaining clarity even in the most congested passages of the movement depicting the revolution), it's the kind of recording that overwhelms you, just as the music was intended to do. To my ears, it makes an even stronger case for the work than any of the four predecessors I know, good as they are—Kondrashin's (with significant cuts), Järvi's, Titov's, and Elder's. Yes, those who insist that their CDs last more than an hour may find this short measure—but it's hard to think of anything that would be an appropriate filler (Järvi's selections from The Stone Flower are distinctly anti-climactic).

I wish there were a surround-sound version. Audite advertises the availability of a multi-channel download on the album jacket, but that's an error—while there's an excellent hi-res stereo download, the performance was recorded in two-channel only. With that small regret, this can be exuberantly recommended.

[Asahi Shimbun](#) 15.03.2018 ( - 2018.03.15)



Japanische Rezension siehe PDF!

**Record Geijutsu** 2018.4 ( - 2018.04.01)



Japanische Rezension siehe PDF!

**Fanfare July/August 2018 (Henry Fogel - 2018.07.01)**

fanfare

In two earlier reviews of recordings of Prokofiev's Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution, Daniel Morrison (Fanfare 40:1) and Peter Rabinowitz (16:4) make eloquent cases for the quality of this 1937 score. Both reviewers help us get past the off-putting text, most of it pure communist propaganda, including settings of speeches by Stalin. Both of my colleagues see the music as being similar in style to Alexander Nevsky. Try as I might, I simply cannot find similar value in this music. The brash martial character of the score, featuring enough percussion to crush an enemy squadron, lacks, to my ears, the variety and beauty that is found in Nevsky.

However, if you are persuaded by their advocacy, or if you wish to expand your collection of Prokofiev, this new release under Kirill Karabits, which has no other coupling, would not be the recording to get. Morrison reviewed a Cugate CD (006-2) that also contained two other politically inspired works by Prokofiev—A Toast (composed in 1939 for Stalin's 60th birthday) and Cantata for the 30th Anniversary of the October Revolution from 1947. While Morrison was positive, and noted the logic of the couplings, as a performance he preferred Neeme Järvi's Chandos (9095) recording, which includes excerpts from Prokofiev's ballet The Stone Flower. I too admire the Järvi recording for its intensity and thrust.

A 41-minute disc (some 32 seconds represents applause) would be justified if there were something extraordinary about Karabits's performance, but there isn't. His approach is certainly dramatic and energetic, but it lacks the specificity of coloring found in Järvi's performance, and Chandos's recorded sound is superior as well. The sound here is overly resonant and a bit muddy. There are very helpful program notes, and full text and translation.

**Fanfare July / August 2018 (James H. North - 2018.07.01)**

fanfare

Our tradition has it that Shostakovich and Prokofiev wrote a lot of potboilers to appease Stalin at the time of the terrors. This is a rare opportunity to hear one of their "patriotic" works. Fascinating! It is indeed dreadful stuff, with a blasting brass band as well as full symphony orchestra and huge chorus; yet there is never a moment of doubt as to its composer. There are many suggestions of Alexander Nevsky, Lieutenant Kijé, and Romeo and Juliet; at one moment the percussion looks forward to the final measures of the Fifth Symphony. There is some superb choral writing—if one can disregard its bombastic accompaniment. But there are also words shouted as if over the radio, screaming choruses, and silly little military marches. What a hodgepodge! The texts (printed in transliterated Russian, English, and German) are taken from speeches and articles by Marx, Lenin, and Stalin. It is just as well that we can understand little of it in this performance. One of the 10 movements, "Symphony," is wordless; unfortunately it is of less interest than the music for much of the patriotic drivel.

How does one judge a performance of such stuff? The chorus shouts a lot, but that seems appropriate. The orchestra is rough, even when the brass band is silent. Overall, the performance does justice to the score. It's also hard to evaluate the recorded sound of such music. I haven't heard any of the several other recordings (Järvi, Kondrashin, Titov) and don't want to. Recommended, I guess, to Prokofiev completists.

As a celebration of noise, Prokofiev's Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution can be enjoyed; it's a kind of über film score to a movie that doesn't exist. There are harmless examples of glorified patriotism like Beethoven's Wellington's Victory (a huge success and money-earner for him) and Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture, written decades after the war. But propagandistic rum-tum from the Soviet era is darker. Like Shostakovich's Song of the Forests, a grand cantata celebrating Stalin's heroic accomplishments in dam-building, a fervent performance of Prokofiev's 1937 commemoration of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution—an event so glorious that the composer immediately ran westward as fast he could to get away—can raise the score above hackwork. It's baffling to me why conductors on the order of Valery Gergiev (on YouTube) and Yuri Temirkanov (Hour Classics and YouTube) are inspired to pay tribute to nationalistic bombast paid for in blood. By 1937 the ideals of the Revolution rang hollow, and the specter of totalitarian repression under Stalin had muted any cause for rejoicing.

Obedience is forced upon composers who have the misfortune to be trapped in authoritarian regimes, but Prokofiev wasn't one—he returned from exile voluntarily. Shostakovich had the heart and courage to stand up against anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union and to offer protection to the beleaguered Mieczysław Weinberg. Prokofiev, so far as I know, didn't confront repression, even though he personally knew people who had been vanished by the NKVD in the middle of the night. As a politically compliant composer he has a trove of boilerplate to his credit, including a cantata for the next 10-year celebration in 1947, which I haven't heard. (Shostakovich had written To October to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the October Revolution in 1927.)

Many will feel that this rousing live performance under the skilled Kirill Karabits is disqualified by its stingy total timing and lack of fillers. In a blow to toadying, Prokofiev's 10-part cantata met with official disapproval and wasn't premiered until 1966. There's a large percussion battering ram—I mean, battery—and the tunes are pitched to the tractor-driving classes. Among the eight-part chorus, which in this performance is very professional and not too large, the men are stout-hearted patriots and the women, too. For official occasions Prokofiev enjoyed being grandiose in his instrumentation, which on this occasion includes quadruple woodwinds and brass, the horns increased to eight. There's a military band with saxophones and extra brass, some accordions for folk flavor, alarm bells, cannons, sirens, and Lenin's voice orating through a megaphone (here undertaken by Karabits). Suddenly Wellington's Victory sounds like a minuet for recorders and lute.

Reviewing an earlier recording conducted by Aleksandr Titov in 2016, Daniel Morrison considered the texts taken from Marx, Lenin, and Stalin. "I am not convinced by the suggestion in the notes for this recording that Prokofiev's setting of these texts contains hidden meanings, that his treatment of them is ironic rather than fully committed. What does appear to me is that rather than praising the present, the work mostly looks back to the early history of the revolution, to a time when its promise to free mankind from bondage, to end exploitation, poverty, and imperialism, could still be taken seriously" (Fanfare 40:1). It's a nonjudgmental judgment, but I doubt that Prokofiev had any illusions about the murderous extinction of those early ideals.

On musical grounds, which aren't a major consideration, really, Karabits leads an effective charge, and I can recommend the performance to anyone who has a specific curiosity about this score on its own. The recorded sound is very good; final applause is included.

**American Record Guide** September / October 2018 (Donald R Vroon - 2018.09.01)



This is not a first recording, but it may be the best. The first recording was in 1966, right after the premiere—though it was written in 1937 for the 20th Anniversary of the Revolution. This is the same period as Alexander Nevsky, and the music is similar: big, bold, brassy choral pieces with some instrumental movements and small bits of speeches by Lenin. There are long choral sections with texts by Marx and Lenin. It is hard to know how complete any recording of this is, because there were also texts from and references to Stalin that were removed for the 1966 premiere. I think the original was an hour long, but you can see that this recording takes 42 minutes. I don't see any references to Stalin in the texts (Russian, German, and English), so this must be the version of the 1966 premiere. If, like me, you really like Prokofieff's choral writing and film music, then you need this—certainly a brilliant recording and probably the best sounding. (Our reviewer did not like the Jarvi on Chandos because of the sound—May/June 1993.)

**Fanfare** October 2018 (Peter J. Rabinowitz - 2018.10.15)  
source: <http://www.fanfarearchive.com/articles/a...>



[...] Crushing is a word that can equally apply to Prokofiev's Cantata on the 20th Anniversary of the Russian Revolution, composed for the kind of forces (huge orchestra, brass band, choir, and even accordion ensemble) that threaten your hearing, as well as the economic solvency of any ensemble that tries to put it on. It shows up now and again on recordings, but none have the sheer dynamism of this one—and while the work is far from a masterpiece, this performance is so gripping that it leaves you little opportunity to exercise your judgment. [...]

**www.musicweb-international.com** Dec 2018 (Marc Rochester - 2018.12.01)



### Recording of the Year

The disc which made the biggest impact on me (and, I regret to say, my near neighbours) was a shattering recording of Prokofiev's rarely-heard Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution. Dramatic doesn't go close to describing this astonishing musical depiction of one of the 20th century's most terrible revolutions.

**Stereoplay** 4|2020 ( - 2020.04.01)



### CDs für ultimative Dynamiktests

*Revolutionskantate {Prokofieff} von audite*

Das kolossale Spektakel hat Audite dem Dirigenten Kirill Karabits anvertraut. Der macht wie die Technik das Beste daraus.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

allmusic.com 05.01.2018 ( - 2018.01.05)  
source: <https://www.allmusic.com/album/prokofiev...>

allmusic

Is there an X factor coming from having performances by former East Germans under a Ukrainian? Probably, and you get the blood and thunder in the revolutionary passages from members of the Luftwaffenmusikkorps Erfurt as well.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*



## Richard Strauss: Macbeth, Don Juan, Tod und Verklärung & Festmarsch in C

Richard Strauss

CD aud 97.755

Pizzicato 04/05/2018 (Remy Franck - 2018.05.04)  
source: <https://www.pizzicato.lu/kirill-karabits...>

**pizzicato**  
Remy Franck's Journal about Classical Music

### Kirill Karabits – ein herausragender Strauss-Dirigent

Dreizehn Jahre sind es her, als ich eines jener Konzerterlebnisse hatte, die sich einem unvergesslich einprägen. Es war ein Strauss-‘Zarathustra’ mit dem Philharmonischen Orchester Luxemburg unter Kirill Karabits. Damals schrieb ich: « ...zeigte, worin sich dieser Dirigent von denen unterscheidet, die den Schwung, die großen Crescendi und die starken Akzente treffen und dennoch eigentlich nur durchs das Werk hüpfen wie jemand, der über ein paar ins Wasser gelegte Steine von einem Ufer eines Flusses an das andere gelangen will. Karabits interessierte sich auch für das, was zwischen den Steinen liegt, ... ».

Und nun wiederholt sich die Begeisterung. Karabits dirigiert auf dieser CD eine absolut phänomenale Fassung des ‘Don Juan’, wunderbar differenziert zwischen den einzelnen Teilen, zwischen aufkeimender Wollust und Liebesszenen, unpathetisch, pulsierend, schlank, ungemein farbig, mit vielen sonst überspielten Zwischentönen und mit einer bemerkenswerten Spannung.

Dass es von Karajan bis zu Karabits nicht sehr weit ist, zeigt auch ‘Tod und Verklärung’, ein Werk, das der Chefdirigent der Staatskapelle Weimar dramaturgisch sehr nahe am Programm dirigiert, spannungsvoll-bedeutsam und mit einem Klanggraffinement, das einen bloß staunen lässt. Musik derartig mit Orchesterfarben zu inszenieren, können heute nur ganz wenige Dirigenten.

Zum Schluss erklingt der selten aufgeführte ‘Festmarsch’, 1888 komponiert, kurz bevor Strauss 1889 sein Amt als Großherzoglich Sächsischer Kapellmeister in Weimar antrat.

Den Auftakt des Programms macht die Tondichtung ‘Macbeth’, die sehr dramatisch musiziert wird. Gerade in dieser letztlich wenig erfolgreichen Tondichtung kann ein Dirigent sehr viel erreichen, um die Musik auf die höhere Schiene zu heben. Kirill Karabits gelingt das sehr gut, weil er die Episoden perfekt verbindet. Und so entsteht in diesem Werk ein Strömen und Blühen der Töne, das zeigt, dass ‘Macbeth’ sehr zu Unrecht im Repertoire vernachlässigt wird. Dies ist für mich die unbestreitbar beste Aufnahme von ‘Macbeth’, die ich gehört habe.



Die Weimarer Produktion begeistert aber auch durch ein hervorragendes Orchesterspiel und durch einen Klang, der in wirklich idealer Weise vom Audite-Team eingefangen wurde. Derart natürliche, räumliche und perfekt ausbalancierte Tonaufnahmen sind heute eher selten. Das alles und vor allem die Tatsache, dass Karabits sich als hervorragender Strauss-Dirigent aufstellt, lässt den Wunsch nach 'mehr' deutlich werden. Mehr Strauss von Karabits aus Weimar!

With this Strauss production Krill Karabits proves a great Straussian! The superbly coloured music glows with life and dramatic passion and is electrifying in its energy. The excellent orchestral playing is extremely well captured by the microphones.

**Thüringische Landeszeitung 10. Mai / 11. Mai 2018 (Wolfgang Hirsch - 2018.05.10)**



### Karabits' Weimarer Vermächtnis?

*Exquisite Richard-Strauss-CD der Staatskapelle – GMD-Vertrag noch nicht verlängert*

Karabits arbeitet plastisch und kontrastiv, und so erweckt er schon beinahe expressionistisch zu nennende Tonerzählungen zu sinnlichem Leben [...]

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Radio Klassik Stephansdom Mittwoch, 9. Mai 2018, 18.37 Uhr ( - 2018.05.09)**

source: <https://radioklassik.at/programm/sendung...>



**BROADCAST: CD des Tages**

Sendebeleg siehe PDF!

**Der neue Merker 21.05.2018 (Dr. Ingobert Waltenberger - 2018.05.21)**

source: <https://onlinemerker.com/richard-strauss...>



Karabits [webt] nach dem von Strauss exakt vorgegeben Programm einen wie von Gold durchwirkten edlen Klanggobelin.

Fazit: Kirill Karabits setzt mit dieser CD Maßstäbe.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[www.opusklassiek.nl](http://www.opusklassiek.nl) mei 2018 (Siebe Riedstra - 2018.05.01)  
source: <https://www.opusklassiek.nl/cd-recensies...>



De Staatskapelle Weimar is net terug van een vier weken durende toernee naar de...

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[Musicalifeiten](http://Musicalifeiten) 25.05.2018 ( - 2018.05.25)  
source: <https://musicalifeiten.nl/cd-recensies/s...>



Of het werk echt spiritueel klinkt of eenvoudiger banaal, is afhankelijk van de uitvoering. Met dirigenten als Karajan in alle Strauss (DG 447.422-2), Blomstedt in Don Juan (Decca 466.423-2) en Kempe in Macbeth (EMI 769.171-2) is Karabits als huidige opvolger van Strauss met zijn goede orkest uit Weimar een der dirigenten die Strauss alle recht doet.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[www.wqxr.org](http://www.wqxr.org) May 24, 2018 (Zev Kane - 1999.11.30)  
source: <https://www.wqxr.org/story/best-new-clas...>



### The Best New Classical Releases of May 2018

*From Monteverdi's sublime "Vespers" to the bold orchestral imaginings of Richard Strauss, here are our favorite releases of the month.*

Kirill Karabits and the Staatskapelle Weimar pay homage to their proud inheritance by leaning into Strauss's emotional extremes

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[Spiegel online](http://Spiegel online) 10.06.2018 (Werner Theurich - 2018.06.10)  
source: <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/musik/kiril...>



### Neuer Schwung, alte Pracht: Klassiker von Strauss und Bartók

*Richard Strauss und Béla Bartók liebten das Orchester, jeder auf seine Art. Wie überzeugend frisch ihre Arbeiten noch heute klingen können, zeigen zwei neue Aufnahmen.*

Ein klarer Punktsieg für den Chef und das Ensemble: Weimar 2018 klingt wunderbar klassisch und frisch zugleich.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

www.musicweb-international.com 20.06.2018 (Nick Barnard - 2018.06.20)

source: <http://www.musicweb-international.com/cl...>



In a world of marketing hype and hyperbola the Staatskapelle Weimar can say quite literally that they have the longest performing tradition of any ensemble in the world as far as the bulk of the repertoire on this disc is concerned. This is for the simple reason that Richard Strauss served as second Kapellmeister from 1889-1894, premiered both Macbeth and Don Juan with the orchestra and completed Tod und Verklärung early on in his tenure there. Aside from any historical links the Weimar orchestra are ideally suited to the rich Romantic style of this music. They make a fabulously rich and warmly integrated sound - as evidenced in the 2005 recording they made for Naxos with Antoni Wit of the Alpine Symphony which remains one of my absolutely favourite versions of that work.

Here they are led by their current principal conductor Kirill Karabits. Karabits has been creating an admired discography of mainly Russian/Soviet music with the other orchestra he directs - the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. The disc gets off to an excellent start with a very fiery and highly dramatic reading of Macbeth. The liner makes clear that Strauss wrote this very much under the influence of Liszt's model of the symphonic poem right down to his choice of a literary/historical figure for the work. However the liner is also correct in noting that this is not a narrative story told through the medium of the orchestra but rather a character study of the principle protagonist himself. Strauss started working on this piece when he was just 22 completing the first version early in 1888. But criticism from his mentor Hans von Bülow meant that it was not premiered in Weimar in a revised form until 1890. Which is why it appears 'later' in the Strauss catalogue than the other more obviously mature works on this disc. Over the years this has proved to be the least popular of the Strauss tone poems either on disc or in the concert hall. The reason for this are fairly easy to discern; although it remains a remarkable apprentice work it displays little of the unique flair for the orchestra or indeed form or melody that is evident in Don Juan completed later the same year on September 30th 1888. This blossoming of Strauss' unique talent from potential to full-blown mastery in just a few months is one of the great musical miracles.

Karabits' strength here is to play the work for what it is not what it might become. The liner references Strauss describing the music as needing to be "harsh and gruesome" as the subject was "of a very wild nature". By the sensibilities of the 21st century the former description seems somewhat excessive but relatively speaking this is cruder and certainly harsher than most other Strauss works and Karabits it very good at bringing that out. Not that his superb Weimar players are in the slightest bit crude or harsh. The collective sound of this orchestra is an enduring joy. This is built on a fantastically solid and rich bass line - Karabits uses the traditional seating plan with the orchestral string basses to his left behind the 1st violins, the cellos next to the first violins and the 2nd violins to his right. Additionally the brass are stretched across the back of the orchestra [YouTube videos of the orchestra in concert and a brief promotional video of the recording of this disc confirm the evidence of the ear from the CD alone]. The brass and wind choirs are beautifully balanced within themselves and the larger orchestral group. Additionally, the trumpets use rotary valve instruments and throughout there is a real sense of an ensemble continuing a performing tradition. Technically the playing is of a superb level - one imagines Strauss would have been thrilled if only his works had been played at this standard in the 1890's - but it is the sound of the orchestra that makes this one of my favourite ensembles in the world at the moment.

But do not think everything is subsumed into a bed of wallowing tonal allure. Karabits can get the orchestra to play with bite and brio as required as the very opening of Macbeth proves. On disc since the work's inclusion in Rudolf Kempe's renowned survey for EMI in Dresden of Strauss' orchestral works there have been many versions variously coupled some of which I know some I do not. Maazel's earlier VPO recording on DG has something of the thrust that Karabits achieves less so in his Bavarian RSO remake. Zinman in Zurich I rate lower than many in Strauss generally and Dorati in Detroit is just a bit lacking in drama and orchestral brilliance. Del Mar in Aarhus is disappointingly scrappy too. Returning to Jarvi with the SNO underlines the exciting impact the Chandos recording gave these performances but again lacking the last degree of orchestral cohesion. Hard not to hear in Kempe an intuitive understanding of how to pace and phrase this music but the EMI recording really does begin to sound its years and even the remarkable

Dresden Staatskapelle of the 1970's cannot beat the sheer collective virtuosity of their Weimar colleagues today.

But the quality of the playing here would count for little if Karabits was not able to tie the whole work together in as convincing a manner as he does. For once this really does sound like the work of a budding genius not just a piece of great promise. Around the 5:00 minute mark I like the way Karabits finds both lyrical flow and dramatic tension that draws the section of the work together. Indeed, throughout this performance it is the sure handling of the pace of the score that impresses right through to the closing glowering pages marking Macbeth's death. So all in all an excellent performance that competes with the best in the current catalogue.

Don Juan that follows is equally technically fine - worth mentioning here that the Audite recording in the sympathetic acoustic of the Weimarahalle is very good indeed. Just in standard CD stereo but the engineers find detail and warmth with the orchestral soundstage clearly delineated whilst providing the collective tonal lustre which defines the orchestra. Don Juan is a staple of every half decent orchestra the world over and of course on disc the competition is ferocious. Karabits is less individual here; the playing is a joy, the music the enduring marvel and tuneful feast it always is but somehow without the headturning individuality I heard in Macbeth. The benefit is a more light-hearted capricious Don Juan than some versions which emphasise the muscular virtuosity of the work. The latter approach is embodied in the famous Solti/Chicago/Decca recording which is as dynamic as it is domineering. But take the melting love theme introduced on the oboe around 6:50 in this performance. This is beautifully played in Weimar - I like the way the recording picks up the muted horns and harp arpeggiations and the oboe itself is lovely. But for a more intimate and touching rendition it is hard to surpass Lothar Koch (I assume) for Karajan in Berlin. The genius here is the tenderness Karajan/Koch brings to a scandalous character, the fractional hesitations suggesting a humanity and vulnerability that is disarming. Perhaps I am over interpreting that but in direct comparison this new version is 'just' beautifully played. Even the famed heroic horn call that follows is played with rock solid power and bravura but just a tad too little flashing-eyed heroism. No-one hearing this performance in isolation will be anything but impressed by the sheer quality of its execution but conversely it lacks the stand-out individuality that made Macbeth such a compelling listening experience.

The third main work is Tod und Verklärung which shows further the developing composer not just in terms of compositional technique but branching out into the realm of the philosophical tone-poem. For a man not yet thirty it seems unlikely that he would embrace the concept about the end of life yet that is what he did. Also, unlike the preceding two works there is a detailed narrative referring to the fevered recollections of a man on his deathbed, his death and subsequent 'transfiguration'. By now on the disc Karabits' interpretational choices as far as Strauss are concerned are becoming clearer. Again this is a sensitive and superbly played performance but it strikes me that Karabits seeks to eschew any sense of sentimentality. A case in point is the beautiful unfolding flute melody that occurs between the two main 'fever attacks' [track 3 9:20] – Karabits allows the flute freedom to phrase but clearly prefers a simpler direct approach. Again worth drawing attention to the quality of the Audite recording which allows all the inner string accompanying detail and those harps again to register. The control of tempo through the following etwas breiter with a well managed poco stringendo shows Karabits' intelligent handling of the structure but come the following appassionato reliving the dying man's former loves and again it is just a fraction too 'placed' for me. The famous Szell/Cleveland recording on CBS/Sony was my introduction to this work. Listening to this same passage there for sure the recording is boxy and constrained in a way the new one patently is not but goodness me Szell finds the sense of delirium and unrestrained passion that is surely what Strauss sought to represent - heresy to say, Reiner in Chicago just seems fast here. Of the more recent recordings I have enjoyed Manfred Honeck in Pittsburgh on Reference but he is generally more interventionist than Karabits so it will be down to the individual listener's tastes as to what they prefer from the podium.

But returning to this new version, whatever passing thoughts one may have about interpretational corners the quality of the orchestra, the marvellously apt collective sound they make and how well this has been caught by the engineering is an ongoing pleasure. As at the last climax of the 'love' music is reached around 15:25 listen to the way the Weimar brass expands to fill the soundstage. But the engineering is equally good at catching the uneven heartbeats on the timps and then through the final spasm of life into death at 17:30 the deep-toned gong is beautifully rendered. No surprise either that this orchestra is

perfectly equipped to play the closing 'transfiguration' music with effortless grandeur. Karabits' pacing here is very good indeed; steady but with an inexorable sense of being pulled forward towards the light. Those harps again are allowed to decorate the melodic lines with a gorgeous filigree texture and Karabits' uncomplicated approach pays substantial dividends with the simple dignity of the statement of the love theme now considered in calm recollection at 20:00. Unmannered apt tempi allow the music to unfurl and open out with a visionary radiance that is very impressive. As the vision fades over the closing two minutes of the work the qualities of playing recording and indeed interpretation bring the piece to a very satisfying conclusion.

The addition of the Festmarsch in C that Strauss wrote for the amateur orchestra he used to conduct is indeed a rarity but by being placed straight after the pained ecstasy of Tod und Verklärung the phrase "down to earth with a bump" comes to mind. Of course its well played and of course it is interesting to hear but even the liner describes it as "a mixture of fairground and emperor's birthday" - a brilliant description I cannot improve upon or elaborate. Clearly, the vast majority of collectors will base their decision to buy this disc or not on the main three works and the march will be a bonus, or not.

The stature of the Weimar Staatskapelle deserves to be further elevated by this disc and the value of having this ensemble play these works for the reasons mentioned earlier is clear. Macbeth is a palpable hit, Don Juan very good technically but slightly faceless interpretatively with Tod und Verklärung basically somewhere between the two with Karabits' style perhaps better suited to this work although I think he could afford a little more expressive freedom and impetuosity to balance his clarity and control. Superb playing and engineering ensure this is never less than a pleasure to listen to.

**Audiophile Audition June 27, 2018**  
(Gary Lemco - 2018.06.27)

source:

<https://www.audaud.com/richard-strauss-m...>

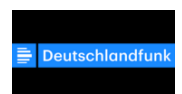


Here, for Audite (19-21 December 2017), Karabits has a first-rate ensemble with which to strike out with singularly oppressive tones, "justifying" the un-popularity of this daring, experimental work.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Deutschlandfunk 08.07.2018, 9.00-9.30 Uhr "Die neue Platte" (Uwe Friedrich - 2018.07.08)**

source: <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/kirill-ka...>



### Der Weimarer Strauss

*Kirill Karabits dirigiert Staatskapelle Weimar*

Bach und ganz besonders Liszt – das sind die Komponisten, die man in erster Linie mit Weimar verbindet. Aber auch Richard Strauss hatte seine "Weimarer Zeit". Diese Schaffensphase beleuchten die Staatskapelle Weimar und ihr Generalmusikdirektor Kirill Karabits auf einer sehr gelungenen neuen CD.

Gerade mal 25 Jahre alt war Richard Strauss, als er im Jahr 1889 Kapellmeister des Großherzogs von Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach wurde. Nach einer eher unglücklichen Zeit am Münchner Nationaltheater kam er nun an die Wirkungsstätte von Franz Liszt. Mit der Weimarer Hofkapelle, heute Staatskapelle, konnte er seine ersten, noch in München entstandenen Tondichtungen "Macbeth" und "Don Juan" uraufführen sowie das in Weimar vollendete Werk "Tod und Verklärung". Der aktuelle Nachfolger von Franz Liszt und Richard Strauss, der ukrainische Dirigent Kirill Karabits, hat nun mit demselben Orchester diese drei frühen Tondichtungen eingespielt und beim Label audite veröffentlicht.

Musik: Richard Strauss, Don Juan

Der Beginn von "Don Juan" lässt auch heute noch Orchestermusiker schwitzen. Das kraftvoll aufstrebende erste Thema ist Zeichen der Männlichkeit, der Vitalität, der Potenz des ewigen Verführers – und sehr schwer präzise zu spielen. Simon Rattle gab jungen Dirigenten einmal den Rat, das Podium möglichst schnell zu stürmen und noch im Auftrittapplaus loszulegen, damit niemand mitbekommt, wenn der schwierige Einsatz verwackelt. Das hat Kirill Karabits gar nicht nötig, denn die Weimarer Staatskapelle spielt extrem präzise und schwungvoll. Die dahintersteckende Arbeit ist den Musikern nicht anzuhören, dabei gilt noch immer, was Richard Strauss nach einer Weimarer "Don Juan"-Probe an seinen Vater schrieb:

"Das Orchester pustete und keuchte, machte aber seine Sache famos. Ein großartiger Witz! Nach dem "Don Juan" saß ein Hornist schweißtriefend, ganz außer Atem da und seufzte: "Du lieber Gott! Was haben wir denn verbrochen, dass du uns diese Rute (das bin ich) geschickt hast? Die werden wir so bald nicht wieder los!" Wir haben Tränen gelacht. Dabei haben gerade die Hornisten mit Todesverachtung geblasen."

Musik: Richard Strauss, Don Juan

Mit großer Lust am luxuriösen Klang spielen nicht nur die Hörner, sondern auch die Streicher der Weimarer Staatskapelle die lebensfrohen Aufschwünge, mit denen Richard Strauss seinen Don Juan charakterisiert. Er orientierte sich an einem Gedicht von Nikolaus Lenau, der den unermüdlichen Verführer schließlich an Verdruss, Lebens- und Selbstekel sterben lässt. Das ist Richard Strauss' Sache eher nicht. Zwar endet seine Tondichtung verhalten, bis dahin schildert der Mittzwanziger seinen Helden aber vor allem kraftvoll hochfahrend und genießerisch. In dieser Komposition findet Strauss seinen eigenen Ton, seinen wiedererkennbaren Orchesterklang und einen musikdramaturgischen Aufbau, den zu beschreiben noch Generationen von Musikwissenschaftlern Probleme bereiten würde. Ist es ein Rondo? Ein verkappter Sonatenhauptsatz? Irgendwas dazwischen oder doch etwas ganz Neues? Dem Dirigenten Kirill Karabits scheint das ziemlich egal zu sein, er nimmt sich die nötige Zeit, die Themen auszubreiten und zieht an den dramatischen Stellen fast unmerklich das Tempo an, ohne den rastlosen Liebhaber zu sehr zu hetzen.

Musik: Richard Strauss, Don Juan  
Komponist auf der Suche

Die drei Tondichtungen "Macbeth", "Don Juan" und "Tod und Verklärung" entstanden in einer wichtigen Phase in der Karriere von Richard Strauss. Der legendäre Dirigent Hans von Bülow, Wagnerianer der ersten Stunde, hatte Strauss nach Meiningen geholt, wo er das Dirigieren lernte und Johannes Brahms traf. Von dort kehrte Strauss in seine Heimatstadt München zurück, wo der ambitionierte Jungkomponist mit ersten Tondichtungen die abgenutzt erscheinende Form der Sinfonie überwinden wollte. Mit seinem "Don Juan" sollte ihm das gelingen, im kurz zuvor entstandenen "Macbeth" war er hingegen noch auf der Suche.

Musik: Richard Strauss, Macbeth

Kaum ein anderes Werk hat Richard Strauss so oft und so gründlich überarbeitet wie "Macbeth". Die erste der drei Fassungen schickte er im Januar 1888 an seinen Mentor Bülow, der ihm mitteilte, er könne eine Tondichtung über den schottischen Königsmörder unmöglich mit dem Triumphmarsch seines Widersachers Macduff abschließen. Strauss schrieb das Finale um, und nun endet das Werk düster mit dem Tod des Titelhelden. Später änderte er noch einige Details dieses finsternen Nachtstücks, das allerdings nicht sklavisch den Handlungsablauf bei Shakespeare wiedergibt, sondern vielmehr atmosphärisch die Stimmung der Tragödie einfängt.

Musik: Richard Strauss, Macbeth

"Macbeth" erreichte nie die Popularität der anderen Tondichtungen von Richard Strauss, umso willkommener ist diese ernsthafte, gründliche und bei aller Düsternis doch farbenreiche Interpretation der Staatskapelle Weimar unter ihrem Generalmusikdirektor Kirill Karabits. Gerade im Vergleich mit den



anderen beiden Tondichtungen auf dieser CD wird aber auch deutlich, dass Strauss mit seinem "Macbeth" noch auf der Suche nach einer neuen Form war und seine Gestaltungsmittel noch nicht völlig im Griff hatte. Das änderte sich bereits im "Don Juan". Zur Meisterschaft gelangte er spätestens 1889 mit der in Weimar vollendeten Komposition "Tod und Verklärung".

Musik: Richard Strauss, Tod und Verklärung

Zwischen Abonnementskonzerten und Opernaufführungen, die er als Kapellmeister zu dirigieren hatte, gestaltete Strauss nach eigenem Bekunden "die Todesstunde eines Menschen, der nach den höchsten Zielen gestrebt hat". Darin dürfen wir in der typischen Künstlerpose des 19. Jahrhunderts durchaus auch ein fiktives und nicht besonders bescheidenes Selbstporträt des Komponisten in hoffentlich ferner Zukunft sehen. Bei einem 25-Jährigen, dessen Leben bis dahin von Schicksalsschlägen oder schweren Krankheiten verschont blieb, mag das etwas präntiös klingen, aber ein mehr oder weniger ausgeprägter Narzissmus lässt sich bei Richard Strauss schließlich in allen Lebensaltern beobachten. Anders als in "Macbeth" ist in "Tod und Verklärung" ein genaues Programm überliefert. Vom stockenden Atem des Sterbenden über den Moment des Todes bis hin zum Blick ins Jenseits, wo der Künstler das erschaut, was er auf Erden nicht schaffen konnte. Dieser Moment klingt bereits wie eine Vorahnung seiner "vier letzten Lieder".

Musik: Richard Strauss, Tod und Verklärung

Traditionsorchester mit Luxusklang

Auch den ätherischen Tonfall der Verklärung treffen die Musiker der Weimarer Staatskapelle unter ihrem aktuellen Generalmusikdirektor Kirill Karabits genau, ohne dass die wilhelminische Heilsgewissheit in süßlichen Kitsch abgeleitet. Der gefürchtete Wiener Kritiker Eduard Hanslick spottete über "Tod und Verklärung", die Musik sei so plastisch, dass dazu auch eine Pantomime des sterbenden Künstlers auf der Bühne aufgeführt werden könnte und hat damit die Kritik an den trappelnden Pferden in der "Elektra" oder den Orgasmustrillern im "Rosenkavalier" vorweggenommen. Schon zu diesem Zeitpunkt, 1889, steht der fertige Strauss vor uns mit all seinen Stärken, auch mit seinen vermeintlichen Schwächen.

Als Bonus und Rarität hat Kirill Karabits zu den drei Tondichtungen noch ein heiteres Nachspiel angefügt, nämlich jenen "Festmarsch in C-Dur", den Richard für seinen Vater Franz zum 25-jährigen Bestehen von dessen Privatorchester "Die wilde Gungl" schrieb. Eine Gelegenheitskomposition, nichts wirklich Wichtiges. Mit dem großen Orchesteraufwand der Tondichtungen hat diese Kleinigkeit nichts zu tun, aber sie macht den Weimarer Musikern hörbar Spaß.

Musik: Richard Strauss, Festmarsch in C

Die Tonmeister des Labels audite haben das Orchester auch im abschließenden Festmarsch plastisch gestaffelt eingefangen. Die Orchestergruppen mischen sich vor allem in den Tondichtungen zu einem warmen, aber nie erdrückenden Luxusklang, der den Rang eines der ältesten deutschen Orchester unmittelbar beglaubigt. Dass die 1491 gegründete Staatskapelle Weimar eines der wendigsten und reaktionsschnellsten Opernorchester Deutschlands ist, wissen nicht nur Fachleute. Ebenso überzeugend ist sie auf dieser neuen Platte unter ihrem Generalmusikdirektor Kirill Karabits mit Tondichtungen von Richard Strauss als Konzertorchester zu hören. Einziger Wermutstropfen ist, dass diese Zusammenarbeit bereits in der kommenden Spielzeit endet, weil Karabits seinen Vertrag in Weimar nicht verlängert.

**Fono Forum August 2018 (Andreas Friesenhagen - 2018.08.01)**

Von Oktober 1889 an amtierte Richard Strauss für fünf Jahre als zweiter Kapellmeister am Hoftheater in Weimar, eine Zeit, in der auch die drei Tondichtungen dieser CD uraufgeführt bzw. komponiert wurden. Wenn Kirill Karabits mit der Staatskapelle Weimar nun die Musik seines Quasi-Amtsvorgängers in der Stadt an der Ilm einspielt, darf er wohl auf die tätige Mithilfe des Genius loci hoffen. Und der lässt ihn nicht im Stich.

Um davon überzeugt zu sein, reicht es schon zu hören, wie mitreißend plastisch der Todeskampf des Protagonisten in "Tod und Verklärung" geschildert ist, wie greifbar etwa die sich nach oben reckenden Figuren der tiefen Streicher zu Beginn des Allegro-Teils das Aufbäumen des Sterbenden nachzeichnen. Karabits belässt es nicht beim Schönklang, er schöpft das erhebliche Konfliktpotenzial der Musik aus, lässt wilde Schmerzzattacken in die Erinnerungen des Helden an schönere Tage hineinfahren. Umso erfüllter wirkt die finale Verklärung. Das ist zugegebenermaßen kein Strauss für Anhänger sublimierter Gefühle – die dem Komponisten hier aber wohl auch nicht vorschwebten.

Den etwas älteren, immer noch zu selten gespielten "Macbeth" inszeniert Karabits düster brodelnd, eruptiv, als Drama mit wenigen Lichtblicken. Was Wunder, wenn auch im "Don Juan" nicht der strahlende Verführer im Mittelpunkt steht. Karabits scheint dem Nimbus dieser Figur zu misstrauen, die Farben wirken gedeckt, die Kantilenen müssen sich gegen die Nebentimmen behaupten. Der Ukrainer akzentuiert auch hier die dunklen Untertöne, ohne dem indes die Leidenschaft zu opfern. Sein Bekenntnis zur Heterogenität dieser Musik lässt ein komplexeres Bild des Don Juan entstehen, als man es vielleicht gewohnt ist.

Der harmlose Festmarsch in C – zwischen "Don Juan" und "Tod und Verklärung" entstanden – ist eine verzichtbare Zugabe.

**Gramophone August 2018 (Hugo Shirley - 2018.08.01)**

Though one of Germany's oldest orchestras, the Staatskapelle Weimar has never been a major presence on disc. Just over a decade ago, though, Naxos released the first of a trio of well-received discs of them playing Strauss, an Alpensinfonie (9/06) that was followed by a Four Last Songs (5/08) and Sinfonia domestica (1/10). This orchestra, where Strauss himself had laid the foundations of his conducting career in the 1890s, revealed itself to be a force to be reckoned with in the composer's works.

This fact is underlined in this fine new recording under Kirill Karabits, who has been juggling his job as music director in Weimar with his post at the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra since 2016. It's an interesting programme, too, offering the early (though subsequently revised) Macbeth, plus two scores that brought breakthroughs in their different ways: Don Juan and Tod und Verklärung. The occasional Festmarsch makes a welcome filler.

The virtues familiar from those earlier discs are apparent here in an orchestral sound that is rich and vibrant, with lively strings, rounded, warm brass and characterful woodwind – and Audite captures the sound most satisfyingly at the Weimarahalle. Karabits shows himself to be a very respectable Straussian, too, offering a beautifully paced, brawny and broody reading of Macbeth. It's a performance that's powerfully driven and characterised by impressive sweep and biting conviction; though it's certainly not rushed, and the conductor takes plenty of time for that yearning climax that marks the score's halfway point (at around 10'10" here).

Don Juan is hugely enjoyable, with plenty of sensuality (listen to that first romantic episode around three minutes in, with the harp nicely audible) and bristling élan – the strings really dig in to their tremolandos

accompanying the final return of the big horn theme (at 14'27"), for example. Karabits turns in a rousing account of Tod und Verklärung, too, although for me it doesn't quite match the warmth and lyricism of Sebastian Weigle's terrific recent Frankfurt account (Oehms, 2/18). The Festmarsch is not a piece to return to often, perhaps, but it's rousingly presented here in a rare outing on disc.

So what are the drawbacks? For all the disc's enjoyability, one notices that that Weimar orchestra doesn't always command the same sharpness and clarity of some of its more glamorous German competitors, with some details occasionally getting lost. But there's still an enormous amount to like in these vivid, committed performances.

**BBC Music Magazine September 2018 (David Nice - 2018.09.01)**



In theory, it was a good idea to show the current shape of Weimar's former Court, now State Orchestra, a fertile training ground for the young Richard Strauss as conductor and composer, in scores premiered either in its home town or neighbouring Eisenach (the exception is the Festmarsch from the same time, dubiously born in his home city of Munich). The problem is bothering with what is chronologically the first of the tonepoem sequence, Macbeth – brassheavy (albeit with the introduction of a bass trumpet), incoherent and very tangential to its subject-matter. The sophistication of the Weimar players under Kirill Karabits tones down the worst excesses, and textures are admirably clear, in fine sound, throughout the recording. But does it deserve yet another recording? I'd say not. The Festmarsch is similarly banal, a good deal shorter and more of a rarity – very odd to hear its C major coming out of what here is quite a spiritual transfiguration in Tod und Verklärung.

Karabits and his orchestra take a long time to flame, namely through three-quarters of a far from fiery Don Juan, where the crucial oboe solo is outshone by the clarinet towards the end of that exquisite love-scene. But when the sparks fly, which they do, fully, for the first time in the sick-bed agonies of the dying man, there's one performance here to set up there with the best. The memories of youth are beautifully gauzy, too. Otherwise not in the same league as the Staatskapelle Weimar's other Strauss recordings with Antoni Wit.

**[classical ear](http://www.classicalear.co.uk/posts/OTk4...) Mon 09 Jul, 2018 (Andrew Achenbach - 2018.07.09)**  
**source:** <http://www.classicalear.co.uk/posts/OTk4...>



On this finely engineered Audite release the orchestra's current principal conductor, Kirill Karabits, presides over a set of Strauss performances that are lucid, watchful and judiciously paced, boasting plenty of well-scrubbed detail from the low winds and strings in particular.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

Might this be the first in a series of Richard Strauss's tone poems by Kirill Karabits and the Staatskapelle Weimar, the orchestra he has led as chief conductor since 2016? There's nothing in the accompanying album notes to indicate whether that might be the case, but there is a reason Karabits chose these three tone poems in particular for this program, and that reason is Weimar.

The album identifies *Macbeth* (1886–88/1891), *Don Juan* (1888–89), and *Death and Transfiguration* (1888–89) as the composer's "early" tone poems, which they are. Only *Aus Italien* (1886) is earlier. But in a larger conspectus of Strauss's output, all but two of his tone poems—*Symphonia Domestica* and *An Alpine Symphony*—predate 1900 and could therefore be said to be "early" Strauss. Another way to look at it, though, is through the iceberg analogy. In sheer numbers, Strauss composed most of his works before the turn of the century, yet except for the tone poems and some of his songs, a large portion of his pre-1900 music is not as widely performed or as well-known as are his later works—namely the operas, *An Alpine Symphony*, the *Four Last Songs*, and a handful of other pieces.

The connection between the works on this album and the city of Weimar is that Strauss, following in Liszt's footsteps, served as Kapellmeister there from 1889 to 1894. All three of these tone poems, *Death and Transfiguration*, *Don Juan*, and *Macbeth*, the latter in its revised form (1891) were all premiered by Strauss at the helm of the Weimar court orchestra. Strauss's *Festmarsch*, TrV 157—I give the Trenner number here because Strauss wrote half a dozen works with *Festmarsch* in the title—is not a tone poem, nor does it have anything to do with Weimar. It's included here simply because it was composed in 1888, just prior to the composer's Weimar Kapellmeister appointment.

The so-called *Wilde Gungl* was a "waltz" orchestra founded in Munich by Josef Gungl in 1864. I imagine it was something like the Lawrence Welk band that flourished in a variety TV show from 1951 to 1971. Strauss played violin in the Gungl orchestra from 1882 to 1885, which was then led by Strauss's father, Franz. To celebrate the orchestra's 25th anniversary, which was to take place in 1889, Richard Strauss composed the *Festmarsch* in 1888, and the piece was presented in Munich for the orchestra's 60th concert. Only 60 concerts in 25 years suggests that the *Wilde Gungl* was an occasional ensemble whose musicians were otherwise employed.

Of the three tone poems given here, *Macbeth* is the only one with fewer than 100 recordings—way fewer—which says something about how unpopular it is compared to the others. Comparing versions of *Don Juan* and *Death and Transfiguration* would be an exercise in futility. So I will just say this: These are works that demand the highest level of virtuosity from an orchestra's musicians. The players of the Staatskapelle Weimar make a valiant effort, but they are not quite up to the standards of ensembles such as the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra under Mariss Jansons or the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra under Manfred Honeck, both of which have recently given us some stunning Strauss releases. You can hear the Weimar's violins scrambling a bit to hit all of the notes in some of the rapid, high-lying passages, and coordination between the orchestra's sections is not all it could be. I haven't heard it, but if, for some reason, having all three of these "Weimar" tone poems together on a single disc appeals to you, you might want to check out Johannes Fritzsch's Naxos recording with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra. It doesn't contain the *Festmarsch*, which isn't related anyway, but it does look to be a fairly recent release. I expect that most fans of Strauss's tone poems will not find the conjoining of these three particular works a strong incentive to purchase this release, and will be just as happy with recordings that pair the tone poems in different combinations, especially if the performances are preferable.

No one, including the conductor, orchestra, and record label, is setting out to rival the great recordings of these Strauss selections. Kirill Karabits, the new music director of the Staatskapelle Weimar since 2016, has steadily risen in a career marked by solid musicianship and some flair as an interpreter. Here he's a reliable Straussian, leading a good but not pre-eminent orchestra, recorded middling well by the engineers.

What interested me, besides the pleasure of meeting up with familiar masterpieces, is the historical perspective offered by a program that unfolds in chronological order. *Macbeth* (1886–88) would be considered a formed, successful work by the standards of the Lisztian tone poem, from which it gains loose organization and a good deal of bombast and rum-tum. But the miraculous breakthrough of *Don Juan* was in the offing, which makes *Macbeth* only a stepping stone. No one fully succeeds in turning the score into a silk purse, yet it isn't entirely a pig's ear, and Karabits, without revealing any new insights, negotiates the music nicely enough. As in the past, I don't recognize a hint of Shakespeare's characters in Strauss's musical portraiture—the title could just as well be *Captain Hook and the Lost Boys*.

The stakes are raised in the two masterpieces on the program, *Don Juan* and *Death and Transfiguration* (both 1888–89), considering the numerous great recordings each has received. Delivering the music with sumptuous virtuosity is something the Staatskapelle Weimar simply doesn't have to give. But Karabits knows how *Don Juan* should go, with brio and panache, and he leads an enjoyable reading. (Come to think of it, how many Slavic conductors have ever triumphed in Strauss, even the most distinguished?) By not aiming for thrills, Karabits may be acknowledging the limitations of his musicians, or perhaps he hears *Don Juan* with less swagger and more nostalgia.

By the time Strauss began *Death and Transfiguration* in the summer of 1888, he had completed his transition from abstract music, which held the highest prestige in the long shadow of Beethoven, to program music, which had been considered facile "Nature painting" aimed at unsophisticated listeners, although Bach and Handel stooped to it—the criticisms seem pointless to us today. *Don Juan* is so perfect that by comparison *Death and Transfiguration* seems more than a bit cloying and mawkish in tone. I don't know of many recorded performances that evoke true dignity in the presence of death and awe at the miracle of transfiguration, but perhaps I want what isn't there in the score. As with *Don Juan*, Karabits gives us a performance characterized by more reflection and calmness than usual. This renders his reading a little underplayed and inert emotionally.

Finally, there comes a bit of early incidental music, the *Festmarsch* in C (one of several pieces Strauss composed under the same title, including his op. 1). Being from 1884, this obscure work is out of chronological order. One hears hints of the *Prelude* to act I of *Die Meistersinger*; otherwise, Strauss composed a richly scored Prussian march of the kind usually reserved for brass band, adding a lyrical section in the middle. There's zero indication, to my ears, of the mature composer except in the grandiosity of the *Festmarsch*'s conception. Pleasantly stirring while it lasts, the music leaves no lasting impression.

The market for this release is hard to fathom, but I doubt that seasoned collectors will take an interest. Karabits is doing better work in other repertoire, especially Russian music of the 20th century.



I want to be less disappointed than I am. Kirill Karabits recently hit paydirt for Onyx in Bournemouth with powerful readings of the Walton symphonies. Meanwhile, the Staatskapelle Weimar, one of the world's oldest orchestras (it dates from 1482) not so long ago made incandescent, sonically rich Strauss CDs for Naxos with Antoni Wit. Kirill Karabits is the orchestra's new music director. What could go wrong? Well, for one, the recording sounds very 1960s. Compared to Naxos's deep Weimar soundstage, Audite has delivered a thin, bass-shy sonority. The Weimar Opera House is made to sound like London's Royal Festival Hall. That's not a good thing. Although one manages to make out the bass drum in Strauss's Festmarsch, it would be hard to avoid. The piece is a Strauss rarity of pre-Elgarian institutional tub-thumping, nicely delivered otherwise. But it would be hard to find supportive low tones and textures elsewhere in this release.

Strauss's music becomes dramatically less interesting when it doesn't have a sensual dimension. I was reminded of this almost immediately, as I listened to Macbeth blast away harshly. Karabits actually delivers a fairly sensitive performance, notable for a certain amount of rubato, but the central march doesn't rise up on grand and noble sonic waves the way it usually does, and one comes away disappointed at the grimness. When we turn to Don Juan and Death and Transfiguration, Karabits brings us standard performances, good ones, not a foot wrong anywhere, but is simply outclassed in every bar by Manfred Honeck and the Pittsburgh Symphony for Reference Recordings, just to name one contemporary. I originally reheard Honeck's CDs to verify the missing depth of basses and percussion in this Audite release. And indeed, what a contrast! Heinz Hall makes for massively satisfying, deep and creamy Strauss sonorities. But I was ironically reminded, too, what a difference imagination makes and that mysterious quality Charles Munch used to call "fire." I came away from the comparison scarcely recalling how Karabits conducted the music. His Don Juan didn't leap from the balconies, and his old man suffered a rather gray tourist-class ascent to heaven.

I suppose that means this time around someone gives out the old fashioned gentleman's "C"...

Richard Strauss wrote these three early tone poems when he was the Kapellmeister in Weimar, Germany from 1889 to 1894, making these performances home cooking for the Staatskapelle Weimar. That said cooking turns out to be very good is apparent right from the rousing opening outburst of Macbeth. From there the music surges forth with controlled abandon. The second theme, in the winds, supposedly is Lady Macbeth conceiving her dastardly plot and is appropriately icy. Then it becomes one big storm, effectively dramatic and well timed right down to the big pauses.

This performance presents a real challenge to the classic Rudolf Kempe recording from Dresden, with Karabits a little slower, heavier, and more dramatic than the more open and brighter Kempe. It also has a bigger bass foundation, and the Kempe is not exactly bass shy. Both are great performances, and the engineering of each fits the interpretations. Of the other Macbeths I know, Gerhard Schwarz is very exciting, though I prefer the German orchestras of Karabits and Kempe. Norman del Mar and Mark Elder are good, Elder less so, but neither is up to Karabits, Kempe, and Schwarz.

The Don Juan is slightly brighter in tone—fittingly so—but still rich, muscular, and dashing. The Death and Transfiguration reading produces the eerie and other-worldly sections very well, but where it really impresses is in its sheer power in the sections that call for it, especially near the end, where Karabits stretches out some passages to great effect. The Festival March in C was Strauss's anniversary gift to "Die Wilde Gung'l", the Munich orchestra he had conducted in his youth. It is a rarity but nothing special. The music is dark, muscular, and powerful, full of energy, and built like most of this kind of German music should be, from the very bottom of the orchestra up.



The cover of the booklet is black, with a picture of Karabits and lettering in purple and white. The dominant impression emanates from the black, and that is fitting, because black is the color I associate with these performances. (The disc is purple. It should be black.) The Staatskapelle Weimar sounds like the perfect orchestra for this music. If this is the first of a Strauss tone poem project from them, the result will be formidable and could stand with the Strauss of Rudolf Kempe, Herbert von Karajan, Karl Böhm, etc. It is probably closest to Kempe, but darker and heavier. The sound emphasizes the darkness of the performance. The notes are not extensive, but they tell the basic story of the music well enough.

Stuttgarter Zeitung Nr. 222 | Dienstag, 25. September 2018 (Götz Thieme - 2018.09.25)

STUTTGARTER  
ZEITUNG

### Strauss-Tradition

Eine außerordentliche Aufführung gelingt hier im Studio, rasant, knackig, mit schallenden Hörnern auf dem Höhepunkt [...] Eine wunderbare Visitenkarte der Weimarer.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[www.artalinna.com](http://www.artalinna.com) 19 September 2018 (Jean-Charles Hoffelé - 2018.09.19)

source: <http://www.artalinna.com/?p=10061>



### Mort et volupté

Karabits fait entendre la modernité drastique du langage du jeune Richard Strauss, exposant ses audaces harmoniques, magnifiant son écriture complexe, aux harmonies chargées : jamais il n'aura été aussi proche d'un certain versant de la Seconde Ecole de Vienne qu'en cette triade que le disque n'avait pas réuni jusqu'alors.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[Das Orchester](https://dasorchester.de) 12/2018 (Franzpeter Messmer - 2018.12.01)

source: <https://dasorchester.de/artikel/macbeth-...>



Diese Einspielung ermöglicht einen neuen Blick und ist nicht nur für Strauss-Liebhaber ein Meilenstein!

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[www.elegantclassics.cz](http://www.elegantclassics.cz) 20.11.2018 (Miloš Bittner - 1999.11.30)  
source: <https://www.elegantclassics.cz/l/karabit...>

EC

### Výborná kombinace pro hudbu Richarda Strausse na labelu audite

Pokud je naše duše otevřena, splyne i s pojetím, které se nám od Karabitse dostává. A v kruhu se opět dostáváme k Staatskapelle Weimar a jejím muzikantům. Ti dokáží přednést jak lahodně znějící sóla, tak unisono hru, která se blýská souhrou a příkladným hudebním cítěním.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[Classical CD Choice](http://www.cdchoice.co.uk/?p=1473) April 30, 2018 ( - 2018.04.30)  
source: <http://www.cdchoice.co.uk/?p=1473>



Also worthy of attention are a brace of new discs with notable individual qualities. The Audite label has a colourful and idiomatic quartet of readings of Strauss (RICHARD STRAUSS: MACBETH, DON JUAN, TOD AND VERKLARUNG AND THE FESTMARSCH IN C) with the Staatskaplle Wein conducted by Kiril Karabits [...]

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*



## Franz Liszt: Künstlerfestzug - Tasso - Dante Symphony

Franz Liszt

CD aud 97.760

[Thüringer Allgemeine](#) 10.01.2020 ( - 2020.01.10)

source: <https://www.thueringer-allgemeine.de/reg...>



**Neue CD der Staatskapelle Weimar mit Liszt-Werken erschienen**

Neue CD der Staatskapelle Weimar mit Liszt-Werken erschienen

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[www.pizzicato.lu](#) 11/01/2020 (Remy Franck - 2020.01.11)

source: <https://www.pizzicato.lu/gottliches-und-...>



### Göttliches und Teuflisches bei Liszt

Franz Liszts Dante Symphonie dreht sich, wie so vieles bei diesem Komponisten, um das Göttliche und das Teuflische. Die Symphonie zu Dantes Divina Commedia hat zwei Teile, Inferno mit den Qualen der Hölle, und das zart klingende Purgatorio, wo die Seele für die Aufnahme in den Himmel gereinigt wird. Ein vom Chor gesungenes Magnificat bringt die Symphonie zu Ende.

1859 komponierte Liszt ein Werk zum hundertsten Jahrestag von Schillers Geburt. Das Stück betitelte er Künstlerfestzug, wohl wissend, dass ein solcher Festzug in Weimar nicht stattfinden würde. Seine Komposition wurde daher auch nicht aufgeführt, weswegen er sie 1860 für Klavier zu zwei und vier Händen transkribierte.

Kirill Karabits liefert von den drei Werken spannende, klangschön ausgefeilte Interpretationen; jene des Künstlerfestzugs ist eine Weltersteinspielung.

In der Dante-Symphonie verhindert er durch den feinen Klang, dass das Inferno grob und schwer klingt. Das Motiv 'Gebt die Hoffnung auf, alle, die ihr hier eintretet' wird orchestral feierlich und kraftvoll vorgetragen, das teuflische Rasen wird mit höchster Dramatik, aber auch mit federndem Spiel und viel Raffinement dargestellt. Im Purgatorio wirkt der Dirigent sehr inspiriert, und er trifft die Atmosphäre von diesem zweiten Satz wie auch vom abschließenden Magnificat sehr gut. Karabits gelingt eine gute Mischung von zärtlicher Versöhnung und Transzendenz. Im Magnificat entsteht eine leichte, kristalline Stimmung, und der himmlische Chor beendet das Werk mit viel Ruhe und Besinnung.

An der Interpretation der Tondichtung 'Tasso' ist nichts auszusetzen: die Färbungen im Orchester sind schön und stimmungsvoll, die Dramatik fehlt ebenfalls nicht, so dass wir diese zweite von Liszts dreizehn Tondichtungen in ihrer ganzen rhetorischen Kraft erleben können.

Franz Liszt's Dante Symphony, like so many other works by this composer, revolves around the divine and the devilish. The symphony to Dante's Divina Commedia has two parts, Inferno with the tortures of hell, and the delicately sounding Purgatorio, where the soul is purified for admission to heaven. A Magnificat sung by

the choir brings the symphony to a close.

In 1859 Liszt composed a work for the centenary of Schiller's birth. He entitled the piece Künstlerfestzug, knowing well that such a procession would not take place in Weimar. His composition was therefore not performed, which is why he transcribed it for piano two and four hands in 1860.

Kirill Karabits delivers exciting, beautifully polished interpretations of the three works; the one of the Künstlerfestzug is a world premiere recording.

With a refined sound he prevents the Dante Symphony's Inferno from sounding coarse and heavy. The motif 'Give up hope, all who enter here' is solemnly and powerfully performed, the diabolical race is presented with the highest drama, but also with supple playing and much refinement. In the Purgatorio the conductor is very inspired, and his conducting of the final movement is suitably atmospheric. In the Magnificat, a light, crystalline mood is created, and the heavenly choir ends the work with much calm and reflection.

There is nothing wrong with the interpretation of the tone poem 'Tasso': the colours in the orchestra are beautiful and atmospheric, and the drama is not lacking either, so that we can experience this second of Liszt's thirteen tone poems in all its rhetorical power.

**Sunday Times January 12 2020 (Hugh Canning - 2020.01.12)**

source: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/magazine/cult...>

THE SUNDAY TIMES  
THE SUNDAY TIMES

**On record: classical**

The still rarely programmed Dante symphony and the tone poem Tasso: Lamento e Trionfo receive committed performances from an orchestra that is on the rise thanks to its charismatic maestro.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Der neue Merker 15.01.2020 (Alexander Walther - 2020.01.15)**

source: <https://onlinemerker.com/cd-dante-sinfon...>



**CD Dante-Sinfonie von Liszt bei audite erschienen**

*Triumph der Kunst*

Die Staatskapelle Weimar musiziert unter Kirill Karabits wie aus einem Guss. [...] Die ganze Ausdrucksskala vom Schmerz bis zum Jubel kommt bei dieser Einspielung zum Vorschein.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Crescendo Magazine 19 janvier 2020 (Jean Lacroix - 2020.01.19)**

source: [https://www.crescendo-magazine.be/quand...](https://www.crescendo-magazine.be/quand-...)



**Quand Liszt célèbre Schiller, Goethe et Dante**

Voilà un programme d'une grande cohérence tant au niveau de la chronologie de l'écriture que des ambiances qui l'entourent. [...] Il se [Karabits] révèle un interprète à la fois racé et passionné, emmenant la Staatskapelle de Weimar vers des élans de puissance ou de transparence construits avec netteté et équilibre, sans appuyer les traits. Il faut désormais considérer ce CD comme une référence moderne pour ces pages inspirées de Liszt.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[www.prestoclassical.co.uk](http://www.prestoclassical.co.uk) 24th January 2020 (James Longstaffe - 2020.01.24)  
source: <https://www.prestomusic.com/classical/ar...>

PRESTO  
CLASSICAL

#### ■ Recording of the Week

*Liszt's Dante Symphony plus a world-premiere recording from Kirill Karabits*

[...] magnificently-performed work.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[The Arts Fuse](https://artsfuse.org/193958/classical-cd...) JANUARY 25, 2020 (Jonathan Blumhofer - 2020.01.25)  
source: <https://artsfuse.org/193958/classical-cd...>

The  
Arts  
Fuse

#### Classical CD Reviews: "Escales," "Jeux de Miroirs," and Liszt Symphonic Works

[...] the Symphony comes over strongly and, given its relative rarity (both in the concert hall and in recording), that puts this album over the top.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

<https://www.midlandsmusicreviews.com> January 15, 2020 (Norman Stinchcombe - 2020.01.15)  
source: <https://www.midlandsmusicreviews.com/202...>



Karabits and his Weimar forces are suitably trenchant and saturnine here [...] The Magnificat finale with women's voices from the Weimar choir and Jena Boys' Choir soloist, is beautifully floated. There's an exuberant colourfully romantic performance of Tasso, one of Liszt's finest tone poems, and a bonus premiere recording of his Künstlerfestzug zur Schillerfeier festival march.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

SWR SWR2 Treffpunkt Klassik, 12:30 Uhr (Manuel Brug - 2020.02.02)  
source: <https://www.swr.de/swr2/musik-klassik/Ne...>



#### BROADCAST

*Neue CDs: Vorgestellt von Manuel Brug*

Die Staatskapelle Weimar durchmisst unter der zupackenden Leitung von Kirill Karabits das komplexe Werk mit großem Können.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**De Gelderlander** 15-02-20 (Maarten-Jan Dongelmans - 2020.02.15)

source: <https://www.gelderlander.nl/luister-mee/...>



### Sidderen en optimaal genieten van Liszt's hellepijnen en hemelse visioenen

*En opnieuw scoort de Staatskapelle Weimar met Kirill Karabits op de bok in muziek van Franz Liszt. Was het eind februari 2019 het onbekende onvoltooide operafragment Sardanapalo dat deze rubriek haalde, nu komt het Duitse label Audite met de volgende verrassing.*

Zelden hebben orkestmelodieën zo zuchtend en melancholiek geklonken als in deze partituur. De Staatskapelle Weimar weet precies de juiste snaar te raken.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Crescendo Februar 2020 (JFL - 2020.02.01)**



### Berührende Momente

*Kirill Karabits*

Ganz aus einem Guss dirigiert Karabits [...] muss sich auch nicht vor den Referenzaufnahmen von Joó Árpád und Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos verstecken.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**www.ResMusica.com 20 février 2020 (Patrice Imbaud - 2020.02.20)**

source: <https://www.resmusica.com/2020/02/20/kir...>



### La Clef

*Kirill Karabits et la Staatskapelle Weimar, l'authentique lisztien*

Si d'aucuns ont pu émettre des doutes quant aux qualités d'orchestrateur de Franz Liszt, Kirill Karabits et la Staatskapelle Weimar leur apportent, par l'intermédiaire de ce disque, un cinglant démenti !

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Audiophile Audition Feb 21, 2020**

(Gary Lemco - 2020.02.21)

source:

<https://www.audaud.com/liszt-dante-symph...>



[...] the music achieves that synoptic, spiritual pose that justifies Dante's life and mission as a poet of Christendom, who, in the opinion of W.B. Yeats, has never been surpassed as the most visionary of literary talents.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*



Audio 04/2020 (Otto Paul Burkhardt - 2020.04.01)



## KLANG TIPP

Bratzendes Blech, Trommeldonner und heulende Windmaschine: So schildert Liszt in seiner „Dante“-Sinfonie das Inferno. Die Staatskapelle Weimar unter Ex-Chef Kirill Karabits verzichtet auf zähes Pathos, glänzt stattdessen mit raffinierten Farben, wilden Rhythmen und einer hauchzarten „Amoroso“-Episode. Grandios, wie Karabits am Ende engelsgleiche Paradies-Gesänge gen Himmel aufsteigen lässt. Zudem überzeugt er mit dem kontrastreich inszenierten Tonpoem zu Goethes „Tasso“ sowie mit dem „Künstlerfestzug“, einer Liszt- Hommage zu Schillers 100. Geburtstag. Allein das Hornthema mit Glitzerharfe ist hinreißend.

Fono Forum April 2020 (Andreas Friesenhagen - 2020.04.01)



## CD des Monats

Die zeitgenössische Kritik warf der Dante-Sinfonie vor, ein "sodomitisches Spektakel" zu sein. Tatsächlich war Liszts Schilderung der Dante'schen Höllen- und Fegefeuer-Visionen schon damals schwere Kost für das konservative Publikum. Eine gewisse Plakativität kann man dem Werk natürlich nicht absprechen. Dass sie in dieser Einspielung nicht störend ins Gewicht fällt, sondern ins poetische Gesamtkonzept eingebunden erscheint, ist einer der angenehmen Züge der Produktion.

Kirill Karabits stellt infernalische Schrecken, verklärte Paradieses-Hoffnung, die Leidenschaft der Francescoda- Rimini-Episode und vieles mehr in diesem vielfarbigen Panorama gleich intensiv, mit geradezu greifbarer Plastizität dar. Mithilfe der sehr guten Tontechnik führt er Liszt – was nicht unbedingt zu erwarten war – als Klangzauberer vor, stellt herrliche Orchesterfarben, eine leuchtende, diaphane Textur in den Vordergrund, gibt klarer, pointierter Diktion den Vorzug vor dickem Pathos. Die großräumige Disposition der beiden umfangreichen Sätze wird dynamisiert, sodass keine Leerstellen entstehen. Trotz der großen Ruhe, ja Abgeklärtheit, die Karabits bei diesem Stoff beweist, bleibt das Geschehen im Fluss.

So auch in der sinfonischen Dichtung "Tasso", die ebenfalls so kontrast- und detailreich abgebildet wird, wie man es selten gehört hat. Auch hier wieder große Orchesterpoesie, vom schmerzgetränkten Solo der Bassklarinette im Lamento zum federleichten Allegretto con grazia, mit dem der Trionfo eingeleitet wird. Der laut CD-Text als Weltersteinspielung vorgestellte "Künstlerfestzug" zur Feier von Schillers hundertstem Geburtstag ist subtiler, als Anlass und Titel vermuten lassen.

**Thüringer Allgemeine** 07.03.2020 ( - 2020.03.07)  
source: <https://www.thueringer-allgemeine.de/kul...>



## Neue CD der Staatskapelle Weimar: Jubelfeiern, Höllenstürze

Hier wird ein Dirigent zum Erzähler, der Binnenspannungen zu gestalten weiß. [...] Karabits' analytische Gestaltungskraft verhilft zu sinnhafter, sinnenmächtiger Erlebnisqualität.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

<http://muzlifemagazine.ru> 18.03.2020 (Roman Korolev - 2020.03.18)  
source: <http://muzlifemagazine.ru/franz-liszt-ki...>



Немецкий национальный театр и...

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**BBC Music Magazine April 2020 (Jessica Duchen - 2020.04.01)**



Franz Liszt's orchestral works are not the most subtle creations in the world. Often the orchestration seems only half-suited to music that can sound conceived in terms of pianistic figuration. However, if you are curious about these under-recognised pieces and fancy plunging into some febrile mid-19th-century sensibility, this disc is a good place to start. The Staatskapelle Weimar has a special closeness to Liszt's heritage: upon retiring from the concert platform he lived in that city from 1848 to 1861, devoting himself to composition and teaching.

These works all date from the Weimar years and each is associated with a bygone literary genius. The first translates as 'Artists' Gala Procession for the Schiller Celebrations'; the second, Tasso, started life as an overture to Goethe's play of that title; and the Symphony to Dante's Divine Comedy was the largest product of a long fascination that Liszt held for that poetic tract.

Kirill Karabits and the Staatskapelle offer powerful and well-balanced accounts, taking the works on their own terms and drawing out the best they have to offer. The pieces can sound portentous and pompous, yet suddenly break into moments of ethereal beauty, and the orchestra's special sound and seamless ensemble make them unusually sympathetic. Silky, sepia-toned strings unify with dusky and eloquent woodwind, edgy brass playing and delectable harps, while Karabits handles the gear-changes with conviction. In the Symphony's Magnificat, the two choruses step aboard and soar, as if a natural part of the orchestra. Recorded sound is warm and pleasing.

**Diapason N° 689 Avril 2020 (Hugues Mousseau - 2020.04.01)**



Admirée par Wagner à qui Liszt la dédia officiellement, l'imposante Dante-Symphonie est restée dans l'ombre de sa soeur jumelle la Faust-Symphonie. A cause de son sujet, moins grand public, mais aussi de l'âpreté sans concession de son orchestre.

Kirill Karabits et les forces de Weimar – ville dans laquelle l'oeuvre fut écrite en 1855-1856 –prennent à bras-le-corps cette fresque où épouvante, angoisse et rédemption se succèdent. L'Enfer qui ouvre les hostilités e toute la férocité mais aussi, dans l'épisode central évoquant la passion funeste de Francesca et Paolo, toute l'effusion requises. On frémit au marcato molto grimaçant des altos à 16' 16", au rinforzando sinistre des contrebasses à 19' 21". Dans le Purgatoire, où tenir l'auditeur en haleine est déjà plus difficile, Karabits emporte l'adhésion par le relief de ses clairs-obscurs, une dramaturgie alliant éloquence et retenue. Négociée d'une main aussi ferme, l'entrée dans le Magnificat nous console du renoncement de Liszt à peindre le Paradis.

Si la Staatskapelle de Weimar ne possède pas tout à fait les timbres de celle de Dresde avec Sinopoli (DG), ce menu handicap est compensé par une prise de son à grand spectacle qui, à défaut d'enchanter vos voisins, vous flanquera la chair de poule dans le vortex de l'Enfer. Exposant ses interprètes à une concurrence plus redoutable encore, Tasso voit Karabits tenir la dragée haute à Masur, Sinopoli, Karajan,

Golovanov et Silvestri, ne s'inclinant d'une très courte tête que dans le Trionfo conclusif. L'enregistrement en première mondiale de Künstlerfestzug zur Schillerfeier (1859), pesante page de circonstance pour l'inauguration du monument élevé par Weimar à la gloire de Goethe et Schiller, a valeur de simple curiosité.

<http://operalounge.de> März 2020 (Daniel Hauser - 2020.03.30)  
source: <http://operalounge.de/cd/instrumentales/...>



## Gelungene diskographische Erweiterung in Sachen Liszt

*Kirill Karabits bei audite*

Das Liszt-Jahr ist zwar vorüber, doch glücklicherweise bedeutet das nicht, dass die Fülle an teils hochkarätigen Neueinspielungen damit verebben würde. Die Staatskapelle Weimar unter ihrem damaligen, aus der Ukraine stammenden Chefdirigenten Kirill Karabits ließ bereits aufhorchen in Sachen Liszt, als audite das Opern-Fragment Sardanapalo (plus Mazeppa) auf den Markt brachte. Es ist insofern schade, dass Karabits' Weimarer Amtszeit 2019 nach gerade drei Spielzeiten auch schon wieder endete. Ob die nun vorgelegte Liszt-Neuaufnahme (audite 97.760) in dieser Kombination bereits die letzte war, bleibt abzuwarten. Eingespielt wurde wieder neben ziemlich bekannten Werken, der Dante-Sinfonie und der Sinfonischen Dichtung Tasso, wiederum eine absolute Rarität, der sogenannte Künstlerfestzug zur Schillerfeier, der hier sogar seine Weltersteinspielung erfährt. Aufgenommen wurden die drei Werke während Karabits' finaler Spielzeit im Congress Centrum Neue Weimarahalle (die Dante-Sinfonie zwischen 17. und 20. August 2018, der Rest am 14. und 15. April 2019).

Von den beiden großen Programmsinfonien, die Liszt vorgelegt hat, steht diejenige, die dem Florentiner Renaissance-Dichter Dante Alighieri und seiner Göttlichen Komödie gewidmet ist, etwas im Schatten der Faust-Sinfonie. Dies gewiss zu Unrecht, zeigt sich die musikalische Umsetzung doch schlechterdings genial. Sie besteht trotz ihrer erheblichen Länge von einer dreiviertel Stunde lediglich aus zwei Sätzen, bezeichnet mit Inferno sowie Purgatorio – Magnificat. Liszt stellte also lediglich das Jüngste Gericht und das Fegefeuer musikalisch dar; den Himmel hielt er letztlich in musikalischer Form für nicht angemessen umsetzbar. Der Schlusschor (mit Harmonium) gibt lediglich eine, allerdings im wahrsten Sinne des Wortes himmlische Vorahnung auf denselben wieder. Ad libitum, auf Anraten der Fürstin Sayn-Wittgenstein, fügte er freilich noch einen „pomphafte[n], plagialische[n] Schluß“ (Wagner) hinzu, der heutzutage fast immer weggelassen wird, so auch hier, so dass die Sinfonie mit einem „sanften, edlen Verschweben“ (ders.) ausklingt. Allzu viele Einspielungen des Werkes gibt es – anders als bei der Faust-Sinfonie – nicht. Daniel Barenboims Aufnahme mit den Berliner Philharmonikern (Teldec) hat mich seinerzeit jedenfalls mehr beeindruckt als jene von Giuseppe Sinopoli mit der Staatskapelle Dresden (DG). Ausgezeichnet ein kommerziell nicht erhältlicher Rundfunkmitschnitt des Chicago Symphony Orchestra unter Riccardo Muti, der tatsächlich den alternativen Schluss anhängt. Die Neuproduktion aus Weimar kann sich dort sehr gut einreihen und wartet zumal mit einer phantastischen Klangqualität auf. Im Inferno und im Magnificat wählt Karabits mit 21:03 und 7:31 nahezu identische Spielzeiten wie Barenboim, um im Purgatorio allerdings fast drei Minuten flotter zur Sache zu gehen (18:02) – und ganze fünf Minuten schneller ist als Sinopoli. Die Damen des Opernchores des Deutschen Nationaltheaters Weimar sowie der Knabenchor der Jenaer Philharmonie unterstützen das herrlich aufspielende Orchester kongenial.

Tasso. Lamento e Trionfo ist vermutlich eine der drei am häufigsten gespielten Liszt'schen Tondichtungen (neben Les Préludes und Mazeppa). Wiederum steht ein italienischer Dichter, diesmal Torquato Tasso, im Zentrum, der am Ende wahnsinnig wurde und einen Tag vor seiner geplanten Dichterkrönung starb. Mit seiner zu Unrecht völlig im Schatten stehenden dritten Trauerode Le Triomphe funèbre du Tasse schuf der Komponist später gar eine Art Fortsetzung. Berühmtheit erlangte Tasso insbesondere wegen der ohrwurmartigen „venezianischen Melodie“, welche Tassos nagenden Schmerz widerspiegelt. Karabits wählt gemessene Tempi, kommt auf 21:25 Minuten und erreicht damit beinahe die Ausmaße, welche Herbert von Karajan 1975 in seiner Einspielung für die Deutsche Grammophon wählte, die für mich nach wie vor die Referenz darstellt. Und ohne Frage gelingt Karabits auch hier eine Interpretation, die zu den besten gerechnet werden muss, vom zaghaften Beginn bis zum triumphalen Abschluss.

Die Weltpremiere, auf der vorliegenden CD als erster Track gelistet, ist das heimliche Highlight. Sicherlich reicht der Künstlerfestzug künstlerisch schwerlich an die beiden anderen Stücke heran, doch ist die Umsetzung dieser etwa elfminütigen Triumphalmusik trotz fehlender Vergleichsoptionen wiederum tadellos und lässt diese Komposition nicht als hohlen Pomp dastehen.

Eine feine diskographische Erweiterung in Sachen Liszt also, bei der man eine Fortsetzung der audite-Reihe erhoffen würde.

**lexnews.free.fr n° 14 / Avril 2020 ( - 2020.04.01)**

**source:** <http://www.lexnews.fr/lesdisques.htm>



La Staatskapelle Weimar et Kirill Karabits parviennent littéralement à matérialiser ces images sonores en des tableaux successifs dans lesquels le fantastique se dispute à la poésie

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Classica – le meilleur de la musique classique & de la hi-fi N° 221 Avril 2020  
(Jérémy Bigorie - 2020.04.01)**



Sur la lancée du détonnant Sardanapale (Classica n° 213). Kirill Karabits et...

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Gramophone April 2020 (Tim Ashley -  
2020.04.01)**



Written in 1857, Liszt's Künstlerfestzug was originally planned as a grand pièce d'occasion to accompany the unveiling in Weimar of the famous double statue of Goethe and Schiller that stands in front of the National Theatre, where Liszt (and indeed, more recently, Kirill Karabits) served as Kapellmeister. In the event, the premiere was shelved until the centenary of Schiller's birth two years later, by which time it had become the Prelude to Friedrich Halm's melodrama Vor hundert Jahren, for which Liszt provided incidental music to accompany the dialogue between allegorical figures representing Germany and Poetry, narrating the writer's life and celebrating his achievement.

It was not revived, however, until last year's Schiller anniversary, when Karabits performed the complete work, first in Weimar, then with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra in Poole. The critical response was guarded (regrettably, I didn't hear it), though Karabits has now given us the premiere recording of the Künstlerfestzug on its own as the first work on his latest Liszt album. Though we're not dealing with a lost masterpiece, it's by no means negligible. There are echoes of the march from the first movement of the Faust Symphony in both the thematic contours and ceremonial tread of the opening statement, while a lyrical, introspective horn melody, representing Schiller himself, forms an effective point of repose at the centre. Avoiding stodgy solemnity and keeping it light on its feet, Karabits propels it forwards with graceful urgency, and brings terrific energy to the final peroration, where the playing is virtuoso and the Weimar brass, excellent throughout, sound splendidly gleaming and triumphant. With its companion pieces we are on more familiar ground, though Karabits is perhaps on a less sure footing. Darkly brooding strings, really intense and grieving, get Tasso off to a fine start, though the performance turns episodic later on – always a danger with this work – and one misses the greater coherence and drama of Masur and the Leipzig Gewandhaus (EMI, 11/81) here. Apart from a couple of moments of thin violin tone, meanwhile, A Dante

Symphony is beautifully played and the unusual combination of women's and children's voices in the final Magnificat is particularly striking. Karabits gives us a notably baleful account of the opening 'Inferno' with an extremely sensuous Paolo-Francesca love scene, though the 'Purgatorio' again seems discursive when placed beside Nosedà, altogether more intense and purposeful with the BBC Philharmonic (Chandos, 8/09), or the extraordinary emotional and spiritual refinement of Sinopoli with the Dresden Staatskapelle (DG, 11/98), still my first choice for this remarkable score. The Künstlerfestzug makes the disc essential listening for Lisztians, but for the other works you perhaps need to look elsewhere.

**allmusic.com 01.04.2020 ( - 2020.04.01)**

**source:** <https://www.allmusic.com/album/franz-lis...>

allmusic

Karabits's performance of this large work is several minutes longer than average, without dragging in the least: he gets the moody quality that is lost in splashier readings. A very strong Liszt release, with fine sound from the Congress Centrum Neue Weimarhalle.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**www.amazon.co.uk 18 January 2020 ( - 2020.01.18)**

**source:** <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Liszt-Dante-Sym...>

amazon

**Künstlerfestzug. One for the Liszt collectors**

Künstlerfestzug is of great interest. A real romantic piece with lots of fanfares. Joyous, triumphal tones throughout. Maybe not his greatest work but one to be enjoyed. All pieces are committed and no doubt orchestra/conductor have a real association with Liszt. Has to be one of the most acclaimed put to record for many of years. . Sound quality is some of the best i have heard. I recommend these to any collector of classical music and not to be missed for any lisztian.

**www.musicweb-international.com Tuesday May 26th ( - 2020.05.26)**

**source:** <http://www.musicweb-international.com/cl...>



I must admit that I have not yet heard the first recording of the completion of Liszt's opera Sardanapalo recorded with these same forces but they have now moved on to some of Liszt's other orchestral works with this CD which, I am pleased to report, includes a first recording.

The Künstlerfestzug zur Schillerfeier is one of those jolly ceremonial marches of which Liszt composed quite a number and all of which are almost never heard these days. It is a shame, as there is some really memorable and fun music here, replete with lots of heroic fanfares and whatnot. It is also interesting to compare this orchestral version to the final solo piano version (S520ii in Searle's catalogue – there is also a 4 hand piano version S605 which as far as I can tell has yet to be recorded) and how much detail there is in the piano version and how well it's all orchestrated from that. Overall, it's not a serious piece, just a bit of fun and full of marvellous tunes. It is also wonderfully clearly recorded and well played by all concerned. The central section which uses the same themes as found in the symphonic poem Orpheus is especially wonderfully played before the bombastic opening themes return to conclude the work.

Liszt's second (of 13) symphonic poems is based on the life of the 16th century lyric poet Tasso. Here, he fashions a story around his exploits, mostly revolving around Tasso's time spent in a mental asylum (as depicted on the front cover, in Delacroix's famous painting) and his later recovery and triumph. One of the major problems with this work is sustaining interest throughout its approximately twenty-minute length, as



the main theme heard at the outset is basically subjected to an ongoing set of variations. Personally, I've always liked this piece; obviously it crops up many times in complete sets of the symphonic poems, so I am very familiar with it. I was recently most taken with Martin Haselböck's set on period instruments, however, almost all recordings are on modern ones, so that is rather an exception. Anyway, here the Staatskapelle Weimar are on cracking form; there is no slowness or dragging of the music and it all fits together extremely well despite the slightly longer than usual playing time. Of particular note is the 'Adagio mesto' mournful section from 3'45", with a wonderful solo turn from the B clarinet which is very atmospheric indeed. The music lightens in character following this and that which is derived from a Venetian Gondoliers song dominates the central part of the work and is perfectly judged throughout. This is gradually ratcheted up in speed and volume as we enter the final third of the work, which is louder and more positive in its outlook. Here, the orchestra is at full power and the effect (especially with headphones) is incredible. The major key statement at 9'02" contains some great playing by the brass who come to the fore in this section of the work before the strings take over for the 'quasi Menuetto' which follows. All the details are present and correct and the playing is superlative. The clarity of the recording certainly shows up well in this section, as the instruments all complement each other perfectly and themes interleave across the different orchestral sections. Once Liszt has finished with this particular theme, the music develops into to a doorway back to the return of some of the music from the opening and commanding music returns again. This acts as a link to the final section of the work, providing a fittingly positive conclusion for this marvellous piece which was magnificently played by all concerned.

The final work on the disc takes up most of the running time: Liszt's Second Symphony, The "Dante". This is another work that I've got to know better of late, having previously always preferred the "Faust" but it is a piece which has definitely grown on me as time has gone by. The opening movement is absolutely incredible on this recording – the malignancy of the themes as they are mangled and the downright sinister aspect to the music comes across magnificently. The tension here in this first movement is palpable and the power generated by the orchestra is awesome. There is so much detail in Liszt's superb orchestration here that it is almost overwhelming. The whole twenty-one-minute expanse of this first movement is marvellously controlled and all of the playing is completely spot on. Towards the end of this movement, they have also included the wind machine which Liszt had originally planned to use but is not often included on recordings – perhaps for obvious reasons. This works very well as the winds blow around the circles of Hell and the movement builds up to the momentous ending which is very loud, ominous and powerful. I initially had my doubts about the pacing of the second 'Purgatorio' movement however after numerous listenings, I feel that it is exactly right. All the detail is there, the playing is superb and everything works very well together. There is a sense of time standing still here in this movement as Liszt depicts the various parts of purgatory and moves towards the conclusion of the movement. There is some utterly beguiling playing here from the strings, especially in the second section of this movement (marked 'Lamentoso') and they grow more agitated as time passes and ultimately lead to a huge fugue for the whole orchestra. The control here of all of the assorted lines is brilliant; it's easy to follow the structure as the work unfolds. After the massive conclusion of this fugue, the work slowly winds down until the final section of the work which is a setting of the 'Magnificat'. Familiarity with the piece is also useful here, as the various elements of the tune which makes up the words set, gradually emerge from the orchestral background. This recording uses a huge choir – far larger than for example that used in Martin Haselböck's recording (the Choir Sine Nomine) and the effect here is breath-taking. The recording quality is so good that you can almost hear the depth of sound in the theatre where the recording was made. The singing is also spot on and ethereally beautiful. Interestingly, Liszt asks for a female or boys' choir and I think here they have used a mixed choir but it does not affect the sound generated. The orchestral accompaniment to this final section of the work is restrained and dignified and does not overwhelm the singers. Having said that, there are some louder moments here but overall the work proceeds to a quiet and dignified ending which is deftly handled by all concerned.

This is a very generously-filled disc at 79 minutes including a first recording of a work by Liszt very rarely heard and which makes it worth seeking out for that alone. The cover notes are interesting and the recording quality is fantastically clear. The CD itself is in one of the less environmentally costly plastic and cardboard holders and the booklet is in German and English. I look forward to further recordings with these forces, as they have done a magnificent job of a work which is not easy to get right. Furthermore, I hope they get around to recording some of the pieces which Martin Haselböck was unable to include in his set.



[www.limelightmagazine.com.au](http://www.limelightmagazine.com.au) June 1, 2020 ( - 2020.06.01)  
source: <https://www.limelightmagazine.com.au/rev...>



The opening Inferno blazes with a scorchingly potent immediacy [...]

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[Das Orchester](#) 05/2020 ( - 2020.05.01)  
source: <https://dasorchester.de/artikel/dante-ta...>



Die Staatskapelle Weimar musiziert unter Kirill Karabits wie aus einem Guss. [...] Sie durchmisst unter [dessen] energischen Leitung alle kontrapunktischen Stadien mit Bravour.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[Fanfare](#) May 2020 ( - 2020.05.01)



Franz Liszt's purely symphonic works, viewed in hindsight, have been more historically instructive than popular with the public. Only A Faust Symphony and Les préludes ever entered the general repertoire, and the latter is currently on life support, though, in fairness, this is probably due to over-familiarity from film, television, and Muzak at the supermarket. Although Liszt sowed the seeds of modern development in concert music, from tone poems to tone rows, his orchestral pieces sound melodramatically pianistic to most ears, constantly declaiming in octaves to stir up excitement and—kiss of death—rarely featuring inspired melodies. An exception is the "Gretchen" movement from his Faust Symphony, which Liszt realized was destined for popularity and published separately in various permutations. Liszt also had trouble with orchestration. Indeed, much of what we encounter was actually scored by Joachim Raff, though musicologists today easily demonstrate that Raff took too much credit as a collaborator, when in fact he simply orchestrated Liszt's direct intentions.

Scholars of the day twisted themselves into pretzels worrying whether Liszt's 1857 Dante Symphony, omitting "Paradiso," correctly represented Dante Alighieri's 14th-century epic poem, "Divine Comedy." Wagner, horrified at Liszt's original decision to conclude the piece with a depiction—presumably loud and bombastic—of paradise, urged him to keep the music ethereal. Liszt took Wagner's critique to heart, and the symphony finishes with a women's chorus singing Mary's hymn of praise from the Gospel according to St. Luke: Magnificat anima mea Dominum, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." More important for modern listeners, though, has been how well or badly the symphony works as music. Just in case the piece would be accused of lamely petering out, Liszt supplied a loud alternative ending, not played here, nor in Daniel Barenboim's benchmark version with the Berlin Philharmonic. It may not make much difference to today's ears.

The Dante Symphony is ultimately boxed-in by the necessary progression from hell to heaven implicit in Dante's poem. Liszt, to be frank, is much better at the "hell" part. His slow movement, "Purgatorio," does feature a haunting horn refrain, but it isn't otherwise that memorable, and listeners tend to experience the symphony, ending quietly and fading away, as a gradual letdown.

It's fully appropriate that this release should come to us from Weimar, Goethe's and Schiller's home and Liszt's home base in later life. The Weimar Court Orchestra was a major ensemble in its day, and its successor plays well here, recorded in flawless sound. Kirill Karabits is a high-energy sort of conductor, and the devilish slashing and dashing he achieves is certainly exciting. But it lacks the rich dreamlike mystery

Barenboim elicits from the Berlin Philharmonic. Liszt never achieved, or perhaps even sought, the “seamless melody” of Wagnerian ideal, but Barenboim seems to find it in the music anyway, and in his hands it glows, intrigues, and frightens us with metaphysical things which go bump in the night. This is no criticism of Karabits’s effort. It’s satisfying in its way, but Barenboim surpasses the music itself and makes it better than it is.

The two other works on this release represent Liszt at roughly the same time in history. The *Künstlerfestzug* listed first translates as “Artists Pageant,” and was composed to introduce a Schiller festival in Weimar. It’s an 11-minute overture/tone poem and like so many of the era, it seeks to capture one’s attention with a variant of Beethoven’s whiplash opening to the *Coriolan Overture*, followed by a fair share of march-like academic pomp, a pretty horn tune, and a good bit of melodic sweep. Its diffuse manner and low brass and percussion proclamations seem to foreshadow Edward Elgar’s early efforts. It manages to include a minuet and actually works rather well.

*Tasso*, which follows, is Liszt’s second tone poem. Its second version is performed here, orchestrated by Joachim Raff. The full title is *Tasso, Lament and Triumph* and it traces the descent into madness and eventual success of Torquato Tasso, 16th-century Venetian poet. A shorter version of Liszt’s music was originally used to introduce Goethe’s play of that name and was later expanded to the 1854 version we encounter here. As one can well imagine, Liszt does very well by the madness part! The romance and triumphal rehabilitation portions of the music are enjoyable and well performed without being quite memorable for today’s ears. But that’s a judgment call one leaves to the listener. I doubt one would hear it better performed than by Karabits and the Weimar Staatskapelle. Chorus and orchestra are perfectly balanced and above reproach. If you enjoy the vivid tortures of hell, this may be the set of performances for you. If you aspire ascending to a more atmospheric heavenly perch, perhaps Barenboim’s performance of the symphony would be the better ladder.

[www.artalinna.com](http://www.artalinna.com) 8 AUGUST 2020 ( - 2020.08.08)

source: <http://www.artalinna.com/?p=13708>



## LE DISQUE DU JOUR

### INFERNO

Magnifique album, qui prend à la gorge aussi les escarpements de *Tasso* et révèle le rare Hommage à Schiller, musique d'apparat grandiose où passe le souvenir de Berlioz.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[Fanfare](#) June 2020 ( - 2020.06.01)

fanfare

The important news here is the world premiere recording of Liszt’s *Künstlerfestzug zur Schillerfeier* (Artists’ Gala Procession for the Schiller Celebrations), S 114, given in its original orchestral version of 1857–59. Some may be familiar with the piece in its arrangement for solo piano made by Liszt in 1860, which was then published as S 520. The piano version has been recorded more than once, including by Sergio Monteiro on Volume 43 of his Naxos survey of Liszt’s complete piano music. The piece is drawn from and based on themes from Liszt’s choral cantata *An die Künstler*, S 70/1–3.

Plans for the work to be performed at the unveiling of twin memorial statues of Goethe and Schiller in 1857 apparently fizzled, but a second opportunity arose two years later when festivities were planned for celebrating the centenary of Schiller’s birth in 1759. Liszt’s 11-minute opener to the Schiller shindig begins with two attention-grabbing chord strokes reminiscent of Beethoven’s *Overture to Coriolanus*. From there,

the piece sweeps on through Wagnerian bluster and pomposity, eventually working its way into a swaying, lilting nostalgia that sounds freakishly like something by Richard Strauss that wouldn't be written for yet another 50 or 60 years. The predominant impression this listener has of Liszt's pageant overture is that it's loud and lurid, grandiose rather than grand, and ceremonious rather than ceremonial—in other words, full of itself, and definitely not choice Liszt, which may explain why it has not been previously recorded.

Familiar from many fine recordings, and of far superior musical quality, are Liszt's tone poem No. 2, Tasso, Lamento e Trionfo (final version 1854) and his Dante Symphony (1857). Karabits's Tasso may just be the most dramatically intense, exciting performance of the work I've heard. The standard CD I'm reviewing from is so gripping, it's hard to imagine how much more stunning the HD download from audite.de can be. Karabits conducts his Weimar orchestra as a painter applying paint to a canvas, mixing the palette of instrumental colors with his baton for maximum brilliance, depth, translucence, and aural impact. The orchestral portrait that emerges is not one of a particularly subtle or nuanced Impressionistic painting, but one of the almost blinding colors of a Gauguin or van Gogh. While the vividness of the performance may be visceral, even primitive, the playing is as disciplined and virtuosic as any you will hear from orchestras with far greater name recognition than the Staatskapelle Weimar. Much the same can be said of Karabits's Dante Symphony. Never have the Gates of Hell been thrown open with such baleful barking as in this performance of the first movement, titled "Inferno." The first few bars will stop your heart, or restart it, if it's already stopped.

If nothing else, Karabits is a master of both the affect and the effect. But there is more to his art than that. His control over the orchestra is ironclad. Passages in unison, where a string section, violas or cellos, play by themselves, they are so together they sound less like multiple players than like a single player amplified to sound like many. It takes meticulous rehearsal and precise direction from the podium for an orchestra to play and sound like that.

I have a feeling this release will be showing up on my 2020 Want List. As of right now, it's the best orchestral disc of the year I've heard, and it may be hard, if not impossible, to beat.

**Klassiek Centraal** 6. juli 2020 ( - 2020.07.06)

source: <https://klassiek-centraal.be/recencies/c...>



### **Audite realiseert CD met hoogtepunten van Franz Liszt**

In augustus 1841 bereikte de gekte rond Franz Liszt een hoogtepunt. De klavierleeuw liet zich in een koets met zes witte paarden rondrijden door Berlijn onder luide toejuichingen van een uitzinnige menigte.

Het jaar daarop kwam de Lisztomania zoals Heinrich Heine de heisa rond Liszt treffend noemde, tot een abrupt einde. Moe van het lege virtuozenbestaan trok Liszt zich terug in Weimar waar hij het geluk had aangesteld te worden als Kapellmeister. Het werd het begin van een vruchtbare periode die duurde tot 1861.

#### **Vrijwilligers gezocht**

Liszt herwerkte in die tijd niet alleen tal van zijn pianowerken maar gaf ook zijn ideeën over programma muziek en de band tussen poëzie en muziek definitief gestalte. In Weimar componeerde hij enkele van zijn belangrijkste werken.

De op deze cd gepresenteerde composities stammen allemaal uit die periode. Ze bieden een representatieve doorsnede van zijn orkestwerken: een gelegenheidswerk, een symfonisch gedicht en een uitgebreid symfonieprogramma. De luisteraar krijgt een treffend beeld van Liszts veelzijdigheid en baanbrekende creativiteit.

Schillers verjaardagsfeest

Die Künstlerfestzug zur Schillerfeier, geschreven ter gelegenheid van Schillers honderdste geboortjaar in 1859, plechtig en heroïsch van karakter is de perfecte opwarmer. Een aantal muzikale elementen die we hier horen, gebruikte Liszt ook voor zijn andere op Schiller geïnspireerde werken zoals Ideale en An die Künstler. Het lyrische thema in de hoorn dolce en expressivo, aanvankelijk door strijkers en harp begeleid en vervolgens door het hele orkest overgenomen, is zo'n voorbeeld van een 'Schillermelodie'.

#### Tasso de pechvogel

Tasso Lamento e Trionfo is een symfonisch gedicht, een muzikale vorm waar Liszt de uitvinder van was en waarin met muzikale middelen een buitenmuzikale werkelijkheid wordt opgeroepen.

De renaissancedichter Tasso was volgens Liszt de belichaming van de gekwelde dichter: tijdens zijn leven miskend, achtervolgd door tegenslag, slecht behandeld, opgesloten in een gekkenhuis, maar postuum glanzend als een oogverblindende ster.

Alle aspecten van dat gekwelde kunstenaarsleven zijn terug te vinden in dit symfonische gedicht, een meesterlijke verklanking van lijden en postume triomf. We volgen onze held over de lagunes van Venetië, bezongen door de gondeliers, vervolgens naar het hof van Ferrara waar hij zijn meesterwerken schreef en tot slot naar Rome waar hij tot dichter der dichters gekroond werd en – te laat – erkenning kreeg voor zijn werk.

Een klagelijke, weemoedige, eentonige melodie volgt de melancholieke rondzwervende dichter die nergens thuis is. Een melodie die op Lisztiaanse wijze onder allerlei vermommingen de meest verschillende gedaantes aanneemt. We horen diepe terneergeslagenheid, melancholie, meditatie en krijgshaftige uitbarstingen uitmondend in de triomf die de dichter pas na zijn dood mocht smaken. Hier bespeelt Liszt de gevoelens van de luisteraar op geraffineerde wijze met zijn rijke gevarieerde instrumentatie, accenten en klankkleuren.

Tasso was oorspronkelijk bedoeld om Goethes honderdste verjaardag in 1849 luister bij te zetten, maar het werk oversteeg de gelegenheid volkomen en ging de geschiedenis in als een eerbetoon aan een held van de wereldliteratuur.

#### De hel van Liszt

Klapstuk van deze cd is de Symphonie zu Dantes Divina Commedia ook wel kortweg Dante Symfonie genoemd. Dit is Liszts vertaling van Dantes Divina Commedia in muziek.

Een curieus werk dat slechts uit twee delen bestaat: Inferno en Purgatorio. Op advies van zijn schoonzoon Richard Wagner liet Liszt een slotdeel Paradiso achterwege. Immers welke sterveling zou in staat zijn om een beeld van het Paradijs te schetsen? Liszt – niet voor één gat te vangen – loste dit probleem op door het Purgatorio naadloos te laten aansluiten op een door een sopranen- en altenkoor gezongen hemels Magnificat. Zo kreeg de luisteraar toch nog een inkijkje in het Paradijs.

De hel begint indrukwekkend. Liszt haalt meteen alles uit de kast: met dreunende paukenslagen wordt de luisteraar zijn stoel uit en de poorten van de hel binnen gejaagd: lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate! (Laat varen alle hoop, gij die hier binnentreedt!). Dat is het hoofdmotief dat een aantal malen terugkeert. De tonaliteit is zoek, wat een wankele, instabiele sfeer schept. In een allegro frenetico leidt Liszt de luisteraar de gruwelijke diepte in, waar hels gekrijs, sardonisch gelach, razernij, vertwijfeling, woede en verwensingen van de vervloekten uiting geven aan een eeuwige doodstrijd. Hier is geen troost, geen liefde, geen rust. Hier worden de zondaars door een orkaan de eeuwige duisternis ingejaagd.

Maar nog beklemmender wordt de sfeer als de stilte invalt en Liszt ons de ongelukkige geliefden Paolo en Francesca toont, als voorbeeld van menselijke zwakte. Betrapt in flagrante delicto en vermoord door haar jaloerse echtgenoot, is Francesca gedoemd om in de hel haar momenten van geluk eindeloos te herleven. Basklarinet en althobo begeleid door een hemelse harp bezingen de pijn die de erotische dromen teweeg brengen. Amoroso staat er in de partituur, als om aan te geven dat waar geen plaats is voor hemelse liefde (namelijk de hel) de aardse liefde nog steeds smeult.

Als muziek al in staat is om de verleden tijd weer te geven, dan is Liszt er hier in geslaagd om door subtiële instrumentatie en een wankelende zevenkwartsmaat de luisteraar mee te voeren naar het verleden van Francesca, die ruggelings vastgeklonken aan haar minnaar, haar wellustige herinneringen steeds moet doorleven, maar onmachtig is om onder woorden te brengen wat ze doormaakt. In Liszts hel is geen plaats voor woorden.

Als Francesca al hoop koestert om uit haar lijden verlost te worden dan wordt deze de grond in geboord door de terugkeer van het hoofdmotief *Lasciate ogni speranza* en een gestaag intensiverend pandemonium dat culmineert in het huiveringwekkend gejam van een windmachine.

Moe gebeukt komen we in het Purgatorium terecht.

De verlossing van Liszt

In tegenstelling tot de cyclische *Inferno* die begint en eindigt met dezelfde onheilspellende boodschap, beweegt dit deel naar een duidelijk einddoel: verlossing en opname in het paradijs.

Een golvend motief in de strijkers, regelmatig en obsessief, roept een beeld op van verloren zielen zwervend tussen een wereld van licht en een wereld van duisternis. Een plechtig koraal breekt door de flarden mist heen als voorbereiding op een grootse fuga over een klagelijk thema. Een lange reeks sequensen, opstijgend als ware het Jakobs ladder, brengt steeds wisselende caleidoscopische klankkleuren teweeg. Hoger en hoger gaat het, totdat in een uitbarsting van licht Liszt ons een blik op het Paradijs gunt, als een openbaring begeleid door een koor engelen die regels uit het Magnificat zingen.

Zo eindigt één van de meest curieuze werken uit het symfonische repertoire. Een wonderbaarlijke schepping van ongebreidelde fantasie en creativiteit.

Een belangrijke cd

Die Staatskapelle Weimar (opgericht in 1491) is een van de oudste orkesten van Duitsland. Het orkest brengt met deze cd een hommage aan haar illustere voorganger.

Onder leiding van dirigent Kirill Karabits levert het orkest een meer dan welkome bijdrage aan de herwaardering van een componist wiens scheppend werk niet altijd naar zijn juiste waarde geschat wordt, omdat zijn verleden als oppervlakkige playboy/virtuoos hem tot op heden blijft achtervolgen. Ten onrechte! Hier is een genie aan het werk geweest, of om weer met Heine te spreken, een geniale hansworst.

Deze cd is ook een belangrijke aanvulling op de Lisztdiscografie. Mooi ruimtelijk en zeer gedetailleerd opgenomen door een team briljante geluidstechnici kan deze opname wedijveren met willekeurig welke andere.

Die Staatskapelle Weimar is niet alleen één van de oudste orkesten van Europa, maar ook één van de beste, zo blijkt hier.

Het orkest overtuigt in alle gelederen. Met superieur gemak overwint het de lastigste passages, waar vooral de Dantesymfonie zo rijk aan is. Het beschikt over een uitzonderlijk rijk palet aan klankkleuren. Dynamiek, accenten, frasering, alles is tot in de puntjes verzorgd. Met extra complimenten aan de basklarinettist en de althoboïst die een ontroerende Francesca neerzetten.

De dames van het Opernchor des Deutschen Nationaltheaters Weimar en de jongens van de Jenaer Philharmonie leveren vanachter de coulissen een hemelse bijdrage.

De in onze streken niet zo bekende dirigent Kirill Karabits haalt alles uit de partituur. Het resultaat is overdonderend.

Al met al een waardige revanche voor de première onder leiding van de componist zelf in 1857, die volledig de mist in ging door te weinig repetities en slecht gemotiveerde musici. Karabits en zijn equipe maken die misser na 163 jaar meer dan goed!

**Musica n° 315, aprile 2020 ( - 2020.04.01)**



Kirill Karabits, che può ormai essere considerato un vero specialista di questo repertorio, si conferma interprete lisztiano d'elezione nel conciliare la raffinatezza dei colori con la potenza degli sbalzi dinamici, l'equilibrio formale e la chiarezza dei dettagli con l'enfasi di fraseggio indispensabile per restituire l'esaltazione e la forza visionaria di queste pagine. Un risultato davvero pregevole al quale concorrono con impeccabile disciplina, varietà timbrica e qualità di suono la Staatskapelle di Weimar e i cori impegnati nel Magnificat.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**American Record Guide August 2020 ( - 2020.08.01)**



In 1847 while touring as a pianist in Kiev, Liszt met Polish Princess Carolyne of Sayn-Wittgenstein, who became his companion for the rest of his life. In 1848 he accepted a conducting job in Weimar, where he and the Princess lived until 1861. Carolyne persuaded him to trade performing for composing, and those years, among his most prolific, produced the three works on this program.

As a young man, Liszt was already an admirer of Dante Alighieri's Divine Comedy. In the 1840s he considered writing a chorus and orchestra work drawn from it, accompanied by a slideshow of scenes from the poem by German artist Bonaventura Genelli, but nothing came of it. In 1849, he composed *Après une Lecture du Dante: Fantasia quasi Sonata* (the Dante Sonata) for piano. In 1855 he began the Dante Symphony based on the 'Inferno' and 'Purgatorio' sections of Dante's poem. He completed it in 1857.

The work begins with Virgil and Dante descending into the Inferno. Liszt supplied no text save for the Magnificat, but he included a few lines from the poem under score staves to guide the conductor's interpretation, most notably the opening brass motifs to the rhythms of the text over the Gates of Hell. Raging downward figures in the low brass follow and then a quiet section where Virgil and Dante meet adulterous lovers Francesca da Rimini and Paolo Malatesta. (Francesca was married to Paolo's brother, Giovanni. Their affair lasted ten years until Giovanni caught and killed them.) In sublime woodwind passages through a rapturous passage for strings, Francesca tells Dante their story, and he faints in despair. After a funereal chant in the muted horns, the descent into Hell resumes in the brass, followed by a soft menacing march and a thunderous conclusion. Many of those themes reappear in 'Purgatorio', which opens with a mysterious nocturnal pastoral with reflective woodwinds, a chantlike beautiful chorale, and urgent strings. A slow fugue (with touches of Berlioz) depicts Dante's journey up the Mountain of Purification. Liszt intended to describe Dante's arrival in 'Paradiso', but after son-in-law Richard Wagner convinced him that no composer can create an image of Heaven, he seamlessly turned the chorale into a Magnificat that Dante observes from the mountain. Carolyne urged Liszt to compose a loud, triumphant ending, which he did; but when Wagner objected, Liszt turned the new ending into a coda that can be tagged onto the original ending. Few conductors, Karabits included, use it.

For more on this fascinating work, consult Steve Haller's reviews (J/A 2011, J/A 2005, S/O 2009, M/J/2013) and Don O'Connor's perceptive introduction to the Liszt Overview.

This performance is sleek. The slightly blended texture of the opening to 'Inferno' maintains the weight of



the low brass but mitigates its bite. In some performances those downward passages cut through so powerfully that one can imagine two giant hands pounding on Liszt's piano, but here they are more blended. The quiet midsection, beautifully played by winds (especially) and strings, could be more expressive and dig in more, but Karabits's reflective and narrative approach in an air of suspension works. The ending is similar to the opening. 'Purgatorio' maintains the suspended quality beautifully, but some performances are more expressive and urgent here. The fugue is refined and clearly drawn, though the violins are sometimes too bright. Busier scoring creates the impression of speeding up, but Karabits holds to his tempo. Liszt called for a female or boys chorus for the Magnificat. Karabits uses both, with the solo sung by boys. The composer also wanted the chorus out of sight. I doubt that is the case here, but the effect is Heavenly enough, and the work evaporates quietly away.

Karabits's sleek and polished Dante Symphony did not appeal to me at first, but it has grown on me a great deal, and it presents an interesting contrast with the heavier, more dramatic Sinopoli, Barenboim (N/D 1994 & 2011), Lopez-Cobos (J/A 2001), and Roth (M/J 2013), the ones favored by most ARG critics. (The Roth is with the period Les Siecles group that I have been critical of, but they are quite good here.) I have not heard the favorably reviewed Ahronovitch (J/A 2011), Haenchen (J/A 2005), and Noseda (S/O 2009). Not reviewed is the heavyweight Masur, which is exciting and gripping, if sometimes hurried in the slower places.

Liszt wrote *Kunstlerfestzug zur Schillerfeier* (Artist Pageant for a Schiller Celebration) for the 1857 unveiling of Ernst Rietschel's statue of Goethe and Schiller in front of the Weimar National Theater, but the work was not actually played until an 1859 celebration of Schiller's birth. Its controlled festive nature is structured in fast-slow-fast sections. It is based on themes from another Liszt Schiller piece, *Die Ideale*, and it sounds like a condensation of that. This is its only recording.

Lord Byron's *Lament of Tasso* (1856) fired Liszt's interest in the Italian poet, Torquato Tasso and led to this symphonic chronicle. The work is based on an Italian gondolier's song Liszt used in 'Chant du Gondolier' from *Venezia e Napoli*. The opening depicts Tasso's sufferings in an insane asylum where he was committed after behavioral problems as court poet of the House of Este in Ferrara, Italy. His life with the Estes is depicted in a lovely minuet that makes up the midsection. The third part describes his triumphal visit to Rome just before he died. Karabits achieves the right celebratory feeling in The Rome music, but the opening could use a greater touch of madness, and the minuet is dull. Alternatives include Silvestri (J/A 1999), Ferencsik (J/A 2005), Noseda (J/F 2006), Botstein (with a poor Dante M/A 2004), Fruhbeck de Burgos (in the Overview but not recommended by Haller—S/O 2001), Masur, and Ivan Fischer.

The engineers handle the churchlike acoustic of the Congress Centrum Neue Weimarahalle by exchanging some detail for ambiance in a way that suits the performances well. Just make sure the volume is high enough. Nicolas Dufetel's good notes would be improved by more on Dante.

This is the second Franz Liszt recording from Karabits and the sleek sounding orchestra with touches of Czech string sound.

Fono Forum Januar 2021 ( - 2021.01.01)

**FONO FORUM**  
KLASSIK JAZZ HIFI

### Kritiker-Umfrage 2020

*Welche fünf CDs haben Sie im vergangenen Jahr am meisten beeindruckt?*

Andreas Friesenhagen: Liszt: Gante-Symphonie, Tasso, Lamento e Trionfo, Künstlerfestzug; Staatskapelle Weimar, Kirill Karabits (Audite).

„Kirill Karabits stellt Liszt mit herrlichen Orchesterfarben und leuchtender Textur als Klangzauberer dar, als Poeten des Orchesters.“

Norbert Hornig: Fantasque- Violinsonaten von Faure, Debussy, Ravel & Poulenc; Franziska Pietsch, Josu de Solaun (Audite).

„Hoch expressive und eloquente Lesarten zentraler Werke des französischen Repertoires für Violine und Klavier.“

Matthias Kornemann: Schubert: Klaviersonate D. 960, Klavierstücke D. 946; Andrea Lucchesini (Audite). „Lucchesinis Schubert-Spiel ist von einer fast altmeisterlichen Gelassenheit und steht mit seiner nobel untertreibenden Gestaltungskraft ziemlich einsam da.“



## Franz Liszt: A Faust Symphony, S. 108 – Mephisto Waltz No. 3, S. 216

Franz Liszt | Borys Lyatoshynsky

CD aud 97.761

**Der neue Merker** 27.06.2023 ( - 2023.06.27)

source: <https://onlinemerker.com/neue-cd-franz-l...>



### Poetisierung der Form

*Neue CD: Franz Liszt „Eine Faust-Symphonie“ mit der Staatskapelle Weimar bei audite*

[...] beweist die Staatskapelle Weimar nochmals ihren Klangfarbenreichtum.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Crescendo Magazine** 9 juillet 2023 ( - 2023.07.09)

source: <https://www.crescendo-magazine.be/liszt-...>



### Liszt à Weimar, chef d'oeuvre et découverte

L'interprétation figolée et brillante du chef et de son orchestre sont un incontestable apport à notre connaissance de l'art du compositeur.

Très bien enregistré, ce disque est à connaître tant pour la belle découverte de la Mephisto Waltz n°3 que pour la réussite artistique de haut vol.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Kulturabdruck** 03.08.2023 ( - 2023.08.03)

source: <https://www.kulturabdruck.de/zerbroeseln...>



### Zerbröselnder Faust, träumendes Gretchen und ein lachender Mephisto

Die Staatskapelle Weimar formt die drei Charakterbilder unter ihrem früheren Chefdirigenten Kirill Karabits zu einem gewaltigen Klangporträt, das die flüchtigen lyrischen Momente ebenso präzise nachzeichnet wie die rauschhaften, sich mitunter selbst überschlagenden Aufschwünge. Den Herren des Opernchores des Deutschen Nationaltheaters Weimar und des Landesjugendchores Thüringen gelingt mit dem Tenor Airam Hernandez ebenfalls eine überzeugende Darbietung [...]

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[www.pizzicato.lu](http://www.pizzicato.lu) 03/08/2023 ( - 2023.08.03)

source: <https://www.pizzicato.lu/liszt-faust-wei...>



## Liszt, Faust, Weimar

Als Liszt die Leitung der Weimarer Hofoper antrat, setzte er sich intensiv mit Goethes Werk auseinander. Besonders das Faust-Thema fesselte ihn. Die Faust-Symphonie ist eigentlich nichts anderes als eine Folge von drei Tondichtungen zu den Themen Faust, Gretchen und Mephisto mit, als Zugabe, dem Chorus mysticus. Kirill Karabits hat die gleichen Rezepte für die drei Tondichtungen: resolutes Suchen nach dramatischen Abläufen, nach Programmpunkten, die an eine Handlung erinnern sollen, mit sämtlichen damit zusammenhängenden Motiven und Gefühlsmomenten.

Er wendet sich freilich nicht, wie es andere Dirigenten getan haben, vom Gedanklichen ab, um das Werk in einem opulenten, brillanten Klanggewand zu dramatisieren. Orchesterale Virtuosität ist zwar reichlich vorhanden und auch bewundernswert, aber sie wird nie zum Selbstzweck.

Sehr tief empfunden ist der Gretchen-Satz, und in der Mephisto-Tondichtung ist die Rhythmik regelrecht faszinierend. Sie ist die Grundlage, auf welcher der Dirigent seine Interpretation aufbaut, die ihm hilft, dämonische Kräfte zu entfesseln, den Geist, der stets verneint, hörbar werden zu lassen.

Das hervorragende Weimarer Orchester unterstützt Karabits dabei sehr gut. Der Tenor Peter Seiffert und die Herren des Senff-Chors leisten eine ebenfalls gute Arbeit.

Zwanzig Jahre trennen den berühmten Mephisto-Walzer Nr. 1 von drei weiteren Walzern aus den 1880er Jahren, den Mephisto-Walzern Nr. 2 (1881), Nr. 3 (1883), Nr. 4 (1885, unvollendet).

Den Mephisto-Walzer Nr. 3 widmete er der französischen Komponistin und Pianistin Marie Jaëll, die nach dem Tod ihres Mannes Alfred im Jahr 1882 Liszts Sekretärin wurde. Dieser dritte Mephisto-Walzer ist etwas weniger virtuos und gleichzeitig moderner, harmonisch kühner als die beiden ersten Walzer. Das wird in dieser Orchesterfassung sehr deutlich, die der Liszt-Schüler Alfred Reisenauer anfertigte, aber unvollendet ließ; sie wurde von Kirill Karabits vervollständigt und am 12. Juni 2022 von der Staatskapelle Weimar uraufgeführt.

## ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

When Liszt took over as director of the Weimar Court Opera, he intensively studied Goethe's work. He was particularly captivated by the Faust theme. The Faust Symphony is actually nothing more than a sequence of three tone poems on the themes of Faust, Gretchen and Mephisto with, as an encore, the Chorus mysticus. Kirill Karabits has the same recipes for the three tone poems: resolute search for dramatic sequences, for program points that should remind of a plot, with all motives and emotional moments connected with it.

He does not, of course, turn away from the thoughtful, as other conductors have done, in order to dramatize the work in an opulent, brilliant sound garb. Orchestral virtuosity abounds and is also admirable, but it never becomes an end in itself.

Very deeply felt is the Gretchen movement, and in the Mephisto tone poem the rhythm is downright fascinating. It is the foundation on which the conductor builds his interpretation, helping him to unleash demonic forces, to make audible the spirit that always denies.

The excellent Weimar orchestra supports Karabits very well. Tenor Peter Seiffert and the gentlemen of the Senff Choir also do a fine job.

Twenty years separate the famous Mephisto Waltz No. 1 from three other waltzes from the 1880s,

Mephisto Waltzes No. 2 (1881), No. 3 (1883), No. 4 (1885, unfinished).

He dedicated the Mephisto Waltz No. 3 to the French composer and pianist Marie Jaëll, who became Liszt's secretary after the death of her husband Alfred in 1882. This third Mephisto waltz is less virtuosic and at the same time more modern and harmonically bold than the first two waltzes. This is very evident in this orchestral version, which Liszt's student Alfred Reisenauer made but left unfinished; it was completed by Kirill Karabits and premiered by the Staatskapelle Weimar on June 12, 2022.

**WDR 3 10.08.2023 "Hörstoff – neue Klassik-Alben" ( - 2023.08.10)**

source: <https://www.ardaudiothek.de/episode/wdr-...>



#### BROADCAST

*Packende Charakterzeichnung: Liszts Faust-Symphonie*

#### BROADCAST

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**concerti - Das Konzert- und Opernmagazin 15. August 2023 ( - 2023.08.15)**

source: <https://www.concerti.de/rezensionen/kiri...>



#### Grübeln und Glanz

*Die Staatskapelle Weimar und Kirill Karabits kosten mit Brillanz die Oberflächenreize in Liszts Faust-Sinfonie aus*

Das Orchester hat neben der Suche nach Tiefe auch Freude an den Oberflächenreizen Liszts, kostet diese mit heutigem Instrumentarium und entsprechender Brillanz gern aus.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Prestomusic 18th August 2023 ( - 2023.08.18)**

source: <https://www.prestomusic.com/classical/ar...>



#### New Release Round-Up

Following their recordings of Tasso, the Dante Symphony and the abandoned opera Sardanapalo, Karabits and the Weimar orchestra turn to a work which is closely associated with the city: the Faust Symphony was premiered in Weimar in September 1857, for the inauguration of the Goethe–Schiller Monument which stands in front of the Court Theater. It's followed here by another Goethe-inspired work, the Mephisto Waltz No. 3 (orchestrated by Liszt's disciple Alfred Reisenauer and Karabits himself).

**Prestomusic 31st August 2023 ( - 2023.08.31)**  
 source: <https://www.prestomusic.com/classical/ar...>

PRESTO  
CLASSICAL

### Editor's Choices

Liszt's orchestral portraits of Faust, Marguerite and Mephistopheles positively leap off the page in this vital, richly characterised account of the Goethe-inspired symphony: the Weimar brass glow and growl in the opening movement depicting Faust's torment, principal oboe and viola are on eloquent form when portraying Marguerite's innocence, and the devilish scherzo is given with dazzling clarity. Boris Lyatoshinsky's 1955 symphonic poem *Grazhyna* (which Karabits has previously recorded in Bournemouth) looks like a non sequitur on paper, but the kinship with Liszt's soundworld is striking.

**Classical Music Magazine September 5, 2023 ( - 2023.09.05)**  
 source: <https://www.classical-music.com/reviews/...>

Classical  
MUSIC  
the voice of the classical music industry

'What would the history of music look like if Goethe had not written his Faust dramas?' It's a good question, posed at the beginning of the liner notes to this new release, but the writer could equally have been asked where music would be without the phenomenon of Liszt. Wagner (and all the long shadows he cast) would have been impossible without the music of his father-in-law Liszt, and what might be called 'Wagnerian' harmonies (and Leitmotifs) make their presence strongly felt in the Faust Symphony, premiered under the composer's own baton in Weimar in 1857.

Liszt's connections with the city ran deep, so it is hardly surprising to hear how even today the Staatskapelle Weimar sounds steeped in his music. The orchestra's former music director Kirill Karabits has immersed himself in Liszt too, also completing Alfred Reisenauer's orchestration of the Mephisto Waltz No. 3 and recording it for the first time. In the Faust Symphony, he handles the sprawling and discursive first movement impressively, moving between rumination and headlong energy in this character sketch of Faust. Portraits of Gretchen (full of delicacy) and Mephistopheles follow, and the added apotheosis with male chorus and tenor soloist (Airam Hernández singing with heft) makes for a grandly affirmative ending.

**BBC Music Magazine October 2023 ( - 2023.10.01)**

 **music**  
MAGAZINE

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Gramophone Monday, September 11, 2023 ( - 2023.09.11)

source:

<https://www.gramophone.co.uk/review/lisz...>

**GRAMOPHONE**  
THE WORLD'S BEST CLASSICAL MUSIC REVIEWS

**Editor's Choice: October 2023 | The best new classical recordings**

Following his earlier recordings of Liszt's Sardanapalo (2/19) and A Dante Symphony (4/20) for Audite, Kirill Karabits now turns his attention to the composer's A Faust Symphony. In his review of the recording of Sardanapalo, Tim Ashley wrote that 'Karabits conducts with extraordinary passion', and the same is true of this latest entry in the series. With a running time of 68 minutes, Karabits's account is one of the swifter performances on record, alongside those of Chailly, Muti and Sinopoli. By contrast, Bernstein takes 77 minutes.

Nevertheless, it's Bernstein's vividly characterised and impassioned interpretation that I'm most reminded of when listening to this new recording. The performance of the work's opening has a compelling sense of mystery and anticipation, and the movement's subsequent episodes are stirring and dramatic. In the movement's gentler passages, as in the subsequent 'Gretchen' movement, the playing of the viola, oboe and other solo instruments is marvellously poetic, and textures are beautifully balanced and marvellously luminous. Both Bernstein and Karabits offer enormously exciting accounts of the work's final movement but ultimately Karabits has the edge with his thrilling interpretation of the concluding 'Chorus mysticus', which combines an ardent contribution by tenor Airam Hernández with choral singing of extraordinary heft and incandescence.

It's a pity that the booklet doesn't include the text of the choral section given that it would take so little space. The booklet essay similarly makes no mention of the rarely heard orchestration of the Mephisto Waltz No 3 included on the album other than giving joint credit for the arrangement to Liszt pupil Alfred Reisenauer and Kirill Karabits. As with the symphony, however, the performance has tremendous panache, and the recording is well balanced and transparent even in the loudest tuttis. Very highly recommended.

**www.musicweb-international.com OCTOBER 12, 2023 ( - 2023.10.12)**

source: <https://www.musicwebinternational.com/20...>



I've long been a fan of Liszt's Faust Symphony and up until recently it was my favourite of his two symphonies. In fact, it was Kirill Karabits's recording of the Dante that made me appreciate that work more than the Faust. Anyway, here the Staatskapelle Weimar turn their attentions to the Faust and, as a bonus, another first recording of a late work by Liszt in an orchestrated version by his pupil Alfred Reisenauer and revised by Kirill Karabits. I'd read about this orchestration of the 3rd Mephisto Waltz somewhere but, up until now, it had remained unrecorded and unheard.

As I had expected from the recording of the Dante, the performance of the Faust Symphony is muscular and powerful – but there is also a delicacy when that is required. The first movement, subtitled "Faust", starts with a twelve-tone row, played fairly slowly and mysteriously, leaving you wondering where the music will go next. However, once the initial tune gets going, the tempo picks up rapidly. The orchestra positively explodes from the speakers with the following "Allegro impetuoso", which sets off at a tremendous pace with the first of several themes that permeate and create the movement. The details captured by the excellent recording here make Liszt's clever writing for orchestra stand out very clearly and also highlight the difficulties in the orchestral parts for the performers. However, this clearly doesn't faze the orchestra as they cope marvellously with all the complications that Liszt throws at them. The music slowly evolves into muted runs in the strings which abruptly stop with a lovely "Affettuoso poco andante" section. This slowly morphs into a section that generates what has been termed the "Pride" motif, which shows Liszt as his most bombastic. This doesn't last long and is transmuted and mixed with themes from earlier in the movement to create something entirely different. Somehow, Liszt (and Karabits) manage to contain all this

tension and we get a repeat of the “Allegro impetuoso”, then the twelve-tone rows return, about fourteen minutes in. This section serves as a bridge to the remainder of this long and complicated movement that is broadly in sonata form – all of which means that the themes which have already been heard are varied and changed and wound up neatly in an effective and unexpected quiet conclusion.

The second movement, “Gretchen”, opens with the violas and oboes sinuously playing her theme with beautiful accompaniment by the remainder of the orchestra. Much of this movement is gentle with some lovely writing and playing; however, there is a more strident section in the middle which is again very well judged. Unlike the first movement, the timing here is slightly slower than other performances I am familiar with but the music does not drag at all. Towards the end of the movement, just before the violas reappear with the “Gretchen” theme, there is a beautifully recorded moment where the orchestra falls silent aside from a harp. It is magnificently captured here. This is the sort of performance in which you can completely lose yourself and be swept away by the music; I defy any Liszt haters not to be enthralled by it. The movement ends peacefully as the music evaporates into the ether.

In complete contrast to the ending of “Gretchen” the third movement, “Mephistopheles”, is a portrayal of the devil, starting with a jolt. It is very cleverly constructed, made up mostly of thematic transformations of the music heard elsewhere within the symphony, but with the addition of a self-quotation from Liszt’s early work for piano and orchestra, Malediction. In fact, the only theme not mutated during the progress of the movement is “Gretchen” (at 8’41”) – showing that Mephistopheles has no power over her. This respite does not last long and the sardonic themes return quickly and continue their development. There is some tremendously exciting playing here – the tension inherent in the music is racked up as the piece progresses with scurrying playing in the strings, clever fugal modifications and changes in tempo and orchestration. The work doesn’t really stop here, but slowly crystallises down to a very foreboding couple of bars in which the organ, violins, cellos and double basses hold a note while the chorus and, slightly later, the tenor soloist emerges from the gloom. Both chorus and soloist do a brilliant job here and are marvellously integrated into the orchestra as they sing various passages from the “Chorus mysticus” in which Faust is redeemed. The tenor Airam Hernández is especially good; his voice suits this piece extremely well.

The performance of this symphony is brilliant in every way. I am also very familiar with Liszt’s own two piano version (S647 in Searle’s catalogue) and listening to this recording makes me appreciate the way that Liszt handled that arrangement. The clarity of this performance enables me to mentally connect the music in that two piano version with the orchestral version better than any other I have heard.

There is almost no information in the notes about the orchestration of the Third Mephisto Waltz which is a shame, as I would have liked to have known more about it. However, in comparison to Liszt’s own orchestration of the Second Mephisto waltz, I would say that Reisenauer / Karabits’s arrangement works extremely well indeed – it’s also got some details in the scoring which stand out better than they do in the piano version. It’s a dark, ironic, sarcastic piece – made even darker by the very interesting novel orchestration which is very much in Liszt’s later style. As an aside, it’s a pity Liszt never finished the fourth of this series of works although Dr Leslie Howard’s completion in the Hyperion set gives an excellent idea of what he might have intended. It is conceivable to orchestrate that, too, which would be a most interesting work to hear.

There is some wonderful playing here, the orchestra works well as an integrated whole and you can really hear all the details. The recording is extremely clear and sounds especially good over headphones. Overall timings for the symphony are about average but especially in the first movement, the rhythmic drive propels the music forward in a way that makes time pass more quickly. The cover notes are fascinating and give lots of details about the symphony (although as I said earlier, there is almost nothing about the waltz, sadly). I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know this recording and hope that these forces will record more of Liszt’s orchestral works as there is still quite a lot that has yet to be recorded.

**Classica – le meilleur de la musique classique & de la hi-fi N° 257 -  
Novembre 2023 ( - 2023.11.01)**

CLASSICA

Kirill Karabits s'inscrit dans cette seconde lignée, avec un troisième mouvement particulièrement réussi où une mise en place au cordeau s'acoquine avec l'esprit méphistophélique. Sa direction à la pointe sèche épure le romantisme de l'œuvre qui regarde moins vers le fondu wagnérien qu'elle ne perpétue, dans la netteté du dessin, un certain classicisme hérité de Berlioz

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Diapason N° 727 NOVEMBRE 2023 ( - 2023.11.01)**



Kirill Karabits poursuit son périple en terres lisztienues . Après l'exhumation de l'opéra inachevé Sardanapalo (Diapason découverte, cf. n° 683) puis la Dante-Symphonie (Diapason d'or, cf. n° 689), voici la Faust-Symphonie. La première de ces « trois études de caractères d'après Goethe », Faust, inspire d'emblée le respect, par la cohérence du propos et la maîtrise de la forme, avec des transitions très réussies. On déplore cependant un éventail assez limité de couleurs, et un certain manque de flamme et de tension pour l'Allegro agitato ed appassionato – le personnage est ici plus nostalgique qu'héroïque. Le début de Marguerite pourrait être plus éthéré, mais la partie centrale, où les thèmes des amants s'unissent en une étreinte passionnée, séduit par le lyrisme de la direction et les nuances. Tout va décidément crescendo, avec un Mephistophélès au rictus diabolique et fort bien tenu. A-t-on gagné le Ciel quand arrive le Chorus mysticus ? Aïram Hernandez, impeccablement stylé, à la ligne fuselée, n'a pas tout à fait le rayonnement extasié de celui que l'Eternel féminin conduit au paradis. Que donnerait le chef ukrainien à la tête d'une autre phalange ? Enregistrer Liszt à Weimar constitue évidemment un retour aux sources, mais s'il tire le meilleur de la Staatskapelle, Karabits se heurte à rude concurrence, celle de chefs plus visionnaires et d'orchestres plus prestigieux. On retiendra surtout de cet album un peu sage une intéressante curiosité, la Méphisto Valse n° 3 orchestrée par Alfred Reisenauer – un des disciples préférés de Liszt – et Kirill Karabits. Même si le maître aurait sans doute été moins massif, plus anguleux, plus diabolique. Pour la Faust-Symphonie, on retournera à Beecham, Bernstein, Dorati, Sinopoli ou Nosedà (sans le chœur final).

**Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik Bestenliste 4/2023 ( - 2023.11.15)**

source: <https://www.schallplattenkritik.de/beste...>



**Bestenliste 4/2023 Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik**

Liszt's Tondichtung »Eine Faust-Sinfonie« gehört wie auch viele andere seiner Partituren zu den ungehobenen Schätzen des 19. Jahrhunderts. Nur selten ist das 1854 entstandene und später durch einen »Chorus mysticus« im Finale erweiterte Werk live zu erleben. Die Einspielung mit der Staatskapelle Weimar unter Kirill Karabits rückt die Komposition ins rechte Licht: symphonisch in Anspruch und Ton, dramatisch im Ausdruck, mit hohem Puls bei der Darstellung der zentralen Charaktere Faust, Gretchen und Mephistopheles. Klanglich durchsichtig, partiell fast kammermusikalisch, räumt die Produktion mit vielen Vorbehalten auf.

**Radio România Muzical** 4-5 octombrie 2023 ( - 2023.10.04)  
source: <https://www.romania-muzical.ro/info/disc...>



## DISCURILE ANULUI 2023

DISCURILE ANULUI 2023

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**klassik.com** 23.01.2024 ( - 2024.01.23)  
source: <https://magazin.klassik.com/reviews/revi...>



## Dämonen und Engel

[Karabits] Aufnahme der kanonischen Faust-Symphonie mit der glänzend aufgelegten Weimarer Staatskapelle unter Beteiligung des Opernchors des Deutschen Nationaltheaters Weimar und des Landesjugendchors Thüringen [ist] durchaus besonders zu nennen. [...] Hier entstehen jene Momente, die große Meisterwerke ausmachen – man glaubt sie zu kennen, doch wird man durch Interpretationen wie jene von Karabits und dem Weimarer Klangkörper beständig eines Besseren belehrt.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Das Orchester** I/2024 ( - 2024.04.01)  
source: <https://dasorchester.de/artikel/faust-sy...>



Wie grandios er dieses Vorhaben in die Tat umgesetzt hat, macht die exzellente Neuaufnahme mit der Staatskapelle Weimar unter Leitung des ehemaligen Weimarer Generalmusikdirektors Kirill Karabits facettenreich hörbar: [...] Dem immensen Spektrum des Werks geben Orchester und Dirigent beeindruckende Gestalt.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Papageno** 22. Juli 2023 ( - 2023.07.22)  
source: [https://papageno.hu/blogok/te\\_csak\\_hallg...](https://papageno.hu/blogok/te_csak_hallg...)



## Jugendliche, spritzige Darbietung – Kirill Karabits dirigiert Liszts Faust-Sinfonie

Zwischen 1854 und 1857 schrieb Franz Liszt die Faust-Sinfonie, die die klare Poesie seiner Musik demonstriert und nichts anderes als eine Hommage an Goethe und Weimar ist. Mit der audite-Aufnahme des Ensembles der Staatskapelle Weimar hat das Werk nun einen authentischen Interpreten.

Den grüblerischen Anfang des Stücks, Lento assai, erarbeitet Karabits mit dem Orchester akribisch. Von den vier Faust-Themen erscheint das erste in einer mystisch-suchenden Stimmung, gefolgt von einem energisch gespielten Thema mit leidenschaftlichem Pathos, und das Liebesthema schreitet mit geheimnisvoller Sehnsucht voran. Fausts Tatendrang und Entschlossenheit sind im gesamten ersten Satz spürbar, während es dem Orchester auch gelingt, die in seiner Seele verborgenen inneren Konflikte zu vermitteln.

Der zweite Satz gehört Gretchen (Andante soave). Das berühmte Oboenthema, ergänzt durch die

ausdrucksstarke Bratschenbegleitung, kommt in der Aufführung der Staatskapelle Weimar sehr präzise zur Geltung und das einfühlsame, fast jungfräuliche Violinthema prägt den Charakter des Gretchens eindrucksvoll.

Es folgt das teuflische Scherzo, das Allegro vivace ironico. Kirill Karabits Interpretation gewinnt noch einmal deutlich an Dynamik und Tempo. Seine drastischen Lösungen zeichnen ein schillerndes Bild von Mephisto, der sich scheinbar in tausend Formen aufspaltet, und das Orchester funkelt. Jedes Faust-Thema wird frivol karikiert – und selbst die Liebesmelodie wird zur teuflischen Fuge. Nur Gretchens Melodie bleibt unberührt.

Unter der Leitung von Karabits folgt die Staatskapelle Weimar Liszts Partitur mit Brillanz und Anmut. Die mystischen Klänge von Orgel und Streichern bilden die Grundlage des Aufrufs „Alles Vergängliche ist nur ein Gleichnis“, vorgetragen vom Männerchor des Deutschen Nationaltheaters Weimar und dem Thüringer Landesjugendchor. Die Harmonie ist schon von weitem wahrnehmbar und kann später im „Faust“-Teil von Gustav Mahlers Achter Symphonie deutlich gesteigert werden.

In den klanggewaltigen Schlussakkorden stellt die Staatskapelle Weimar noch einmal ihren Klangreichtum unter Beweis. Und Tenor Airam Hernandez intoniert gemeinsam mit dem Chor geheimnisvoll die letzte Strophe des zweiten Teils von Goethes „Faust“.

Die CD enthält auch den Mephistopheles-Walzer, die wahre Entdeckung ist jedoch die Faust-Sinfonie im jugendlichen, spritzigen Spiel des Weimarer Orchesters unter der Leitung des jungen ukrainischen Dirigenten Karabits.



## Franz Liszt: Sardanapalo - Mazeppa

Franz Liszt

CD aud 97.764

Gramophone February 2019 (Tim Ashley - 2019.02.01)

source:

<https://www.gramophone.co.uk/review/lisz...>

**GRAMOPHONE**  
THE WORLD'S BEST CLASSICAL MUSIC REVIEWS

An immensely important issue, this is the first recording of the performing edition by British musicologist David Trippett of *Sardanapalo*, the only projected opera by the mature Liszt of which substantial material survives. Its genesis remains to some extent shrouded in mystery. Byron's 1821 play *Sardanapalus*, about the sensualist Assyrian king who immolated himself and his mistress after failing to quell an insurrection, was among the subjects that Liszt was contemplating, as early as 1842, to mark his return to opera, his only previous work in the genre being the juvenile *Don Sanche* of 1825. Why he chose *Sardanapalo* over, among others, Byron's *Corsair* and an opera about *Spartacus*, is seemingly unknown. We also have scant information about *Sardanapalo*'s librettist, an unnamed Italian poet suggested by the Princess Cristina Belgiojoso after attempts failed to procure a text from the French playwright Félicien Mallefille. Nor has the full libretto survived: the only extant portions are those to be found in the manuscript.

Liszt seemingly began composition early in 1850 and was still working on the score in the winter of 1851/52. At some point shortly afterwards, however, he abandoned the opera, probably because his librettist was either unable or unwilling to undertake revisions to the second and third acts. The manuscript itself, meanwhile, though familiar to Liszt scholars, was long deemed too fragmentary for reconstruction. Trippett's painstaking research, however, revealed that in essence what we possess is a draft piano-vocal score of the complete first act, albeit with some key signatures omitted and a handful of gaps in the accompaniment; there are also a number of cues for orchestration, which Liszt apparently intended to entrust to his assistant Joachim Raff. Trippett consequently decided there was 'just sufficient' to undertake a performing version, and his edition caused something of a stir when it was first heard in Weimar last August, conducted by Kirill Karabits, with the cast we have here.

It is indeed extraordinary and in some respects unique. Commentators familiar with the manuscript have often dubbed it 'Meyerbeerian'. The opera might better, however, be described as through-composed bel canto, at times echoing Bellini, at others pre-empting 1860s Verdi (*Forza* in particular comes to mind), though the melodic contours and chromatic harmony are unmistakably Liszt's own. Dramatically straightforward and uncluttered, it falls into four distinct sections: an introductory chorus for *Sardanapalo*'s many concubines; a colossal scena for *Mirra*, the king's slave-girl mistress; a love duet for the central couple; and a final trio in which *Mirra* and the Chaldean soothsayer *Beleso* attempt to persuade the unwilling king to go into battle after news of the insurrection breaks. Though the opening chorus repeats its material once too often, the rest of the act is beautifully shaped, while Liszt's fluid treatment of bel canto structures – blurring boundaries between recitative, aria and arioso in a quest for psychological veracity – reveals an assured musical dramatist at work.

He makes no concessions to his singers, though, and his vocal writing is taxing in the extreme. Joyce El Khoury is pushed almost to her limits in *Mirra*'s scena, with its big declamatory recitatives, interrupted cavatina (it fragments as mounting desire for her captor obliterates memories of a life once lived in freedom) and vast closing cabaletta. Her dramatic commitment is never in doubt, though, and there's a



ravishing passage later on when she pleads with the king to put aside his aversion to military conflict, her voice soaring sensually and ecstatically over rippling harp arpeggios. Airam Hernández sounds noble and ardent in the title-role, wooing El Khoury with fierce insistence and responding to Oleksandr Pushniak's stentorian Beleso with assertive dignity. The choral singing is consistently strong, the playing terrific, and Karabits conducts with extraordinary passion. Trippett has carefully modelled his orchestration on Liszt's works of the early 1850s, and it sounds unquestionably authentic when placed beside the exhilarating performance of Mazeppa that forms its companion piece. Throughout there's a real sense of excitement at the discovery and restoration of a fine work by one of the most inventive of composers. You end up wishing that Liszt had somehow incorporated operatic composition into his extraordinary career, and wondering what the course of musical history might have been if he had.

**concerti - Das Konzert- und Opernmagazin 31. Januar 2019 (Roland H. Dippel - 2019.01.31)**

source: <https://www.concerti.de/rezensionen/kiri...>



#### ALBUM DER WOCHE

*Italienisches Opernabenteuer: In „Sardanapalo“ verbindet Liszt glänzend erfundene Melodien mit den zukunftsweisenden Orchesterfarben seiner sinfonischen Dichtungen.*

#### ALBUM DER WOCHE

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Note 1 - Neuheitenheft Februar 2019 ( - 2019.02.01)**

source: <https://www.note1-music.com/opencms/expo...>



#### Überfällig

Der assyrische König Sardanapalo, der als Hedonist Wein und Konkubinen den Staatsgeschäften vorzieht, und der ukrainische Volksheld Iwan Mazeppa, der nach Leid und Erniedrigung ruhmvoll stirbt: konträrer könnte man sich zwei Protagonisten wohl kaum vorstellen. Die literarisch-dramatischen Vorlagen von Lord Byron und Victor Hugo dienten Franz Liszt als Inspirationsquelle, wobei die Oper Sardanapalo nach Byron leider Fragment blieb. Die zeitgleich in Weimar entstandenen Werke repräsentieren die Ideen des Komponisten im Ringen um eine Vereinigung von Literatur und Musik. Auf der einen Seite die Modernisierung der italienischen Oper, auf der anderen die Weiterentwicklung der Sinfonik. Das Manuskript zu Sardanapalo umfasst lediglich den ersten Akt, weshalb das Material 170 Jahre lang im Weimarer Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv schlummerte. Erst 2017 wurde die Niederschrift von David Trippett an der University of Cambridge entziffert, editiert und orchestriert. „Die erhalten gebliebene Musik ist atemberaubend – eine einzigartige Mischung aus italienisch beeinflusstem Gefühlsüberschwang, kühnen harmonischen Wendungen und Seitenwegen“, beschreibt Trippett die Komposition. „Es gibt nichts Vergleichbares in der Opernwelt. Das Werk ist durchflutet von Liszts charakteristischem Stil und birgt zugleich Elemente von Bellini und Meyerbeer, in denen immer wieder auch Wagner zu erkennen ist.“ Kirill Karabits hat das Fragment mit der Staatskapelle Weimar für AUDITE erstmals eingespielt, mit dem Orchester der Stadt, für welche die Oper einst gedacht war. Das Label setzt damit die verdienstvolle und vielbeachtete Veröffentlichungsreihe von Werken der großen Komponisten und Weimarer Kapellmeister fort.

**Der neue Merker** 05.02.2019 (Dr. Ingobert Waltenberger - 2019.02.05)  
 source: <https://onlinemerker.com/cd-franz-liszt-...>



Kirill Karabits leitet eine in allen Gruppen großartig disponierte Staatskapelle Weimar. Aller Glanz und Können dieses erstklassigen Orchesters ist besonders in der der Operneinspielung vorgelagerten Aufnahme der Sinfonischen Dichtung „Mazeppa“ zu genießen.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**CBC Radio** February 6, 2019 (Robert Rowat - 2019.02.06)  
 source: <https://www.cbcmusic.ca/posts/20853/sard...>



It's a little-known fact that Franz Liszt, famed composer of symphonic poems and virtuosic piano works, actually tried his hand at writing an opera.

And now, thanks to an intrepid musicologist, a willing conductor and a cast that includes Canada's Joyce El-Khoury, we'll be able to listen to the world premiere recording of Sardanapalo, set for release on Feb. 8.

Liszt got as far as sketching out the first act of his opera, based on Lord Byron's Sardanapalus, before abandoning the project in the mid-1850s.

A few years ago, musicologist David Trippett sought out Liszt's sketches and notes for the opera at the Goethe and Schiller Archive in Weimar, Germany, and spent three years translating and fleshing them out. His reconstructed score then enabled Staatskapelle Weimar to present the first-ever concert performances and recording sessions of the opera's first act, which took place in August 2018 under the direction of Kirill Karabits. The cast comprised soprano El-Khoury as Mirra, tenor Airam Hernández in the title role, and baritone Oleksandr Pushniak as Beleso.

"It's through-composed with a meaty orchestration," explained El-Khoury to CBC Music, pointing out the influence of Richard Wagner on Liszt. "But the vocal lines are in an Italian bel canto style. It is evident from his vocal writing that Liszt loved the voice."

The role of Mirra is a particularly satisfying sing, as El-Khoury explains.

"Constantly pulled in two directions, the character has an abundance of the magical ingredient for the stage: conflict. This is expressed in the music Liszt wrote for her, and it demands every tool in a singer's arsenal. Even in this one extant act, the tormented passion and complexity of her existence is laid bare. Being a slave who was forcibly removed from her homeland, and then, in an ironic twist of fate falls in love with her captor, King Sardanapalo (probably the destroyer of her family), the opportunity to show this inner conflict is theatrical gold to a dramatically alert singer."

El-Khoury credits musicologist Trippett for making the whole thing possible. "He was very communicative from the start, generously offering his knowledge about the piece over emails and Skype calls," she recalls. "Once we arrived in Weimar for the concerts and recording, David coached us and helped us form the characters, carefully having considered Liszt's wishes. He was present during the recording sessions giving notes, feedback and encouragement. No one knows the piece as intimately as David does, so it felt like somewhat of a direct line to Liszt himself."

In addition to her Violettas (La Traviata), Tatyanas (Eugene Onegin) and Mimis (La bohème), El-Khoury has lately made a specialty of reviving and recording forgotten operas by Gaetano Donizetti: Belisario (released in 2013), Les Martyres (released in 2015) and L'Ange de Nisida (to be released in March 2019). And her album Écho, which has been nominated for a 2019 Juno Award, also features excerpts from

obscure operas alongside more familiar ones.

This process of (re)discovery is thrilling for El-Khoury, who says, "there are no traditional norms to adhere to (or be expected to adhere to) and no so-called traditions associated with the pieces," she says. "It is, in short, liberating. I now try to bring this sense of freedom to my other roles as well. It has helped me step outside the box and visualize what my voice, personally, has to say."

**Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk MDR Kultur - Sa 02.02. 20:05 Uhr (Bettina Volksdorf - 2019.02.02)**

source: <https://sputnik.de/mediathek/radio/mdr-s...>



#### BROADCAST

*Liszts Sardanapalo aus Weimar auf CD*

Sendebeleg siehe PDF!

**The Guardian Thu 7 Feb 2019 (Erica Jeal - 2019.02.07)**

source: <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2019/f...>

the guardian

**Franz Liszt: Sardanapalo, Mazeppa review – lost opera of glittering scope**

*Musicologist David Trippet skilfully reconstructs a Liszt opera fragment, illustrating the composer's fertile musical mind*

Kirill Karabits conducts this [Mazeppa] and Sardanapalo with pace and purpose, and his singers are strong if not subtle.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**The Times February 8 2019 (Geoff Brown - 2019.02.08)**

source: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/times...>



When El-Khoury's volatile soprano shoots skywards, wildly dramatic, you wonder what heights were left to breach in the unwritten acts. Airam Hernández (Sardanapalo) and Oleksandr Pushniak (soothsayer Beleso, the grown-up in the room) contribute forcefully, although not as much as Karabits's orchestra, on excellent form, weighty with piercing brass and thrusting strings. Liszt's symphonic poem Mazeppa, thrillingly performed, valuably fills out this most special and historic release.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[www.prestoclassical.co.uk](http://www.prestoclassical.co.uk) 8th February 2019 (Katherine Cooper - 2019.02.08)  
source: <https://www.prestomusic.com/classical/ar...>

PRESTO  
CLASSICAL

## Recording of the Week

*Kirill Karabits conducts the world premiere of Liszt's Sardanapalo*

It's undeniably thrilling stuff, and by this stage I found myself so caught up in the drama that I was itching to crack on with the next four acts...until I remembered that they'd never materialised. Sardanapalo may be 'the claw of a lion' rather than the entire majestic beast (to borrow a phrase from one of Wagner's letters to Liszt), but it's definitely worth a visit.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[Thüringer Allgemeine](http://www.thueringer-allgemeine.de/web...) 09. Februar 2019 (Wolfgang Hirsch - 2019.02.09)

source: <https://www.thueringer-allgemeine.de/web...>

Thüringer Allgemeine

## Weimarer Staatskapelle widmet sich Liszts „Sardanapalo“

*Die mit Spannung erwartete Weimarer Weltersteinspielung des „Sardanapalo“-Fragments ist nun im Handel. Generalmusikdirektor Kirill Karabits zeichnet den tragischen Weg des Heerführers klar, straff und überaus sinnlich mit Klängen nach.*

Karabits und seine glänzend aufgelegte Weimarer Staatskapelle und Chor zaubern mit köstlichen Farbtupfern eine prickelnde Orientatmosphäre, vor allem kosten sie die zahllosen, durchaus strapaziösen Spannungsbögen weidlich aus.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

Thüringische Landeszeitung Sonnabend, 9. Februar 2019 (Wolfgang Hirsch - 2019.02.09)

TLZ

## Franz Liszts genussüchtiger Opernheld

*Die mit Spannung erwartete Weimarer Weltersteinspielung des „Sardanapalo“-Fragments ist seit gestern im Handel*

Karabits und seine glänzend aufgelegte Weimarer Staatskapelle und Chor zaubern mit köstlichen Farbtupfern eine prickelnde Orientatmosphäre, vor allem kosten sie die zahllosen, durchaus strapaziösen Spannungsbögen weidlich aus.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Augsburger Allgemeine** Freitag, 15. Februar 2019, Nr. 39 (rh - 2019.02.15)



## Sardanapalo und seine Konkubine

der erste Akt von „Sardanapalo“ [ist] jetzt für die Weimarer Uraufführung und CD-Ersteinspielung musikalisch eingerichtet worden – und was dabei durch die Staatskapelle Weimar unter Kirill Karabits frappt, ist – bei originärer Liszt-Harmonik – der Spagat zwischen Verdi und Wagner, hier im Chor und in den Solistenarien zu hören, dort in appellativen Blechfanfaren.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Deutsche Liszt-Gesellschaft** 18.02.2019 (MS - 2019.02.18)  
source: <https://deutsche-liszt-gesellschaft.de/i...>



DEUTSCHE LISZT-GESELLSCHAFT

Karabits und Trippett ist für das Zustandekommen dieser Aufnahme sehr zu danken. Die Erarbeitung des unbekannten Werks in dieser Form und Qualität darf getrost eine musikalische Sensation genannt werden. Unbedingt empfehlenswert.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**www.pizzicato.lu** 13/02/2019 (Remy Franck & Guy Engels - 2019.02.13)  
source: <https://www.pizzicato.lu/liszts-unvollst...>



## Liszts unvollständige Oper 'Sardanapalo'

Unter seinem Chefdirigenten Kirill Karabits hat die Staatskapelle Weimar im Sommer 2018 die unvollständige Oper 'Sardanapalo' von Franz Liszt uraufgeführt. Das Manuskript lag seit 100 Jahren völlig vergessen im Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv in Weimar. Die Musik wurde von David Trippett, Dozent an der Fakultät für Musik der Universität Cambridge, überarbeitet und orchestriert.

(Remy Franck): Das Libretto basiert auf Lord Byrons Tragödie 'Sardanapalus' und erzählt die Geschichte von Sardanapalo, dem König des alten Assyrien, einem friedliebenden Monarchen, der von Rebellen besiegt und ermordet wird. Liszts Oper konzentriert sich auf die Liebe zwischen König Sardanapalo und seiner Lieblingskonkubine Mirra, die den König liebt, obschon sie sich als eine vom Schicksal verhöhnte Sklavin ansieht. Im letzten Teil des ersten Aufzugs versuchen ein Wahrsager und Mirra, den König zu überzeugen, einen neuen Krieg zu beginnen, was er denn auch tut.

Liszt komponierte nur einen Akt. Musikwissenschaftler gehen davon aus, dass er mit dem Libretto für die Akte II und III nicht zufrieden war.

Trippett arbeitete an dem Manuskript mit Liszts eigenen Anweisungen zur Orchestrierung der Partitur und erhielt eine Performance-Version, die für die Weimarer Premiere verwendet wurde, die dieser Aufnahme zugrunde liegt. Laut Trippett ist die Musik eine « einzigartige Mischung aus italienischer Lyrik und harmonischer Innovation. » Die starken melodischen Linien können an Bellini oder Donizetti, mitunter auch Verdi erinnern, ein bisschen sogar an Wagner. Von Liszt hat die Musik die auf der Dramatik fußende Melodik, nach seinen eigenen Worten die 'deklamatorische Melodie'. Jedenfalls gilt es festzustellen, dass an ihm ein guter und einflussreicher Opernkomponist verlorengegangen ist.

Weimar hatte für die Besetzung eine sehr gute Wahl getroffen. Joyce El-Khoury singt mit leuchtendem Sopran, schönen Nuancen und Farben die Rolle von Mirra.

Der Tenor Airam Hernandes imponiert als Sardanapalo, und Oleksandr Pushniak ist großartig in der Rolle des Beleso.

Kirill Karabits dirigiert leidenschaftlich, und die Staatskapelle Weimar setzt sein Dirigat farbenreich und dramatisch um. Eine insgesamt großartige Aufnahme eines hörenswerten Werks!

Die CD beginnt mit einer spannenden und sehr differenziert und flexibel gestalteten Darbietung von 'Mazeppa'.

(Guy Engels): In Liszts Musik begegnen wir immer wieder Heldenfiguren, die nur zu oft von Interpreten überhöht werden. Die mächtigen Klänge werden romantisch aufgemotzt und übertünchen den differenzierten Blick, den Liszt auf seine Protagonisten wirft.

Kirill Karabits lässt eine solche Lektüre nicht zu. Er stützt 'Sardanapalo', den König wider Willen, auf sein menschliches Maß zurück. Sardanapalo frönt lieber den Freuden des Lebens als der Diplomatie und dem Krieg. Durch die Mahnungen seines Beraters Beleso gerät er jedoch in einen persönlichen Konflikt wegen der Vernachlässigung seiner Königspflichten.

Karabits zeichnet die unterschiedlichen Facetten und Seelenzustände des Sardanapalo durch einen sehr differenzierten Klang. Er sucht die Schattierungen in Liszts Musik, nicht deren inhärente Opulenz. Die Staatskapelle Weimar spielt mit warmem, homogenem und durchaus auch kräftigem Klang, enthält sich aber jedweder Heroisierung. Das Sängertrio fügt sich wunderbar in die Inszenierung dieser Politromanze ein: Airam Hernandez als zweifelnder und verzweifelter Sardanapalo, Joyce El-Khoury als verliebte Sklavin, die mit ihrem reinen und schillernden Sopran nach der Heimat verlangt sowie Aleksandr Pushniak, als mit klarem, dunklen Bass mahnender Berater und Priester.

Ergänzend zum Opernfragment 'Sardanapalo' hören wir die Tondichtung « Mazeppa », die zur gleichen Zeit entstand. Auch Mazeppa ist in dieser treffenden Lektüre ein Mensch aus Fleisch und Blut, ein Mächtiger, der am Ende ohne Macht und ohne Freunde ist.

Besides his early opera Don Sanche, Sardanapalo is Liszt's only other opera, yet it remained unfinished, with only one from three acts. David Trippett has orchestrated the score, and his performing version was first given at the Staatstheater Weimar in 2018. This premiere recording is from that production. Kirill Karabits and his ensemble offer good singing and music making, with an excellent sense of presence and atmosphere.

**Sunday Times February 17 2019 (Hugh Canning, David Cairns, Paul Driver and Stephen Pettitt - 2019.02.17)**

source: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/magazine/cult...>

THE TIMES  
THE SUNDAY TIMES

## ALBUM OF THE WEEK

*On record: Classical, Feb 17*

David Trippett's orchestration [...] brings this fragment back to life, and it is rip-roaring stuff, characteristic of the dramatic orchestral narratives of the composer's neglected tone poems. Karabits conducts his Weimar forces with flair, and the voices of Joyce El-Khoury, [...] Airam Hernandez [...] and Oleksandr Pushniak [...] make a fine case for this rediscovery.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*



WDR 3 TonArt | 14.02.2019 (Desiree Löffler - 2019.02.14)  
source: <https://www1.wdr.de/mediathek/audio/wdr3...>



## BROADCAST

*Neuentdeckung von Liszts*

Er war eine Sensation: Der neu entdeckte und letztes Jahr erst uraufgeführte Opernakt von Franz Liszt: "Sardanapalo". Desiree Löffler spricht mit Musikwissenschaftler David Trippett, der das Werk mühsam aufgearbeitet hat.

Der vollständige Radiobeitrag ist zu hören unter:  
<https://www.audite.de/media/file/00/34/73/WDR-3-TonArt-20190214-AUD-97764.mp3>

[www.klassikerleben.de](http://www.klassikerleben.de) Frühjahr 2019 ( - 2019.02.20)



## Uraufführung einer Liszt-Oper

*Joyce El-Khoury, Airam Hernandez u.a.*

Uraufführung einer Liszt-Oper

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

Financial Times Saturday 25 February 2019 ( - 2019.02.23)



## Liszt's Sardanapalo, Mazeppa — brought to life

*Incomplete and long assumed not worth performing, the opera has now been reborn in a rich new version by David Trippett*

This first-ever recording offers a fascinating glimpse of what might have been. Joyce El-Khoury and Airam Hernández are the singers bravely taking on the challenging lead roles and the Staatskapelle Weimar conducted by Kirill Karabits revels in the Gothic excess of Liszt's only mature operatic score. The tone poem Mazeppa makes a comparably rousing filler.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[jpc-courier](#) 3/2019 ( - 2019.03.01)

source: <https://www.jpc.de/downloads/jpc-courier...>



## Klassik-Neuheiten des Monats

*Überfällige Ersteinstrument*

Der assyrische König Sardanapalo, der als Hedonist Wein und Konkubinen den Staatsgeschäften vorzieht und der ukrainische Volksheld Iwan Mazeppa, der nach Leid und Erniedrigung ruhmvoll stirbt: konträrer könnte man sich zwei Protagonisten wohl kaum vorstellen. Die literarisch-dramatischen Vorlagen von Lord Byron und Victor Hugo dienten Franz Liszt als Inspirationsquelle, wobei die Oper Sardanapalo nach Byron leider Fragment blieb und lediglich den ersten Akt umfasst.

[Musik & Theater](#) 03/04 März/April 2019 (Reinmar Wagner - 2019.03.01)



m&t meilenstein

In Liszts Wirkungsstätte Weimar liess sich der heutige GMD Kirill Karabits von diesem Opernfragment begeistern und realisierte die Ersteinstrument zusammen mit einem hochkarätigen Sängertrio, angeführt von Joyce El-Khoury. [...] diese grandiose, 50-minütige Opernszene [ist] eine überaus lohnende Begegnung.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[de Volkskrant](#) 01.03.2019 (MK - 2019.03.01)

deVolkskrant

Wie daar niet bij was, kan nu alsnog een indruk krijgen van hoe Liszt de operageschiedenis had kunnen beïnvloeden als hij had doorgezet. De Staatskapelle Weimar heeft Sardanapalo op cd gezet onder leiding van dirigent Kirill Karabits. Het is een geloofwaardige voltooiing met kwetterende blazerspartijen en vloeiende zanglijnen in overwegend gunstige liggingen. Sopraan Joyce El-Khoury geeft haar partij veel gewicht.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[Musicalifeiten](#) 01.03.2019 ( - 2019.03.01)

source: <https://musicalifeiten.nl/cd-recensies/4...>



Joyce El-Khoury is een gepassioneerde, dramatische, soms heel assertieve maar soms wat schelle Mirra, Aïram Hernández een vurige, maar ook nobele koning en Oleksandr Pushniak een serieuze spelbreker Beleso met zijn zware bas. Karabits dirigeert energiek en doelgericht.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**De Gelderlander** 27-02-19 (Maarten-Jan Dongelmans - 2019.02.27)

source: <https://www.gelderlander.nl/luister-mee/...>

 de Gelderlander

### Opera over vorstelijke genotzoeker is de nieuwste sensatie uit Weimar

Heerlijk om vooral zó te kunnen genieten van de prachtige sopraan uit Canada. Haar stem zet Joyce El-Khoury nu eens metalig dan weer honingzoet in. Lof ook voor de dames van het koor. Zij weten opperbest raad met de meeslepende partijen die geïnspireerd lijken door de jonge jaargenoten Verdi en Wagner.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

### Das Opernglas März 2019 (A. Laska - 2019.03.01)



Joyce El-Khoury meistert die enormen Anforderungen der Partie mit Aplomb. Das eher scharfe Timbre der ziemlich eng geführten Stimme bleibt freilich Geschmackssache. Mit schönem Tenor und sicheren Höhen glänzt Airam Hernandez in der Titelrolle, als Priester Beleso trumpft Bassbariton Oleksander Pushniak gegen Ende des Aktes mächtig auf. Generalmusikdirektor Kirill Karabits lässt die Staatskapelle Weimar nach Kräften funkeln und strahlen.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

### Crescendo Magazine Le 3 mars 2019 (Jean-Baptiste Baronian - 2019.03.03)

source: <https://www.crescendo-magazine.be/un-o-pe...>



### Un opéra de Franz Liszt

Sardanapalo n'est pas un chef-d'œuvre, mais il ne manque pas par moments de puissance et montre en tout cas à quel point Franz Liszt a toujours été un musicien inspiré, c'est-à-dire un artiste animé d'un extraordinaire souffle créateur. Une très intéressante découverte.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

### BBC Music Magazine April 2019 (John Allison - 2019.04.01)



Specialist record labels may face a challenging time, but they do at least benefit from one growth industry: the ongoing Franz Liszt discoveries and reconstructions. Yet nobody was expecting to hear anything of the composer's opera Sardanapalo, begun and abandoned in the early 1850s. For all Liszt's tireless role in championing operas by his peers, he wrote his only complete opera (Don Sanche) aged 13. Now it turns out that Act I of Sardanapalo had been sketched fully enough to allow musicologist David Trippett to produce a realisation of the score.

What emerges sounds like a catalogue of styles from Bellini and Verdi to Mendelssohn and Wagner, an unsatisfying mix that lacks its own distinctive voice. Still, it's good to be able to hear it and fitting that Liszt's old Weimar orchestra (now under Kirill Karabits) has recorded it. In the title role, the plangent tenor Airam Hernandez confirms his status as a rising star; but it is Mirra, the king's lover, who carries the burden and Joyce El-Khoury is on exciting, mettlesome form. As the soothsayer Beleso, Oleksandr Pushniak projects a

darkly imposing voice.

Though Liszt's operatic ambitions were never fulfilled, he found his metier in the symphonic poem – with contrasting fortunes that are underlined by the inclusion here of the contemporaneous Mazeppa, also based on Byron. Quintessential Liszt, this masterpiece telling the story of a Ukrainian hero is brought to vivid life under the baton of today's leading Ukrainian conductor.

[www.opusklassiek.nl](http://www.opusklassiek.nl) maart 2019 (Aart van der Wal - 2019.03.25)  
source: <https://www.opusklassiek.nl/cd-recensies...>



Voor de een is het glas misschien halfleeg en voor de ander halfvol, maar een feit is wel dat we nu wel kunnen luisteren naar wat had kunnen uitgroeien tot een avondvulle opera die, tenminste wat deze eerste akte betreft, het beluisteren zeker waard is.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[La Libre Belgique](http://www.lalibre.be) Arts Libre - mercredi 13 mars 2019 (N.B. - 2019.03.13)



[...] ce premier enregistrement, réalisé à Weimar sous la direction de Kirill Karabits, permet de découvrir une partition pleine de souffle, à mi-chemin entre Verdi et Wagner. L'oeuvre est servie par de bons solistes (dont la soprano Joyce Elkhoury et surtout le ténor Aïram Hernandez) et complétée ici par le poème symphonique Mazeppa.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[www.musicweb-international.com](http://www.musicweb-international.com) Thursday March 28th (Jim Westhead - 2019.03.28)  
source: <http://www.musicweb-international.com/cl...>



Has any great composer been so vilified in the half century after his death as Franz Liszt?

Ernest Newman's 1934 biography: The Man Liszt: A Study of the Tragi-Comedy of a Soul Divided Against Itself, says it all in its title. The book itself must establish a world record in anti-hagiography.

I have read widely on the life and music of Liszt, and for anyone interested in a thoroughly readable, gripping biography, it is difficult to do better than Alan Walker's three volume set, published in 1983, 1989 and 1996. In it we learn of Liszt the composer, pianist, music teacher, music arranger, organist, philanthropist, author and traveller as well as of his relations with his children, contemporaries (musical and otherwise) and his lovers.

However, in it you will not find any discussion of Liszt's incomplete opera Sardanapolo. This is unsurprising, since Liszt left over one hundred and fifty works and/or components of works unfinished. His finished total amounts to over seven hundred, and very many of these are multi-part works. Pieces by him are still being discovered to this day, as anyone who followed Hyperion's Complete Piano Music series would know, as supplementary 'New Discoveries' discs were added quite soon after the official termination.

Now we have an opera, or to be accurate, part of one, and original opera is a genre with which Liszt is not usually associated. In fact, his catalogue of completed works contains only one operatic entry, Don Sanche

from 1824-5 when Liszt was 13. Of course, he composed a multitude of operatic paraphrases for piano, and during his Weimar years he wrote a series of tracts on Opera and Stage Works. As far as I can tell only some of these are in print, but in edited, collected form, Vol.1 has 314 pages, Vol.3 part 1 has 314 pages and Vol.3 part 2 has 342 pages. From this information alone, it can be seen that opera formed a fundamental part of Liszt's artistic interests, which were of an astonishing range and depth.

Sardanapolo dates from about 1846 until 1852. Its progress, or otherwise is a complex matter, and it seems that Liszt finally gave up in frustration over complications with the libretto. The booklet notes that accompany this fine CD are by Dr. David Trippett, who is responsible for Sardanapolo's unearthing, the editing and the completion of the first act. They are similar to the content of an interesting interview with him for Presto Classical by Katherine Cooper, which can be read [here](#).

The plot is derived from Byron's five-act tragedy Sardanapalus (1821). The plot of the first act begins with a slave girl, Mirra, being comforted by a chorus of the King Sardanapalus' concubines. She is pining for her lost home, as the chorus assures that she is the de facto Queen, having been chosen by the King from thousands of others. She is struggling with guilt for having fallen for the King who conquered her homeland, and also for having adopted his faith. Then the King enters and asks her why she is distressed and he seeks to reassure her, speaking of their love in a grand lyric duet. Despite this, she still feels unhappy at her circumstances. Beloso, a Chaldean Soothsayer enters and warns of war, urging the indolent and pleasure-loving king to take up arms against the insurgents. Sardanapalus hesitates, being fearful of the carnage that would ensue, but Mirra pleads with him to take action. The act concludes with a grand trio espousing the war, and a closing orchestral march.

And the operatic style? In five words – largely Italian, sung in Italian. I must admit that this surprised me. Liszt conducted the first performance of Lohengrin at Weimar in 1850, and it might be supposed that he would have been greatly influenced by it. Instead, to my ears, at least, we have bel canto and a hint of Verdi, but I have to admit that the booklet informs us that there are proto-Wagnerian harmonies and massed sonorities after the style of Berlioz. It seems that Liszt believed that the genre of Italian opera could be modernised, even monumentalised, as drama. In common with other orchestral works of the period, Liszt had intended the work to be orchestrated by Joseph Joachim Raff, who was acting as his assistant at Weimar in the 1850's, and from whom he was learning the techniques of orchestration. In fact, Raff orchestrated some of the early Symphonic Poems, although once he felt himself to be fully competent in handling the orchestra, Liszt re-orchestrated them himself. The opening section of the opera has the woodwind chirping in a manner that reminds me of some of Raff's rustically inspired works.

The vocal writing is taxing, and the excellent soprano, Joyce El Khoury is occasionally pushed to her limits. She has a lovely voice though, and such moments are rare. There is a lovely passage where she persuades the king to go to war, her voice chiming beautifully with the harp. The tenor, Aíram Hernández is splendid, his voice youthful and ardent in his passion for Mirra, and the bass-baritone, Oleksandr Pushniak is suitably impressive in his warnings of war. The female chorus is lovely and Kirill Karabits obtains accurate and committed playing from the heirs to Liszt's own orchestra at Weimar.

The CD is completed with a performance of the roughly contemporaneous Mazeppa. This is really just a nicely performed makeweight. However, Audite might have done better to include one of Liszt's rarer orchestral works instead.

The recording itself is suitably natural, with an excellent balance between the vocal and instrumental forces, and a fine bloom on the sound. The booklet is in German and English, and is suitably comprehensive, but unfortunately no text is given, just a synopsis. However, the complete libretto, in Italian, German and English, is available through the Audite website.

Fono Forum Mai 2019 (Giselher Schubert - 2019.05.01)

**FONO FORUM**  
KLASSIK JAZZ HIFI

Franz Liszt entwickelte als Komponist ein literarisch vermitteltes Musikverständnis, das ihn das Genre der Sinfonischen Dichtung erschaffen ließ. Die hier eingespielte Tondichtung "Mazeppa" – sie ist die sechste seiner insgesamt 13 Tondichtungen – besitzt denn auch, wenn sie, wie in dieser Aufnahme, angriffig-robust voller Impetus interpretiert wird, die ausdrucksvolle Prägnanz von Musik, die einen außermusikalischen Vorgang suggestiv schildert.

Umso mehr verwundert es, dass Liszt wohl verschiedene Opernprojekte erwog (etwa nach Dumas, Scott, Goethe oder Schiller), doch keine Oper vollendet hat. Das hier eingespielte Fragment einer Oper über den assyrischen König Sardanapalo (er wollte eher hedonistischen Neigungen nachgehen als Kriege führen) nach dem Drama von Lord Byron brach er mit dem Entwurf eines ersten Aktes 1852 ab.

Erhalten haben sich in Skizzen die Singstimmen und eine angedeutete Orchesterbegleitung, die David Trippett zu einer spielbaren Fassung ausarbeitete: mit einem völlig überzeugenden Ergebnis. Das ist Opernmusik ganz auf der Höhe der Zeit, wie sie Verdi, Bellini oder Berlioz komponierten – an sie reicht Liszt durchaus heran, und an ihr orientierte sich Trippett in seiner Einrichtung der Musik. Der in den Ensemble-Szenen geradezu bezwingende Eindruck dieser Musik entsteht freilich auch durch das vorbildliche Engagement aller Beteiligten und das beeindruckende interpretatorische Niveau: ein glanzvolles Dokument der Spielkultur des Nationaltheaters Weimar! Deshalb mag es ungerecht wirken, Joyce El-Khoury in der Rolle der Mirra besonders hervorzuheben: Ihr klangvoller, wunderbar beherrschter Sopran lässt diese Einspielung zu einem Erlebnis werden.

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung Montag, 8. April 2019, Nr. 83 (Anja-Rosa Thöming - 2019.04.08)

Frankfurter Allgemeine  
ZEITUNG FÜR DEUTSCHLAND

### Kunst zwischen Konkubinen und Kreuzweg

*Das Opernfragment*

Mehr als bloße Begleitung, vielmehr ein lebhaftes musikalisches Gegenüber stellt der frappierend ausdifferenzierte Orchesterpart dar, den die Staatskapelle unter der Leitung von Kirill Karabits mit großem lyrischem Engagement ausgestaltet.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

<http://operalounge.de> 29.04.2019 (Daniel Hauser - 2019.04.29)

source: <http://operalounge.de/cd/instrumentales/...>



### GENRE-TORSI

Franz Liszt und Oper, das ist eigentlich ein schnell abgehandeltes Kapitel. In allen anderen musikalischen Genres ist Liszt bedeutender hervorgetreten, besonders freilich bei Klavier- und Orchesterwerken. Bis dato galt das für Paris komponierte Jugendwerk Don Sanche, ou le Château de l'Amour von 1824/25 als einziger Beitrag Liszts in Sachen Oper (die alte Hungaroton-Aufnahme unter Tomas Pal ist längst vergriffen/ G. H.). Trotz der begeisterten Aufnahme an der Pariser Oper nahm der ungarische Komponist bald schon Abstand von weiteren Unterfangen in Sachen Musiktheater. Dass er zwei Jahrzehnte später gleichwohl an weiteren Opern arbeitete, ist selbst Liszt-Kennern oft gar nicht geläufig. Sardanapalo von 1846, basierend auf der Tragödie Sardanapalus (1821) von niemandem Geringeren als Lord Byron. Erhalten haben sich lediglich vier Szenen, aber immerhin gut 50 Minuten bisher unbekannter Musik. Doch



stellt dies noch nicht einmal den einzigen Versuch einer Rückkehr zur Operngattung durch Franz Liszt dar: In den 1840er und 50er Jahren beschäftigte er sich tatsächlich mit mannigfaltigen Themen und hatte bereits 1841 eine Oper über *Le Corsaire*, ebenfalls von Byron, in Vorbereitung. Hervorzuheben sind diese Überlegungen gerade auch wegen der oft sehr prominenten Autoren, denen Liszt kompositorisch ein Denkmal setzen wollte: Mit *Manfred* ist noch ein dritter Byron-Stoff darunter, dazu noch *Richard of Palestine* von Walter Scott, *Consuelo* von George Sand, *Jankó* von Karl Beck, *Spartacus* von Oscar Wolff, *Marguerite* nach Goethes *Faust*, *Semele* von Schiller, *Jeanne d'Arc* von Friedrich Halm sowie *Autrans* Adaption von Dantes *Divina commedia*. Es wäre sicherlich von großem Interesse, hätte zumindest einer dieser Versuche zu einer vollständigen Oper geführt – gerade auch im direkten Vergleich mit Liszts späterem Schwiegersohn Richard Wagner.

So bleibt *Sardanapalo* (neben *Don Sanche*) die einzige Möglichkeit, hier Rückschlüsse zu ziehen. Im Zentrum der Handlung steht Assyrien im Altertum unter dem dekadenten und effeminierten letzten König *Sardanapalo*, der mit Aufständen und Rebellionen zu kämpfen hat. Der über seine Ufer tretende Euphrat besiegelt das Schicksal seines zuvor wehrhaften Palastes. Zuletzt wählt der König zusammen mit seiner Geliebten *Mirra* den dramatischen Tod in den Flammen. Liszt dachte in diesem Zusammenhang offenbar an ein besonders pompöses Finale, welches sogar Feuer im Publikum entfachen sollte. Die Byron'sche Thematik war bereits zuvor in der Kunst (*Delacroix*) und Musik (*Berlioz*) aufgegriffen worden; Liszts Vorhaben stellte sicherlich das ambitionierteste dar. Kurios, dass der Librettist namentlich unbekannt geblieben ist.

Eigentlich sollte Joachim Raff die Orchestrierung für den orchestral des damals noch wenig geübten Liszt besorgen, der lediglich eine hybride Partitur für Klavier und Stimmen vorlegte. Dazu sollte es indes niemals kommen, da die Arbeit an *Sardanapalo* 1852 endgültig eingestellt wurde. Die Orchesterfassung für die vorliegende Einspielung musste daher 2017 neu erarbeitet und teils auch ergänzt werden, was von dem britischen Musikwissenschaftler David Trippett besorgt wurde und sich soweit wie möglich an Liszts eigenen Komponierstil der 1850er Jahre orientiert. Erst dies ermöglichte die Welturaufführung 2018 in Weimar. Bereits jetzt legt Audite die zwischen 17. und 20. August entstandene Einspielung vor.

Man geht sicher nicht zu weit, wenn man diesem zweiten Opernversuch Liszts nicht dieselbe Güte der gleichzeitig entstandenen Musikdramen Wagners bescheinigt. Gewisse Anklänge an die Opernlandschaft um 1850 sind unverkennbar (gerade auch die französische *Grand opéra*). Dass es letztlich zum Abbruch der Komposition kam, wird man daher auch unter diesem Aspekt betrachten müssen, ist Liszts Genie hier doch allenfalls in Ansätzen spürbar. Vielleicht hätte er aber auch schlichtweg mehr Durchhaltevermögen beweisen müssen, denn als Orchesterkomponist und eigentlicher Schöpfer der Sinfonischen Dichtung sollte Liszt wahrlich nicht weiter unterschätzt werden.

Dies belegt auch die auf der CD ebenfalls inkludierte Tondichtung *Mazeppa*, nach *Les Préludes* und neben *Tasso* wohl seine berühmteste und wohl auch gelungenste. Dieses Werk datiert ins Jahr 1851, fällt also in dieselbe Entstehungszeit wie *Sardanapalo*. Hat er mit dem Opernfragment ein zwar bemühtes, aber letztlich nicht besonders außergewöhnliches Stück geschaffen, so darf bei *Mazeppa* durchaus von einem Coup die Rede sein. In ihrer Dramatik und Zuspitzung zeigt diese Sinfonische Dichtung Liszt auf dem Gipfel seiner handwerklichen Fähigkeiten als Orchesterkompositeur. Die Hintergrundgeschichte mit dem gleichnamigen ukrainischen Kosakenführer ist zwar im deutschsprachigen Raum bei weitem nicht so bekannt wie in Ostmitteleuropa, doch lässt sich gerade *Mazeppa* eben durchaus auch als absolute Musik genießen.

Die eigentliche Umsetzung der beiden Werke durch die wie so häufig vorzügliche Staatskapelle Weimar lässt kaum Wünsche offen. Kirill Karabits versteht es, das Interesse sowohl für die unbekannte Oper als auch für die vergleichsweise häufig eingespielte Tondichtung zu wecken, auch wenn die allerbesten Interpretationen von *Mazeppa* nicht ganz erreicht werden (es sei neben den üblichen Verdächtigen auf eine exemplarische Rundfunkproduktion des WDR unter Hiroshi Wakasugi aus den 70er Jahren verwiesen). Sängerisch wissen im Opernfragment besonders die Herren zu überzeugen. Der Tenor Airam Hernández als *Sardanapalo* und der Bassbariton Aleksandr Pushniak als *Beleso* erwecken den Eindruck, als holten sie das Bestmögliche aus den nicht unbedingt dankbaren Partien heraus. Dagegen fällt die Sopranistin Joyce El-Khoury ab und scheint ihre Probleme mit der Partie zu haben, ohne allerdings zum Totalausfall zu

werden. Dafür entschädigt wiederum der hervorragend disponierte Opernchor des Nationaltheaters Weimar. Die klangliche Qualität der Einspielungen ist superb.

Anders als auf der hier besprochenen Compact Disc wurde übrigens auch der sehr selten aufgeführte, sechs Minuten dauernde Liszt'sche Huldigungsmarsch auf den Großherzog Carl Alexander von Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach (1858) von der Staatskapelle Weimar unter Karabits aufgenommen; dieser ist allerdings lediglich in Form eines Zusatztracks per Download beim Label selbst erhältlich, obwohl er leicht noch auf die gerade 67-minütige CD gepasst hätte. Eine insofern reichlich unverständliche Entscheidung (Franz Liszt: Sardanapalo; Mazeppa mit Joyce El-Khoury, Mirra (Sopran), Airam Hernández, Sardanapalo (Tenor), Oleksandr Pushniak, Beleso (Bassbariton); Opernchor des Nationaltheaters Weimar; Staatskapelle Weimar/Kirill Karabits; Audite 97.764; Aufnahme: 2018/ veröffentlicht 2019).

[www.classicalsource.com](http://www.classicalsource.com) 29.04.2019 (Alexander Campbell - 2019.04.29)

source: [http://www.classicalsource.com/db\\_contro...](http://www.classicalsource.com/db_contro...)



The performance is excellent, captured in a very immediate-sounding acoustic, not over-reverberant and with voices somewhat to the fore. Dynamic range is also wide. Kirill Karabits and the excellent players of Staatskapelle Weimar take an energetic and appropriately exciting approach to the score with more than a whiff of the theatre to it. Joyce El-Khoury is an attractively italianate-voiced and involving Mirra, and although she has the necessary virtuosity and power she does occasionally sound stretched by some of the vocal writing.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**F. F. dabei Nr. 9/2019 vom 27. April bis 10. Mai ( - 2019.04.27)**



## CD-TIPPS

*Gehört und gut gefunden*

Franz Liszt hat seine späte Oper Sardanapalo nie fertiggestellt. 170 Jahre alt, ist der rekonstruierte erste Akt wie ein Prisma, in dem sich die Welt der Oper um die Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts in Liszts unverwechselbarer Musiksprache bricht.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**orpheus 03/2019 Mai/Juni (Christoph Zimmermann - 2019.05.01)**



## Empfehlungen – Gehört, gesehen, gelesen

»Sardanapalo« – Franz Liszt, der verhinderte Opernkomponist

Es gibt Komponisten, welche sich mit dem Genre Oper ausgesprochen schwer taten, auch wenn sie – wie Schubert – vollendete Werke hinterließen. Wie stark das Ringen jedoch häufig war, zeigt u.a. Beethoven mit seinem »Fidelio«. Angesichts der oft so theatralisch anmutenden Musik von Franz Liszt kann es nicht verwundern, dass auch dieser Komponist nach rhetorischer und visueller Ergänzung seiner Musik strebte. Doch vom »Don Sanche« des 14-Jährigen abgesehen, kamen sämtliche Versuche über ein embryonales Stadium nicht hinaus: »Le Corsaire«, »Richard of Palestine«, »Consuelo«, »Janko«, »Spartacus«,

»Marguerite« (nach Goethes »Faust«), »Divina comedia«, »Jeanne d'Arc«, »Manfred« und »Semele« (Schiller).

Von »Sardanapolo« aus Liszts Spätjahren wurde zwar nahezu der gesamte erste Akt fertiggestellt, doch nur mit Andeutungen bezüglich orchesterlicher Ausführung. Warum das Interesse des Komponisten an dem Projekt abbrach, ist nicht letztgültig zu verifizieren. Ein Grund könnten die Schwierigkeiten hinsichtlich der Librettogestaltung sein. Dabei war die Orchestrierung durch Liszts Assistenten Joachim Raff bereits in Aussicht genommen worden. Aber auch dieser Kontakt verlor sich in einem allgemeinen Unbefriedigtsein über künstlerische Ansprüche. Was an Aufführungsmaterial überlebte (ausschließlich erster Akt, welchem allerdings 20 Finalakte fehlen), wurde von dem an der Cambridge University lehrenden David Trippett in eine aufführungspraktische Form gebracht. Auch wenn zu vermuten steht, dass dem ergänzten »Sardanapolo«-Fragment keine große Zukunft im Konzertsaal beschieden sein wird, ist die Musik ungeachtet diverser Stilanleihen eine ausgesprochen attraktive Partitur, welche die lyrischen wie dramatischen Ansprüche des Stoffes mit großer Inspiration umsetzt.

Die Staatskapelle der Liszt-Stadt Weimar wird samt Chor unter dem ukrainischen Dirigenten Kirill Karabits den theatralischen Aspekten der Musik voll gerecht. Für die Titelpartie, den hedonistischen König Sardanapolo, den man gerne als »männliche Königin« bezeichnete, bringt der spanische Tenor Airam Hernandez vielleicht nicht ein ideal charakterisierendes Timbre mit, dennoch nimmt die lyrisch ausgreifende Stimme ungemein für den Sänger ein. Wie der Dirigent stammt auch der Baßbariton Oleksandr Pushniak aus der Ukraine. Dem chaldäischen Wahrsager Beleso gibt er männlich attraktive Konturen. Absolute Spitze ist die libanesische Sopranistin Joyce El-Khoury, welche der von Sardanapolo angebeteten Mirra mit ihrer vibrierenden Verdi-Stimme stimmige Konturen gibt.

Die sinfonische Dichtung »Mazeppa« bildet eine dramaturgisch sinnvolle Ergänzung der CD, wirkt auch dank der impulsiven Wiedergabe wie eine Oper ohne Worte.

**Luister April 2019 (Quirijn Bongaerts - 2019.04.01)**

**LUISTER**  
TIJDSCHRIFT VOOR KLASIEKE MUZIEK

Het resultaat is spectaculair. We horen Italiaans belcanto, Von Weber-achtige passages, dat alles met Wagner-achtige trekjes. In de prelude neemt Liszt de luisteraar mee de natuur in, met een pastoraal wijsje en de suggestie van fluitende vogels. Zeer monumentaal is L'altera Ninive at te s'inchina. Aan Liszt is een groot operacomponist verloren gegaan.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Opera May 2019 ( - 2019.05.01)**

**Opera**  
The world's leading opera magazine

[...] Trippett's instrumentation is bold, truly reflecting the score's over-exuberance... This important audite issue is a model of how rare works such as sardanapalo ought to be presented.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Opera Now** March 2019 ( - 2019.03.01)

Opera Now

[...] Sardanapalo receives an outstanding performance from the Weimar Staatskapelle and Nationaltheater Opera Chorus under Kirill Karabits. Joyce El-Khoury brings her fascinating soprano to bear upon the role of Mirra, arching some spacious phrases with intensity. Airam Hernández brings warmth to the tenor title role, and Oleksandr Pushniak's bass-baritone provides thunder as Beleso.

**Crescendo** April 2019 (Corina Kolbe - 2019.04.01)

source: <https://crescendo.de/spektakulaere-urauf...>

crescendo

Eine interessante Trouvaille, die dem Liszt-Bild eine neue Facette hinzufügt.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Audiophile Audition** Apr 22, 2019

(Gary Lemco - 2019.04.22)

source:

<https://www.audaud.com/liszt-sardanapalo...>



Tenor Airam Hernandez sports a sweetly voluptuous voice as the sympathetic Sardanapalo, while basso Oleksander Pushniak defines a predictable foil as Beleso.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

<https://iclassical.co.uk> 13th February 2019 (John T - 2019.02.13)

source: <https://iclassical.co.uk/premiere-record...>



**Premiere recording of Liszt's unfinished opera Sardanapalo**

The choral singing is strong throughout and the soloists perform magnificently; [...] The orchestral players, under Kirill Karabits, are on top of their game and give us a weighty performance with piercing brass and thrusting strings that have been captured in top quality sound by the Audite team.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[forumopera.com](http://forumopera.com) - [Le magazine du monde lyrique](#) 28 Mai 2019  
(Laurent Bury - 2019.05.28)  
source: <https://www.forumopera.com/cd/sardanapal...>



Franz aurait voulu s'appeler Giuseppe ou Richard

Portée par la Staatskapelle Weimar que dirige Kirill Karabits, la musique de Liszt convainc et l'on y entend de fort belles choses. Les dames du chœur d'opéra du Théâtre de Weimar ont assez peu à chanter mais le font avec beaucoup d'élégance.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Classica – le meilleur de la musique classique & de la hi-fi N° 213 - Juin 2019**  
(Jérémy Bigorie - 2019.06.01)



Liszt, croyait-on, est resté définitivement sourd aux sirènes de l'opéra,...

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[Le Soir](#) 24.04.2019 (S.M. - 2019.04.24)



Karabits retrouve le même souffle éloquent dans la fougue irrépressible qu'il met à bâtir le poème symphonique Mazeppa.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[Klassieke zaken](#) 2/2019 (Jos van der Zanden - 2019.02.01)  
source: <http://website.emagazine.nl/klassiekezak...>



Het is een machtig mooie surroundopname van de Staatskapelle Weimar, waarbij je op het puntje van je stoel zit.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[Neues Deutschland](#) 20.02.2019 (Dr. Stefan Amzoll - 2019.02.20)



**Franz Liszts Opernfragment „Sardanapalo“ auf CD**

Das vorjährige Kunstfest in Weimar hatte „Sardanapalo“ zentral im Programm gehabt und als Neuentdeckung üppig beworben. Überall in der Stadt rankten die Plakate. Eine Oper von Franz Liszt? Der hat doch nie eine geschrieben, dürfte der Opernfrend sich gewundert haben. Liszt ist neben den Klassikern ein großer Sohn von Weimar. Doch bevor er vor 170 Jahren dort ankam, hatte er halb Europa bereist. Schon im Alter von neun Jahren bot der Junge in Salons schwierigste Klaviernummern. Ungarische Adlige sollen darüber derart erstaunt gewesen sein, dass sie ihm eine Ausbildung in Wien finanzierten. Noch keinerlei Gedanke, einmal musikalisch der Bühne sich zu verschreiben. Liszt und die Oper ist ein

schwieriges Kapitel.

Sein Ruhm als Klaviervirtuose wuchs unaufhaltsam und an Oper war nicht zu denken. Neben Chopin und Paganini lernte er Berlioz und Wagner kennen, beides junge Opernkomponisten. Handfest mit Oper kam das junge Klaviergenie erst in Berührung, als es 1847 nach Weimar ging und das Amt eines Hofkapellmeisters ausübte, betraut mit der Aufgabe, die zeitgenössische Musik zu fördern, also neben Konzertstücken und Symphonien auch Werke des jüngsten Operschaaffens aufzuführen. Wer anderes als die damals jungen, revolutionär gestimmten Verdi, Berlioz, Wagner, Donizetti, Bellini, Rossini, Meyerbeer kamen in Betracht.

Liszt war also sehr vertraut mit dem Metier, komponierte allerdings selber statt Opern Konzerte und Soloklavierwerke. Später, seit 1851, verwirklichte er Stück um Stück seine Konzeption der symphonischen Poeme. Und irgendwann meinte er, dass er in der Oper an der Reihe sein werde: „In drei Jahren werde ich definitiv mein Klavier zuschließen. Dort, wo ich meine Karriere begonnen hatte, in Wien und Pest, werde ich sie auch beenden.“ Davor, im Winter 1843, wollte er in Venedig eine Oper vorstellen, „Le Cosaire“ nach Lord Byron.

Daraus wurde nichts. Im Gegenteil. Eine gewisse Unentschlossenheit kam auf, vielleicht auch eine gewisse Abneigung, denn nicht jedes Genie, entfuhr es ihm 12 Jahre später, vermag „seinen Flug auf die engen Grenzen der Bühne“ zu beschränken. Gleichwohl quoll sein Geist eine Zeit lang über vor hochrangigen literarischen Stoffen (Dante, Schiller, George Sand, Alexandre Dumas, Walter Scott etc.) und suchte sie, in Libretti zu verwandeln. Eine hohe, anspruchsvolle Bemühung, aber sie zahlte sich lediglich entlang seiner Produktion von symphonischen Dichtungen aus.

„Sardanapalo“ ist seine einzige reife Oper. Warum er die Arbeit daran abbrach, verrät kein Zeugnis. Aber umfangreiche Skizzen sind erhalten geblieben, Material für etwa eine Stunde Musik, aus dem der britische Musikologe David Trippett eine spielbare Partitur hergestellt hat. In der Weimarahalle kam sie im August 2018 zur Aufführung. Es gab eine öffentliche Generalprobe und am Folgetag eine vielumjubelte Uraufführung.

Nun ist jenes lange der Entdeckung harrende Opernfragment bei Audite auf CD gebannt. In allen Belangen eine hervorragende Ausgabe, zuallererst in der erklingenden Musik, darin dem stofflich-thematischen Angebot, aufnahmetechnisch, in grafischer Ausstattung und musikwissenschaftlicher Begleitung (Covertext). „Sardanapalo“ nach Lord Byrons gleichnamiger Tragödie, vieraktig, behandelt das Thema Krieg und Frieden im Assyrischen Reich. Wegen seiner hedonistischen Lebensweise angefeindet, wollen Rebellen des Heeres Sardanapalo, den letzten König, stürzen. Der lässt sie fassen und begnadigt sie überraschenderweise, was zu einem noch größeren Aufruhr führt. Der Euphrat tritt über die Ufer und zerstört den wichtigsten Verteidigungswall des Schlosses, sodass die Niederlage unvermeidlich ist. Der König schickt seine Familie fort und befiehlt, ihn mit seiner Geliebten Myrrha (bei Liszt Mirra) inmitten von Düften und Gewürzen in einem großen Inferno lebendig zu verbrennen, sodass „Licht in Ewigkeiten schwinden wird.“ Sein Finale ziele sogar darauf, schrieb Liszt an einen Freund, „das ganze Publikum in Brand zu setzen.“ Freilich hat er sich seinen Teil genommen, als er an dem Werk saß. Die Musik partizipiert an allem, was um 1850 an Neuheiten in der Szene entwickelt worden war. Die kannte er ja aus seiner Kapellmeisterpraxis. Aber nichts geht ungebrochen durch sein Genie hindurch. Die Opulenz des Orchesters ist der Verdis ebenbürtig. Charakteristisch die Einleitungs- und Zwischenmusiken, sie schüren die im Finale explodierende Dramatik. Klar, lodernd die Arien des Königs (Airam Hernández, Tenor). Wie auf einem wankenden Schiff schaukeln im Walzertakt die Chöre des 1. Aktes (Chor des Nationaltheaters Weimar). Mirra (Joyce El-Khoury, Sopran) und Sardanapalo duettieren im 4. Akt nicht minder eindringlich wie die Paare bei Verdi oder Bellini. In allem legte Kirill Karabits mit den Solisten, dem Chor und der Staatskapelle Weimar eine außerordentliche Aufführung hin. Auf CD kann sie nun jeder nachhören und sich überdies an der Symphonischen Dichtung „Mazeppa“ erfreuen, die der Oper voransteht.



Franz Liszt harbored operatic ambitions that remained unfulfilled. How great a...

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Diapason N° 683 - Octobre 2019 (Paul de Louit - 2019.10.01)**



En août 2018 à Weimar, la découverte de ce Sardanapale faisait événement. Pensez donc ! La seule incursion de Liszt dans le genre lyrique, disparue, retrouvée, reconstituée et enfin créée. Autant exhumé un tableau perdu de Michel-Ange. Kirill Karabits fait une nouvelle fois sensation en enregistrant un fragment de ce grand projet d'opéra historique d'après Byron, laissé inachevé par Liszt au début de 1851.

Le livret est peut-être imputable à la princesse Belgiojoso, son flirt du moment. De ce premier acte pour trois personnages et chœur se détache une grande Scena dramatique et émouvante, proche du « E strano » de Traviata. Elle met à rude épreuve l'aigu de Joyce El-Khoury, dont le timbre chaleureux et expressif sert noblement le rôle de la Ninivite esclave Mirra. On n'aura que des éloges pour Aïram Hernandez et Oleksandr Pushniak, qui font tout ce qu'ils peuvent pour donner vie aux rôles assez falots du pacifique roi d'Assyrie et de son confident va-t-en-guerre. La confrontation triangulaire piétine.

Notre grand Franz est meilleur dramaturge à son piano. Et peu familier de la prosodie italienne, bizarrement accommodée dans un essai de récitatif continu. Reste la découverte passionnante d'un Liszt inconnu, qui se détache de Meyerbeer, fraie avec Verdi et, tout en préservant un langage harmonique immanquablement à lui, a su puiser dans Tannhäuser et Lohengrin la prévalence d'un orchestre qui n'accompagne plus mais embrasse et guide les voix.

Restituée, complétée et instrumentée avec talent par le musicologue David Trippett, cette si importante partie d'orchestre est servie par une Staatskapelle de Weimar aux cordes précises, aux bois et aux cuivres incisifs quoique peu puissants. La baguette experte de Kirill Karabits pourrait se montrer elle-même plus dynamique, et surtout dans l'interprétation de Mazeppa qui ouvre le disque. Pour un peu, avec des fff si sages et des phrasés si courts, certains passages où strident piccolos et trompettes tiendraient davantage d'un kiosque de ville d'eau que des tumultes hugoliens.

**Note 1 - Neuheitenheft Weihnachtsbroschüre ( - 2019.11.01)**

note 1  music

Franz Liszts Oper Sardanapalo blieb leider ein Fragment und umfasst lediglich den ersten Akt. Erst 2017 wurde die Niederschrift von David Trippett an der University of Cambridge entziffert, editiert und orchestriert. Trippett beschreibt die Komposition: „Es gibt nichts Vergleichbares in der Opernwelt.“

<https://o-ton.online> 17.12.2019 (Karin Coper - 2019.12.17)  
source: <https://o-ton.online/medien/o-ton-album-...>



## Grandioser Operntorso

Grandioser Operntorso

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

<https://www.midlandsmusicreviews.com> February 07, 2019 (Norman Stinchcombe - 2019.02.07)  
source: <https://www.midlandsmusicreviews.com/201...>



The Lebanese soprano Joyce El-Khoury is magnificent as Sardanapolo's mistress Mirra – maintaining bel canto beauty despite formidable vocal demands – and tenor Airam Hernandez (Sardanapolo) and bass-baritone Oleksandr Pushniak, as the Chaldean soothsayer Beleso, give fine support. Kirill Karabits conducts like a born Lisztian – an impressive Mazeppa opens the disc.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[Avant Scène Opéra](https://www.asopera.fr/fr/cd-dvd/3767-sa...) 21/12/2019 (Jean-Charles Hoffelé - 2019.12.21)  
source: <https://www.asopera.fr/fr/cd-dvd/3767-sa...>

Avant  
Scène  
OPÉRA

Joyce El-Khoury, de son timbre plein de caractère, de sa grande voix de pur théâtre italien, en magnifie les inventions stupéfiantes, surmontant les épreuves inhumaines que l'écriture lui impose. Pour ce moment, qui prouve que si Liszt l'avait un peu plus voulu il aurait eu ici autant à dire qu'à son piano et à son orchestre, la découverte vaut la peine, d'autant que Kirill Karabits croit à l'ouvrage, l'enflamme, comme les deux voix masculines qui ont pourtant si peu d'espace pour affirmer leurs personnages.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[Sverige Radio](https://sverigesradio.se/artikel/7173734) onsdag 13 mars 2019 ( - 2019.03.13)  
source: <https://sverigesradio.se/artikel/7173734>

sverigesradio

## BROADCAST

*Premiärkänsla: Lisztopera hörs för första gången*

## BROADCAST

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

www.amazon.com May 7, 2019 ( - 2019.05.07)  
source: <https://www.amazon.com/-/de/Liszt-Sardan...>

### Genuine discovery – a beautiful lost opera

This is a remarkable discovery that shows Liszt's natural voice in opera. What an eye-opening recording! The music is thrilling – an opera composed at the peak of its time. Liszt's lyrical voice is clear in its melodic and harmonic fingerprints, and yet the music is constantly surprising – from the opening Italianate chorus with its melodious, twirling waltz to Beleso's dark timbre and moments of Wagnerian drama.

Listening to this disc, I was emphatically persuaded that Liszt was capable of composing opera, and of shaping psychological drama on the stage. It comes from one of his most productive periods (1849-52), i.e. right in the middle of his career, at the same time as the two piano concertos, the first four symphonic poems, the B-minor sonata, revisions to the Dante Sonata and Totentanz, sacred choruses, Lieder, psalm settings etc.

There are four scenes, lasting 52 minutes. After the ethereal prelude (redolent of the Prelude to Lohengrin, with its characteristic woodwind and high strings) we move straight to the opening chorus of concubines. It's tantalizingly situated between Bellini and Verdi, but with more exploratory, chromatic harmony.

Scene 2 is for soprano alone. And what a feat of stamina, drama and coloratura it is. Mirra is angry at her situation: torn in two directions, between her love for the king, and his destruction of her homeland. Soaring lines, v moving in the lead up to the cabaletta. The final cadenza is sumptuous.

Scene 3 features a love duet between tenor and soprano, as they work out their feelings towards one another. Tension rises throughout (often through well-paced harmonic steps) with occasional moments of lyrical release, particularly the central march in 'sotto il tuo sguardo'. It's gripping stuff, and the closing climax is surely one of the finest in any opera from this period.

Scene 4 sees the entrance of the bass-baritone Beleso, who keeps urging the King to take his royal duties seriously, and go to war. It's richly dramatic, almost Wagnerian stuff. There is also a stunning soprano aria here ('Oh perché, perché') from Mirra, and the final trio transforms this music into a high-paced, rousing finale. (What could possibly have followed this in Acts 2-3??)

For the performance there can only be praise – clear, at times beautiful and thoroughly committed. The orchestration is rich and thoroughly idiomatic, and the Weimar orchestra makes a terrific case for this rediscovery. All in all, it is a remarkable first recording that adds fascinating new colors to Liszt's identity. Surely it can't be long before others join it.

www.amazon.com February 16, 2019 ( - 2019.02.16)  
source: <https://www.amazon.com/-/de/Liszt-Sardan...>

### Vintage music from Liszt, highly recommended

This is vintage Liszt, the unfinished opera Sardanapolo and the symphonic poem Mazeppa. It is a pity that Liszt did not get to complete his opera, but only act I. It is monumental, with such powerful music and great arias and chorus. It is sung beautifully on the CD, and both the soprano and the tenor have great voices, with clarity and great expression. Joyce El-Koury has such a beautiful voice, and in this opera her singing captures so well the emotions and the drama of the action. The orchestra is also excellent. Sardanapalo is the last king of Assyria, who after a life of luxury and debauchery, hesitated before taking up arms, but after ineffectual resistance, committed suicide to avoid capture.

Mazeppa is a lovely piece of music, quite dramatic, evoking the suffering Mazeppa endures until he finally

comes victorious. It is nowadays played to portray the suffering in the world. According to legend, Mazeppa ended up in the Ukraine after being sent off from Poland tied to a loose horse as a punishment for his misdemeanour. The tone poem was revived in the Ukraine when they gained their independence in 1991.

I recommend this audio CD.

**www.amazon.co.uk 24 January 2020 ( - 2020.01.24)**  
**source:** <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Liszt-Sardanapa...>



**This is fantastic!**

First to get it out of the way, the Mazeppa performance is fine, but nothing special.

Now onto the single reconstructed act of the opera: This is fantastic stuff. Not just for Liszt completists. The music is thrilling, and the central love duet and finale particularly so. Melodic in a way that Liszt sometimes isn't, dramatic as the best of his work. Totally brilliant. Perhaps this isn't the best of librettos and the best of drama in the libretto, but the music, my goodness, the music! What a shame this is just one Act. It's a complete transfiguration of the Italian operatic style of the 1850s. To me, this has surprisingly little in common with the far more dignified dramatism of his oratorio on St Elizabeth, which was also semi-staged an opera by Liszt from time to time. I wasn't really expecting music as thrilling and barnstorming as this opera fragment.

**www.amazon.co.uk 16 August 2019 ( - 2019.08.16)**  
**source:** <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Liszt-Sardanapa...>



**Scoperta interessantissima!**

Ascoltare le sezioni ritrovate e ricostruite di un'opera lirica di Liszt è un'esperienza unica e da raccomandare a tutti i lisztiani! CD da avere assolutamente a casa!

**Newsletter of the Hungarian Liszt Society Nr. 40 – August 2020 ( - 2020.08.01)**  
**source:** <http://www.lisztociety.hu/40.ujzag-2020...>



**Ferenc Liszt: Sardanapalo – Resuscitation of an operatic fragment**

It is well known that Ferenc Liszt's oeuvre comprises only one complete opera: Don Sanche, composed in his adolescence, whose world première was in Paris on October 17th 1825, and altogether had four performances then. Modern revivals of the opera have been staged several times in Hungary (in Szeged and Miskolc), and even an LP was recorded in 1986. Less well known is that the composer had a relatively long period in his mature years as well (the decade between 1841 and 1851) when he was seriously preoccupied with composing opera. The seriousness of his plans is proven by numerous references in his correspondence, his readings on the subject, and by various librettos he ordered and partly even received, some of which have survived and can be studied in the Liszt-inheritance preserved in the Goethe-Schiller Archive in Weimar. However, we know of a serious compositional experiment, a musical notation, in the case of only one work, and that is Sardanapalo (Sardanapal or Sardanapale) – whose material is also preserved in the Weimar collection, and already Peter Raabe evaluated the musical sketch material in his manuscript catalogue of 1910/11 as a "major fragment".

Liszt's operatic plans, including Sardanapalo, have been examined by several scholars, and studies were

already published decades ago. In 2017, however, it caused a sensation when an English music historian, David Trippett, announced that he had succeeded in reconstructing a complete, performable act of the opera with years of work (and with the help of his linguistic colleagues in terms of the libretto) from the autograph containing merely short references about the instrumentation, and noted only in sketch form and mostly in musical stenography. It was characteristic of Liszt's working method at that time that, in the first stage, he only prepared a piano (or vocal-piano) sketch of his orchestral or vocalorchestral works – or a so-called *particella*, a short score sketch – specifying at some points what kind of instruments he would like to see in the full orchestral score. After that he delegated the instrumentation to one of his composer secretaries, Joachim Raff or August Conradi. Liszt then thoroughly reviewed the score they had prepared and corrected or supplemented it at many points, and then had it copied out again, so that the final version, when completed, fully reflected his own concept. However, there was more than one composition where the work of instrumentation was not completed (just as in the case of *Sardanapalo*, which Raff was supposed to orchestrate, but it never happened), or it was albeit done, but got stuck at one point, sometimes at a very advanced stage (as for example, *Four Elements – Les quatre éléments*, where the last steps necessary for a possible performance were completed by Géza Gémesi in 2016).

On the occasion of the 2017 press announcement, details of the *Sardanapalo* reconstruction were posted on youtube as well, and on August 19th and 20th 2018, the full reconstructed opera act was presented and recorded in Weimar at the Neue Weimarahalle Congress Centre. Prior to the event, Tamás Pallós had published a very informative article on the topic in the column "Our Recovered Values" in the weekly cultural magazine *Mértékadó*. The main reason why we are turning to the appreciation of the *Sardanapalo*-reconstruction exactly now is the fact that the programme schedule of this year's Spring Festival included the Budapest première of the work in a performance by the Weimar ensemble, which, however, could not come true unfortunately due to the epidemic situation, and we do not know if this highly anticipated concert can be made up for in the future. Nevertheless, for those interested in the topic, we are happy to recommend the CD recording that has been released in the meantime, and in addition to the opera act of just over fifty minutes, the disc also features the symphonic poem *Mazeppa*. Furthermore, we are in the fortunate position of holding in our hands the original score material that survives in one of Liszt's sketchbooks, registered in the Goethe-Schiller Archive in Weimar under the bookmark N 4, which was the basis of Trippett's instrumentation. The New Liszt Complete Edition by Editio Musica, namely, under publication for many years now in the excellent edition by Adrienne Kaczmarczyk, released this score at the beginning of March this year – perfectly timed for the planned Hungarian première – thus launching Series IX of the "New edition of the complete works by Ferenc Liszt", which is to feature "Vocal Works with Orchestra or with Multiple Instruments". The release of a series of supplement volumes for the two series of two-handed piano works is close to completion, and it is very gratifying that the publisher has not missed the opportunity to launch another series in parallel by publishing this particularly interesting and timely musical material. David Trippett, who is currently the person most familiar with the material, was invited to the publication, while the libretto was reconstructed by Marco Beghelli, assisted by Francesca Vella and David Rosen. The introductory study (in English, German and Hungarian) provides detailed information about the history of the work's origin, the problems with the libretto, and also raises the question of why Liszt abandoned composing the opera (although is not answered definitely). The critical commentaries (only in English already, as usual) also provide information on the theoretical aspects of the release, the nature of the musical source, and the reconstruction of the libretto. The critical notes themselves are very detailed (which is understandable and necessary for the publication of a material that survives only in sketch form). It is also very useful that after the score material, the complete libretto in rhymed form in Italian is also available, separately and in a complete form, along with prose translations in English, German and Hungarian. Facsimile reproductions of no less than six original score pages, provided with proper explanations, help us understand from what sources and how the publishers worked, what kind of typical abbreviations Liszt used, how he indicated instructions for the instrumentation etc.

The theme of *Sardanapalus* was very popular in Liszt's youth, especially after Byron, whom Liszt particularly revered, had published a poetic tragedy in five acts in 1821 with the title *Sardanapalus*, which he dedicated to Goethe. As early as 1827, Liszt obtained a complete French edition of Byron's works by Amédée Pichot, which later survived in the library of his son-in-law, Émile Ollivier. Liszt marked several volumes of the series with underlinings and handwritten entries in the margins, including the 11th volume that contains *Sardanapalus*. According to the story, the fall of the last Assyrian king was due to his

favouring the pleasures of life and love, and his naive love of peace. Liszt had a lot of trouble obtaining a libretto based on the subject and suitable for composing music. Eventually, with the help of Cristina Belgiojoso, an Italian princess living in voluntary exile in Paris, he managed to obtain a libretto by a poet whose name is unknown to us, which he found already good enough to start composing. The characters of the completed first act are Sardanapalo, his dearest concubine, Mirra and the royal adviser, Beleso, as well as the women's chorus, impersonating the other female prisoners of the ruler. Mirra's fate foreshadows the situation of Aida in a way: although she is a prisoner and is tormented by a longing for her lost homeland, she cannot hide from herself that she is impressed by Sardanapalo, and tender feelings have woken in her heart towards him. Liszt's musical interpretation for this is a very beautiful solo section composed for the soprano singer, wherein he masterfully weaves together the lyrical, dramatic and virtuoso parts, interestingly blending the traditional elements of Italian opera with his own characteristic modulations and bold harmonies. On the CD, Joyce El-Khoury performs the grandiose melodies, passionate recitatives, and coloratura elements with amazing security and authenticity. Sardanapalo, who would do anything to drive away the grief of his beloved and win her love, is a true grateful heroic tenor role, which Aíram Hernández demonstrates accordingly. Their duet scene is particularly beautiful, wherein they get to the point, through Italian-like ariosos and passionate recitatives, when the girl confesses her love, too, and they unite in an ecstatic duet, at the end of which they sing the Italian melody unisono. All this does not happen in a conventional manner at all, and it is particularly interesting when Beleso, the ruler's adviser, played by Oleksandr Pushniak, a bass singer with a beautiful voice, unexpectedly appears at the pinnacle, calling upon the ruler why he does not focus rather on maintaining his power and his empire, which is threatened by enemies through betrayal. The peace-loving ruler answers: "I am not deceived by the easy boast of a fleeting glory. Every glory is a lie, if it must be bought with the weeping of afflicted humankind." Eventually Mirra joins the dialogue between the two men, and also encourages the king to fight: "If I am dear to you, show the world your valour!" This convinces Sardanapalo: the act ends with a great terzetto and the preparation of the royal army for war, with belligerent orchestral music and a march.

It was a fortunate idea to begin the Weimar CD recording with the Mazeppa symphonic poem, because if we listen to the Sardanapalo act right after it, it is easy to recognize what instrumentation pattern David Trippett followed during the reconstruction of the score. It is also clear that not only did Liszt know very well the language and instruments of contemporary Italian opera (Bellini, Donizetti, the young Verdi), but so does Trippett. An interesting, special blend is the result of intertwining the typical Italian opera style and Liszt's specific musical language, and we can only regret that we do not know of any musical composition material for the other two acts of the three-act libretto, for which Liszt recommended various amendments. "We do not know whether Liszt had already worked up some musical material for these missing acts in anticipation of receiving a revised libretto for Acts 2-3. None of this is notated in N4, in any case. The opera is not mentioned in his correspondence thereafter, and just as Liszt moved decisively onto new compositional challenges, he neither recycled nor destroyed the music for Sardanapalo" – Trippett writes. This is fortunate – because in this way we can be certain that Liszt could also have been a successful opera composer among the musicians of his age. We owe many thanks to David Trippett for the instrumentation, and the Weimar performers, led by the Ukrainian conductor Kirill Karabits, who shows an obvious commitment to Liszt. We can be grateful that they have introduced this precious piece of music to the world at such a high standard, with genuine empathy, and in an understanding interpretation of its particular style. We can only wish that the missing Hungarian première may take place sometime!



**Das Orchester** 06/2019 ( - 2019.06.01)

source: <https://dasorchester.de/artikel/sardanap...>



Weimarer Opernchor und Staatskapelle unter der Leitung des ukrainischen Dirigenten Kirill Karabits setzen sich ebenfalls exzellent in Szene. [...] Eine hochspannende CD!

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Luister** 2 oktober 2021 ( - 2021.10.02)

source: <https://www.luister.nl/lisztsardanapalo-...>



Sardanapalo – wie o wie was Sardanapalo? Eugène Delacroix schilderde een...

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**www.allmusic.com** April 2019 ( - 2019.04.01)

source: <https://www.allmusic.com/album/mw0003252...>



The prima donna role of Mirra is sung by the emerging Lebanese-Canadian star Joyce El-Khoury, and she has an unbridled dramatic power [...] Airam Hernández as Sardanapolo is a strong foil. Karabits keeps things moving, both in the opera and in Mazeppa, and at the very least this opera is going to contribute some arias to vocal recitals and recording collections, Mirra's "Più lunga cura" above all. Highly recommended, and a great surprise.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

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