

we hear the stormy sea in all the customary rhetorical motifs. But the quality of musical inventiveness does not stop at description and is greatly elevated when it most passionately evokes the lovers' vicissitudes, leading to total immersion in empathy for them by the composer. Who, being an extraordinary creator of different piano timbres, translated his feelings into a magisterial tapestry of sounds (not of notes!). In the 1860s the great pianist had not lost his "transcendental execution", but the extremes of his most flamboyant period were long past and the technical difficulty of the Two Legends and the Ballade was a useful tool for his ongoing research into timbre. However it is immediately obvious that in the Sonata, too, Liszt's writing for piano forgoes daring experimentation and returns in some measure to the classical tradition. The Fünf Klavierstücke, composed between 1865 and 1879, appear like isolated moments in time, gathered together as a compilation characterised by tenebrous melancholic tones. But at times their moving tenderness becomes a real cry of pain, revealing the deep pessi-

mism which marked Liszt's final years. The minor compositions - like the Fünf Klavierstücke - are also valuable means for understanding their creator's character, and this applies not only to the Hungarian composer. Finally a comment on something which has often struck me: in Liszt's repertoire the final bars which end some pieces in silence are amongst the most moving. On this album there are many examples. The Sonata (the extraordinary reworking traceable in the manuscript, which transformed the emphatically triumphal finale into an unforgettable meditation, is well-known), the Ballade, the Legend of St. Francis of Assisi and the five short Klavierstücke all end by looking towards transcendence. If we want fully to appreciate Liszt's greatness we must take into consideration this little-considered aspect of the Hungarian composer's character. It is easy to remember his frequent, typical moments of passion, while tending to overlook a fundamental aspect of his psyche, the introspection which looked to life's last things. Just recognizing two such contrasting sides to the complex

