

LISZT **ANNÉES DE PÈLERINAGE**

BRIAN HSU



Franz Liszt (1811–1886): Années de Pèlerinage (Complete)

Brian Hsu, piano

DISC 1

Première Année: Suisse (Switzerland) S. 160

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| 1. I. | Chapelle de Guillaume Tell | 5:54 |
| 2. II. | Au lac de Wallenstadt | 2:40 |
| 3. III. | Pastorale | 1:43 |
| 4. IV. | Au bord d'une source | 3:56 |
| 5. V. | Orage | 4:39 |
| 6. VI. | Vallée d'Obermann | 12:46 |
| 7. VII. | Eglogue | 3:05 |
| 8. VIII. | Le mal du pays | 6:06 |
| 9. IX. | Les cloches de Genève: Nocturne | 5:51 |

Total Playing Time 46:35

DISC 2

Deuxième Année: Italie (Italy) S. 161

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| 1. I. | Sposalizio | 7:10 |
| 2. II. | Il Penseroso | 3:20 |
| 3. III. | Canzonetta del Salvator Rosa | 2:59 |
| 4. IV. | Sonetto 47 del Petrarca | 5:38 |
| 5. V. | Sonetto 104 del Petrarca | 6:31 |
| 6. VI. | Sonetto 123 del Petrarca | 6:28 |
| 7. VII. | Après une lecture du Dante (Fantasia Quasi Sonata) | 17:29 |

Venezia e Napoli (Supplement) S. 162

8. I.	Gondoliera	5:13
9. II.	Canzone	3:35
10. III.	Tarantella	9:43
Total Playing Time		68:11

DISC 3

Troisième Année (Third Year) S. 163

1. I.	Angélus! Prière aux anges gardiens	9:02
2. II.	Aux cyprès de la Villa d'Este. Threnody I	6:08
3. III.	Aux cyprès de la Villa d'Este. Threnody II	8:25
4. IV.	Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este	7:25
5. V.	Sunt lacrymae rerum (En mode hongrois)	7:04
6. VI.	Marche funèbre (En mémoire de Maximilian I)	6:05
7. VII.	Sursum corda (Erhebet eure Herzen)	3:17
Total Playing Time		47:29

A MONUMENTAL JOURNEY

BRIAN HSU

I was introduced to the music of Franz Liszt when I was ten years old, and from that moment, I was drawn to the imagination, virtuosity, emotional range, and expressive power of his music. What began as an early fascination gradually deepened into a lasting artistic relationship, ultimately leading me to one of the most ambitious and personally meaningful projects of my career: recording the complete *Années de pèlerinage*.

This monumental cycle offers a rare portrait of Liszt—not only as the virtuoso whose technical brilliance reshaped the piano literature, but as a poet, philosopher, and artist whose musical language evolved alongside his professional and personal life. My desire to learn and record the complete set grew from a wish to share this fuller image of Liszt with audiences. Throughout my life as a performer and teacher, his name has often been associated with dazzling virtuosity and showmanship. While those qualities are undeniably present, especially in his earlier works, they represent only one facet of a composer whose artistic voice grew increasingly reflective, restrained, and forward-looking over time. *Années de pèlerinage* offers a comprehensive view of that evolution.

The idea to immerse myself in Books I (*Suisse*) and II (*Italie*) took shape during the COVID lockdown, a period when physical travel was impossible, and the world felt still. Like so many others, I longed for travel, discovery, and escape. These pieces became a way for me to travel through music—to wander the mountains of Switzerland, drift along the canals of Venice, and encounter the art and architecture of Italy through Liszt's imagination. In a moment defined by isolation, this repertoire offered connection, motion, and emotional release.

As I continued living with this cycle, I was naturally drawn toward Book III. These later, less frequently performed works revealed a different Liszt—one who speaks quietly yet profoundly. Here, virtuosity gives way to contemplation, and spectacle yields to restraint. I was struck by the honesty of these pages and by how fearlessly Liszt strips his musical language to its essence. Harmonically, these works look forward, paving the way for composers who would follow him; spiritually, they feel like an inward

turning—a reckoning with time, memory, and impermanence. This is music written not to impress, but to understand and connect.

Heard as a whole, *Années de pèlerinage* traces both a physical and emotional journey. Books I and II reflect youth, exploration, and outward discovery, filled with vivid imagery and energy. Book III unfolds as a spiritual pilgrimage—an inward journey shaped by reflection and acceptance. Each book offers a distinct emotional world and together they form a narrative that mirrors the stages of a life lived.

I invite you to take this journey with me—from the peaks and valleys of Switzerland, through the art and waterways of Italy, and finally into a space of quiet reflection, as if retreating from the world. In many ways, this music feels profoundly relatable, reminding us that growth often moves from outward striving toward inward understanding.

After living with this repertoire for several years, recording it felt like a way to close an important chapter and step forward into new artistic directions. While I now move on to other projects, this music will always remain close to my heart, representing a deeply transitional period in my artistic life—one that continues to shape who I am as a musician.

I am deeply grateful for the support of the Office of the Vice President for Research & Innovation at the University of Oregon. This project would not have been possible without their generous commitment to artistic research and creative work.

Brian Hsu

Recorded at Blue Griffin Studio July 2024, August 2024, December 2025

Piano: Steinway D

Engineering and mastering by Sergei Kvitko

Design by James Cardell-Oliver

Photography by Athena Delene, of Delene & Co.

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BRIAN KENG-LUN HSU

Associate Professor of Piano at the University of Oregon, Taiwanese-American pianist Brian Hsu has been recognized for his electrifying energy and highly communicative performances since making his concerto debut at age 16 with the Philadelphia Orchestra. Critics have praised his playing in superlatives, citing his “breadth of expression and technical ability.”

An accomplished and versatile performer, Hsu has appeared throughout North America, Europe, Asia, and South Africa, with performances in major U.S. cities including Boston, New York, Chicago, New Orleans, and Dallas. He has been featured as concerto soloist with leading ensembles such as the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Taiwan National Symphony Orchestra, the Juilliard Orchestra, the Sendai Philharmonic, the University of Oregon Symphony, the Haddonfield Symphony, and the University of Michigan Symphony Orchestra. His performances have been broadcast nationally on WQXR in New York and All Classical Radio in Portland. Festival appearances include the Amalfi Coast Music Festival in Italy, the Banff Festival of the

Arts in Canada, PianoFest in the Hamptons, the Gijón International Piano Festival in Spain, the Eastern Music Festival, and Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp.

Hsu's U.S. debut solo album, *Night at the Opera: Part I*, featuring virtuosic opera transcriptions for solo piano, was released in 2018 to wide acclaim. In addition to his competition successes, he has received numerous awards during his studies at The Juilliard School, Yale University, and the University of Michigan.

Equally active as a collaborator, educator, and advocate, Hsu is frequently invited as a guest artist and clinician at universities across the United States and Asia, as well as a presenter and adjudicator for MTNA events and major international competitions, including the San Diego International Piano Competition, the New Orleans International Piano Competition, and the Nanyang Academy of the Arts in Singapore. A passionate chamber musician, he has performed with distinguished artists worldwide, collaborates regularly with Chamber Music Northwest as a chamber musician, and participated in the world premiere of Paul Schoenfeld's *Piano Quintet* with members of the Pro Arte Quartet (Albany Records, 2014). He also joined Ensemble Peri for its inaugural tour of Korea and is a founding member of Key to Inclusion, an intercollegiate initiative dedicated to promoting piano music by Black American and other underrepresented composers, which has presented at several MTNA National Conferences, the Context Conference at the Eastman School of Music, and the National Conference on Keyboard Pedagogy (NCKP).

Hsu's extensive teaching experience includes appointments at Yale University, the University of Michigan, the Eastern Music Festival, the Amalfi Coast Music Festival, Siena Heights University, and the Ann Arbor School for the Performing Arts, as well as faculty positions at Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp and the McAlester Institute. He previously served as Associate Professor of Piano at Loyola University New Orleans.

His principal teachers include Logan Skelton, Arthur Greene, Peter Frankl, Jerome Lowenthal, Yoheved Kaplinsky, Wha-Kyung Byun, Da-Ming Zhu, and John Kuo. He holds degrees from The Juilliard School (BM, MM), Yale University (Artist Diploma), and the University of Michigan (DMA).

More information, including recordings and upcoming engagements, can be found at www.brian-hsu.com.



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