

The Liszt–Listmann Incident

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Abstract: Before ending his performance career by concerts in Odessa and Elizabethgrad in 1847, Franz Liszt visited Istanbul, gave a number of public concerts and performed twice for Sultan Abdul-Medgid in the Tcheragan Palace. A widely reported incident in relation to this trip concerns an impostor named Listmann, a historically unidentified character, who supposedly passed himself off as Liszt in Istanbul and who received valuable presents from the Sultan under this pretext. According to some accounts Listmann almost caused Liszt to be arrested upon his arrival. The purpose of this work is to present historical data on this folkloric Liszt–Listmann tale. We present primary sources that show that Herr Listmann of the Liszt–Listmann incident was in fact a German Tonkünstler and a man of letters named Eduard Litzmann who toured Spain and the orient, and who was apparently a pretty competent pianist. The sources indicate that notwithstanding Liszt’s own letter to his cousin Henriette, numerous colourful aspects of the incident as reported in the literature result from self-perpetuating transformations of fiction and cannot be substantiated.

Keywords: Franz Liszt, Constantinople, Ottoman

1847 was Liszt’s last year as a virtuoso pianist. Before he ended his performance career by concerts in Odessa and then Elizabethgrad, he came to Istanbul on a steamboat from Galatz, arriving there on June 8, 1847. He gave a number of concerts, performed twice for Sultan Abdul-Medgid in the Tcheragan Palace, and left on July 13 to go eventually to Woronince through Galatz and Odessa.

One incident in Liszt’s intriguing and relatively little known sojourn in Istanbul is described by Robert Stockhammer in *Franz Liszt, Im Triumphzug durch Europa*:

After a 54-hour long trip [from Galatz], Liszt had at last reached Constantinople, this city at the boundary of Turkey, which he had cherished for such a long period of time. Here, he at first experienced an inconvenient surprise: when he introduced himself as the piano virtuoso Liszt, he was arrested. He was deemed an impostor, because an artist by the name of Liszt had already performed a few days before. However, that had been a certain Herr Listmann, who had impersonated the famous virtuoso, in order to enrich himself.¹

Now, this is a most incredible story, a comedy of errors of sorts, but it raises a number of questions. First of all, is it true? More precisely, how much of it is based on fact and how much is made up, and what are the sources on which the factual parts are based? Was there really a pianist Herr Listmann? Was he an impostor as portrayed? Did he shorten his name by dropping the second syllable? Did he get rich pretending he was Liszt – assuming that doing such a thing is artistically possible? Is the existing Liszt literature in agreement on how this event occurred, and exactly what occurred? Was the Ottoman Court in 1847 really so naïve as to have the great Liszt arrested upon his arrival? By the same token, were the dilettantes in Pera, the Levantine neighborhood of Istanbul, where *Il Trovatore* premiered just 10 months after its opening in Rome and three years before any Parisian ever heard it,² so naïve as to fall for Herr Listmann's story hook, line and sinker?

The purpose of this work is to present historical data on this folkloric Liszt–Listmann tale of Lisztmania, as exemplified by Stockhammer's treatment – though it is certain that the story did not start with him. The creation of this folklore is apparently the result of transformations of fiction caused by self-perpetuating cross-references among secondary sources. Primary sources show that Herr Listmann of the Liszt–Listmann incident was in fact a German Tonkünstler and a man of letters named Eduard Litzmann who toured Spain and the orient, and who was apparently a pretty competent pianist. The rest of the story cannot be substantiated.

All existing accounts of the incident can be traced back to a letter from Liszt to his cousin Henriette written in 1884:

To Frau Hofrathin Henriette von Liszt

My Very Dear Cousin,

This time I was not able to have a thorough rest in Vienna. Such an extra [luxury] is hardly my lot anywhere. My life is one continued fatigue. Some one

1. Robert Stockhammer, *Franz Liszt, Im Triumphzug durch Europa* (Vienna: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1986), 138.

2. The world premiere of Verdi's *Il Trovatore* was in January 1853 in Teatro Apollo, Rome; its first performance in Istanbul in November 1853 in the Naum Italian Theater in Pera. The first Paris performance was in Salle Le Peletier, in January 1857, and the first performance dates in other cities were: Vienna 1854, Warsaw 1854,

once asked the celebrated Catholic champion Arnauld (the Jansenist) why he did not allow himself some rest. “We have eternity for that,” answered he.

I hear for the first time through you of a cousin or niece, Mary Liszt, a concert giver. Concert givers have frequently misused our name by playing under it in provincial towns. A pianist in Constantinople, Herr Listmann, apologised to me for having knocked off the second syllable of his name. On this account he received a valuable present from the then Sultan Abdul-Medgid. —.

Farewell till our next meeting in Easter week, dear cousin, from yours ever affectionately,

F. Liszt

Budapest, February 8th, 1884³

Compared to Liszt, most pianists of his day, or any other day for that matter, could be considered false artists of the piano. This may be the truth of the matter and the explanation of the contents of Liszt’s letter to Henriette, written almost four decades after his visit to the Ottoman capital. It appears that poor Mr. Litzmann was not really the impostor that he is made out to be, notwithstanding Liszt’s own suggestion; but he had the misfortune of being at the wrong place at the wrong time, with the wrong vocation and most importantly the wrong last name – a name that could hardly help but survive in Liszt’s recollections from that time, even for as long as forty years, and one which he happened to use to make a point to his cousin Henriette about a real impostor named Mary Liszt.

It turns out that Herr Litzmann did receive valuable presents from the Sultan, and he performed with the Sultan’s orchestra at the royal palace and gave solo recitals. He seems to have been regarded quite highly as an artist by the musical community in Pera during his stay in Istanbul. Thus the one sentence in Liszt’s letter to Henriette, which is the cause of the subsequent embellishments, and which may in fact be erroneous is “Herr Listmann, apologised to me for having knocked off the second syllable of his name.” There is no evidence that Litzmann knocked off the second syllable of his name so that it sounds like Liszt, nor there is any evidence that the two actually met in Istanbul. However, it is virtually certain that Liszt read about a performance by Eduard Litzmann which took place in Istanbul just a few weeks before his own arrival there, and it is also likely that Litzmann had already departed the city when Liszt arrived. So it is possible that this particular comment in Liszt’s letter to Henriette is not a historical fact. The evidence I present seems to support this claim, but in view of Liszt’s own words, the readers may certainly make of the evidence what they will.

St. Petersburg 1855, London 1855, New York 1855, Brussels 1856, Prague 1856, Berlin 1857, Cairo 1879. See Cevad Memduh Altar, *Opera Tarihi IV* (Istanbul: Pan Yayıncılık, 2001).

3. La Mara, *Letters of Franz Liszt*, vol. 2: *From Rome to the End* (New York: Greenwood Press, R1969), Letter No. 336, 443–444.

Liszt had wanted to visit the Queen of Cities for a long time, and we find allusions to this in his letters as early as 1840. This wish to visit Istanbul was realized in 1847, the last year of his career as a traveling virtuoso. After his concerts in Istanbul in June and July 1847, he publicly played only in Odessa and Elizabethgrad in Russia, and at the conclusion of his trip, stepped aside from the international scene as a public virtuoso performer forever.

Curiously, even in some large biographical works on Liszt, the time he spent in Istanbul is either barely mentioned in a sentence as being a side trip to his tour of Russia, or it is simply omitted, as in Pourtalès' *Franz Liszt*,⁴ Taylor's *Franz Liszt: The Man and the Musician*,⁵ Newman's *The Man Liszt*,⁶ and Rostand's *Liszt*.⁷ Highlights of the visit can be found in Koronghy,⁸ in the comprehensive book by Walker,⁹ and a rather more detailed description in Aracı.¹⁰ There are shorter accounts in Williams,¹¹ and in Sitwell.¹² Sitwell gives the standard sketch of the trip in a paragraph, sans the Listmann story, although he mistakenly places Liszt in Turkey during 1843–1844. There are accounts of the visit in the Turkish sources as well: Çalgan,¹³ Erol,¹⁴ Kosal,¹⁵ Aracı,¹⁶ Toros,¹⁷ but unfortunately these are also rather incomplete.

Along with the manifest difficulty of source material location for micro-historical inquiries of this type, be it for cultural, linguistic or other reasons, the trip seems not to have garnered enough academic interest. This is exacerbated by the limited coverage of Liszt's tours when they were seen as peripheral to Central Europe; Liszt's appearances in places such as Barcelona or Istanbul or even St. Petersburg, received mostly local coverage and not the usual lengthy reports by the mainstream publications in Europe.¹⁸ There is also the necessity of carefully sifting through the sources which can be questionable and sometimes incorrect,

4. Guy de Pourtalès, *Franz Liszt (L'Homme d'Amour)* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1926).

5. Ronald Taylor, *Franz Liszt: The Man and the Musician* (Glasgow: Grafton Books, 1987).

6. Ernest Newman, *The Man Liszt* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1969).

7. Claude Rostand, *Liszt* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1972).

8. Clara von Koronghy, *Die Musik war sein Leben: Gedenkbuch für Franz Liszt* (Eisenstadt: Horvath, 1984), 65–66.

9. Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years 1811–1847*, rev. edition (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 440–441.

10. Emre Aracı, "Liszt at the Ottoman Court," *International Piano Quarterly* 4/14 (Winter 2001), 14–19.

11. Adrian Williams, *Portrait of Liszt by Himself and His Contemporaries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 235–236.

12. Sacheverell Sitwell, *Liszt* (New York: Dover Publications, 1967), 110, 359.

13. Koral Çalgan, *Franz Liszt ve M. R. Gazimihal'in bir araştırması: 'Liszt'in İstanbul Konserleri'* (Ankara: Müzik Ansiklopedisi Yayınları, 1991).

14. Reşat Erol, "Franz Liszt, Payitahtta bir Piyano Sihirbazı," *Andante Dergisi* 1/5 (2003), 12–15.

15. Vedat Kosal, "Osmanlı'da Klasik Batı Müziği," *Toplumsal Tarih Dergisi* 57 (1998), 15–22; idem, *Osmanlı'da Klasik Batı Müziği* (Istanbul: EKO Basım Yayıncılık, 2001).

16. Emre Aracı, "Franz Liszt'in İstanbul Macerası," *Toplumsal Tarih Dergisi* 7/42 (1997), 33–35.

17. Taha Toros, "Liszt'ten İstanbul'da Kalan Anılar," *Tarih ve Toplum Dergisi* 11/65 (1989), 25–37.

18. Michael Saffle, *Liszt in Germany, 1840–1845: A Study in Sources, Documents, and the History of Reception* (Pendragon Press, Franz Liszt Studies Series, No. 2, 1994), 205–206.

as in Sitwell and (many) others. The work of collecting and organizing the historical data both from Ottoman and Western sources for a detailed account of Liszt's visit to Istanbul is in progress,¹⁹ and the material presented here is the Liszt–Listmann aspect of the data collected.

I have provided translations of the letters and the news items in essentially chronological order. My aim is not a literary reconstruction of the Listmann incident of Liszt's trip to Istanbul, but to provide for the record the details of the available information from various sources. In the news articles that are quoted, some items that appear under the same heading but distinct from news about Listmann are also included, in the hope of putting in context the time, place, the local color, and the level of involvement of the news source in the cultural life of the day.

In addition to the Listmann incident as related by Stockhammer, which is short but rather typical, there are a number of other versions. We start with an inventory of these. However it must be stressed that the embellishments of the story about Liszt being arrested on the orders of the Sultan does not start with Liszt's letter, and therefore scholarly accounts of the Listmann story based essentially on Liszt's letter discount this rather sensational fabrication. In this sense the quoted accounts can be separated along the lines of scholarly treatments and more colorful fictional accounts which freely make use it.

In Ann Lingg's book on Liszt²⁰ we find limited attempt at historical accuracy. Of course Lingg has produced a romanticized account of Liszt's life and not an academic work, so these liberties taken are to some extent understandable. We read:

He arrived in Budapest in January, 1884. "I couldn't even rest in Vienna this time," he complained. "My life is constant fatigue." [...]

From Constantinople one Listmann, a piano player, apologized for having deleted the second syllable of his name in a program. The Sultan had made "Mr. List" a nice present. Liszt hadn't been to Turkey for a long time, but even "List" commanded its ruler's admiration.

It is unlikely that Liszt heard from a Listmann in 1884 when he was in Budapest. The incident in Liszt's letter dates from 1847.

In *Immortal Franz: The Life and Love Affairs of Franz Liszt*,²¹ Harsányi uses the same device of novelized biography as Lingg. The fourth part of the book recounts Liszt's relationship with princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein, starting

19. Ömer Eğecioğlu, *Liszt in Istanbul* (in preparation).

20. Ann M. Lingg, *Mephisto Waltz: The Story of Franz Liszt* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1951), 286–287.

21. Zolt Harsányi, *Immortal Franz: The Life and Love Affairs of Franz Liszt* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1939), 292.

with their first meeting in Woronince. In his description of Liszt's trip from Woronince after the meeting, Harsányi places Liszt in Istanbul as follows:

Czernovitz, Galatz, the Black Sea, Constantinople. Amid the beauties of the Turkish capital his thoughts were incessantly with the Princess. He was received by the Sultan and they had a long conversation together. Franz told him that he had been arrested in Istanbul in mistake for some one [sic] else. The Sultan roared with laughter. Then he handed him a gold enameled box filled with gold and conferred an order upon him.

In the chronicle of Liszt's life by Ernst Burger,²² the description of the events of Liszt's stay in Istanbul contains the following paragraph:

An amusing incident in passing: on his arrival in the city, Liszt was brought before the Sultan with a warrant for his arrest. A fellow pianist had used the similarity of their names to advertise himself as the famous Liszt, so that the real Liszt was taken to be an impostor. The error was soon cleared up. "A pianist, Listmann by name, begged for my forgiveness in Constantinople for having removed the second syllable of his name from his concert programme. His reward was a lavish gift from the then Sultan," Liszt later told Henriette von Liszt in a letter of February 8, 1884.

In his article on the German pianist and conductor Bernhard Stavenhagen (1862–1914), Henry Finck writes:²³

In one of his letters Liszt refers to the fact that concert-givers in remote localities often made unwarranted use of his name. A pianist named Listmann went so far as to drop the last four letters of his name, for which he received a costly present from the Sultan Abdul-Medgid.

Alan Walker, giving Liszt's 1884 letter to Henriette as source, presents the following version of the Listmann incident:²⁴

By an amusing coincidence, Liszt found himself in Constantinople at the same time as another pianist, Listmann, who decided to capitalize on the situation by dropping the second syllable of his name. Liszt was displeased at this act of gamesmanship, the more since his "double" received an expensive gift from the Sultan intended for Liszt himself. Listmann apologized for his behaviour, but there is no record of his having returned the gift.

Turkish accounts of the incident are similar: In Reşat Erol's detailed article²⁵ we find

22. Ernst Burger, *Franz Liszt: A Chronicle of His Life in Pictures and Documents* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 169.

23. Henry Finck, "Bernhard Stavenhagen," *The Century Magazine* 6 (April 1895), 936–937.

24. Walker, *The Virtuoso Years*, 441.

25. Reşat Erol, "Franz Liszt, Payitahta bir Piyano Sihirbazı," 12–15.

It is interesting that by coincidence, another pianist named Listmann passed himself off as Liszt around the same time, gave a few concerts, and even managed to obtain a gift from the Sultan. It has been said that Franz Liszt was then accused of being an impostor himself, and almost got himself arrested. In a letter written to Henriette von Liszt, he talks about Listmann, and the fact that the impostor pianist later apologized to him.

Emre Aracı²⁶ quotes Ernst Burger and Liszt's letter to Henriette as his sources and writes:

By an amazing coincidence, a pianist by the name of Listmann was giving concerts in Istanbul at about the same time. He had cunningly dropped the last syllable of his name and had promoted himself as the famous Liszt. But he could not have guessed that by an unlikely turn of events the real Liszt would materialize in the same town at the same time. The impostor Liszt had given a few concerts in his guise and had managed to obtain a precious gift from the Sultan. According to Ernst Burger, Liszt was brought before the Sultan with a warrant for his arrest. Though the truth of the existence of this warrant is not known, it seems certain that Liszt came across such an impostor in Istanbul. Many years after this incident he explained the situation to Henriette von Liszt in these words "A pianist in Constantinople, Herr Listmann, apologised to me for having knocked off the second syllable of his name." It is not known whether he returned the gift.

It is pretty remarkable that all of these accounts are somewhat similar and told with conviction of historical statements. Some point correctly to Liszt's letter as a source. The accounts given by Finck and Walker stick with the spirit of Liszt's letter as the primary source, for example. We see varying doses of the arrest anecdote incorporated into the others, although this anecdote is not to be found in Liszt's letter itself. Also, in the works considered there are no references for any of the additional colorful information used. The reason for the paucity of sources is simple; there are none to be found to support them.

Among the sources that mention the Liszt–Listmann incident in an exaggerated manner, the earliest one I could locate is Harsányi's book, published in 1939. This does not automatically mean that he is the original author of the rumors however, but unfortunately his own sources for the story are not made available for further investigation.

For the setting of the Liszt–Listmann incident, some background material on the cultural life in Istanbul and the Ottoman Court in the mid nineteenth century is in order. Abdul-Medgid (1823–1861), who was the Monarch at the time, was the second of the three Ottoman Sultans who were bent on westernizing the empire. Abdul-Medgid's reign falls between 1839–1861. He was educated in the

26. Emre Aracı, "Franz Liszt'in Istanbul Macerası," 33.

Western style, played the piano, and spoke French. He was an avid fan of Italian opera, and was known to be generous to a fault, notwithstanding a bankrupt empire. It is known that he contributed generously towards the development of private opera companies in the city, and to the rebuilding of theatre buildings which frequently succumbed to fires. In *New York Monthly Magazine*²⁷ there is a report from Istanbul dated February 22, 1849 in which we read that Sultan Abdul-Medgid sent fifty thousand piastres as a donation to the Italian theatre company in Pera; that he was continuing with his piano lessons from Donizetti, the leader of the Sultan's band; and that

Seldom does an artist of celebrity visit Constantinople without receiving an invitation to perform before the Sultan, and is handsomely recompensed...

The Donizetti mentioned in the news was Giuseppe Donizetti, the elder brother of Gaetano of the *Lucia di Lammermoor* fame. He was born in Bergamo in 1788, and was appointed the Royal music director of the Ottoman Court by Sultan Mahmud II in 1827. He is usually credited with the introduction of Western music elements to the Ottoman Court and military during his twenty-eight year tenure in Istanbul as the Royal chef d'orchestre. Donizetti was also instrumental in the organization of the annual opera season in Pera. He died in Istanbul in 1856, aged sixty-seven.

During that time, the cultural life in Pera, the Levantine neighborhood of Istanbul was quite lively. Pera has been called the crossroads of Istanbul, and likened to a cultural menagerie and the tower of Babel in which a multitude of languages were spoken.²⁸ Situated on a hill across the Golden Horn from the old city, it was first settled by the Genoese in the thirteenth century. Pera later prospered as the Levantine neighborhood of the Ottoman capital where the foreign embassies and residences were erected. Pera has been the cultural center of Istanbul as well. Starting from the middle of the nineteenth century, it was a frequent visiting place of European virtuosi, and of Italian and French opera companies.

To appreciate the level of local musical activities of the time, we go back to the year 1839 and read the following news about opera in the New York publication *The Corsair*:²⁹

The Opera in Turkey.

The Italian Opera at Constantinople, as we find by accounts from that capital, continues to maintain the favor it met with on its opening. The house is not only filled every night, but the performances are much more frequent than at first. In the beginning none but the operas of Italian composers were given, but

27. *New York Monthly Magazine* 33/7 (June 1849).

28. Akylas Millas, *Pera, The Crossroads of Constantinople* (Athens: Troia Editions, 2006).

29. *The Corsair. A Gazette of Literature, Art, Dramatic Criticism, Fashion and Novelty* 1/5 (June 22, 1839), 236.

latterly it has been resolved to bring forward the works of other masters, and Mayerbeer's [sic] *Robert le Diable* is in rehearsal. The new theatre at Pera is advancing rapidly, and will open in September with *Don Giovanni* or the *Nozze di Figaro*.

The following is from the newsweekly *Niles' National Register*,³⁰ also from the year 1839:

Opera in Constantinople.

Among the many innovations which have been made of late years in the east, certainly the establishment of an Italian opera in Constantinople is not the least remarkable. The Turkish fashionables are so carried away by their rage for the opera, that, unable to wait till the erection of the theatre in Pera, for which two experienced French architects are engaged, they have had a large hotel in the square called Almeidan, fitted up for the purpose, and have operas three or four times a week. Notwithstanding the high price of the places, (from two to ten heavy piastres, or from 8s to 2l.) the theatre is always cramed [sic] with Turks, who, in spite of their habitual early hours, loll there contentedly till midnight... The Grand Seigneur himself has visited the opera, which will, perhaps, do as much as his absolute commands to amalgamate his people with those of Western Europe.

Judging from the news about the opera, which was the favorite medium of Western entertainment in Istanbul, the level of cultural activities and atmosphere in Pera, and the interest and encouragement showed by the Sultan's Court in Western culture and entertainment 1840s and 50s is quite significant. In addition to opera there were plays, concerts, and various light entertainment. Cultural news could be followed in the *Journal de Constantinople*, the French language newspaper of the town mainly catering to Levantine Pera, covering not only cultural and political events of the Ottoman capital, but also newsworthy developments in Europe, political as well as cultural. The Istanbul of Sultan Abdul-Medgid was not a cultural wasteland by any means.

As early as November 1846, the residents of Pera found out that Liszt was on his way to their town. In the *Journal de Constantinople* dated November 6, 1846 we find the announcement

Mr. Listz [sic], the renown Hungarian pianist of European fame who leaves all other known pianists well behind, will arrive soon in Constantinople.

The error in the spelling of Liszt's name is not unusual for the nineteenth century. We know that on his baptism record the family name is listed as List.³¹ In

30. *Niles' National Register* 7/1 (August 31, 1839), 13.

31. Walker, *The Virtuoso Years*, 56.

France he was known as the “little Litz”. Other orthographic variations that were used include List, Litz, Liz, and even Leist.

The earliest major news article concerning Listmann of the Liszt–Listmann incident – but we can henceforth refer to him by his real name, Eduard Litzmann³² – is from *Vossische Zeitung*.³³ It is a private communication from Istanbul, dated January 5, 1847 which contains remarkable wealth of information about Litzmann as well as details of Abdul-Medgid’s Imperial orchestra, which is of independent interest:

Constantinople, January 5th (private communication).

The German musician [Tonkünstler] and man of letters Eduard Litzmann, who is visiting the Orient in order to complete a substantial work on the history of music and national music, was introduced during his stay in Constantinople to the Sultan Abdul-Medgid by the Grand-Vizier. Upon the recommendation of the Grand-Vizier, the Sultan had accepted the dedication of several pianoforte pieces, composed for the Sultan by Mr. Litzmann, and had thereupon had him invited to the Tcheragan palace for the evening of December 29th. Besides his own compositions, the artist also performed pieces by Thalberg, Liszt and Döhler. The Sultan sat to the side of the piano and smoked, yet drew closer several times in order to observe Mr. Litzmann more closely and to indicate his approval. Several Court officers and servants were in a remote corner of the room and only approached the Sultan when he called them by name in order to issue commands. After the performance continued for over one and a half hours, the Sultan conversed with the artist by means of an interpreter about his fatherland, the purpose of his trip, Turkish national music, and so on. Then he introduced one of the people of his Court to him – a young Bey who played the pianoforte and who should now perform some Turkish music, so that Mr. L. could deliver his judgment regarding his accomplishments. The pieces played were really quite humble. After every few bars the Bey regarded the Sultan imploringly, that he might deliver him from his nervousness, but he remained inexorable for a quarter of an hour. During this time, the Sultan had his Court orchestra and singers from his harem come in order to give Mr. L. a genuine idea of the current status of music at his Court. They had to perform first a dozen Turkish songs, later Italian music, notably almost an entire act from Scaramuccia. For the Sultan has his own Italian opera in the harem. Conductor, orchestra and singers are Turks. They sing and play rather purely and exactly in time, but the tempi are not accurately interpreted, they consistently sing and play equally strongly, and the singers literally scream with might and main. The choir consists of a dozen boys and young men. They sing Italian without understanding what they are singing. The orchestra consists of about 20 musicians, namely 6 violins, 6 violoncellos, 1 contrabass, 2 flutes, 4 clarinets, 2 oboes, 2 cornets, 1 bombard, 1 trombone, and 1 keyed trumpet. The conductor conducts purely with his glances, which incidentally are very tranquil and serene. Only at the beginning does he call out the command word: March! to

32. Or Li_mann, although *Journal de Constantinople* uses Litzmann.

33. *Vossische Zeitung* 23 (January 28, 1847).

the musicians and sometimes keeps time by clapping his hands. The Sultan repeatedly asked Mr. L. for his opinion about these feats, noted that the orchestra has only existed for 2 years, that he had brought in the violins only 6 months ago, and that the ensemble should not be judged as something perfected, but rather that one should evaluate these accomplishments only in consideration of the duration of its existence, as the musical institutions, like everything in the Turkish empire, were in the midst of definitive progression. After Mr. L. had remained about 5 hours at the Sultan's, the latter released him with the warmest panegyrics in asking him to compose several pieces for his orchestra and for the military music, and in expressing his desire to listen to him again sometime. – If one takes into consideration how the similarly highly recommended pianist De Meyer was received by the Sultan several years ago, how was not allowed to seat himself in order to perform in the Sultan's presence, then one certainly must be astonished by such a great and rapid change in the customs and views of the Turkish Court.

Evidently the author of this detailed piece of news was somebody who was so close to the Sultan that he was able to observe both him and Litzmann in such an intimate setting. Unfortunately *Vossische Zeitung* does not provide us with the identity of the source of the news, we are only told that it is a private communication from Constantinople.

Consider the description in the news of what Mr. Litzmann played in front of the Sultan. How would it be possible for an impostor passing himself off as Liszt to be reported by *Vossische Zeitung* as

Besides his own compositions, the artist also performed pieces by Thalberg, Liszt and Döhler?

Even this description of Litzmann's programme alone is sufficient to put the Liszt–Listmann tale as it is reported to rest. But there is a lot more detail we can find out about what Litzmann did in Istanbul from other sources.

First, some clarifications of a few other items that appear in the *Vossische Zeitung* news. Scaramuccia is Luigi Ricci's opera *Un'avventura di Scaramucci*. It premiered in Milan in 1834 and was later arranged for the French stage by Flotow and opened in Paris on February 26, 1846.

One interesting piece of information to note is that Litzmann is described as being 'highly recommended as pianist De Meyer,' probably meaning that Litzmann's qualifications appeared to be on a par with those of the pianist Leopold De Meyer (1816–1883), who performed in Istanbul in 1843.

Incidentally, the information reported at the very end of the news pertaining to Leopold De Meyer's claim – that he was not allowed to sit down in the Sultan's presence for his performance, that the piano he had to play on had no legs, but was carried on the back of five Turks, etc., is another fable. This tale and its variants were perpetuated in newspapers and books all the way up to the twentieth

century. De Meyer, by all accounts, was as much a buffoon as a pianist,³⁴ and a shrewd self-aggrandizer. An accurate account of his performance at the Ottoman capital can be found in *Augsburg Allgemeine Zeitung*³⁵ of September 1843. A full comparison of this factual account with De Meyer's fabrication, which the review article pretty much labels as such, appears in the Musical Review section of Harbinger, 1845.³⁶

The Eduard Litzmann news in *Vossische Zeitung* can also be found in *Königlich privilegierte Berlinische Zeitung*³⁷ of the same date. The article appeared verbatim in *Berliner Musikalische Zeitung* in February 1847.³⁸ The source is given as *Vossische Zeitung*. There is also an editorial footnote to this latter article which gives additional information on Litzmann and notes that

Mr. Litzmann also acquired a reputation in Spain, where he spent several years.

Continuing with more news on Litzmann and the Ottoman Court, the following news article appeared in *Der Humorist*³⁹ under the title "Entertainment and Theatre at the Grand Palace." It is a report from Istanbul dated January 11, 1847. Again, we have a wealth of information about the large number of cultural activities that were taking place in the city. The news article ends with a report of Eduard Litzmann's performance at the Sultan's Palace on December 29, 1847, referring to the same performance as the one reported by *Vossische Zeitung*:

The love entertained by Sultan Abdul-Medjid for music is so great that he devotes to it the greater part of his leisure time. The ensemble of Court musicians, which is made up of young people of good birth, education and talent, has recently been greatly enhanced. So far, it had solely been dedicated to the presentation of symphonies but His Highness has recently decided to combine it with vocal music. The young people were made to study Italian and a choir was formed which, within a short time, made such a prodigious advance that the youngsters are now capable of presenting pieces from Italian Opera in front of the Monarch in the most perfect manner. All this is under the direction of the Court music conductor Donizetti Bey.

It has been decided that during the month of October of the current year to widen the scope of musical arrangements at Court by transforming, as far as this is possible, a large hall in the Tcheragan Palace into a theatre. One of the Sultans' secretaries, by the name of Saffet Efendi who has a full mastery of the French language, has translated into Turkish, several plays by Molière; the roles were distributed among the clever youngsters, the royal music director ordered

34. George Kehler, *The piano in Concert*, vol. I (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1982), xxxi; Harold C. Schonberg, *The Great Pianists from Mozart to the Present* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 190.

35. *Augsburg Allgemeine Zeitung* (September 11, 1843).

36. Harbinger, *Devoted to Social and Political Progress* 2/1 (December 13, 1845), 11.

37. *Königlich privilegierte Berlinische Zeitung* (January 28, 1847).

38. *Berliner Musikalische Zeitung* (February 8, 1847), 8.

39. *Der Humorist* (January 30, 1847).

the fashioning of clothes suitable for the characters and sex of the actors in the play and then the plays were performed in front of his Highness. His Highness was so pleased with this presentation that he ordered that formal theatres according to European patterns should be incorporated in Royal palaces.

Meanwhile, plays continue to be diligently presented at the Tcheragan palace; thus on December 6 at 6 o'clock in the evening, Molière's "Malade imaginaire" was presented in the Turkish translation, in the presence of the ladies of the palace and many distinguished guests. Abdul-Medgid on that occasion, gave evidence of his grace as well as of his sense of humor when he asked the head of Medical affairs, İsmail Efendi to inform the two European Court physicians Charotheodori and Spitzer that it would please him if they would attend a performance of the play in question. It is well known that Molière's "Malade imaginaire" comprises some amusing allusions to physicians and medicines. Both doctors were graciously received on their arrival at the palace by the sovereign himself and were invited before the performance to partake of a meal with the Monarch's first chamberlain.

Already, a second play by Molière was announced for the 15th of the month, namely "George Dandin". – Any way, it seems that the search for entertainment in the European manner has also taken root in the Palace. One day one finds a German production by Bosco, "Herr Baron", the following day the French conjurer Debraine with a swarm of trained birds.

The German piano player Litzmann gave a concert on the 29th of December which so pleased his Majesty that he had him play again at Court, accompanied by the Palace orchestra. This interest of the Monarch, exhilarated the German artist so much that he dedicated a march he had composed to his Highness and gave it to the Grand-Vizier to present to his Majesty.

There is also an issue of *Der Humorist* from the end of May 1847 in which there is news about both Liszt and Litzmann. The news article is a report from Istanbul dated May 12, 1847.⁴⁰ Under the section "Konversations Lexikon des Tages", we find the following detailed report, which concludes with the news of Litzmann followed immediately by news of Liszt (for a facsimile see Plate 1):

On the 7th of this month, our Capital was the scene of most wonderful spectacles instigated by the occasion of the yearly release of troops who had accomplished their service, customarily held early in May, as well as the ceremony of launching three warships from the arsenal. The Sultan, who perpetually strives to accustom his people to the manners of Europe, appeared on that day on the wide military exercise ground in the company of her Majesty the Queen mother, and immediately mounted his horse whilst the Sultana Valide watched the military demonstrations from a magnificent English coach. On the 8th, His Majesty on a sloop, with great pomp, surrounded by the diplomatic corps and all state-dignitaries entered the arsenal when he launched, first the triple-decker "Messudith" [Mesudiye], and then the steam frigates "Medschidich" [Mecidiye] and "Taisi Bahrd" [Tahir-i Bahri]. Countless masses of people crowded the shore of the Golden Horn and the nearby heights, proclaiming their elation

40. *Der Humorist* (May 31, 1847).

with loud shouts of Hurray while warships in the harbor sounded their salvoes of a twenty-one volley salute. To show his satisfaction, His Highness presented his brother-in-law, High Admiral Mehmet-Ali Pasha, with a snuff-box, richly encrusted with brilliants, worth 30,000 Francs. A humane touch of the Government is worth mentioning here. Most of the workers at the arsenal who are prisoners condemned to hard labor, were brought out of their cells on that day and led to a high terrace from which they could witness the magnificent and patriotic sight of the festival.

On that same evening, the inauguration of the new theatre took place which the brother in law of the Sultan, High Admiral Mehmet-Ali Pasha had ordered to be built in the Khas-Bagdsche [Hasbahçe] district in the vicinity of the arsenal, opposite the Royal kiosk. In this theatre, designed and constructed by the architect Lanzoni which could hold over 1000 spectators, was presented for its opening, Donizetti's "Don Pasquale" with the singers, G. Lanzoni and Giacomelli as well as the Primadonna Mlle Gambardella. The Sultan, the Sheikh-ul-Islam and a large number of high civil and military dignitaries attended the performance to which his Highness gave his whole attention from beginning to end. Furthermore, in order that the Monarch should fully follow the significance of every scene in the plot of this tragi-comedy, the text of the opera was presented to him in a Turkish translation (prepared by the officials of the Royal translation office) which he carefully consulted during the evening. The well-equipped orchestra was directed by Mr. Guatelli, while the scenery which aroused general admiration was executed by the capable Venetian painter Fornari.

– The pianist Litzmann, who has often had the honor of performing in front of the Sultan and the Royal family, will give his farewell concert in the former Casino; playing with him will be the well known flutist, Mr. Micheli-Folz who gave his first concert in Constantinople the day before yesterday.

– Liszt will arrive in Constantinople in the near future. The Royal chef d'orchestre Donizetti has received confirmation from the famous instrument maker, Seb. Pierre Erard in Paris that as soon as Liszt arrives there, Erard will have sent a beautiful piano with seven octaves addressed to Donizetti in Constantinople, so that the genius and piano-virtuoso will find a fine and worthy instrument at his disposal in that Capital.

The last two items of news are of great interest in their content and the implication of their proximity. For one thing, the news of Litzmann and Liszt that appear next to one another leaves no doubt that there was no mistaken identity issue of any kind. Litzmann was known as Litzmann, just as Liszt was known as Liszt, and there is no indication of any attempt at fraud or deception on the former's part. Also, just the fact that *Der Humorist* saw it fit to report Litzmann's news in this fashion and in the same breath as Liszt's travel news to Istanbul is an indication that Litzmann was of sufficient stature at the time to merit coverage alongside Liszt.

Next, we have news about the flutist mentioned in the preceding *Der Humorist* article who visited Istanbul and played in the same concert with Eduard Litzmann. Michel Folz (1820–1886) was a virtuoso flutist from Naples. He held the position of first flute in Teatro del Fondo of Naples and later in Gymnase Or-

PLATE 1 Shown together: two news items that appear in the same column of *Journal de Constantinople* on May 11, 1847.

2^e ANNÉE, N^o 19. — MARDI, 11 MAI 1847.

JOURNAL DE CONSTANTINOPLE

ECHO DE L'ORIENT.

— Le pianiste M. Litzmann, qui a eu l'honneur de jouer plusieurs fois devant Sa Majesté le Sultan, et qui s'est fait entendre dans les salons diplomatiques de Péra, donnera avant son départ de Constantinople, dans les salons de l'ancien Casin, un grand concert qui aura lieu, vendredi, 14 mai, et dans lequel le célèbre flûtiste, M. Micheli Folz, se fera entendre pour la dernière fois ici. Nous ne doutons pas qu'un nombreux public ne se rende au concert de M. Litzmann pour y applaudir plusieurs morceaux des plus grands maîtres qu'il exécute avec beaucoup de talent.

Il y a quelque temps, un de nos abonnés émettait le vœu de voir visiter Constantinople par le célèbre pianiste M. Listz. Ce vœu ne tarderait pas à se réaliser, si nous en jugeons par la lettre suivante que l'on a bien voulu nous communiquer :

Paris, 5 avril.

Monsieur Donizetti, à Constantinople.

Notre ami Listz devant se rendre prochainement d'Odessa à Constantinople, nous avons voulu qu'il trouvât à son arrivée dans cette dernière ville, un piano digne de son talent. Nous avons pris en conséquence la liberté de vous adresser cet instrument qui sera dans 20 jours à Marseille. Il est à queue, grand modèle *La, Mi, La*, à 7 octaves et 3 cordes, mécanique à double échappement d'Erard avec tous les perfectionnemens, en acajou, etc.

Nous partageons d'avance la surprise que vous éprouverez en voyant un instrument d'une telle puissance et d'une telle perfection.

Vous nous obligerez de prévenir M. Listz aussitôt après son arrivée à Constantinople.

Agréez, etc.

SEBASTIEN PIERRE ERARD.

chestra in Paris. Folz was a respected musician throughout the continent. He concertized extensively in Italy and toured Europe, gave many concerts in Paris and in London before visiting Istanbul. His arrival was announced on April 16, 1847 issue of the *Journal de Constantinople*:

Famous flutist of the King of Naples Michel Folz, of whom almost all newspapers of Europe talk as being an exceptional artist, has arrived in our town. We hope that he will give a number of concerts and provide the dilettantes of Pera a chance to applaud him.⁴¹

On May 6, Folz's was lauded and his high artistic qualifications were reiterated:

M. Folz, the famous flutist, professor of His Royal Highness the Count of Trapani, well-known for his success in Paris and London will give a concert Monday, May 10 in the hall of the old Casino, next to Hotel Angleterre. M. Folz has already played in many diplomatic circles and has received ardent acclaim.⁴²

Following this, in the May 11, 1847 issue of *Journal de Constantinople* we read about the performance of Eduard Litzmann and Michel Folz in Pera, to take place on May 13, and also learn that Litzmann is about to depart from the city:

Pianist Mr. Litzmann, who had the honor of playing in front of the Sultan several times, and who was heard in the diplomatic salons of Pera, will give before his departure from Constantinople a grand concert which will take place on Friday, May 13, in the salons of the old Casino, in which the celebrated flutist Mr. Micheli Folz, will also be heard here for the last time. We do not doubt that a large number of people will attend the concert of Mr. Litzmann to applaud several pieces from the great masters that he will perform with a great deal of talent.⁴³

This is significant for a number of reasons. First, it demonstrates that Litzmann appeared together with a highly respected artist of the time in his last concert in Istanbul, possibly playing together. Second, in the concert announcement, the event is referred to as the concert of Mr. Litzmann, and not as the concert of Mr. Folz, even though Folz was himself a celebrated musician. Therefore Mr. Litzmann seems to have been regarded quite highly as an artist. Finally, it throws some doubt on whether or not Litzmann was in town when Liszt arrived there. We know that Litzmann departed sometime after May 13 when this last grand concert took place. Liszt's arrival was on June 8. Granted, at the time adjectives like "soon" and "immediately" as they apply to travel had broader meanings than today, but still the newspaper announcement allows for the possibility that Litzmann had already departed when Liszt arrived. Moreover, in the same column of

41. *Journal de Constantinople* (April 16, 1847).

42. *Journal de Constantinople* (May 6, 1847).

43. *Journal de Constantinople* (May 11, 1847).

this issue of the *Journal de Constantinople*, Liszt's imminent arrival is also announced by the following news:

Some time ago, one of our subscribers had expressed his desire to see the famous pianist Mr. Liszt [sic] visit Constantinople. This desire will not be much delayed, judging by the following letter which they were kind enough to send to us:

Paris, April 5

Mr. Donizetti, Constantinople.

Our friend Liszt [sic] is to travel soon from Odessa to Constantinople, and we would like him to find on his arrival in there, a piano worthy of his talent. Consequently we took the liberty of sending this instrument, which will be in Marseilles in 20 days, addressed to you. It is a grand piano model, A, E, A in seven octaves and 3 strings, with Erard's double-escapement mechanism and all the improvements, made of mahogany, etc.

We want to share with you in advance the surprise of seeing an instrument of such power and such perfection.

Please oblige us by letting Mr. Liszt know as soon as his arrival at Constantinople.

Sincerely, etc.

Sebastien Pierre Erard

When visiting Paris, Liszt's father Adam Liszt and the founder of the Erard company Sébastien Erard had made an agreement according to which the young Liszt would play on Erard's pianos and essentially advertise the brand, in exchange for this the Erard company would ship their pianos to various destinations for Liszt's concerts. The letter writer here is Sébastien's nephew Pierre who took charge of business after his uncle's death in 1831.

We know that Liszt actually read this issue of the journal! He writes to Pierre Erard from Odessa on August 5, 1847 as follows:

I owe you the most sincere thanks, my dear Erard, for the kind attention which you showed towards me in sending one of your magnificent instruments to me in Constantinople. Even before I embarked at Galatz, the *Journal of Constantinople* had advised me of this kind gesture which so reflects your thoughtfulness; but I was no less pleasantly surprised when running my fingers over the keys at the Tcheragan Palace at an instrument "of such power and such perfection," as you happily put it in your letter to M. Donizetti, which the *Journal de Constantinople* published in full.⁴⁴

Liszt may have also read the news about Mr. Litzmann's concerts that appear in the same issue of the journal right above the news about himself.

44. Michael Short, *Liszt Letters in the Library of Congress* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1994), Letter No. 49, 47.

What were Liszt's own impressions of his reception in Istanbul? Writing to Marie d'Agoult on July 17, 1847 from Galatz, where he was in quarantine on his way to Odessa after leaving Istanbul, Liszt says:

His Majesty the Sultan was extremely gracious to me, and that after having compensated me both in money... and with a gift (a charming enamel box with brilliants), he conferred on me the Order of Nişan-İftihar in diamonds. I admit that I was greatly surprised to find His Highness so well informed about my bit of celebrity that long before my arrival he had told both the Austrian Ambassador and Donizetti, that as soon as I had disembarked they were to take me to his Palace of Tcheragan.⁴⁵

In view of Liszt's description of his reception by the Court, it is highly unlikely that he was arrested or embarrassed in any way upon his arrival, as some Liszt–Listmann accounts claim.

We know that Liszt was considering another visit to Istanbul on his way back from Woronince. Unfortunately this second visit did not materialize. He stayed in Woronince until the end of January 1848, then departed for Weimar.

What about Eduard Litzmann? What happened to him after his departure from Istanbul? Where did he go? What was his own piano music like? Did he ever complete the work on the history of national music that he was reported to be undertaking by *Vossische Zeitung*? Are there records of his stay in Spain as reported by *Berliner Musikalische Zeitung*?

Even with the vast resources of the internet and ever-growing digitized archival material, I have been unable to locate bibliographic information on Eduard Litzmann, his visit to Spain, his music, trace of any work on the music of the orient he published, or indeed anything else about him other than what I presented here.⁴⁶ This includes the searches in the major printed catalogs of eminent German personalities of the time. It is possible that news about his travels appeared in issues of the journals quoted here which appeared after 1847.

The only published book that I could locate with the help of a network of librarian friends, which is even remotely relevant to the story is by an author named E. Litzmann titled "Aus dem Lande der Märchen und Wunder, Indische Skizzen" published in Berlin by Dietrich Reimer. But there is no indication of what the "E" stands for, and even if there were, the book is from 1914, far too recent to be relevant.

I was unable to get news information from Spanish sources, though undoubtedly they exist in some form.

45. Adrian Williams, *Franz Liszt: Selected Letters* (Gloucestershire: Clarendon Press, 1998), 255.

46. As of January 2008, the query "Eduard Litzmann" on the search engine Google returns only the inquiry in German posted by the UCSB Library specialist Jim Markham on my behalf in search of books written by Eduard Litzmann.

It would be worthwhile to have an account of Herr Litzmann's life; this is a man who had such a close brush with Liszt and in this odd and tenuous way immortalized himself in music history as a fool's gold of a virtuoso. It is clear that he was not the impostor that he was made out to be. The papers including *Vossische Zeitung*, *Berliner Musikalische Zeitung*, *Der Humorist*, and *Journal de Constantinople* that wrote about him were by no means ignorant of the artists of their time, nor were they naïve about international events. We observe that Litzmann was worthy of news on their pages as an artist, sometimes even right next to news about celebrities like Liszt. These journals gave no indication whatsoever to support the claim that Eduard Litzmann was pretending to be Liszt, by dropping the last syllable of his name or any other way. We must also discount the part of the Liszt–Listmann incident about Liszt's arrest as pure fiction. Not only is there no evidence to support that Liszt's reception was marred by an unpleasant affair, but on the contrary, there is every indication, including Liszt's own letters, that his arrival was nothing but smooth, and even flattering. The Sultan and his city were prepared and were expecting Liszt's arrival with anticipation.

Now we at least know that as described by *Vossische Zeitung* and other papers, Eduard Litzmann of the Liszt–Listmann stories was a German Tonkünstler and a man of letters. He was interested in national music and the music of the Orient and was compiling what is referred to as a substantial work on the history of music and national music. He traveled to Spain as well as to the Orient collecting data, composing, and concertizing with some well known virtuosi of his time. He had the music of Liszt, Thalberg, and Döhler in his repertoire, and to quote *Journal de Constantinople* from 1847, had “beaucoup de talent” as a pianist.

