
The Virtuoso and the Artist

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



The Wagner Library

Edition 1.0

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About this Title

Source

The Virtuoso and the Artist
By Richard Wagner
Translated by William Ashton Ellis

In Paris and Dresden
Richard Wagner's Prose Works
Volume 7
Pages 108-122
Published in 1898

Original Title Information

Der Virtuos und der Künstler
Published in 1840
Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen : Volume I
Pages 167-179

Reading Information

This title contains 5489 words.
Estimated reading time between 16 and 27 minutes.

Notes are indicated using parenthesis, like (1).
Page numbers of the original source are indicated
using square-bracketed parentheses, like [62].

[108]

The Virtuoso and the Artist

(1)

ACCORDING to an ancient legend there is somewhere an inestimable jewel whose shining light bestows forthwith, upon the favoured mortal whose glance rests on it, all gifts of mind and every joy of a contented spirit. But this treasure lies buried in unfathomed depths. The story goes, that eyes of happy mortals once were blest with superhuman power to pierce the ruins heaped above it like gateways, pillars, and misshapen fragments of a giant palace: through this chaos then there leapt to them the wondrous splendour of the magic jewel, and filled their hearts with bliss untold. Then yearning seized them to remove the pile of wreckage, to unveil to all the world the glory of the magic treasure at which the very sun would pale its fires when *its* glad rays should fill our heart with love divine, our mind with heavenly knowledge. But in vain their every effort: they could not move the inert mass that hid the wonder-stone.

Centuries passed by: the spirit of those rarest favoured ones still mirrored on the world the radiance of that starry light which once had shone upon them from the glinting jewel; but no one could draw near itself. Yet tidings of it still existed; there were traces, and men conceived the thought of burrowing for the wonder-stone with all the arts of mining. Shafts were sunk, levels and cross-cuts [109] were driven into the bowels of the earth; the most ingenious of subterranean tactics were pursued, and one dug afresh, cut winzes and new galleries, until at last the labyrinth grew so confusing that all remembrance of the right direction was lost for good. And so the whole great maze, in whose behalf the jewel itself was finally forgotten, lay useless quite: men gave it up. Abandoned were adits, shafts and raises: already they were threatening to cave in, when—so they say—a poor miner from Salzburg came that way. He carefully surveyed the work of his forerunners: full of astonishment he paced the countless mazes, whose useless plan he half surmised. Of a sudden he feels his heart beat high for very rapture: through a chink the jewel flashes on him; with a glance he takes the measure of all the labyrinth: the longed-for pathway to the wonder-stone itself grows plain; led by its light he dives into the deepest cavern, to it, the heavenly talisman itself. A wondrous luminance then filled the world with fleeting glory, and every heart was thrilled by ecstasy untold: but the miner from Salzburg no man saw again.

Then came once more a miner, this time from Bonn in the Siebengebirge; he wished to search in the abandoned levels for the missing Salzburger: he lit full soon upon his track, and so suddenly the splendour of the wonder-jewel smote his eye, that it struck him blind. A foaming sea of light surged through his senses, he flung himself into the chasm, and down the timbers crashed upon him: a fearful din went up, as though a world had foundered. The miner from Bonn was never seen again.

And so, like every miner's-story, this ended—with a falling in. Fresh ruins overlay the old; yet to this day men shew the site of the ancient workings, and recently have even begun to dig for the two lost miners, as kind good people think they still might be alive. With breathless haste the pits are sunk afresh, and get much talked of; the curious come from far and near, to view the spot: fragments of schist are taken away as souvenirs, and paid a trifle for, for everyone would like to have contributed to such a pious work; moreover one buys the life-account of [110] the two entombed, which a Bonn professor (2) has carefully drawn up, yet without being able to tell exactly how the accident occurred, which nobody knows but the Folk. And things have come to such a pass at last, that the real original legend is clean forgotten, whilst all kinds of minor modern fables take its place, *e.g.* that quite prolific veins of gold have been discovered in the diggings, and the solidest ducats struck therefrom. Indeed

there seems some truth in this; for people think less and less about the wonder-stone and those two poor miners, although the whole exploit still bears the title of a rescue-party.—

Perhaps the whole legend, with its subsequent fable, is to be understood in an allegoric sense: on that hypothesis, its meaning would soon be apparent if we took the wonder-jewel to be the *genius of Music*; the two incarcerated miners would be no less easy to divine, and the debris that covers them would lie before our feet when we gird ourselves to pierce to those enshrined elect. In truth, on whom that wonder-stone has shone in fabled dreams o'night, whose soul has felt the fire of Music in the holy hours of ecstasy,—would he fain arrest that dream, that ecstasy, *i.e.* if he would seek the tools therefor, he first of all will stumble on that heap of ruins: there he has then to dig and delve; the place is filled with gold-diggers; they pile the debris ever denser, and, would you make for the forgotten shaft, they fling down slag and cat-gold in your way. The rubble waxes high and higher, the wall grows ever thicker: sweat pours in rivers from your brow. Poor fellows! And they laugh at you.

Yet the thing may have a serious side.—

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What you have written down in notes, is now to sound aloud; you want to hear it, and let others hear it. Very good: the weightiest, nay, the ineluctable concern for you, is to get your tone-piece brought to hearing exactly as you felt it in you when you wrote it down: that is to say, the composer's intentions are to be conscientiously reproduced, so that the thoughts of his spirit may be transmitted unalloyed and undisfigured to the organs of perception. The highest merit of the executant artist, the Virtuoso, would accordingly consist in a pure and perfect reproduction of that thought of the composer's; a reproduction only to be ensured by genuine fathering of his intentions, and consequently by total abstinence from all inventions of one's own. It follows that a performance directed by the composer in person alone can give a full account of his intentions; nearest to him will come the man sufficiently endowed with creative power to gauge the value of observing another artist's intentions by that he sets upon his own, and it will be an advantage to him to have a certain loving pliability. After these most authorised would come such artists as make no claim to productivity, and belong to art, so to say, merely in virtue of their aptitude for making a stranger's artwork their intimate possession: these would have to be modest enough to so entirely sink their personal attributes, in whatever they may consist, that neither their defects nor their advantages should come to light in the performance; for it is the artwork in its purest reproduction, that should step before us, in nowise the distracting individuality of the performer.

Unfortunately however, this very reasonable demand runs counter to all the conditions under which artistic products win the favour of the public. This latter's first and keenest curiosity is addressed to art-dexterity; delight in that is the only road to notice of the work itself. Who can blame the public for it? Is it not the very tyrant whose vote we sue? Nor would things stand so bad with this failing, did it not end by corrupting the executant artist, and make him forget at last his own true mission. [112] His position as vehicle of the artistic intention, nay, as virtual representative of the creative master, makes it quite peculiarly his duty to guard the earnestness and purity of Art in general: he is the intermediary of the artistic idea, which through him, in a sense, first attains to physical existence. The real dignity of the Virtuoso rests therefore solely on the dignity he is able to preserve for creative art: if he trifles and toys with this, he casts his own honour away. To be sure, 'tis small matter to him, should he not have grasped that dignity at all: though he be no artist, he yet has art-dexterities to hand: these he lets play; they do not warm, but glitter; and at night it all looks very nice.

There sits the virtuoso in the concert-hall, and entrances purely for himself: here runs, there jumps; he melts, he pines, he paws and glides, and the audience is fettered to his fingers. Go and watch the strange Sabbath of such a soirée, and try to learn how you should make yourselves presentable for this assemblée; you will find that, of all that passes before your

eyes and ears, you understand about as much as probably the Witches'-master there of what goes on within your soul when music wakes in you and drives you to produce. Heavens! You are to dress your music to suit this man? Impossible! At each attempt you would miserably fail. You can swing yourselves into the air, but cannot dance; a whirlwind lifts you to the clouds, but you can make no pirouette: what would you succeed in, if you took him for model? A vulgar catherine-wheel, no more,—and everyone would laugh, even if you did not get hurled from the salon.

Plainly we have nothing to do with this virtuoso. But presumably you mistook your locality. For indeed there are other virtuosi, and among them true, great artists: they owe their reputation to their moving execution of the noblest tone-works of the greatest masters; where would the public's acquaintance with these latter be slumbering, had not those eminently pre-elect arisen from out the chaos of music-makery, to shew the world [113] who These really were and what they did? There sticks the placard, inviting you to such a lordly feast: one name shines on you: *Beethoven!* Enough. Here is the concert-room. And positively, Beethoven appears to you; all round sit high-bred ladies, row after row of high-bred ladies, and in a wide half-moon behind them lively gentle men with lorgnettes in the eye. But Beethoven is there, midst all the perfumed agony of dream-rocked elegance: it really is Beethoven, sinewed and broad, in all his sad omnipotence. But, who comes there with him? Great God:—Guillaume Tell, Robert the Devil, and—who after these? *Weber*, the tender and true! Good! And then:—a "Galop." (3) O heavens! Who has once written galops himself, who has had his stir in Potpourris, knows what a want can drive us to it when it is a question of drawing near to Beethoven at all costs. I took the measure of the awful need that could drive another man to-day to Potpourris and Galops, to gain the chance of preaching Beethoven; and though I must admire the virtuoso in this instance, I cursed all virtuosity.—So falter not, true disciples of Art, upon the path of virtue: if a magic power drew you to dig for the silted shaft, be not misguided by those veins of gold; but deeper, ever deeper delve towards the wonder-stone. My heart tells me, those buried miners are living yet: if not, why! still believe it! What harms you the belief?

But come, is it all mere foppery? You need the Virtuoso, and, if he's the right sort, he needs you too. So, at least, it must once have been. For something happened, to cause a division between the Virtuoso and the Artist. In former times it certainly was easier to be one's own virtuoso; but you waxed overweening, and made things so hard for yourselves that you were obliged to turn their [114] execution over to a man who has quite enough to do, his whole life long, to bear the other half of your labour. Indeed you should be thankful to him. He is the first to face the tyrant: if he doesn't do his business well, nobody asks about your composition, but *he* is hissed off the boards; can you be cross with him then, if, when applauded, he takes that also to himself, and does not specially return his thanks in name of the composer? Nor would that be quite what you want: you want your piece performed precisely as you thought it; the virtuoso is to add nothing to it, leave nothing from it; he is to be *your second self*! But often that is very hard: let one of you just try, for once, to sink himself so entirely in another!—

Lo there the man who certainly thinks least about himself, and to whom the personal act of pleasing has surely nothing special to bring in, the man beating time for an orchestra. He surely fancies he has bored to the very inside of the composer, ay, has drawn him on like a second skin? You won't tell me that *he* is plagued with the Upstart-devil, when he takes your tempo wrong, misunderstands your expression-marks, and drives you to desperation at listening to your own tone-piece. Yet *he* can be a virtuoso too, and tempt the public by all kinds of spicy nuances into thinking that it after all is *he* who makes the whole thing sound so

nice he finds it neat to let a loud passage be played quite soft, for a change, a fast one a wee bit slower; he will add you, here and there, a trombone-effect, or a dash of the cymbals and triangle; but his chief resource is a drastic cut, if he otherwise is not quite sure of his success. Him we must call a virtuoso of the Baton; and I fancy he's none too rare, especially in opera-houses. So we shall have to arm ourselves against him; and the best way will probably be to make sure of the real original, not second-hand virtuoso, to wit the *singer*.

Now the composer so thoroughly impregnates the Singer, that he streams from his throat as living tone. Here, one would think, no misunderstanding is possible: the Virtuoso has to pick here and there, all round him; he may [115] pick the wrong thing: but there, in the Singer, we sit with our melody itself. It will be a bad job, by all means, if we are not sitting in the right spot of him; he, too, has picked us up from outside: have we got down as far as his heart, or simply stuck in his throat? We were digging, for the jewel in the depths: are we caught in the toils of the gold-veins?

The human voice, as well, is an instrument; it is rare, and paid for dearly. How it is shaped, is the first care of the inquisitive public, and its next *how* it is played with: *what* it plays, is immaterial to the generality. The Singer knows better: for what he sings must be so formed, as to make it easy for him to play on his voice to great credit. How small, in comparison, is the heed the Virtuoso has to pay to *his* instrument: it stands ready-made; if it suffers harm, he gets it repaired. But this priceless, wondrously capricious instrument of the Voice? No man has quite found out its build. Write how you will, ye composers, but mind it is something the singer sings gladly! How are you to set about it? Why, go to concerts, or better still, to salons!—We don't want to write for these, but for the theatre, the Opera,—dramatic music.—Good! Then go to the Opera, and discover that you still are merely in the salon, the concert-room. Here, too, it is the Virtuoso with whom you must first come to terms. And this virtuoso, believe me, is more perilous than all the rest; for wherever you encounter him, he'll slip between your fingers.

Look at those most celebrated singers in the world: from whom would you learn, if not from the artists of our great Italian Opera, who are worshipped as positively superhuman beings, not only by Paris, but by every capital in the world? Here learn what really is the *art* of Song; from them the famous singers of the French Grand Opéra first learnt what singing means, and that it's no joke, as the good German scrape-throats (*Gaumen-Schreihälse*) dream when they think the thing done if their heart is in the right place, namely seated tight upon their stomach. There you also will meet the composers who understood how to write [116] for real singers: they knew that through these alone could they arrive at recognition, eh! existence; and as you see, they are there, doing well, nay, honoured and glorified. But you don't want to compose like these; your works shall be respected; it is from them you require an impression, not from the success of the throat-feats of the singers to whom those others owe their fortune?—Look a little closer: have these people no passion? Do they not tremble and heave, as well as lisp and gurgle? When they sing "*Ah! Tremate!*" it sounds a little different from your "*Zittre, feiger Bösewicht!*" Have you forgotten that "*Maledetta!*" at which the best-bred audience turned into a Methodist-meeting of niggers?—But to you it doesn't seem the genuine thing? You think it a pack of Effects, at which all reasonable men should laugh?

However, this also is art, and one these celebrated singers have carried very far. With the singing-voice. too, one may toy and juggle as one pleases; but the game must lastly be related to some passion, for one does not pass so altogether needlessly from rational talk to the decidedly much louder noise of singing. Ah! now you have it: the public wants an emotion it cannot get at home, like whist or dominoes. This, also, may have been quite otherwise at one time: great masters found great pupils among their singers; the tradition still lives of the wonderful things they brought to light together, and often is renewed by fresh experience.

Most certainly one knows and wills that Song should also work dramatically, and our singers therefore learn so thorough a command of Passion that it looks as if they never left it. And its use is quite reduced to rule: after cooing and chirping, an explosion makes a quite unparalleled effect; its not being an actual matter of fact, why! that is just what makes it art.

You still have a scruple, founded principally on your contempt for the sickly stuff those singers sing. Whence springs it? Precisely from the will of those singers, on whose behalf it is cobbled up. What in the world can a [117] true musician wish to have in common with this handiwork? But how would it stand if these fêted demigods of the Italian Opera were to undertake a veritable art-work? Can they truly catch fire? Can they bear the magic lightnings of that wonder-jewel's flash?

See: "Don Giovanni"! And really by Mozart! So reads the poster for to-day. Let us go to hear and see.

And strange things happened to me, when I actually heard "Don Juan" lately with the great Italians: it was a chaos of every sensation in which I was trundled to and fro; for I really found the perfect artist, but close beside him the absurdest virtuoso, who sent him to the wall. Glorious was *Grisi* as "Donna Anna" unsurpassable *Lablache* as "Leporello." The grandest, richest-gifted woman, inspired with but one thought: to be Mozart's own "Donna Anna": there all was warmth and tenderness, fire, passion, grief and woe. Oh! *she* knew that the buried miner still is living, and blessedly she fortified my own belief. But the silly soul consumed herself for Signor *Tamburini*, the world-most-famous barytone who sang and played "Don Juan": the whole evening through, the man could not rid himself of the log of wood that was tied to his legs with this fatal rôle. I had previously once heard him in an opera of Bellini's: there we had "*Tremate!*" "*Maledetta,*" and all the Passion of Italy rolled into one. Nothing of the sort to-day: the brief swift pieces whizzed past him like fugitive shadows; much airy Recitative all stiff and flat; a fish on the sands. But it seemed that the whole audience was stranded too: it remained so decorous that no one could trace a sign of its usual frenzy. Perhaps a worthy mark of homage to the true genius who swayed his wings to-night throughout the hall? We shall see. In any case the divine *Grisi* herself did not peculiarly entrance: nobody could quite appreciate her secret passion for this tiresome "Don Juan."—But there was *Lablache*, a colossus, and yet to-night a "Leporello" every inch. How did he manage it? The enormous bass-voice sang throughout in the clearest, most superb of tones, and yet it was more like a chattering, [118] babbling, saucy laughing, hare-footed scampering; once he absolutely piped with his voice, and yet it always sounded full, like distant church-bells. He neither stood nor walked, nor did he dance; but he was always in motion; one saw him here, there, everywhere, and yet he never fidgeted; always on the spot, before you knew it, wherever a fine sense of humour could scent out fun or frolic in the situation. *Lablache* was not applauded once in all this evening: that might be reasonable, a token of dramatic *goût* in the audience. But the latter seemed really annoyed that its authorised favourite, Madame *Persiani* (one's heart convulses at mere mention of that name!), was ill at ease in the music for "Zerlina." I perceived that one had quite prepared oneself to be charmed beyond all bounds with her, and whoever had heard her a short while before in the "*Elisire d'amore*" could not be gainsaid such a verification. But *Mozart* was decidedly to blame, that the charm refused to work to-night: more sand, for such a lively fish! Ah! what would not audience and *Persiani* have given to-day, had it been held decent to infuse a drop from that Elixir of Love! In effect, I gradually remarked that both sides were bent on an excess of decency: there reigned a unanimity which I was long in accounting for. Why, since to all appearance one was "classically" minded, did the magnificent and perfect execution of that glorious "Donna Anna" not carry everyone into that sterling ecstasy which seemed to be the only thing proposed to-day? Why, as in the strictest of senses one was ashamed of being carried away, had one come to a performance of "Don Juan" at all? Verily the whole evening

seemed a voluntary act of penance, imposed on oneself for some unknown reason: but to what end? Something must really be gained by it; for such a Paris audience will spend much, 'tis true, but always expects a return for its money, be it only a worthless one.

This riddle also solved itself: *Rubini fired off this night his famous trill from A to B!* The whole thing flashed [119] on me. How could I have expected much from poor "Don Ottavio," the so often mocked-at tenor-stopgap of Don Juan? Indeed I long felt truly sorry for the so unrivalledly adored *Rubini*, the wonder of all tenors, who on his side went quite crossly to his Mozart-sum. There he came, the sober, solid man, passionately dragged on by the arm by the divine "Donna Anna," and stood with ruffled peace of mind beside the corpse of his expected father-in-law, who now no more could breathe his blessing on a happy marriage. Some say that *Rubini* was once a tailor, and looks just like one; I should have credited him with more agility in that case: where he stood he stayed, and moved no further; for he could sing, too, without stirring a muscle; even his hand he brought but seldom to the region of his heart. This time his singing never touched him at all; he might fitly save his fairly aged voice for something better than to cry out words of comfort, already heard a thousand times, to his beloved. That I understood, thought the man sensible, and, as he took the same course throughout the opera whenever "Don Ottavio" was at hand, I fancied at last it was over, and still more anxiously inquired the meaning, the purpose of this extraordinary night of abstinence. Then slowly came a stir: unrest, sitting-up, shrewd glances, fan-play, all the symptoms of a sudden straining of attention in a cultured audience. "Ottavio" was left alone on the stage; I believed he was about to make an announcement, for he came right up to the prompter's box: but there he stayed, and listened without moving a feature to the orchestral prelude to his *B flat* aria. This ritornel seemed to last longer than usual; but that was a simple illusion: the singer was merely lisping out the first ten bars of his song so utterly inaudibly that, on my discovery that he really was giving himself the look of singing, I thought the genial man was playing a joke. Yet the audience kept a serious face; it knew what was coming; for at the eleventh bar *Rubini* let his F swell out with such sudden vehemence that the little reconducting [120] passage fell plump upon us like a thunderbolt, and died away again into a murmur with the twelfth. I could have laughed aloud, but the whole house was still as death: a muted orchestra, an inaudible tenor; the sweat stood on my brow. Something monstrous seemed in preparation: and truly the unhearable was now to be eclipsed by the unheard-of. The seventeenth bar arrived: here the singer has to hold an F for three bars long. What can one do with a simple F? *Rubini* only becomes divine on the high B flat: *there* must he get, if a night at the Italian Opera is to have any sense. And just as the trapezist swings his bout preliminary, so "Don Ottavio" mounts his three-barred F, two bars of which he gives in careful but pronounced crescendo, till at the third he snatches from the violins their trill on A, shakes it himself with waxing vehemence, and at the fourth bar sits in triumph on the high B flat, as if it were nothing; then with a brilliant roulade he plunges down again, before all eyes, into the noiseless. The end had come: anything that liked might happen now. Every demon was unchained, and not on the stage, as at close of the opera, but in the audience. The riddle was solved: this was the trick for which one had assembled, had borne two hours of total abstinence from every wonted operatic dainty, had pardoned Grisi and Lablache for taking such music in earnest, and felt richly rewarded by the coming-off of this one wondrous moment when *Rubini* leapt to B flat!

A German poet once assured me that, in spite of all, the French were the true "Greeks" of our era, and the Parisians in particular had something Athenian about them; for really it was they who had the keenest sense of "Form." This came back to me that evening: as a fact, this uncommonly elegant audience shewed not a spark of interest in the stuff of our "Don Juan"; to them it was plainly a mere lay-figure on which the drapery of unmixed Virtuosity had first to be hung, to give the music-work its formal right to existence. But *Rubini* alone [121] could

do this properly, and so it was easy to guess why just this cold and venerable being had become the darling of the Parisians, the chartered "idol" of all cultivated friends of Song. In their predilection for this virtuosic side of things they go so far as to give it their whole æsthetic interest, while their feeling for noble warmth, nay even for manifest beauty, is more and more amazingly cooling down. Without one genuine throb they saw and heard that noble *Grisi*, the splendid woman with the soulful voice: perhaps they fancy it too realistic. But *Rubini*, the broad-built Philistine with bushy whiskers; old, with a voice grown greasy, and afraid of over-taxing it: if *he* is ranked above all others, the charm can't reside in his substance, but purely in a spiritual Form. And this form is forced upon every singer in Paris: they all sing *à la* Rubini. The rule is: be inaudible for awhile, then suddenly alarm the audience by a husbanded explosion, and immediately afterwards relapse into an effect of the ventriloquist. Mons. *Duprez* already quite obeys it: often have I hunted for the substitute, hidden somewhere beneath the podium like the mother's voice trumpet in "Robert the Devil," that seemed to take the part of the ostensible singer at the prompter's box, who now wasn't making a sign. But that is "art." What do we block-heads know about it?—Taken all in all, that Italian performance of "Don Giovanni" has helped me to great consolation. There really are great artists among the virtuosi, or, to put it another way: even the virtuoso can be a great artist. Unfortunately they are so entangled with each other, that it is a sorrowful task to sift them out. That evening *Lablache* and the *Grisi* distressed me, while *Rubini* diverted me hugely. Is there something corruptive, then, in setting these great differences side by side? The human heart is so evil, and hebetude so very sweet! Take care how you play with the Devil! He'll come at last when you least expect him. That's what happened to Sig. Tamburini that evening, where he surely would never have dreamt it. Rubini had happily swung [122] himself up to his high B flat: he looked simpering down, and quite amiably upon the Devil. I thought to myself: God, if he'd only take that one!—

Presumptuous thought! The whole audience would have plunged to Hell after him.—

(To be continued in the next world!)

Notes

Note 1 on page 5

Under the title of "Du métier de Virtuose et de l'indépendance des Compositeurs: Fantaisie esthétique d'un musicien," this article appeared in the *Gazette Musicale* of Oct. 18, 1840; its French form, however, differs so greatly from the German of the *Ges. Schr.*, after the first page or two, that I reproduce it in its entirety on pages 123 *et seq.*—Tr.

Note 2 on page 5

Otto Jahn, whose *Life of Mozart* appeared in 1856-59, with a second edition in 1867; he also wrote for the *Grenzboten* an exhaustive review of the Complete Edition of Beethoven's works, with biographical information, re-published in his *Collected Essays on Music* in 1868, and was collecting materials for a minute biography of Beethoven at the time of his death in 1869. So that this clause at anyrate is an interpolation of 1870-71, having probably been represented in the original German manuscript by a reference to Schindler's biography of Beethoven, which made its first appearance in 1840; one of Wagner's Letters from Paris of 1841 (to appear in Vol. VIII.) alludes at greater length to Schindler.—Tr.

Note 3 on page 7

On April 20, 1840, Liszt had given a concert in the Salle Erard, playing Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony (for two hands), a fantasia on airs from *Lucia*, Schubert's *Serenade* and *Ave Maria*, and winding up with a *Galop Chromatique*. His *Robert le diable* fantasia would pretty certainly have figured also, if only as encore.—Tr.

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Summary

Fable of the magic jewel and the two poor miners—Mozart and Beethoven—succeeded by the gold-diggers (110). The composer's intention and its interpreters; after *himself* would come an executant endowed with some creative power and much affection; then the man who, no producer, will sink himself in the performance. But the public wants trick; Thalberg contrasted with Liszt, though even Liszt makes concessions (113). Conductor as virtuoso, with false tempi, added instruments, and cuts (114). Singers: surely here are the true artists, for the composer's music comes from *inside* them; but the human voice is an expensive instrument, and needs humouring; you'll have to write to please them. The Italians, see how they're glorified! Can they really catch fire at the wonder-stone? (117). "Don Giovanni" at the *Italiens*: Grisi and Lablache, true artists, make no effect; the whole audience strangely impassive; why this abstinence? Don Ottavio (Rubini) duller than ever; till at last the fans begin to stir, the audience wakes up, for—Rubini is about to do his trick: an inaudible tenor suddenly explodes, and lands on his high B flat. Take care how you play with the Devil (122).