



# Franz LISZT

## *Concerto for piano and orchestra No. 2, S. 125*

**Franz Liszt** (born Franz Joseph Liszt) (22 October 1811 – 31 July 1886) was a prolific 19th-century Hungarian composer, virtuoso pianist, conductor, music teacher, arranger, organist, philanthropist, author, nationalist and a Franciscan tertiary. Liszt gained renown in Europe during the early nineteenth century for his prodigious virtuosic skill as a pianist. He was a friend, musical promoter and benefactor to many composers of his time, including Frédéric Chopin, Richard Wagner, Hector Berlioz, Robert Schumann, Camille Saint-Saëns, Edvard Grieg, Ole Bull, Joachim Raff, Mikhail Glinka, and Alexander Borodin. As a composer, Liszt was one of the most prominent representatives of the New German School (*Neudeutsche Schule*). He left behind an extensive and diverse body of work in which he influenced his forward-looking contemporaries and anticipated many 20th-century ideas and trends. Some of his most notable musical contributions were the invention of the symphonic poem, developing the concept of thematic transformation as part of his experiments in musical form, and making radical departures in harmony.

Liszt wrote drafts for **Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 2 in A major, S.125**, during his virtuoso period, in 1839 to 1840. He then put away the manuscript for a decade. When he returned to the concerto, he revised and scrutinized it repeatedly. The fourth and final period of revision ended in 1861. Liszt dedicated the work to his student Hans von Bronsart, who gave the first performance, with Liszt conducting, in Weimar on January 7, 1857. This concerto is one single, long movement, divided into six sections that are connected by transformations of several themes. While this work is less virtuosic than the First Piano Concerto, shows far more originality in form. In this respect it reveals a closer link to Liszt's better-known symphonic poems in both style and structure. Also, while the final version of the First Concerto could be considered a soloist's showpiece, the Second shows Liszt attempting to confirm his compositional talent while distancing himself from his virtuoso performance origins. Liszt is less generous with technical devices for the soloist such as scales in octaves and contrary motion; instead of an overbearing virtuoso, the pianist often becomes an accompanist to woodwinds and strings. The soloist does not dominate the thematic material—in fact, after the opening, the pianist never has the theme in its original form. Instead, his role is to create, or at least seem to create, inventive variations that lead the listener through a series of thematic transformations. The various pauses and silences are not intended breaks in the musical flow but rather as transitions in the musical discourse. "Organic unity" lends structure to the entire work.