Form and Programme in Liszt's *Hamlet*: A New Perspective

by

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Abstract

The question of the interrelation between formal and programmatic aspects of Liszt's symphonic poem 'Hamlet' has stimulated much scholarly debate. The symphonic poem was written around twenty years after the Shakespeare explosion in continental Europe, but just two years after Liszt's initial acquaintance with the celebrated actor Bogumil Dawison, whose stage performances in the role are commonly believed to have inspired Liszt's composition.

This dissertation argues that Dawison's influence on Liszt is less straightforward than hitherto believed. It offers a revised view of the interaction between the two artists, and a more detailed appraisal of Dawison's acting style than has previously appeared in the Liszt literature. In fact, it seems likely that Liszt never actually saw Dawison's Hamlet in the theatre. An analysis of the extant manuscripts of Liszt's *Hamlet* then chronicles the evolution of the piece from 'overture' to 'symphonic poem'. Finally, the dissertation revisits Lina Ramann's much neglected analysis of the work, affirming that the source of her information was none other than the composer himself. By comparing the final version of the score with information gleaned from Ramann, we can clearly see that Liszt's *Hamlet* is programmatically structured around three main points of action in Shakespeare's narrative.

Contents

Introduction

Programmaticism is a contentious issue, and this was especially so in the nineteenth century. In Liszt's time the topic divided musicians and caused bitter feuds, culminating in the infamous manifesto published in *Das Echo* in 1860, signed by Joachim and Brahms, condemning the 'New German School'. Criticisms of programmaticism are largely directed at its subjective nature, and the alleged inability of music to express feelings or phenomena outside itself.[1] Liszt's programmatic music has additionally been accused of 'formlessness'.[2] Today the forms of Liszt's works still create confusion, which he partly brought on himself by publishing statements declaring that his music was not 'submitted to the constraint of any customary form'.[3] This dissertation will aim to clarify the situation by investigating the impact of programmatic elements on Liszt's use of form in his symphonic poem *Hamlet*.

Context

Liszt's response to literature was typically 'Romantic'. An often-quoted extract from a letter to Pierre Wolff suggests that he did not necessarily see a distinction between writers and composers:

> For the past fortnight my mind and fingers have been working away like two lost spirits. Homer, the Bible, Plato, Locke, Byron, Hugo, Lamartine, Chateaubriand, Beethoven, Bach, Hummel, Mozart, Weber, are all around me. I study them, meditate on them, devour them with fury...Ah provided I don't go mad you will find an artist in me! Yes, an artist such as you desire, such as is required nowadays![4]

He uses the broader term 'artist' rather than simply composer to describe himself, and suggests that it was necessary for artists of the time to be intellectuals, and to be knowledgeable about art forms other than their own. Liszt also used his love of literature to describe music: 'The *Meistersinger* is to Wagner's other conceptions roughly what *The Winter's Tale* is to the works of Shakespeare'[5] and 'His [Wagner's] *Meistersinger* is a masterpiece of *humour*, spirit, and lively grace. It is animated and beautiful, like Shakespeare!'[6] Music and literature were accordingly entwined for Liszt.

[1] See Eduard Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful*, trans. Geoffrey Payzant (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986).
[2] Keith T. Johns, *The Symphonic Poems of Franz Liszt* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1997), 6.
[3] Franz Liszt, 'Foreword', *Album d'un Voyageur* (Vienna: Tobias Haslinger, 1842).
[4] Adrian Williams (ed.), *Franz Liszt: Selected Letters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 7.
[5] *Ibid*., 585.
[6] *Ibid*., 614-5.

Consequently, it is essential to consider his knowledge of and reaction to Shakespeare when investigating the inspiration behind his own *Hamlet*.

Liszt's love of reading, born out of a consciousness of his lack of formal education (a consequence of his busy career as a young virtuoso), is widely acknowledged.[7] Accordingly, in a letter to Marie d'Agoult in 1834 outlining a list of books he intended to read, Liszt confided his hopes that 'within the next three years I shall become a little less ignorant'.[8] His early reading encompassed contemporary French literature (Victor Hugo, Chateaubriand, and George Sand were some of his favourite authors), German literature (primarily Goethe and Schiller), literature of a mystical or religious nature (the Bible, Lamartine, and Lamennais), as well as some authors outside the French and German languages (Dante, Byron, and Shakespeare). Whilst Eleanor Perényi suggests that Liszt, 'read more or less the same books for the rest of his life'[9] (largely drawn from the authors mentioned above), Ben Arnold believes that Liszt read 'a minimum of 240 different authors and hundreds of volumes of poetry, prose, essays, history, and scholarship'.[10] Either way, it is true that several of the books that Liszt read during his twenties were to create a lasting impression: he famously revisited Goethe and Dante when writing the *Faust* and *Dante* symphonies, and soon after returned to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

Liszt wrote the symphonic poem in 1858, during his tenure as Kapellmeister at the Weimar Court Theatre, alongside some of his most significant and enduring works, including the two symphonies, and eleven other symphonic poems. The one-movement symphonic poems are deliberately programmatic; in many cases they draw on literary sources for inspiration. As such, they symbolise Liszt's response to contemporary debate over absolute and programme music. In fact he put forward an embryonic form of programmatic ideas at least as early as 1842, when he described

[7] For two examples see Derek Watson, *Liszt* (The Master Musicians, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 8 and Adrian Williams *op. cit.* (1998), 5.
[8] Adrian Williams, *op. cit.* (1998), 23.
[9] Eleanor Perényi, *Liszt: The Artist as Romantic Hero* (S.I.: Little Brown and Company, 1974), 42.
[10] Ben Arnold, 'Liszt as Reader, Intellectual, and Musician' in *Liszt and His World* ed. Michael Saffle (New York: Pendragon Press, 1998), 48.

music as 'a poetic language perhaps better suited than poetry itself to express everything in us'.[11] Later in his essay 'Berlioz and his "Harold" Symphony' Liszt went further, writing 'Through song there have always been *combinations* of music with literary or quasi-literary works; the present time seeks a *union* of the two which promises to become a more intimate one than any that have offered themselves thus far.'[12] As extra-musical content was essential to his work and ideals, it follows that any interpretation of Liszt's *Hamlet* should consider the composer's response to Shakespeare's play. Furthermore, it is widely believed that two years prior to composing the work, Liszt had seen a production of *Hamlet* in which Bogumil Dawison played the lead role.[13] I shall later argue that this was actually not the case, although Liszt undoubtedly admired Dawison's original interpretation of the character of Hamlet.[14] Therefore, the actor's influence on the symphonic poem cannot be entirely ignored. Accordingly, as well as investigating how Liszt's response to Shakespeare shaped his music, this dissertation will aim to clarify the relation between Dawison's 'Hamlet' and that of Liszt.

Objectives

The study has three main objectives: firstly, to establish the extent of Liszt's knowledge of Shakespeare, including which translations he was familiar with; secondly, to investigate how far Dawison's interpretation of Hamlet influenced Liszt's view of the play, and, consequently, his musical ideas; thirdly, to determine to what extent, if at all, the narrative of the play governs the form of the symphonic poem.

Methodological Approach

The approach is primarily that of a music historian, but this will be combined with music analysis. An inter-disciplinary approach will be necessary owing to the nature of the topic and the literary and contextual ideas involved. Three main methods will be used. First, secondary literature

[11] Franz Liszt, 'Foreword', *Album d'un Voyageur* (Vienna: Tobias Haslinger, 1842).
[12] Franz Liszt, 'Berlioz and his "Harold" Symphony', in *Source Readings in Music History* Vol. 5 ed. Oliver Strunk (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1965), 128.
[13] For examples see Keith T. Johns, *op. cit*., 74 and Humphrey Searle, *The Music of Liszt* 2nd Edition (New York: Dover Publications, 1966), 74.
[14] Adrian Williams, *op. cit.* (1998), 396-7.

will be examined in order to identify the gaps in our current knowledge. Second, primary sources penned by Liszt and his contemporaries will be analysed, including Liszt's letters and the autograph score and engraver's copy of *Hamlet* from the Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv in Weimar.[15] Finally, a musical analysis of the symphonic poem will be presented, drawing on the information gathered using the first two methods.

Synopsis

Chapter one places the research in the context of nineteenth-century Europe by examining Liszt's first encounters with Shakespeare's work in the Romantic circles of 1830s Paris. It discusses Shakespearian references in Liszt's letters. It also establishes that the translations of *Hamlet* that Liszt knew followed the same course of events as the *Hamlet* we know today, despite the common procedure of cutting the text in performance, or transposing the order of scenes. This has important implications for the analysis of the structure of the music in Chapter three.

Chapter two investigates the extent to which Liszt and Dawison were acquainted by examining their correspondence, and argues that similarities in their work and personalities may have caused Liszt to identify with Dawison. It then establishes the extent of Liszt's knowledge of Dawison's portrayal of Hamlet, and examines Dawison's acting style, contrasting his performance with that of other contemporaries.

Chapter three draws on the evidence examined in the previous two chapters in order to examine programmaticism in *Hamlet*. It argues from documentary and musical evidence that the piece is partly structured using Shakespeare's narrative, but for the most part also retains a musical logic.

[15] The author would like to thank the Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv for the use of these scores, and for the use of original letters from Dawison to Liszt.

Significance

An original aspect of this study is the examination of the autograph score with a view to providing an account of the genesis of certain programmatic features of the work. As far as I am aware, this has not been attempted in studies of *Hamlet* to date. Furthermore, it will correct misconceptions regarding the content and form of *Hamlet*, and Liszt's relationship with Bogumil Dawison.

Literature Review

This study relies, to a large extent, on Liszt's correspondence. A significant proportion of this has been published in various volumes, but the state of research resists easy summary. Many broadly similar volumes have been published with the addition of only a few previously unknown letters. Articles, however, also regularly appear containing the texts of previously unpublished letters. The standard collection is La Mara's *Franz Liszt's Briefe* in eight volumes.[16] The letters in these volumes are predominantly in French (Liszt's language of preference), with a few in German. The first two volumes have also been published in English, translated by Constance Bache. The third volume of La Mara's collection, 'Briefe an eine Freundin', is a collection of letters to Agnes Street-Klindworth, with whom Liszt was having an affair. Due to the sensitive nature of these letters, and in view of the fact that members of Liszt's family were still alive when they were published, they were heavily censored by La Mara, therefore it is more helpful to refer to Pauline Pocknell's uncensored, thorough and scholarly collection of English translations: *Franz Liszt and Agnes Street-Klindworth: a Correspondence*. Bellas and Gut's *Correspondance* is the most complete edition of the Liszt-d'Agoult letters, and is a more scholarly edition than the old version edited by Daniel Ollivier. These letters are particularly pertinent to this study as this literary-minded couple often referred in writing to the literature they enjoyed. Equally, Klara Hamburger's *Franz Liszt. Briefwechsel mit seiner Mutter* is more complete than the La Mara edition containing these letters, and is the first publication of the letters in their original language, for La Mara translated them from the original French into German. An important volume of English translations is Adrian Williams's *Franz Liszt: Selected Letters*. This

[16] La Mara, *Franz Liszt's Briefe* 8 Vols. (Leipzig, 1893-1905).

is an extensive collection, complete with helpful scholarly notes. Several other collections of letters have been used in research, but La Mara's *Briefe hervorragender Zeitgenossen an Franz Liszt* is the only one that contains a letter from Bogumil Dawison. The Goethe-und Schiller-Archiv boasts five letters from Dawison to Liszt in its collection, which will be considered in this study. The first appears in La Mara's *Briefe hervorragender Zeitgenossen an Franz Liszt*, but it is likely that the other four have never been published.

Lina Ramann's official biography: *Franz Liszt als Künstler und Mensch* has also been heavily used, for her musical analysis of *Hamlet* provides the basis for the analysis in this dissertation. Her book is problematic because of its idealised portrayal of its subject, but it offers invaluable information for Liszt scholars, and has provided a model for most subsequent Liszt biographers. Liszt was involved to some extent in its creation, completing questionnaires for Ramann's use. He made corrections to the first volume, which was partially revised,[17] although some of the corrections never made it into print.[18] The answers Liszt provided in the questionnaires were often short and abrupt; his tone suggesting that he was a reluctant participant in the project. There were probably parts of his life that he did not want included in the biography, and, tellingly, he instructed Ramann that his biography should be more 'imagined than taken down in dictation'.[19] Ramann also envisioned publishing a volume of documents she had used when writing *Franz Liszt als Künstler und Mensch*. The proposed work would have included her own notes and diary entries, as well as Liszt's questionnaires and letters. She never completed the book, but it was finally published posthumously in 1983 under the title *Lisztiana*. It includes much pertinent material, especially notes taken after discussing *Hamlet* with Liszt. Her analysis of *Hamlet* in *Franz Liszt als Künstler und Mensch* reveals these comments made by Liszt about the various programmatic aspects of the piece, and is, therefore, invaluable for any discussion, based as it is on first-hand knowledge of the composer's intentions. A more up-to-date biography is Alan Walker's three-volume study, *Franz Liszt*. It is impressive in scope, detail, and in

[17] Christopher H. Gibbs and Dana Gooley (eds.), *Franz Liszt and his World* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), 365.
[18] See James Deaville, 'Writing Liszt: Lina Ramann, Marie Lipsius, and Early Musicology', *Journal of Musicological Research*, 21:1 (2002), 88.
[19] *Ibid.,* 366.

the variety of sources used, and earned Walker much critical acclaim. But, he has been criticised for including 'anecdotal, often gossipy sensationalist storytelling'[20] and he relied heavily on Ramann's work. Finally, Walker is prone to idealise his subject, and includes little discussion of Liszt's music.

There are many useful overviews of Shakespeare in France and Germany during Liszt's lifetime, as well as analyses of the available French and German translations.[21] For Bogumil Dawison, there are some brief, but useful, accounts in English of his life and acting style in Simon Williams's *Shakespeare on the German Stage*, and in *Shakespeare an Illustrated Stage History* by Jonathan Bate and Russell Jackson. There is also a short biography in German by Alfred von Wurzbach,[22] and a longer, much more thorough and scholarly biography by Peter Kollek that considers Dawison's acting style in detail, and provides information on his guest appearances in Weimar.[23] Otherwise, it is necessary to consult contemporary literature. Dawison's guest appearances in Weimar were listed in the *Allgemeine Theater-Chronik* in February 1856. This identifies which roles he performed, and suggests that he was very well received, but provides no more detail. Emil Knetschke's article 'Bogumil Dawison' published in *Deutsche Schaubühne* in 1861 describes Dawison's acting style and portrayal of *Hamlet* in comparison with other famous actors of the time. Reminiscences by contemporary colleagues provide interesting and useful information regarding Dawison's performances, though these accounts may, of course, be biased. This dissertation draws particularly upon the reminiscences of Eduard Genast[24] and Eduard Devrient.[25] Therefore, a wealth of contextual information exists regarding Dawison's acting, but this has never before been brought to a discussion of Liszt's *Hamlet*. A final invaluable source is Adolf Bartels's *Chronik des Weimarischen Hoftheaters*

[20] Allan Keiler, 'Liszt research and Walker's Liszt', *The Musical Quarterly*, 7 (1984), 377.
[21] Studies that provide French context include Pemble's *Shakespeare Goes to Paris—How the Bard Conquered France*, Helen Phelps Bailey's *Hamlet in France from Voltaire to Laforgue*, and *Four Hundred Years of Shakespeare in Europe* by A. J. Hoenselaars and Angel-Luis Pujante. Those that consider Germany include Roger Paulin's *The Critical Reception of Shakespeare in Germany 1682-1914*, and *European Shakespeares: Translating Shakespeare in the Romantic Age* by Dirk Delabastita and Lieven d'Hulst.
[22] See Alfred von Wurzbach, *Bogumil Dawison* (Wien: A. Hartleben, 1871).
[23] See Peter Kollek, *Bogumil Dawison: Porträt und Deutung eines genialen Schauspielers* (Kastellaun, Henn, 1978).
[24] See Eduard Genast, *Aus Weimars klassischer und nachklassischer Zeit* (Stuttgart: Robert Lutz, 1904), 355-357.
[25] See Eduard Devrient, 'Tagbuchaufzeichnungen Eduard Devrients über Darstellungen Shakespearescher Rollen: Karl Seydelmann als Shylock; Bogumil Dawison als Hamlet', *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch*, 68 (1932), 140-146.

1817-1907 which provides a record of what was performed at the Weimar court theatre during Liszt's tenure, including both theatrical and musical performances. It also includes the theatre cast lists, and gives valuable insights regarding the circumstances in which Liszt's symphonic poems were originally performed.

Liszt's symphonic poems were the subject of several contemporary articles and reviews, but today they are rarely given the attention they deserve. During Liszt's lifetime, they were criticised in Hanslick's writings,[26] but defended by Wagner[27] and Felix Draeseke.[28] Draeseke's series of articles is the most detailed and analytical of these defences, but, unfortunately, only the first nine of the symphonic poems were available at the time of writing, so *Hamlet* is not included. Of Liszt's own writings, the essay 'Berlioz and his 'Harold' Symphony'[29] is the most pertinent to this discussion. This defends programmaticism in music in response to Hanslick's 'On the Musically Beautiful'. The extent of Liszt's reading is evident here, particularly his knowledge of aesthetics. What is more, it identifies the literature Liszt found most suitable for musical expression. As with all of Liszt's writings, the issue of authorship is contestable, for Marie d'Agoult and Princess Wittgenstein were known to have contributed to his publications. Today the symphonic poems appear most often in overviews of Liszt's orchestral music, and are usually not discussed in detail. Examples include Watson's *Liszt*; 'Liszt's symphonic poems and symphonies' by Reeves Shulstad in *The Cambridge Companion to Liszt*;[30] and Kenneth Hamilton's chapter on Liszt in *The Nineteenth Century Symphony*.[31] Nonetheless, the passage on *Hamlet* from this latter chapter is of great relevance because it contains a reading of the work, based on original sources, not previously considered in Liszt literature. This thesis aims to build on this.

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[26] See Eduard Hanslick, 'Liszt's Symphonic Poems' in *Hanslick's Music Criticisms*, trans. Henry Pleasants (New York: Dover Publications, 1988).
[27] See Richard Wagner, 'On Liszt's Symphonic Poems' in *Richard Wagner's Prose Works* Vol. 3, trans. Williams Ashton Ellis (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1894).
[28] See Felix Draeseke, 'Franz Liszt's Nine Symphonic Poems' in Christopher Gibbs and Dana Gooley *op. cit*.
[29] See Franz Liszt, 'Berlioz and his "Harold" Symphony', in *Source Readings in Music History* Vol. 5 ed. Oliver Strunk (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1965).
[30] See Reeves Shulstad, 'Liszt's symphonic poems and symphonies' in *The Cambridge Companion to Liszt* ed. Kenneth Hamilton (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 206-222.
[31] See Kenneth Hamilton 'Liszt*'* in *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony* ed. D. Kern Holoman (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997), 142-162.

Detailed studies of the symphonic poems are evidently rare. Perhaps this is a residual effect of the labels of superficiality[32] and formlessness which have plagued Liszt's work. The only book-length study in the English language is *The Symphonic Poems of Franz Liszt* by Keith T. Johns. This posthumous publication is not without its flaws. Rather than offering a detailed analytical investigation, the author devotes half of the book to a reception history of the symphonic poems only spanning the years 1855-61. It therefore does not include performances of *Hamlet*, as the premier had to wait until 1876.[33] Most of the space devoted to musical discussion is taken up discussing 'quasi-traditional musical topics'[34] in Liszt's music, such as 'Lament, Mourning, Death, and the Funeral March', without otherwise addressing Liszt's treatment of programmaticism. This does not leave much room for discussing individual pieces. Consequently, the pages devoted to *Hamlet* go into little detail, and largely repeat Humphrey Searle's overview of the piece in *The Music of Liszt*.

There are several articles on the symphonic poems that examine the form and programme of particular pieces, but few consider *Hamlet*. Tellingly, Saffle's survey of the Liszt literature: *Franz Liszt: A Guide to Research*[35] notes only two articles on *Hamlet*, whereas five are listed on *Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne*,[36] highlighting *Hamlet*'s comparative neglect. Unfortunately, articles that are concerned with *Hamlet* often reveal more about the authors' personal responses to the work than Liszt's intentions. Steven Vande Moortele's 'Form, Program, and Deformation in Liszt's *Hamlet*' published in 2006 is illustrative of how the piece is still being misunderstood. Moortele forces the work into sonata form, overlooking Ramann's account of her discussion of *Hamlet* with Liszt. Equally, Edward W. Murphy, in his 'A Detailed Program for Liszt's *Hamlet*',[37] does not appear interested in, or even aware of, Liszt's own comments. He instead offers his own imaginative view of the narrative aspects of the work. Highly subjective in nature, this latter study contributes little to our

[32] Michael Saffle, (2004) *op. cit.*, 8.
[33] Derek Watson, *op. cit.*, 104.
[34] Keith T. Johns, *op. cit.*, 17.
[35] A new edition of this book is shortly to be published by Routledge.
[36] Michael Saffle, (2004) *op. cit.*, 410.
[37] See Edward W. Murphy, 'A Detailed Program for Liszt's *Hamlet*', *Journal of the American Liszt Society*, 29 (1991), 42-60.

understanding of Liszt's response to *Hamlet* and his compositional processes. Further examination of *Hamlet* might serve to correct these misconceptions and to give the work the attention it deserves.

Chapter One: Liszt's Shakespeare

Liszt's hunger for literature coincided with his friendships with many of the greatest poets, thinkers, and artists of the day. From 1830 he frequented fashionable Parisian salons that honoured the artistic and intellectual elite, and his correspondence shows that he became personally acquainted with Balzac, Sainte-Beuve, Alfred de Musset, Heinrich Heine, Lamartine, Victor Hugo, and Delacroix, among several others. These men became strongly associated with French literary Romanticism, and Marion Bauer provides an apt description of their shared ideals: 'They were individualists, studying their own emotions and experiences, abolishing classical forms and traditions, freeing the imagination, seeking to express the subjective and return to "real life"'.[1] Such ideals can be found in Victor Hugo's preface to his play *Cromwell*, where he set out his thoughts on the role of art. Hugo believed that art should take real life as its subject: 'Le théâtre est un point d'optique. Tout ce qui existe dans le monde, dans l'histoire, dans la vie, dans l'homme, tout doit et peu s'y réfléchir, mais sous la baguette magique de l'art.'[2] But Hugo did not believe that art should simply seek to reproduce real life—it could not anyway. Instead, art should amplify real life:

> D'autres, ce nous semble, l'ont déjà dit: le drame est un miroir où se réfléchit la nature. Mais ci se miroir est un miroir ordinaire, une surface plane et unie, il ne renverra des objets qu'une image terne et sans relief, fidèle, mais décolorée: on sait ce que la couleur et la lumière perdent à la reflexion simple. Il faut donc que le drame soit un miroir de concentration qui, loin de les affaiblir, ramasse et condense les rayons colorants, qui fasse d'une lueur une lumière une flamme.[3]

Some of these principles can also be applied to Liszt who was proud to declare his endeavours to 'convey in music some of my most powerful sensations and most vivid perceptions', music which would not be 'submitted to the constraint of any customary form'.[4] It is known that Liszt read many works by his 'Romantic' friends, and clearly he also adhered to many of their beliefs.

Liszt's friendship with this group coincided with the explosion of Shakespeare onto the stage of continental Europe, which, as we will see, was a highly significant event both for the Romantics

[1] Marion Bauer, 'The Literary Liszt', *The Musical Quarterly*, 22 (1936), 298.
[2] Victor Hugo, *Cromwell* (Paris: Ambroise Dupont et Cie, 1828), xl.
[3] *Ibid*., xxxix-xl.
[4] Franz Liszt, 'Foreword', *Album d'un Voyageur* (Vienna: Tobias Haslinger, 1842).

and for Liszt. This chapter will provide an overview of the wider context of the European Shakespeare cult, before demonstrating that Liszt's personal knowledge of Shakespeare was substantial by the time he came to write *Hamlet*. The argument will be based primarily on an analysis of Liszt's letters, which will document his references to reading a wide range of Shakespeare plays and contemporary analyses of some of these, as well as his references to attending particular performances, and it will examine the translations with which Liszt was familiar through his reading and through attending the theatre. In this way the chapter will play a contextual role for the entire thesis.

Shakespeare and the 'Romantics'

Shakespeare was first introduced to France during the mid-eighteenth century by French exiles, such as Voltaire and Antoine François Prévost, on their return from England.[5] Their reports, such as Prévost's positive articles on current views of Shakespeare in England published in the weekly Parisian review *Le Pour et Contre*, initiated a public fascination with everything English. Concurrently, Germany saw the beginnings of a similar absorption in Shakespeare, whose appeal particularly captivated those associated with the Sturm und Drang movement. This was characterised by 'an extreme emphasis on an anti-rational, subjective approach to all art'.[6] Goethe and Schiller, originally proponents of Sturm und Drang, admired Shakespeare,[7] and, although they later had reservations about the Bard's works, they did stage some of his plays at the Weimar Court Theatre.[8] As in France, Shakespeare's popularity grew, and his works were staged throughout Germany. They were still in the repertoire when Liszt moved to Weimar in 1848.

Shakespeare became so fashionable in France that several of his plays were performed in their original language at the Odéon by Kemble's visiting English company in 1827 and '28. Barzun writes

[5] John Pemble, *Shakespeare Goes to Paris: How the Bard Conquered France* (London: Hambledon and London, 2005), 2.
[6] Bruce Alan Brown and Daniel Heartz, 'Sturm und Drang' *Grove Music Online*, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/27035?q=Sturm+und+Drang&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit, accessed 29 June 2009.
[7] John Pemble, *op. cit.*, 7.
[8] Simon Williams, *Shakespeare on the German Stage* Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 88.

that, 'everyone in Paris who had a name or hoped to have one went to the Odéon to see *Hamlet* and *Romeo*'.[9] He lists Delacroix, Hugo, Vigny, Dumas, and Sainte-Beuve amongst those present. Famously, Berlioz, also part of the 'Romantic' circle, attended the 1827 performance of *Hamlet*, and his admiration for Harriet Smithson's portrayal of Ophelia marked the beginning of his obsession with the actress.[10] Berlioz was profoundly moved by the 'power and vitality' of *Hamlet*,[11] and the impact of Shakespeare was to stay with him for the rest of his life.

Eleanor Perényi's assumption that Liszt attended the Kemble Shakespeare performances along with his other 'Romantic' friends[12] is problematic. The fifteen-year-old Liszt had neither yet acquired his thirst for literature, nor his fashionable friends; he spent much of 1827 on tour with his father in Switzerland and England.[13] On 28th August Liszt's father died and was buried the next day. Liszt returned to Paris to live with his mother. He spent most of his time giving piano lessons to support her, and his reading during this period was primarily of a spiritual nature.[14] Considering that Liszt's father had died just a couple of weeks prior to the Shakespeare performances, and the fact that Liszt was not yet acquainted with Shakespeare or the Romantic circle, it is highly unlikely that he would have attended the performances. The Kemble Company did return the following year, and so Liszt had another opportunity to see *Hamlet*, but again, it seems unlikely that he availed himself of this. When writing about the year 1828 Liszt biographers tend to focus on his long teaching hours and his ill-fated love affair with Caroline de Saint-Cricq,[15] the collapse of which affected him so badly that he withdrew from public view, so much so that *Le Corsaire* published his obituary.[16] No biographer mentions Liszt attending a specific Kemble Shakespeare production, and most date his

[9] Jacques Martin Barzun, *Berlioz and the Romantic Century* Vol. 1 (3rd Edition, New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1969), 85.
[10] Hector Berlioz, *The Memoirs of Hector Berlioz*, trans. David Cairns (London: Gollancz, 1969), 95-100.
[11] David Cairns, *Berlioz: 1803-1832: the Making of an Artist*, Vol. 1 (London: Andre Deutsch, 1989), 234.
[12] Eleanor Perényi, *Liszt: The Artist as Romantic Hero* (S.I.: Little Brown and Company, 1974), 33.
[13] Adrian Williams, *Portrait of Liszt By Himself and His Contemporaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 30-33.
[14] *Ibid*., 32.
[15] Lina Ramann, *Franz Liszt*: *Artist and Man, 1811-1840* Vol.1, trans. E. Cowdery (London: Allen, 1882), 179-205, Derek Watson, *Liszt* (The Master Musicians, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 22-23 and Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt* Vol. 1: *The Virtuoso Years, 1811-1847* (Rev. edn, London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1989), 129-136.
[16] Adrian Williams, *op. cit.* (1990), 34.

interest in Romantic French literature from after his affair with Caroline.[17] It therefore seems highly improbable that Liszt would have attended the 1827 performances, and perhaps unlikely that he was present for those in 1828.

Nonetheless, Liszt was soon to become part of the circle of young literary 'Romantics' who 'interpreted the coming of Shakespeare in religious terms',[18] believing that Shakespeare's work would, 'liberate French art from the shackles of Classicism.'[19] The contrast between the dignified, ceremonious, constrained performances of the French classical theatre style that was then in vogue and the Shakespearean emphasis on human experience and psychology, which encompassed even ugly or violent aspects of life, was profound. Considering the shared ideals of Liszt and the 'Romantics' (and also those of the Sturm und Drang school), the appeal of such shocking portrayals of 'real life' and subjective emotions in a form that mixed genres (comedy and tragedy, for example), and ignored the classical unities, seems natural. The 'Romantics' particularly identified with Hamlet; his melancholy view of the world, his yearnings and doubts, and his philosophising.[20] In view of Liszt's admiration for Chateaubriand's novel *René*, which became his 'exclusive reading for whole months',[21] and his identification with the protagonist René's sense of isolation from a world that did not understand him, his propensity for introspection, and his feelings of melancholy, it seems likely that Liszt too would have sympathised with Hamlet.

Many 'Romantic' works were inspired by *Hamlet* during this time, including Berlioz's 'Mort d'Ophélie' (composed in 1827, with Harriet Smithson still fresh in his mind) and 'March funèbre pour la dernière scène d'Hamlet' (1844). The 'Mort d'Ophélie' was adapted into two numbers: 'Chant de bonheur' and 'La harpe éolienne, souvenirs' to form part of the 'monodrama lyrique' *Lélio* (1831-2). *Lélio* was written as a sequel to *Symphonie Fantastique*. It consists of six orchestral numbers and a largely autobiographical monologue recited by an actor. Liszt knew it well and in 1834 wrote his

[17] Derek Watson, *op. cit.*, 24.
[18] David Cairns, *op. cit.*, 228.
[19] *Ibid*., 227.
[20] Helen Phelps Bailey, *Hamlet in France: from Voltaire to Laforgue* (Switzerland: Librairie Droz, 1964), 54.
[21] Lina Ramann, Vol.1, trans. E. Cowdery, *op. cit.* (1882), 209.

Grande fantaisie symphonique (a one-movement work for piano and orchestra) based on two of its numbers ('Le pêcheur' and 'Chant de brigands'). Although Liszt never published this work, it was performed at least twice in 1835 and 1836. Berlioz conducted on the latter occasion.[22] Liszt also later played the piano part for *Lélio* when it was performed during the 'Berlioz Week' he put on in Weimar in 1855, [23] a few years before composing his own work based on *Hamlet*. Many of Liszt's friends were fanatical about Shakespeare, and this naturally manifested itself in their work. Surely Liszt would have wanted to know what all the fuss was about, and perhaps the wealth of creativity that Shakespeare stimulated prompted him to consider the playwright as a source of inspiration for his own music. But, despite the frequent references to Shakespeare in Liszt's correspondence, there is nothing to suggest that he considered composing a Shakespeare-inspired work until the 1850s. Only in the essay 'Berlioz and his "Harold" Symphony' (1855) do we read 'Rich shafts of ore lie here awaiting the bold miner'[24] with reference to Shakespeare's work.

Liszt's Knowledge of Shakespeare

i. Reading Shakespeare

If Liszt did not attend the Kemble Shakespeare performances it still remains to be settled when his first encounter with Shakespeare and *Hamlet* actually was. Ben Arnold's study of references to literature in Liszt's letters states that Liszt first referred to Shakespeare in 1836, specifically *Much Ado About Nothing*.[25] Arnold also claims, astonishingly, that Liszt's first reading of *Hamlet* was in 1859.[26] Both of these dates are obviously incorrect. A letter written to his mother shows that Liszt owned the collected works of Shakespeare by 1835. This letter contains detailed instructions asking his mother to send him his 'Schakespeare [sic!] en anglais 1 vol.' and 'Schakespeare [sic!] (en

[22] Anna Celenza, 'Liszt's Piano Concerti: a Lost Tradition' in *The Cambridge Companion to Liszt*, ed. Kenneth Hamilton (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 158.
[23] Adrian Williams (ed.), *Franz Liszt Selected Letters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 367.
[24] Franz Liszt, 'Berlioz and his "Harold" Symphony', in *Source Readings in Music History* Vol. 5 ed. Oliver Strunk (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1965), 129.
[25]Ben Arnold, 'Liszt as Reader and Intellectual' in Michael Saffle (ed.), *Liszt and His World* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1998), 60.
[26] *Ibid*., 60.

français), 2 vols.'[27] among several other titles. In fact, Liszt's knowledge of Shakespeare probably coincided with the beginning of his friendship with Berlioz. Liszt first introduced himself to Berlioz on 4th December 1830, the night before attending the premier of *Symphonie fantastique*.[28] Berlioz recalled that the conversation soon turned to literature: 'I spoke to him of Goethe's *Faust*, which he confessed he had not read, but about which he was soon as enthusiastic as I. We felt an immediate affinity...'[29] Considering Berlioz's love of Shakespeare and his burgeoning relationship with Harriet Smithson, it is probable that he also would have recommended Shakespeare.

As many of his friends enjoyed discussing Shakespeare, it seems natural that Liszt would have wanted to appear knowledgeable about the playwright, and would have wished to participate in contemporary debates. Indeed, given the circles in which he moved, and the reputation he wanted to create as a serious artist, this seems a necessity. In view of its popularity among his friends, and its reputation as one of Shakespeare's greatest works, it seems likely that *Hamlet* would have been one of the first Shakespeare plays that Liszt would have known well. His letters to Marie d'Agoult from the early 1830s contain (sometimes incorrect) quotations from *Hamlet*. A letter to Marie written in Paris between January and April 1833 contains the line 'Pour moi, il n'y a plus que de l'absynthe!'[30] Serge Gut and Jacqueline Bellas regard this as Liszt's mistranslation of Hamlet's line 'That's Wormwood, wormwood' in Act III, Scene ii.[31] Liszt, therefore, seems to have read an English edition of *Hamlet* by 1833. He correctly quoted Hamlet's lines to Horatio in Act I, Scene v in another letter to Marie. The date of this is uncertain, but it is likely to have been written during the winter of 1834 or 1835:

> Je suppose que la réponse d'Horatio a un peu contrarié notre chère malade, peut-être même les *suites* en seront-elles fâcheuses – espérons pourtant que tout cela se remettra au mieux.
> There are more things in heaven...[32]

Liszt continued to quote *Hamlet* during the 1840s. In December 1840 he wrote to Marie: 'Un mot sublime de Shakespeare: 'Tu me prends pour un fou. Moi, je vous prends pour un homme, *who*

[27] Klára Hamburger (ed.), *Franz Liszt Briefwechsel mit seiner Mutter* (Eisenstadt, 2000), 64-68.
[28] Adrian Williams, *op. cit.* (1990), 42.
[29] *Ibid*., 42.
[30] Serge Gut and Jacqueline Bellas (eds.), *Correspondance Franz Liszt Marie d'Agoult* (Paris: Fayard, 2001), 50.
[31] *Ibid*., 50.
[32] *Ibid*., 190.

circumvent [sic] *God!*'[33] This quotation from Act V, Scene i, seems a particular favourite of Liszt's, for he quoted it again to Marie the following year: 'Le mot de Shakespeare est—*Circumvent God.*'[34] Finally, a letter to Marie in 1842 contains the quotation, 'To die, to sleep'[35] from Hamlet's soliloquy in Act III, scene i.

Hamlet is in fact the Shakespeare play quoted most often by Liszt, suggesting that it was a favourite, and the one with which he was most familiar. He occasionally quoted from the others, providing further clues to which plays he knew. He referred to *Much Ado About Nothing* in a letter to George Sand in 1836[36] (this is probably what Arnold mistakes as Liszt's first reference to Shakespeare), whilst to Princess Wittgenstein in 1857 he quoted the more obscure Cymbeline: 'Hang there like fruit my soul, Till the tree die!'[37] There are several other examples spanning his entire life, demonstrating that Liszt's enthusiasm for Shakespeare never left him. Moreover, his ability to quote a range of plays provides further evidence that Liszt's knowledge of Shakespeare was considerable.

ii. Analyses

During the nineteenth century several analyses of Shakespeare and his plays were published; some by figures associated with Romanticism. Given his personal acquaintance with this circle, and his admiration for many of the writers associated with it, Liszt must have been aware of some of these. He definitely knew Victor Hugo's detailed essay on Shakespeare because he quoted it in a letter to Agnes Street-Klindworth: 'If I had to write a book on Wagner, I should gladly take for an epigraph this remark of Victor Hugo's about Shakespeare: "I admire *everything*—I admire like a brute."'[38] Liszt also read some analyses from outside the 'Romantic' circle. He wrote to Princess Wittgenstein in 1851, 'Have you Gervinus's *Shakespeare*? If you haven't yet bought it, don't—for you will find it

[33] *Ibid*., 718.
[34] *Ibid*., 738.
[35] Adrian Williams, *op. cit.*, (1998), 182.
[36] *Ibid*., 53.
[37] *Ibid*., 443.
[38] *Ibid*., 678.

here.'[39] This comprehensive work was published between 1849 and '52,[40] therefore Liszt must have bought the book as soon as it was published, revealing a keen interest in the contemporary Shakespeare debate. Here we find analyses of each of the plays, a contextualisation, and a discussion of issues such as Shakespeare's morality, his inattention to rules, and his sense of beauty.[41] Finally, Liszt enjoyed attending a lecture given by Dingelstedt in 1859 on the performance practices of Shakespeare's day.[42] Clearly Liszt was sufficiently interested in Shakespeare to be motivated to read essays on his life and works, and to attend such lectures. He made efforts to cultivate and supplement his already thorough knowledge of Shakespeare by keeping abreast of contemporary opinions and interpretations.

iii. Performances

Documenting the Shakespeare performances that Liszt actually attended is essential in evaluating the extent of his knowledge of the playwright, but also problematic, simply because there may well have been performances that Liszt attended but which he did not mention in letters. The first Shakespeare performance Liszt mentions was a recital given by Harriet Smithson at a benefit concert, in which Liszt also performed, on 24 November 1833[43]: 'Berlioz's concert has been metamorphosed into a Grand Benefit Performance...Miss Smithson will give us an act from *Hamlet*'.[44] According to John R. Elliot, Jr., Harriet normally gave Ophelia's mad scene at benefits[45], so it is likely that Liszt saw her perform this. During the years before Weimar, Liszt's letters do not mention his attending any Shakespeare performances, aside from this recital. Perhaps this is to be expected, as much of his time during those years was spent touring. From 1848 Liszt's position as Kapellmeister at the Weimar Court Theatre made him responsible for the music at most theatrical productions given there, and,

[39] *Ibid*., 309.
[40] *Ibid*., 309.
[41] G. G. Gervinus, *Shakespeare Commentaries*, trans. F. E. Bunnett, 2 Vols. (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1863).
[42] Adrian Williams, *op. cit.* (1998), 476.
[43] *Ibid*., 10.
[44] *Ibid*., 20.
[45] John R. Elliott, Jr., 'The Shakespeare Berlioz Saw', *Music and Letters*, 57:3 (1976), 302.

accordingly, his references to theatre-going became more frequent. Perhaps this repeated Weimar exposure to Shakespeare influenced his decision to compose *Hamlet*.

Though Weimar was relatively small, its unique literary history established it as a cultural centre capable of attracting famous visiting actors and large audiences. The first Shakespeare performance of the Weimar years referred to by Liszt in his letters was such a 'guest appearance': Dawison's *Hamlet* in January 1856.[46] There is evidence in Eckhardt and Liepsch's *Franz Liszts Weimarer Bibliothek* that confirms that Liszt saw *Hamlet* in Weimar before this, on 19 December 1847. This publication includes a reproduction of a handwritten inventory of Liszt's Weimar library. Among the books is *Shakespeare-Gallerie, Illustrationen zu Shakespeare's Dramatischen Werken* (Leipzig, 1847).[47] This volume was a present to Liszt from B. F. Voigt, a publisher and bookseller in Weimar. On the character list for *Hamlet*, Voigt made a handwritten note of the actors from the December 1847 performance,[48] which would suggest that they both attended. On this occasion the well-known actor Josef Wagner performed the role of Hamlet.

As is the custom today, any performance of *Hamlet* that Liszt did attend would have been cut substantially. John R. Elliott, Jr. writes that the character of Fortinbras was omitted entirely from the Kemble productions. In fact, this was a traditional cut, made for practical reasons to shorten the play.[49] Even today Fortinbras often disappears for the same reason. The effect of the elimination of Fortinbras would have been to 'throw the character of Hamlet himself into even higher relief than it already possessed',[50] to remove the wider political context of the play, and to hide the contrast between Fortinbras, who acts, and Hamlet, who procrastinates. The Kemble production of *Hamlet* ended with Hamlet dying in Horatio's arms,[51] rather than with Fortinbras returning from war and assuming the throne of Denmark. Similarly, the playbill from Dawison's Weimar production also

[46] Adrian Williams, *op. cit*. (1998), 397.
[47] Maria Eckhardt and Evelyn Liepsch, *Franz Liszts Weimarer Bibliothek* (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1999), 72.
[48] *Ibid*., 104.
[49] John R. Elliott, Jr., *op. cit.*, 295.
[50] *Ibid*., 295.
[51] *Ibid*., 296.

shows that Fortinbras was cut. All the other major characters, however, were included. It is probable, therefore, that most of the *Hamlet* productions Liszt was likely to have seen omitted Fortinbras.

Figure 1: Playbill from Weimar production of *Hamlet* 9 January 1856.

Anfang dieſer Vorſtellung um 6 Uhr.

Hof-Theater.

Weimar, Mittwoch den 9. Januar 1856.

Bei aufgehobenem Abonnement:

Hamlet,

Prinz von Dänemark.

Trauerſpiel in fünf Akten, nach Shakespeare, von Schlegel.

Claudius,	König von Dänemark,	Hr. Wolkowa.
Hamlet,	Sohn des vorigen und Neffe des gegenwärtigen Königs,	* * *
Polonius,	Oberkämmerer,	Hr. Genaſt.
Horatio,	Hamlets Freund,	Hr. Jendersky.
Laertes,	Sohn des Polonius,	Hr. Grans.
Roſenkranz, Güldenſtern,	im Gefolge des Königs,	Hr. Lemaiſtre. Hr. Knopp.
Marcellus, Bernardo,	Offiziere,	Hr. Weßnig. Hr. Schmeißer.
Der Geiſt von Hamlets Vater,		Hr. Höfer.
Gertrude,	Königin von Dänemark, Hamlets Mutter,	Fr. Stör.
Ophelia,	Tochter des Polonius,	Frl. Döllinger.
Erſter Zweiter	Todtengräber,	Hr. Franke. Hr. Hettſtedt.
Ein Schauſpieler,		Hr. Häſer.
Franciſco,	ein Soldat,	Hr. Koch.

Perſonen im Schauſpiel:

Der König,	Hr. Stromeyer.
Die Königin,	Fr. Hettſtedt.
Lucianus,	Hr. Häſer.

Herren und Damen vom Hofe, Offiziere, Pagen, Schauſpieler.

* * * Hr. Vogumil Dawiſon, vom Königlichen Hof-Theater zu Dresden — Hamlet — als Gaſt.

Preiſe der Plätze:

Fremden-Loge	1 Thlr. 10 Sgr.	Parterre-Loge	— Thlr. 25 Sgr.
Balkon	1 „ — „	Parterre	— „ 15 „
Sperrſitze	1 „ — „	Gallerie-Loge	— „ 10 „
Parket	— „ 20 „	Gallerie	— „ 7½ „

Anfang um 6 Uhr. Ende gegen halb 10 Uhr.

Die Billets gelten nur am Tage der Vorſtellung, wo ſie gelöſt worden.

Der Zutritt auf die Bühne, bei den Proben wie bei den Vorſtellungen, iſt nicht geſtattet.

Das Theater wird um 5 Uhr geöffnet.

Die freien Entréen ſind ungültig.

Dawison's visit to Weimar in December 1856 was by no means his only one. He returned to the town in April 1857. On 2 April he played the role of Bonjour in *Wiener in Paris*, and on 4 April he played Richard in *Richard III*.[52] Although this performance is not mentioned in Liszt's letters, Liszt probably seized the opportunity to attend. Dawison's next visit to Weimar was in September 1857 to perform at the celebrations for the late Carl August's 100th birthday and the inauguration of the Goethe and Schiller monument. This was a three-day programme, for which Liszt and the Princess were present. It even included a concert made up entirely of Liszt's music.[53] Over the course of the three days Dawison appeared as Phillip II in a performance of the third act of Schiller's *Don Carlos*, as Antonio in the second act of Goethe's *Torquato Tasso* (Emil Devrient played Tasso), and as Mephistopheles in the fourth act of Goethe's *Faust*.[54] The performance of excerpts of plays was commonplace on such occasions. Peter Kollek states that during these occasions Dawison mostly performed climactic situations from great poetry and drama.[55] He often elected to perform monologues in order to avoid having to perform with an under-rehearsed ensemble[56], although undoubtedly this gratified his ego as well. When writing to Agnes Street-Klindworth about the occasion Liszt told her that the 'theatre performances, [were] lent brilliance on this occasion by Dawison, and Mesdemoiselles Seebach and Fuhr'.[57] Dawison performed at Weimar for the final time in November 1858. An unpublished letter from the Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv shows that he wrote to Liszt, using the familiar 'Du' form, informing him that he would be coming to Weimar to play the part of Franz Moor in *Die Räuber* on 10 November.[58] Liszt may also have attended this performance. It is likely, therefore, that Liszt had experienced Dawison's acting several times before he wrote his symphonic poem.

[52] Adolf Bartels, *Chronik des Weimarischen Hoftheaters 1817-1907* (Weimar, 1908), 118.
[53] Pauline Pocknell (ed.), *Franz Liszt and Agnes Street-Klindworth: a Correspondence* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1999), 134-5.
[54] Adolf Bartels, *op. cit.*, 120.
[55] Peter Kollek, *Bogumil Dawison: Porträt und Deutung eines genialen Schauspielers* (Kastellaun, Henn, 1978), 135.
[56] *Ibid*., 135.
[57] Pauline Pocknell *op. cit.*, 134.
[58] Unpublished letter from Bogumil Dawison to Franz Liszt, October 1858, Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv, Weimar, Signatur GSA 59/12,5.

Bartels's *Chronik des Weimarischen Hoftheaters 1817-1907* demonstrates that Liszt would have had the opportunity to see a wide variety of Shakespeare plays performed by the regular company of actors at Weimar. During his residence there were performances of *Coriolanus, A Comedy of Errors*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Julius Caesar*, *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry IV*, *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night*, *A Winter's Tale, King Lear*, and *Richard III*.[59] Liszt did not tend to refer to any of these regular performances in his letters, but he did occasionally mention Franz von Dingelstedt's Weimar productions. Liszt had supported the appointment of Dingelstedt as Weimar's Intendant (general manager of the theatre).[60] The latter was a talented producer who put on successful performances at Weimar of *The Winter's Tale* and Shakespeare's Histories. The presence of such a gifted director and Shakespeare enthusiast must have encouraged Liszt to attend the productions. In June 1857 he remarked upon a performance of *The Tempest* organised by Dingelstedt in Weimar.[61] He also praised the repeat of some of the Shakespeare Histories in Weimar in 1877 writing, 'we have had here 4 successive evenings of Shakespeare's histories, *Richard III*, *Henry IV*, and *V*...It is the most brilliant feather in Dingelstedt's dramatic cap at Weimar and in Vienna...Those in Weimar interested me keenly—I followed them while reading the printed text.'[62] Presumably this would have been a Dingelstedt translation, considering it was his production and he had published a series of Shakespeare translations by 1867.[63] Liszt also mentioned that Dingelstedt had mounted 'the complete cycle of the 7 historical plays from *Richard II* and the *Henrys* to *Richard III*' in Weimar several years earlier.[64] This was in 1864, a few years after *Hamlet* was composed. Liszt's letters also occasionally contain references to performances he had seen outside Weimar. The success of Dingelstedt's production of *The Winter's Tale* in Berlin in 1861 was mentioned, although it is not clear whether Liszt himself was present.[65] But this production was such a celebrated success[66] that it is highly probable that Liszt attended a performance of it, either at Weimar or elsewhere. Finally, in

[59] Adolf Bartels, *op. cit.*, 88-135.
[60] Adrian Williams, *op. cit.* (1998), 963.
[61] La Mara, *Franz Liszt's Briefe* Vol. 3 (Leipzig, 1893-1905), 91.
[62] Adrian Williams, *op. cit.* (1998), 817.
[63] Dirk Delabastita and Lieven d'Hulst (eds.), *European Shakespeares: Translating Shakespeare in the Romantic Age* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1993), 52.
[64] Adrian Williams, *op. cit.* (1998), 817.
[65] *Ibid*., 539.
[66] *Ibid*., 963.

February 1874 Liszt told the Princess, 'Apponyi dragged me off yesterday evening to *King Lear*, performed by an Italian company whose principal actor is Rossi'.[67] Assuredly, there would have been other evenings in the theatre for Liszt that did not appear in his correspondence.

iv. Translations

As this thesis examines whether the form of Liszt's *Hamlet* is influenced by the narrative of the play, it is vital to determine which translations Liszt knew, and how similar they were to the *Hamlet* we know today. This could have a considerable impact on the sequence of events and on the selection of characters, which, in turn, could affect the structure of the piece. Happily, an investigation of secondary literature on nineteenth-century Shakespeare translations combined with an examination of Liszt's correspondence elucidates fairly conclusively which translations he knew.

As different versions of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* exist in English, it is essential to ascertain which would have been the basis of contemporary translations. Modern editions of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* have the choice of basing themselves on three different versions of the play: the first quarto (Q1), printed in 1603; the second quarto (Q2), printed in 1604/5; and the First Folio, printed in 1623.[68] Q1 is much shorter and more plot-driven than Q2 and F, and some important events occur in an unusual order: Hamlet's 'To be or not to be' soliloquy and the subsequent scene with Ophelia, where he tells her, 'Get thee to a nunnery', are in Act 2, Scene ii, rather than in Act 3, Scene i, as in Q2 and F.[69] Today Q1 is generally deemed less reliable than Q2 and F. It is thought that it was put together from recollections of actors and audience members, and not by Shakespeare himself.[70] According to Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, and David Scott Kastan, the editors of the Arden Shakespeare, 'Scholars have accepted both Q2 and F as authorial versions, with recent opinion inkling towards

[67] *Ibid*., 774
[68] William Shakespeare, *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, and David Scott Kastan (Walton-on-Thames: Nelson, 1998), 291.
[69] William Shakespeare, *The Arden Shakespeare, Hamlet The Texts of 1603 and 1623*, Ann Thomson and Neil Taylor eds. (London: Thomson Learning, 2006), 92-97.
[70] William Shakespeare, ed. Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, and David Scott Kastan, *op. cit.*, 291.

seeing F as Shakespeare's revision of Q2.'[71] Therefore, 'Most editions of *Hamlet* virtually ignore Q1 but include all the lines from both Q2 and F, providing a composite or 'conflated' text.'[72] Q1 was rediscovered and published in English in 1825,[73] and although this was seen as an important event in France (French Shakespeare enthusiasts valued its simplicity and saw it as a valuable source of authentic performance information[74]), it was not translated into French until 1859 by François-Victor Hugo. Therefore, Liszt could not have known the French translation of Q1 when he wrote his symphonic poem.

It is likely that Liszt was familiar with three different translations of *Hamlet*. The first is the Le Tourneur version used at the Kemble Shakespeare performances,[75] which was based on Q2 and F. It follows the same sequence of events, with the same characters, as in the *Hamlet* we know today.[76] Since Harriet Smithson's knowledge of French was negligible,[77] the extracts from *Hamlet* she performed in Liszt's presence would have been given in English, whilst audiences followed the Le Tourneur translation.

Although Liszt would have known the Le Tourneur translation it is not certain that he owned it. In a letter to Marie d'Agoult of August 1840, Liszt instructed her to 'Achetez les traductions de Benjamin La Roche de Byron et Shakespeare, 1 volume Byron, 2 volumes Shakespeare'.[78] This translation: *Oeuvres dramatiques de Shakespeare*, published in Paris from 1839-1840 is based on Le Tourneur but is more accurate, capturing Shakespeare's meaning and tone more successfully with few errors and no cuts.[79] It has, however, been criticised for resorting to paraphrase to the detriment of the

[71] *Ibid*., 291.
[72] *Ibid*., 291.
[73] Helen Phelps Bailey, *op. cit.*, 66.
[74] *Ibid*., 66.
[75] Helen Phelps Bailey, *op. cit*., 75.
[76] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, trans. Pierre Le Tourneur (Paris, pub. unknown, 1881).
[77] Eleanor Perényi, *op. cit.*, 73.
[78] Serge Gut and Jacqueline Bellas*, op. cit.*, 629.
[79] *Ibid*., 75.

imagery.[80] From this, Liszt would, therefore, have experienced largely the same play we experience today, but perhaps would have missed some of the poetic nuances. Again, the fact that he recommended this translation when it had only recently been published shows that he kept abreast of such things.

Finally, Liszt would have known the popular German Shakespeare translations begun by August Wilhelm Schlegel in 1797 and completed under the supervision of Ludwig Tieck by 1833. These translations were praised for their Romantic poetic beauty,[81] but this has also provoked a criticism that Schlegel regularised 'expressive metrical irregularity' to create elegance at the expense of meaning and imagery.[82] The playbill from the 1856 performance of *Hamlet* in Weimar announces that the Schlegel-Tieck translation was used: 'Hamlet, Prinz von Dänemark. Trauerspiel in fünf Akten, nach Shakespeare, von Schlegel'.[83] It is likely, therefore, that any discussion Liszt had with Dawison about *Hamlet* was based on this translation. In summary, both the French and German translations that Liszt knew of *Hamlet* were largely similar to the *Hamlet* we know today, therefore, if the symphonic poem was shaped by the narrative, it can be assumed that it followed a familiar course.

Liszt's views on Shakespeare

Unfortunately, Liszt rarely offered a detailed account of his thoughts on Shakespeare's plays: in his letters he seldom goes further than expressing admiration. It is clear, however, that Shakespeare was one of his favourite authors: the quotations, the analyses and translations he owned, and the frequency with which he attended performances during the Weimar years are testament to this. Furthermore, Liszt wrote to Princess Wittgenstein in January 1869: 'I shall not overdo the theatre. It will be enough for me to go there once or twice a week, when Schiller, Goethe, Shakespeare, and

[80] *Ibid*., 76.
[81] Dirk Delabastita and Lieven d'Hulst, *op. cit.*, 47.
[82] *Ibid*., 48.
[83] See Figure 1.

Hebbel are performed; or great operas. The small game of the repertory is no concern of mine...'[84] Liszt never disclosed which of Shakespeare's plays he preferred and why, and the instances where he expresses his responses to or opinions on individual plays are rare. One such occasion was in connection with the aforementioned production of *King Lear* given by an Italian company. Suggestively, Liszt wrote that 'I...simply gave myself up to the poignant emotions of Shakespeare's drama',[85] revealing the typically 'Romantic' response, similar to that of his twenties, that seems to have remained with him throughout his life. Liszt refers to *Hamlet* most often in his correspondence, which suggests that it was one of his favourites, and, of course, it was the only one that inspired him to music. Furthermore, *Hamlet* is the one play about which he did express a detailed opinion—comments inseparable from his views on Dawison's portrayal of Hamlet.[86]

Conclusion

Given the fascination for Shakespeare that swept Europe during the 1820s-30s, and profoundly affected many of Liszt's close friends, it seems only natural that he too would have felt its influence. His letters provide an invaluable source of information, containing numerous clues which together provide an account of the extent to which he knew Shakespeare's works. The quotations from Shakespeare's plays, the references to his reading particular translations, to analyses he had come across and productions he had seen, reveal an image of Liszt the Shakespeare enthusiast with a considerable knowledge of the plays, coupled with a desire to cultivate this knowledge by attending various productions and reading different interpretations. It has been established that Liszt would have known *Hamlet* rather well in the Le Tourneur and La Roche translations by the time he saw Dawison's portrayal, and that Dawison used the Schlegel-Tieck translation. It has also been determined that all these translations were largely similar to the *Hamlet* we know today, which has important implications for the structure of Liszt's music. The next chapter will investigate Dawison's individual portrayal of *Hamlet*, and the importance this had for Liszt's music.

[84] Adrian Williams, *op. cit.* (1998), 697.
[85] *Ibid*., 774.
[86] *Ibid*., 397.

Chapter Two: Dawison's Hamlet

When writing about Liszt's *Hamlet* it is customary for scholars to quote a letter to Agnes Street-Klindworth written on 18 January 1856. Liszt enthused, 'On my return to Weimar I found Dawison there...His conception of the role of Hamlet is entirely new'.[1] The assumption is that Liszt attended Dawison's guest performance of *Hamlet* at the Weimar Court Theatre on 9 January that year. Dawison's conception of Hamlet is then easily associated with the composition of the symphonic poem two years later. Humphrey Searle tells us that *Hamlet* was 'written in 1858 as an overture to Shakespeare's play; Liszt had been greatly impressed by a performance of the play in Weimar with Bogumil Dawison in the title role',[2] whilst Keith T. Johns,[3] and Huré and Knepper[4] also state that Liszt attended this production and that it influenced the symphonic poem. Finally, Lina Ramann, whilst commenting that the exact inspiration for the symphonic poem can never be ascertained for sure, also drew the conclusion that it was highly probable that the piece was stimulated by this performance of Dawison's.[5] Indeed, as Liszt expressed such enthusiasm for Dawison's interpretation in the Klindworth letter, it does seem likely that further investigation of Dawison's acting style, would enable a greater understanding of Liszt's music. Accordingly this chapter will explore Dawison's portrayal of Hamlet and will assess why Liszt was drawn to it, arguing that certain aspects of it were associated with the figure of the romantic hero. It will then demonstrate that the influence of these features can indeed be traced in Liszt's symphonic poem, but that the connection between them and Dawison's actual stage performance of Hamlet is less direct than previous writers have believed.

Liszt and the Weimar Production of *Hamlet*

Dawison appeared at the Weimar Court Theatre as a guest from 9 to 14 January 1856. During this time he performed *Hamlet* on 9; Carlos in *Clavigo* on 11 followed by Bonjour in *Wiener in Paris*;

[1] Adrian Williams, (ed.), *Franz Liszt: Selected Letters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 397.
[2] Humphrey Searle, *The Music of Liszt* (2nd edn, New York: Dover Publications, 1966), 74.
[3] Keith T. Johns, *The Symphonic Poems of Franz Liszt* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1997), 74.
[4] Pierre-Antoine Huré et Claude Knepper (eds.), *Correspondance, Lettres choisies, presentées et annotées* (Paris: J. C. Lattès, 1987), 203.
[5] Lina Ramann, *Franz Liszt als Künstler und Mensch*, Vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1880-94), 294.

Mephistopheles in *Faust* on 13; and Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* on 14.[6] This seems an ambitious programme by modern standards, but it was in keeping with the customs of the time. Patrick Carnegy confirms that theatres 'had to put on huge repertoires to keep the public coming'.[7] The eighth February edition of the *Allgemeine Theater-Chronik* includes a short account of Dawison's visit. It was enormously popular. Dawison, moreover, was made to promise to return the following year.

Although scholars, as noted above, have made the natural assumption, based on the Klindworth letter, that Liszt attended this production, another letter to Princess Wittgenstein proves that he could not in fact have been present. He was in Berlin on 7 January attending the first performance of *Tannhäuser* and on 8 January (the day before *Hamlet* was performed) wrote to the Princess from Berlin, explaining that he had been invited to a court reception by the King, would be extending his stay in Berlin, and so would have to miss Dawison's *Hamlet*: 'Il est donc nécessaire que je reste jusqu'à demain, quelque regret que j'aie de manqué le Hamlet de Dawison.'[8] Basing her comments on several other Liszt letters, Pauline Pocknell confirms that 'Liszt returned to Weimar with his daughters on January 10'.[9] It is possible, therefore, that Liszt could have seen the three other Dawison performances, but he definitely missed *Hamlet*. Conceivably, he might have seen Dawison play Hamlet some other time, —certainly it was one of the latter's favourite roles and he performed it regularly.[10] But Chapter one has already established that if Liszt did see Dawison perform Hamlet it could not have been in Weimar, for Dawison did not perform any part of this play during any of his other guest appearances there. Although it is impossible to rule it out entirely, given Liszt's hectic travel schedule, it seems unlikely that Liszt ever saw Dawison perform Hamlet on the stage at all.

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[6] Adolf Bartels, *Chronik des Weimarischen Hoftheaters 1817-1907* (Weimar, 1908), 113.
[7] Patrick Carnegy, *Wagner and the Art of the Theatre* (New Haven, Connecticut; London: Yale University Press, 2006), 7.
[8] La Mara, *Franz Liszt's Briefe* Vol. 4 (Leipzig, 1893-1905), 295.
[9] Pauline Pocknell, *Franz Liszt and Agnes Street-Klindworth: a Correspondence* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1999), 82.
[10] Simon Williams, *German Actors of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: idealism, romanticism and realism* (Westport, Connecticut; London: Greenwood, 1985), 103.

Yet the enthusiasm that Liszt expressed in the Klindworth letter shortly after Dawison left Weimar clearly shows that Dawison's conception of Hamlet made a profound impression on Liszt. Liszt's words, 'À mon retour à Weymar j'y ai trouvé Dawisson'[11] followed by detailed comments about Dawison's ideas on Hamlet suggest that the two men met and discussed the play. Dawison may even have performed a few extracts for Liszt in private (and if he did, the soliloquies seem the obvious choice), to illustrate the points he made. Interestingly, it is also possible that the use of music in *Hamlet* was discussed, as Peter Kollek points out that Dawison placed great importance on choosing the music to which he acted: 'Dawison legte grossen Wert darauf, sich Schauspielmusiken selbst auszuwählen. Er gab solche auch in Auftrag, besonders während seines Engagements in Dresden.'[12] However, the Weimar performances were so popular that the orchestra pit was cleared to free up extra spaces for the audience[13], therefore there can only have been minimal music at these performances, if any at all, with the possible exception of the occasional stage trumpets and drums indicated in the stage directions (see the opening of Act I, Scene ii for example).

Dawison's Hamlet: The 'Romantic Hero'

Knowing that the two men spoke about Hamlet, and the impression that this made on Liszt, an investigation of Dawison's background, his acting style, and his ideas about the play must be of value in order to understand why Liszt identified with these ideas, even if he did not actually see Dawison perform the role on stage.

Liszt's meeting with Dawison seems to have marked the beginning of a friendship between the two men. They corresponded at least from 1857-60, and Dawison addressed Liszt affectionately in

[11] Pauline Pocknell, *op. cit.*, 322.
[12] Peter Kollek, *Bogumil Dawison: Porträt und Deutung eines genialen Schauspielers* (Kastellaun, Henn, 1978), 223-4.
[13] *Allgemeine Theater-Chronik*, (Leipzig, 1856, Nr. 19-21, 8 Februar), 80.

these letters as 'Mein vortrefflicher Freund!',[14] using the intimate 'Du' form to declare 'Ich bleibe Dir true und liebe Dich wie ein Bruder.'[15] It is easy to see why Liszt may have identified with Dawison: the two had much in common. They both came from relatively poor backgrounds, and had little formal education.[16] Perhaps more significantly, they both were drawn to and shared traits associated with the figure of the 'Romantic Hero'. Dawison was known as a virtuosic actor, largely for his vocal flexibility and range of facial expressions.[17] This made him particularly suited to 'dämonischen und leidenschaftlichen Rollen'[18]. In fact, an article from 1861 by Emil Knetschke on Dawison's acting suggested that his Hamlet contained 'eine Dosis mephistophelischen Wesens beigemischt.'[19] The image of the 'virtuoso'; 'the concept of the Artist as Hero, mastering sensational difficulties or having access, through his special sensibility, to heightened emotions'[20] was inherently linked to Romanticism, and Dawison's virtuosity attracted Liszt. In fact, Liszt wrote of Dawison that 'there is an affinity between his virtuosity and mine: in reproducing, he creates'.[21]

Liszt's dedication of his melodrama *Helge's Treue* to Dawison suggests not only that he held Dawison in high regard, but, given the content of the narrative of the melodrama, also that he saw him as a 'Romantic Hero'. The melodrama is a setting of a poem by Moritz Graf Strachwitz, based on a story from Norse mythology, which depicts the tragic fall of King Helge in battle, and the consequent death of his beloved maid Sigrun. Helge is taken to Valhalla and is tempted by a virgin, but rejects her

[14] La Mara, *Briefe hervorragender Zeitgenossen an Franz Liszt*, Vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1895, 1904), 147.
[15] *Ibid.*, 148.
[16] Joseph Kürschner, 'Bogumil Dawison' *Allgemeine deutsche Biographie*, http://mdz10.bib-bvb.de/~db/bsb00008362/images/index html?id=00008362&fip=88.107.233.119&no=&seite=790, accessed 10 August 2009.
[17] See Simon Williams, *op. cit.* (1985), 101-2, and Eduard Devrient, 'Tagbuchaufzeichnungen Eduard Devrients über Darstellungen Shakespearescher Rollen: Karl Seydelmann als Shylock; Bogumil Dawison als Hamlet', *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch*, 68 (1932), 144.
[18] Joseph Kürschner, 'Bogumil Dawison' *Allgemeine deutsche Biographie* , http://mdz10.bib-bvb.de/~db/bsb00008362/images/index html?id=00008362&fip=88.107.233.119&no=1&seite=791, accessed 10 August 2009.
[19] Emil Knetschke, 'Bogumil Dawison', *Deutsche Schaubühne*, 6 (1861), 58.
[20]Jim Samson, 'Romanticism', *Grove Music Online*, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e5729?q=romanticism&search=quick&pos=2&_start=1#firsthit, accessed 10 August 2009.
[21] Adrian Williams, *op. cit.* (1998), 397.

for Sigrun. He leaves Valhalla one last time to spend the night with Sigrun but, tragically, must return in the morning. Clearly the subject of the melodrama has many romantic themes: not only the figure of the romantic hero, but also the use of mythology, the supernatural, and tragic love. It is also highly reminiscent of the story of Wagner's *Die Walküre* and of the *Orpheus/Eurydice* legend that inspired another of Liszt's symphonic poems. The performance of melodramas, though now out of fashion, was very popular in the nineteenth century. Marian Wilson Kimber describes the form as 'a characteristically Romantic attempt to create a synthesis between words and music'.[22] It seems natural that Liszt would be drawn to such a genre. According to Dennis Kennedy, 'music is an essential part of high melodrama, as is athletic, expressive movement; stage setting will strive for visual and aural excitement to match the size and importance of the issues dramatized.'[23] Dawison's acting style would have been ideally suited to such performances.[24]

Wagner's comments on Liszt's *Hamlet*, recorded in Cosima Wagner's Diaries, are interesting in relation to the musical depiction of heroic figures: 'In the evening R. plays my father's *Hamlet* with Lusch as a piano duet and says it arouses the impression of a dishevelled tomcat lying there before him... Coming back to *Hamlet*, R. says: 'Musicians should not concern themselves with things that have nothing to do with them. Hamlet offers nothing to Musicians.'[25] Clearly Wagner did not believe *Hamlet* to be a suitable programmatic subject. Cosima did not record his reasons for this, yet it seems fair to speculate that *Hamlet* may have focussed too much on the vacillation of the protagonist, and not involved enough decisive action for Wagner to think it a suitable subject. A strong narrative would stop the work degenerating into 'mood music'—a charge that could be levelled at the opening of Liszt's *Hamlet* in particular, where a lengthy section of music simply sets the scene. Indeed,

[22] Marian Wilson Kimber, 'Reading Shakespeare, Seeing Mendelssohn: Concert Readings of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ca. 1850-1920', *The Musical Quarterly,* 89 (2006), 212.
[23] Dennis Kennedy (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of Theatre and Performance*, Vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 840.
[24] It is also known that Dawison performed another of Liszt's melodramas, *Leonore* in Prague in 1860, conducted by Hans von Bülow.
[25] Cosima Wagner, *Diaries*, Vol. ii, ed. Martin Gregor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack, trans. Geoffrey Skelton Collins (St James's Place: London, 1980), 1 May 1879, 300.

Wagner's criticisms of Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette* in 'On Liszt's Symphonic Poems' support this supposition. Wagner believed that the love scene was unsuccessful because it relied too much on a picture present in the artist's mind that the audience cannot see.[26]

Liszt's description of the modern hero in his essay 'Berlioz and His "Harold" Symphony', published a year before his encounter with Dawison, suggests that his conception of subjects suited to programme music differed to Wagner's, and provides some clues as to why he may have been susceptible to Dawison's interpretation of Hamlet: 'No longer does the poem aim to recount the exploits of the principal figure; it deals with affections active within his very soul. It has become far more important to show what the hero thinks than how he acts'.[27] Evidently, Liszt would have been drawn to an interpretation strongly based on the motivations of the character, and this is precisely what Dawison attempted. Simon Williams writes that Dawison 'preferred conflicted characters' and 'rescued many roles previously considered unplayable because of their difficult motivation'.[28] This was a trait also noticed by Emil Knetschke.[29] Dawison's ability to play such characters was attributed to the fact that he was an intellectual actor, basing his interpretations on his own analyses of the text. This sometimes led him to play well-known characters in an original way, as was the case with Hamlet.[30] Liszt seems to have been aware of Dawison's use of textual evidence to back up his interpretation. He wrote to Agnes Street-Klindworth that 'les previsions ménages par Shakespeare au rôle de Hamlet, ses intelligences et négociations avec l'Angleterre clairement denounces à la fin du Drame justifient pleinement à mon sens la conception de Dawisson'.[31] One can imagine Dawison explaining his conception of Hamlet to Liszt and backing it up with passages from the play. The example referred to here by Liszt shows that Dawison based his conception on those sections in the

[26] Richard Wagner, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works* Vol. 3, trans. Williams Ashton Ellis (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1894), 249.
[27] Franz Liszt, 'Berlioz and his "Harold" Symphony', in *Source Readings in Music History*, Vol. 5, ed. Oliver Strunk (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1965), 125.
[28] Simon Williams, *op. cit.* (1985), 102.
[29] Emil Knetschke, *op. cit.*, 58.
[30] Peter Kollek, *op. cit.*, 163-4.
[31] Pauline Pocknell, *op. cit.*, 322.

play where Hamlet appeared especially heroic. Hamlet's 'intelligences et négociations avec l'Angleterre' must refer to his escape from Rosencrantz and Guildernstern after being sent to England to his death, and his return to Denmark on a pirate ship mentioned in Act IV, Scene vii and Act V, Scene ii.

A new conception of Hamlet

Dawison's analysis of Hamlet led him to portray the character in a way that contrasted with popular portrayals of the time. Hamlet was portrayed almost without exception as a weak, sentimental dreamer, and as a procrastinator.[32] Liszt would have been aware of this partly through his acquaintance with the celebrated actor Emil Devrient, who was probably the most famous Hamlet of the time, and also because he had seen Josef Wagner, another well-known actor, perform the role.[33] Both men played Hamlet as the traditional indecisive dreamer.[34] Similarly, in the English performances of 1827 and 1828 Kemble transmuted Hamlet's anger and sarcasm into melancholy in his portrayal of the character.[35] Such portrayals of Hamlet are similar to Goethe's views of the play, set down in his novel *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*:

> The novel must go slowly forward; and the sentiments of the hero, by some means or another, must restrain the tendency of the whole to unfold itself and to conclude. The drama on the other hand, must hasten, and the character of the hero must press forward to the end; it does not restrain, but is restrained… These considerations led them back to the play of *Hamlet*, and the peculiarities of its composition. The hero in this case, it was observed, is endowed more properly with sentiments than with a character; it is events alone that push him on; and accordingly the piece has in some measure the expansion of a novel.[36]

Dawison's acting style was the complete opposite of Devrient's. Dawison was 'praised for fieriness and natural speech',[37] noted for his 'aggression and energy',[38] and portrayed 'embittered experience'[39] with the 'immediacy and potency' of his stage presence.[40] Whereas Devrient was

[32] Peter Kollek, *op. cit.*, 163.
[33] See Chapter One, 18.
[34] Peter Kollek, *op. cit.*, 163.
[35] John R. Elliott, Jr., 'The Shakespeare Berlioz saw', *Music and Letters*, 57:3 (1976), 296.
[36] J. W. von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, Book V (The Harvard Classics Shelf of Fiction, 1917), 185-6.
[37] Simon Williams, *op. cit.* (1985), 100.
[38] *Ibid.*, 101.
[39] *Ibid*., 102.

'passive'[41] and represented 'slow, agreeable, prudent pathos'[42] with 'charm and elegance'.[43] Accordingly, his Hamlet was very different to Devrient's, and to Goethe's conception of the character. Dawison was actually criticised by the critic Emil Knetschke for this, because the latter perceived passiveness, melancholy, and dreamy meandering as qualities integral to Shakespeare's hero. He noted that they were missing from Dawison's portrayal:

> Obgleich derselbe freilich die ganze Schärfe von Dawison's genialen Verstande offenbart, so fehlt ihm doch die Passivität eines hinhangenden träumerischen Gemüths, die z. B Ludwig Dessoir's Erscheinung in der Rolle einen so unnennbaren Zauber verleiht, jene holde Schwermuth, die nach des Dichters Willen dem Dänenprinzen doch wohl von Natur aus eigen sein und den Grundzug seines Charakters bilden soll.[44]

Instead, Dawison's interpretation was based on long neglected qualities of the role, such as references to Hamlet as a warrior, skilled in swordsmanship.[45] The result of this interpretation was a Hamlet who, according to Simon Williams, was 'aggressive, not overcome by inner weakness' and 'active and certain in his goals'.[46] Instead of procrastinating through indecision, Dawison's Hamlet waited because he wanted to consider all the possible consequences of the act of murdering Claudius.[47] Again, this would fit with Liszt's ideas on the modern hero in his essay 'Berlioz and His "Harold" Symphony'.

Liszt's comments on his meeting with Dawison show that he admired this interpretation and was aware of the originality of it, and the detail that he goes into suggests that he was summarising Dawison's own words:

> À mon retour à Weymar j'y ai trouvé Dawisson...Sa conception du rôle de Hamlet est tout à fait neuve. Il ne le prend pas comme un songe creux succombant sous le poids de sa mission ainsi qu'on est convenu de l'envisager depuis la theorie de Goethe (dans *Wilhelm Meister*) mais bien comme un prince intelligent, entreprenant, a hautes visées politiques, qui *attend* le moment propice pour accomplir sa vengeance et toucher à la fois au but de son ambition en se faisant

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[40] *Ibid.*, 103.
[41] *Ibid.*, 102.
[42] *Ibid.*, 101.
[43] *Ibid.*, 102.
[44] Emil Knetschke, *op. cit.*, 58.
[45] Peter Kollek, *op. cit.*, 164.
[46] Simon Williams, *op. cit.* (1985), 103.
[47] Peter Kollek, *op. cit.*, 164.

> couronner à la place de son oncle. Ce dernier resultat ne pouvant evidemment pas être atteint dans les 24 heures.[48]

The consideration of the consequences of the decision to avenge his father's death is depicted in Liszt's score. Letter G comes after Hamlet has seen the ghost of his father and has been told to avenge his death. According to Lina Ramann, whose comments are partially based on first-hand knowledge of Liszt's intentions,[49] the two themes at letter G (Examples 1 and 2) chase each other until Hamlet reaches a decision: 'Wie eine wilde Hetzjagd treiben die Themen, bis Hamlet, hoch aufgerichtet, in sich zum Entschluß gelangt.'[50]

Ex. 1: Liszt, *Hamlet* bb. 104-108

Ex. 2: Liszt, *Hamlet* bb. 110-115

The themes link seamlessly into one another, yet have very different characters. The first is punchy and staccato with dotted rhythms, whilst the second is much smoother in both its articulation and its shape. They could well represent two different modes of action with which Hamlet wrestles before making his decision. In the end the first theme wins and is transported from the strings to the upper woodwind, where the shrill tones of the piccolo give it more prominence. With the repetition of this idea at the expense of the other it would appear that it has taken Hamlet only from letter G to letter H (bars 103-132) to reach his decision.

For Liszt, Dawison's Hamlet was an 'exceptional character',[51] which was again fitting with his idea of the modern hero:

[48] Pauline Pocknell, *op. cit.*, 322.
[49] See Introduction, 6 and Chapter Three, 43.
[50] Lina Ramann, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2 (1880-94), 296.
[51] Adrian Williams, *op. cit.* (1998), 397.

> While the antique epos exhibits to us the majority of mankind and, in its truthful and exact portrayal of character, causes us to admire its profound insight into the soul, the romantic species, as we shall call it, seeks out exceptional figures only; these it draws far beyond life-size and in unusual situations, so that there recognize themselves in them only those constitutions that are formed of a finer clay and animated by a warmer breath, that lead a more powerfully pulsating life than others, with a more responsive soul.[52]

Several of Liszt's symphonic poems take these 'exceptional characters' as their inspiration (Tasso, Prometheus, and Orpheus are examples). Dawison's intelligent and strong Hamlet fits this description much better than Goethe's weak, passive, and indecisive dreamer. Since there is nothing in available documentary evidence to suggest that Liszt considered writing anything based on *Hamlet* before his meeting with Dawison, it seems likely that Dawison's interpretation was the catalyst he needed. Liszt, in other words, identified with Dawison's rather than Goethe's Hamlet.

Ironically, a letter to Agnes Street-Klindworth from 26th June 1858 suggests that Liszt might have returned to the traditional view of Hamlet by the time he wrote the symphonic poem:

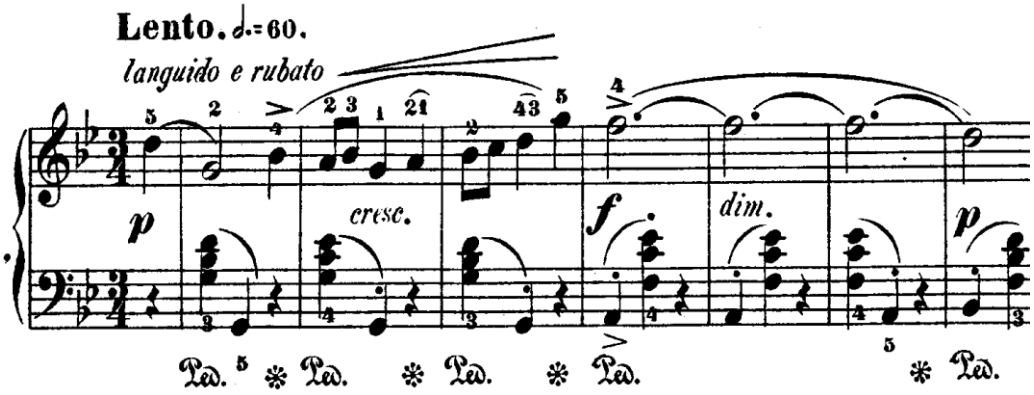
> One number still lacking to make my symphonic poems a round dozen (for the Faust and Dante symphonies are separate), I have just brought forth a *Hamlet*. We tried it out yesterday with the orchestra. I am not displeased with it—he will remain just as he is: pale, fevered, suspended between heaven and earth, the prisoner of his doubt and irresolution![53]

Liszt had already written to Agnes about his admiration for Dawison's Hamlet. Perhaps this later letter was a way for him to distance himself from Dawison, and, consequently, from any relations between Liszt's piece and the theatre. This may have been to avoid the label of overture (a label Liszt initially used with reference to the piece[54]), allowing the work to sit readily within Liszt's new genre, the symphonic poem: a genre with more 'romantic' associations. This would not have been out of character for Liszt, who was sometimes misleading in his programme notes regarding the inspiration and genesis of the symphonic poems. For example, the programme notes to *Orpheus* concentrate more on the inspiration Liszt gained on seeing an Etruscan vase depicting Orpheus in the Louvre, rather than on the original circumstances of its composition as an overture to Gluck's opera. Similarly, Andrew Bonner has shown that *Les Préludes* was actually originally based on Joseph Autrun's *Les*

[52] Franz Liszt, *op. cit.* (1965), 126.
[53] Adrian Williams, *Portrait of Liszt By Himself and His Contemporaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 346.
[54] See Chapter Three, 43-46.

Quatres Élémens, rather than on Lamartine's *Les Préludes* as Liszt's programme notes would have us believe.[55] Whatever his reasons for writing this letter to Agnes, Liszt's music is very unlike the pale and fevered Hamlet described. The main theme from letter G (Example 1) comes to encapsulate Hamlet throughout the piece. It is impassioned, driven, and aggressive and builds in intensity. It is marked 'violente', whilst a second theme associated with Hamlet is marked 'furioso' in the first violins at bar 233. There is nothing weak, meandering or passive about these themes. They are a complete contrast to Chopin's *Nocturne Op. 15 No. 3 in G minor*, which was allegedly based on *Hamlet*.[56] This piece possibly reflects a dreamy interpretation of Hamlet's character with its *piano* dynamic and *languido* marking.

Ex. 3: Chopin, *Nocturne Op. 15 No. 3 in G minor* bb. 1-7



Liszt's *Hamlet* resembles Joachim's *Overture to Hamlet* somewhat more—a piece Liszt he knew well, having conducted it in Weimar in 1854.[57] A sense of anxiety and intensity is common to both, but in the Joachim there is not the passion and drive of Liszt's *Hamlet*, suggesting that the Hamlet that inspired Liszt differed largely from the popular portrayal that stimulated his contemporaries.

Sarcasm and Irony

Another significant characteristic of Dawison's interpretation was the sense of alienation, bitterness, sarcasm and irony he brought to the role. Again this can be related to the figure of the 'Romantic Hero'. Bettina Knapp states: 'That the romantic hero considered himself different from

[55] See Andrew Bonner, 'Liszt's *Les Préludes* and *Les Quatre Élémens*: A Reinvestigation', *19th Century Music*, 10 (1986), 95-107.
[56] Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 153.
[57] La Mara, *Briefwechsel zwischen Franz Liszt und Hans von Bülow* (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1898), 114.

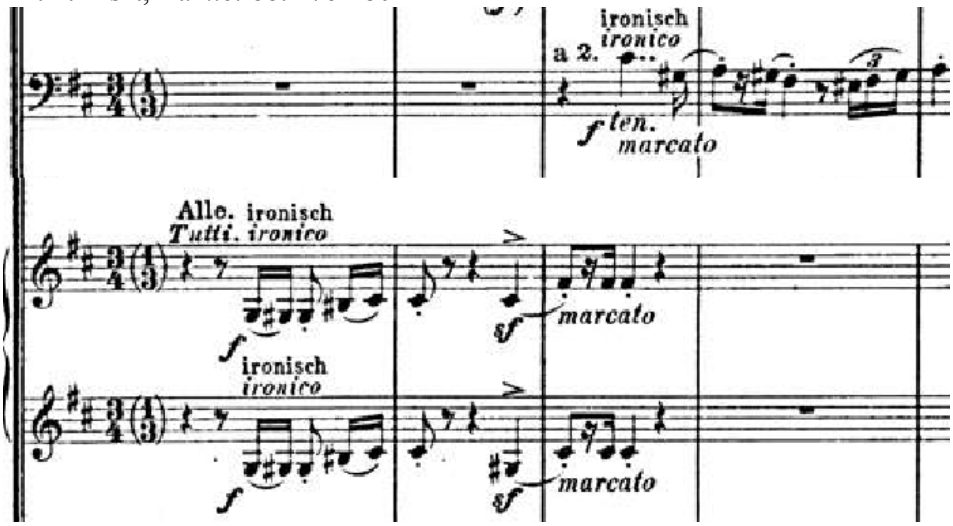
others encouraged in him feelings of isolation, alienation, and corrosive bitterness.'[58] Both Dawison and Liszt were outsiders. Neither had a fixed sense of home or nationality, and this 'difference' was commented upon by critics in the press. Dawison was a Polish Jew trying to make a career as a German actor, and the 'ungermanic' aspects of his acting style were often noted.[59] Eduard Devrient's reminiscences of one of Dawison's performances of *Hamlet* in 1852 show that Devrient saw Dawison as a foreigner and believed that this impacted upon his acting. Devrient commented on the apparent 'Jewishness' of Dawison's manner of giving speeches: 'Leichtes, epigrammatisches Hinwerfen der Rede verrät den Juden sehr an ihm,'[60] and saw his 'moderne Englische Manier' (at the time associated with *naturalism*, or the realistic interpretation of everyday life [61]) as contributing to the degradation of German acting.[62] Similarly, Liszt enjoyed cultivating his image as exotic, alienated from the world and without a specific nationality, writing in 1837: 'It behooves an artist more than anyone else to pitch a tent for an hour and not to build anything like a permanent residence. Isn't he always a stranger among men? Whatever he does, wherever he goes, he always feels himself an exile.'[63]

Dawison brought this sense of difference and isolation, manifesting itself in sharp sarcasm, to his interpretation of Hamlet. Kollek remarks upon the bitterness in Dawison's performance of the 'To be or not to be' speech,[64] and had Dawison performed any parts of the play for Liszt, this soliloquy seems the obvious candidate. Dawison's use of sarcasm was often striking, particularly in Act III, Scene i: the scene where Hamlet tells Ophelia, 'Get thee to a nunnery'. Emil Knetschke wrote that 'Dawison's Hamlet legt zu viel Gewicht auf reflektirende Skepsis und sarkastische Verschlagenheit'.[65] Kollek also mentioned Dawison's emphasis of sarcastic nuances.[66] Intriguingly,

[58] Bettina L. Knapp, 'Review: The Romantic Hero and his Heirs in French Literature', *The French Review,* 59 (1986), 787.
[59] For example see Peter Kollek, *op. cit.*, 165.
[60] Eduard Devrient, *op. cit.*, 145.
[61] Dennis Kennedy, Vol. 2, *op. cit.*, 925.
[62] Eduard Devrient, *op. cit.*, 146.
[63] Charles Suttoni (ed.), *Liszt, An Artist's Journey. Lettres d'un bachelier ès musique 1835-41: Franz Liszt* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 28.
[64] Peter Kollek, *op. cit.*, 164.
[65] Emil Knetschke, *op. cit.*, 58.

the section of Liszt's symphonic poem beginning at bar 176, which alludes to Act III, Scene i, is marked *ironisch*.

Ex. 4: Liszt, *Hamlet* bb. 176-180



It seems likely that Liszt's use of this term was inspired by his meeting with Dawison, especially as it is hardly possible to portray 'irony' in music. Furthermore, the general mood of the symphonic poem is dark and sinister, particularly the opening that refers to the 'To be or not to be' speech. Perhaps even this was a product of the bitterness of Dawison's interpretation.

Dawison and Ophelia

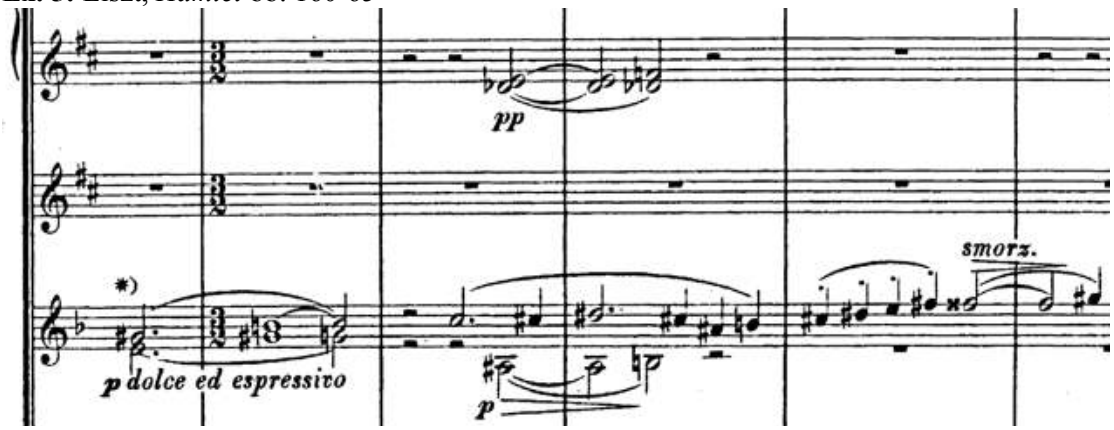
Dawison's sarcasm and bitterness were directed primarily at Ophelia, and the way Dawison's Hamlet acts towards his Ophelia was much discussed in the literature. Kollek wrote that in Act III, Scene i, Dawison alternated between coquetry and malice.[67] Similarly, Eduard Devrient observed that Dawison was cold and abrupt in his dialogue with Ophelia, without betraying his own feelings: 'Dialog mit Ophelia die Herbigkeit besonders hervorgehoben, kalt, schroff, ohne eigene Empfindung zu verraten.'[68] It is likely that Dawison and Liszt discussed the relationship between Hamlet and Ophelia, and the remarks Liszt made about this again sound like they were Dawison's own:

[66] See Peter Kollek, *op. cit.*, 163, 165, and 166.
[67] *Ibid.*, 165.
[68] Eduard Devrient, *op. cit.*, 145.

> Du même coup Dawisson tranche aussi très affirmativement la question de savoir si Hamlet aime ou n'aime pas Ophelia. Oui, Ophelia est aimée; seulement Hamlet comme tout caractere exceptionel exige d'elle impérieusement le *Vin de* l'amour, et ne se contente pas *du petit lait. Il veut en etre compris sans se soumettre à l'obligation de s'expliquer.* De cette façon c'est Ophelia qui correspond à la notion généralement répandue du caractère de Hamlet; c'est elle qui est ecrasé sous sa mission par son impuissance d'aimer Hamlet comme *lui faut* être aimé et sa folie n'est que le *decrescendo* d'un sentiment dont l'inconsistance ne lui permet pas de se maintenir dans la région de Hamlet.[69]

For Dawison and Liszt, Ophelia pales into insignificance beside Hamlet. She is not an 'exceptional character' like Hamlet; she is weak and not equal to loving him. This is reflected in Liszt's music. For the 'Ophelia section' in bars 160 to 219, Liszt provides the instruction that the music should sound like a 'Schattenbild' or shadow-picture of Ophelia.[70] It is a complete contrast to Hamlet's music in terms of its minimal scoring, soft dynamics, and drifting melody and harmony.

Ex. 5: Liszt, *Hamlet* bb. 160-65



Ophelia is a weak character here. She is, moreover, soon forgotten as the focus quickly switches back to Hamlet and his plans for vengeance. Furthermore, the autograph score in Weimar shows that the Ophelia section was a late insertion into the piece.[71] Clearly for Liszt, Hamlet was the central figure. Admittedly, at the time Ophelia was often a secondary character, and in fact Gertrude was the lead female role,[72] but Harriet Smithson's portrayal of Ophelia had made her a much more significant part of the play than hitherto. Given his friendship with Smithson and Berlioz, Liszt would certainly have been aware of this. It is yet again, therefore, Dawison's influence that seems the best explanation for Liszt's 'shadowy' Ophelia.

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[69] Pauline Pocknell, *op. cit.*, 322.
[70] See bar 160 of Liszt's *Hamlet*.
[71] 'RV421 Hamlet' (Autograph score), June 1858, Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv, Weimar, Signatur GSA 60/A 10a
[72] David Cairns, *Berlioz: 1803-1832: The Making of an Artist*, Vol. 1 (London: Andre Deutsch, 1989), 232.

The complete centrality of Hamlet to Liszt's symphonic poem, which is even more pronounced than in the play, could also stem from the way Dawison would have presented his ideas to Liszt. There can be no doubt that an individual private recital must have concentrated entirely on Hamlet. Similarly, in Liszt's *Hamlet* all the themes of the work, which largely grow out of one another, are associated with the protagonist,[73] with the exception of the short Ophelia section. Liszt does not seem to have been concerned with depicting the other characters in the play, and perhaps this is one reason for the commonly held misconception that the symphonic poem is 'a psychological study of Hamlet's character, without any particularly programmatic elements.'[74]

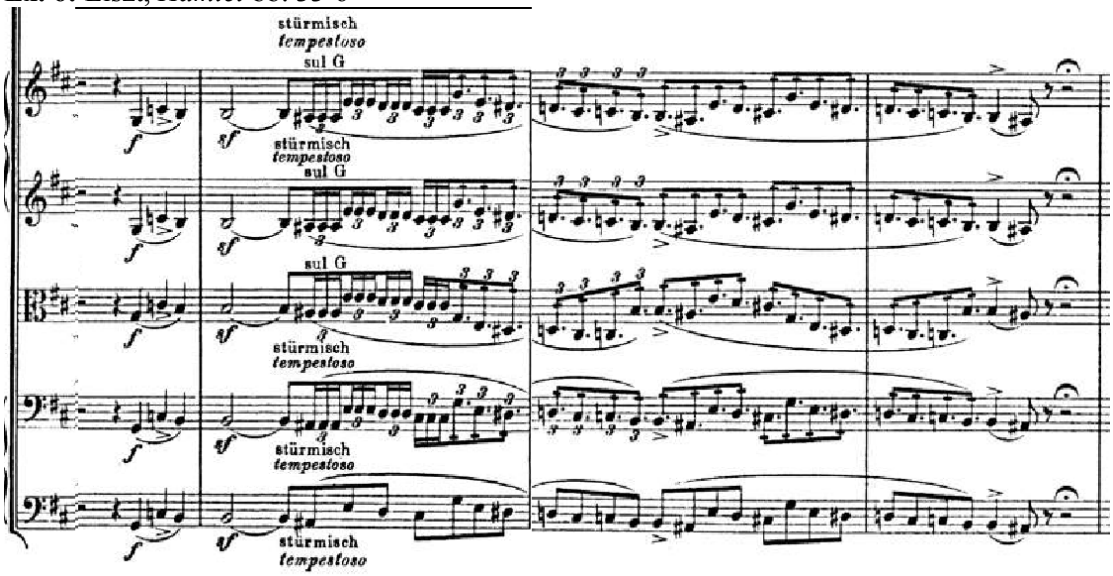
Overstatement and Effect

Finally, most descriptions of Dawison's acting style refer to his tendency for overstatement. Genast, who acted alongside him in the Weimar production of *Hamlet*, remembered how his portrayal of the shock Hamlet feels on first being told of the appearance of his father's ghost was so excessive that it was not possible for him to seem any more shocked when he encountered the ghost itself.[75] Perhaps even Dawison's overacting may have appealed to Liszt. It conformed to Liszt's ideas of Romanticism with its tendency to 'heighten and exaggerate'.[76] And of course, 'histrionics' as a performer were also characteristic of Liszt's playing style. Ernest Legouvé wrote of Liszt's playing: 'Liszt's attitude at the piano, like that of a pythoness, has been remarked again and again. Constantly tossing back his long hair, his lips quivering, his nostrils palpitating, he swept the auditorium with the glance of a smiling master…'[77] Similar accusations of overstatement have also often been levelled at Liszt's compositions, but, unlike Dawison, Liszt managed to pace the climactic moments in his *Hamlet*. The music before the appearance of the ghost, signalled by the repeated chords at letter B, is

[73] See Edward Murphy, 'A Detailed Program for Liszt's "Hamlet"' *Journal of the American Liszt Society*, 29 (1991), 42-60 for an alternative reading of the themes of the piece, albeit based on no evidence.
[74] Humphrey Searle, *op. cit.*, 75. See also Derek Watson, *Liszt* (The Master Musicians, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 274 and Keith T. Johns, *op. cit.,* 74.
[75] Eduard Genast, *Aus Weimars klassischer und nachklassischer Zeit* (Stuttgart: Robert Lutz, 1904), 355.
[76]Jim Samson, *op. cit.*
[77] Adrian Williams, *op. cit.* (1990), 89.

significantly understated. All parts at letter A are marked either *pp*, *p*, or *mp* and the direction 'sehr düster' or 'very bleakly' is given. Only after the repeated chords at letter B are the woodwind and strings *f* and 'stürmisch' (stormy).

Ex. 6: Liszt, *Hamlet* bb. 33-6



Linked to Dawison's overacting is the criticism that he often achieved effect rather than substance. Gustav Freytag, again with reference to Hamlet's first encounter with the ghost, suggested that Dawison strained for effect to the detriment of his performance, claiming that: 'man merkt die Absicht, man sieht die Arbeit.'[78] Perhaps this is why Eduard Devrient described Dawison's portrayal as an arrangement of brilliant moments, rather than a depiction of a whole character.[79] It was likely to have been consistent with Liszt's experience of Dawison in the role. If he did favour Liszt with any scenes from the play, they could only have been a series of moments. Indeed, as is mentioned in Chapter One, Dawison was used to giving guest performances of extracts from plays.[80] Liszt could hardly have experienced the impact of Dawison's interpretation on the overall form of the play. Similar accusations of the achievement of effect rather than substance were often also aimed at Liszt's compositions, as well as the charge that his compositions were made up of moments, rather than having an overarching form. In fact, the structure of Liszt's *Hamlet* is built around a small number of

[78] Gustav Freytag, essay on Dawison in *Aufsätze zur Geshichte, Literatur, und Kunst,* Vol. 8 of first series of *Gesammelte Werke* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1920), 319.
[79] Eduard Devrient, *op. cit.*, 144.
[80] See Chapter One, 20.

key events or moments from the play, as will be explored in Chapter Three. This structure may well be consistent with the way in which Dawison would have presented the play to Liszt.

In conclusion, it has been established that the belief held by many scholars that Liszt saw Bogumil Dawison play Hamlet in Weimar in January 1856 is inaccurate, and indeed it seems doubtful that he ever saw Dawison in an actual production of *Hamlet*. Nonetheless Dawison's conception of Hamlet did make a profound impression on Liszt. The two men definitely spoke about it, and it is likely that Dawison performed a little of the role in private for Liszt. They had much in common, from their backgrounds to the ways in which critics perceived them. Most significantly, they were both attracted to aspects of romanticism associated with the figure of the 'Romantic Hero'. These manifested themselves in Dawison's interpretation of Hamlet, and can account for Liszt's attraction to his portrayal. Some of the most characteristic aspects of Dawison's conception can be traced in Liszt's music: most notably, the image of Hamlet as determined and driven, the overt use of irony, and the portrayal of Ophelia as a weak figure. The fact that these characteristics are markedly different from other popular portrayals of the day verifies that Dawison likely had a profound influence on Liszt's decision to write the piece and on the score itself, for it is highly improbable that they could have come from any other source.

Chapter Three: Programmaticism in Liszt's *Hamlet*

Given the emphasis Liszt put on the programmatic aspects of his music, particularly in the symphonic poems, it might reasonably be argued that an understanding of this area is vital in order to elucidate the structure and expressive intentions of the piece. The danger with this approach is that all listeners will appreciate the music from an individual standpoint, and hence everyone will hear their own 'programme' in the music—a programme that may be perfectly valid in itself, but nevertheless not accord with Liszt's intentions. Therefore, in order to avoid merely relaying yet another highly personal reading of the piece, this chapter will analyse programmaticism in Liszt's *Hamlet* from the point of view of what is known of Liszt's intentions from his letters, his instructions in both the printed score and the autograph score, and from comments he made to his biographer Lina Ramann. Ramann's *Franz Liszt als Künstler und Mensch* contains a detailed discussion of *Hamlet*. From Ramann's notes published in *Lisztiana*[1], it is clear that her remarks in *Franz Liszt als Künstler und Mensch* are based on comments Liszt made to Ramann when they attended a performance of *Hamlet* in the version for two pianos. Therefore, despite its often idealised portrayal of Liszt and his life, Ramann's work gives us an insight into Liszt's musical intentions that might otherwise have been unavailable. Using this information, this chapter will demonstrate that Liszt's *Hamlet* is programmatic in terms of both its content and form. Its structure follows simultaneously a musical and a narrative logic. We begin by investigating the genesis of *Hamlet* as an overture, and the implications this has for programmaticism, before proceeding to a largely narrative analysis of the piece, which will draw on and evaluate previous investigations of the work.

Hamlet as an Overture

Hamlet was completed in June 1858, two years after Dawison's visit to Weimar. A note on the title page of the autograph score reads 'Vorspiel zu Shakespeare's Drama' or 'Prelude to Shakespeare's Drama', suggesting that the work was originally written as an overture to the play. This is consistent with the genesis of some of the other Symphonic poems: Bartels' *Chronik des*

[1] Lina Ramann *Lisztiana* (Mainz: Schott, 1983), 258.

Weimarischen Hoftheaters 1817-1907 shows that *Tasso* was performed as an overture to a performance of Goethe's *Torquato Tasso*[2], *Prometheus* as an overture to a performance of Herder's *Der entfesselte Prometheus*[3], *Orpheu*s as an overture to Gluck's opera,[4] and *Festklänge* as an overture to Schiller's *Die Huldigung der Künste*.[5] The previous three pieces were all originally referred to as 'Ouvertüren' by Bartels. Only with the performance of *Festklänge* in November 1854 do we find the appellation 'symphonische Dichtung'. Kenneth Hamilton suggests that the term was used for the first time in April 1854 for a performance of Tasso,[6] therefore one would expect that it would be in regular use by 1858, especially after the publication of the first six 'symphonic poems' in 1856. It seems strange, therefore, that Liszt should revert back to 'Vorspiel', unless it was originally in his mind that the piece should be performed expressly as an overture. In fact, the concise length of the piece suggests that this was the case. *Hamlet* is only around 13 minutes long in performance, and would originally have been even shorter before the insertion of the Ophelia section. *Orpheus* and *Prometheus* (both originally overtures) are also a similar length, whereas the *Bergsymphonie*, which was always intended as a symphonic poem, is 30 minutes in duration.

According to Alan Walker, *Hamlet* was written for a private performance of the play in Weimar, 25 June 1858.[7] This information is not referenced, so it is not clear what the source was, and such a performance is not listed in Bartels's *Chronik*. It would appear, therefore, that it did not take place at the Weimar Court Theatre. The only mention of any performance in Liszt's correspondence is in a letter to Agnes Street-Klindworth written on 26 June 1858: 'One number still lacking to make my symphonic poems a round dozen…I have just brought forth a *Hamlet*. We tried it out yesterday with

[2] Adolf Bartels, *Chronik des Weimarischen Hoftheaters 1817-1907* (Weimar, 1908), 88.
[3] *Ibid.*, 92.
[4] *Ibid.,* 106.
[5] *Ibid.,* 108.
[6] Kenneth Hamilton, 'Liszt', *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony*, ed. D. Kern Holoman (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997), 144.
[7] Alan Walker, 'Liszt', *Grove Music Online*, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxyd.bham.ac.uk/subscriber/article_works/grove/music/48265pg28#S48265.29.7, accessed 14/08/2009

orchestra.'[8] This suggests that the 'private performance' was in fact a rehearsal of the piece, not a performance of the play. Liszt now referred to the piece as a symphonic poem rather than a 'Vorspiel' or 'Ouvertüre'. Therefore, even though the work may have started life as an overture, the completed version was, to Liszt's mind, a symphonic poem, and this is reflected in the engraver's copy. Corrections to the engraver's copy in Liszt's hand are visible, including the subtitle 'Nr. 10 – der Symphonische Dichtungen', but 'Vorspiel zu Shakespeare's Drama' no longer appears.[9]

This metamorphosis from overture to symphonic poem has implications for Liszt's use of programmaticism and form, and so should be discussed briefly before moving onto a detailed discussion of *Hamlet* itself. There were two main types of overture: the dramatic and the concert. The dramatic overture of the eighteenth century was originally a multi-movement work typically performed at the beginning of an opera. It was usually unrelated to the drama it preceded, and it was not until the end of the eighteenth century that this conception changed with Gluck's demand that the overture should refer to the drama of the coming opera.[10] By the end of the century it had been established that the overture should take the form of a single movement comparable to the first movement of a symphony with a slow introduction, but often with no development section.[11] The concert overture was largely a child of the early nineteenth century. It was similar to the dramatic overture, but, as its nomenclature suggests, was performed on the concert platform as an independent piece. It usually bore a title suggesting its literary or pictorial content—Mendelssohn's overture to "A Midsummer Night's Dream" is one of the earliest examples.[12] Like the dramatic overture it always consisted of one movement and was usually in sonata form (frequently with development).[13]

[8] Adrian Williams, *Portrait of Liszt By Himself and His Contemporaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 346.
[9] 'RV421 Hamlet' (Engraver's copy), undated, Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv, Weimar, Signatur GSA 60/A 10b
[10] Donald Grout, *A Short History of Opera* 3rd Edition, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 223.
[11] Nicholas Temperley, 'Overture' in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* ed. Stanley Sadie, 29 vols. (2nd edn, London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2001), xviii, 825.
[12] *Ibid*., 824.
[13] *Ibid*., 824.

By the nineteenth century, then, both types of overture contained programmatic content in one movement organised in sonata form. Given that *Hamlet* seems to have started life as an overture, it is reasonable to expect that it should depict some of the main events of the play, and perhaps also that it should exhibit traits of sonata form. However, the main difference between the overture and the symphonic poem resulted from the difficulty of combining a detailed narrative with sonata form. Wagner in his open letter 'Liszt's Symphonic Poems' acknowledged the similarities between the symphonic poem and the overture but also wrote of the unsuitability of the overture precisely because of its 'very definite form' which 'demands strict attention from those who wish to express themselves in it'. This would be 'disturbing when used to accommodate the Idea'.[14] Although Richard Kaplan has demonstrated that several of the early symphonic poems are organised in sonata from,[15] perhaps due to their origins as overtures, this is not the case with *Hamlet*. In fact, the later group of symphonic poems, of which *Hamlet* is part, are generally not written in sonata form, and it seems natural that as Liszt became more practised in maximising the flexibility of his new genre, he should move further away from this form. All of this suggests that the form of *Hamlet* may well have been structured largely with the intention of expressing its narrative.

Content and Form in Liszt's *Hamlet*

There are several different readings of the content and form of *Hamlet.* Some writers see the piece as a psychological portrait of Hamlet[16], whereas others believe it depicts specific scenes or events from the play.[17] The latter reading is not only verified by Lina Ramann's account, stemming from the composer himself, but also seems in keeping with the improvisational quality of Liszt's compositional processes. The following reminiscence of the German poet and playwright Emmanuel

[14] Richard Wagner, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works* Vol. 3, trans. Williams Ashton Ellis (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1894), 244.
[15] See Richard Kaplan, 'Sonata Form in the Orchestral Works of Liszt: The Revolutionary Reconsidered,' *19th-Century Music* 8 (1984), 142-52.
[16] For example, see Derek Watson, *Liszt* (The Master Musicians, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 274 or Keith T. Johns, *The Symphonic Poems of Franz Liszt* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1997), 74.
[17] See Lina Ramann, *Franz Liszt als Künstler und Mensch* Vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1880-94), 292-299; Kenneth Hamilton '*Liszt'* in *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony* ed. D. Kern Holoman (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997), 142-162; and Edward W. Murphy, 'A Detailed Program for Liszt's *Hamlet*', *Journal of the American Liszt Society*, 29 (1991), 42-60.

Geibel provides an idea of the way in which Liszt may have begun working on his *Hamlet* composition:

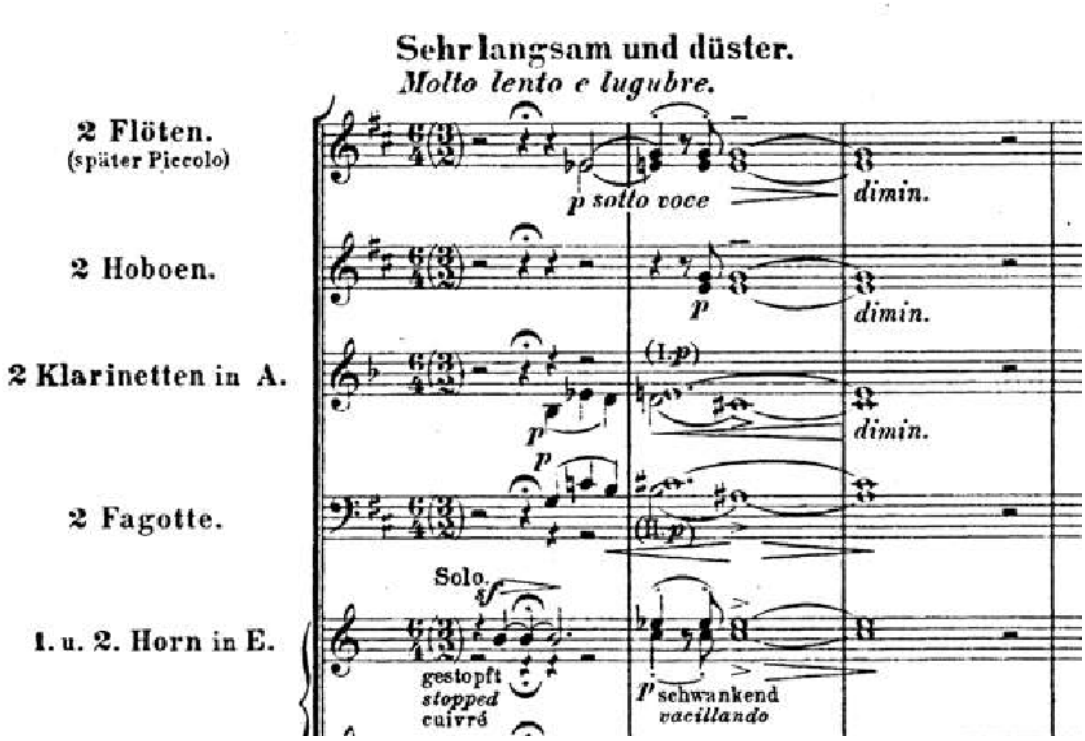
> we came to talk about Shakespeare in general, first *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Mendelssohn's music, and then *The Tempest*. Here, too, I said, was rich material for a musical setting. Liszt agreed. We went through the principal moments of the enchanting play, and the more we immersed ourselves in the magic world of the great poet the warmer our enthusiasm. In the end Liszt sprang up and took his seat at the piano...Everything we had been discussing we now heard once more in fantastic musical form: a storm at sea and a shipwreck; fear and love; Caliban's bestial cursing and Stephano's laughing drunkenness; and then again, as though whispering towards us from on high, the silvery notes of Ariel's ivory bell; and at the last, over and above all else, the dominion of Prospero as he puts all to rights again, as with his golden wand he subdues the roaring elements and their spirits, and with mellow wisdom smoothes [sic] and unravels the entanglements of human passion.[18]

Following this pattern, it seems possible that when Liszt set out to write *Hamlet* he first considered the principal moments in the play and then improvised around them. The relatively small number of themes used in the work, reappearing in different transformations, seems to fit with this improvisatory approach, as does the complete reprise of the introduction at bar 338.[19] As regards form Lina Ramann believed the piece to be structured around three main scenes from the play; Kenneth Hamilton builds on this, describing the piece as a taut arch form;[20] whilst Steven Vande Moortele sees it as a sonata deformation.[21] The following analysis will consider content and form in tandem and will argue that the structure is based closely on the narrative of the play (around the three scenes that Ramann mentions), but that the music simultaneously exhibits a formal logic of its own. The programmatic elements are fused onto the arch-like musical structure that Hamilton mentions, but this is not always a perfect synthesis: at times the programmatic aspects usurp the musical form, whilst at other points the narrative has to make way for formal requirements.

[18] Adrian Williams, *op. cit.* (1990), 296.
[19] Kenneth Hamilton writes that it is likely that Liszt's fondness for repeating a slow introduction later on in a work was inspired by Beethoven's 'Pathétique Sonata (see Kenneth Hamilton *op. cit.* (1997), 146) but it is also likely that this was a habit left over from Liszt's performing days, improvising on a theme which he would then reprise in its original form towards the end of the performance.
[20] Kenneth Hamilton, *op. cit.*, 150-151.
[21] Steven Vande Moortele, 'Form, Program, and Deformation in Liszt's *Hamlet*', *Tijdschrift Voor Muziektheorie*, 11 (2006).

The first section of *Hamlet* encompasses bars 1-73. Vande Moortele also sees bars 1-73 as the first section, but labels it a sonata form slow introduction[22] despite the several changes of tempo and mood that occur within this section. These irregularities are explained away as 'deformations' of sonata form,[23] whereas, in fact, they are a product of the close relationship of the music to the programme. This first section initially depicts Hamlet's melancholy and his suspicions that Claudius murdered his father. Accordingly it opens quietly and sinisterly with the marking *sehr langsam und düster* (very slowly and gloomily). The repeated use of diminished 7th chords and timpani rolls throughout the first eight bars contribute to the sinister mood, and the only reference to the tonic B minor are the barely audible pizzicato b's and f♯'s of the double bass and *pianissimo* timpani. Lina Ramann informs us that the initial motif that passes from the low to high woodwinds and horns depicts the words 'To be or not to be'.[24]

Ex. 1: Liszt, *Hamlet* bb.1-3.

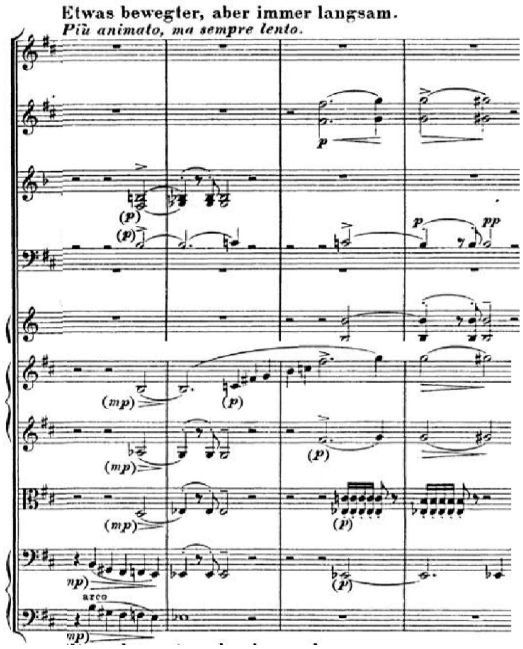


[22] *Ibid.*, 76.
[23] *Ibid.*, 76.
[24] Lina Ramann, *op. cit.* (1880-94), 294.

The matching rhythm of the music and words is easy to see, and Ramann's notes in *Lisztiana* verify that this was Liszt's intention. She writes that in 1884 she and Liszt attended a performance of *Hamlet* for two pianos, and during this opening motif Liszt whispered to her 'To be or not to be'.[25] This appears to be fairly conclusive, but surprisingly has still been misinterpreted or ignored by scholars. Steven Vande Moortele, for instance, believes that, aside from explicit annotations in the score, 'Every attribution of programmatic meaning to other passages remains hypothetical. The opening measures, for instance, might be related to Hamlet's doubt—to Christian Martin Schmidt, they even are a musical equivalent for Hamlet's words 'to be or not to be'—but they may also be heard more prudently as creating a general setting.'[26] Moortele seems ignorant about Liszt's statement on the opening, and, in fact, few scholars who have written about *Hamlet* seem aware of this.[27]

After a second statement of the 'To be or not to be' theme a new idea begins at letter A incorporating the dotted rhythm from the opening but moving upwards via a tritone into an ascending violin figure that ends chromatically.

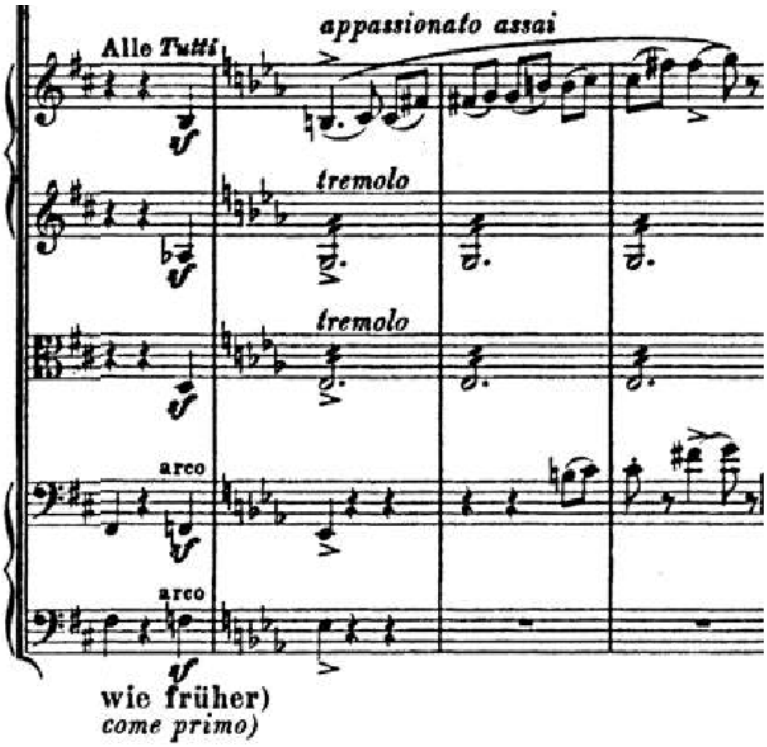
Ex. 2: Liszt, *Hamlet* bb.9-12



[25] Lina Ramann *op. cit.* (1983), 258.
[26] Steven Vande Mooretele, *op. cit.*, 73.
[27] No mention of this is made in the analyses of *Hamlet* by Keith T. Johns (*op. cit.*), Edward Murphy (*op. cit.*), or Derek Watson (*op. cit.*). Kenneth Hamilton's anaylsis in *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony*, 150-151 is the exception.

Ramann claims that this section is an expression of Hamlet's gloomy thoughts,[28] and the continued use of the marking 'sehr düster' and the melancholic style of the motif itself attest to this. Edward Murphy attributes this motif to Claudius but never gives reasons for any of his views—his article is entirely based on his personal response. The motif is later transformed and associated directly with Hamlet, as it is reintroduced at bar 221 to lead directly into a statement of Hamlet's main themes at 225, so it is unlikely to depict Claudius.

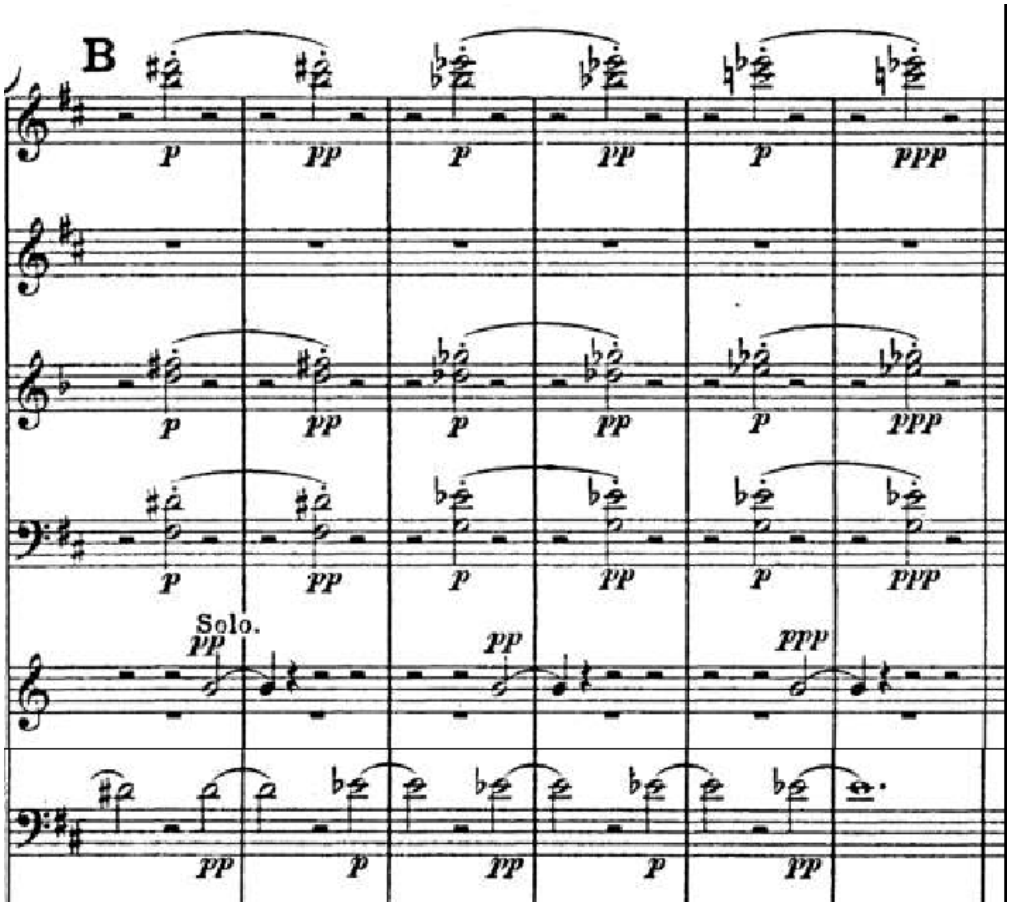
Ex. 3: Liszt, *Hamlet* bb.221-224.



The next programmatic event occurs at letter B. Keith T. Johns associated the repeated chords here with the striking of the clock of Elsinore[29] (connected in the play to the appearance of the ghost of Hamlet's father). Johns does not provide the sources for his reasoning, but the striking clock is also mentioned by Humphrey Searle in the foreword to the Eulenberg miniature score,[30] and indeed, the twelve strikes alternating between cellos and woodwind make it seem likely that this was what was intended.

[28] Lina Ramann, *op. cit.* (1880-94), 295.
[29] Keith T. Johns, *op. cit.*, 78.
[30] Humphrey Searle, 'Foreword' in Franz Liszt, *Hamlet* (London: Edition Eulenberg, 1976).

Ex. 4: Liszt, *Hamlet* bb.26-31.

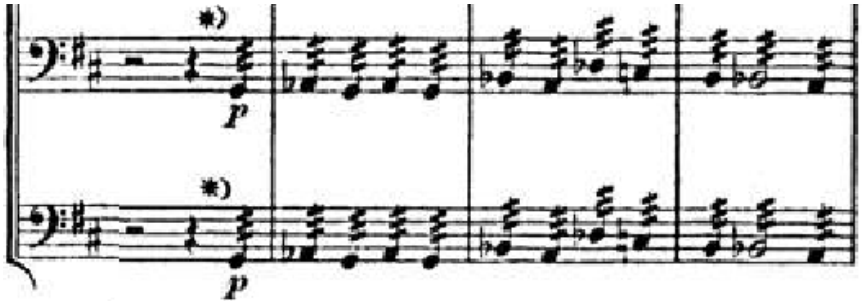


Lina Ramann does not mention the clock, but she too seems to associate this passage with the appearance of the ghost, which implies a similar programmatic allusion.[31] Less plausible is Murphy's assertion that these chords look forward to the stabbing chords at bar 294. Not only are different chords used in these two sections, there is nothing violent about the chords at letter B.

Restatements of the 'To be or not to be' theme marked *forte* descend into chromatic strings marked *stürmisch*, presumably to depict Hamlet's agitation at the prospect of seeing the ghost. The next depiction of the ghost is at letter D, represented by tremolo strings marked *schaurig* or *eerily*.

[31] Lina Ramann, *op. cit.* (1880-94), 295.

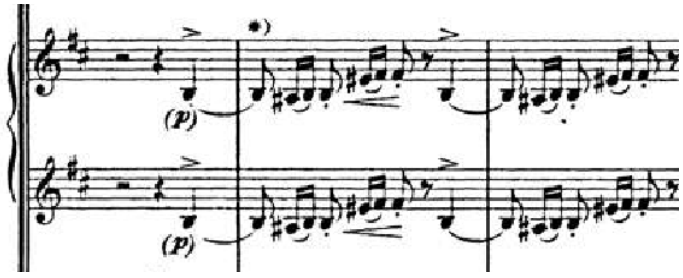
Ex. 5: Liszt, *Hamlet* bb.50-53.



Ramann writes that the chords played over the top of these tremolos represent Hamlet,[32] so this section must refer to Act I, Scene v where the ghost tells Hamlet the story of his death and asks him to take revenge. Evidently Ramann also took this view, for she declared that Act I, Scene v was one of the main parts of the play Liszt alluded to in the music.[33] She writes that from this moment onwards Hamlet's suspicions about his father's death turn to certainty.[34]

After the tremolo strings, letter E (bar 74) introduces a new tempo: *Allegro appassionato ed agitato assai*, and a new mood: agitated rather than melancholy, we hear a firm cadence on the thus far elusive tonic, B minor. All this suggests that bar 74 heralds a new section encompassing the main body of the work. This is supported by the fact that, aside from the existing 'To be or not to be' theme, and the following languishing figure in the strings, the main themes of the piece are introduced in this second section from bars 74-156. Agitation is depicted by the staccato quavers of the first new theme.

Ex. 6: Liszt, *Hamlet* bb. 74-76



[32] *Ibid.*, 295.
[33] *Ibid.*, 293.
[34] *Ibid.*, 296.

This theme is preparatory in nature and introduces

Ex. 7: Liszt, *Hamlet* bb.104-108

and **Ex. 8:** Liszt, *Hamlet* bb. 110-115.

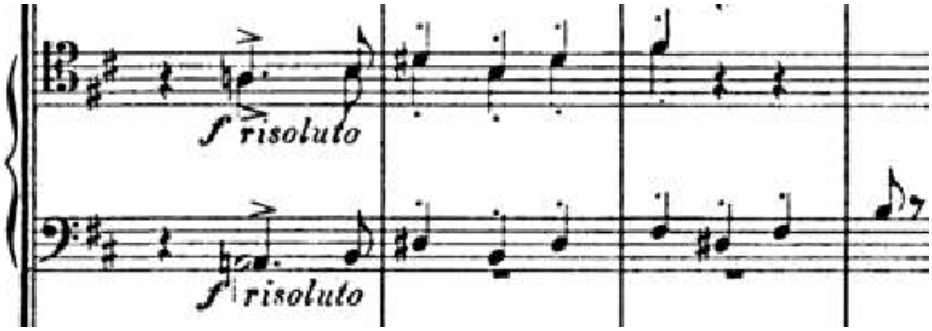
Examples 7 and 8 are both associated with Hamlet (Example 7 is actually a thematic transformation of the 'To be or not to be' theme) and are the two main themes upon which the majority of the rest of the material is built. Strangely, Vande Moortele divides bars 74-156 into two sections. For him, 74-106 is the main theme group, and 107-159 a transition section.[35] Again, this is a product of trying to impose sonata form onto *Hamlet*. He acknowledges the preparatory character of bars 74-106 and the thematic nature of bars 107-159, but because bars 107-159 modulate he cannot categorise them as the main theme group[36], which would affirm the tonic in a sonata form. Instead he is forced to deny the obvious thematic nature of bars 107-159 and categorise them as merely transitional, which does not seem to do justice to the expository character of the section.

Bars 74-106 can also be regarded programmatically. The first section depicts Hamlet's melancholy and meeting with the ghost. Ramann tells us that bars 74-156 shows Hamlet's reaction to the news that the ghost of his father has told him, and his reaching a decision to take revenge. Ramann

[35] Steven Vande Mooretele, *op. cit.*, 76.
[36] *Ibid*., 77.

suggests that the latter is marked by the introduction of a rising arpeggiated theme, aptly marked *risoluto*.[37]

Ex. 9: Liszt, *Hamlet* bb.137-140



The programmatic meaning attributed by Ramann to this motif is supported by the fact that it returns at bar 291, continuing into the repeated chords at bar 294 that represent the stabbing of Polonius. This motif is only used in these two instances; therefore it is likely that Liszt (perhaps influenced by Dawison) employed it to represent Hamlet's decisive action.

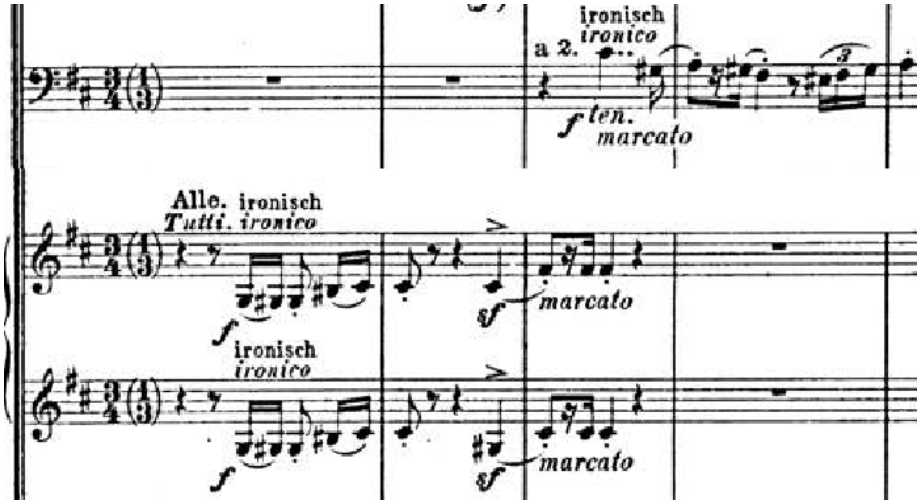
The middle section (bb. 160-216) refers overtly to Ophelia, as indicated by a note in the score: 'Dieser Zwischensatz 3/2 Takt, soll äußerst ruhig gehalten sein und wie ein Schattenbild erklingen, auf Ophelia hindeutend.'[38] It presents a complete contrast to the previous music in its light scoring, sustained notes, *piano* dynamic and legato articulation. It is easy to understand, therefore, why Vande Mooretele characterises it as a 'subsidiary theme group'.[39] However, the key of the Ophelia section is C♯ minor—an unlikely 'sonata' second-group tonality in relation to the tonic of B minor. Liszt's most frequent key for his second theme group in sonata-form pieces is that of the raised mediant (which would be D♯/E♭ in this case), although he does sometimes also use more 'traditional' keys, such as the relative major in the *Sonata in b-minor*, or the dominant in *Festklänge*. The *Hamlet* tonality is easily explained away by Vande Moortele as another 'sonata deformation'. But clearly

[37] Lina Ramann, *op. cit.* (1880-94), 296
[38] Liszt, *Hamlet*, b. 160.
[39] Steven Vande Mooretele, *op. cit.*, 76.

Hamlet does not exhibit the tonal conflict/resolution pattern so integral to sonata form, or indeed Liszt's usual treatment of sonata form key relations. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the Ophelia section was a late insertion to the score. Therefore, even if this section is viewed as a subsidiary group, it must be conceded that Liszt cannot have originally intended the piece to be in sonata form.

The final version of the score sees two Ophelia sections either side of an *Allegro* marked *ironisch*. The *ironisch* section consists of the themes from Examples 6 and 7.

Ex. 10: Liszt, *Hamlet* bb. 176-180.



These themes have already been closely associated with Hamlet, and now represent his reaction to Ophelia. Ramann explains that this section depicts Act III, Scene i of the play, and the *ironisch* marking is consistent with Hamlet's cruel and sarcastic behaviour towards Ophelia. Structurally, the Ophelia section functions as the keystone of an arch form. Bars 74-156 make up one side of the arch, and, after the Ophelia section, the themes from bars 74-156 are presented in reverse order in the *Allegro molto agitato* from bars 218-283, which constitute the other side of the arch. Example 8 dovetails into Example 7 this time, whilst Example 6 is incorporated as part of Example 7, and does not have a section to itself.

The autograph score gives an interesting insight into the genesis of the composition of the Ophelia section, as the passages that have been crossed out are still legible. Originally bar 152 would have led straight into a slightly different version of the final *ironisch* music. The use of the theme in Example 7 is exactly the same as in the final version but it is interspersed with a new triplet figure in the strings. The scoring is the same as in the final version, and the *marcato* marking remains, but the dynamic is *piano* instead of *forte* and the *ironisch* marking is missing. (See Transcription 1: the original middle section from the autograph score.) According to the autograph score, this middle section led straight into the *Allegro molto agitato* at bar 218. The Ophelia section inserted into the autograph also represents a stage before the final version. In both versions the Ophelia passages are present with largely the same harmonies and scoring. The main difference is that the violin and cello solos are missing. Moreover, in the autograph the two sections run straight into one another without the *ironisch* section dividing them. In the engraver's copy, however, the Ophelia sections and *ironisch* section appear as they do in the final version. Therefore, there is likely to have been another complete score, or at least some manuscript sheets containing revisions for the copyist, in between the autograph score and the engraver's copy.[40] This argument is supported by Mária Eckhardt in her book *Franz Liszt's Music Manuscripts in the National Széchényi Library, Budapest*. She cites a manuscript in Budapest that contains correction sheets for *Hamlet*, probably dating from after the autograph score but before the engraver's copy.[41] One of these sheets refers to bars 176-194[42] (the *ironisch* section and the second Ophelia passage). Therefore, this must have been the stage at which the final version of the Ophelia and *ironisch* sections was completed. Unfortunately, these fragments are not dated.[43]

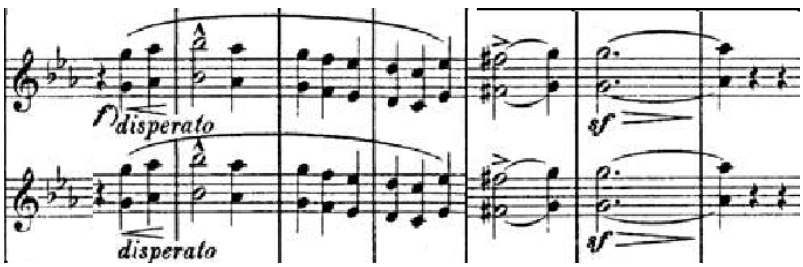
The addition of this section serves both a programmatic and a functional purpose. Without the contrasting style of this section there would have been little to differentiate the centre of the arch

[40] 'RV421 Hamlet' (Autograph score), June 1858, Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv, Weimar, Signatur GSA 60/A 10a
[41] Mária Eckhardt, *Franz Liszt's Music Manuscripts in the National Széchényi Library, Budapest*, trans. Erzsébet Mészáros (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1986), 85.
[42] *Ibid*., 85.
[43] *Ibid*., 85.

form, as originally the central section consisted of repetitions of the already familiar Example 7. Without the Ophelia section, the piece looses its keystone, and so originally the form would not have been an arch, but rather Introduction, Section A, Section A^1, Recapitulation. The insertion of the Ophelia section also allowed Liszt to include an important scene from the play, and thereby enhance the narrative structure of the symphonic poem. In the final version, therefore, the Ophelia section is most convincingly described as, not a sonata-form second subject, but both the keystone of the arch form, and as one of the key moments of the programmatic structure.

The next section (bb. 218-283) repeats part of the introduction, specifically material from bars 104-155, with little alteration. Vande Moortele's categorisation of this section as the development, therefore, is unconvincing.[44] It can more aptly be described as a variation of earlier material. In fact, the lack of development could be consistent with the original genesis of the piece as an overture.[45] Similarly, Liszt's symphonic poem *Orpheus* has no development of its main themes, and, as has already been mentioned, was originally written and performed as an overture to Gluck's opera. According to Lina Ramann, bars 218-283 represent Hamlet arguing with his mother in Act III, Scene iv.[46] The highly dissonant harmonic language seems consistent with this interpretation: the first sustained chord of the section is a tonally ambiguous augmented triad (bar 222), and the tritones of bars 222 and 224 contribute to this dissonance. Furthermore, the appearances of Example 8 in the lower strings are now marked *violente*. Similarly, Murphy writes that this section depicts Act III, Scene iv but goes too far in his claim that bars 226-232 specifically depict Gertrude in this scene.[47]

Ex. 12: Liszt, *Hamlet* bb. 225-231

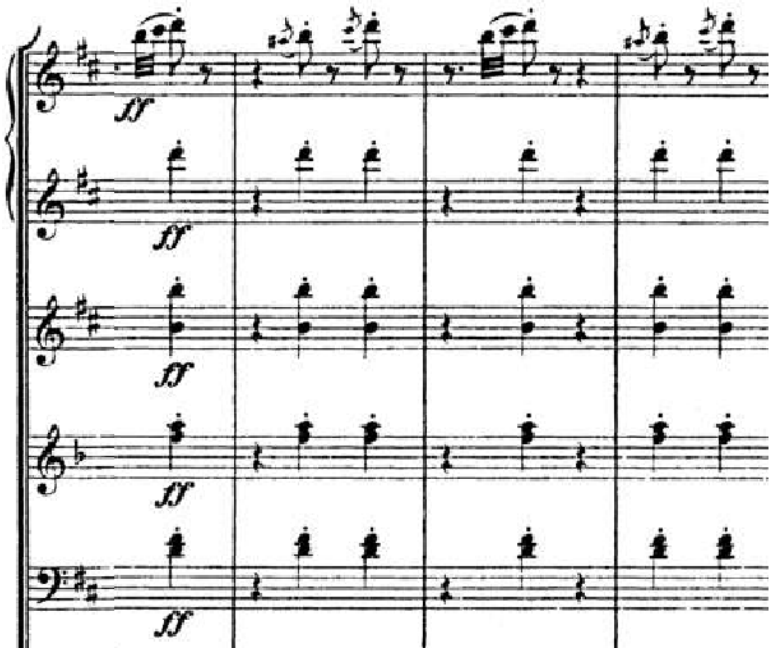


[44] Steven Vande Moortele, *op. cit.*, 76.
[45] See Nicholas Temperley, *op. cit.*, 825.
[46] Lina Ramann, *op. cit.* (1880-94), 298.
[47] Edward Murphy, *op. cit.*, 57.

This reading seems unlikely, considering this theme has already occurred in relation to Hamlet (See Example 8). Gertrude is only present in terms of the way she is perceived by Hamlet, not as a character in her own right.

Eventually the *risoluto* theme (Example 9) recurs at bar 291 to lead into stabbing chords at bar 294.

Ex. 13: Liszt, *Hamlet* bb. 294-297.



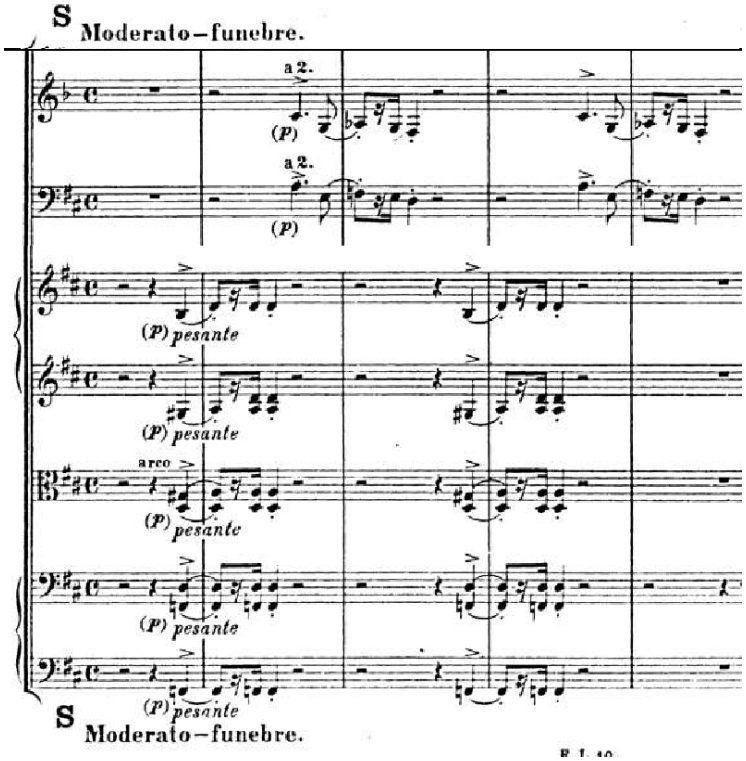
Ramann wrote that at this point in the performance of *Hamlet* for two pianos, Liszt whispered, 'Polonius—die Ratte' and made a stabbing action with his arm,[48] clearly referring to Hamlet stabbing Polonius in Act III, Scene iv, and to Polonius's line 'How now? A rat! Dead for a ducat, dead.'[49] Steven Vande Moortele sees the passage with the stabbing chords as a way for Liszt to hold long pedal points, typical of the end of a development, again giving a sonata-form function to something that has a largely programmatic significance. A firm believer in repeating sections of his music for the sake of clarity and balance, Liszt repeated the stabbing section (bars 305-321 are an exact repeat of bars 287-303). This shows that he allowed the musical structure to dominate the programmatic

[48] Lina Ramann, *op. cit.* (1880-94), 298.
[49] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* in *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, and David Scott Kastan (Walton-on-Thames: Nelson, 1998), 316.

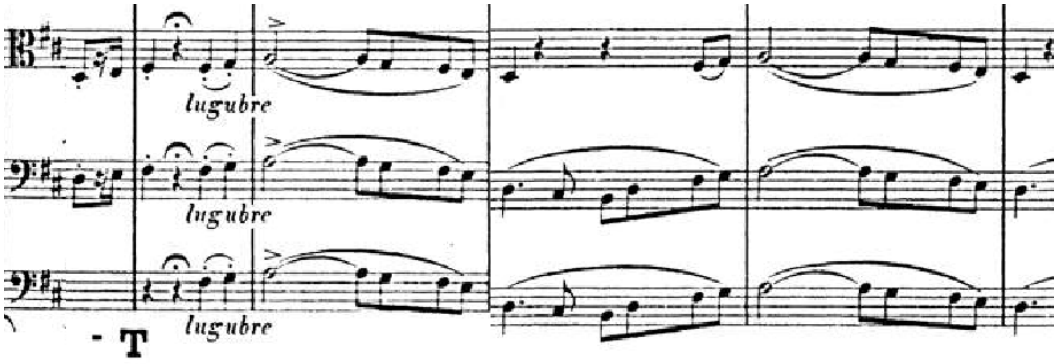
structure in this instance, in contrast, for example, to his melodramas, where the music only serves to emphasise the text.

The final section of the piece is signalled by the exact repeat of the first eight bars. This is followed by a section marked *Moderato – funebre* which depicts Hamlet's death—reflected in the sombre transformations of Hamlet's main themes from Examples 7 and 8.

Ex. 14: Liszt, *Hamlet* bb. 346-350



Ex. 15: Liszt, *Hamlet* bb.359-364



According to Murphy, the tremolo strings from bars 370-377 hark back to the ghost, and this seems plausible given their similarity to the *schaurig* figure that depicted the ghost from bars 50-70. Another occurrence of Hamlet's semiquaver theme (see Example 6) leads into a final climax on the dotted rhythm of the 'To be or not to be' theme, emphasising the 'Not to be' part to close the piece. Interestingly, the autograph score shows that originally the piece ended at bar 381 with the addition of three more bars of repeated *piano* b's, and no final climax in B minor.[50] See Transcription 2: the original ending from the autograph score of Liszt's *Hamlet*.

Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to provide an account of Liszt's intentions regarding programmaticism in *Hamlet*. It has done this by, first, investigating the context of the work, both in terms of Liszt's knowledge of Shakespeare's plays, particularly of *Hamlet*, and in terms of the wider trends of Shakespeare appreciation in France and Germany at the time. It has demonstrated that Liszt's acquaintance with Shakespeare's plays began in the early 1830s; at the same time that he began to befriend figures associated with French literary Romanticism. It has shown that he cultivated his knowledge of Shakespeare throughout his life, and that his letters suggest that *Hamlet* was a particular favourite. It has established that Liszt's decision to write *Hamlet* came at the time in his life when he was most exposed to Shakespeare (by the regular productions put on at the Weimar Court Theatre), when the famous Theatre Producer Dingelstedt was in residence, and when Bogumil Dawison was regularly appearing in Weimar as a guest star.

Secondly, it has investigated the relationship between the programmatic aspects of the symphonic poem and Dawison's portrayal of the character of Hamlet, revealing that scholars have been mistaken in believing that Liszt attended the 1856 Weimar production of *Hamlet*. Nonetheless, Liszt still met with Dawison, and the two began a friendship, which their letters show was fairly intimate. Accordingly, it has been demonstrated that Dawison's conception did influence the

[50] 'RV421 Hamlet' (Autograph score), June 1858, Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv, Weimar, Signatur GSA 60/A 10a

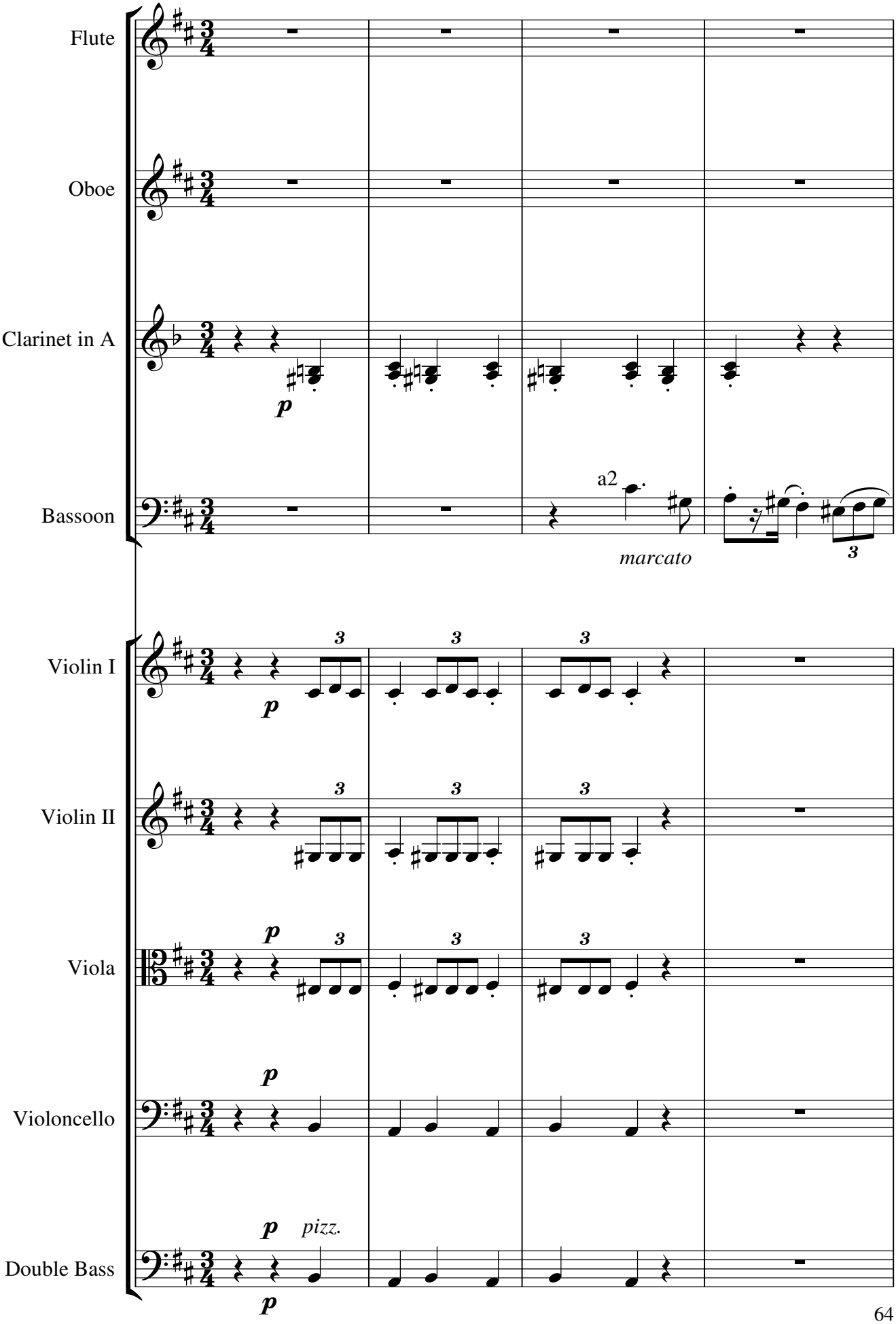
symphonic poem in several ways, most notably in terms of the determined, agitated mood that Liszt created, rather than the traditionally melancholic one; the use of irony; and the portrayal of Ophelia.

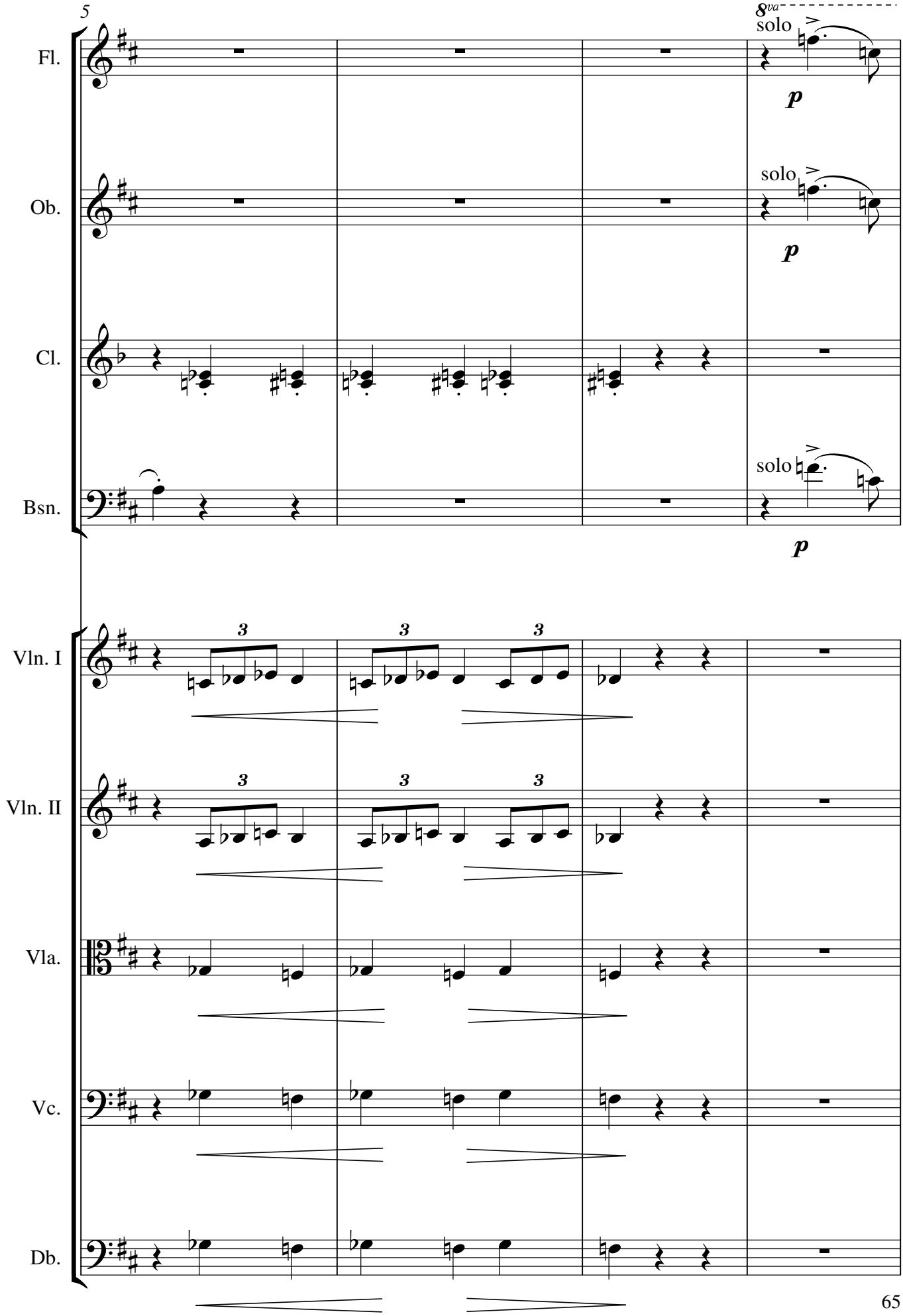
Finally, this thesis demonstrated that specific programmatic events taken from the play are apparent in the piece. These are evident both in the markings in the score, and from comments made by Liszt, reported by Ramann. Yet, strangely, most modern interpreters tend to ignore Ramann's analysis of the piece in *Franz Liszt als Künstler und Mensch* and her notes in *Lisztiana*, often preferring to dissect the work from the point of view of modern formal theory than to examine what the composer himself was trying to do. *Hamlet* centres on three main points of action: the appearance of the ghost in Act I, Scene v, Hamlet's dialogue with Ophelia in Act III, Scene i, and the stabbing scene in Act III, Scene iv. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that, although the piece started life as an overture, it is organised in an arch-like structure, rather than in sonata form. The changes evident in the two main versions of the score suggest that *Hamlet* grew in programmatic detail over time, perhaps as a product of its metamorphosis from overture to symphonic poem. At some points the programmatic aspects of the work dominate the structure, leading to passages such as the introduction that set a mood. This has partly contributed to misconceptions regarding the form of the work. Yet, at other times, musical exigencies come to the fore, for example in the passage depicting the stabbing of Polonius. An arch-like musical structure is clearly discernible overall, which seems to have developed as Liszt revised the piece, inserting the Ophelia section. Taken as a whole, *Hamlet* represents an attempt to fuse narrative with a satisfying musical structure.

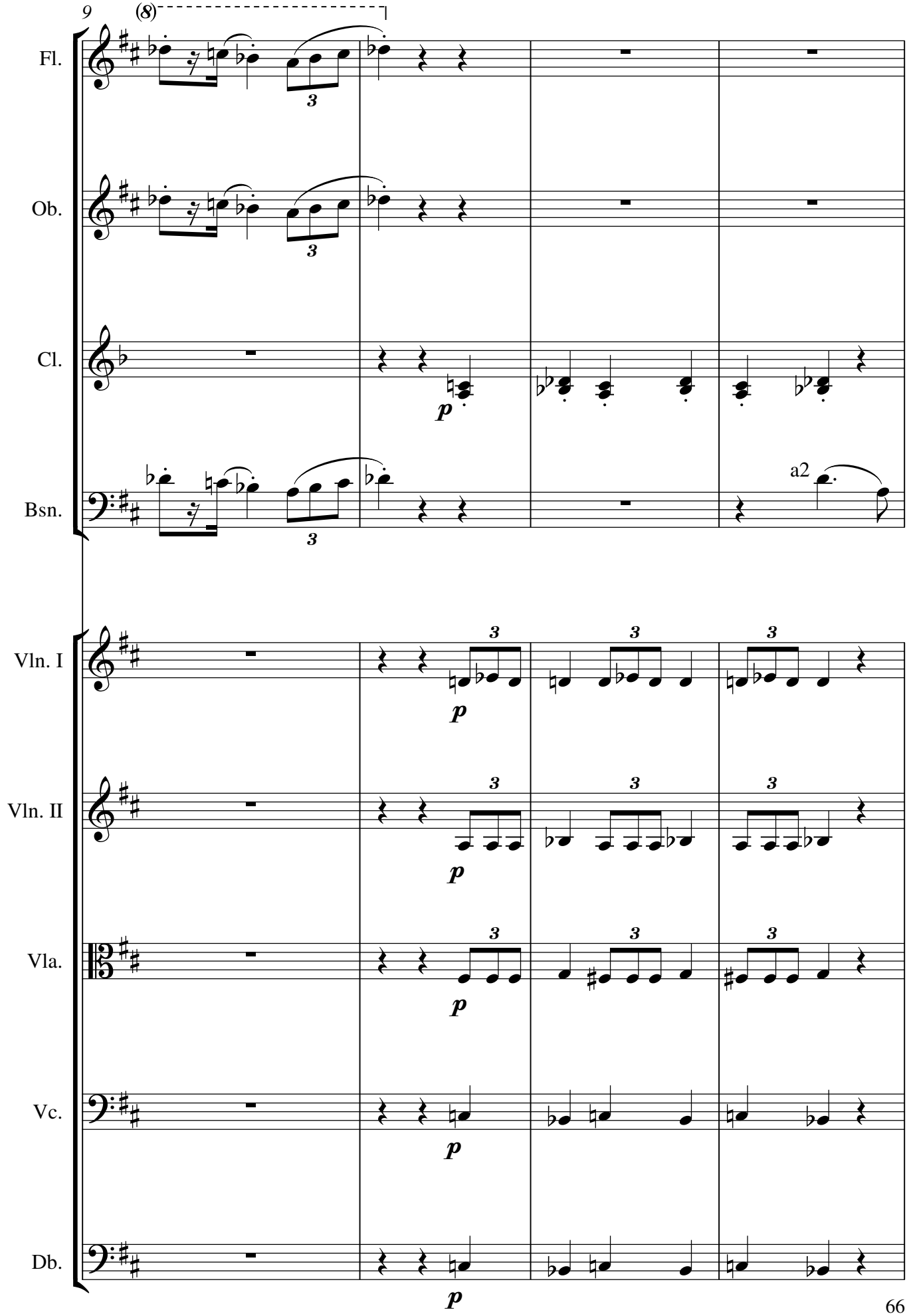
In summary, this thesis has demonstrated that Liszt's *Hamlet* is highly programmatic in terms of both its content and form. Its programme is based partly on Dawison's conception of Hamlet, and Dawison may well have been a catalyst for writing it, but largely it is a product of Liszt's own substantial knowledge of Shakespeare's plays. Throughout the piece, Liszt maintains a balance between the musical and dramatic exigencies of the work. *Hamlet* represents, therefore, an attempt to

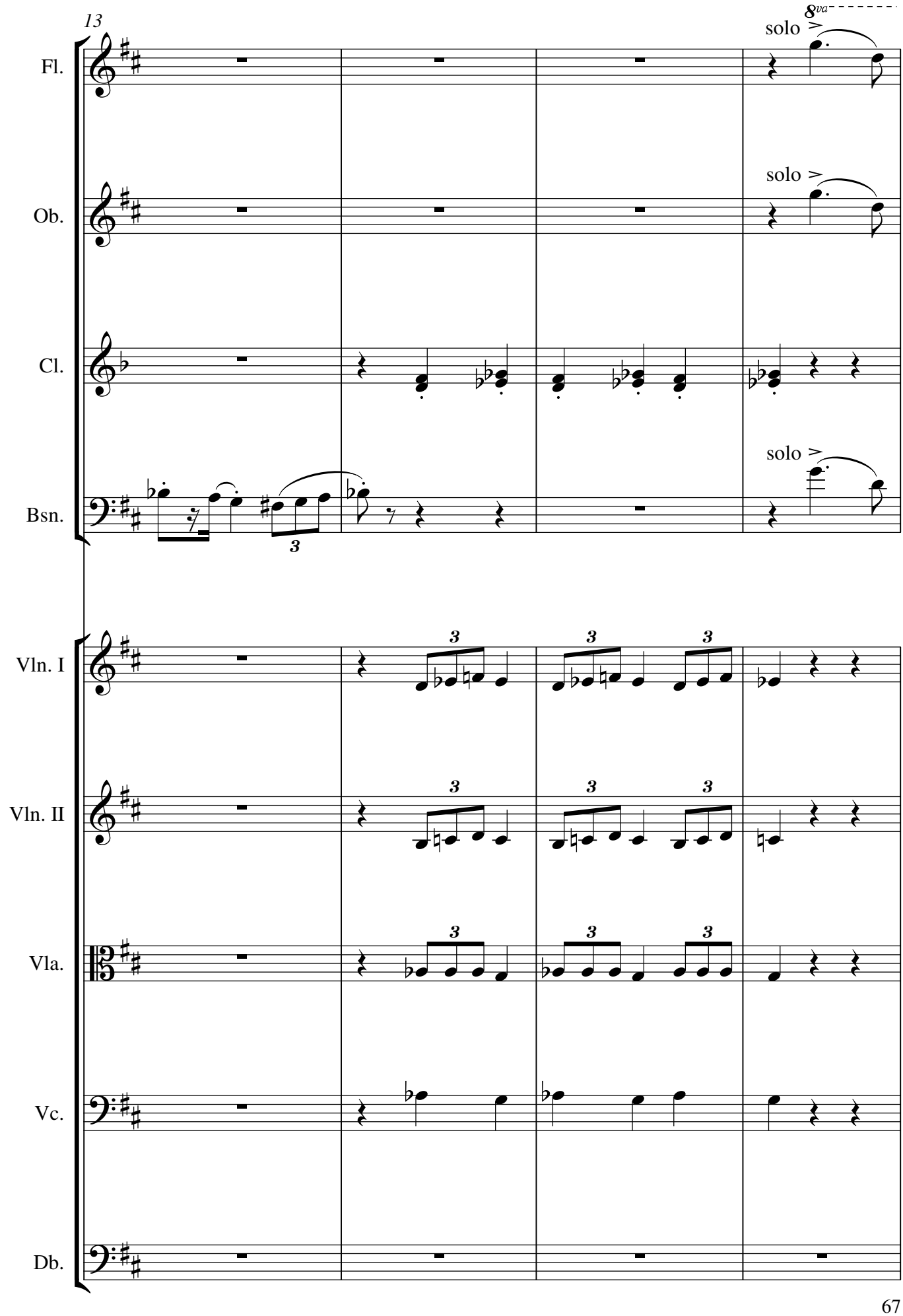
depict programmatic content within a satisfying musical structure, and so symbolises the realisation of Liszt's programmatic ambitions.

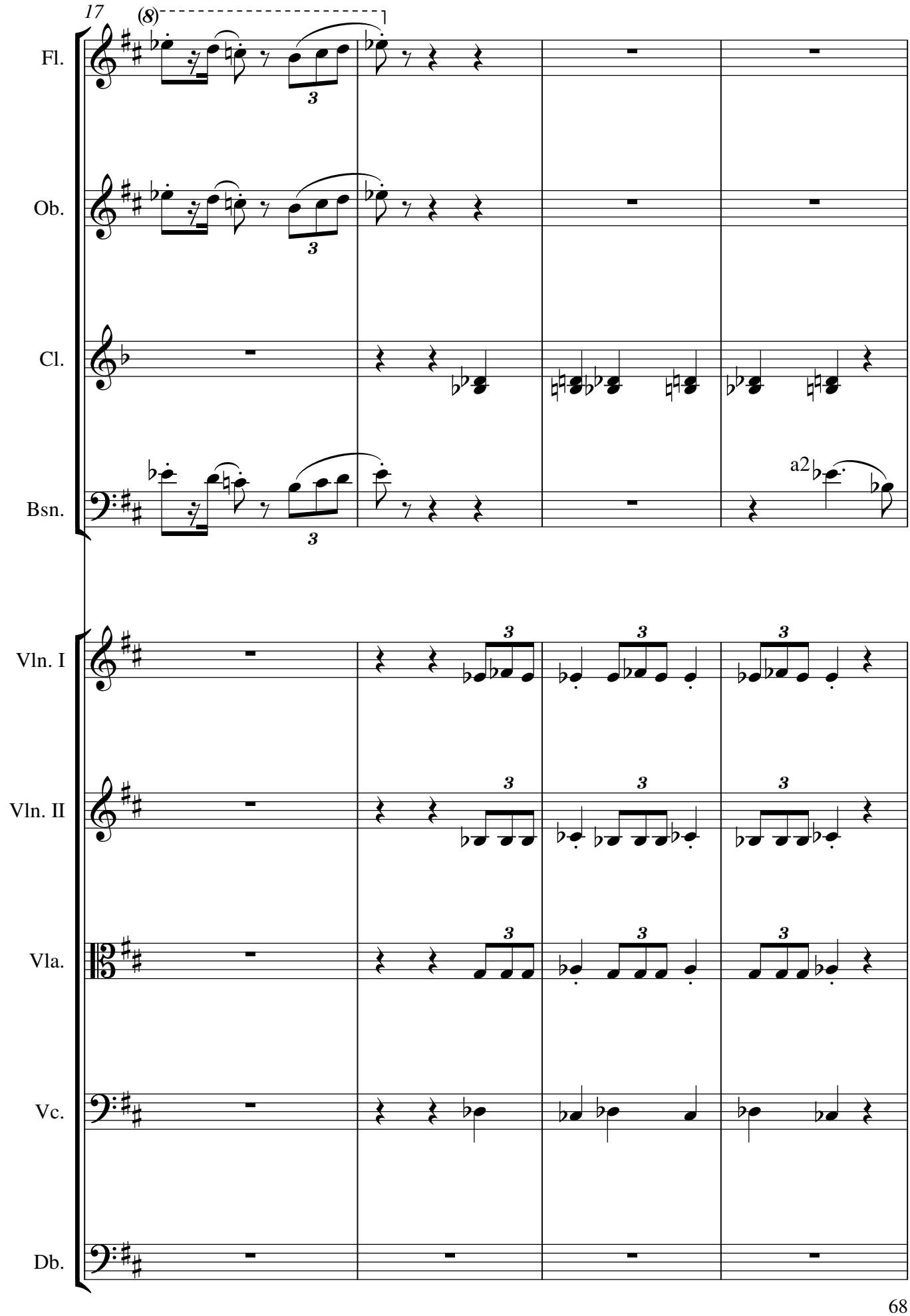
Transcription 1: The original middle section from the autograph score of Liszt's *Hamlet*

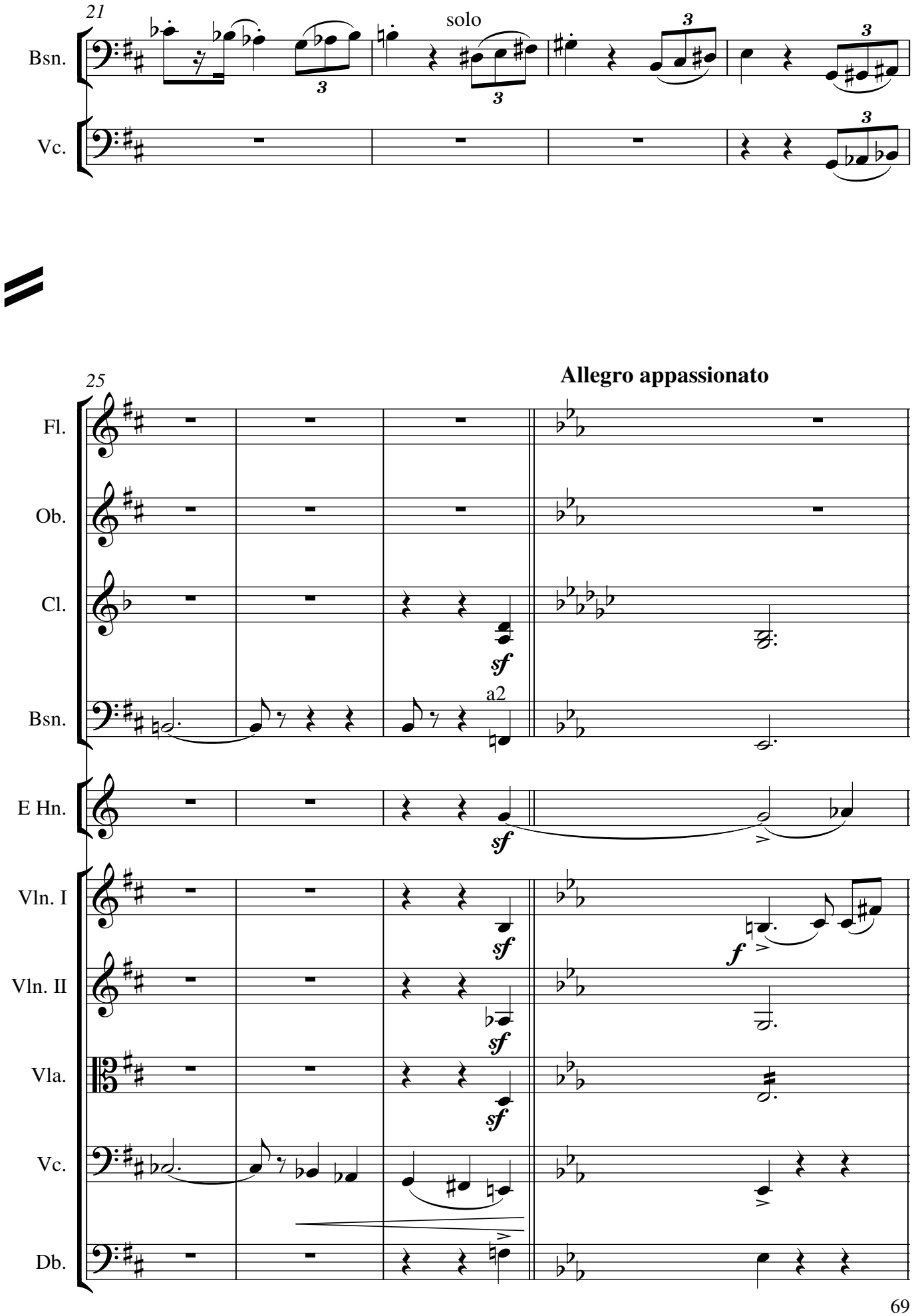



5
8va
solo
Fl.
p
solo
Ob.
p
Cl.
solo
Bsn.
p
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

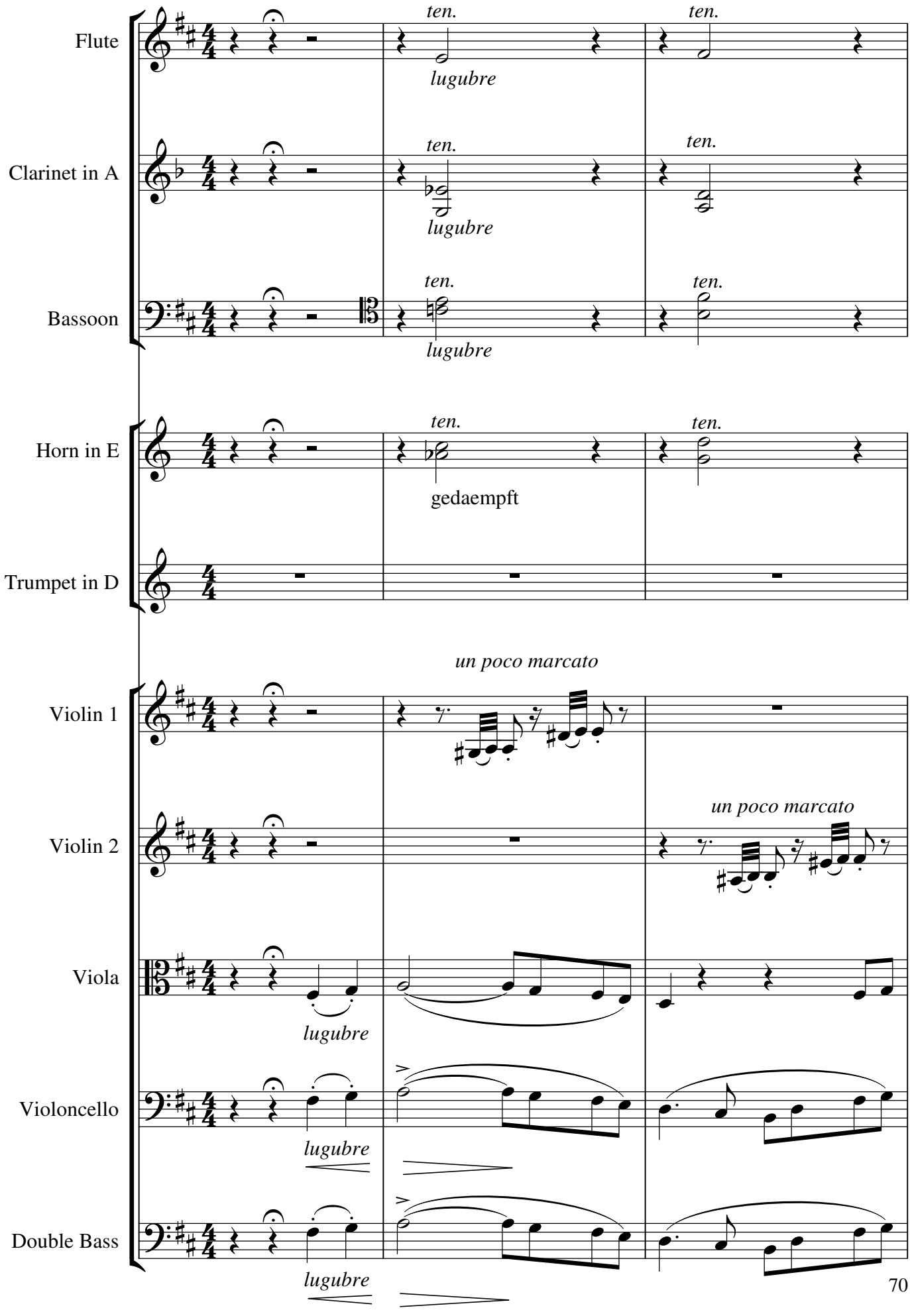

9
(8)
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
a2
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
p
3

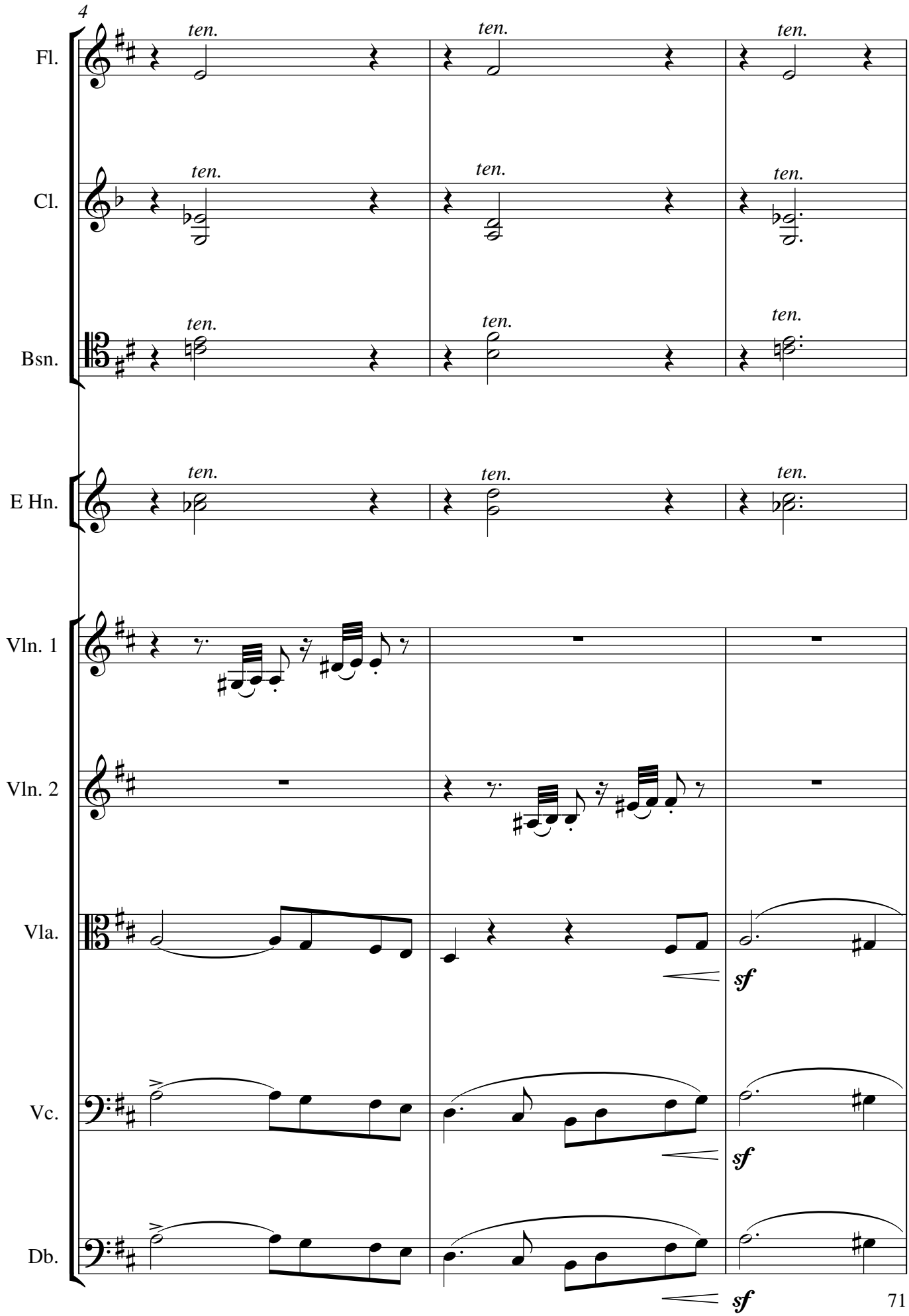

13
8va
solo
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

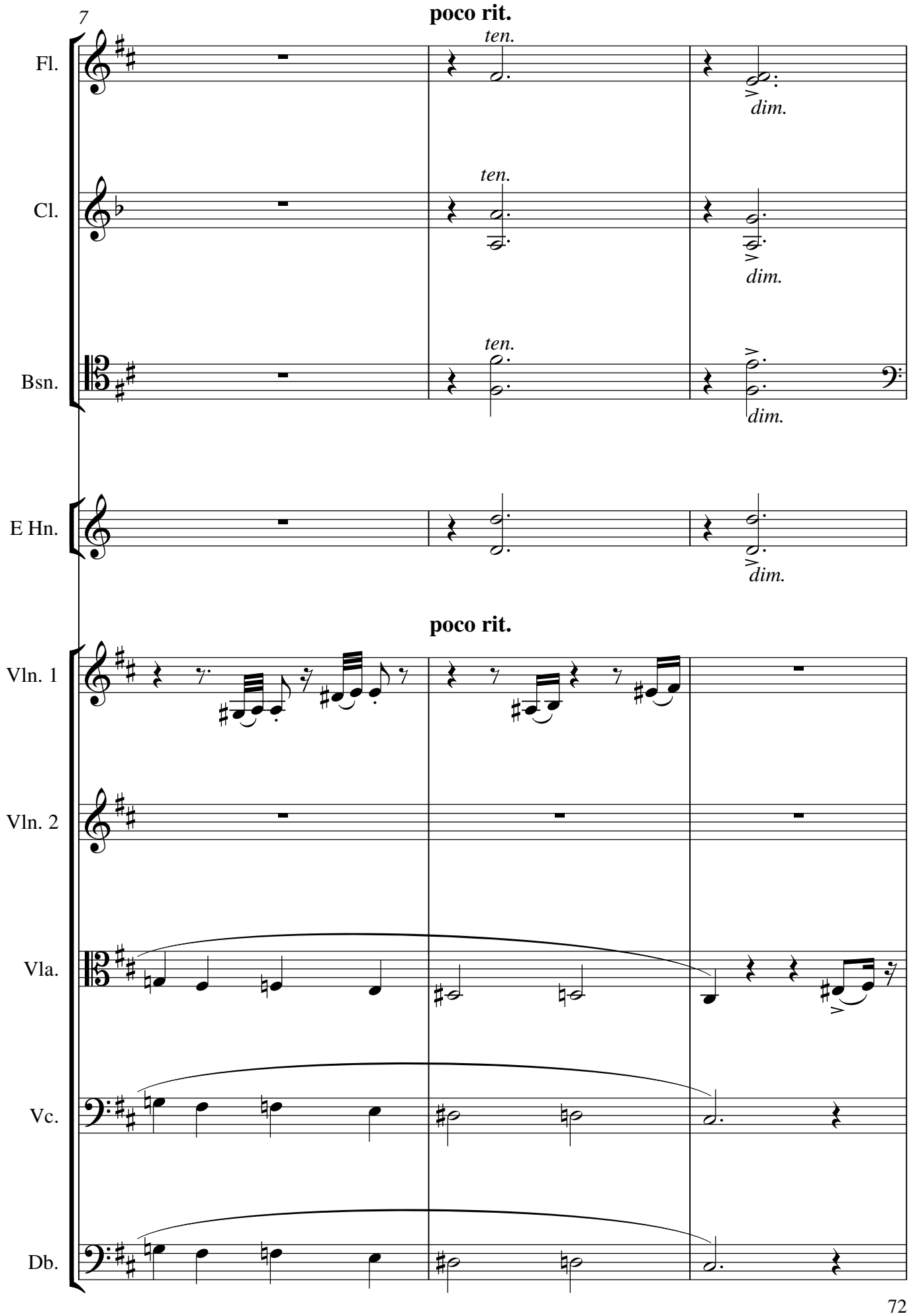

17
(8)
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
a2
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

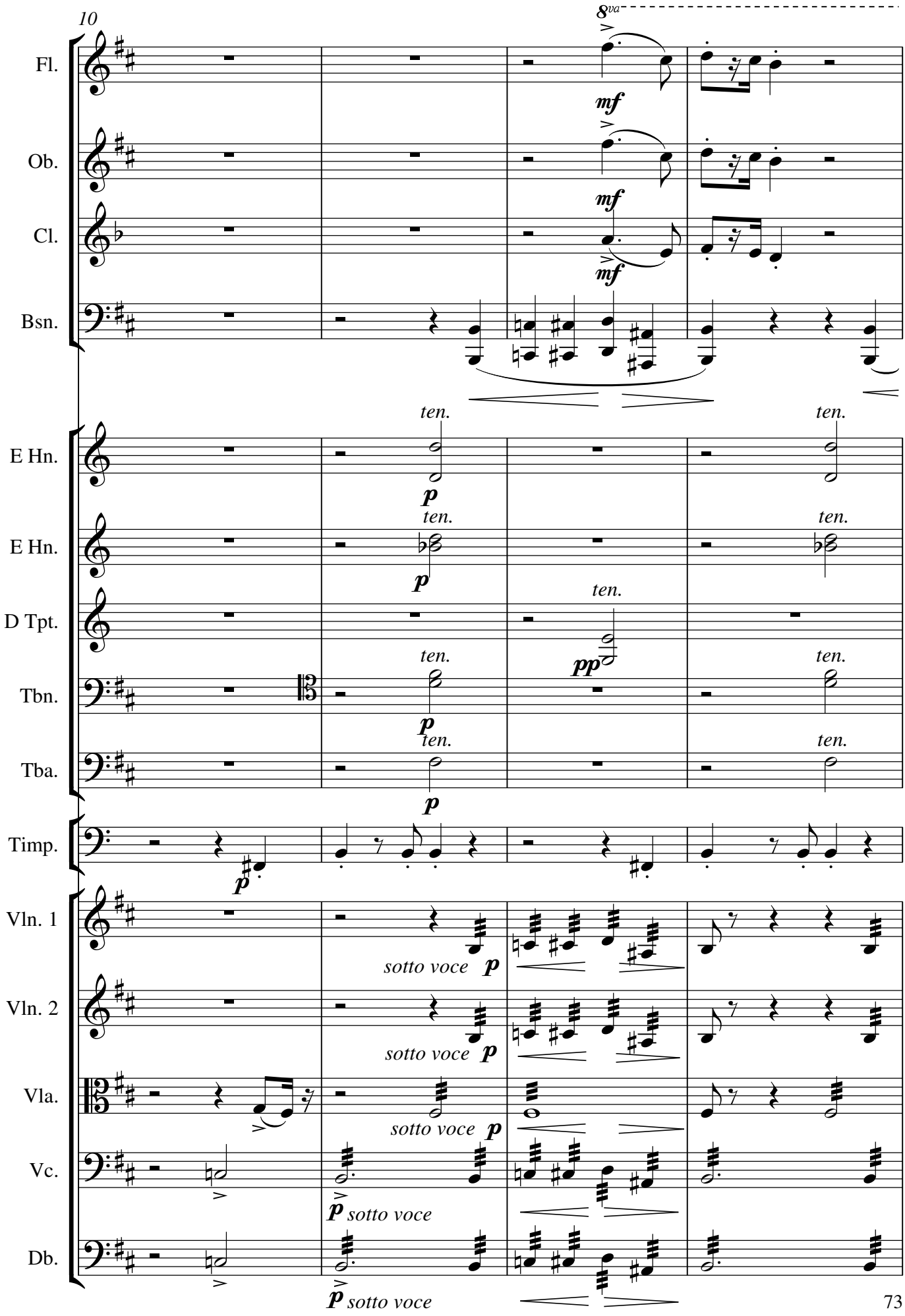

21
Bsn.
solo
Vc.
25
Allegro appassionato
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
a2
E Hn.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
sf
f

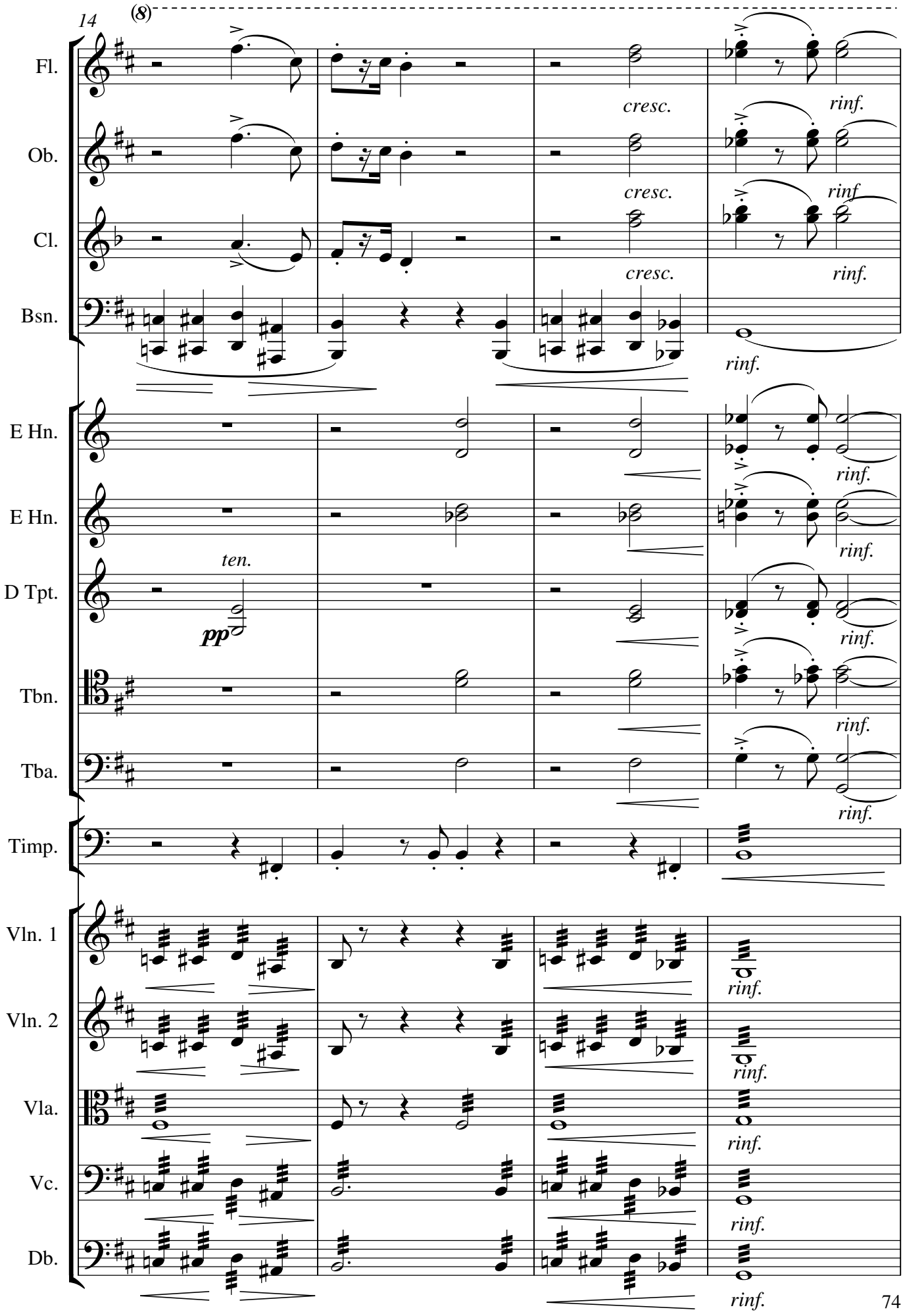
Transcription 2: The original ending from the autograph score of Liszt's *Hamlet*

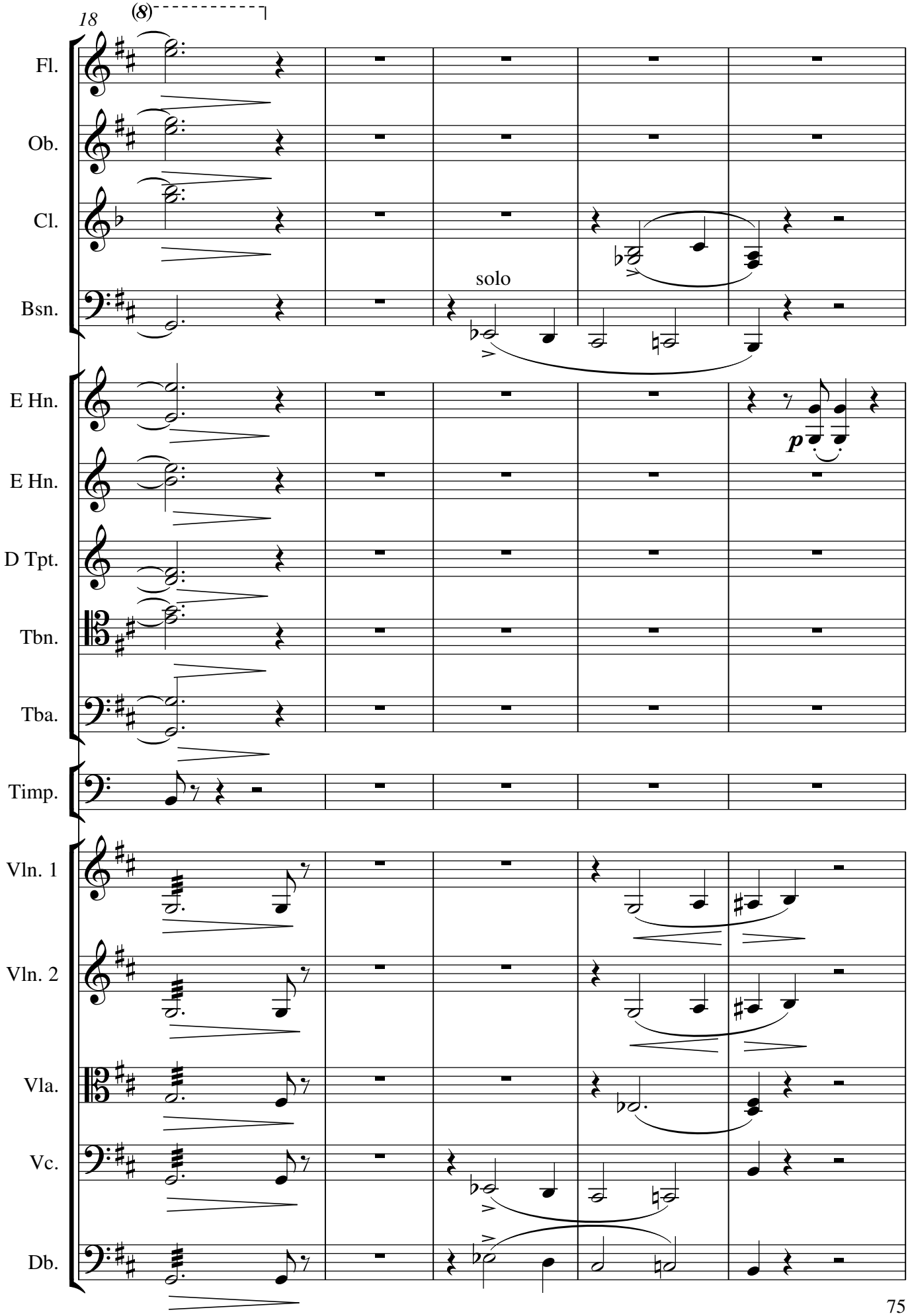


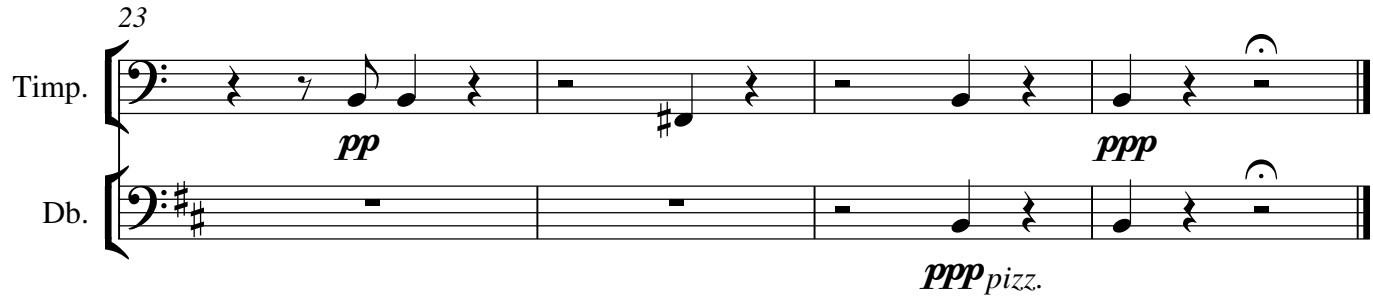

4
Fl.
Cl.
Bsn.
E Hn.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
ten.
sf


7
poco rit.
ten.
dim.
Fl.
Cl.
Bsn.
E Hn.
poco rit.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
Db.


10
8va
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
E Hn.
E Hn.
D Tpt.
Tbn.
Tba.
Timp.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
mf
p
pp
ten.
sotto voce


14
(8)
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
E Hn.
E Hn.
D Tpt.
Tbn.
Tba.
Timp.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
cresc.
rinf.
ten.
pp


18
(8)
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
solo
E Hn.
E Hn.
D Tpt.
Tbn.
Tba.
Timp.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
p


23
Timp.
pp
ppp
Db.
ppp pizz.

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