

class, but ethnically very mixed. Only a little over half the people are Arabs, the rest mostly Iranians and Baluchis.

Wikan studied the Arabs, who are everything that the Cairene poor are not: blessed with beautiful manners, dignified, serene, and poised. They also mind their own business. If a wife is unfaithful, even if she prostitutes herself, that is a matter between her and her husband. Her neighbors, women of impeccable reputation, will treat her in the same polite and friendly way that they treat anyone else, whether visiting her in her home or receiving her in theirs. Even the transvestite male prostitutes have an accepted place. The Sohar women are also in the highest degree reserved and inexpressive. Under quite ordinary circumstances, a group of them may sit together for eight hours and exchange no more than a few dozen sentences.

The sexes are segregated in Sohar to an extent unusual even in the Islamic world. Women move in a tiny social circle consisting almost exclusively of the women and children of a few adjacent houses. Shopping is done by men, for a woman would be ashamed to go to the market. Fertile ground, one might think, for a women's liberation movement—or at least for resentment. Not at all, says Wikan: The women, far from objecting to these restrictions, welcome them as a sign that they are honored and protected by their men.

Wikan, a fine ethnographer, has an eye for everything that is distinctive about the culture and by the careful use of small details builds up a wholly convincing picture. Above all, there is a sustained attempt to penetrate the inner lives of these strangely serene people, an attempt that may lead other readers, as it did me, to ponder what individual sacrifices, intellectual and emotional, might be required to maintain a social facade of such unruffled calm.

—Frank H. Stewart

**FRANZ LISZT: Vol. 1:**  
**The Virtuoso Years,**  
**1811–1847**  
by Alan Walker  
Knopf, 1983  
481pp. \$25.

"Franz Liszt was a delightful fellow." So began the first biographical essay I ever read on Hungary's greatest composer. After 30 years of reading in the Liszt bibliography (which currently embraces over 10,000 items), I see no reason to challenge that verdict.

The man was improbably handsome, charming, decent, and unselfish—at least during the years covered by Walker in this new, definitive study. Later on, during his years in Weimar and through his *vie trifurquée* (Liszt's own phrase for his restless old-age wanderings in Italy, Hungary, and Germany), there would be outbreaks of melancholia and misanthropy, expressed in the savage, atonal music that his countryman Béla Bartók found so fascinating. But these black depressions were like spots on the sun: Liszt was too radiant a personality to indulge them for

long. He remained a "delightful" fellow to the end of his life, happily curbing his own ambition to help along the careers of others. Schumann, Berlioz, Wagner, and Grieg were but a few of the many who owed their early successes to Liszt's patronage and counsel.

Not that Liszt's career suffered as a result of his generosity. At age 14, he saw one of his operas staged in Paris. By 1841, his piano recitals had put him at the center of a craze that was sweeping cultured Europe—a frenzy of adulation that the German poet Heinrich Heine dubbed "Lisztomania."

It follows that Liszt biographers are more than normally prone to what the English historian Thomas Macaulay called *lues boswelliana*, the disease of admiration. Walker, professor of music at McMaster University, has not escaped unscathed after 10 years of studying the man more closely than any previous scholar. He goes to great lengths, for example, to prove that Liszt was virtually the only prominent mid-century European *not* to sleep with the notorious "Spanish dancer," Lola Montez (born Eliza Gilbert of Limerick, Ireland). Be that as it may, this biography—massively researched, gracefully written, and elegantly produced—is certain to emerge as the most important full-length study of Liszt to appear in nearly a century.



The volume at hand is dense with new material, notably from the vast Esterházy Archives in Budapest. It proves among other things that Liszt, despite his aristocratic mien and rumored patents of nobility, was born to virtual serfdom, rising from his humble Magyar origins only through the irresistible force of his genius. Adam Liszt at long last receives his due as the most inspiring and supportive of musical fathers, Leopold Mozart not excepted. Franz's own (inherited) religiosity, his agonized self-transformation in Paris in 1832 ("Ah! provided I don't go mad, you will find in me an artist. . ."), his difficult romance with Marie d'Agoult (who left her husband in 1834 and lived with Liszt for 10 years), his grand tours of Europe and Asia Minor—all are treated in revealing detail. Yet even this book is not exhaustive. One would like, for instance, to have read more about what made Liszt so unique a pianist (the excellent eyewitness accounts by Sir Charles Hallé are unaccountably missing) and composer. Doubtless, these questions will be dealt with fully in Professor Walker's next volume. Musicians and music-lovers everywhere await it eagerly.

—Edmund Morris