

Weimar
1850–1851



By
Robert Whitehouse Eshbach

Editorial content copyright
© Robert W. Eshbach, 2026

Regent & Nott

MUSICOLOGY



Weimar, ca. 1850

The Call to Weimar

From January through mid-April 1850, Joseph Joachim made his first concert appearances in Paris, performing with Hector Berlioz, Louis Moreau Gottschalk, and Gewandhaus principal ‘cellist Bernhard Cossmann, among others, and participating in a notable concert given by Louise Farrenc.¹ The Paris reviewer for the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* expressed what was in those days a seemingly universal opinion of the idealistic young virtuoso:

He must be heard, and, where possible, known. Where such integrity and seriousness of disposition are united, in such young years, with such mastery, such unpretentiousness, such talent, so much simplicity and such amiability of mind, one is aware that one is observing

¹19 March: the program in Erard’s salon included the premiere of Farrenc’s Nonet. *Revue et Gazette Musicale*, 17/13 (21 Mar. 1850): 108–9. News of Joachim’s visit can be found in the *Revue et Gazette Musicale*, 17 (1850), passim. See also: Jeffrey Cooper, *The Rise of Instrumental Music and Concert Series in Paris 1828–1871* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research, 1983), 247.

something rare; but one does not know what one loves or values the most—the artist or the person. Joachim is among those called, but he is also one of the chosen.²

After his triumphs in Austria, Germany, England, and now France, it was clear that Joachim stood at the threshold of a major international career. On 1 May, he assumed the post of assistant concertmaster of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, performing alongside his mentor Ferdinand David. His future seemed assured.

Following his return to Leipzig, Joachim made a short trip to Weimar to visit Franz Liszt, and to report on his Paris trip. He had first encountered Liszt as a 12-year-old, while participating in one of Fanny Hensel's *Sonntags-Morgenmusiken* in Berlin.³ They met again in Vienna in March 1846 where they played Mendelssohn's new violin concerto together at the Stadt London, Liszt's preferred Viennese hotel. Liszt put on a show, sight-reading the piano reduction with a lit Havana held between his fingers, impressing young Joseph with his brilliance touched with charlatanry.⁴

During his April 1850 visit in Weimar, Joachim took part in a soirée given by Liszt, performing Beethoven's op. 132 quartet in A Minor, a Bach fugue (doubtless the G Minor, BWV 1001, which he had recently played in Paris), a piano trio by Franck that was one of Liszt's favorites, and an andante for string quartet by Joseph Joachim Raff.⁵ Those were, he wrote to Cossmann, 'some unforgettable days'. 'I really enjoyed it there', he continued. 'It's an amiably situated little town, and you can certainly live quite well with the people there...' About Liszt, he wrote: 'My former antipathy towards him has now, since I have gotten to know him better, turned into an equally strong preference. Am I perhaps less Philistine now, since Paris? Has he

² 'Den muß man hören und wo möglich kennen. Wo in so jungen Jahren solche Gediegenheit und solcher Ernst der Gesinnung, mit solcher Meisterschaft, solcher Anspruchslosigkeit, mit solcher Begabung, so viel Einfachheit und solche Liebenswürdigkeit des Gemüths vereinigt sind, da ist man sich bewußt daß man Seltenes vor sich hat; weiß aber nicht was man am Meisten lieb und werth hält, ob den Künstler, ob den Menschen. Joachim ist der Berufenen einer, aber auch ein Auserwählter.' *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 32/32 (19 Apr. 1850): 168.

³ Fanny Lewald, *Meine Lebensgeschichte*, 3 vols. (Berlin: Otto Janke, 1871), 3:147; Sebastian Hensel, *The Mendelssohn Family 1729–1847*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper, 1881), 2:260.

⁴ Andreas Moser, *Joseph Joachim: Ein Lebensbild* (Berlin: Behr, 1904), 63. Liszt once did his cigar trick for Jean-Joseph Bonaventure Laurens (1801–1890), claiming that this was how he would play 'as a charlatan, to amaze and astonish the public'. J. Marcelle Herrmann, 'J. B. Laurens' Beziehungen zu deutschen Musikern', *Schweizerische Musikzeitung* 105 (1965): 260.

⁵ *Signale für die musikalische Welt*, 19 (May 1850): 183.

really modified his manner that much? or maybe both? Enough, I like him so much that I am looking forward to going back to Weimar soon.’⁶

In July, Joachim acquired a new violin: ‘a magnificent Stradivari’, with the financial help of his wealthy Viennese uncles. ‘I am now so truly lucky as to call an instrument mine that is one of the most exquisite in Europe, and that has always represented for me the ideal of a beautiful tone. My joy over it is indescribable’, he wrote to his uncles in gratitude; ‘it is my true and heartfelt desire to express before the world my deeply felt thanks to you... for your willingness once again to make my artistic career easier and more beautiful’.⁷ The new violin seems to have had an inspiring effect on his playing. Hearing him, Clara Schumann, who had earlier found his playing cold, confided in her diary, ‘Joachim played Robert’s second quartet gorgeously, with a glorious tone and an extraordinary facility, and today I regretted inwardly what I had recently said of him’.⁸

Joachim returned to Weimar in late August for the Goethe and Herder Festival, at which Liszt conducted the premiere of Wagner’s *Lohengrin*. He was overwhelmed by the opera and its performance,⁹ and for a time he became an enthusiastic *Wagnerianer*. There was more chamber music: Joachim, Liszt, and Cossmann played Joachim Raff’s Piano Trio — ‘to perfection’, as Raff said — and Ferdinand David, Joachim, Carl Stöhr, and Cossmann performed Raff’s string

⁶ ‘... einige unvergeßliche Tage’. ‘Mir hat es dort sehr gefallen; es ist ein freundlich gelegenes Städtchen, und es läßt sich gewiß mit den Leuten dort recht gut leben...’ About Liszt, he wrote: ‘Meine sonstige Antipathie gegen diesen ist jetzt, seitdem ich ihn näher habe kennen gelernt, in eine eben so starke Vorliebe übergegangen. Bin ich vielleicht seit Paris weniger Philister? Hat er seine Art und Weise wirklich so sehr modificirt? oder wohl Beides? Genug, er gefällt mir so sehr, daß ich mich schon darauf freue, bald wieder nach Weimar zu fahren.’ Johannes Joachim and Andreas Moser, *Briefe von und an Joseph Joachim*, 3 vols. (Berlin: Bard, 1911–13), 1:21.

⁷ ‘...eine herrliche Stradivari...’ ‘Ich bin nun wirklich so glücklich ein Instrument mein zu nennen, welches zu den vorzüglichsten in Europa gehört, und das mir stets als Ideal eines schönen tones vorgeschwebt hat. Meine Freude darüber ist unbeschreiblich; vor allen Augen ist es mir aber wahres und inniges Herzensbedürfnis, Ihnen ... für diese Bereitwilligkeit, mir die Künstlerbahn zu verschönern und erleichtern, meinen tiefgefühlten Dank zu sagen.’ Leipzig, 27 July [1850]. Letter facsimile, Brahms-Haus Baden-Baden. See further Joachim’s letter to his brother Heinrich, 4 August 1850: ‘Es ist ein Göttertön’. Brahms-Institut an der Musik Hochschule Lübeck, Signatur: Joa: B1: 20, p. 3.

⁸ 15 July [1850]: ‘Joachim spielte Roberts 2. Quartett wunderschön, mit herrlichem Ton und einer außerordentlichen Leichtigkeit, und heute bereute ich in meinem Innern, was ich neulich über ihn gesagt.’ Berthold Litzmann, *Clara Schumann. Ein Künstlerleben Nach Tagebüchern und Briefen*, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1905), 2:112.

⁹ On Goethe’s birthday, 28 August 1850. Joachim did not participate in the premiere (as has sometimes been reported), for which 46 rehearsals (!) had taken place over a period of four months.

quartet ‘to absolute perfection’.¹⁰ Together, Joachim and Raff played a nocturne. ‘He’s like a younger brother to me here’, Raff wrote of Joachim.¹¹

Liszt offered Joseph the position of Concertmaster of the Weimar Hofkapelle and twice sent Raff to Leipzig to persuade him to accept.¹² After making the journey himself to discuss the matter with Ferdinand David, however, Liszt still had to address with the Weimar court the fraught issue of Joachim’s Jewishness.¹³

David may well have been reluctant to let Joachim go. After Mendelssohn’s death, he had grown disenchanted with Leipzig, and he often spoke of his desire to leave. He found his obligations at the opera increasingly burdensome and was frequently absent from his post in the Gewandhaus Orchestra. During that time, his stand partner, Moritz Klengel, often relieved him of his concertmaster duties.

Joachim, too, found the city unstimulating without Mendelssohn’s enlivening presence.¹⁴ He had performed as an *Extrageiger* in the Gewandhaus Orchestra since 1 August 1848, but he gave up his substitute position in September 1849. In an effort to retain Joachim for Leipzig, David and Kapellmeister Julius Rietz pressed the orchestra’s directorate to grant him a permanent appointment with benefits. On 1 May 1850, Klengel replaced Carl August Lange as leader of the second violins, and Joachim was engaged to stand beside David on the first desk. There, Joachim effectively served as co-concertmaster of the orchestra until autumn, when he was called away to Weimar. He gave notice of his Weimar appointment on 15 September and

¹⁰ Unquestionably Raff’s String Quartet in C Major (1849–50), now lost.

¹¹ Helene Raff, *Joachim Raff: Portrait of a Life*, trans. Alan Howe (www.raff.org, 2012), 85.

¹² Marie von Bülow, ed., *Hans von Bülow. Briefe und Schriften*, 8 vols. (1841–1853), (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1895), 1:235. Raff, *Raff*, 84. By then, Joseph Joachim and Joseph Joachim Raff had struck up a warm friendship. Raff guided Joachim around the town, and they were amused to sign their names in guestbooks: ‘Joseph Joachim’ and ‘Joseph Joachim Raff’. Bülow jokingly called them ‘Raff und seine Vornamen’ — Raff and his given names. See: Helene Raff, ‘Franz Liszt und Joachim Raff’, *Die Musik* (April 1902): 1276 fn.

¹³ Toward the end of his life, Liszt told August Göllerich that Mendelssohn might have wanted to go to Weimar as Hofkapellmeister, but that the Weimar court ‘would not have him because he was a Jew. For the same reason I later had to overcome many difficulties because of Joachim.’ ‘...wollte ihn aber nicht als Israeliten. Aus demselben Grunde mußte ich später auch wegen Joachim manche Schwierigkeiten besiegen.’ August Göllerich, *Franz Liszt* (Berlin: Marquardt Verlagsanstalt, 1908), 129.

¹⁴ See letter from Joseph Joachim to his brother-in-law Johann Rehnitz, 18 Nov. 1847: ‘Mendelssohn’s Death’, josephjoachim.com.

resigned from the orchestra shortly thereafter. Raimund Dreyschock was hired to fill the position of second concertmaster.¹⁵

Despite his recent promotion in Leipzig, Joachim nevertheless seized the opportunity to work with Liszt in what promised to become a prestigious center for new music. The proffered job also promised to allow time for private work, and opportunity to advance his solo career through travel, perhaps to Russia (Weimar's Grand Duchess was the sister of Tsar Nicholas I). On 30 September, Joachim wrote to his brother Heinrich:

Es ist auf meines Freundes u. Gönners Liszt Betrieb dort für mich von der Frau Großherzogin eine Concertmeister-Stelle kreirt worden, welche mir zwar augenblicklich in pecuniärer Beziehung nicht mehr biethet als Leipzig, wo ich aber für's Erste einen weit ehrenhafteren Posten habe, für's zweite außerordentlich wenig zu thun (vielleicht einmal wöchentlich unter Liszt's Direktion in der Oper vorzuspielen), für's 3te die Aussicht auf 5 Monate jährlich Urlaub (nächstes Jahr von Ende März bis Ende August) u. s w. Am meisten zieht mich aber das Zusammenwirken u. Leben mit Liszt nach Weimar, den ich lerne ihn mit jedem Male mehr lieben u. habe auch von ihm die feste Überzeugung, daß er mein wahrer Freund ist, der mir nicht zu der Stellung rathen würde, wenn er nicht meinte, daß es für mich heilsam wäre.¹⁶

[At the urging of my friend and patron Liszt, the Grand Duchess has created a position for me there as concertmaster; although this position currently offers me no greater financial compensation than Leipzig, I do, for the time being, hold a far more honorable post there, secondly, have exceptionally little to do (perhaps performing once a week at the opera under Liszt's direction), and thirdly, have the prospect of five months' annual leave (next year from the end of March to the end of August), and so on. But what draws me most to Weimar is the opportunity to work and live alongside Liszt, whom I find myself loving more and more with each passing day; I am also firmly convinced that he is my true friend, who would not advise me to take this position if he did not believe it would be beneficial for me.]

The same day, he wrote to Liszt:

Lieber Herr Doctor!

Wenn Sie wüßten in welchem Musikwirwar: Conservatoriums-Prüfungen, tägliche Aufführung des leidigen Propheten oder der unleidlichen Rosenfan u.s.w. ich in der letzten Woche gesteckt habe, Sie würden es mit bekannter Güte gern entschuldigen, daß ich nicht Nachricht von mir gegeben habe, umso mehr da es mir echt schmeichelte, daß Sie welche erwarteten. Sie scheinen es aber zu wünschen, und das ist mir genug, um Ihnen augenblicklich mitzutheilen, daß ich nach unserer Uebereinkunft dem Leipziger

¹⁵ Alfred Dörfel, *Geschichte der Gewandhausconcerte zu Leipzig* (Leipzig: Im auftrage der Concert-Direction, 1884), 141.

¹⁶ Leipzig am letzten September 1850. Joachim, *Briefe*, 1:22–3. [D-LÜbi, Joa : B1 : 23, p. 2]

Concertdirectorium angezeigt habe, daß ich Mitte October meine Stelle in Weimar antreten würde. Ich kann demnach am 15ten October bei Ihnen erscheinen, wenn Sie mich wollen. Sollten Sie aber Weimar vor diesem Tag verlassen, so müßte ich suchen einige Tage früher hier abzukommen, denn ich würd es freilich für ein böses Omen halten, müßte ich meine Stelle in Ihrer Abwesenheit antreten....¹⁷

[Dear Doctor!

If you only knew what a musical whirlwind I've been caught up in over the past week—conservatory exams, daily performances of that tiresome *Prophet* or that insufferable *Rosenfan*, and so on—you would, with your usual kindness, gladly excuse my failure to write. All the more so since I was genuinely flattered that you were expecting a letter from me. However, you seem to wish for it, and that is enough for me to inform you immediately that, in accordance with our agreement, I have notified the Leipzig Concert Board of Directors that I would be taking up my position in Weimar in mid-October. I can therefore join you on October 15, if you wish. Should you, however, leave Weimar before that date, I would have to try to leave here a few days earlier, for I would certainly consider it a bad omen if I were to take up my post in your absence....]

On 13 October 1850, Weimar's Grand Duke Carl Friedrich approved Joachim's employment for three years at the unusually high annual salary of 500 Thaler; as with Liszt, the money was to be paid by Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna through the court treasury.¹⁸ In artistic matters, the 'excellent young artist' was to be responsible solely to Liszt; he was further granted an annual three-month vacation (despite the five months he had earlier been led to expect), to be arranged in consultation with, and at the pleasure of, theater Intendant Ferdinand von Ziegesar. He was exempt from performing in theatre and vaudeville productions.¹⁹

On 14 October, Staatsminister Bernhard von Watzdorf wrote to Joachim, informing him of his appointment, effective the following day. Thus, 'in consideration of his significant artistic talent and in expectation that he will render useful service to the Grand Ducal Court Orchestra',

¹⁷ 'Leipzig, am 30. Septbr 1850'. Staatsarchiv Weimar, Generalintendanz des Deutschen Nationaltheaters Weimar Nr. 183, 'Die Anstellung des Konzertmeisters Joachim', Nr. 7.

¹⁸ Joachim's successor from 1 Jan. 1853–1 Nov. 1854, Ferdinand Laub (1832–1875), received an annual 400 Rth., and Laub's successor, Edmund Singer (1831–1912), Joachim's contemporary and friend from Pesth, was still paid 400 Rth. from 1856 until his salary was raised to 440 Rth. in 1860. [Wolfram Huschke, *Musik im klassischen und nachklassischen Weimar, 1756–1861* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1982), 154.] Laub and Singer were not made 'Concertmeister', as is usually noted, but were given the title of 'Kammer-Virtuos'. See: Richard Pohl, *Jahrbuch des Großherzoglich Weimarischen Hof-Theaters und der Hof-Kapelle* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1855), 27. As principal 'cellist, Bernhard Cossmann was paid 350 thalers annually. [Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: The Weimar Years, 1848–1861*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1989), 101.]

¹⁹ Landesarchiv Thüringen – Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar, Generalintendanz des Deutschen Nationaltheaters und der Staatskapelle Weimar Nr. 183, Document no. 13: 'Carl Friedrich von Sachsen Weimar Eisenach an das Hofmarschallamt', Weimar, 13 October 1850.

the 19-year-old ‘Vice-Concertmaster and first violinist at the Konservatorium zu Leipzig’ became the first person to hold the title of *Concertmeister* in Weimar in forty years.²⁰

Joachim’s first act in Weimar was to perform Beethoven’s violin concerto and his own ‘Phantasie über ungarische Motive’ for an audience of 370 (268 paying) in a benefit concert for the widows and orphans of the grand-ducal Hofkapelle (19 October 1850).²¹ As was customary at the time, the concert was arranged at the last minute; on Saturday morning, 12 October, Joachim wrote to Liszt from Leipzig:

Verehrter Hr Doctor!

In aller Eile zeige ich Ihnen, daß ich mit Freude Ihren Wunsch nachkomme, das Beethoven’sche Concert am 19ten zu spielen. Als 2tes Stück würde ich gerne eine noch nicht öffentlich gespielte Phantasie von meiner Wenigkeit über Ungarische Motive wählen; doch wäre es mir lieb, wenn es bei meiner Ankunft in Weimar erst Ihre Census passirte. Ich schlage dafür vor: vorläufig für das 2te Stück bloß “Phantasie für Violine, gespielt von Joachim,” auf das Programm zu setzen. Sollten Sie indeß aus besondere Gründe sich vor meiner Ankunft für ein Stück von Ernst entscheiden wollen, so finden Sie mich auch dazu bereit....²²

[Dear Herr Doctor!

I am writing in haste to let you know that I am happy to comply with your request to perform the Beethoven concerto on the 19th. As the second piece, I would like to choose a fantasia of my own composition based on Hungarian motifs, which has not yet been performed in public; however, I would prefer that it first receive your approval upon my arrival in Weimar. I therefore suggest that, for the time being, the program simply list “Fantasy for Violin, performed by Joachim” as the second piece. Should you, however, for any particular reason, wish to select a piece by Ernst before my arrival, I am also prepared to do so....]

²⁰ Ibid. Further: Document no. 14: ‘Staatsminister von Watzdorf an Joseph Joachim’ Weimar, 14 October 1850; Document no. 16: ‘Arbeitsvertrag vom 24. Oktober’ [1850], signed ‘Joseph Joachim’. See also: *Weimarische Zeitung* 86 (26 October 1850): 835.

²¹ Audience attendance statistics in Huschke, *Musik*, 202.

²² Sonnabend 7 Uhr Morgens. Goethe-Schiller Archiv Weimar, GSA 59/19, 15. Joachim had recently played Ernst’s ‘Othello Fantasie’ in Paris.

The 6:30 concert also featured a ‘solo brillant’ for violoncello by Servais, performed by Joachim’s Leipzig colleague Bernhard Cossmann, who had also been recently hired in Weimar.²³

Liszt left Weimar shortly afterwards.

Concertmaster



Weimar Hoftheater, before 1907²⁴

Joachim’s début performance would be the first of only three public solo appearances with orchestra that he would make in Weimar during his years of employment there (October 1850 through the end of 1852); the others were a performance of Mendelssohn’s violin concerto on 16 February 1851 in a concert celebrating the Grand Duchess’s birthday,²⁵ and a performance

²³ *Weimarische Zeitung* 84 (19 Oct. 1850): 826.

²⁴ Wikimedia Commons.

²⁵ The concert, which included Wagner’s *Tannhäuser* overture, a Fantasia for violoncello composed and played by Bernhard Cossmann, and a Scene and Finale from the third act of J. J. Raff’s *King Alfred*, was conducted by Liszt. Liszt, who by then rarely played in public, ‘stole the show’ with a command performance of his own *Illustrations du Prophète*. Landesarchiv Thüringen–Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar, Kunst und Wissenschaft–Hofwesen Nr.A 10419/38 Blatt: 81. Accessed 19 Apr. 2021.

on viola of Hector Berlioz' *Harold in Italy* on 13 April 1851.²⁶ Thereafter, with the exception of private court concerts, a journey to England, and a few rare appearances in Germany, Joachim's burgeoning solo career was largely held in abeyance as he assumed the role of a court opera concertmaster.²⁷

Contrary to his sanguine expectations, his opera schedule proved to be full and long: during his first two and a half months, the Weimar Hoftheater gave seventeen performances, comprising ten different operas.²⁸ (See Fig. 1)

- 16. 10. 1850 Donizetti *Die Favoritin*
- 22. 10. 1850 Donizetti *Lucia von Lammermoor*
- 27. 10. 1850 Mozart *Die Zauberflöte* (Neu einstudiert)
- 2. 11. 1850 Flotow *Martha*
- 13. 11. 1850 Donizetti *Marie, oder: Die Tochter des Regiments*
- 16. 11. 1850 Meyerbeer *Robert der Teufel*
- 20. 11. 1850 Donizetti *Die Favoritin*
- 24. 11. 1850 Donizetti *Marie, oder: Die Tochter des Regiments*
- 26. 11. 1850 Spontini *Die Vestalin* (Neu einstudiert)
- 30. 11. 1850 Flotow *Stradella*
- 1. 12. 1850 Boieldieu *Johann von Paris*
- 7. 12. 1850 Boieldieu *Johann von Paris*
- 10. 12. 1850 Boieldieu *Johann von Paris*
- 15. 12. 1850 Spontini *Die Vestalin*
- 22. 12. 1850 Weber *Der Freischütz*
- 26. 12. 1850 Mozart *Die Zauberflöte*
- 29. 12. 1850 Kauer *Die Saalnixe* (Neu einstudiert)²⁹

Fig. 1

The Weimar opera season typically lasted from early- or mid-September to mid-June. During the course of Joachim's twenty-six-month service, the Kapelle gave 115 performances of 36 different works. (see Fig. 2).

²⁶ Landesarchiv Thüringen–Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar, Kunst und Wissenschaft–Hofwesen Nr.A 10419/38 Blatt: 114. Accessed 19 Apr. 2021.

²⁷ Joachim had previously been a regular soloist with the Gewandhaus Orchestra, appearing in the previous two seasons with the Beethoven Concerto, Spohr's E Minor Concerto, the Mendelssohn Concerto, and some solo Bach. He did not appear with the Gewandhaus Orchestra during his tenure in Weimar, reflecting not only his immersion in his duties there, but perhaps also the state of music-political relations between the two cities at the time. He returned to the Gewandhaus stage again in January 1854. [Dörffel, *Gewandhauskonzerte*, 142.]

²⁸ The number of operas given was considerably larger than those accounted for in Adolf Bartels, *Chronik des Weimarschen Hoftheaters 1817–1907* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1908).

²⁹ As advertised in the *Weimarsche Zeitung*. The complete listing of operas performed during Joachim's tenure in Weimar can be found at 'Opera Performances in Weimar during Joachim's Tenure as Concertmaster', josephjoachim.com.

Auber *Die Stumme von Portici* (2)
 Fra Diavolo, oder Das Gasthaus in Terracina
 Beethoven *Fidelio*
 Bellini *Die Familien Capuleti und Montecchi* (4)
 Die Nachtwandlerin
 Norma (4)
 Berlioz *Benvenuto Cellini* (5)
 Boieldieu *Johann von Paris* (4)
 Donizetti *Der Liebestrank* (2)
 Die Favoritin (7)
 Lucia von Lammermoor
 Lukrezia Borgia (2)
 Marie, oder: Die Tochter des Regiments (5)
 Flotow *Martha, oder Der Markt von Richmond* (5)
 Stradella (4)
 Herold *Zampa, oder Die Marmorbraut* (3)
 Kauer *Die Saalnixe* (1) plus 2 x 1. Theil
 Lortzing *Czaar und Zimmermann* (7)
 Mehul *Jacob und seine Söhne* (2)
 Meyerbeer *Die Hugonotten* [4th act]
 Robert der Teufel (2)
 Mozart *Die Hochzeit des Figaro*
 Don Juan (4)
 Die Zauberflöte (4)
 Raff *König Alfred* (3)
 Rossini *Othello, der Mohr von Venedig* (3)
 Der Barbier von Sevilla
 Schumann *Manfred* (2)
 Spohr *Faust* (3)
 Spontini *Die Vestalin* (2)
 Ferdinand Cortez oder Die Eroberung von Mexico (3)
 Verdi *Hernani* (2)
 Wagner *Lohengrin* (8)
 Tannhäuser und der Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg (10)
 Weber *Der Freischütz* (4)
 Weigel *Die Schweizerfamilie*

Fig. 2

The hard-working Weimar Hofkapelle was quite small—barely adequate for the performance of many contemporary works. By October 1851, it consisted merely of five first violins, six second violins, three violas, four celli, three double basses, double winds, four horns, two trumpets, one trombone (!), one tuba, and timpani.³⁰ Additional players from Leipzig or Meiningen were added for important occasions, as needed. Perhaps because of Joseph's youth,

³⁰ The entire ensemble, with names, in Huschke, *Musik*, 152; see also: Walker, *Liszt*, 100.

the members of the orchestra were required to sign a declaration stating ‘that they will willingly listen to the instructions of the concertmaster Joachim. The eagerness and goodwill with which this is done will best show who knows how to value and appreciate art and talent, and who cares about the prosperity of the whole honorable institute.’³¹ In turn, the young concertmaster grew to respect the efforts of his colleagues and formed close friendships with some of them; when he left Weimar at the end of 1852 it was to the members of the Weimar Kapelle, not to the composers and proponents of the ‘Weimar School’, that he dedicated his Overture to *Hamlet*, op. 4, conceived during their time together and completed in solitude during his first months in Hanover.

Nevertheless, Joachim’s first year in Weimar was in many ways a personal and artistic disappointment. The promise of ‘collaboration and life together with Liszt’ proved particularly elusive: Liszt was often away for protracted periods in the spa town of Bad Eilsen due to his partner Princess Carolyne Wittgenstein’s chronic illness, her grief over her mother’s death, her 13-year-old daughter’s serious bout of typhoid fever, and the tiresome annulment negotiations that the princess was pursuing with her husband. In Liszt’s absence, most opera performances were conducted by André Hippolyte Chélaré (1789–1861), a reputed mediocrity who a decade earlier had succeeded Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778–1837) as Hofkapellmeister in Weimar, and then, to the inevitable detriment of his reputation, had the misfortune of continuing to serve alongside Liszt.³² Born in Paris, and educated at the Paris Conservatoire, the young Chélaré had been a well-thought-of composer and violinist. Now in his sixties, he was an embarrassment. His poor command of German, his inadequate conducting technique, his unadventurous programming, and his uninspiring leadership became a source of growing discontent within the theatre, and led to incessant abuse, both private and in print, from Liszt’s worshipful partisans.³³ On 25 November 1850, actor, singer, and regisseur Eduard Genast (1797–1866) wrote to Liszt:

³¹ ‘... daß sie hierin den Anordnungen des Konzertmeisters Joachim willig Gehör schenken werden. Es wird sich in den Eifer und dem guten Willen, mit dem dies geschieht, am besten darthun, wer Kunst und Talent zu würdigen und schätzen weiß und wem das Gedeihen des ganzen ehrenwerten Institutes am Herzen liegt.’ Landesarchiv Thüringen – Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar, Generalintendanz des Deutschen Nationaltheaters und der Staatskapelle Weimar Nr. 183, Document no. 21: Nachricht über Joachims Kompetenzen an das Orchester, Weimar, 24. Oktober 1850.

³² For the division of their duties, see Walker, *Liszt*, 96–7.

³³ As early as 1845, Chélaré’s ‘expressionless’ and ‘boring’ conducting had been the object of ridicule. (See, for example, the openly sarcastic review in *NZfM* 23 (1845): 117). Joanne Cormac comes to Chélaré’s defense, suspecting that his poor reputation is largely a result of ‘Lisztian partisanship’. Be that as it may, the Lisztian

Die Darstellung von [Meyerbeer's] "Robert der Teufel" war schauderhaft! Es fehlt mir der Muth und die Lust, alle die Dummheiten Ihnen aufzuzählen, die der Ignorant Chelard stets mit lächelndem Gesicht gemacht hat. Er konnte lachen während ich in meiner Loge fast verzweifelte. Nur soviel sei gesagt, dass fast nicht eine Nummer ohne Fehler vorüber gegangen ist. Morgen soll die "Vestalin" sein. Zwei Proben haben wir bereits abgehalten, und die zweite ging schlechter als die erste. Der Mann giebt sich rasende Mühe, Orchester und Sänger in Unordnung zu bringen. ... Der Himmel erhalte Sie und Ihre Lieben und führe Sie bald zu uns zurück.³⁴

[The performance of [Meyerbeer's] "Robert the Devil" was dreadful! I lack the courage and the desire to list for you all the blunders that that ignoramus Chelard kept making with a smile on his face. He could laugh while I was nearly in despair in my box. Suffice it to say that hardly a single number went by without a mistake. Tomorrow is supposed to be "La Vestale." We've already held two rehearsals, and the second went worse than the first. The man is going to great lengths to throw the orchestra and singers into disarray. ... May heaven preserve you and your loved ones and bring you back to us soon.]

In early December, Joachim visited his 'dear Kapellmeister' Liszt 'in his seclusion' in Bad Eilsen, and he may have voiced concerns at that time. Three weeks later, on 28 December, Intendant von Ziegesar requested Chélard's resignation.³⁵ Nevertheless, the following day Raff sent Liszt the following discouraging letter:

Unser Theater befindet sich fortwährend miserable. So haben wir nacheinander 2 Opern-Vorstellungen gehabt [...] in denen selbst ganz unschuldige unmusikalische Leute es nicht mehr aushalten konnten, weil eben Fehler vorkamen, die selbst den Geduldigsten blessiren müssen. Joachim ist über dies und Ähnliches fortwährend ausser sich. Er geht morgen oder übermorgen nach Leipzig, wo er sich besser gefallen wird. Wenn sich Ihre Abwesenheit um ein paar Monate verlängern sollte, so können Sie darauf rechnen, uns samt und sonders nicht mehr hier zu finden, wo wir kanaille Musik anhören müssen und sonst lediglich auf uns allein angewiesen sind, weil in diesem verdammten Nest blutwenig Leute sind, mit denen man verkehren kann. Man verliert Glauben und Lust an der Kunst und die Freude, zu arbeiten, wie es dem armen Joachim jetzt wirklich geht.³⁶

partisans in the early 1850s included Genast, Raff, Bülow—and Joachim. See Joanne Cormac, *Liszt and the Symphonic Poem*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 50.

³⁴ La Mara [Ida Maria Lipsius], *Briefe hervorragender Zeitgenossen an Franz Liszt*, 3 vols. (1824–1854) (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1895–1904), 1:151. See also: Arthur Friedheim, *Life and Liszt. The Recollections of a Concert Pianist*, ed. Theodore L. Bullock (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 1961), 106–7. Friedheim, and following him Walker, *Liszt*, 99, dates this letter to 1851. *Robert le Diable* was performed on 16 November 1850, however, followed by a performance of Spontini's *La Vestale* on 26 November. I have dated the letter accordingly.

³⁵ Chélard's termination was made final by the grand-ducal decree of 17 April 1851. Huschke, *Musik*, 108.

³⁶ Hans Joachim Moser, 'Joseph Joachim', *Sechshundneunzigstes Neujahrsblatt der Allgemeinen Musikgesellschaft in Zürich 1908* (Zürich: Art. Institut Orell Füssli, 1908): 21. La Mara, *Briefe Hervorragender Zeitgenossen*, 1:152–3.

[Our theater is constantly in a miserable state. For instance, we've had two opera performances in a row [...] during which even the most innocent, unmusical people could no longer bear it, because mistakes occur that are bound to offend even the most patient. Joachim is constantly beside himself over this and similar matters. He's leaving for Leipzig tomorrow or the day after, where he'll be happier. If your absence should be extended by a few months, you can count on not finding any of us here anymore, where we are forced to listen to wretched music and are otherwise entirely on our own, because in this damned backwater there are very few people with whom one can socialize. One loses faith in and enthusiasm for art, as well as the joy of working—which is exactly how poor Joachim is feeling right now.]

The same day, Joachim wrote to his brother: '[Liszt] will return on the 8th of January to Weimar, where I will have a pleasant musical life until my departure [for England] (at the end of April)'.³⁷ Liszt did not return in January as promised, however, and Joachim did not visit England that year. In fulfillment of contractual obligations, Liszt returned to Weimar for several weeks each in January/February, April, and May 1851, but otherwise stayed away until October 1851.

Joachim must have felt that he had made a costly career mistake. At a time when Weimar was the focus of the musical world's attention, the young, celebrated virtuoso with burning artistic ambitions had been enchanted by the prospect of daily fellowship with Liszt, building the new 'Athens on the Ilm'. In reality, he had regressed from being a popular, up-and-coming soloist and de facto concertmaster of the prestigious Gewandhaus Orchestra to being a musical retainer, entertaining the Weimar aristocracy playing operas by Flotow, Meyerbeer, and Boieldieu under the musical direction of a dispirited and inept *routinier*. By 1853, Joachim could write to Liszt of being inspired by 'the Atmosphere that, through your tireless activity is filled with new sounds', and of the pleasure of working with the 'phalanx of like-minded friends' in Weimar.³⁸ At present, however, the circle that Alan Walker has called a 'Gathering of Eagles'—'the brilliant band of pupils and disciples which formed itself around Liszt during his Weimar years'—had not yet appeared on the horizon, and Liszt was nowhere to be found.³⁹ Concerned

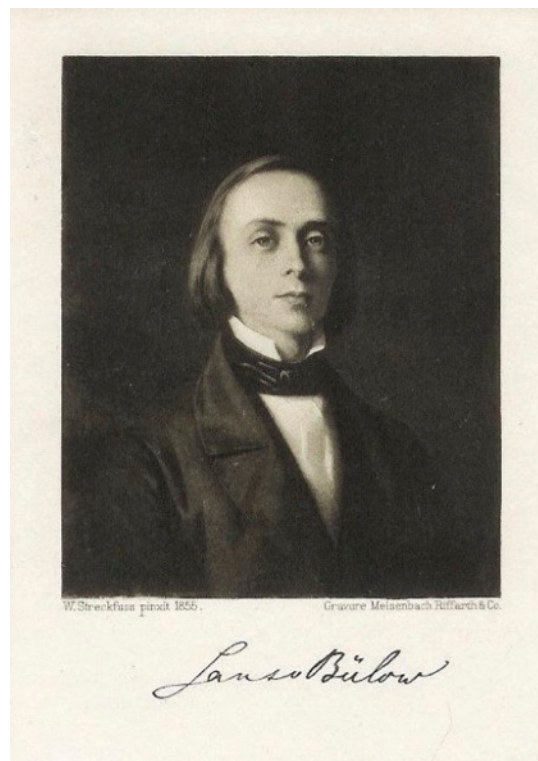
³⁷ Joseph Joachim to Heinrich Joachim, 29 Dec. 1850. 'Vor ungefähr 3 Wochen habe ich in Bremen mit glücklichem Erfolg gespielt, und auf der Rückreise meinen lieben Kapellmeister Liszt in seiner Zurückgezogenheit aufgesucht. Er kommt am 8ten Januar wieder nach Weimar, wo ich also bis zu meiner Abreise (Ende April) ein angenehmes musikalisches Leben haben werde.' D-LÜbi, Joa : B1 : 25, p. 4. Neither his anticipated concert tour to England nor a hoped-for January return to Paris materialized in 1851, however.

³⁸ '... Atmosphäre... die durch Ihr Wirken rastlos mit neuen Klängen erfüllt wird...' '... der Phalanx gleichgesinnter Freunde in Weimar'. Joachim, *Briefe*, 1:44.

³⁹ Walker, *Liszt*, 167. Walker does not mention Joachim among them.

friends began to suggest that Joachim look for other positions. Ten months after beginning his job in Weimar, Joseph wrote to Ferdinand Hiller that, for the time being he had decided to stay, but ‘you are quite right to assume that Liszt is the only thing that holds me here; for, without him Weimar has very little to offer, both artistically and personally.’⁴⁰

Friendship with von Bülow



Hans von Bülow

In early June 1851, Hans von Bülow arrived in Weimar to begin his piano studies with Liszt. With Liszt away, Bülow stayed at a Gasthof in town, until, encouraged by Raff (his friend from earlier years), he took up lodgings in the back wing of the vacated Altenburg. On 28 June, he attended a lacklustre performance of *Tannhäuser*, the final performance of the spring opera

⁴⁰ ‘Sie haben ganz recht anzunehmen, daß Liszt einzig und allein mich hier festhält; denn ohne ihn bietet Weimar sowohl in künstlerischer als in gesellschaftlicher Beziehung nur wenig.’ 22 August 1851. Joachim, *Briefe*, 1:24.

season. ‘Oh! How we missed your magic wand, the breath of life, the soul of this inanimate body!’ he wrote to Liszt the next day.⁴¹

Bülow was intent upon pursuing a virtuoso piano career, and he did his best to seek acceptance into ‘the school of the *école de Weimar*’ (as Liszt had expressed it to Raff, redundantly mixing German and French).⁴² ‘I have for now relinquished my autonomy, and allow myself to be “Weimarized”; of course I still retain enough of my “ego” to be able to judge the results of the experiments that I allow to be conducted on my person.’⁴³

Bülow had first met Joachim in Leipzig in June 1845.⁴⁴ Now, little more than a week after his arrival, he joined Joachim and Cossmann for a private performance on Liszt’s good piano of an “intractably difficult” trio by Raff (‘that even Liszt had had to take exceptional pains over’). Among the auditors were author and women’s rights activist Fanny Lewald (1811–1889) and her future husband, writer and critic Adolf Stahr (1805–1876). ‘I have never yet had such excellent partners to play with’, Bülow remarked in a letter to his father.⁴⁵ ‘Joachim, who earlier in Leipzig had always behaved somewhat distantly toward me, here treats me quite pleasantly—in short, it does me a lot of good, finally to be among my peers, who, insofar as I deserve it, also value me.’⁴⁶ Four days later, Bülow wrote to his mother: ‘I have found a congenial friend in Concertmaster Joachim’.⁴⁷

That summer, Bülow, Raff and Joachim became inseparable and constant companions. The three friends would often walk together to work up an appetite for dinner. In the dog days of August, when heat made their regular walk oppressive, Joachim and Bülow relieved their boredom by learning Spanish. ‘After Spanish we want to learn Italian’, Bülow wrote to his

⁴¹ ‘Hier soir j’ai entendu le Tannhäuser. Oh! que votre baguette magique le souffle vivifiant, l’âme de ce corps inanimé, s’est fait regretter!’ Bülow, *Briefe*, 341.

⁴² ‘... die Schule der école de Weimar’. Bülow, *Briefe*, 330.

⁴³ ‘... ich habe mich für jetzt meiner Autonomie begeben und lasse mich verweimaranern; ich behalte natürlich immer noch so viel von meinem “Ego” übrig, um die Resultate der Experimente, die ich mit meiner Person vornehmement lasse, beurtheilen zu können’. Bülow, *Briefe*, 331.

⁴⁴ Heinrich Reimann, *Aus Hans von Bülow’s Lehrzeit* (Berlin: Harmonie, 1908), 120.

⁴⁵ ‘...mit dem selbst Liszt genöthigt war, sich ganz absonderliche Mühe zu geben’. ‘...ich habe noch nicht zwei so treffliche Mitspieler in meinem Leben gehabt...’ Bülow, *Briefe*, 330.

⁴⁶ ‘Joachim, der mich früher in Leipzig oft etwas zurückgesetzt sah, benimmt sich hier sehr hübsch gegen mich—kurz, es thut mir sehr wohl, einmal unter Leuten meines gleichen zu sein, die mich auch so weit ich es verdiene, werth schätzen.’ Bülow, *Briefe*, 333.

⁴⁷ ‘An Concertmeister Joachim habe ich auch einen angenehmen Freund gefunden.’ Bülow, *Briefe*, 338.

mother; ‘we give ourselves at most a quarter-year for each.’⁴⁸ To his father, Bülow commented: ‘Other than Raff and Joachim, with whom I often make music, I have no companionship at all’.⁴⁹ ‘Here it is very quiet’, Joachim wrote to his brother Heinrich. ‘Liszt has not yet returned, and Cossmann, Milde and the majority of my acquaintances are away. I compose and play and keep company with Bülow...’.⁵⁰ A week later, he wrote, ‘... here it is as before: still no Liszt to be seen. I am really curious how things will change! But it’s really just the same to me; I use Weimar in order to study undisturbed’.⁵¹

The fall opera season began inauspiciously with a cancelled performance of Weimar’s most-performed opera: Lortzing’s *Zaar und Zimmermann*, replaced with a concert by pianist Sophie Dulcken and her concertina-playing sister, Isabella. Thereafter, the season opened with Bellini’s *The Capulets and the Montagues*, followed by Spontini’s *Ferdinand Cortez* and Flotow’s *Martha*.

Liszt finally returned on 12 October. Bülow wrote that his “protector and master” appeared unexpectedly during a performance in the Court Theatre ‘as though conjured up from the floor by magic’, striking fear into the orchestra, which was sleepwalking its way through a repeat performance of Spontini’s *Ferdinand Cortez* (probably under the direction of the elderly music director Carl Eberwein).⁵² Bülow described how, had decency permitted, Liszt in his anger would gladly have torn the baton out of his lame surrogate’s hands.⁵³ After the performance, Liszt, the princess, Bülow and Joachim conversed over supper. A month later, Eberwein was replaced as Music Director by violinist and composer Carl Stöhr, a distinguished musician who

⁴⁸ ‘... so treibe ich mit Joachim Spanisch.... Nach dem Spanischen wollen wir das Italienische treiben; wir geben uns zu jedem höchstens ein Vierteljahr Zeit.’ Bülow, *Briefe*, 351.

⁴⁹ ‘Außer Raff und Joachim, mit denen ich oft musiziere, habe ich gar keinen Umgang’. Bülow, *Briefe*, 351–2.

⁵⁰ ‘Weimar, am 13ten August 1851’ ‘Liszt kommt noch immer nicht, u. Cossmann, Milde u. die meisten meiner Bekannten sind verreist. Ich componiere u. spiele, u. habe in Gemeinschaft mit Bülow die spanische Sprache angefangen....’ D-LÜbi, Joa : B1 : 26, pp. 2–3.

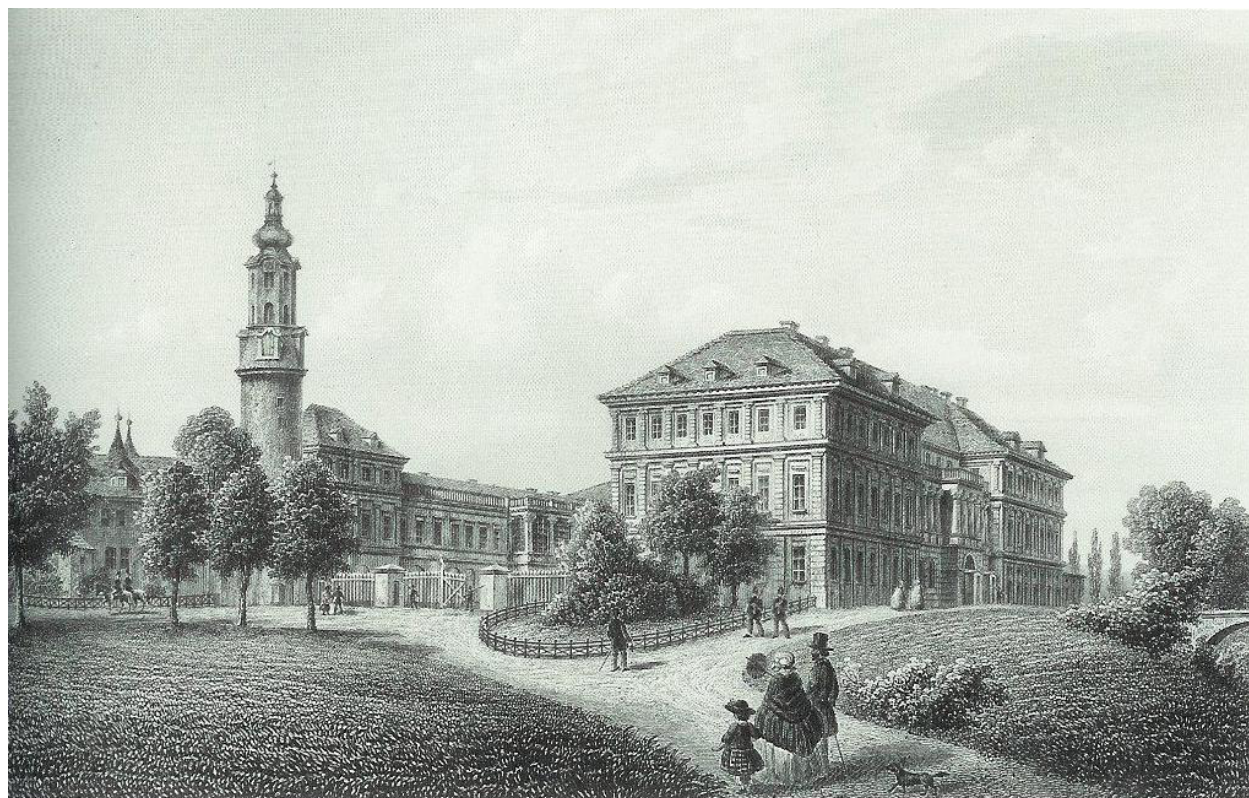
⁵¹ ‘Am 20. Aug: 1851’ ‘...Sonst ist’s hier immer noch wie sonst: noch immer kein Liszt zu sehen. Ich bin wirklich begierig, wie es sich hier noch wenden wird! Mir kann’s übrigens ziemlich einerlei sein; ich benutze Weimar um sorgenfrei für mich studieren zu können’. D-LÜbi, Joa : B1 : 27, pp. 3–4.

⁵² It is not known who was conducting, but Music Director Carl Eberwein is the most plausible candidate. It seems unlikely that the performance was led by Chélaré, as Alan Walker maintains. [Walker, *Liszt*, 171] Chélaré’s employment had been terminated on 17 April.

⁵³ ‘... Liszt ärgerte sich und hätte gern seinem lahmen Stellvertreter das Szepter entrissen und der gemüthlichen Philisteranarchie durch den Despotismus seines Dirigentengenies ein Ende gemacht, wenn es der Anstand erlaubt hätte...’ Letter from Bülow to his mother, Weimar, 15 Oct. 1851. Bülow, *Briefe*, 372.

played second violin in Joachim's Weimar quartet.⁵⁴ Thereafter, Stöhr became the principal substitute conductor in Liszt's absence.⁵⁵

Court Concerts



Weimar *Schloss*

On 22 November 1850, Joachim wrote to his brother Heinrich: “As concertmaster, I have been given sole responsibility for arranging the court concerts in Liszt's absence, of which next week will be the fourth. It will amuse you to learn that, at the request of the Grand Duchess, I had to play a romance for violin of mine in each of them. I will gladly play it for you too, and without any grand-ducal command, if you should wish to hear it. . .”⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Bartels, *Chronik*, 96.

⁵⁵ Cormac, *Liszt*, 49. Weimar had two music directors—subordinate conductors to the two Kapellmeisters.

⁵⁶ 22 November 1850, to Heinrich: ‘Ich habe in Liszt's Abwesenheit als Concertmeister das alleinige Arrangement der Hofconcerte, von denen nächste Woche das 4te sein wird. Es wird Dir Spaß machen zu erfahren, daß ich auf Wunsch der Frau Großherzogin noch in jedm derselben eine Romanze für Violine von mir spielen mußte. Auch Dir

Non-operatic musical performances in Weimar were of several kinds: guest recitals, *Zwischenaktsmusik* (instrumental entr'actes during opera performances), the so-called 'große Concerte', benefit concerts with orchestra that were open to the public and took place either in the Court Theatre or the large hall of the Stadthaus (there was no purpose-built concert hall in Weimar), and the 'Hofconcerte', private concerts for the members of the court and their guests which normally took place in the grand ducal palace.⁵⁷ The 'große Concerte', instituted by Hummel, occurred rarely—typically twice a year.⁵⁸ The 'Hofconcerte' occurred nearly every week. Little is known about the private court concerts, since they were not publicly advertised or reviewed, and programs were apparently not printed.⁵⁹ Joanne Cormac details several handwritten programs from 10 February and 15 April 1850 which suggest that court concerts consisted mainly of vocal offerings, sporadically interspersed with solo instrumental pieces. Even the instrumental pieces were often opera-inspired: for example, Liszt, who by then had largely retired from the public stage, performed his 'Fantasie über Motive aus den Propheten von Meyerbeer' on the otherwise purely vocal 10 February concert.⁶⁰

The court concerts were among Liszt's core responsibilities, and it is a measure of his regard for Joachim that, in his absence, he delegated them to his young concertmaster. Programming the concerts would have tested Joachim's knowledge of the vocal repertoire while giving him a regular opportunity to perform music of his own choosing. In a 29 December letter to his brother, Joachim mentions that on several occasions he had programmed a string quartet in the Hofconcerte—his first mention of quartet playing during his Weimar years, and doubtless an innovation for the court concerts, where the performance of 'absolute music' was exceptional.⁶¹

Joachim continued to perform in the Hofconcerte even after he left Weimar for Hanover: in January 1854, he accepted an invitation to play with Liszt, suggesting two works belonging to

werde ich sie gerne und ohne großherzoglichen Befehl vorspielen, wenn Du sie nämlich wirst hören wollen. . .'
Joachim, *Briefe*, 1:23.

⁵⁷ Cormac, *Liszt*, 43 ff.

⁵⁸ 'It had been Johann Nepomuk Hummel ... who introduced two yearly symphonic concerts in Weimar at a period when scarcely anyone outside the musical profession knew the repertoire of instrumental works.' Friedheim, *Life*, 106.

⁵⁹ See: *Signale für die Musikalische Welt*, 9/26 (Jun. 1851): 236.

⁶⁰ Cormac, *Liszt*, 73, based on Ferdinand von Ziegesar, 'Hofconcerte 1850', Generalintendanz des DNT Weimar, 55, Thüringisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Weimar.

⁶¹ D-Lübi Joa : B1: 25 (29 Dec. 1850, p. 4).

the Weimar circle: Raff's duo *Aus der Schweiz*, op. 57 and Liszt's *Rhapsodie Hongroise* No. 12 in C Sharp Minor for violin and piano (1853), which was dedicated to Joachim, and for which he had provided the violin part.⁶²

Chamber Music

While in Weimar, Joachim's greatest artistic satisfaction came from playing chamber music. Joachim formed a regular partnership with Bülow, and their memorized performances of Beethoven's 'Kreutzer' Sonata were widely known and acclaimed. When Liszt was in town, Joachim, Liszt, and Cossmann played trios at the Altenburg, often in private, but also occasionally for a semi-public audience. Liszt's letters make frequent mention of suppers and chamber music, and also simply of keeping company together. On 27 January 1851, Liszt wrote to Princess Carolyne complaining of the burden of rehearsals, correspondence, and business, saying '[I] limit my relations to what is strictly necessary, with the exception of Joachim, for whom I have genuine affection'.⁶³ Fanny Lewald painted an unforgettable word-picture of the ambience at the Altenburg, and of Liszt's fostering care there during Liszt's spring visits:

Er hatte damals Schüler und junge Musiker um sich, die alle Meister geworden sind: den ganz jugendlichen Konzertmeister Joseph Joachim, Hans von Bülow, Coßmann, Singer, Winterberger, Voß und noch manche Andere; und es war, ganz abgesehen von dem großen musikalischen Genuß, den das Zusammenwirken dieser, an Liszt mit Begeisterung hängenden jungen Männer gewährte, eine Freude zu sehen, mit welcher Liebe und Hingebung er sie beobachtete und leitete, wie ihr Können ihn freute, wie warmherzig er es ihnen aussprach, wenn sie es ihm zu Dank gemacht.—Ich meine den Ton seiner Stimme noch zu hören, mit dem er ihnen zurief: "Bravo, Joachim! Bravo, Hans! je ne pourrais pas faire mieux!"—und wie er, sich dann zu den Hörern wendend, fragte: "Nicht wahr? das finden Sie nicht überall?"⁶⁴

[At that time, he was surrounded by students and young musicians, all of whom went on to become masters in their own right: the very young concertmaster Joseph Joachim, Hans von Bülow, Coßmann, Singer, Winterberger, Voß, and many others; and, quite apart from the great musical pleasure afforded by the collaboration of these young men, who were enthusiastically devoted to Liszt, it was a joy to see the love and dedication with which he observed and guided

⁶² Joachim, *Briefe*, 1:142–3.

⁶³ '...et borne mes relations au strict necessaire, à l'exception de Joachim, que je prends en veritable affection'. La Mara [Ida Marie Lipsius], (ed.), *Franz Liszts Briefe*, 8 vols. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1893–1905), 4:56.

⁶⁴ Fanny Lewald[-Stahr], *Zwölf Bilder nach dem Leben* (Berlin, 1888), 361–2.

them, how their skill delighted him, and how warmly he expressed his appreciation when they performed for him. — I still seem to hear the tone of his voice as he called out to them: “Bravo, Joachim! Bravo, Hans! Je ne pourrais pas faire mieux!”—and how, turning then to the listeners, he asked: “Isn’t that right? You don’t find that everywhere, do you?”]

Joachim’s most significant achievement in chamber music during his Weimar time was the formation, together with Carl Stöhr, Johann Walbrül, and Bernhard Cossmann, of his first regularly constituted string quartet.⁶⁵ In addition to the above-mentioned appearances at the Hofconcerte, the quartet met regularly on Sundays, either at Joachim’s residence or at the Altenburg.⁶⁶ Liszt’s letters mention the ensemble and its regular Sunday meetings already from his visit in January 1851. On several occasions, he writes that they came to cheer him when he was feeling ill. He also visited them. On Easter Tuesday, 22 April 1851, he wrote to Princess Carolyne: ‘On leaving Prokesch I went to Joachim’s. By chance they played one of Beethoven last quartets, the one in A whose Adagio is headed: *Canzone di ringraziamento offerta alla Divinità da un guarito*. That was my real Easter.’⁶⁷

Under Liszt’s patronage, the quartet eventually appeared in public. Beginning in November 1851, Joachim, Stöhr, Walbrül, and Cossmann were joined by Bülow and Alexander Winterberger (1834–1914), and by unnamed colleagues from the Hofkapelle, for a series of four public chamber music soirées, taking place in the small hall (Gesellschaftssaal) on the third floor of Weimar’s 15th-century Stadthaus. Though billed as ‘Quartet Soirées’, the programmes included pieces for mixed ensembles:

November 18

Haydn String Quartet in B-flat Major
Mozart String Quintet in G Minor, K. 516
Beethoven String Quartet in F Major, Op. 59 No. 1

December 9

Schubert String Quartet in D Minor, D. 810 “Death and the Maiden”

⁶⁵ Violinist, composer, and music director Carl Stöhr (1814–1889), violist (and violinist) Johann Walbrül (1813–1889), and ‘cellist and composer Bernhard Cossmann (1822–1910). For a contemporary assessment of the players, see *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 35/26 (26 December 1851): 286–7.

⁶⁶ See, for example, La Mara, *Franz Liszts Briefe*, 4:48–9. The painter Friedrich Preller the elder was also among the listeners. See: Adelheid von Schorn, *Das nachklassische Weimar*, 2 vols. (Weimar: Kiepenheuer, 1912), 2:40.

⁶⁷ ‘En quittant Prokesch, je me rendis chez Joachim. On exécuta, par hasard, un des derniers Quatuors de Beethoven en la don’t l’Adagio est ainsi désigné: *Canzone di ringraziamento alla Divinità d’un guarito*. C’était là ma véritable Pâques’. La Mara [Ida Marie Lipsius], (ed.), *Franz Liszts Briefe*, vol. 4 (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1900), p. 98.

Schumann Piano Quintet in E-flat Major, Op. 44 (Hans von Bülow, piano)
Mendelssohn Octet in E-flat Major, Op. 20

December 16

Niels Gade String Quintet in E Minor, Op. 8
Mendelssohn Piano Trio in C Minor, Op. 66 (Alexander Winterberger, piano)
Beethoven String Quartet in F Minor, op. 95 “Serioso”

December 30

All Beethoven Program
String Quartet in A Major, Op. 18 No. 5
String Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 74 “Harp”
String Quartet in C-sharp Minor, op. 131

Fig. 3



Weimar Stadthaus

On 21 November, Bülow wrote to his mother with pride: ‘On December 2 [sic], I will perform for the first time as an artist pianist (until now it was only as an amateur pianist) in the second quartet soirée that Joachim, Cossmann and other musicians began to give to the Weimaraner, at a price unheard of for Weimar, but fixed by Liszt at one thaler per evening and three for the four subscription concerts. Consequently, only the good society attend, but quite

large in number; the entire court, including the Grand Ducal family, attends. I will play the Schumann Quintet, a piece that is not very brilliant, but of sure effect and easy to understand.’⁶⁸ The wrong date in Bülow’s letter implies that the concerts may originally have been planned for successive Tuesdays, but that the second was delayed. It may also be that the opera schedule was somewhat lightened to accommodate these performances: familiar works by Flotow, Herold, Bellini, Donizetti, and Mozart were programmed during those weeks. The quartet series already shows Joachim’s later programming predilections. The final soirée, an all-Beethoven evening, follows Wilhelm von Lenz’s periodization into early, middle, and late works.

A critic for the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* makes oblique reference to the novelty of such entrepreneurial public events in Weimar at that time, where the only established public was the grand-ducal court:

Das für die Geschmacksläuterung des Publikums so wohlthätige Werk findet allgemeinen Anklang, ungeachtet der ziemlich hohen aber angemessenen Eintrittspreise. Daß dies der Fall, haben wir dem Kunstsinn des Hofes, d. h. der großherzoglichen Familie zu danken, deren sämtliche Glieder bis jetzt jedes Mal vom ersten bis letzten Tone mit wahrer Andacht zugehört haben, eine so seltene Erscheinung, daß wir auch keinen Anstand nehmen, — honny soit qui mal y pense — die Achtung auszusprechen, welche uns diese anspruchslose Mäcenasschaft einflößt, in einer Zeit, wo das Gedeihen der Kunst auf naturwüchsigen Wege aus dem Volke heraus, leider zu den Unmöglichkeiten gehört.⁶⁹

[This production, which is so beneficial for refining the audience’s taste, has been well received by all, despite the rather high but reasonable ticket prices. We owe this to the artistic sensibility of the court—that is, the grand ducal family—whose members have, without exception, listened with genuine devotion from the first note to the last; a phenomenon so rare that we do not hesitate — honny soit qui mal y pense — to express the respect that this unassuming patronage inspires in us, at a time when the natural flourishing of art from within the people, unfortunately, belongs to the realm of impossibilities.]

⁶⁸ ‘Le 2 Décembre je me produirai pour la première fois comme pianiste-artiste (jusqu’ici ce n’était que comme pianiste-amateur) dans la seconde soirée des Quatuors que Joachim, Cossmann et autres musiciens ont commence à donner aux Weimarois, un prix inouï pour Weimar, mais fixé par Liszt à un thaler par soirée et trois pour les quatre dans l’abonnement. Il n’y assiste, par conséquent, que la bonne société, mais en assez grand nombre; la cour entière, la famille grand-ducale s’y rend également. Je jouerai le Quintuor de Schumann, un morceau pas trop brillant mais d’un effet sûr et facile à comprendre.’ Marie von Bülow, ed., *Hans von Bülow. Briefe*. Vol. 1, (1841–1853), (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1895), 384–5.

⁶⁹ For the extensive series review, see *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 35/26 (26 December 1851): 286–7. Quotation: p. 287.

The quartet continued to meet through the succeeding year, though the series of public soirées was a one-off.⁷⁰ After Joachim left Weimar at the end of 1852, the ensemble continued with Ferdinand Laub as first violinist, and after Laub with Edmund Singer. What Joachim discovered with his Weimar colleagues, however, would continue to inform the remainder of his career. On 2 March 1852 he wrote to his brother Heinrich concerning upcoming London engagements, ‘I should most like to accept quartet engagements; for quartet-playing is probably my real métier.’⁷¹

Envoi

The eventual estrangement between Joachim and Liszt was one of the greatest misfortunes in the history of nineteenth-century musical relations. It is commonly said that Joachim grew disillusioned with Liszt during his Weimar years and that his growing distaste for Liszt’s music precipitated his departure from the Weimar circle. Contemporary evidence suggests the opposite: that during that time the two artists enjoyed an extraordinary level of mutual respect and personal devotion, and that Joachim’s change of heart came only later, as he grew close to the Schumanns, Bettina von Arnim, and Brahms. Further, through his close friendships with Raff and Bülow, Joachim seems to have grown more, not less, committed to the music and aesthetic of the Weimar circle.⁷² In early February 1852, Bülow wrote to Theodor Uhlig:

Ich danke für die Mittheilung wegen des Tannhäuser-klavierauszuges; die Partitur besitze ich schon, doch ist mir die mit Wagner’s eigenhändigen Abänderungen sehr willkommen; ich verschenke dann die alte an Joachim, der ein sehr heißer und tüchtiger Kämpfer für die gute Sache zu werden verspricht. Wie hat sich dieser Mensch verweimaranert, oder vielmehr entleipzigert!’⁷³

[Thank you for letting me know about the piano reduction of *Tannhäuser*; I already own the score, but I very much welcome the one with Wagner’s handwritten corrections; I will then give

⁷⁰ See, for example, the Albumblatt quotation of Beethoven’s op. 131 quartet to singer Lidy Steche ‘Zur Erinnerung an den Vormittag des 11ten Januar in Weimar, für eine Verehrerin der letzten Musik Beethovens aufgeschrieben von Joseph Joachim Weimar, am 12ten Januar 1852.’ The 11th was a Sunday in 1852. Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig, accessed 20 March 2021.

⁷¹ ‘Weimar, am 2ten März, 1852’. ‘Am liebsten werde ich Quartett=Engagements annehmen; den das Quartett=Spiel ist doch wohl mein eigentliches Fach.’ D-Lübi Joa : B1 : 29, p. 5.

⁷² In March 1851, Joachim, who otherwise never engaged in journalistic advocacy, even attempted to write a piece on Raff’s opera *König Alfred*. [La Mara, *Briefe hervorragender Zeitgenossen*, 1:160.]

⁷³ Bülow, *Briefe*, 1:422.

the old one to Joachim, who promises to become a very passionate and capable champion of the cause. How this man has become so “Weimarized”—or rather, so “de-Leipzigerized”!]

Joachim’s Violin Concerto No. 1 in G Minor ‘In One Movement’ Op. 3 (1851–52), dedicated to Liszt, shows many characteristics of the Weimar ‘school’, and the concerto was among the representative works featured in the Karlsruhe Musikfest of 1853, under Liszt’s direction.⁷⁴

While in Weimar, Joachim had ample reason to be dissatisfied with Liszt, yet in private letters to family and friends he invariably refers to Liszt with affection and real admiration. Liszt’s reciprocal regard for Joachim is made explicit in a letter he wrote to an unnamed correspondent:

In den letzten Tagen hatte ich einen sehr angenehmen Besuch, der nicht wenig dazu beitrug, mich wieder gesund zu machen, nämlich den Joachim’s, dessen Sie sich wol erinnern werden. Sie wissen, daß es mir gelang ihn von Leipzig zu entführen, und nach Weimar zu ziehen, wo er als Konzertmeister fungirt. Es ist ein Künstler vom besten Schrott und Korn, von kräftiger edler Bogenführung; und ich glaube durchaus nicht zu irren, wenn ich hinzusetze, daß er in vier-fünf Jahren—denn er ist jetzt kaum 20 Jahre alt, alle Violinisten Europas verdunkeln wird.—Um sich eine vollständige Idee des vollendeten Spieles von ihm machen zu können, muß man ihn Bach, Beethoven oder Paganini vortragen hören. Der breite, markige Ton, die Tiefe des Stils, das Zarte in den Einzelheiten; Feuer, Leben und Seele der Musik—alles findet sich da zu einem Vollendeten im größten Maße vereinigt. Noch mehr, man begegnet in ihm einer wahren, loyalen, und sehr bescheidenen Künstler-natur. Welcher Unterschied gegen unsere jetzigen Virtuosen—wahre Blasen, die sich gerne für Laternen halten, was sage ich! mindestens für Sonnen. Doch ihre eingebildete Berühmtheit ist eben so vergänglich, wie ihr schales Talent.⁷⁵

[Over the past few days, I’ve had a very pleasant visitor who has done a great deal to help me recover—namely, Joachim, whom you will no doubt remember. As you know, I managed to lure him away from Leipzig and bring him to Weimar, where he serves as concertmaster. He is an artist of the finest caliber, with a powerful and noble bowing technique; and I do not believe I am mistaken in adding that in four or five years—for he is now barely 20 years old—he will outshine all the violinists in Europe. —To gain a complete sense of his consummate playing, one must hear him perform Bach, Beethoven, or Paganini. The broad, rich tone, the depth of style, the delicacy in the details; the fire, life, and soul of the music—all are united there to the highest degree of perfection. Moreover, one encounters in him a true, loyal, and very modest artistic nature. What a contrast to our current virtuosos—mere bubbles who like to think of themselves as

⁷⁴ See: Katharina Uhde, Chapter 3, ‘Between Uncoiled Virtuosity and Lisztian Temptations’ in Katharina Uhde, *The Music of Joseph Joachim*, (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2018), 73ff.

⁷⁵ Ignaz Reich, *Beth-El. Ehrentempel verdienter ungarischer Israeliten*, 1 vol., 3 Hefte (Pesth: Alois Bucsanszky, 1856), Heft 1:68–9.

lanterns—what am I saying!—at least as suns. Yet their imagined fame is just as fleeting as their insipid talent.

On November 12, 1852, Joachim's Viennese friend and fellow student Georg Hellmesberger died of consumption, two months short of his twenty-third birthday. Hellmesberger had for several years served as concertmaster to the King of Hanover until illness made his work impossible. When it appeared that Hellmesberger could no longer work, Jean Joseph Bott was approached to fill his post. Bott, the second Kapellmeister to Spohr in Cassel, was nevertheless unable to break his contract, and so consideration turned to the young Grand-ducal concertmaster in Weimar. When Hanover court pianist Heinrich Ehrlich sought Liszt's assistance in obtaining Joachim for Hanover, Liszt, recognizing an opportunity for Joachim to gain a "large sphere of influence," generously assisted in obtaining his release from Weimar.⁷⁶

It was only after Joachim left Weimar that his loyalty to Liszt began to waver. Yet for several years, Joachim's continued high regard for Liszt was apparent. Helene Raff's memoir of her father mentions how 'in a letter as lovely as it was serious, dated Hanover, Easter Tuesday [1854, Joachim] told Raff off for the occasional bitterness in his attitude towards Liszt "who needs his true friends to stand by him at the moment. ... There might be other things responsible for putting you in a bad mood—things which a great man like Liszt wouldn't recognize at all. He himself is certainly doing everything he can to help you become independent."'⁷⁷

Liszt was well aware of the influence of Joachim's new friends, and he wrote a touching letter to Joachim as Schumann lay dying:

Diese paar Worte sollen dir nur meine wahre, innige und verehrungsvolle Freundschaft wieder in's Gedächtniss rufen Liebster Joachim. Sollten auch andere Deiner Dir Näherstehenden bemüht gewesen sein diese Freundschaft dir zu verargwohnen, so laß Ihre Mühe eine vergebene gewesen sein — und bleiben wir uns stets getreu und wahrhaftig wie es so ein paar Kerle unsrer Sorte geziemt! ... Härtel wird dir meine Dinge oder Undinge nach Hannover gesandt haben. Wenn sie Dir auch gar nicht zusagen, soll dies kein Zankapfel in unser Freundschaft sein. "Ein großer Fehler," sagt Goethe, daß 'man sich mehr dünkt als man ist und sich weniger schätzt als man 'werth ist'.' Diesen Fehler möchte ich vermeiden; daher sehe ich daß Geringe was ich geleistet und noch leisten kann sehr objectiv an. ... Nun Sapperment, wenn du noch nicht weißt daß Du mir lieb bist so hole der Kukuck

⁷⁶ For further details, see: Heinrich Ehrlich, *Dreißig Jahre Künstlerleben* (Berlin: Verlag Hugo Steinitz, 1893), 8–9. Also: 'The Call to Hanover', josephjoachim.com.

⁷⁷ Raff, *Raff*, 124.

deine Geige! ... Laß es Dir bestens wohlergehen, liebster Freund, und schreibe bald an Deinen getreuen F. Liszt.⁷⁸

[These few words are meant only to remind you, my dearest Joachim, of my true, heartfelt, and reverent friendship. Even if others close to you have tried to make you doubt this friendship, let their efforts be in vain—and let us always remain true and sincere to one another, as befits a couple of fellows of our sort! ... Härtel will have sent my writings—or nonsense—to you in Hanover. Even if they do not appeal to you at all, let this not be a bone of contention in our friendship. “A great mistake,” says Goethe, “is to think more of oneself than one is and to value oneself less than one is worth.” I would like to avoid this mistake; therefore, I view the modest achievements I have made and can still make very objectively. ... Well, damn it all, if you don’t already know that I care for you, then the Devil can take your fiddle! ... Take good care of yourself, dearest friend, and write soon to your faithful F. Liszt.]

The influence of the Schumann circle was too strong, however, and proved irresistible. In August of the following year, Joachim wrote his famous ‘Absagebrief’ to Liszt, in which he declared ‘I am completely unresponsive to your music’. Joachim’s very harsh letter is hard to defend. It must have come to Liszt as a great defeat. It ended their friendship. Liszt’s subsequent behavior implies, however, that he accepted Joachim’s closing avowal: ‘whatever you may think of this letter, believe one thing of me: that for all that you were to me, for the often undeserved praise you bestowed on me at Weimar, for all that I often strove to absorb from your divine gifts, I shall never cease to carry in my heart the deep and faithful memory of a grateful pupil.’⁷⁹

© Robert W. Eshbach, 2026.

⁷⁸ ‘Weimar 10. Juli 1856’. Joachim, *Briefe*, 1:353–4; Holograph: Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv, GSA 59/70, 1.

⁷⁹ ‘Ich bin Deiner Musik gänzlich unzugänglich’. ‘...wie Du immer von diesen Zeilen denkst, glaube eins von mir: daß ich nie aufhören werde, für Alles, was Du mir warst, für die ganze oft überschätzende Wärme, die Du für mich in Weimar hattest, für all das, was ich von Deinen göttlichen Gaben oft lernend aufzunehmen strebte, von tiefstem Herzen die volle, treue Erinnerung eines dankbaren Schülers in mir zu tragen’. Holograph: Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv, 59/70, 1.