



# Liszt's Final Decade (Eastman Studies in Music)

*Dolores Pesce*

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Toward the end of his life Franz Liszt maintained extensive correspondence with two women who were at the time his closest confidantes, Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein and Olga von Meyendorff. Liszt wrote to them regularly, expressing his intimate feelings about personal and career events and his conflicted self-image as a celebrated performer but underappreciated composer. Absent a diary, the letters offer the most direct avenue into Liszt's psyche in his final years. Liszt's Final Decade explores through these letters the mind and music of one of the nineteenth century's most popular musicians, providing insight into Liszt's melancholia in his last years and his struggle to gain recognition for his music yet avoid criticism. The exchange indicates that Liszt ultimately resolved his inner conflict through a personally constructed Christian moral philosophy that embraced positive resignation to suffering, compassionate love, and trust in a just reward to come. The book also examines how Liszt's late sacred compositions affirm the yielding of suffering to joy and hope. Significantly, Liszt viewed these works, commonly overlooked today, as a major part of his compositional legacy. This volume thus challenges the idea of a single "late" Lisztian style and the notion that despair overwhelmed the composer in his final years. Dolores Pesce is the Avis Blewett Professor of Music in Arts and Sciences at Washington University in St. Louis.



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