Marie Lipsius was a well-known German writer on music and journalist. Under the pseudonym "La Mara", she wrote biographical portraits of musicians that were extremely popular during her lifetime; these appeared in journals and newspapers, and were published in five anthologies by Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig, amongst other publishers, between 1868 and 1882. Beginning in 1910, they appeared as "Little Musicians' Monographs" in individual editions in up to 17 printings and were translated into many languages, including English, French, Swedish, Italian and Spanish. La Mara was a committed adherent of "music of the future". Franz Liszt and Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein held her in high esteem, encouraged her and counted her amongst their circle of friends. She collected and edited the letters of Franz Liszt, as well as those of other musicians, and wrote the book "Liszt and the Women" in 1911. In 1917 she was awarded the honorary title of Royal Saxon Professor. Marie Lipsius/La Mara died in 1927 in Schmölen, Saxony.

Cities an countries

Marie Lipsius was born in Leipzig and later lived in Weimar with Franz Liszt and Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein, as well as in Vienna and Bayreuth for the purposes of research, where she also moved in the circles surrounding Richard Wagner, amongst others. She died in 1927 in Schmölen, Saxony.

Biography

Ida Marie Lipsius was born on 30 December 1837 in Leipzig. After the three sons Adelbert, Constantin and Hermann, she was the first daughter of the theologian and later rector of Leipzig’s St. Thomas’s School, Carl Heinrich Adelbert Lipsius, and Molly Rost, whose father had been the rector preceding Lipsius. Her mother died at the age of 36 of a serious illness in 1842, so that Marie was initially raised by her father and two grandmothers as well as an aunt. Her father later remarried. Marie Lipsius lived with her stepmother, Lina Wohlfahrt, in Leipzig until 1882.

Beginning in 1849, she learned languages and other subjects at the upper continuation school of Dr. August Christian Adolf Zestermann and organised ballet, theatrical and domestic music performances with her fellow pupils. She also became acquainted with Laura Pohl there, her later sister-in-law and lifelong friend. It was at the Pohl
residence that she came into contact with Leipzig's salon culture. Balls, soirees and readings were organised regularly, attended by artists, scholars and the military. Plays or domestic music were performed. Marie Lipsius, who had received instruction in the piano from her childhood onwards, especially at the instigation of her paternal grandmother, became acquainted here, for the first time, with representatives of musical "progress" who stood in marked contrast to the members of the Leipzig Conservatory who were regarded as "ultraconservative" (more on this in the next section). Laura's brother, the later music commentator Richard Pohl, acquainted her with the symphonic poems of Franz Liszt and Wagner and with Berlioz's overtures and orchestral movements at the grand piano, by playing four-hand arrangements of these works. But their repertoire also included Schubert's marches and chamber music, Schumann's symphonies, "Manfred" and "Genoveva", later Brahms's Liebeslieder Waltzes and Hungarian Dances, and even Strauss's Blue Danube Waltz.

After moving out of her parents' house, Marie Lipsius lived with her friend Similde Gerhard in a marriage-like coexistence. It is not clear in her autobiography whether this was also a community of love. On the question of marriage, she wrote: "Love, the most powerful of earthly forces, has not passed me by, either. But it arrived as is sung in the folksong: 'They could not come together - the water was really too deep.' Many years later, he gave someone else his name. Many tragic things resulted from this connection. God granted me another joy: he allowed me to recognise my innermost calling in the talent for writing about music with which he had entrusted me, and which had until now lain dormant within me. Without any selfish goals, I devote myself to it as to a sanctuary. And Liszt, the one who spurred me on in my life, was its 'discoverer'". (La Mara, "Through Music and Life in the Service of the Ideal", Vol. 1, pp. 50–51.)

Encounter with Franz Liszt and the "Music of the Future"

It was through Richard Pohl that Marie Lipsius became acquainted with Franz Liszt in 1856 in Weimar, an encounter that she herself called "fateful": "This visit, to the extent that it conveyed to me, in my first youth, the acquaintance with Liszt and the introduction to the Weimar artists' circle, was decisive for the direction of my life." (ibid., p. 24.) From then on, she could attend concerts in private and half-private settings, and also partici-
First Publications and Pseudonym

When her father died in 1861, shortly after he had been elected rector of St. Thomas's School, Marie Lipsius felt obliged to "create goals for herself in life". ("Through Music and Life", Vol. 1, p. 50) She was 24 years old at this time and lived in the house of her stepmother; there were no marriage plans. Her brothers had already left Leipzig. Adelbert, the eldest, had often challenged and stimulated his sister with lectures and conversations. One of his friends, a temporary editor of the "Literarischen Zentralblatt", made her the offer of writing a discussion of Paul Heyse's latest novelette. Her text was published without mentioning her name – a matter of course for her during this time – and earned her the first writer's fee of her career, amounting to two marks.

As a result of this, other unpublished novelettes and sketches were written, including those about her journey to Weimar and the encounter with Franz Liszt. When Marie Lipsius introduced her biographical sketches on Robert Schumann and the Weimar memoirs to her friends Laura and Richard Pohl, they both voted for their publication. Thus her first three music-biographical texts on Robert Schumann, Franz Liszt and Frédéric Chopin were published in 1867 in "Westermanns Monatsheften", entitled "Musikalische Studienköpfe" ("Musical Studies") under the pseudonym "La Mara", which was a combination of the names Marie and Laura. Lipsius chose the pseudonym especially for the sake of her father, who had supposedly stated that he would not want to see her embarking upon a writer's career: "I was therefore loathe to appear in public under his name, although this would have surely facilitated this important step for me." (ibid., p. 67.)

Musikalische Studienköpfe (Musical Studies)

Immediately after it was published in October 1867, La Mara had her essay written about Franz Liszt sent to the composer. He answered her - and her sister-in-law, the pseudonym having erroneously led him to believe that it was a joint authorship: "How can I thank my so tolerant and kind, most understanding biographer? Forgive me all imperfections of language for the sake of the joy that you have granted me. You shall attune and motivate me to further, better productivity." (ibid., p. 85)

But La Mara did not only receive encouragement and praise from Franz Liszt; he also promoted the popularity of her books and arranged the necessary contacts for her to well-known musicians, to his pupils, and to those people who were not only enthusiastic about music, but also mediated and organised it. It was through Liszt's recommendations that La Mara gained access to previously unknown or unpublished documents, letters and other sources that represented the basis of her work as a writer. Her unconditional position in favour of the representatives of the "music of the future", especially Liszt and Wagner, doubtless made her enemies, but also faithful readers; this contributed to her networking as well.

Further positive reactions and discussions of the first three "Musikalische Studienköpfe" followed, so that in November 1867 the young publisher Hermann Weißbach enquired of her whether she wished to begin his publishing programme with her studies, expanded into a book. After initial hesitation, La Mara agreed. She made sure that she could herself determine the further content of her first book, and supplemented the portraits of Schumann, Chopin and Liszt with those of Weber, Schubert, Mendelssohn and Wagner as the chief representatives of the post-Beethovenian, Romantic period in music.

The first anthology of the "Musikalischen Studienköpfe" was published in 1868. The second volume appeared in late 1871, with portraits of the "foreign masters" Luigi Cherubini, Gaspare Spontini, Gioacchino Rossini, François-Adrien Boieldieu and Hector Berlioz, also published by Hermann Weißbach Publishers. In 1875, published by the publishing house of Schmidt and Günther in Leipzig, followed Volume 3: essays on the musicians of "the recent past and present day" Ignaz Moscheles, Carl Ferdinand David, Adolf Henselt, Robert Franz, Anton Rubinstein, Johannes Brahms and Carl Tausig. In 1881 the series was continued by the Leipzig publishing house of Breitkopf & Härtel with the "Classics" as Volume 4, containing essays on Georg Friedrich Händel, Johann Sebastian Bach, Christoph Willibald Gluck, Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang A. Mozart and Ludwig van Beethoven. The series ended in 1882 with texts on "Women in Present-Day Musical Life", also published by Breitkopf & Härtel as Volume 5.

The essays of the first four volumes, designated by La Mara as "portraits" and for whom the musicians "posed for her as models", are all written according to the same pattern: they comprise an average of fifty printed pages; the longest by far (Ludwig van Beethoven) is 86 pages long, and the shortest (Carl Ferdinand David) is 18 pages long. The finely characterised, biographical-psychological descriptions of the musicians' personalities neither delve too deeply into the private sphere, nor are the analyses of
their works too detailed for a wider public. In an introduction of two to five pages at most, a judgemental classification of the respective musician is undertaken, often in rapturously excessive metaphors. There follows the depiction of the respective life’s journey in which the history of the works is interwoven. The sources of the study are named directly in the text or in footnotes: original documents, personal contacts or specialist literature as well as already existing biographies (especially for Volume 4: ”Classics”). La Mara later added a catalogue of works for each composer that she painstakingly compiled or completed herself, if the catalogue did not yet exist or was incomplete.

La Mara describes her first portrait of Robert Schumann “as the result of my profoundly intimate empathy with a musical poetry that is infinitely sympathetic to me”. (ibid., p. 139) Others also particularly emphasised the great empathy with which her texts were written. She was praised for her profoundly psychological sharpness, an ability that was particularly attributed to women during this time, for example by Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein in a letter of 5 October 1875 to the author: “Alongside these two portraits, two others emerge as the most admirable: those of Franz and of Brahms. In their depiction, you have descended into the psychological depths such as only a woman – I do not say understands them – but rather, as a woman can interpret and express them.” (ibid., p. 218) Frau von Henselt, too, the wife of the composer Adolf Henselt, in her letter of 2 January 1874, attributed the special quality of the texts to the particularly female abilities of the author: "The depictions of your Studies complete what is missing in the biographies of these great masters; you have, in a truly female manner, depicted them with your heart, not merely with your mind (…)”. (ibid., p. 206)

Colleagues in the field of musicology (such as Eduard Hanslick), a subject that had just been established at universities, and in the area of musical biography, with some of whom she actively exchanged letters pertaining to their shared speciality (for example, with Ludwig Nohl, Richard Pohl, Eduard Marxen, the Leipzig music critic Oskar Paul, the Beethoven scholar Erich Prieger, etc.) also readily acknowledged La Mara’s works. They praised her precision of detail, love of truth and faithfulness to her sources. Although she harboured no scholarly pretensions – as a woman during this time, she was not entitled to them – La Mara was extremely careful in her research and verification of her sources from the very outset. She sought out contemporary witnesses or relatives of deceased composers, collected letters and autobiographical material from private persons, in church records and archives - especially in Vienna, where she frequently stayed with friends and worked in libraries and archives. She developed surveys enabling her to interview contemporary artists either by letter or in person; she conducted such interviews either directly or via common acquaintances, often through the mediation of other musicians such as Franz Liszt, for example. Hardly any of the people being portrayed welcomed her decidedly biographical intentions. Most of them – both men and women – retreated behind their oeuvres and work, emphasising that their lives were not very exciting, unimportant and not worth telling about, that they hardly remembered the facts or did not wish to reveal them. Some entirely refused to cooperate, such as Jenny Lind and the pianist Marie Jaëll. La Mara always sent her finished texts to the persons being portrayed, allowing them to make corrections which were then taken into consideration in new editions when they were subsequently made.

Excerpts from the portraits always appeared prior to publication in an anthology or in an illustrated journal such as "Westermanns Monatshefte", "Die Gartenlaube" or "Gegenwart". Most of the portraits were reprinted by Breitkopf & Härtel as bound separate editions, the "Kleine Musikergeschichtchen" (“Little Biographies of Musicians”), beginning in 1910. The individual portraits of Schubert, Mendelssohn, Chopin and Liszt thus reached 17 printings by 1929.

Amongst the collected volumes, the first volume of the romantics was the most successful, with nine printings. The volumes of the “Foreign Masters” and the musicians of the “Recent Past and Present Day”, as well as the “Classics” were somewhat less in demand, with seven and four printings respectively. The anthology “Women in Present-Day Musical Life” only achieved three printings. As usual, La Mara also sought the advice of her mentor Franz Liszt for these portraits; he named to her the women pianists of the time whom he thought should be portrayed: “As chairperson by seniority, (…) you must give priority of place to Clara Schumann, although the newer ones exceed her ability, doubtless Sofie Menter. Then Marie Jaëll-Trautmann, who is markedly musically superior to her husband. Then there are Essipoff and Timanoff, Krebs and Mehlig, who has earned much money and thus more fame in America. Also, if you wish, Szarvady-Clauß – a person who cannot do very much, even though she imagines
that she introduced Schumann in Paris." (ibid., pp. 248–249)

Alongside the women pianists named by Liszt - Sofie Menter, Annette Essipoff - the first edition of the women's volume contains the portraits of Laura Rappoldi-Kaher, and of three composers who were also known as pianists or singers: Ingeborg von Bronsart, Pauline Viardot-Garcia, and Clara Schumann. Alongside the violinist Wilma Neruda-Norman and the pedagogue Auguste Götz, the singers Teresa Carreno, Marie Wilt, Amalie Joachim, Désirée Artôt, Pauline Lucca, Marianne Brandt, Adeline Patti, Christine Nilson, Aglaja Orgeni, Amalie Materna, Lilli Lehmann-Kalisch, Fanny Bertram-Moran-Olden, Ernestine Schumann-Heink, Marcella Sembrich, Ellen Gulbrandson and Nellie Melba are introduced.

For the third edition of the volume, published in 1902, several portraits of women artists were eliminated because they had meanwhile died or were no longer performing. In the preface to this volume, La Mara wrote: "The present day at the time when this volume first appeared is no longer as it is today. Some of the women artists portrayed at that time have now died, some have withdrawn from public life or from international art circulation. What remains of them – with contemporary supplements, of course – are the portraits of those great, unique phenomena, even though some may have meanwhile fallen silent for us - those who have an exemplary effect extending beyond their own time, still shining a bright light into our present-day artistic life. In place of those to whom such an illuminating power was not granted – there are nine of them – a corresponding number of later great ones have been included who have attained a world reputation by playing, singing or teaching. As a result of its essential innovation, the content of this book should still comply with its title."

The musicians not considered worth retaining were A. Mehlig, M. Krebs, P. Fichtner-Erdmannsdörfer, W. Claü–Szavarvady, A. Goddard, E. Lie-Nissen, V. Timanoff, Z. Trebelli and T. Vogl. The following were added in the third edition: the vocal pedagogue Auguste Götz, the pianist, singer, conductor and composer Teresa Carreño as well as the singers Aglaja Orgeni, Lilli Lehmann-Kalisch, Fanny Bertram-Moran-Olden, Ernestine Schumann-Heink, Marcella Sembrich, Ellen Gulbrandson and Nellie Melba.

The portraits of the women, with an average of 20 printed pages, are much shorter than those of the men (the shortest essay on Nellie Melba is only four pages long). The catalogues of works of women composers were not arranged separately like those of their male colleagues and placed after the essays, but inserted into the text as listings or included in a footnote.

Editor of Letters

Beginning in 1882, La Mara primarily occupied herself with the editing of letters and correspondence of musicians which she collected from all over the world with incredible diligence and great effort. For the collection of Liszt's letters alone, according to her own information, she wrote and sent about 1200 requests by 1915. It was also her ambition to "shed light on previously unprinted documents" ("Through Music and Life", Vol. 2, p. 42) alongside those that had already been published – as was also the case with the selection for the publication "Musicians' Letters from Five Centuries" (2 volumes, Leipzig 1885).

The death of Franz Liszt on 31 July 1886 represented a serious turning point for her. The next year also saw the death of Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein, whom La Mara visited in Rome in 1884 and with whom she had closely corresponded for many years. Her memories of these two people so important to her, and their shared experiences, remained the focal point of her work even after their deaths.

Liszt Biography

Already in the early 1870s, the cousin of Franz Liszt, Eduard von Liszt, requested that La Mara write a biography of Franz Liszt. In June 1877, Liszt himself asked her to write his biography in close collaboration with him, although the writer on music and pedagogue Lina Ramann (1833–1912) was meanwhile already at work on such a project. Liszt himself had made extensive material available to Lina Ramann and later referred her to Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein for further research. To La Mara – according to her own depiction – he expressed his ambivalence towards this undertaking: "It [the Ramann biography] will be an extensive work – much too extensive", he opined, telling me that it had been prepared for two years by the author, unknown to him at the time and completely without his knowledge and assistance. She came to him one day with the question as to whether he had anything against it if she were to interpret his 'Christus' in an interdenominational manner, so to speak, in a planned brochure. To this he replied, 'Of course I have written it from the point of view of a Catholic, since I can-
not do otherwise. But if you find that one could interpret it in a Calvinist, Puritan, Turkish or any other way, as far as I'm concerned, then it's up to you.' Soon after this, she started writing the biography in secret. He did not give her any notes for it, but only corrected a few erroneous pieces of information. On the other hand, she received a great deal from the Princess this year. I acknowledged that although I was free of petty envy, a cherished life's task had been taken from me; even though I had declined his cousin Eduard von Liszt's urgent request seven years ago, the idea had constantly haunted me as one that had to be realised later. He then said, in a kindly way, 'Your character study is something completely different and independent, and will always retain its value as the best thing written about me in a succinct form.'” (ibid., p. 248)

Beyond this, La Mara and Lina Ramann were apparently not acquainted with each other, only meeting a single time after La Mara’s statement: "Then Fräulein Lina Ramann, coming from Weimar, paid me a visit and I was able to help and provide her with the essays of Liszt written for the “Neue Zeitschrift für Musik” that were to be published as a collection, and which she could never have found elsewhere. This was to remain our only personal encounter. We have only repeatedly exchanged letters since then.” (ibid., p. 338)

Liszt and the Women

Since the "cherished life’s task" had been completed by another – Lina Ramann’s two-volume work was published in 1880–1894 under the title "Franz Liszt as an Artist and Human Being" in Leipzig – La Mara developed another narrative style on the occasion of Franz Liszt’s 100th birthday in order to be able to portray the life of her venerated master. In 1911 her work "Liszt and the Women" was published by Breitkopf & Härtel. After a brief introduction, divided into two large sections ("Liszt’s Virtuoso Period" and "Liszt in Weimar and Rome"), on a total of 321 printed pages, 26 "outstanding" women are introduced who "played a major role" (quotations from the introduction) as lovers and life partners, friends, pupils, colleagues, patronesses or sponsors in Liszt’s life, and who were known and recognised as musicians, interpreters and composers, authors and princesses, including: Caroline de Saint-Criq; Adèle Gräfin Laprunarède; Countess Louis Plater; George Sand; Countess Marie d’Agoult; Princess Christina Belgiojoso; Pauline Viadot-Garcia; Caroline Unger-Sabatier; Marie Camilla Pleyel; Charlotte von Hagn; Bettina von Arnim; Marie von Mouchanoff-Kalergis; Countess Rosalie Sauerma, Maria Pawlowna, Grand Duchess of Saxony; Sophie Grand Duchess of Saxony; Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein; Emilie Merian-Genast; Agnes Street-Kindworth; Jessie Hillebrand-Lausso; Sofie Menter; Countess Marie Schleinitz, now Countess Wolkenstein; Countess Marie Dönhoff, now Princess Bülow; Espérance von Schwartz, Elpis Melena; Princess Fanny Rospigliosi; Nadine Helbig; Baroness Olga Meyendorff. Sofie Menter and Pauline Viardot-Garcia had already been portrayed by La Mara in Volume V of the "Studienköpfe".

Vital, brief biographies were created with the working method developed in the "Studienköpfen" – of portraying personalities with close reference to the available source material, including self-testimonies, letters or reviews as well as already existing biographies, personal conversations or surveys. Her chronological arrangement corresponding to her encounters with Liszt led, on the one hand, to a dazzling biographical description of Liszt enriched by new viewpoints, in which the influences of the women on the composer are taken seriously and upgraded. On the other hand, this layout once again points out the heroic-historical world view of the author and of artists’ biographies during this period – with the male genius always standing at the centre.

Beethoven and the Brunsviks

Franz Liszt, the "divine", the "titan", the "marvel who always created energetically and pugnaciously out of plenitude" ("Musikalische Studienköpfen", Vol. 1, p. 251 ff) is only surpassed in the perceptions of La Mara, as in those of her contemporaries, by one other composer: the "heroic" Ludwig van Beethoven. In her "Studienkopf" dedicated to Beethoven, his significance is constructed out of the combination of his outstanding work and the profound tragedy of his personal fate. Deafness, loneliness and disappointment in love are the necessary tragic ingredients for the construction of the term "hero", also used by her, at best, only for Johann Sebastian Bach. Alongside the "heroes" and "titans", La Mara's cosmos is populated by "figures of light" (such as Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy – highly gifted and favoured by fate, not quite as overwhelming as a creator but with a great deal of beauty and brilliance), "fighters" and "innovators", "reformers" and "martyrs" (for example R. Wagner and H. Berlioz) as well as "poets", "dreamers" and "fantasists" (such as R. Schumann and F. Chopin – creating naively, producing
self-willed, individualistic works that require complete devotion if one wishes to understand them; see the corresponding "Studienköpfe").

With the 91-page essay "Beethoven and the Brunsviks", published in 1920 on the occasion of the festivities on the composer's 150th birthday, the author dedicated herself once again to her source research, extending over a period of 30 years' duration, on the Brunsvik family and their relationships to Ludwig van Beethoven. Alongside the contextualisation of important works composed during this period, it is primarily concerned with the question of who the "immortal beloved" was – the addressee of Beethoven's only surviving love letter, consigned without an appellation. For this purpose, she reconstructed Beethoven's relationships to the members of the Brunsvik family with the help of sources that she gathered together, such as the correspondence between Beethoven and the members of the Austro-Hungarian noble family, as well as the correspondences of the family members with each other and the memoirs of Therese Brunsvik, already edited by her in 1909. She also incorporated the Beethoven biographies available by that time, by Anton Schindler, Alexander Wheelock Thayer, Alfred Kalischer, Ludwig Nohl, André de Hevesy and Hugo Riemann, as well as contemporary essays. After repeated readings of the correspondence between the sisters Therese and Josephine Brunsvik, she arrived at the conviction that Josephine Brunsvik must have been the "immortal beloved".


La Mara was awarded the title of Royal Saxon Professor for her life's work on her 80th birthday, on 30 December 1917. She died on 2 March 1927 in Schmölen.

Appreciation

Alongside Lina Ramann and Anna Morsch, La Mara was one of the first women in Germany who were able to professionally succeed as writers on music during the 19th century. The area of musicians' biographies was one of the few music-theoretical fields in which women – excluded from higher schooling and university studies – could become active. James Deaville has pointed out that La Mara's (like Lina Ramann's) method of systematically surveying musicians with catalogues of questions in an interview or by letter, as well as having the finished portraits double-checked and corrected, did not become the norm for musicological research until the 20th century (see James Deaville: Lina Ramann und La Mara: Zwei Frauen, ein Schicksal, Wien 1999, pp. 239–252). Both authors, however, were frequently criticised for this practice – it was considered not sufficiently objective.

The works of La Mara are of especial importance for Liszt research. Thanks to her often tenacious and extensive research, numerous musicians' legacies could be safeguarded and delivered to archives. Through her questioning of contemporary witnesses and surviving relatives, many personal memories have been preserved that are of great use for research today.

Her portraits in Volume 5 of the "Musikalischen Studienköpfe: Tonkünstlerinnen der Gegenwart" ("Musical Studies: Women Musicians of the Present Day"), published in 1882, represents the first publication of a book about women musicians in German-language music historiography. Nonetheless, La Mara shared the polarising gender images of her time. Through the rapturous super-elevation of the creative artist as opposed to the mere interpretation and reproduction of music by performers, she also contributed to the perpetuation of gender hierarchies and heroic images in the music historiography of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Reception

La Mara's books underwent up to eleven printings during her lifetime: her portraits and articles were printed in numerous newspapers and journals and translated into many languages, often without the permission or information of the author or the publisher. Translations into Swedish, English, French, Italian and Spanish are known.

The last new editions of her books followed during the early 1920s. Her works were not republished after her death. There has not yet been a more precise overview of the further reception of her works, especially after her death. Only the American musicologist James Deaville has made a contribution about this writer on music for the second printing of the standard work "Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart" ("Music in History and the Present Day").

In her two-volume autobiography "Durch Musik und Leben im Dienste des Ideals" ("Through Music and Life in
the Service of the Ideal", Leipzig 1917) the author compiled numerous statements on her works from her friends and colleagues, and also from relatives of the musicians whom she had portrayed over the course of her life. Several particularly remarkable reactions to her writings are cited here from her autobiography.

Her first music publication in 1867, three essays on Franz Liszt, Robert Schumann and Frédéric Chopin in "Westermanns Monatsheften" was received and acknowledged very favourably. The journal "Signale" praised the "excellent Liszt sketch which is continued to the present day and is distinguished by reliability of information and warmth in its depiction." (quoted from La Mara, "Durch Musik und Leben im Dienste des Ideals"/"Through music and Life in the Service of the Ideal", Vol.1, p. 85.) Other papers also referred to it favourably.

The first anthology of the "Musikalische Studienköpfe", dealing with Liszt, Schumann, Chopin, Weber, Schubert, Mendelssohn and Wagner, was issued on 1 November 1868 and found a "warm reception". by the press. (ibid., p. 92) The "Magazin für die Literatur des Auslandes" of 14 November 1868 wrote: "It is a collection of thoroughly refined portraits, characterisations presented by a master's hand. It is as if a particularly gifted painter had decorated his room with the portraits of the contemporary artists whom he reveres the most, but reproduced them as he sees them, knowing them so well and having observed them so attentively. And, beyond that, we must especially praise the pure German writing style in this small work, reminiscent as it is of the most beautiful prose. (...) At the end of the work, the author wholeheartedly confesses his [sic!] veneration of Liszt's and Wagner's latest creations. The entire series of portraits is indeed hung, one would like to believe, for the sake of its ending." (ibid., pp. 92–93) In the "Neue Zeitschrift für Musik", too, the book of "Herr La Mara" was reviewed positively. The son and biographer of Carl Maria von Weber, Max Weber, wrote to the publisher that he was "quite captivated by the brilliance of the presentation, as by the warmth in capturing the subjects and emotions, although the author's artistic point of view differed from his own." (ibid., p. 93)

The Beethoven researcher Kalischer made the following statement about the Berlioz portrait from Vol. 2 of the "Studienköpfe": "No one, surely, has yet drawn this gloomily suffering, magnificent phenomenon of an artist in a manner so true to life, so fervid in his zeal for love, as the author." (ibid., p. 137)

Princess Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein wrote the following in 1871 to La Mara concerning the portrait of Beethoven, published in 1870: "I shall not utter any particular words of praise concerning your Beethoven. You will have already heard and read enough of such things from others. Please allow me to add to all these so well-deserved accolades that your activity as a writer fills me with pride in my capacity as a woman. Without in the least having to deprive women of the area of pure activity of the imagination, in which they profess such a refined sensibility and power of observation, I am delighted to see them encouraged by you to attempt paths on which they, with their pens for the benefit of the intellectual world, can in the same way replace the needle and spindle that have been killed by machines. As often, I give you as an example: for you show what many of us could and should do with their leisure. With luck, you have chosen an area where, without trespassing into that scholarly dryness in which a woman loses her best assets without gaining those of a man, she can indeed unite the gifts of observation and expression of feeling bestowed upon her by nature with a real, solid historical interest. Art is indeed an area within which women cannot sufficiently acclimatise themselves, so that the men succeed in it all the better." (ibid., p. 127.)

The Leipzig music critic Louis Köhler wrote to La Mara: "When I read your pretty books, I occasionally had a fleeting idea that the author could be a lady; for the narrative style had, in its friendly language, such a directly natural quality. When men write in a 'friendly' way, by contrast, their writing allows us to sense a secret will to do this. Because you, however, make your own observations at the same time, and declare these so resolutely, I occasionally deviated from my conjecture, continuing to waver." (ibid., p. 180)

And finally, Eduard Hanslick declared the following about her publication "Musikalische Gedankenpolyphonie" ("Musical Polyphonic of Thought"), issued in 1873: "A selection made with taste and erudition which unites a great deal that is good and interesting, and should make numerous friends." (ibid., pp. 180–181)

Research

At Oldenburg University, a dissertation by Lisbeth Suhrcke is currently underway with the working title "The Journalistic Work of Marie Lipsius (1837-1927) in the Formative Phase of Musicology". I wish to sincerely thank Lisbeth Suhrcke at this point for her corrections and annotations to this article.
Need for Research

Could La Mara live from the proceeds of her books?
How precise were her working methods, under what conditions did she work, and to what extent did her conditions differ from those of her male colleagues?

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mugi.hfmt-hamburg.de
Forschungsprojekt an der
Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hamburg
Projektleitung: Prof. Dr. Beatrix Borchard
Harvestehuder Weg 12
D – 20148 Hamburg