Mazeppa, Kindig Arr.

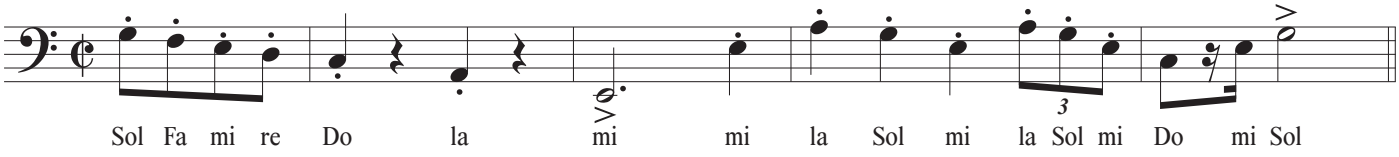
Transposition Inquisition No. 88

Franz Liszt

arr. Martorano

About the Composer:

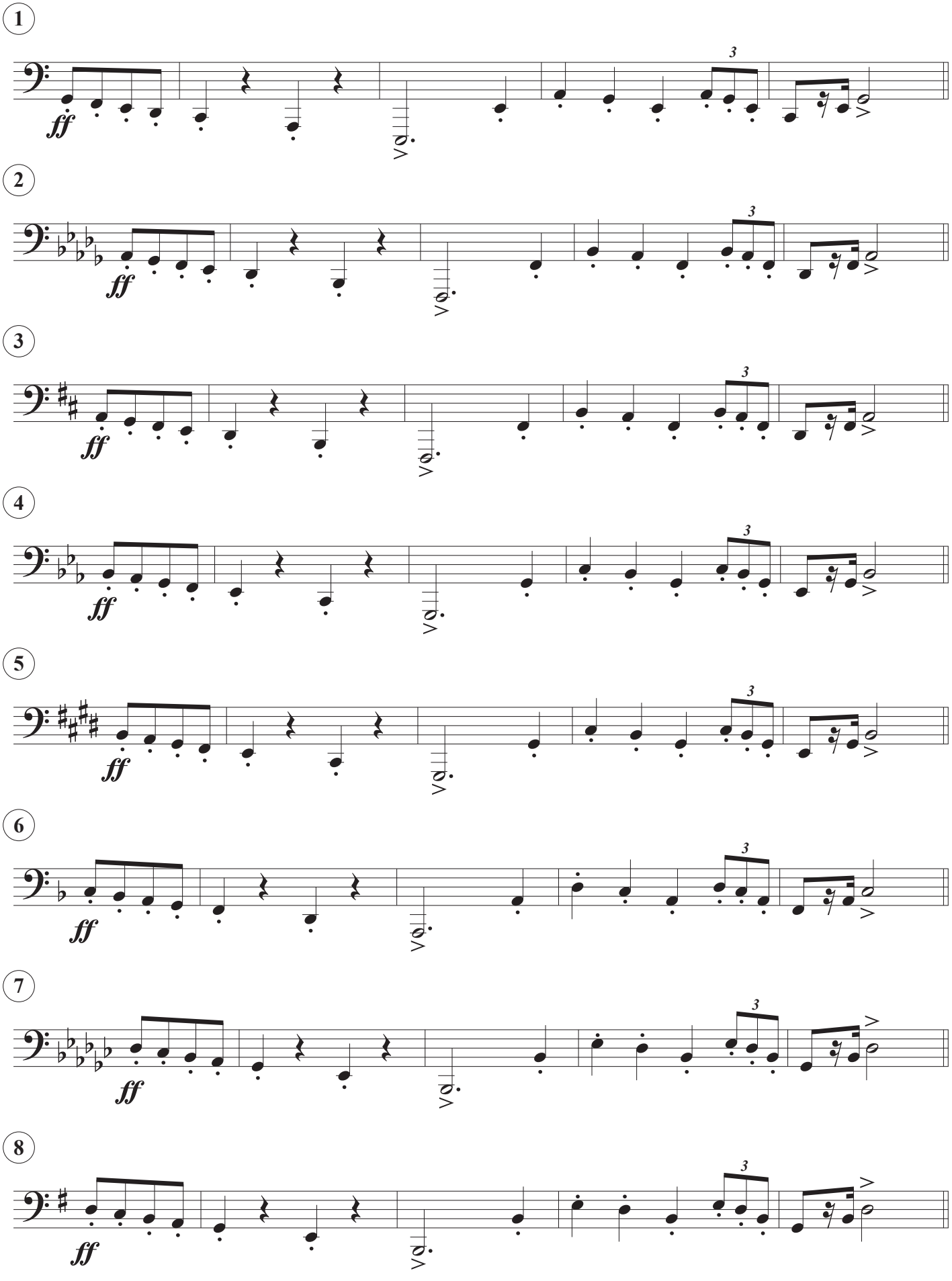
Hungarian composer, pianist and teacher. He was one of the leaders of the Romantic movement in music. In his compositions he developed new methods, both imaginative and technical, which left their mark upon his forward-looking contemporaries and anticipated some 20th-century ideas and procedures; he also evolved the method of 'transformation of themes' as part of his revolution in form, made radical experiments in harmony and invented the symphonic poem for orchestra. As the greatest piano virtuoso of his time, he used his sensational technique and captivating concert personality not only for personal effect but to spread, through his transcriptions, knowledge of other composers' music. As a conductor and teacher, especially at Weimar, he made himself the most influential figure of the New German School dedicated to progress in music. His unremitting championship of Wagner and Berlioz helped these composers achieve a wider European fame. Equally important was his unrivalled commitment to preserving and promoting the best of the past, including Bach, Handel, Schubert, Weber and above all Beethoven; his performances of such works as Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Hammerklavier Sonata created new audiences for music hitherto regarded as incomprehensible. The seeming contradictions in his personal life – a strong religious impulse mingled with a love of worldly sensation – were resolved by him with difficulty. Yet the vast amount of new biographical information makes the unthinking view of him as 'half gypsy, half priest' impossible to sustain. He contained in his character more of the ideals and aspirations of the 19th century than any other major musician.



About the Composition:

Mazeppa is a symphonic poem composed by Franz Liszt from 1851 to 1854, part of the long cultural legacy of the Ukrainian hero. Mazeppa, S. 100, is the sixth in the cycle of thirteen symphonic poems written during Liszt's time in Weimar. It follows the story as told in Lord Byron's 1819 poem: Ivan Mazepa seduced a noble Polish lady, and in punishment was tied naked to a wild horse that carried him to Ukraine. There, he was released by the Cossacks, which later made him Hetman (military leader). The work premiered at the Court Theatre in Weimar on April 16, 1854.

The composer follows Hugo's narrative, describing the hero's journey through the vast steppes in the first movement. The string section plays the main theme, which is transformed and distorted with six strokes of the timpani that evoke the fall of the rider. After a silence, strings, bassoon and horn soloists express astonishment of the injured, raised by the trumpets at Allegro Marziale. Mazeppa and his cossacks are placed in front of the army (a march is heard) and the return of the hero's theme signifies his end in glory.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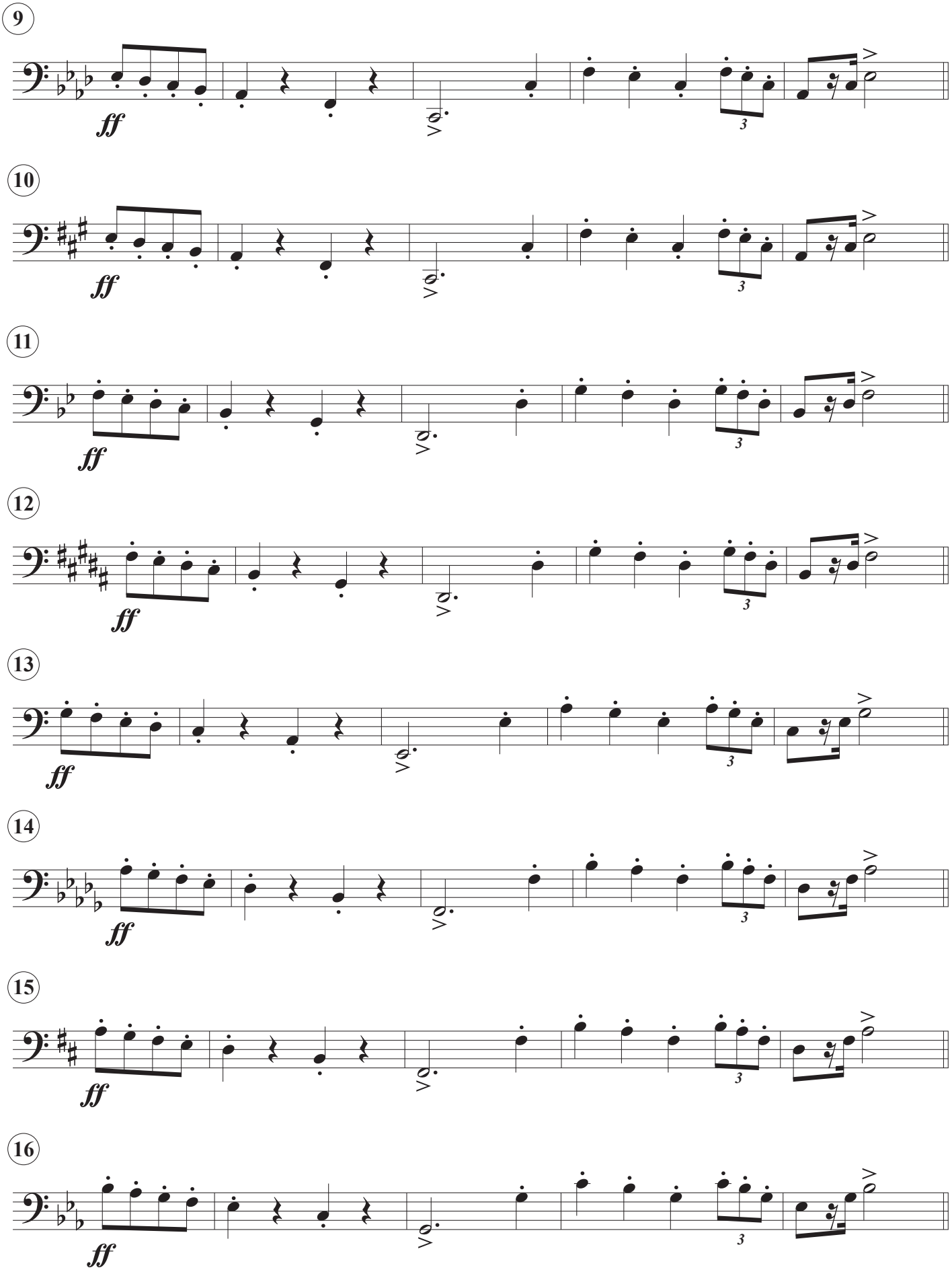
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