

BERLIOZ: *SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE*

Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* is a key work in the understanding of romanticism, programme music, and the development of the orchestra post-Beethoven. It is noted for having a title and a detailed programme, and for its connection with the composer's personal life and loves. This handbook situates the symphony within its time, and considers influences, literary as well as musical, that shaped its conception. Providing a close analysis of the symphony, its formal properties and melodic and textural elements (including harmony and counterpoint), it is a rich but accessible study which will appeal to music lovers, scholars, and students. It contains a translation of the programme, which sheds light on the form and character of each movement, and the unusual use of a melodic *idée fixe* representing a beloved woman. The unusual five-movement design permits a range of musical topics to be discussed and related to traditional symphonic elements: sonata form, a long adagio, dance-type movements, and thematic development.

JULIAN RUSHTON is Emeritus Professor, School of Music, University of Leeds. His publications include *The Musical Language of Berlioz* (1983), *The Music of Berlioz* (2001), and as editor, *The Cambridge Berlioz Encyclopedia* (2018). He is past president of the Royal Musical Association and an honorary member of the American Musicological Society.

NEW CAMBRIDGE MUSIC HANDBOOKS

Series Editor

NICOLE GRIMES, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE

The New Cambridge Music Handbooks series provides accessible introductions to landmarks in music history, written by leading experts in their field. Encompassing a wide range of musical styles and genres, it embraces the music of hitherto under-represented creators as well as re-imagining works from the established canon. It will enrich the musical experience of students, scholars, listeners and performers alike.

Books in the Series

Hensel: String Quartet in E flat

Benedict Taylor

Berlioz: Symphonie Fantastique

Julian Rushton

Margaret Bonds: The Montgomery Variations and Du Bois 'Credo'

John Michael Cooper

Schoenberg: 'Night Music', Verklärte Nacht and Erwartung

Arnold Whittall

Forthcoming Titles

Schubert: The 'Great' Symphony in C major

Suzannah Clark

Bach: The Cello Suites

Edward Klorman

Clara Schumann: Piano Concerto in A minor Op. 7

Julie Pedneault-Deslauriers

Donizetti: Lucia di Lammermoor

Mark Pottinger

Beethoven: String Quartet Op. 130

Elaine Sisman

Louise Farrenc: Nonet for Winds and Strings

Marie Sumner Lott

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci

Alexandra Wilson

BERLIOZ: *SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE*

JULIAN RUSHTON
University of Leeds

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
 978-1-316-51383-5 — Berlioz: Symphonie Fantastique
 Julian Rushton
 Frontmatter
[More Information](#)



CAMBRIDGE
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
 New Delhi – 110025, India
 103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
 a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
 education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781316513835

DOI: 10.1017/9781009075138

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2024

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions
 of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take
 place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

First published 2024

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Rushton, Julian, author.

TITLE: Berlioz: symphonie fantastique / Julian Rushton.

Other titles: Symphonie fantastique

DESCRIPTION: [First edition]. | Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY :
 Cambridge University Press, 2023. | Series: New Cambridge music handbooks |
 Includes bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2023023916 (print) | LCCN 2023023917 (ebook) | ISBN
 9781316513835 (hardback) | ISBN 9781009074889 (paperback) | ISBN
 9781009075138 (ebook)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Berlioz, Hector, 1803–1869. Symphonie fantastique. | Berlioz,
 Hector, 1803–1869 – Influence. | Symphonies – Analysis, appreciation.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC MT130.B48 R8 2023 (print) | LCC MT130.B48 (ebook) | DDC
 784.18/4–dc23/eng/20230531

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023023916>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023023917>

ISBN 978-1-316-51383-5 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-009-07488-9 Paperback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence
 or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
 publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain,
 accurate or appropriate.

To David Cairns, with admiration and affection

CONTENTS

<i>List of Illustrations and Box</i>	page viii
<i>List of Tables</i>	ix
<i>List of Music Examples</i>	x
<i>Preface and Acknowledgements</i>	xi
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xvi
1 Introduction, Programme, Outline	I
2 Literary and Musical Romanticism	14
3 <i>Symphonie fantastique</i> in Berlioz's Lifetime	34
4 First Movement: 'Rêveries, passions'	48
5 Second Movement: 'Un bal'	64
6 Third Movement: 'Scène aux champs'	72
7 Fourth Movement: 'Marche au supplice'	87
8 Fifth Movement: 'Songe d'une nuit de Sabbat'	94
9 The Sequel: Reception by Composers	109
10 Reception: Schumann and Musical Form	121
11 Other Approaches: Conclusion	133
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	146
<i>Index</i>	151

ILLUSTRATIONS AND BOX

Illustrations

- | | | |
|------|--|---------|
| 3.1 | Eugène Delacroix, <i>Faust and Gretchen, Walpurgisnacht</i> (c. 1828), showing the apparition of Gretchen | page 41 |
| 10.1 | Schumann's table of the first-movement form. From 'Hector Berlioz, <i>Episode de la vie d'un Artiste. Grande Symphonie fantastique ...</i> ', <i>NZfM</i> (July–August 1835), issues 10–13 | 125 |

Box

- | | | |
|-----|-----------|---|
| 1.1 | Programme | 7 |
|-----|-----------|---|

TABLES

4.1	First movement: Form of the Largo	<i>page</i> 50
4.2	First movement: Formal outline of the Allegro	52
5.1	Form of ‘Un bal’	65
6.1	Form of ‘Scène aux champs’ (Adagio ♩ = 84)	73
7.1	Form of ‘Marche au supplice’	88
8.1	Formal outline of ‘Songe d’une nuit de Sabbat’	95
8.2	‘Ronde du Sabbat’ considered as a fugue	101
10.1	Schumann’s outline of Berlioz’s Allegro and the ‘traditional model’	124

MUSIC EXAMPLES

2.1	Berlioz, <i>Grande Messe des morts</i> , <i>Dies irae</i> , and the <i>Dies irae</i> plainchant	page 22
2.2	<i>Symphonie fantastique</i> , first movement. Violins I and II from bar 410	27
4.1	The ‘Florian song’. Largo, ♩ = 56	49
4.2	The Largo, bars 45–63: harmonic outline	51
4.3	The <i>idée fixe</i> (P1) and its pendant (P2)	54
4.4	The S theme, opening like the <i>idée fixe</i>	55
5.1	‘Un bal’, the waltz theme (♩. = 60)	66
5.2	‘Un bal’, version of the <i>idée fixe</i>	70
6.1	The <i>ranz des vaches</i>	75
6.2	‘Scène aux champs’, main theme	78
6.3	‘Scène aux champs’, <i>idée fixe</i>	80
6.4	‘Scène aux champs’, new motif with ‘quail’ rhythm	80
6.5	‘Scène aux champs’, transition to reprise of the main theme	83
6.6	‘Scène aux champs’, combination of themes from bar 150	84
7.1	‘Marche au supplice’, main theme	89
7.2	‘Marche au supplice’, main theme, with inversion and counterpoint	90
7.3	‘Marche au supplice’, second theme	92
8.1	(a) Berlioz, ‘ <i>Songe d’une nuit de Sabbat</i> ’; (b) Liszt, ‘ <i>Mephistopheles</i> ’ (<i>Eine Faust-Sinfonie</i>)	95
8.2	‘ <i>Songe d’une nuit de Sabbat</i> ’, bars 11–12	96
8.3	‘ <i>Songe d’une nuit de Sabbat</i> ’, bells and <i>Dies irae</i>	98
8.4	‘ <i>Ronde du Sabbat</i> ’, fugue subject, countersubjects, and punctuation	102
8.5	‘ <i>Ronde du Sabbat</i> ’ and <i>Dies irae</i> combined	105
8.6	‘ <i>Songe d’une nuit de Sabbat</i> ’, final allusion to the <i>idée fixe</i>	107

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Berlioz's *Episode in the Life of an Artist*, now routinely referred to in English as the *Fantastic Symphony*, is 'programme music', a wide-ranging term embracing musical works with titles that are not simply generic.¹ We do not refer to it as 'Berlioz's Symphony No. 1'. Several earlier symphonies were given titles by their composers, and some have nicknames acquired later, such as Mozart's last symphony ('Jupiter'). Berlioz probably knew little of eighteenth-century precedents, but he knew Beethoven's titled third (*Eroica*) and sixth (*Pastoral*) symphonies (see Chapter 3). However, symphonies with evocative titles were uncommon before the nineteenth century; indeed before 1830 when *Symphonie fantastique* was first performed.

The existence of titles and programmes bears on the eternal and possibly insoluble question of musical meaning. Music is often functional, used for dancing or other kinds of entertainment; music attached to words supports, or should support, the lyric or dramatic texts. But can music convey meaning, or some other kind of message, on its own? Early in the nineteenth century writers such as E.T.A. Hoffmann, himself a composer, were beginning to interpret even untitled works, like Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, in terms that suggested profound significance of a kind that could not adequately be expressed in words; for Hoffmann, music was the most romantic of the arts precisely because it reached beyond the events of life or, transcending them, reached the numinous or sublime.²

A growing tendency to compose instrumental music with a title and an implied or explicit programme received a major stimulus from Berlioz's work. It preceded by nearly a quarter-century the coinage of the term 'symphonic poem' associated with Franz Liszt, who had previously played a significant part in the early history of *Symphonie fantastique*. But symphonic poems are

Preface and Acknowledgements

usually single-movement affairs, their direct ancestor being the titled concert overture. Some of these, such as Beethoven's *Coriolan*, live mainly in the concert hall despite being commissioned to preface a drama, but other overtures, like numerous piano 'preludes', were composed as short instrumental works not intended to precede a drama, though they might refer to one, for instance Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, composed long before his incidental music to the play, or they may be picturesque, like his *Hebrides* overture. Berlioz had himself composed two overtures before embarking on his first symphony. One, for an opera that was never staged, *Les Francs-juges*, has survived in the concert hall; the other, *Waverley*, the first of his five concert overtures, is prefaced with a quotation from the eponymous novel (1814) by Walter Scott.

At about fifty-five minutes, *Symphonie fantastique* is a long symphony for its time, as were some of Beethoven's. Whatever was new about the work, it was not that it had a title, and was orchestral music associated with a narrative. What marks it as exceptional is the detailed story supplied by the composer; and that the story, unlike the titled overtures mentioned, is the composer's own. This is sometimes misunderstood. The programme is not strictly autobiographical; almost none of the events described actually happened. But it is no one else's story, and Berlioz intended the audience to listen with his complete, strangely dream-like narrative in mind.

Symphonie fantastique, composed in late 1829 and early 1830 at the cusp of Berlioz's artistic maturity, was written under considerable stress involving his love life, finances, and career prospects. The composer is lightly disguised as the 'artist' of the programme. Berlioz's later works refer to pre-existing literature, for instance those based on Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (late 1830), *King Lear* (1831), and *Romeo and Juliet* (1839). But the narrative of *Symphonie fantastique* was itself a new creation, taking programme music along a new path. The programme reflects Berlioz's inner feelings – although not, fortunately, his real-life actions.

Chapter 1 includes a translation of the programme, following consideration of Berlioz's life in the years preceding his decision to compose the work, and concludes with an outline of the whole

Preface and Acknowledgements

symphony, a framework for later discussion of each movement in turn (Chapters 4–8). Even such a strikingly original piece of music is not created in isolation, so the next chapters consider the historical and cultural contexts within which Berlioz lived and worked. Chapter 2 connects him to the burgeoning of French romanticism, and reviews aspects of his musical education, set in relief by comparison with a symphony composed at the same time by his younger colleague Felix Mendelssohn. Chapter 3 considers the major literary and musical influences that most affected Berlioz up to the symphony's composition and premiere.

Chapters 4–8 discuss each movement in terms of musical form, thematically and harmonically defined, exemplifying details of particular interest or originality and mentioning the revisions made before its definitive version, represented by the full score, published as late as 1845. The remaining chapters suggest ways in which this remarkable composition was received; first in Chapter 9 by Berlioz himself, leading to his producing a sequel (*Lélio, or the Return to Life*), then by other composers. Chapter 10 engages with one of the symphony's more controversial aspects, at least for music theory and analysis: the debate on Berlioz's use, or abuse, of sonata form, a debate initiated by another composer, Robert Schumann. Other angles of approach, both to the music and the programme, are considered here and in the final chapter.

Since the 1830s critics, musicologists, analysts, and annotators of concert programmes and recordings have written a great deal about *Symphonie fantastique*, often with insight. I cannot claim to have read everything, and I have not added much from authors already mentioned in my earlier books. I have tried to take account of published work more recent than *The Music of Berlioz* (2001) which, like *The Musical Language of Berlioz* (1983), has several pages on *Symphonie fantastique*. The Select Bibliography includes works in English – and other languages – that are worth exploring, including some not actually mentioned in the text.

My feelings about the symphony have not fundamentally altered since 2001, but I have tried to gather thoughts that go

Preface and Acknowledgements

back further, and to view it from different angles. My interest in it started when my undergraduate supervisor, Raymond Leppard, suggested I write an essay on ‘Berlioz’s attitude to symphonic form’. This encouraged me to buy miniature scores, which I took to the Edinburgh Festival in the 1960s; there I heard *Symphonie fantastique* with its sequel, *Lélio*, under Colin Davis, the first conductor to record nearly all of Berlioz’s output.

Immediately after another Edinburgh performance I came across Berlioz’s future biographer David Cairns, with smoke (almost) coming from his nostrils: ‘That man’s never seen a metronome in his life!’ he said to anyone within earshot (the conductor, Lorin Maazel, had exceeded the speed limit in the finale). All of us interested in Berlioz are eternally indebted to David, and I acknowledge with gratitude the work of many other Berlioz scholars mentioned within. I also warmly acknowledge the support of these, and more, over the years, particularly Hugh Macdonald for his encouragement in the early stages of my developing interest in this composer, and for inviting me to edit some volumes in the New Berlioz Edition, of which he is General Editor. My thanks go also to Cambridge University Press, to the series editor Nicole Grimes, to the excellent copy-editor Frances Tye, and to the anonymous reader of the first – which I rashly hoped would be the final – draft of the text.

In 2019 the 150th anniversary of Berlioz’s death was commemorated by the launch of ‘Berlioz 150’ by Lord Aberdare (Chairman of the Berlioz Society). This has produced ‘*Fantastique for Schools*’, an educational programme which, it is to be hoped, will continue to inspire younger listeners to explore music simplistically labelled ‘classical’ (and all too often considered ‘elitist’). Berlioz was a major player in the subset of such music generally called ‘romantic’, and has been perceived, from a perspective that views the mainstream as Austrian and German, as an outsider. But his work is in a kind of dialogue with these and other predecessors, in which respect he was very much an artist of his time. His music, not only *Symphonie fantastique*, has achieved wider-than-ever acceptance and prominence since 1969, the centenary of his death, and he continues to interest fellow composers up to the present day. His place in the pantheon of

xiv

Preface and Acknowledgements

significant and pioneering European composers, often disputed, is by now secure.

Notes

1. See, for instance, Jonathan Kregor, *Program Music* (Cambridge Introductions to Music, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
2. E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony*, *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* xii (July 1810). Translations in Elliot Forbes (ed.), *Beethoven. Symphony No. 5 in C Minor*, Norton Critical Score (London: Chappell & Co., 1971), 150–63, and David Charlton (ed.), *E. T. A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings*, trans. Martyn Clarke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 234–51.

ABBREVIATIONS

Citations in the notes after the first reference take the form: author, short title, page. Full details are also in the bibliography. The following abbreviations are used for items frequently referenced, and are listed here as a memorandum, although a full reference is given at the first mention in the notes, and in the bibliography. All unattributed translations are by the author.

Works by Berlioz

Berlioz's <i>Memoirs</i> :	References to whole chapters without qualification refer to a relatively extended passage which can be consulted in any edition. Chapter numbers are those of the original edition and correspond to the most recent editions in French and English: <i>Mémoires d'Hector Berlioz de 1803 à 1865</i> . Text prepared, introduced and annotated by Peter Bloom (Paris: Vrin, 2019).
<i>Mémoires</i> (ed. Bloom):	<i>Mémoires d'Hector Berlioz de 1803 à 1865</i> . Text prepared, introduced and annotated by Peter Bloom (Paris: Vrin, 2019).
<i>The Memoirs</i> (trans. Cairns):	<i>The Memoirs of Hector Berlioz</i> . Translated and edited by David Cairns, revised second edition (London: Allen Lane/The Penguin Press, 2002).
Cone, <i>Fantastic Symphony</i> :	Edward T. Cone, <i>Berlioz: Fantastic Symphony</i> , Norton

List of Abbreviations

	Critical Score (London: Chappell, 1971).
NBE:	New Berlioz Edition (General Editor Hugh Macdonald), 26 vols. (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1967–2005).
NBE 16:	Berlioz, <i>Symphonie fantastique</i> (ed. Nicholas Timperley), New Berlioz Edition vol. 16 (1972).

Alphabetical Abbreviations Used in the Notes:

<i>CBE</i> :	Julian Rushton (ed.), <i>The Cambridge Berlioz Encyclopedia</i> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018)
<i>CG</i> (plus volume number):	Hector Berlioz, <i>Correspondance générale</i> , Vols. I–VIII (Paris: Flammarion, 1972); Vol. IX (Paris: Actes Sud, 2016)